

IT'S NOT ABOUT HOW FAR I CYCLE

Joel Emonson



In 2019, with the FIFA Women's World Cup in France and both the Women's and Men's Ashes cricket series in England, it made sense for Joel to combine attending these sporting events with a five-month bicycle tour. He had some set dates where he needed to be, but for the rest, he made up the route as he went.

Joel spent time cycling as many rail trails and canal towpaths as he could in Spain, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the UK. He also visited heritage sites, including numerous castles, battlefields, churches and a wide range of museums.

Travelling for months outdoors meant dealing with a range of weather, from the hottest day ever in France to rainy days in Spain to freezing summer days in Scotland.

He stayed with many helpful people but also camped in unusual places, from abandoned buildings to sporting fields to sneakily camping beside castles.

While on this journey he dealt with many issues, including bags going missing, shoes falling apart and parts of his bicycle randomly breaking.



Devon

After a six-hour crossing of the English Channel, the ferry arrives into overcast dull-looking Plymouth. As I make my way out of the terminal, an old man with a white beard and a bicycle asks me if I'm Joel. I say yes, and he introduces himself as Sid, my Warmshower host in Plymouth and says, 'follow me'.

He soon outpaces me up a hill to his home. So many Warmshower hosts live up a hill.

It's strange suddenly talking freely in English, but I'm often replying in French to Sid's questions as it has become a habit even when people speak to me in English.

Sid walks up to a nearby high point of Plymouth every day, so I join him in the morning.

Once we reach the top of this small grass-top hill surrounded by houses, Sid explains how there used to be battery guns stationed here from the Napoleonic Wars until the end of the Second World War. Now only the bricks and stone foundations are left, with a few information panels around. From this height, the numerous surrounding houses all look the same. Sid explains that because Plymouth was bombed during the Second World War, most buildings are from after then. He also tells me we can see Cornwall to the west, a place I thought about visiting but probably won't.

My first full day in Plymouth is about getting my bicycle and body serviced, along with exploring the city.

A few days ago, I booked a service with Evans Cycles because my bicycle hasn't been looked at since leaving Australia. Along with a general service, I'm told it will need a new brake cable and a new chain, so I will leave it here all day.

My right knee is still sore from my fall in Torino two weeks ago, so I have found an osteopath. He finds my ligaments are still swollen but thankfully no significant damage. He recommends getting the swelling down using Voltaren and ice.

Today Australia is playing England in the second Men's Cricket World Cup semi-final, so I'm searching for a transistor radio to listen to today's cricket and the six Ashes test matches coming up over the next two months. I could just use an app on my iPhone, but this will require me to get a SIM card, which will drain its battery, so a separate radio is preferred. It will also allow me to see what British radio is like.

I'm not having any luck finding one in the various electronic stores. So without a radio, throughout the day, I'm ducking into pubs to check the cricket score as Australia is batting first.

Plymouth's focus is its harbour, as many people immigrated from here to

various places, including Australia. A few plaques on a stone wall refer to where people migrated to, including one for the Cornish part of South Australia, where I briefly lived a few years ago.

The most famous departure was the Mayflower to North America, so where these pilgrims left from is called the Mayflower Steps. However, I can't see anything because they are being refurbished in preparation for the 400th anniversary in 2020.



Old railway office is now a tourist office

Nearby is a four storey red-bricked building with the *London-South-Western Railway Parcel Office* name still on the outside in block letters. Plymouth's tourist information centre is on the bottom floor of this former railway building, while above is a museum focusing on the journey the Mayflower Pilgrims took. On three levels are stories of the people who migrated, why they chose to leave and the varying success of those who settled in North America. There are also items on display, including a model of the Mayflower sailing ship.

Around from this harbour, is a grass-covered headland with plenty of people out enjoying this cooler day than I'm used to.

Late in the afternoon, after randomly walking into a store called Argos, I have found a digital USB charging transistor radio with the help of a friendly staff member. However, instead of having stock on display, they just have lists of available items. You order the item, and it magically appears from the back, ten minutes later.

