

2019 edition

# Cycling Selkirk



**Discover the best road cycling routes at the heart of the Scottish Borders**



## **Selkirk sits at the heart of the Scottish Borders, home to some of the finest road cycling routes in the UK. It's the perfect base for exploring this beautiful region.**

This guide is published by [The Five Turrets](#), the self catering holiday property near the centre of Selkirk which offers accommodation for up to eight people in four double bedrooms, along with secure cycle storage on site.

The Five Turrets was named by The Sunday Times as one of the top 25 self catering properties in the UK for 2019.

Check availability at [FiveTurrets.com](https://www.fiveturrets.com)



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# Yair Circular Cycle Route

Grade: Leisurely

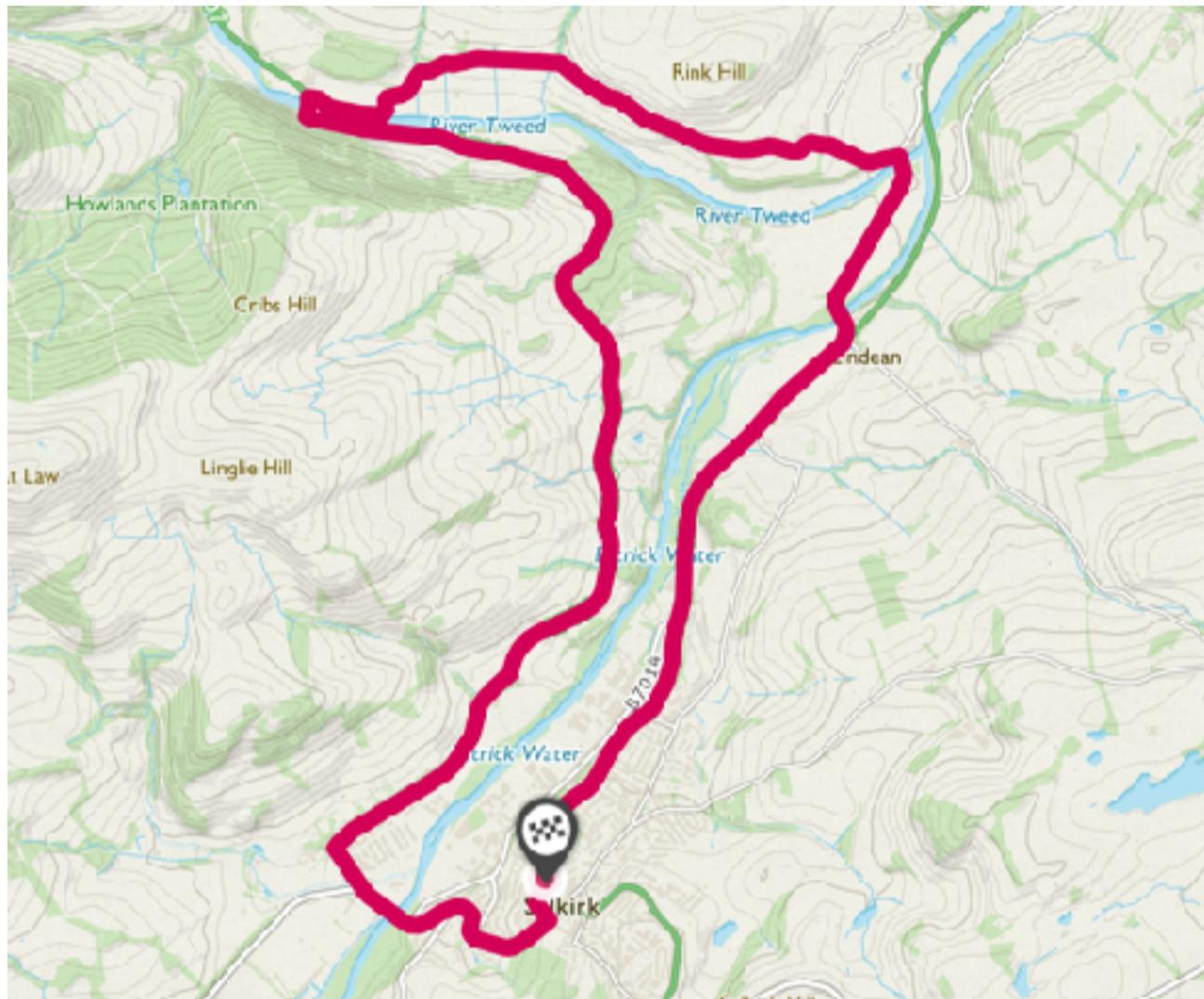
Distance: 15 km (9 miles)

Total ascent: 241 m

[Download full GPX route details.](#)



**A leisurely 15 km loop out from Selkirk, crossing the Ettrick Water and River Tweed. With added bees.**



Head south west out of Selkirk from The Five Turrets, turning right at the market square and following the road down over the Ettrick Water before turning right again to follow the course of the river, climbing gently before descending again to the bridge over the Tweed at Yair.

Once over the bridge, turn right onto the B7060 and follow it uphill before dropping back down to recross the Tweed on the stone bridge marked with cycle lanes.



Follow the road back towards Lindean, crossing a bridge over the Ettrick Water and keeping an eye open for the marauding bees...

At the main A7, turn right on the cycle path and follow it back into Selkirk.



