

## 4. GREENHILLSTAIRS

Distance: 8 miles

Leave Moffat on the A701, signposted to Edinburgh. The road climbs steadily up the sides of the Annan Water Valley. It carries some heavy traffic, but experienced cyclists should not find this intimidating, for the heavy traffic is mixed with domestic vehicles and slow-moving agricultural equipment. The views to the Moffat hills are superb.

At the first opportunity, turn left on to the B719. The road continues to climb for another mile, before descending to the valley of the Evan Water which carries both the main west coast railway line and the busy A74(M). There is an expansive view of the valley from a lay-by. It is difficult to imagine now, as electrically powered locomotives pull fully laden expresses up the gradient to Beattock Summit at speeds approaching 100 m.p.h. that, not so many years ago, the largest of steam locomotives, dropping sand on the rails all the way, laboured to maintain momentum even with the aid of the banking engines kept at Beattock Depot for that purpose alone.

Cross the motorway and then turn left. Cycle lanes are marked on this road as it gradually descends the valley between the motorway and the railway, neither of which is intrusive.

Follow the cycle lanes around both roundabouts at Beattock, following signs for Moffat. After the second roundabout, turn right and follow this minor road past Barnhill Springs, to cross the Annan Water at Oakriggside. Turn left after the bridge and then left again at the T junction to return to the town.

## 5. OFF-ROAD IN AE FOREST

Distance: 7 miles, 8 miles or 17.5 miles

Most of the paths and tracks around Moffat are unsuitable for off-road cycling, but by travelling to Ae (the British village with the shortest name) the off-road enthusiast can have most of his ambitions satisfied.

Take the A701 towards Dumfries and turn right after 13 miles, signposted to Ae. Immediately after the Forestry Training Centre turn right, and then right again after 1.5 miles on to a well signposted track, leading to cycle tracks, foot paths, and a picnic area.

Forest Enterprise, who now manage the forests of this area, have thoughtfully provided a display of heavy machinery with information, and there is ample parking space at several points along the way.

The cycle routes undulate through the forest, vary in length between 7 and 17.5 miles, are well signed, and provide an expedition feeling, particularly to children.



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# TAKE 5 CYCLE RIDES AROUND MOFFAT



*Moffat is not ideally suited to cycling, for the surrounding hills are steep. However, most of the traffic is on the A74(M) motorway, and the road which parallels it is part of the National Cycling Network. Most roads carry little traffic and this selection of rides will allow the visitor to enjoy the region from the saddle. Any figures in brackets are the distances from Moffat Post Office.*

# 1. *BEECHGROVE AND OLD EDINBURGH ROAD*

Distance: 7.6 miles

This is an unclassified road which serves a scattered community in the Annan Water Valley. It is a cul-de-sac with no steep gradients, and although sometimes used by heavy agricultural vehicles, it is seldom busy.

Head north from the High Street and turn right beside Moffat Academy into Beechgrove. This soon becomes Old Edinburgh Road and was the main route to Edinburgh until the A701 was built. It was also the route taken by those visiting Hartfell Spa.

Nothing is now visible of Moffat's largest hotel, the Hydropathic, which was destroyed by fire in 1921, although you will pass Hydro Avenue on your right which once led up to the main gates.

After 3 miles you pass Granton House on your left. Once the home of the Moffat Clan, it was, until consumed by fire in August 1997, a hotel. Not far beyond Granton House, on the right, is Annan Water Hall (3.3), still a local community centre, and beside it is the sign pointing the way to the spa.

The public road ends at Ericstane (3.8), although a private road continues to Corehead, the last farm on the road. There is no alternative but to return by the same route.

# 2. *WAMPHRAY GLEN BY OLD CARLISLE ROAD*

Distance: 17.6 miles

Leave Moffat by the A708, signposted 'Selkirk' and turn right about 100 metres beyond the Fire Station, into Old Carlisle Road. This minor road undulates along the side of the Moffat Water Valley. It is seldom busy and most of the traffic is local.

The Moffat Water is crossed at Dumcrieff, once the home of John Macadam (of Tarmac fame) and the Southern Upland Way crosses the road nearby on its long route from the Irish Sea to the North Sea. Continue on this road until the turn off to Newton.

Here you should bear left (5.83). The road rises slightly to Pumplaburn Farm where you should turn left. Then turn down right to cross the Wamphray Water for the short climb to Wamphray Kirk. This typically rural Scottish church has many very grand gravestones in its grounds, and it is here that Dr. Rogerson, first physician to the Czars of Russia, is buried.

Turn right at the church and then right again to return to the main road where you should turn left. Then take the second right to go under the railway, straight on at the little crossroads, and right having crossed the motorway by a bridge.

Although this road carries some heavy traffic, it is seldom busy and there is a marked cycle lane as far as Beattock, and a cycle track around Beattock. Either follow all signs back to Moffat or, to avoid the busy A701, turn right immediately after the roundabout to the east of the motorway junction. This minor road crosses the Annan Water at Oakriggside, and if you turn left as soon as you cross the river you will return to the town by Old Carlisle Road.

# 3. *JOHNSTONEBRIDGE AND LOCHWOOD TOWER*

Distance: 22 miles

Follow route 2 to the end of paragraph 2. After 5.83 miles take the right fork, signposted Newton, and continue on this road as it first crosses the railway and then passes through the scattered community of that name. The next turn is right at the T-junction where there are the remains of an old finger post (8.91).

The road now runs parallel to the railway again until the next right turn opposite the lane to Dalmakethar (9.73). Just beyond the old smithy turn right again on to what was the old A74, now with little traffic since the building of the motorway. Cross over the motorway, and turn left (10.96) at the first minor road after the turning to the motorway services. It is possible to access the services by cycle and there is a very pleasant nature walk in the service area.

This tiny road rises steadily to meet the B7020 where you should turn right (12.16) and then left (13.86) to Lochwood. Lochwood Tower is now ruined, but from the remains and the information board, it is easy to visualise what it was like in its heyday.

Cross over the A701 and make your next turn, right, immediately beyond the little bridge over the Kinnel Water. This next section is quite exposed in windy weather, but after recrossing the river the road first rises and then descends steeply, where care is needed, to the old school at Beattock. Turn left here and follow the road back to Moffat. However if you want to avoid the busy A701 follow the instructions at the end of the previous route.