Throughout the day, it has been strange walking past shops that appear more franchised than France, with many selling cheap junk. Maybe because I can now read shop signs, I know what each one is selling compared to Europe, where sometimes I had no idea.

As for food, bakeries are more like Australia, with pasties and meat pies now available, while the more chocolate-based items have decreased, along with the mini pizza buns I was enjoying.

There is also less stone fruit available, and nearly all fruit in supermarkets is sold in sealed plastic bags, with half a dozen pieces often in each bag. So it's hard to get just a single piece of fruit. It also generates a lot more plastic waste. Even more annoyingly, these plastic containers aren't resealable, which means raspberries and blueberries spill easily. Thankfully, I have my Tupperware container for storing berries.



Fruit is now sold in plastic and so containers aren't resealable

While walking to collect my bicycle, I listen as England comfortably chase down Australia's total of 223. So England will now play New Zealand in the Men's Cricket World Cup Final in a few days.

It's been strange today cycling back on the left side of the road. I have gone to the right side a few times, but a more common occurrence is looking the wrong way when crossing the road or at an intersection. From previous experience in a few days, I should get used to being back on the left.

Compared to France, there appears to be less cycling infrastructure, especially bicycle lanes, and fewer cyclists.

In the evening, back at Sid's place, I spend some time working out a plan on how I will cycle to Taunton in time for the start of the Women's Test in six days. With Dartmoor National Park nearby, most of my planning involves finding a route through the park while still cycling rail trails where I can.

In the morning, after another walk with Sid up to the same hill, I will leave Plymouth by following Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 27.

In 2013 I was pleasantly surprised to discover the National Cycle Network with hundreds of numbered routes criss-crossing the country. I particularly enjoyed National Cycle Route 4 along the Kennet and Avon Canal between the River Thames and Bath, along with Route 8 through the Brecon National Park north of Cardiff.

This is the main cycling reason for returning to the UK, especially since most of these routes involve rail trails or towpaths beside canals. If there are gaps, often these signed cycle routes will take quiet roads.

I still have a National Cycle Network paper map of the UK at home, which helpfully shows sections that include off-road paths like rail trails and canal towpaths. It was useful for developing route ideas, especially in Scotland. I'm assuming more cycling routes have been developed since 2013, so looking online at the cycle network has also been useful.

Navigating the National Cycle Network is easy because these routes are well signed with white numbers on a small red square on a larger blue background. Often at junctions and in towns, there will be more prominent signs with

distance markers to the next town. Helpfully sometimes tourist offices will have brochures on specific cycle routes.

The lower the number, usually the longer the route is. For example, Route Two follows the southern coastline, while Route One follows the east coast all the way to the top of Scotland. Often a route with more digits will relate to a route with fewer digits nearby, sometimes as a loop route. For example, route 339 is a loop of route 33.



One of four types of mileposts

It's nostalgic seeing these National Cycle Network signs again, especially one of the four types of artistically designed mile marker posts, which I recall from 2013. Apparently, there are just 1,000 of these throughout the UK. Each one is uniquely shaped, coloured, and designed for that specific location as direction and distance information is on them.

After crossing the River Plym on an old rail bridge, National Cycle Route 27 initially follows the shoreline of the currently broad Plym. As the river narrows, this route becomes a rail trail named after Devon local Francis Drake. For a short time beside this trail is a tourist railway which only operates on weekends. It This trail is in good condition, with a few viaducts to cycle on as I'm passing through a mixture of forests and open treeless landscapes.

Unfortunately, this route leaves the rail right of way a few times. Even then, I soon find an even older horse-drawn tramway to follow, which still has stone sleepers in the ground. The downside is that there are numerous wooden gates to open with a slide latch, as stock are on this part of the trail.

From Yelverton, I could head directly east into the Dartmoor National Park, but with the rail trail existing for four more miles north of here, I will cycle a bit further.



