

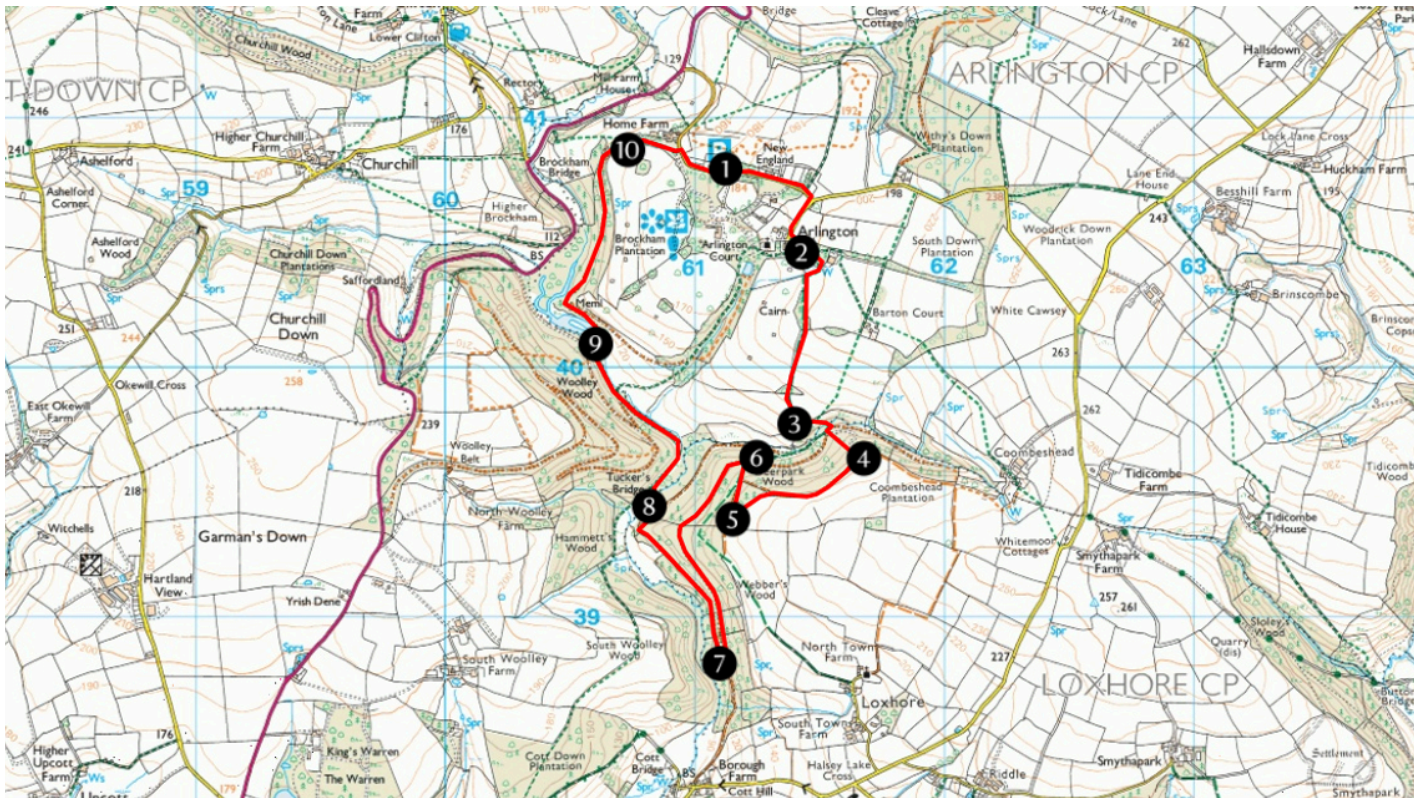
DEVON

Arlington cycle - Deer park and Old Lake loop, 7km

This mountain-bike route shows off the best of the estate, starting from the main car park and fully exploring Deer Park Wood before crossing Tucker's Bridge, tracing the River Yeo all the way to the Old Lake and looping back along Monkey Puzzle Avenue.

i Please note

This route includes sections on minor roads at the user's own risk.



