**Great Trees Cycle Ride**

**An easy, educational, 11 mile circuit in Southwark and Lewisham.**

Devised by Bruce Lynn, Southwark Cyclists. www.healthyrider.weebly.com

A ride to look at some trees. Boring? Maybe - but trees, we are realizing, are not just a taken-for-granted background. They matter. They soak up CO2 and are good for our health. Inspiration comes from a Zoom talk in March to [Better Streets Southwark](https://www.betterstreetsforsouthwark.org.uk/) by Paul Wood about [Tree Talk](https://www.treetalk.co.uk/) and his amazing Tree Map. Route is inspired by Paul’s **Great Trees of London Map**. Southwark Cyclists did this as a group ride on June 19th, 2021 ([report here](https://southwarkcyclists.org.uk/healthy-rides/healthy-ride-reports-2021/great-trees-ride/)). NB this report has photos of most of the trees.

Route goes past 6 of the Great Trees and is nearly flat and 11 miles long. The route uses quiet streets, cycle lanes and paths as much as possible. Main road crossings are light controlled, or adjacent pedestrian crossings can be used. Annotated route map at <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1WMWt1qLR_4_obNGcwNHD3Sghfv22eLEW&usp=sharing>

Start is from the Southwark Needle, south end of London Bridge, [SE1 2PF](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/SE1%202PF). Handy for London Bridge Station if you want to get to the start by train. Since this is a circuit, you could start anywhere. You could even try it clockwise although the turn by turn guidance that follows is not very good for that!

**Turn by turn guide**

From the Needle go downhill along Tooley St and turn right at lights into the Bermondsey St tunnel. At the lights at the end of the tunnel, go straight along the trendy bit of Bermondsey St and turn right into Morocco St then continue along Leathermarket St. Cross Long Lane and at the junction with Wilds Rents go sharp rt to Law St. You are briefly on Cycleway 10. Continue straight at Tabard St, leaving C10. Carefully cross Gt Dover St and look for the path going past the right side of Lyle House. Head between blocks taking care as the path is narrow. As you approach Burbage Close on the other side, look to your left to see a rather unusual pine tree. This is Great Tree no 1, a **Norfolk Island Pine**. Norfolk Island is latitude 29 degrees S. We are at 52 degrees north. Trees do not generally range across 23 degrees of latitude. Only report of this species growing outdoors in the UK is on the Isles of Scilly. Here is the Map’s take on this: “A houseplant gone feral [my note: cute little Norfolk pines in pots are widely sold as indoor living Christmas trees], this tree proves how the city’s climate is warming”.

Head west along Burbage Close. At the T junction turn left and cycle through the estate negotiating the unusual barriers made of randomly angled stainless steel posts. At Harper Road turn right, then first left into Falmouth St. You are now on Cycleway17 and will follow this all the way to Burgess Park. As the signage is easy to miss, will give you the key turns. Follow Falmouth Rd to the New Kent Rd, turn left and use the crossing. Off the crossing turn left on to the cycle path. At Rodney Place turn right on to the segregated cycle path. This is a nice surprise, but ends soon in Rodney Rd where there is a cycle crossing. Cross this, turn back on yourself briefly, then left and left on to Brandon St. Continue straight, across East St with its market and along Portland St to Albany St. At Albany use the cycle crossing (has its own light phase) and turn right onto the cycle lane and pretty much immediately left into Burgess Park. Where the paths cross near the Lime Kiln, turn left and carefully negotiate the tunnel. After the tunnel fork left, cross a path and then fork left again. You will see the houses of Chumleigh Gardens on your left. There is a café and toilets here. Now you have to find the well hidden World Garden. Lock your bike next to a gate into a formal garden with an Indian Bean Tree on your right. Follow this path and turn left then right to enter the area we want behind the houses. This is the World Garden section of Chumleigh Gardens and is packed with unusual trees. You need the Tree Talk digital map to sort them out, so hope your phone is up to it! I like the Stone Pine in pole position at the end of the garden. The unusual palms are notable – 2 Chilean Wine Palms (one in the middle of the middle section) and at least 2 Chinese Windmill Palms. Note that this garden is not on the Great Trees Map. I just included it because it is amazing. Like Kew Gardens compressed into a pocket handkerchief-sized space!

Next backtrack through the tunnel then fork left re-joining C17. As you approach the Play Area, turn left then cross the road into Edward St. Follow this 400m to Elmington St and turn left, leaving C17. First rt, second left and second rt takes you to Havill St and up to the lights at busy Peckham Rd. Go straight across, then immediately turn left into Lucas Gardens. Follow the path carefully for 100m and you will see a large tree in an enclosure on the left. This is Great Tree number 2, a **Tulip Tree** of impressive size. This small park has several other large trees, e.g. a huge Copper Beech. The park was made from the gardens of a Georgian Terrace built in 1790, so presumably these trees are at least 230 years old.