Gates to open on this trail which passes the remains of a tramway

It takes a while to actually be back on the rail right of way. Once I'm back on the trail, a new looking white bridge soon appears. It's located much lower than a train could get down to, while cement block remains are next to the trail. As I cross this bridge and head up a short section, an information panel explains that the bridge was demolished when the railway line closed in the 1960s, so a new bridge was opened in 2012 for rail trail users. Not long after going through a former rail tunnel, I will turn around because from here, the cycle route isn't on the rail right of way for another ten miles.



A new bridge built for rail trail

Once back at Yelverton, after visiting a familiar green Co-op grocery store, I will be heading into Dartmoor National Park. After some quiet roads, I'm near a reservoir, where I join a former rail right of way, which climbs up to Princetown, the highest town in the park.

Initially this trail has been fenced with a few wooden pine gates to open with a sliding metal hatch, while some bridges have been converted for non-motorised traffic to cross over roads. There are mile markers on this trail, but it's a rough track with the surface unimproved from when rails were removed.

Not sure why it hasn't been improved for cycling because as it becomes tree and fence less, it's a gradual climb with decent views of the surrounding rocky landscape. Despite the bumpy surface, the cold wind and the sun coming and going behind clouds, it's still an enjoyable ride.



At the start this rail trail is fenced, before it becomes an open unimproved surface to cycle

Along the way, a few mountain bikers pass me heading downhill, while there are many hikers with backpacks, including a few teenagers who aren't looking that thrilled to be here. As it's looping around a hill, occasionally, I can see where I have come from.

Today has taken a bit longer than expected, so I have just made it to Princetown before the national park visitor centre closes at 5 pm. After learning more about the park, instead of continuing on further tonight, I will stop here, enabling me to enjoy it more tomorrow. Since I'm in a national park, I will respect the no wild

camping rules, so I will have to find a place to stay.

Princetown is a small town, so there are only a few options. I could pay £8 50 to camp behind a pub in a grass paddock, or I could stay at a backpackers behind a café for £13 50. If I'm going to pay for accommodation, I prefer to sleep indoors with a bed and a kitchen, rather than in a tent. So it's an easy decision to go with the warmer backpackers.

As the pound is roughly worth 50 cents Australian, I just double everything when working out prices, so \$25 to sleep inside is fine by me. With only an elderly couple staying in another room, I'm able to relax here, cook a nice meal and watch the Federer-Nadal Wimbledon semi-final on the BBC.

The elderly couple from Plymouth are looking at hiking in Dartmoor for five days, having turned back previously due to heavy rain. It appears many people come to Dartmoor to go walking, so I'm wondering what I will see from my bicycle tomorrow.

Before leaving Princetown in the morning, I will visit the prison museum on the edge of town as one of the maximum-security prisons of the UK is based here. As I cycle to the museum, the entrance to a collection of stone buildings must be the prison. The museum is in a similar style of building.

Inside are rooms full of information, pictures and objects. This prison was first built to house French prisoners during the Napoleonic Wars in 1809 and then housed American prisoners from The War of 1812 before eventually becoming a prison for British criminals. After telling the story of the establishment of the prison, the museum has examples of general prison life, including talking about the attached farm, while there are a few escape stories over the years.

As I begin my ride into Dartmoor National Park, it's supposed to be a sunny day, but it's cold and overcast, despite being predicted to be above 20 degrees. I don't have a plan except to just cycle in an easterly direction. If I learn of anything interesting, I will change my route.

It looks like I'm riding in the Western District of Victoria with stone fences, small farms, and numerous farm animals. Along the way are a few popular small tourist villages with souvenir shops and restaurants. Despite the weather, people appear to be enjoying themselves, with plenty going for short walks.



Stone bridges in Dartmoor National Park

The actual cycling is mainly on narrow hedgerow roads, where I'm going up and down numerous small hills. Sometimes if cars meet, they have to reverse as the roads are so narrow.

After a steep climb, as I make my way out of the national park, suddenly the landscape becomes open and treeless, with many small scenic rocky hills. Numerous people are exploring them, while seemingly wild horses are feeding around them. So I randomly stop near a hill.

The top of this rocky hill provides a 360-degree view, including the English Channel in the distance. Once back on my bicycle, as I begin descending, I pass more rocky hills, including one that reminds me of Pride Rock from the Lion King.