Lowest 86m Highest 160m  
Total ascent 337m

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# Selkirk to Melrose return

Grade: Leisurely

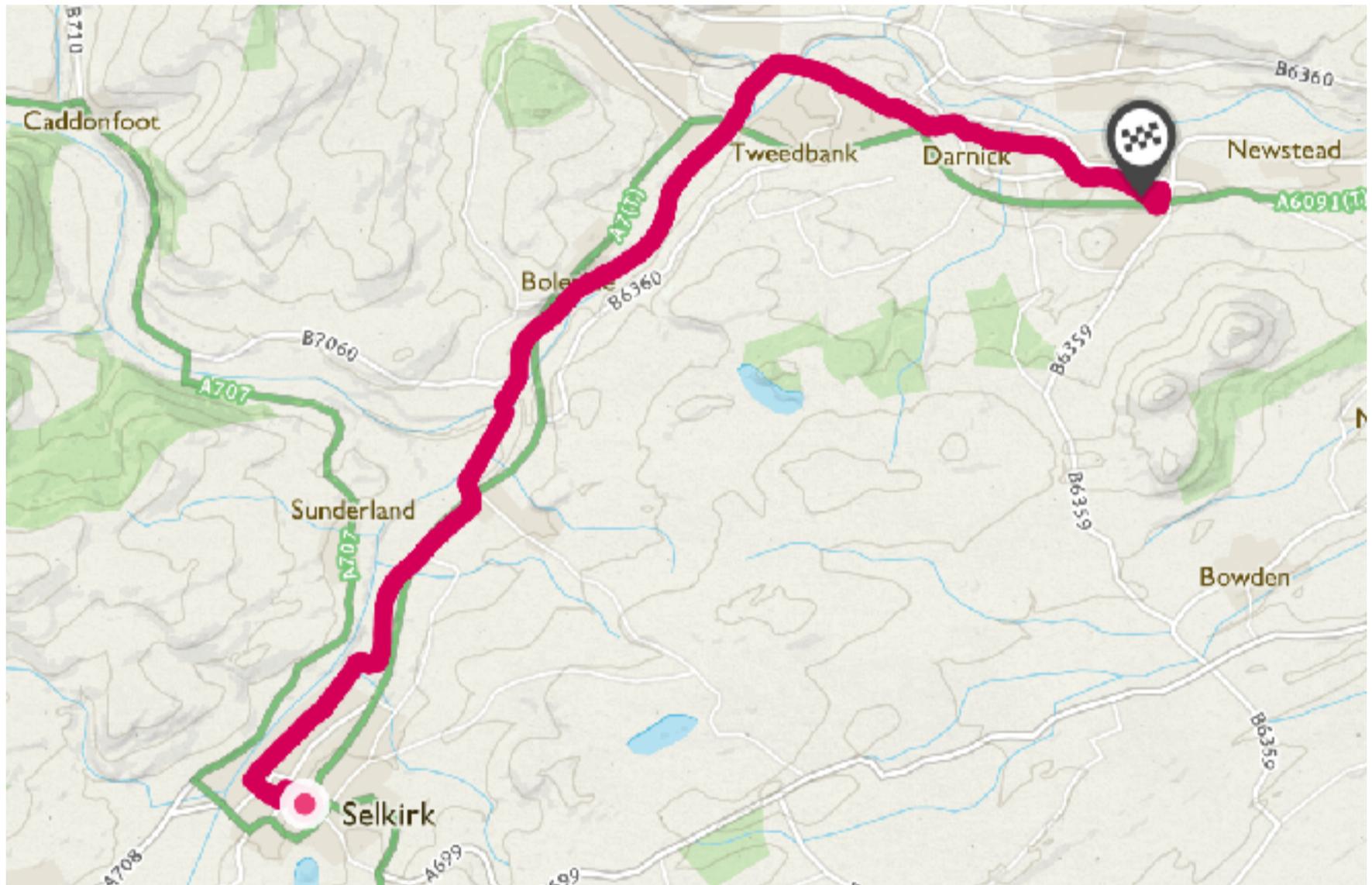
Distance: 25.4 km (16 miles)

Total ascent: 337 m

[Download full GPX route details](#)



**A lovely ride from Selkirk to the pretty Borders town of Melrose, mainly on dedicated cycle paths. Good for families. And fans of bagpipe-playing pigs.**



The round trip starts at The Five Turrets in Selkirk, heading downhill to the river and onto a cycle path that runs alongside the river and stays mainly off the road for most of the way. Return by the same route.

For much of the way the route follows the course of the Ettrick Water and then the Tweed.





Once over the Old Tweed Bridge and beyond the confluence of the two rivers the path heads into woodland, which offers pleasant shade on a sunny day.



Apart from the initial drop down to the river and the steep climb at the very end of the return leg, the route remains fairly level, with only a few variations.

There's plenty to do and see in Melrose, including the old Roman fort of Trimontium (and the quirky associated museum in the town).

The ruined abbey is also worth a visit, if only to see the carving of a bagpipe-playing pig. Robert the Bruce's heart is also buried in the grounds.



More adventurous cyclists can tackle the three Eildon hills. Take care though: local folklore says this is the gateway to the land of the elves. There's a good selection of pubs and cafes to enjoy before returning the same way to Selkirk.

And there really is a bagpipe-playing pig at Melrose Abbey...



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# Bowhill and Yair Brig circular

Grade: Leisurely

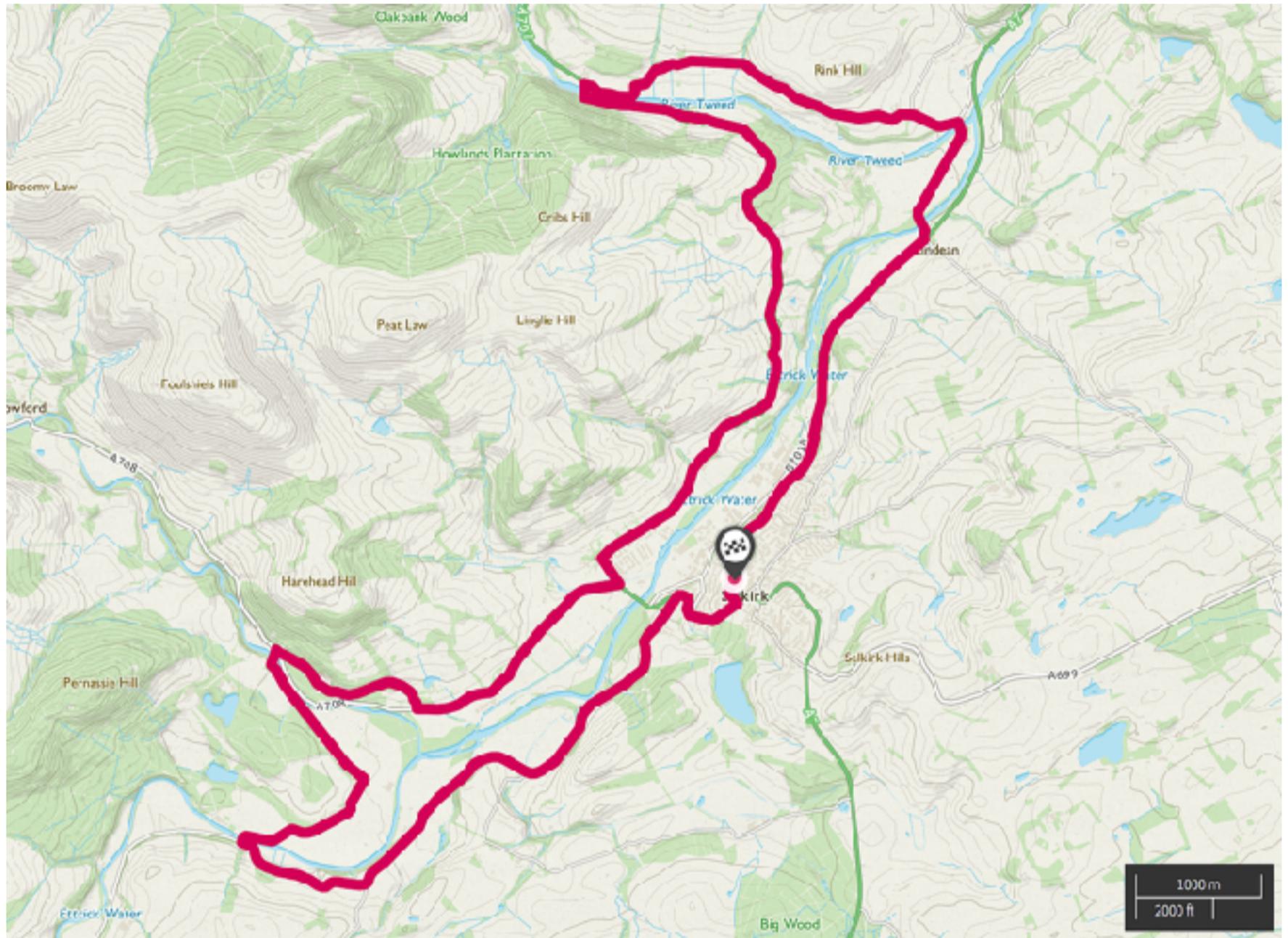
Distance: 25.4 km (16 miles)

