

Alston Moor



Alston market town & station

This route takes the cyclist along the main Weardale valley over the climb of Killhope Moor (2056ft) England's highest classified road. Alston is one of the highest elevation towns in the country (1000ft) a market town that was built round the mining industry. Lead, silver, zinc, coal and fluorspar have been mined in this area. Silver mined in Alston in the 13th century was sent to the Royal Mint in Carlisle to convert into coinage. Alston has a steep cobbled main street with a distinctive market cross, and many stone buildings dating from the 17th Century. It is a bustling town, with a reputation for delicious locally made specialities such as Cumberland Mustard, and Alston Cheese. Alston is the starting point for the South Tynedale Railway. England's highest narrow gauge railway.

Leaving Alston the route climbs the Alston Hills and drops into the upper Tees Valley, passing High Force Waterfall and continuing to the small village of Newbiggin. At Newbiggin the route turns over the climb of Swinhope Fell into Weardale.

Alston Route 52 miles

- 1 Leaving Dales Centre, Stanhope turn RIGHT onto A689
- 2 Continue on main valley road to Cowshill
- 3 At Cowshill bear LEFT towards Alston climbing Killhope Cross
- 4 Leave Alston on B6277 climbing over Alston Moor and descending into the upper Tees Valley
- 5 Follow the valley road through Langdon Beck and past High Force to Newbiggin
- 6 Turn LEFT into Newbiggin village
- 7 Turn LEFT after 100 yds on local roads over Swinhope Head
- 8 After descent turn RIGHT at cross roads
- 9 Follow local roads through Brotherlee and continue on to road junction
- 10 Turn LEFT on local roads for 400yds
- 11 Turn RIGHT onto A689 to Stanhope Dales Centre

Elevation profile: Alston Circuit height gain 6174 ft

The Hills

Killhope Cross

Height: 2056 ft

Length: approx 0.5 mile

Steepest section: 1 in 5

The climb from the Weardale valley starts from the Killhope Mine Visitors Centre and climbs in one section up to the summit at 2056 ft. The steep 1 in 5 section towards the summit can be testing in poor weather conditions. This is the highest classified road in England

Alston Moor

Height: 1495 ft

Length: 3 miles

Steepest section: 1 in 10

A long but not too difficult climb over the Alston hills to the head of the upper Tees Valley.

Swinhope Head

Height: 1997 ft

Length: 3 miles

Steepest section 1 in 8

From the village of Newbiggin the climb starts with a steep section up Summary Hill and onto Gurrick Hill and Black Hill to the summit at Swinhope Head.

This single track road has been a great favourite for cyclists crossing from the Tees to the Wear valleys due to the lack of traffic.

Once blocked by four farm gates on the Teesdale side and a single gate on the descent into Weardale this stopped traffic other than the occasional farm vehicle.

The gates on the Teesdale side have now been replaced by cattle grids leaving only one obstacle on the Weardale side.