One of the few rocky hills

After hearing on my radio that Simona Halep has comfortably beaten Serena Williams in the Wimbledon singles final, I depart the small town of Bovey Tracey to join a rail trail. It soon runs out despite this former railway line having continued north.

Instead, I'm trying to go around the eastern side of Dartmoor National Park by following the Dartmoor Way signed cycle route. Occasionally I'm still seeing the remains of this former rail line, in particular a few stone bridges. There are a couple of short sections of rail trail, but also short sharp hills to negotiate and narrow roads, with cars often forced to reverse.



Dartmoor Way cycle route

While snacking in the town of Lustleigh, the locals learn I'm Australian, so a man asks me who I will be supporting in the cricket tomorrow. I'm unsure because I don't have personal animosity to either nation. I know an English win will be good for the locals and raise the profile of cricket here, which is less than what I'm used to in Australia. However, the underdog story of New Zealand is also compelling.

After negotiating all these short sharp hills by the time I make Okehampton, it feels like it has been a long day. This could be because I'm now cycling miles rather than kilometres, so the distance covered feels less impressive and takes longer. After more than three months of cycling, I'm used to knowing that x number of kilometres should take me a certain amount of time. Now I have to recalibrate my estimations for miles. If it's ten kilometres to the next town, I know it's probably less than an hour ride, but ten miles will be closer to an hour and a half.

I will get use to miles but I can't get my head around measuring height in feet

especially using the gradient feature on Maps.me. It just sounds so much higher and doesn't relate to miles at all.

Okehampton still has a passenger rail service, while a short tourist line travels south in the other direction.



Meldon Viaduct

A paved cycle path follows this tourist line before eventually becoming a paved rail trail just before the high steel Meldon Viaduct.

Randomly in the middle of nowhere, a paper sign is saying the trail is closed ahead due to private property. To get through, I have to go around on a long detour. However, I will keep going on this trail to see what the actual situation is.



A random short rough section

As I meet an unlocked gate, ahead is an undeveloped rocky surface. Since no one is around, I open the gate and go through. After like 200 metres, there is another gate, and as I go under a cement road bridge, the paved rail trail returns. I have no idea why this situation exists because in the morning, plenty of cyclists and walkers were ignoring the signs as well.

Further on is a smaller viaduct, and just after that, there is a flat bench seat near a cement shed presumably left over from the railway. As it's now dusk, this will do as a place to cook dinner while watching a red sunset. With no one else around, I set my tent up beside the rail trail.



Camping beside the rail trail

I wake up to a busy trail this Sunday, with people cycling, running or walking their dogs. I will leave my bicycle bags in the cement shed because there is only a short section south to Lydford to finish this rail trail.

It runs out just before this small town, which has a small abandoned castle.

If I continued heading south, I would eventually connect with the route I left to head into Dartmoor National Park, but this section is not a rail trail despite a former rail line having existed. There is a gorge south of Lydford, but it isn't open for another hour, so I will return north, collecting my bags on the way.

Back in Okehampton, the rail station is now busy with a footbridge separating two bricked station buildings. Inside is an informative rail museum that helps explain where railway lines went in the southwest of England. An excellent map shows many rail lines that no longer exist as there is now only one main line with just a few branch lines. Many of these former rail lines are now rail trails.

Many railway lines in the UK closed in the 1960s after a government report by Dr Beeching recommended a third of them should close. Many of the 6,000 miles closed by the Beeching Cuts have been made into rail trails.

Nearby is the small Okehampton Castle, which is managed by English Heritage. It doesn't look worth paying to enter, especially as I'm now distracted by listening to the Men's Cricket World Cup Final, taking away my focus on anything else today. I'm also trying to keep up with the men's singles tennis at Wimbledon.

National Cycle Route 27 is called the Coast to Coast route because it connects Plymouth on the English Channel to Ilfracombe on the north coast of Devon opposite Wales. There are rail trails at both ends, but in between are some hills, especially a steep one out of Okehampton. After chatting to a 75-year-old touring cyclist, I leave him behind as he says he will walk the whole hill. I end up walking the last bit as it's at 17% gradient.

