

## **My five favourite bike rides and destinations**

All rides start and finish in Stratford-upon-Avon which is where I live. They could be shortened (or lengthened) dependent upon the start point. Coffee and cake are increasingly important to me these days [!], so they define the destinations!

### **Cotswold Distillery, Stourton, Warwickshire** *44 miles 567m ascent*

Out on the Shipston Road, right onto the Atherstone on Stour to Preston on Stour road for a great 360° view of South Warwickshire. Then on to Illmington, Stretton on Fosse, Paxford and the beautiful lane to Aston Magna. Towards Batsford but turn to Dorn (beware the descent), Toddenham, Great Wolford and thence to Stourton (the distillery is on the road to Whichford).

Back through Barcheston, Honington, Halford and Crimscote.

Stunning vistas of South Warwickshire at not too great a cost in elevation gain (but some)!

### **Tibetan Café – Alain Rouveure Galleries, Todenham, Gloucestershire**

Café and Gallery of Tibetan rugs and things from Nepal. Run by a charming Frenchman who does great works in Nepal, particularly for children.

You almost pass the cafe on the above route but turn left in Todenham (or take a shorter route from Paxford – just stay as clear as you can from the Fosseway on a bike), so it's an alternative destination! Nothing but five-star reviews on Tripadvisor (open only in the summer, so ignore the review from the person who went there when closed!).

### **Beckford Old Post Office, Beckford, Gloucestershire** *57 miles 549m ascent*

Out of Stratford on the Ridgeway heading north west(ish), then through Temple and Arden Graftons, and head west on the lanes to Radford, turn to the south, through Fladbury, Elmley Castle and Beckford. Come back through Broadway and any route back through the lanes to Stratford. Excellent café, and a relatively flat ride!

It is pretty long as it is, but it can be extended, and many more miles achieved, by doing an anticlockwise circuit of Bredon Hill – Beckford sits on its south eastern flank.

### **The Espresso Barn, Long Marston, Warwickshire** *19 miles 141m ascent*

A shorter one this, out of Stratford, through Luddington, Welford towards Barton and then turn left through Dorsington (one of my favourite lanes), past the late publisher Felix Dennis' house and on to Long Marston. The café is halfway along the lane to Lower Quinton. The return stays in the same direction to Lower Quinton and then left to Preston on Stour, and then home.

### **Watermark café, Draycote Water, Kites Hardwick, Warwickshire** *62 miles 590m ascent*

And this is a longer one! Out through Wellesbourne, Ashborne and through Chesterton onto a private road to Harbury. Then Southam, the Welsh Road to the turn off to Napton on the Hill, Lower Shugborough and across the open (and impressive) Grandborough Fields followed by a little of the main road to the visitor centre café. Great views of the reservoir and any sailing activity going on.

Return by the reservoir edge track along the dam wall to Draycott, then Birdingbury, Long Itchington and Harbury (you can then retrace your tracks or take a variant through Lighthorne to Wellesbourne and return to Stratford through Loxley).