

CTC Cambridge Permanent: Beer and Brecks 323km

PLEASE NOTE: this route is different from the calendar version, which uses 1.5km of the A47 overnight. Do not use the calendar version!

CTC Cambridge was established in 1921 and has always been an active club with a variety of rides on offer. In 2025, CTC Cambridge revived some audax routes from the late 90s-early 2000s. This 323km (200 mile) ride is the permanent version of a calendar event added in 2026, using quiet roads throughout so that it is suitable for any time of day.

Starting at Cambridge central station, we take surprisingly quiet paths out of Cambridge and through fen edge villages. Around Mildenhall, and onto the Brecks with their wind-twisted Scots pines. Control in Swaffham. We then drop down through Norfolk and Suffolk to Southwold, home of the Adnams Brewery. Bonus prizes for anyone who makes time to visit the Under The Pier show – free entry to another perm if you send me a selfie for the website! We wind our way back through Suffolk to historic Lavenham. Then it's the home run; drop back into Cambridgeshire, and take the DNA path and the guided busway path back into Cambridge central station.

The route can be done in either direction, starting at any point on the route or from a nearby train station.

Controls:

0km Cambridge central railway station

78km Swaffham

169km Southwold Pier

254km Lavenham

317km Shelford railway station

323km Cambridge central railway station

Useful train stations:

Cambridge central

Cambridge south (opens end June 2026)

Wymondham

Stowmarket

Shelford

Cafes/village shops/toilets/water:

Please note – cafes are just off-route in several towns!

0km Cambridge central station: food vans outside, usually open lunchtime to late evening

35km Mildenhall: cafes, shops off route.

78km Swaffham: cafes, shops off route.

102km Hingham sports centre: tap on front of building, cafes in village

104km Just after Hingham: sign for cooked breakfasts, but haven't investigated!

113km Wymondham: cafes off route. Co-op on route.

130km Hempnall: Morrisons Daily, cafe, bakery off route.

141km Ditchingham Nisa Local just off route.

143km Silo cafe: looks like fancy coffee.

169km Southwold: toilets to L of pier. Tap on prom between beach huts. Cafes, shops on high street.

218km Debenham: L into Gracechurch Street then immediately R into Little Back Lane for toilets and Co-op

230km Tap in Stowupland cemetery on little brick shed, just opposite high school.

231km Coop at petrol station just before Stowmarket. Has loos.

234km Stowmarket: cafes, Asda with public toilets at front

236km Just outside Stowmarket, R towards Rattlesden for excellent Lakeside Cafe at Onehouse on L. Tap on black shed just past cafe.

253km Lavenham: cafes, Co-ops, public toilets in car parks (suggested £1, cash or card). Northern Co-op is open later. Excellent sausage rolls from butchers next to southern Co-op.

277km Cafe 33 and shop on R

294km Balsham: Old Butcher's cafe (park bike in garden at back, tap), shop

301km Great Abington: cafe, shop

309km Sawston: L at traffic lights for cafes, shops. Toilets in Free Church (Footprints cafe) or parish council building in Link Road.

Points of interest and things to watch out for:

0km Cambridge central station: dreadful ugly sculpture is called Ariadne (Wrapped).

2km The Tins path So named because it used to have tall metal sheeting all along one side.

15km Swaffham Prior Two churches share the same yard, St Mary's and St Cyriac and Julitta (deconsecrated and available for champing). Services are held at St Mary's – but as it has no bells, the St Cyriac and Julitta bells are rung on Sundays. Without bells in the way at St Mary's, it is possible to see right up into the tower from the inside: the layers are supported by 3D arches at the corners called squinches. The WWI memorial stained glass is well worth a look: there can't be many other stained glass depictions of a zeppelin and the Statue of Liberty.

38km Thetford Forest Much of the woodland between Mildenhall and Swaffham is part of Thetford Forest, in an area known as the Brecks. During WWI, Britain had great difficulty meeting the demand for timber. Throughout the 20s and 30s, estate owners and farmers happily sold off poor quality sandy Breckland to the then Forestry Commission. Much of the planting was carried out between the wars by 6000 otherwise unemployed men from north east England. TV show Dad's Army was filmed nearby.

112km Wymondham Abbey visible to right (Wymondham is pronounced "WIN-dum").

169km Southwold, home to the Adnams brewery and bougie shops. But the best bit is the Under The Pier show, on the pier. Fantastic wacky arcade machines and automata by local Tim Hunkin (riders may remember 80s TV show The Secret Life of Machines). Well worth a look: I will give you a free entry to another perm if you send me a selfie for the website!

Southwold to Walberswick is an extremely popular walking location: you must walk across the bridge. Please cycle very slowly here and look out for walkers.

193km Heveningham Route goes through Heveningham Hall estate. The first house on the site was built in 1658 for William Heveningham, a politician and one of the men responsible for the execution of Charles I. The present hall was built in 1778. Capability Brown, you'll be

unsurprised to learn, planned the landscaping – but the plans only came to fruition after purchase in 1994 by Jon Hunt, founder of estate agency Foxtons.

237km Great Finborough: plaque on left to DJ John Peel who lived here.

253km Lavenham, once one of the wealthiest towns in Britain, has tourist delights for all the family: the enormous Lavenham Church funded by the wool trade, a house that was in the Harry Potter films, and – this one is new to me – was home to Jane Taylor (1783-1824) who wrote the poem that we know as Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.

264km Hartest: as well as pretty houses, there is a fabulous large lump of granite at the north end of the village green just off route. The stone was dug up at Somerton in 1713 and moved on a specially-constructed sledge pulled by 45 horses. Internet folk lore about the stone includes sitting on the stone at midnight leading to possible marriage or fortune (but not both).

309km Sawston to Shelford An optional (but nice) section in order to round up to 200 miles. Feel free to skip.

312km Bees in the Wall pub look back to see → pointing to actual bees in actual wall.

318km DNA path The colours represent the sequence of the BRCA2 gene, implicated in early-onset breast cancer, discovered and sequenced at the nearby Sanger Institute (I think the stripes were paid for by a member of Sanger, who lives nearby?). The path includes the 10,000th mile of the National Cycle Network. Apparently the path has about ten different landowners, all of whom required separate negotiation in order to build the path.