Until joining another rail trail, the rest of this route involves smaller hills. With narrow roads where the vegetation is close to the road, I have to get right off the road a few times due to tractors carting trailers full of hay coming towards me.

In the small town of Sheepwash, the local church has signs saying cyclists are welcome to have a picnic in the garden and a toilet is available. All because I'm on a cycle route.



Cyclist welcome in Sheepwash



It appears a train could still arrive at these stations

As I join a rail trail, the sun is out, and the trail is in good condition, so it's an enjoyable ride as I pass a few sculptures, and old railway stations which are now restaurants. Unlike in Spain and France, here most stations have kept railway infrastructure like seats, signals and railway gates, so it looks like a train could arrive at any time.

I'm soon following the old Rolle Canal, which became obsolete when the railway came through but still today, a stone aqueduct is visible from the trail. After crossing the River Torridge a few times on scenic former curvy rail bridges, the river begins to widen. So for a while, the rail trail follows the eastern riverbank through a couple more refurbished stations.



Crossing the River Torridge, before cycling beside it

As the cricket becomes a close game, I'm hoping to find somewhere to watch the last ten overs. Thankfully, North Devon Cricket Club is right next to the rail trail, located scenically beside the river's mouth.

A local T20 tournament is finishing, but I head inside the thatched straw roof and white clubhouse to watch on television the incredible finish in the World Cup Final.

I can't do the match justice, so I recommend watching highlights on YouTube or reading Geoff Lemon's book *The Comeback Summer*.

Anyway, from what I see, England is lucky to force a tied match with an incredible final over, including an unintentional, fortunate deflection off the bat of Ben Stokes from a fielder's throw, which runs to the boundary for four. For

the final ball in the subsequent Super Over, New Zealand needs two runs to win. Martin Guptill hits the ball and attempts to run the two required, but is run out going for the win. Scores are level again, which means England has won because of an obscure rule where the team that hits more boundaries in the match wins.

Throughout the clubhouse the locals are celebrating and singing “*crickets coming home*”. I’m hoping the cricket I will be attending will be just as dramatic.

As the crowd disperses, a red sunset is visible over the oval and river mouth out to the sea behind it, while this also provides a reflective glow on the clubhouse windows.

This cricket ground will do as a stealth camp, but I will temporarily leave before the last person to avoid making the locals suspicious.

After about half an hour of sitting on a beach, I return to the now quiet cricket ground, where a few marquees have been left set up. They are a perfect space to sleep under, and will allow me to be out of sight of nearby houses.



Sunset at North Devon Cricket Club

From North Devon Cricket Club, the rail trail follows the shoreline of the River Taw through to the town of Barnstaple. After heading south of town to cross the river on a former rail bridge, I turn around and head north, following the Taw by using a previous rail route into the town centre. I’m told that Barnstaple once had five railway lines spreading out from town, and there were nearly as many stations. Now there is only one passenger service, and sadly the scenic curved rail bridge over the Taw is long gone. At least there is still a nice looking old stone road bridge.

This scenic paved rail trail leaves Barnstaple by continuing beside the Taw for about three miles before heading away from the river to the town of Braunton, which feels more like a beach village with holidaymakers. Near where the long-gone railway station was, is a nature visitor centre, while across the road is the visitor information centre.



Braunton Museum

This centre is also a museum, where I learn that sandy beaches nearby were where Americans trained for the D-Day landings as they are apparently similar to Utah and Omaha beaches in Normandy. During my 2013 ride, I visited many D-Day landing sites in Normandy, so I am familiar with them.

I end up spending half an hour chatting to a man at the museum as he explains the history of Americans training here. Specific training objects like bunkers and loading ramps are still there, but mainly covered in sand. It's always enjoyable learning something new.

Since there is a gap between rail trails, I make my way via a beach to Croyde, where there are surfers and plenty of people sunbaking on actual sand. However, as the man in the visitor centre had explained, there isn't a road between all the beaches, so I will begin climbing up to join the northern part of the rail trail.