Total ascent: 360 m

[Download full GPX route details](#)

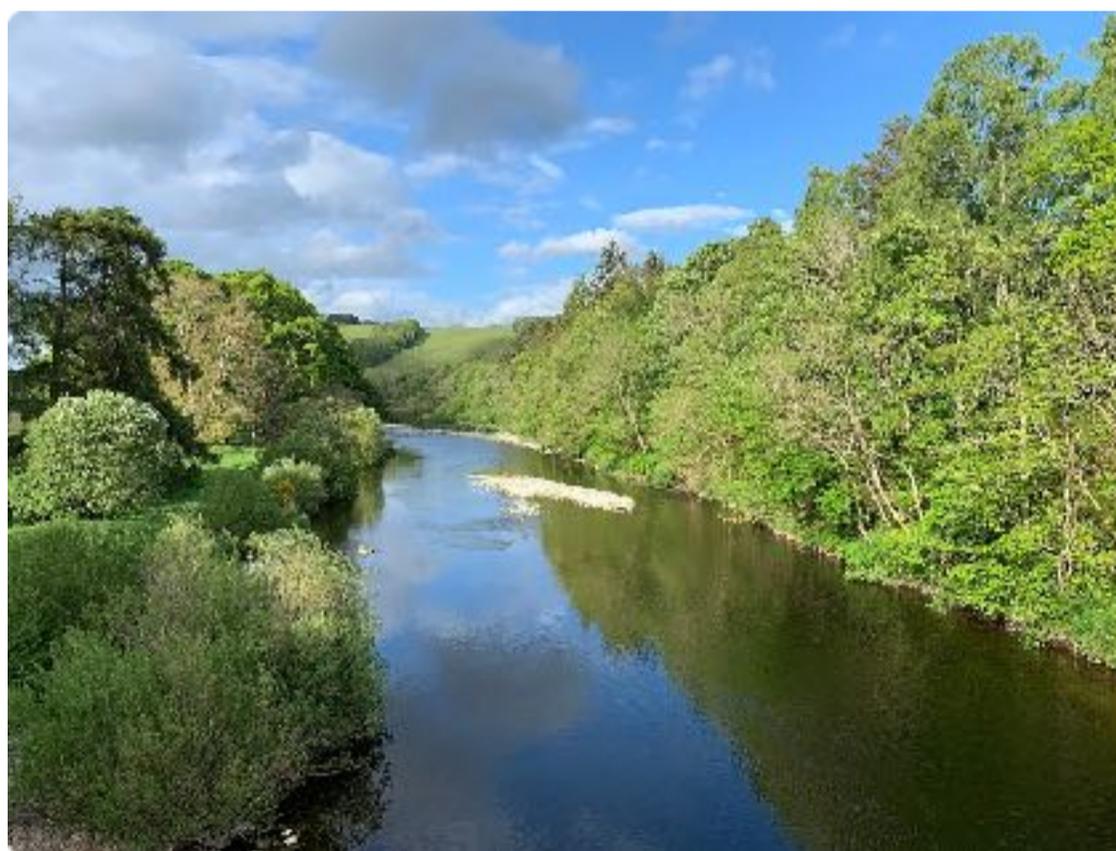


**A scenic 16 mile loop along the course of the River Tweed and Ettrick Water around Selkirk. With an added battlefield.**



Mostly flat and on minor roads and cycle paths, it's particularly suitable for families (a shorter version is also available).

The route heads south west out of Selkirk and loops around to the Bowhill estate (extend it by following the road along to Newark Castle or stop for refreshments next to the main house) and back through Philiphaugh, site of the [1645 battle](#).



The route then joins the A707 down to Yair Bridge before climbing gently and crossing the Tweed and then the Ettrick, returning to Selkirk along the cycle path alongside the A7.

There's a short climb back into Selkirk, but overall this is a pretty gentle route with plenty of places to stop and take in the view.



Lowest 99m Highest 169m

Total ascent 360m

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# Ettrickbridge and Newark Castle circular



