

Hythe & the Royal Military Canal

Enjoy a visit to the Canal and surrounding countryside

Route length: 13 miles (20.9 km)
Start point: CT215RL (Seabrook, Hythe) or CT214NT (West Hythe)
Points of interest: Royal Military Canal, Hythe, Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, Lympne Castle.

The Royal Military Canal offers a variety of cycle routes so you can choose from a 4.5 mile (7.2km), mainly off-road ride following the banks of the tranquil Royal Military Canal or extend your route to 13 miles (20.9km) taking in some of the scenery of Romney Marsh.

The canal was built as a defence against invasion during the Napoleonic Wars with France (1793 - 1815). Work started on 30 October 1804. Digging took just 22 months but the canal was not finished and ready for service until 1812. By then the French Navy had been defeated at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805) and there was no longer any threat of invasion.



As well as an important military monument, the canal is an excellent habitat for wildlife. Some plants and animals are national rarities but you are likely to see some more common species of wildlife too. During the summer months the canal comes alive with patrolling dragonflies and noisy Marsh Frogs and Kingfishers.

Hythe, one of the Cinque Ports, is a small, quaint, coastal market town. It has medieval and Georgian buildings, as well as a Saxon/Norman church on the hill and a seafront promenade. Hythe was once defended by two castles, Saltwood and Lympne, which are well worth a visit if you have time.

Another must see is the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway that opened in 1927 and is the world's smallest public railway. It runs between Hythe and Dungeness, stopping at five stations along the way. They even accommodate bikes if you fancy cycling back. If you want to pick up some fresh local produce to enjoy along the way, a Farmers' Market takes place in the Methodist Church Hall on the second and fourth Saturday of every month from 10am to noon.

From West Hythe you can either follow the route on road along quiet country lanes, providing some great views of Lympne Castle or stick to the off-road canal path to return to Hythe.

Between a line of gentle hills and the English Channel, the Romney Marsh is a hundred square miles of peaceful countryside that is a paradise for walkers, cyclists and explorers of historic towns, quaint villages, ancient churches and wild life.

Nowadays, the Marsh is a perfect place to find peace and quiet, but in days gone by its remoteness made it an attractive location for smugglers of contraband. Legends of their exploits are brought to life at festivals and country fairs at Lydd and New Romney.



This route and others are available to download for free on the Explore Kent iPhone and Android app.

With maps, points of interest and route directions, it is really easy to enjoy this route. Download it from the app store now.