Style of houses in this region

Along the way, I'm on narrow hedgerow roads and passing picturesque houses with thatched rooftops. I'm also coming across recycling trucks going around picking up recycling and sorting by hand into individual bins in the back of the vehicle. In Australia, recycling typically goes in one bin together and is sorted later.

After climbing, I'm able to enjoy another paved rail trail which rolls nearly all the way down to Ilfracombe, another tourist town where the railway line ended until 1970. The former station was high above the town, and is now a factory. I only know where the station was because an information panel tells me about the railway lines history.

As I descend into this unremarkable town, it's busy with holidaymakers despite the ugly beaches. One is only accessible by man-made tunnels, but it's rocky and ugly, so not sure what the attraction is, especially as I have to pay to visit it.



Tunnels lead to ugly rocky beaches

From here, National Cycle Route 27 ends and route 51 starts heading east, but unlike 27, which was mainly on rail trails, 51 uses secondary roads, which appear to involve a lot more climbing.

I have heard from fellow cyclists that the southwest is a hilly part of England. This afternoon, I can confirm for Devon at least this is true. All afternoon involves numerous short steep up and down sections often descending to rivers before then climbing straight up again, without a break of any flat cycling. It is just draining and hard on my knees.

I'm covering less distance than expected, especially compared to much more mountainous Spain and France, where it was generally longer gradual climbs so I could get in more of a rhythm, therefore less stress on the knees. Thankfully, the weather is delightful, mid-twenties with little wind to worry about.

My day ends at the village of Parracombe because it has a small park with a toilet block with picnic tables, but I can't find the general store which is supposed to be here.

While relaxing after dinner, a woman comes over and locks the toilet, but doesn't comment on me clearly cooking dinner here. This locked toilet is annoying as one of the reasons for stopping here was to have a toilet in the morning for my regular morning poo. So in the morning, when no one shows up to unlock the toilet, I find a pile of old mowed grass under a tree to cover my deposit. Unlike last year I'm not carrying a mini shovel to dig a hole.

Nearby a short one mile of narrow-gauge railway has been rebuilt around the restored Woody Bay station. It's nice to go inside the cafe attached, and to learn a little more about the rail line that once went between Barnstaple and Lynmouth. Hopefully, one day a longer tourist line will be rebuilt on this former railway line. Having cycled in this landscape, I can understand why only a narrow-gauge railway line came to this region.



Restored Woody Bay Station

Suddenly just before Lynmouth, there is a 25% road to descend. So I hold tight onto my brakes for this short, fast descent into a seaside fishing village with plenty of visitors, and fish and chip shops. The tide is currently way out, leaving many boats high and dry.

It has been hard finding drinking fountains in England. Thankfully Lynmouth has one near the toilets. Around the corner is a national park visitor centre where I learn of a walking track up the hill.



Coastal Lynmouth

Lynmouth is a twin town with Lynton located at the top of the steep hill I just rode down so much so that there is a cliff railway between the two.

This double-track railway works using gravity, where one carriage's weight going downhill lifts the other up. It's a scenic ride as I look back at a scenic open bay on this beautiful sunny day as this green carriage goes under a couple of bridges.



Cliff Railway



Valley of Rocks Walk

From Lynton, there is the Valley of Rocks walk. After walking on a bridge over the cliff railway, I'm walking on the edge of a cliff with a clear blue sea on one side and rock formations on the other, with goats sunbaking on the rocks. This is the highlight of the day, especially as I had no idea about it.

As I loop around on the way back to town, I pass a scenic cricket village ground in one of the few flat areas. It's enchanting seeing so many scenic village cricket grounds in England.



Scenic village cricket ground, while I'm soon on a bridle path

Back on my bicycle, I'm trying to avoid a straight up and down road climb by following the East Lyn River using a bridle path. Initially, it's enjoyable beside the river, but unfortunately, the track soon becomes rough. Eventually walking my bicycle becomes the only option, especially with some minor uphill sections at the end. Fortunately, it's only just over a mile of walking. When I meet the road, a sign tells me that I have missed a 25% climb.

