Top to bottom:
Track to Dockernook Wood. Kentmere Valley. Near Stockdale Bridge. Longsleddale locals

Weekender

Postman Pat's round trip

Longsleddale is the Cumbrian valley that gave us the postie of children's TV fame. **Julie Rand** is your guide to a lanes-and-bridleways ride up and down it

114-mile road ride
DIY Fred Whitton:
cyclinguk.org/route/weekender-route-diy-fred-whitton-challenge

JULIE RAND

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Along with the post office at the end of writer John Cunliffe's street in Kendal, Longsleddale was the inspiration for Greendale, home to Postman Pat (and his black and white cat). Riding here, you may spot a real-life post van beetling along to the isolated farmhouses. But, by and large, you'll have only sheep, birds and the babbling River Sprint for company – even if you're not there just as day is dawning.

While the Lake District gets jammed with tourists, the only hold-up you're likely to encounter in Longsleddale is a flock of sheep being herded by a farmer and their black and white dog. It can feel like you're in an Arcadian idyll, with stunning, soaring views of fells on all sides. Longsleddale provides dramatic Lakeland scenery without the grind of the steeper climbs, and a rural beauty largely untouched by the modern world.

This route is an out-and-back amble from Kendal railway station that could easily be tackled in a morning or afternoon. However, it does link into more challenging gravel and mountain biking routes over the Gatescarth Pass to Haweswater, or a fairly steep but short hike-a-bike over Cocklaw Fell into Kentmere Valley for a return leg. There are pubs and cafés in Staveley, plus a station if you want to take the train back.

Most of the ride described here is a gentle roller coaster that gradually climbs to around 189 metres at the tiny hamlet of Sadgill, the furthest point that can be reached on tarmac. It's a nice ride down the other side of the valley on bridleways but you can retrace your route on road if it's too muddy or your bike isn't suitable.