

Hever Castle Festival of Endurance

180K Cycle Sportive

The inaugural Festival of Endurance (FOE) 180K cycle sportive is a wonderful amalgam of a number of recognised local cycling route classics. The circuit takes in 13 category 5 climbs and scales a massive 2,428m of ascent. The first 12K and the last 32K follow the existing Bastion (full iron distance triathlon) 60K loop but everything else is virgin FOE territory.

On exiting Hever Castle, participants take a left turn and pass the Henry VIII pub before descending to the bus stop T-junction at the bottom of Uckfield Lane and the first of the 6 climbs. Straight into it as they say! Right at the top of the 2K hill and pass the Kentish Horse before coming to the Queen's Arms after a further 1K. A careful left here and pretty much straight to Hartfield on the Hartfield Road with a bit of undulation en route.

Pass through the village of Hartfield and continue on past Jib Jacks hill on your left heading towards Coleman's Hatch and Forest Row. At Coleman's Hatch turn left and follow the minor road up the 2nd category climb to Wych Cross. Turn left at the lights here and then after 100m turn right across the traffic and follow the A275 towards Lewis. Stunning views of the South Downs will present themselves as you crest the top of the hill (you are at your high point of the Ashdown Forest on your route South here) and you will then commence a steady and glorious descent on good roads down toward the River Ouse.

As you enter the village of Sheffield Green just after 27K turn left off the A275 and follow the minor road into the village of Fletching where you'll find your first feed station in the village hall opposite the Award Winning pub called the Griffin Inn. On exiting the high street turn right down the narrow Mill Lane for 2K (bear with this as gives you a better crossing point of the A272 in Newick), crossover the River Ouse and then turn right at the junction in the village of Newick onto Newick Hill Rd. When you get to the busy A272 turn left into the centre of the village and then turn right just before the village green down a minor road signposted to Barcombe.

At just over 40K you will come to the village of Barcombe Cross where you will turn left at the roundabout and head towards Barcombe Mills and re-cross the River Ouse. At 44K turn right onto the A26 heading towards Lewis for 1K before turning right onto Ham Kane and into the town of Ringmer. Turn right at the B2192 and travel for approx. 700m before turning right down New Rd signposted to Glynde. Pass the opera house at Glyndebourne before passing through the village and then out onto the A27 here you will turn left. Bear with this for 8K (it is the key to the South Downs section) before turning right at the first roundabout that you come to signposted to Alfriston and Seaford. The next section into Eastbourne is as good as riding gets in the UK as you gain sight of the sea and ride up and over the South Downs taking in three of your category climbs as you go. At 70K, in the South Downs Country Park Visitors Centre you will come to your second feed station.

Descend into Eastbourne and at the first set of lights turn left onto Victoria Drive and follow this for 3K before hitting the A2270 and turning left towards Polegate. Just after 84K, turn right at a set of lights and adjacent to St George's Catholic Church, onto Polegate High St. Continue over the level crossing and the right at the roundabout onto station road. After less than 100m turn left onto School Lane and then after another 100m look out for the signs for the Cuckoo Trail Cycle Path and turn right onto this on a bend in the road. Stick with this cycle path for 4K until you get to Hailsham (believe you me you

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wouldn't want to cycle down the dual carriageway which is the only other option). The path deposits you on Freshfields Close (a housing estate) and then this leads to Lindfield Drive where you take a right turn. Shortly after take a left onto Station Rd and this will take you into the middle of Hailsham where you will turn right onto the A295. Follow this north out of the town, past a Supermarket and a set of traffic lights and then turn right onto Battle Road, still the A295, just shy of 90K your halfway point!

After the first roundabout as you head out of Hailsham turn right and the road you are on becomes the A271 and is signposted to Herstmonceaux and Battle. Follow this road until just before 101K, after the village of Boreham Street, where it becomes the A269 without you deviating. Not long after this you will come to your 6th category climb bringing you p into the High Weald. Just after the village of Ninfield turn left onto the B2204, again signposted to Battle and follow this for 2K before turning right on a minor road called Powdermill Lane which will bring you into Battle from the south side. Turn left on the A2100 and then look out for your 3rd feed station which is in the Memorial Hall on the right hand side of the High Street at 110K just beyond the entrance to the Abbey (which is on your left).

As you exit Battle High Street turn left onto the A271 (towards Hailsham) and then after another 2K turn right onto the B2096 signposted towards Heathfield. 17K of glorious cycling in the High Weald and your 7th, 8th and 9th category climbs, brings you to the outskirts of Heathfield via a left turn on the A265. Approx 100 yards after this left turn and just after a petrol station on your right hand side, turn right on Newick Lane and head north towards Mayfield for 5K crossing over the River Rother en route. Climb Knowle Hill into Mayfield and then turn left at the first junction onto Stone Cross and then left at the roundabout as you join the A267 for 4K before turning right onto the A272 and heading towards Maresfield and Uckfield. At 146K cross the A26 at the roundabout taking the 2nd exit (straight on) into Maresfield Village and then head north on Straight Half Mile Rd for 2K. Turn right onto the B2026 (signposted to Hartfield) and begin your 9th category climb which will take you up onto the Ashdown Forest (eastern end this time). At the high point, just past King's Standing Car Park on your right, take the right turn signposted to Groombridge and after 400m you will come to the 4th feed station on your route at Black Hill Car Park before enjoying a long blast downhill as you exit the forest. It's not quite all plain sailing as you will have to negotiate your 11th category climb for descending down into the village of Groombridge. Groombridge Hill at 163K presents you with your stiffest and 12th category climb as you head north before regaining the A264 at the farm shop where you turn left.

Stay on the A264 for 100m before regaining the B2188 and heading downhill through the village of Fordcombe on your way to the River Medway. As you climb away from the river you meet your final short and sharp category climb before levelling out and heading into the village of Penshurst. Left in Penshurst, up a short hill and then left down Station Hill will see you onto the B2026 with a left turn and your run in back to Hever Castle. At 178K in the village of Bough Beech continue straight on at the railway bridge (don't go over it) taking the minor road signposted to Hever. At Hever Castle make sure you go back in the entrance that you came out of which is next to the church and opposite the pub.

NB. Don't forget to hand in your tracking device at the timing tent when you get back to the event village before heading off to the Car Park.

Start Time: 0700 - 0800

Cut of Time: 12 hours (must cycle at 15km/h including stops)