Continue up the path to the top exit from Lucas Gardens. You are starting a long stretch to New Cross Gate, keeping you off main roads until you hit Queens Road. From the Gardens turn left uphill and continue to the T junction. This short up hill is all the climbing you will do. At the top turn left on to Lyndhurst Grove. Ride down round a few bends for 300 m then turn rt into Azenby Rd which leads immediately to Warwick Gardens. Negotiate the heavily sprung gate and ride through the gardens to the exit opposite Holly Grove. Use the crossing to get into Holly Grove and follow this, negotiating the street sellers’ barriers at the junction with Rye Lane. Turn rt up Rye Lane under the rail bridges and take the first left into Bournemouth Rd. At the T junction turn rt on to Copeland Rd. Take care as visibility to the left is limited. Take the second left into Brayards Rd, follow this across Consort Rd, under the rail bridge and for another 300m to a T junction. Turn left on to Hollydale Rd then immediately rt on to Dundas Rd. At the modern church bear left round this then turn rt to Belfort Rd which leads shortly to Lausanne Rd. Turn right on to Lausanne. The stretch from Lausanne Rd to New Cross Gate is busy. Turning right from Lausanne to Queens Rd can most safely be done as a 2-stage right (<http://bit.ly/39ssnPJ>). Go straight from Lausanne then when half way across turn left into the ASL area at the Queens Rd stop line. As you do this, turn further to point towards New Cross, i.e. east. When the Queens Rd lights go green, then go straight and join the cycle lane when it starts.  As you approach New Cross Gate take care if manoeuvering around the many buses and watch for traffic turning left into Sainsburys. Ride past New Cross Gate Station then stop at the end of the barrier. Get on to the pavement and put the bike to one side. The pavement is narrow, so make sure bikes do not block the path. Look over the wall on the bridge towards the platforms of New Cross Gate Station and there it is, a **Giant Redwood** right next to the tracks. This is tree number 3. Its survival must mean that the railway authorities actually have a soul.

Continue along New Cross Rd taking the second left and down Clifton Rise and rt into the relative tranquillity of Fordham Park. Continue along the path to the rail underpass then immediately turn left on to Amersham Vale. Follow this to the rt turn on to Edward St (another Edward St – not the one in Camberwell we rode on before). Under the railway then immediately left and left through some bollards to a path beside a basketball court. Follow this and the road it leads to until the crossroads with Abinger Grove. Turn rt on to Abinger Grove and ride to busy Evelyn St. Carefully use the wide pavement for 80 m (not legal, so walk if worried). Then use the light controlled crossing to get to Grove St. 100m along Grove St there is a narrow entrance into Sayes Court Park. Bear right and you will spot tree number 4 in its enclosure. This is a **Black Mulberry**. There is a plaque saying this tree was planted by Tsar Peter the Great when he stayed at Sayes Court while learning how to make a Navy. That was in 1698, so a 323+ year-old tree. Map says this story is incorrect, but I like it.

Exit the way you entered and turn rt to continue along Grove St. Take the second right into Leeway, follow left to Millard Rd, then 1st rt into Barfleur Lane and up to the Thames. This is a small detour but worth it for the river views and the reminder of Deptford as a naval base. The brick Georgian buildings were part of the navy base and included the all-important rum store. Those were the days of wooden ships. The Golden Hind was built here. Building the wooden walls of Britain consumed rather a lot of mature woodland. Continue along the waterfront until you approach the lock into South Dock. Turn left and follow the side and then the top of the dock. At the road (Rope St) turn left past the Water Sports Centre then go right and left to follow the side, then the top, of Greenland Dock. As you reach the corner of Greenland Dock bear left under the road. Be careful to pick the line that uses the ramp, not the steps. After the underpass you go up to Tesco. Negotiate the shoppers and cross the car park to the service road around this. Turn rt on to the service road (Deal Porters Way). Wind along this over some bumps and take the ramp on the left that leads down to Hothfield Place. At the main road (Lower Rd) use the pavement (this is dual use) and just beyond the crossing you will see blue hoarding. Inside the hoarding are the remains of the old Rotherhithe Police station and, half hidden, a rather unprepossessing tree. This is tree number 5, a **Southern silky Oak**. The Great Map says “Mystery surrounds how this rare Australian tree arrived outside the old Rotherhithe police station”. Developers may be cursing this tree as it is a bit in the way. Must have a 5 star preservation order!  Not related to English Oak - was named oak because its hard wood reminded early settlers of oak.

Back to the crossing and along Lower Rd, through the traffic light and then we join lovely Cycleway 4. Whiz along this for a mile until you reach the complex junction at Dockhead. Continue for 150m then use the crossing to get into Fair St. Take the rt branch then look immediately for a narrow path between the buildings on the left. You should emerge into a Play Area and on your left is tree number 6. This is a **Tree of Heaven**. It is planted beside the small vault containing the ashes of Dr Alfred and Mrs Ada Salter, famous local campaigners for better health and other social conditions and for peace in first half of 20th century. Ada was responsible for planting many trees.

To finish backtrack to Tooley St and rejoin C4. Head west to Tower Bridge Rd. Here you get a cycle phase to cross diagonally to the left side of the road. Then it is a quick ride along Tooley St to the Needle and back where we started.

Having the real map would increase your fun. This can be purchased (£8) at the Riverside Bookshop (riversidebookshop.co.uk) on Tooley St more or less opposite the London Bridge station entrance, or from https://uk.bookshop.org/shop/theriversidebookshop.