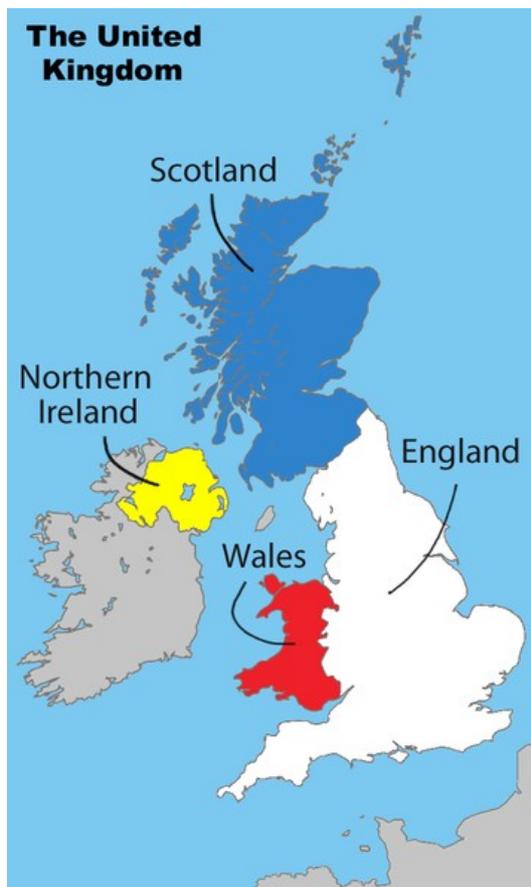


The Quest of the Hilly Grail

The Challenge is a list of 450 climbs: 100 in Scotland, 250 in England, 75 in Wales and 25 in Northern Ireland.



A few figures to start

In the whole challenge, the average climb is 4.5km long, the average elevation gain is 205m for 190 europoints. Where are the places to be? A lot of BIGs among the most interesting.

In Europoints, Great Dun Fell is the hardest (680pts, Engl.), followed by Dunkery Beacon (618, Engl.), Moel Famau (613, Wales), Bealach na Ba (583, Scot.), Hard Knott Pass (563, Engl.), Marchlyn Mawr Reservoir (531, Wales), Kirkstone (501, Engl.), The Wrekin (494, Engl.),... The hardest in NIR.: Benbradagh (430).



Great Dun Fell



Bealach na Ba

As far as elevation gain is concerned, Great Dun Fell is still the best (633m.), then Bealach na Ba (614), Lowther Hill (597, Scot.), Marchlyn Mawr (537), Hartside Cross (488, Engl.), Slieve Croob (NIR.) and Moel Famau (484), Dylife Panorama (472, Wales),...

What about the bombs? The Top9 is English (Hard Knott 45pts, Clovelly 44, Wynnatts Way 43, The Corkscrew 41, Whitby Abbey 40, ...). Best Scottish bomb: Bealach Feith Nan Laogh (38). First Welsh: Constitution Hill (37). First Northern Irish: Sleeve Croob (18).



Slieve Croob



Bealach Feith Nan Laogh

Tourism

The United Kingdom ensures the protection and the promotion of its heritage thanks to three labels. In 2019, there were 15 National Parks (NP in the following text), 69 Areas of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) and 600 National Trust.



Official links

<https://nationalparks.uk/>

<https://landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-aonbs/aonbs/overview>

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/search?view=map>

England

1- INTRODUCTION TO GEOGRAPHY

England is one of the four nations of the United Kingdom. It has an area of 130.000 km², that means 52% of the whole United Kingdom. The most important range of mountains and hills, the Pennines, is in the north. It is separated from Scotland by the Cheviot Hills (Carter Bar, Thirl Moor) and it stretches southwards to the Peak District. A National Trail (the Pennine Way) runs more than 400km through it (not with a bicycle) and goes through its highest point: Cross Fell (890m). Not too far from our BIG Great Dun Fell. Hartside Cross and Westernhope Moor are near. The highest point of England, Scafell Pike (978m in the Cumbrian Mts.), is situated in the Nord West, in the Lake District NP. Our classic Hard Knott, Wrynose and Honister Passes revolve around this summit.



In the Pennines we have the National Parks and AONB (North Pennines AONB, Yorkshire Dales NP, Nidderdale AONB and Peak District NP). A detailed list of the selected climbs appears in the « Tourism » section. The Google map will help you to locate them easily.



