

Tamsin Grey explores a circular route around the reservoirs on the eastern side of the National Park.

Starting and finishing at the main car park at Trenchford Reservoir on the eastern edge of Dartmoor high above the Bovey Valley, this route explores one of the lesser-known areas of the National Park and offers a mix of quiet roads and off-road sections along tracks through woodland around the scenic reservoirs of Trenchford, Tottiford and Kennick. There are options to extend the route and add more challenging loops so it could be ideal if you're in a group of mixed abilities. It's also a great route for all weathers as it's more sheltered than the high moor in the wind and rain and has a number of beautiful picnic spots along the way with views out across the water.

At the start cyclists and walkers can choose separate routes around Trenchford Reservoir which later converge. The waterside footpath that leaves the car park on the left (if you are facing the Reservoir) offers a scenic walk that follows the bank in a clockwise direction until you come to the road. It gives you a great chance to see the wildlife along the water margins but is not recommended for those with young children and pushchairs due to the narrowness of the path and the proximity of deep water.

Cyclists should leave Trenchford car park by the main entrance and turn left and immediately left again along the road to Kennick and Tottiford Reservoirs. Those following the road will find themselves sweeping round over Trenchford Dam with views out across the water on the left and down to the water treatment works on the right. After you have crossed the dam continue to follow the road over the next dam between Trenchford and Tottiford Reservoirs (reservoir walkers you will join the road at this point).



Water Wheels

Tottiford is the oldest reservoir in the National Park and was built in 1861 with Kennick following in 1884 and Trenchford completing the trio in 1907. During the summer of 2010 Channel 4's Time Team spent three days with a crew of over 60 investigating a recently discovered prehistoric complex at Tottiford. The discovery of the complex, which includes a stone circle and stone rows, was announced the previous winter by Dartmoor National Park Authority following the draining of the reservoir by South West Water for maintenance. A number of trenches were opened up at strategic points over the site, various types of geophysical survey took place, old maps were looked at in detail and the former landscape setting of the site was examined. Soil samples were taken to provide important dating and environmental information. The site was also flown over and a reconstruction of how

the site might have appeared in prehistory was produced by their artist Victor Ambrus. The site was fully reinstated afterwards and reservoir water levels returned to normal.

There is a section of steep hill after the dam but it's short so keep going! Follow this quiet road through the woods to the next T-junction. Although the road is narrow there are plenty of passing places so even if you do hold up a motorist or two it won't be for long. At the next T-junction turn right - signposted Reservoirs - for the short descent to Kennick Reservoir.

The next section of the route follows the reservoir edge with beautiful views out across the water. Kennick is a popular trout fishery and is around 50 acres in size. It was one of the first venues in Europe to be stocked with rainbow trout. On the left you will see the new Anglers Lodge and during the fishing season (15 March - 31 October) you will often see people fishing

from the banks or out in boats. In late spring the opposite bank is ablaze with rhododendrons.

At the end of the reservoir you will cross another dam. It's worth pausing for a moment to admire the view out across the water. In the low light of a sunny evening the view is particularly stunning. If you look in the opposite direction down to your right you might just be able to see the top end of Tottiford. After crossing the dam there's another short steep section through trees. Pass round a couple of bends and when the road begins to flatten out again look out for a bridleway on your left. This follows a forestry track, that can be rough in places, through Clampitt Plantation to a T-junction. Directly ahead you will see a plaque marking the site of an old quaker burial ground. Family cyclists will find it easiest to turn right here and follow the track along the edge of a mixed woodland and out to the minor road. Walkers



PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN BAKER

ROUTE INFO

LENGTH: Main route 4.5 miles (7.2km)
TIME: Allow at least 2 hours
START/FINISH: Trenchford Reservoir SX804824
TERRAIN: A mixture of on and off-road. The off-road sections include unsurfaced tracks that can be rough and muddy in places although the easier option should be passable for those towing child trailers or with children in bike seats in all seasons.
MAPS: OS Explorer 110 1:25000 Torquay & Dawlish, HARVEY Dartmoor and surrounding are for Cyclists.
PUBLIC TRANSPORT: There is no public transport to this site at present. The nearest bus routes follow the main roads between Bovey Tracey and Moretonhampstead and between Exeter and Moretonhampstead.
PARKING: There is a free car park at Trenchford Reservoir.
REFRESHMENTS: There are a variety of places offering food in Bovey Tracey, Lustleigh, Moretonhampstead and Christow depending on which direction you are approaching from.
NEARBY ATTRACTIONS: Canonteign Falls to the south east of the reservoirs offers a number of scenic walks and family activities. www.canonteignfalls.co.uk.

and more adventurous cyclists have the option to turn left and explore the muddier often single track bridleways around Laployd Plantation and rejoin the main route shortly before the road.

At the road turn right up the hill. This is the longest hill section of the whole route and is still rideable even with a trailer or childseat. At the next T-junction turn right - signposted Reservoirs - and follow the road for a short distance to find a left turn back towards Trenchford. The road takes you gently downhill to the next turning on your right. Take this and follow the road as it winds through the trees. Shortly before the next T-junction there is a car park and waterside picnic area with a picnic bench and great views of Tottiford Reservoir.

At the T-junction turn left and retrace the route alongside Trenchford Reservoir and over the dam to turn right and immediately right again back into the car park. ■