Information

Address: Arlington, near Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 4LP

Activity: Cycling

Challenging

Not suitable for dogs

Full trail: Miles: 4.5 (km: 7.2)

Duration: 45 mins

Total stages: 10

Start point: Arlington Court car park, grid ref: SS611408

1. From the visitor's car park, opposite the main entrance to the estate, turn left and ride along the quiet country road, passing several houses and cottages. Reaching a junction, turn right along the cul-de-sac, following a fingerpost pointing towards Arlington. Cycle along the narrow lane, ignore a turning right (which leads to St James's Church), arc left around the bend and pedal past the back of the Carriage Museum. Emerging at a junction, ignore the lane leading right and continue straight, passing the Sawmill building (now an National Trust rangers' base) and small car park on your left.
2. Turn right opposite the sawmill building, following a fingerpost for Deer Park Wood. Cycle through a small copse of trees, passing a pretty cottage on your right. Go through a wide wooden gate, turn right and ride down a track beside a field. At the bottom, follow the waymarked route left, going through another gate and pedalling along a gravel bridleway. After a short climb, pass a turning on the right for the Jubilee Cairn, but continue through trees to the crest of the hill and then enjoy a swooping descent along thin gravel trail (please be mindful of walkers, runners and riders going in the opposite direction).
3. At the bottom, go past a footpath leading left and follow the trail as it arcs left and goes up a small pinch climb before rolling down a steep descent, elbowing right and crossing a stream to enter Deer Park Wood. When you meet a major junction, ignore first left turn (signed to Combeshead), go straight across and then take the second left, following a fingerpost indicating a 'Permissive bridleway (circular route)'. Get into a low gear here, and grit your teeth, because the climb is steep and challenging, but thankfully relatively short. (If you'd rather avoid this vertiginous climb, go straight across the junction, along the track that rises slightly more gently,

and rejoin the route a point 6 – but you will miss out on some lovely singletrack and a cracking descent.)

4. At the top of the breathtaking ascent you meet a fingerpost for the permissive bridleway. Turn right here and ride along the broad track, through wild garlic and bluebells in spring. When the track starts to descend, look out for a smaller trail forking left and take this through the trees, with a field on your left. Keep left, riding along a fantastic flowy section of singletrack trail until you meet a wider track.
5. Turn right here and enjoy a fast descent along a good broad track that drops into the heart of Deer Park Wood. Pass a fingerpost and continue straight, following the arm pointing down the steep descent towards Arlington.
6. When you meet a crossways, turn acute left and follow the fingerpost pointing towards Loxhore Cott. Enjoy a long flowing descent along a wide track. Ignore an acute left turn and continue to the bottom, where there's a T-junction.
7. Hook sharp right here and cycle with the sound of the River Yeo flowing to your left. The water is often visible through the trees as you ride along this relatively level track, which leads to a junction beside Tucker's Bridge.
8. Turn left here and cross the Yeo. On the far side of the bridge, bear right and ride with the rushing river on your right and the trees of Woolley Wood rising up the hill on your left. Continue cycling along the wide track, going past Smallacombe Bridge until you reach the Lake.
9. Follow the main track as it arcs right, crosses the dam, goes past a sculpture of a wooden horse and then elbows left, tracing the water's edge. Ride past a large stone urn (a memorial to Miss Rosalie Chichester, who donated the estate to the National Trust) and start to ascend away from the water. Pass a turning for the Hide (where birdwatchers observe Arlington's famous herons). Ignore a right turn leading to the Wilderness, and keep climbing the main track, going past a turning on the left, which offers runners and walkers an alternative (steep) route back to the house.
10. Pass a map of the estate, go through wide wooden gate and continue along the now level track, which is lined with spiky monkey-puzzle trees, keeping to the left. Turn left through a gate, with posts topped by stone herons holding eels in their beaks (an emblem of Arlington). The car park is 50 metres up the road on the right (but you can also access it via a cur-through trail leading through a gate almost directly opposite the heron gate).

End point: Arlington Court car park, grid ref: SS611408