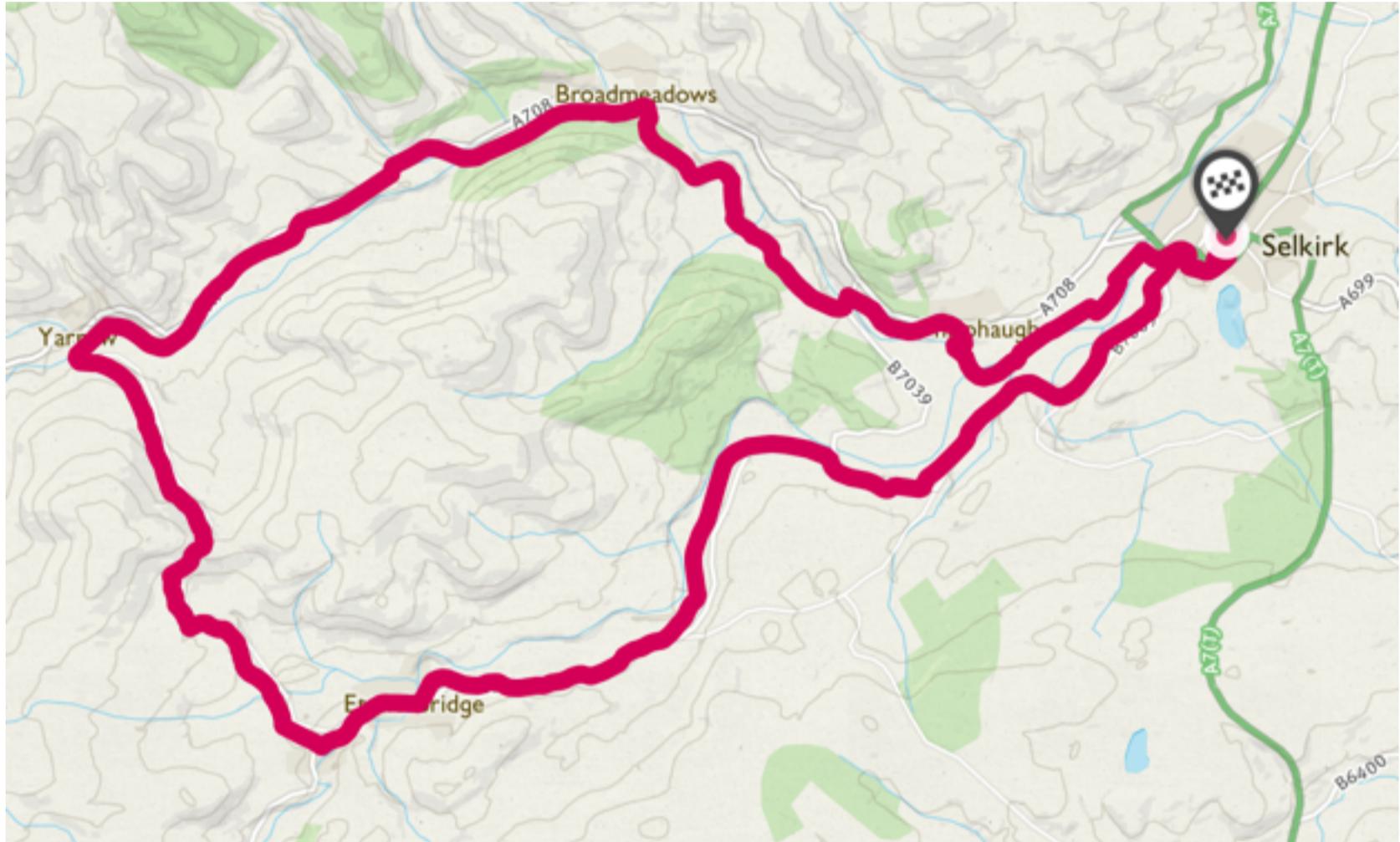
Grade: Moderate

Distance: 33.1 km (20.5 miles)

Total ascent: 624 m

[Download full GPX route details](#)

**A moderate circuit south and west of Selkirk in the Scottish Borders. With a castle and a peel tower - a defence against the notorious Border Reivers - thrown in for good measure.**



The route sticks to fairly quiet roads through stunning Borders scenery. Refreshments can be taken at Ettrickbridge.

Head south west out of Selkirk to Ettrickbridge, where a short detour after passing through the village and turning right at Kirkhope leads to Kirkhope Tower a mile north of the village.

Return to the road and continue uphill over wild moorland before turning for home at Yarrow.

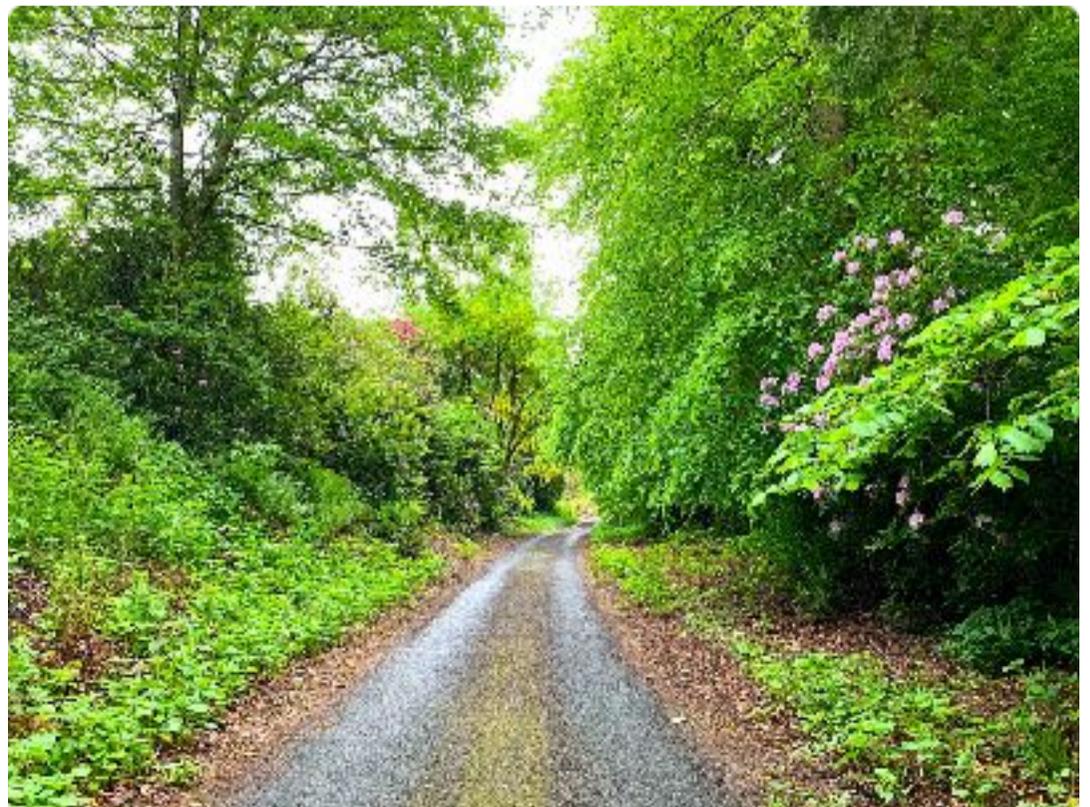


At Yarrowford fork right onto the minor road at North Lodge and follow it past Newark Castle on the Bowhill estate.

Cross the bridge and the main road and take the minor road opposite through Philiphaugh east, site of the 1645 battle.

At the main road make a right turn and then almost immediately a left turn onto a track leading back to Selkirk along the river and Mill Lead before rejoining the main road uphill back into Selkirk.