Thankfully, the road follows the East Lyn River for a while out of Devon into Somerset, but occasionally there are still some short, steep climbs, particularly for the final climb before Porlock. However, this allows a decent descent on the scenic, quiet Toll Road with only one passing car and a few cyclists.

After more hilly cycling, I'm in the busy beachside tourist town of Minehead with an unremarkable stony beach. There is a free small museum as part of the tourist office, while a more extensive, well maintained railway station is across the road. It closed in 1970 but then became part of a tourist train line in 1979. There are a few services a day, with most being steam trains.



Minehead Railway Station

After looking around Minehead, I can't find any suitable places to camp, so I will cycle to the nearby town of Dunster.

It's quieter here with a castle I can't access dominating this town. There are a few options to wild camp, including either at the more open cricket ground or in a nearby enclosed public playground. Since no one shows up while I cook dinner in the park, I will camp here using play equipment to keep my bicycle and bags sheltered from the morning dew.

West Somerset Railway operates the longest tourist line in the UK from Minehead to Bishops Lydeard near Taunton. Since there are no quiet road options and I'm feeling in need of a rest from cycling, I will take the opportunity to ride the train.

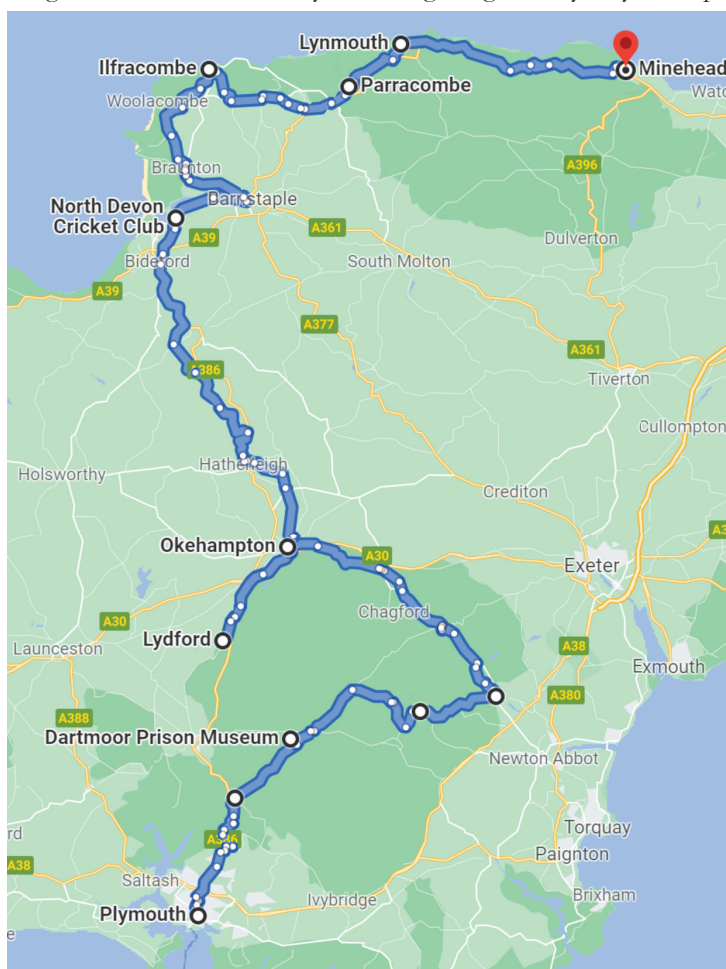


Bishops Lydeard Railway Station

They have informative museums at the stations at both ends of the line, and from the train it appears there are also some scenic stations along the way. However, the actual ride is nothing special as the landscape is unremarkable apart from a pleasant view at the start when the rail line is beside the ocean.

The end of the tourist line is for England, at least in the middle of nowhere near some factories. This rail line is still connected to the mainline, but there is a gap to the nearest operating railway station, so I will have to cycle the short distance to Taunton.

Not long into the ride, I suddenly hear a big bang and my bicycle stops.



Plymouth to Minehead (Google Maps)