

Spokes competition 2015, Entry 28

Union Canal to Malleny Garden

2. Who is it suitable for? [it doesn't need to suit everyone] circle all that apply...

Families with young children / Experienced cyclists / Novice cyclists / Other – specify...

3. Where is the route located? circle all that apply ...

Ed central / Ed north / Ed south / Ed east / Ed west / East Lothian / Midlothian / West Lothian

4. Brief description of route

a. Start point... Union Canal, Fountainbridge b. End point (or circular)... Malleny Garden, Balerno

c. Brief description...

The route begins on the Union Canal which can be found in the Fountainbridge area of Edinburgh. Once on the canal you have the delight of a traffic-free towpath. After about 2 miles you will cross the Slateford Aqueduct. Shortly after this there will be a National Cycle Route 75 sign pointing to a path on the right. All you have to do is follow these signs to reach Balerno. The route proceeds along the Water of Leith Walkway, ending at Bridge Road in Balerno, a village located about 8 miles south of Edinburgh. This entire route is traffic-free, but you can continue 2 minutes on the road to reach the centre of Balerno and Malleny Garden. Turn left onto Bridge Road where you will soon see a sign post for the gardens.

5. Any interesting / useful / beautiful features / facilities en route ...

Union Canal. A green and peaceful corridor within the city, flat and traffic-free.

Water of Leith Walkway. Most of the route travels alongside this gently flowing water. There is a chance to spot wildlife. If you are lucky you might see deer, heron, badger and kingfisher.

Colinton has an old railway tunnel to cycle through and Spylaw Park is a nice spot to take a break.

Main Street in Balerno is a pretty little street that it curves uphill and is lined with attractive stone buildings and bright flower boxes.

Malleny Garden (admission charge) is in the care of the National Trust. The gardens are small, but have beautiful displays and you could end your ride with a picnic in the gardens. An interesting fact is that spring arrives up to 10 days later here than it does in the centre of Edinburgh. This is because the garden is north-facing and has an altitude of 170m.

6. Why is this a favourite route of yours? [This question is very important in the judging. You can just write one or two sentences or up to 300 words maximum].

A quick escape from the city

This route is ideal to get a fill of fresh air, peace and nature without having to travel too far from the city centre. Cycling alongside the Water of Leith provides a constant soundtrack of gently flowing water, sure to make you feel calm and relaxed.

Much of the route follows a disused railway which operated until 1967 with the most exciting legacy being the tunnel at Colinton. It follows a curve and you can admire the thousands of neat bricks used to line the inside.

Malleny Garden is a perfect way to end the ride as it gives you a chance to get out the saddle and take a stroll. The gardens have many interesting features, including clipped yew trees planted in the 17th century, Victorian glasshouses and the largest rose collection in Scotland.

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[NB – we said people could submit 'one or two' photos – he sent 3]