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# Lindean Loch and Midlem



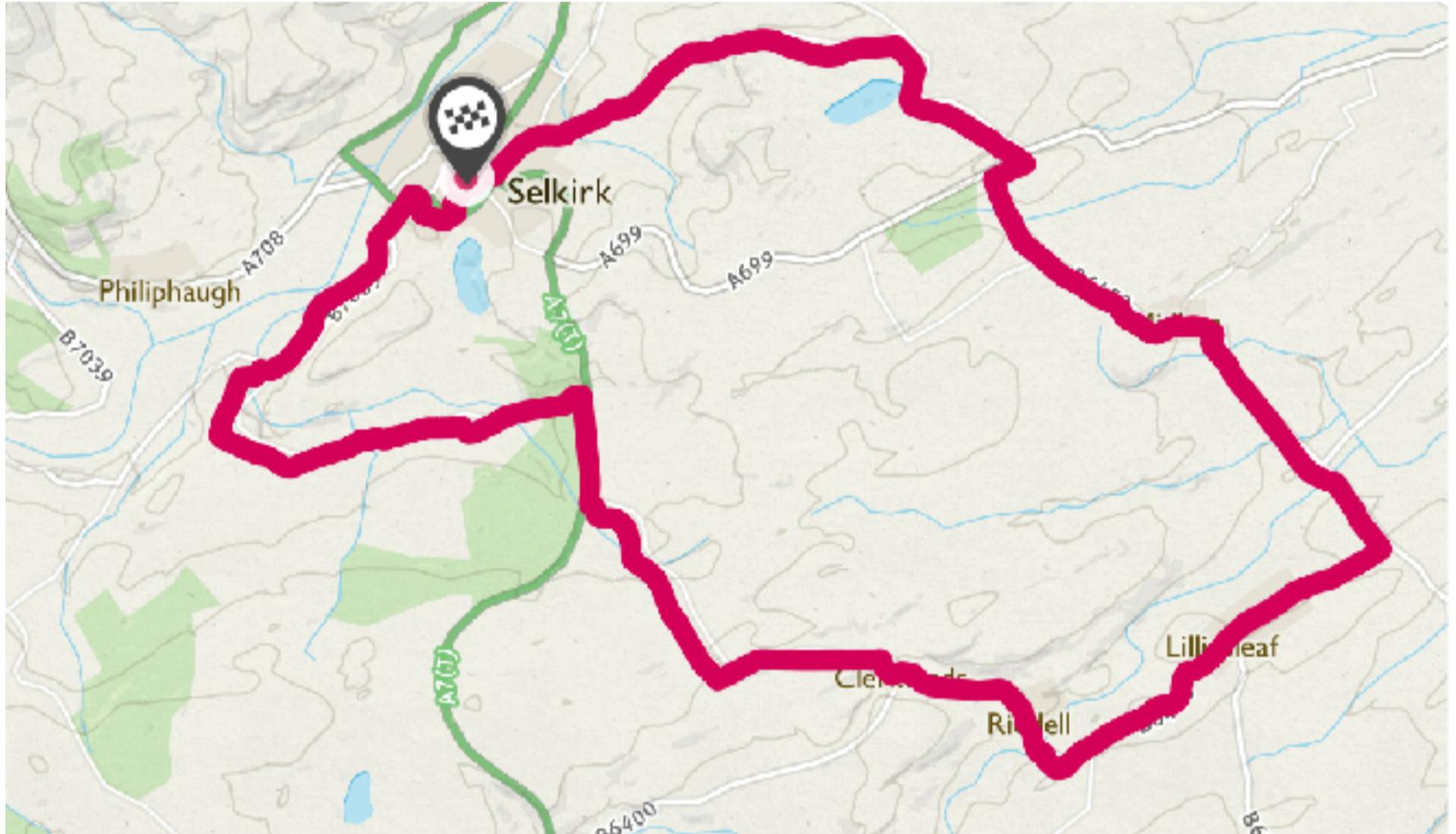
Grade: Moderate

Distance: 26.6 km (16.5 miles)

Total ascent: 505 m

[Download full GPX route details](#)

A moderate 16.5 mile circuit heading east out of Selkirk and uphill to picturesque Lindean Loch before looping south of the town.



This route starts outside The Five Turrets and sticks mainly to minor roads, with several options for refreshments at Lilliesleaf.



Starting with a steady climb east out of Selkirk, the route passes Lindean Loch. At the junction with the A699 turn right and then take the first left onto the B6453. Continue south east through pretty countryside to Midlem where the road joins the B6359 and shortly afterwards turns sharply right to head south west through Lilliesleaf. Refreshments are available here at the Jammy Coo cafe and the Plough Inn.

On the western edge of the village join the B6400 and follow it south west and then west. Take the right fork at Clerklands and head north west until the road meets the A7. Turn right onto the A7 and then take the first left turn onto a minor road that heads uphill across wilder countryside before swinging round to meet the B7009 at Howden. Turn right and follow the road back into Selkirk.



