

Home from Holyhead

Novice tourers Pete & Anne Kelsall rode a long-distance Sustrans route

The small signs showing a bike and a number five that we saw in North Wales were just like those at home in the West Midlands. It turns out NCN Route 5 goes from Holyhead to Walsall (and beyond). We decided to cycle it.

The first challenge was to get used to cycling reasonable distances carrying our stuff in panniers. The second was buying train tickets from Arriva Trains, who have just two cycle spaces on trains to Holyhead. We needed a train with both available. It meant setting off ridiculously early one July morning.

We arrived without a hitch. Route 5 was clearly marked

near the station exit, and the signs were plentiful all the way home. It was sunny and warm as we rode to a B&B in the middle of Anglesey. The next day dawned drizzly but brightened as we got closer to Llandudno. Without the cycle and pedestrian bridges between Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr we would have come unstuck.

A day of two halves followed, starting off along the flat coastal path to Prestatyn. Then we had a big hill to climb before

descending to Flint and on into the heart of Chester.

Our longest day's ride, at 60 miles, began the 'wrong' way north to Frodsham, before turning down the map and homeward. It was an interesting mix of lanes, farm tracks, riverside, canals, and old railways. We appreciated the excellent canal route for miles right through the middle of Stoke, avoiding the

city traffic.

Our last day from Trentham to home had the longest section where there is a 'gap' in Route 5, south of Stafford. We found a good bridleway that avoided the major hills of Cannock Chase and picked up the NCN signs again at Chasewater. Eventually we could see a well-known sign of home: the imposing sculpture of Walsall's Brownhills Miner.



Cycling the Berlin Wall

Finding herself in Berlin, Frances Wilson borrowed a folding bike to explore the city

Opportunities for great cycling can occur in the most unexpected places. A long weekend in Berlin with a borrowed bike gave me the chance to see the history of the city without the need for public transport.

With its flat terrain, Berlin is ideal for cycling. Cycle lanes are numerous and clearly marked, with their own mini traffic lights. At junctions, cyclists have right of way over turning cars (waves of thanks are greeted with blank stares). On my folding bike, I quickly became confident in spite of being on the 'wrong' side of the road. I enjoyed cycling round the city centre, stopping off to visit such sites as the Tiergarten and the Reichstag. Most are free and all have cycle parking.

There is also the chance to see how the city has changed since the Second World War. The Berlin Wall, built in the early 1960s, divided the city into East

and West and remained in place until November 1989. The Tourist Board have turned its former path into a cycle way with a difference. Die Berlin Mauer-Radweg opened in October 2009 and weaves its way round the city for some 160km through places such as

Potsdam and Spandau, and past sites with familiar names like Checkpoint Charlie and the Brandenburg Gate.

A section of the Wall has been preserved for tourists, although you have to imagine the floodlights, soldiers and dogs. Along most of its length the radweg follows the former patrol path, now paved and ideal for cycling. In the city centre the route is marked by a cobblestone line so it is easy to follow, whilst elsewhere it is clearly signposted. The radweg can be done in sections using the railway network or ridden entirely over several days.



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