

# Strawberry Line



## The Route

**Where:** Yatton to Cheddar via Congresbury and Axbridge

**National Route:** 26

**Distance:** 9 miles one way

**Terrain:** primarily traffic free paths with short on road sections

**Public transport:** railway station at Yatton

**Bike hire:** Cheddar Cycle Store – 01934 741300

**Maps:** Strawberry Line leaflet – free from Sustrans

**OS maps:** Explorer 153/154, Landranger 172

**Tourist information:**

Cheddar Tourist Information Centre – 01934 744071

**Places to search for on Sustrans website mapping:**

Clevedon, Yatton, Axbridge, Cheddar

**Family Friendly Section: path alongside Cheddar Reservoir**

The branch line between Yatton and Cheddar was built in 1869 as part of the Great Western Railway and was known as the Strawberry Line because of its delicious cargo from the strawberry fields of Cheddar. The line was well used by passengers and to carry freight until it was closed in 1965 and since then a wealth of wildlife habitats have been allowed to flourish. Cheddar Valley Walk Society volunteers started work on converting the line to a walking and cycling route in 1983 and now it forms a 9 mile, almost traffic free route through the Nature Reserve, cider apple orchards and picturesque villages of North Somerset.



The ride begins at Yatton Station, which is well served by trains from Bristol, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare and further afield. Exit the station from Platform One and turn right. At the end of the car park you will see the artworks that mark the start of the path and it's a fairly straightforward route from here, although the track is a little rough and can be muddy after rain, but surface improvements are in the pipeline. You will ride along some raised route overlooking open landscapes and under big skies, and at the occasional fork in the path simply continue straight on. After crossing the River Yeo the path comes out onto the main A370 on the approach to Congresbury and you need to turn

left onto the main road for a few metres before using the pedestrian crossing to access the traffic free route again. If you are in need of refreshments or toilets you can continue on the main road into Congresbury but care is needed as there can be fast and heavy traffic.

Initially the path now takes you through some green and leafy woodland before you emerge into the open countryside once again, going straight on at the crossroads and passing the apple orchards. You will emerge on a quiet road taking you into Sandford, where you turn right onto the

A368 for a short distance. You can stop at the pub for refreshments or visit the Thatchers Farm Shop before pressing on over the brow of the hill and turning left back on to the traffic free path as shown by the sign.

After a pleasant stretch you will reach the old station at Winscombe which has been converted into a Millennium Green with picnic areas, a sculpture crafted from local limestone and a timeline composed of brass plaques along the old platform edge, depicting some famous historical events of the past 2,000 years. The Millennium Green has been created largely by a group of committed volunteers and a May Fair has been held there each year since its opening in May 2000.

After the old station you will come to the Shute Shelve Tunnel for which you may want to switch on your bike lights, although there is some lighting to guide you through the dark and eerie tunnel. After emerging into the sunlight again, continue a short distance to the A38 which you will need to cross with care before returning to the path and then turning right onto a quiet road heading downhill on the contraflow cycle lane.

At the bottom of the hill you turn left then right into Axbridge, avoiding the main A38, where you can enjoy the picturesque streets and visit King John's Hunting Lodge Museum or one of the many pubs and cafes. Then, heading out of Axbridge, turn right on to the last stretch of traffic free path just before the quiet road rejoins the A38, and enjoy the fine views of Cheddar Reservoir. The path winds through a housing estate before ending rather unceremoniously in an industrial estate. Visit the Cycle Store here to get any problems with your bike fixed before returning along the same route, or continue by road into the town of Cheddar with its famous Gorge and cave system, and even more famous cheese!



Cheddar Reservoir, as seen from the route