Lowest 123m    Highest 289m  
Total ascent 505m

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# Ettrick Forest circular

Grade: Challenging

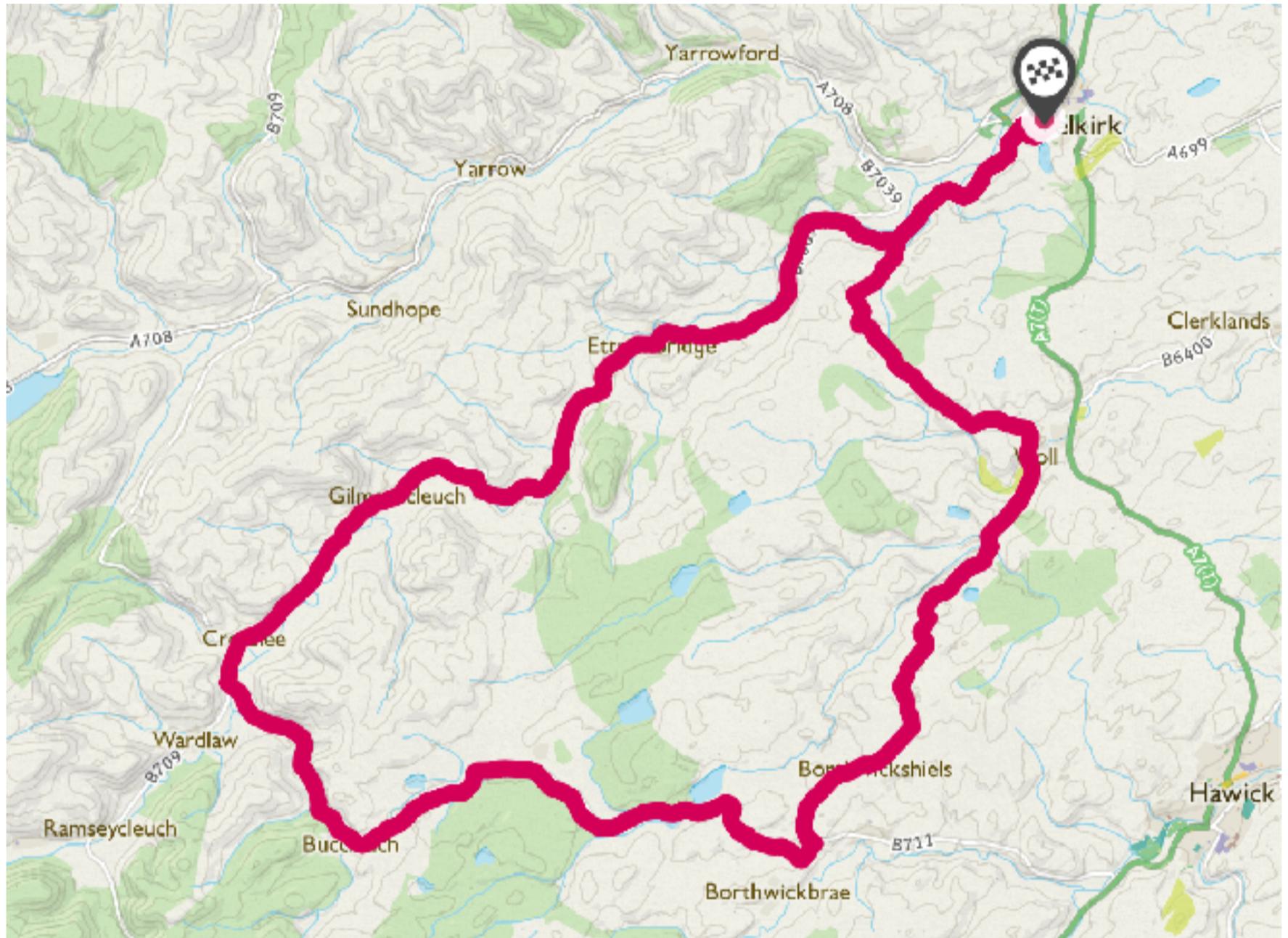
Distance: 62.6 km (39 miles)

Total ascent: 924 m

[Download full GPX route details](#)



**One of the finest road circuits in the Scottish Borders, largely on single track roads, through spectacular upland scenery, taking in lochs, hills and rivers.**

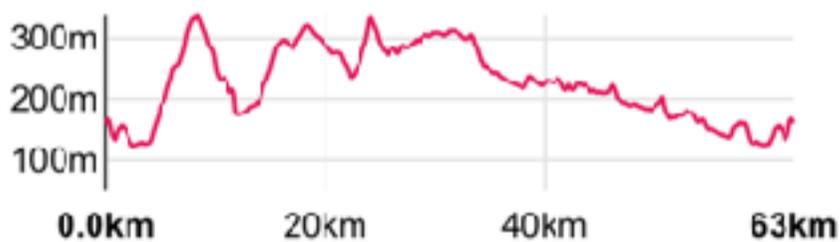


This route starts and ends at The Five Turrets in Selkirk. Follow signs for Ashkirk, then Robertson, Alemoor, Tushielaw, Ettrick Bridge and Selkirk.



There are some energetic climbs in the early stages but it gradually becomes less demanding. Much of the route uses single track roads through spectacular upland countryside, taking in lochs, rivers and hills.

This route takes riders through the hill country to the south west of Selkirk and the scattered remains of the Ettrick Forest, from where William Wallace once fought a guerilla campaign against the English.



Lowest 124m    Highest 336m  
Total ascent 924m

Highlights include the beautiful Alemoor Reservoir (also known as Ale Water) and other smaller lochs along the way. There's very little vehicle traffic, but do keep an eye out for sheep wandering onto the road.

There are several places for refreshment along the way, including the Smiddy Bar and Restaurant at Ashkirk, Tushielaw Inn, the Woll Restaurant and the Cross Keys Inn at Ettrickbridge.

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Start outside The Five Turrets in Selkirk and head west out of town on the A708 - this is the busiest road on the circuit, but only BFTB (Busy For The Borders). The first stop should be St Mary's Loch - keep an eye out for ospreys which are active in the area during the late spring and summer months.

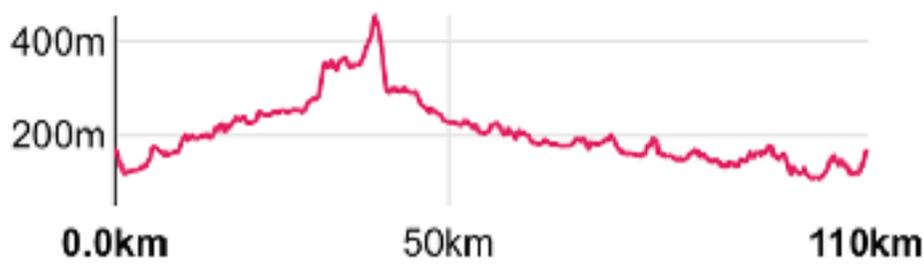
Take the minor road to the right at Cappercleuch and wind your way up to Megget Reservoir, well worth stopping to see. It's the largest earth dam in Scotland and as impressive as it sounds. The view south's very pretty too.



Continue on upwards to Talla Reservoir. Scottish Water, another imposing loch. If you like adders, you may be in luck. If you don't, you may want to watch where you put your feet.

Head north through sensational upland countryside until a sharp right turn onto the B712 takes you north east, eventually picking up the course of the River Tweed. Dawyck Botanical Gardens are a wonderful stopping off point with an excellent cafe. You'll also go past Stobo Castle - it's got a spa, if the limbs are beginning to ache.

Turn right onto the A72 and head east past Neidpath Castle and into Peebles, where there are too many places to stop off to mention.



Lowest **105.74m** Highest **457.73m**  
Total ascent **1260.41m**

Cross the river on the Tweed Bridge and then turn right to follow the minor road that follows the south bank of the river. It's a pretty cute with trees either side of the road: detour into Innerleithen for a couple of cycling friendly watering holes. You'll also pass Traquair House, Scotland's oldest inhabited house. Apparently visited by 27 Scottish kings and queens, though not by bike. It's a pretty ride back into Selkirk.

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At the roundabout turn right and follow the cycle path before taking the second turning at the next roundabout and then first left down to the Lowood Bridge. Turn right and follow the road under the Leaderfoot viaduct.



