

My Favourite Place by Bike: Cramond, Edinburgh (OS NT275735)

Why it's my favourite place by bike... From central Edinburgh I cycle along the Goldenacre Path, through the old railway tunnel under Trinity Road with all its drips and echoes, to arrive on McKelvie Parade on the Forth, right at the water's edge (when the tide's in!).

Then, cycling east along past Granton Harbour, I have to 'tackle' West Harbour Road. In the past, it was full of potholes and lined with decaying buildings, but at least it was pretty empty apart from the occasional lorry thundering along, necessitating careful judgement (and even dismounting) to avoid danger from drivers who thought the road was all their own! Nowadays, the traffic can be very heavy, and still treacherous in a few places, though generally much safer. Best of all, the cyclist leaves it for the esplanade along the Forth at a much earlier point than before, enjoying two miles of next-to-sea cycling - though watch out for the sharp little pieces of shell left by seabirds, which have learnt to whack them open on the tarmac!

During the working day, there are few people about, although the esplanade becomes more populated towards Cramond, with its big car park nearby. To the right is the Firth of Forth with the Kingdom of Fife beyond, and to the left, great sweeps of grass and views up to the grand houses set among woods. Nearing Cramond, especially on Sunday afternoons, it can get very crowded with walkers and runners, children on tricycles and scooters, skateboarders and rollerskaters, not to mention dogs – the cyclist has to weave in and out with some care.

At Cramond itself, cyclists can find every facility for a pleasant stop, with refreshments indoors and out (there's almost always an ice-cream van!), and places to sit. You can look down the causeway to Cramond Island, and walk there at low tide. And for the historically-minded, there's the Roman archaeology, the ancient church, and the various literary associations of Cramond on which to ponder.

The river Almond meets the Forth here, with ducks and swans congregating at its mouth. All summer, boats are moored a little way upstream. A few years ago a Roman sculpture, now known as the Cramond Lioness (now in the Museum of Scotland) was found in the river here. Rather more recently, the sculptor Ronald Rae created his Cramond Fish, which sits beached by the waterfront.