Turn right onto the B6356 and follow the road up to the car park at Scott's View - said to be Sir Walter's favourite view - which looks out over the River Tweed towards the Eildon Hills.

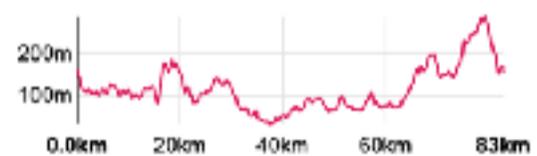
A little further on there's a signpost to the William Wallace statue, a giant sculpture looking out across the countryside. Turn right at Bemersyde and follow signs for Kelso.



The road goes past a turning for Smailholm Tower, a dramatic peel tower worth a detour, before heading on to Kelso where there are cafes, pubs and restaurants and shops. Follow signs for A699 over the Teviot Bridge and then left onto the B6400 towards Ancrum.



The village hosts a scarecrow competition in June. Look out for unicorns and the odd Loch Ness Monster. Head south towards Denholm before heading north back to Selkirk.



Lowest 31m Highest 288m  
Total ascent 1059m

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# Selkirk to Denholm figure of eight



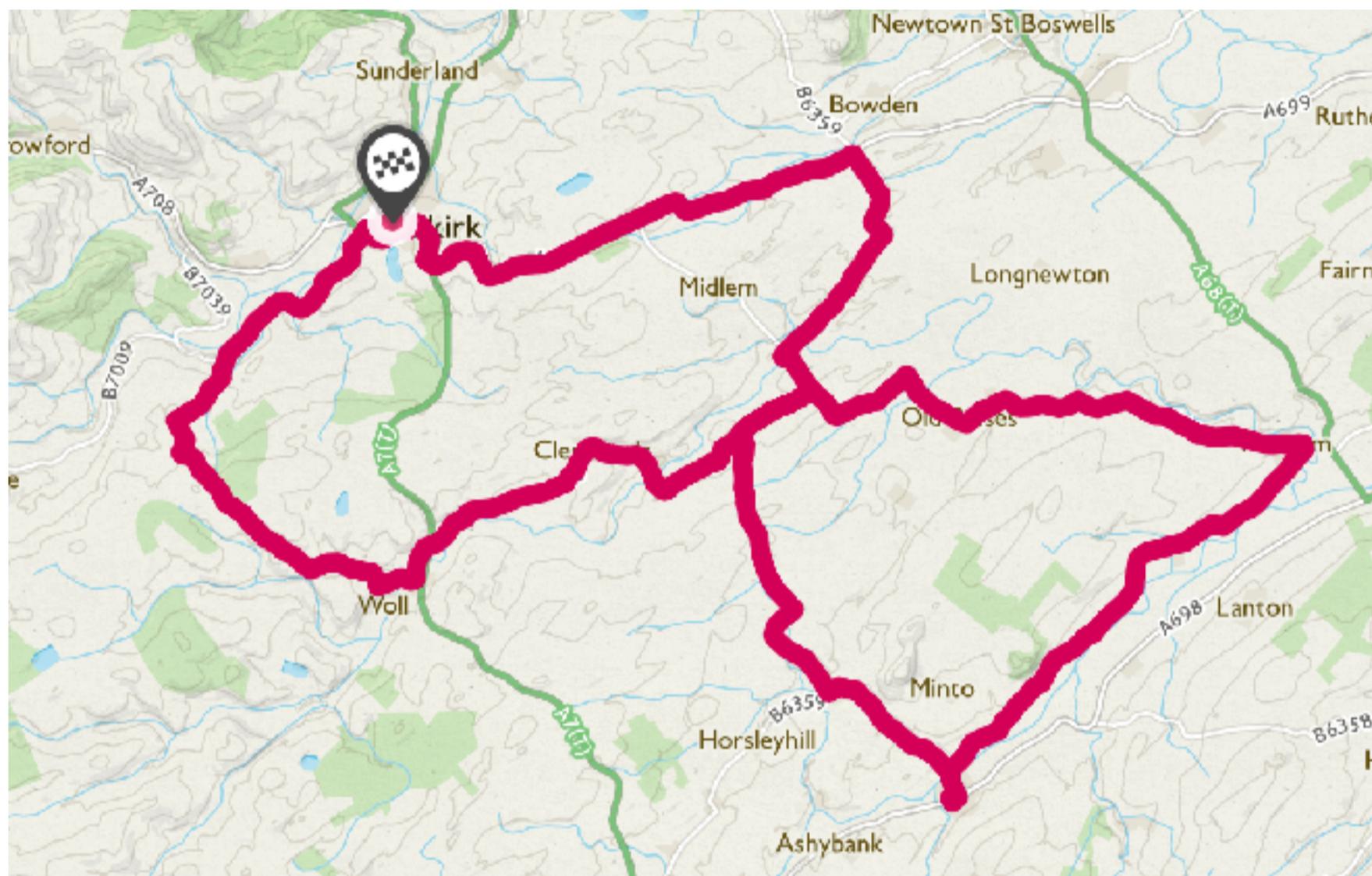
Grade: Challenging

Distance: 66.6 km (41 miles)

Total ascent: 913m

[Download full GPX route details](#)

**An energetic 41 mile ride through the gentle countryside south east of Selkirk at the heart of the Scottish Borders. Beware of vampire hay bales.**



The route starts outside The Five Turrets in Selkirk and heads east out of the town on the main A7 and then onto the A699 towards Bowden. There's a short climb before the route levels out.



At Bowden the route turns south, onto quieter B roads. At Lilliesleaf there's an opportunity to stop off at the Jammy Coo gallery and coffee shop for a break. Or try the Plough Inn.

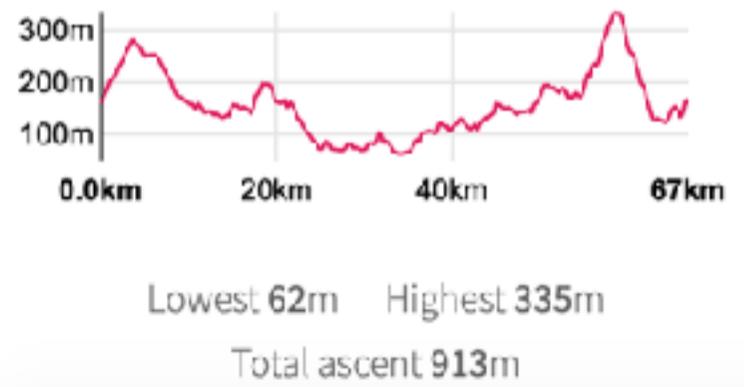
Follow the B6359 down to Denholm, with its Fox & Hounds pub and Auld Cross Keys Inn along with the Denholm Meet and the Cream Puff cafes.

For the really energetic, there's a good walk from the village green up to the summit of Rubers Law, the conical hill south of the village which dominates the local landscape. There was an Iron Age fort there and later a Roman signalling station.

The route returns to Selkirk via Ancrum, Lilliesleaf and Askhirk, where it briefly turns left onto the A7 before taking the next right turn and heading uphill on a minor road.



There are good views north east towards Selkirk. Do look out for the vampire hay bales.



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# Paddy Slacks and Tweed Valley



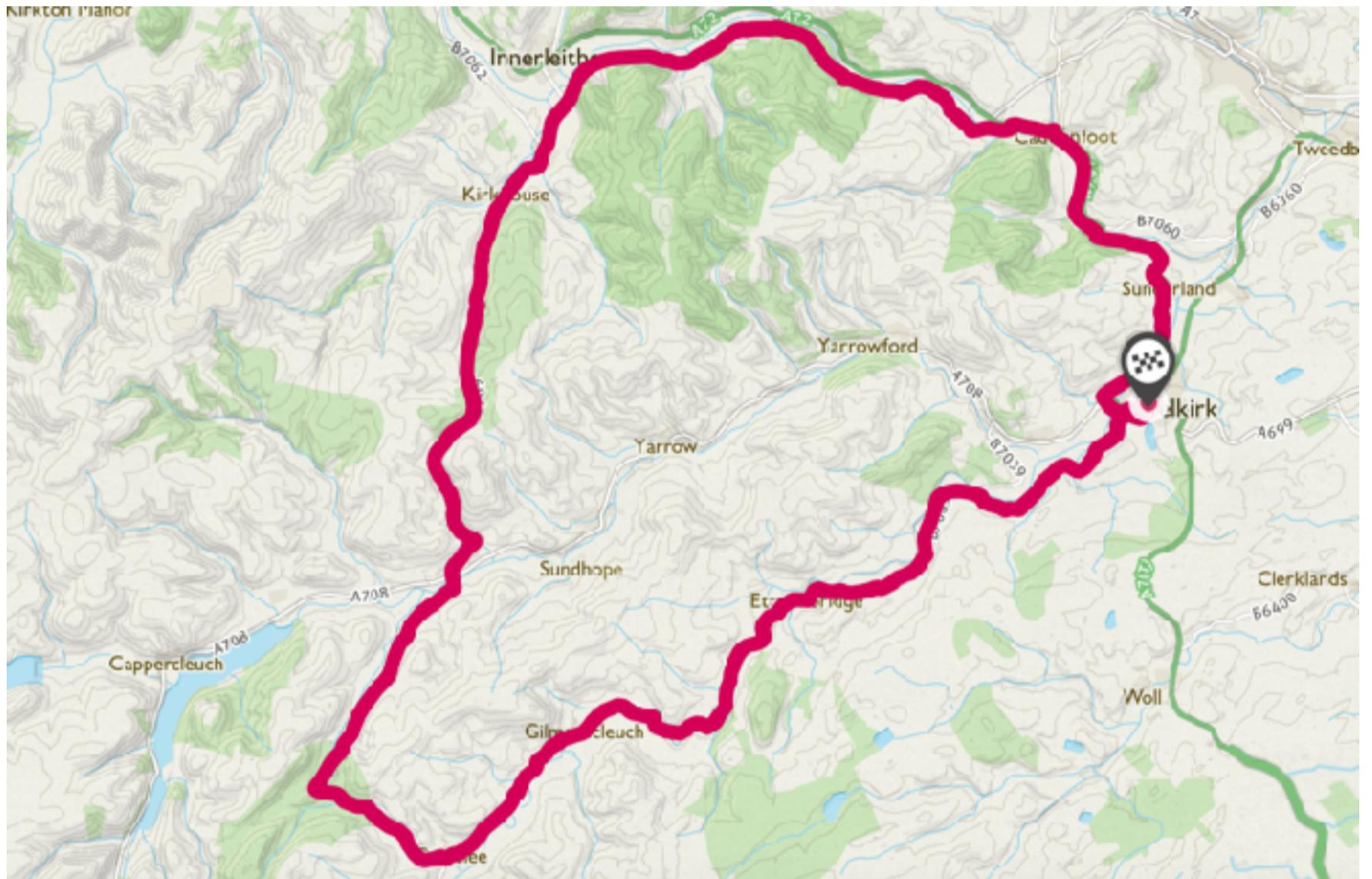
Grade: Challenging

Distance: 69.4 km (43 miles)

Total ascent: 1,030 m

[Download full GPX route details](#)

**Up, up and away, through rugged uplands with only sheep for company - and a couple of exhilarating descents**



The route starts at The Five Turrets in Selkirk and heads west through pretty countryside, climbing slowly upwards as it follows the course of the Ettrick Water.

Beyond Ettrickbridge, the road continues to climb south west until Tushielaw, where the ride becomes a little bit more demanding.

Now it becomes a steep climb up to the highest point of the circuit, at Berry Knowe, where it turns sharply north east and descends to meet the A708 just south of Mountbenger, where James Hogg, [the Ettrick Shepherd](#), once farmed.

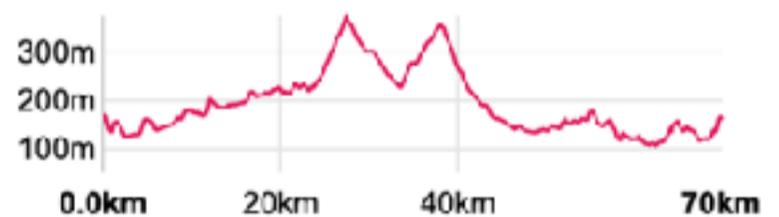
The Gordon Arms - where Hogg used to drink - offers an opportunity for refreshments.



Cross the road and climb sharply again through wild and gloriously empty countryside, skirting Mountbenger Law and then it is downhill all the way to Innerleithen on the road known locally as Paddy Slacks.

Watch out for the sheep - they are firm in their belief that they have right of way.

Just past Traquair House and before the bridge that leads into Innerleithen (which is a good spot for a break, with plenty of places to get something to eat or drink) there is a right turn onto a minor road with trees either side and the river Tweed to the left. Follow this until a fork, go right and join the A72 for the return to Selkirk.



Lowest 105m    Highest 376m  
Total ascent 1030m

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# THE FIVE TURRETS

STAY IN SCOTLAND IN STYLE



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Thanks to Selkirk cyclist and trail designer Pete Laing for suggesting many of these routes.

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