Excerpt from Google map in the Pennines

East of the Pennines, there is also the North York Moors (NP), where Rosedale Head, Dalby Forest and others have been selected.

East Yorkshire (north of the Humber Estuary, Kingston upon Hill), is the land of the « wolds », hills of low altitude, but often very steep. We've chosen four of them, to give a foretaste. The « Wold Land » stretches southwards, into Lincolnshire (Normanby le Wold in our list).



The Wolds around Kingston upon Hull

In the central part of England, we lose the altitude and difficulty. Some regions, like East of England, are rather flat, however we can highlight some small hills but they are not devoid of interest (the factors here are sport and tourism). Here cycling activity can be intense (see section « Media »):

-The Shropshire Hills, between Birmingham and Wales, for instance. Long Mynd, Abdon Burf or Brown Clee Burf are really well worth a visit.

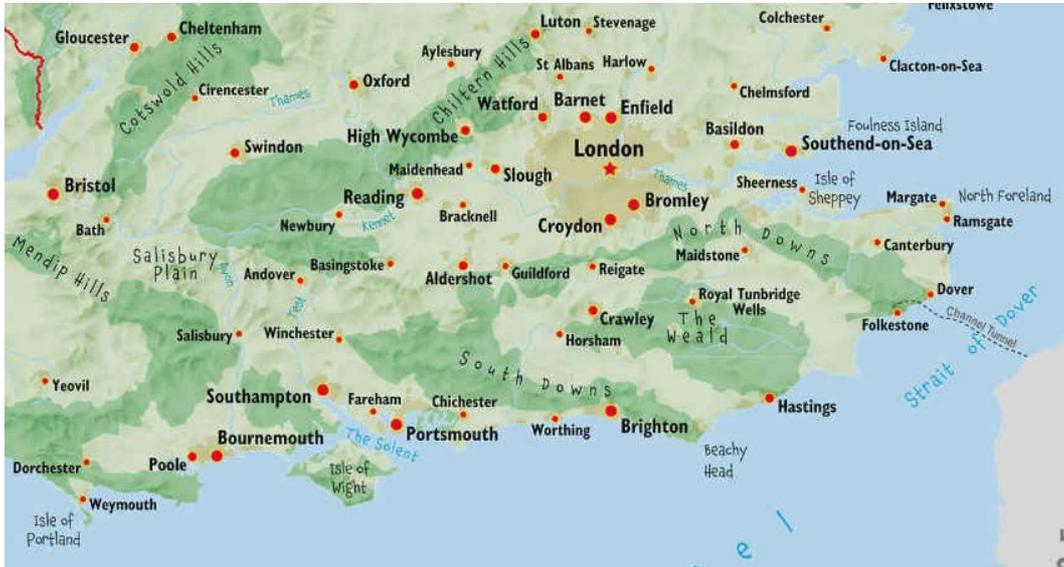
-Southwards, Worcestershire Beacon allows you a sweeping view of the Malvern Hills and more.

-Near the Severn Estuary (to Bath included), in the AONB Cotswolds, the steepness is back: Haresfield Beacon, Bear of Rodborough, Bushcombe Lane, Dover's Hill, Wyke Beacon and Sun Rising Hill.



The « Downs » are typical of South East England:

- The North Wessex Downs, west of London (Hackpen White Horse, Combe Gibbet,...) and the Chiltern Hills (Whiteleaf Hill, Kingston Hill, ...) to the north-east.
- The North Downs, from the south-west of London as far as Dover (from Barhatch Lane to Smallpox Hill, going through White Downs, Box Hill, York's Hill, Blue Bell Hill, ...)
- The South Downs (Goodwood, Black Down, Bignor Hill,...), north of Portsmouth.



Altitude is back in the South West, because in Devon the highest point, Willhays (Dartmoor NP), is 621m high:

- Once out of the Salisbury Plain, westwards, we face the Mendip Hills (Cheddar Gorge).
- The coast is very undulating, especially in Cornwall, so that an important selection of « sea walls » has been made there (at Challacombe, Clovelly, Talland, Millook, ...).
- Two massifs (and also National Parks) are inland: Dartmoor (Bush Down and Haytor Vale) and Exmoor (Dunkery Beacon, Porlock Hill).
- Other less important hills: the Quantock Hills (Taunton-north, with Crowcombe Combe) or the Blackdowns Hills (Taunton-south, with Wellington Monument).



2- TOURISM

The Challenge attaches great importance to places of interest as a way to discover the country. Here under a long, but not comprehensive list. By region:

In the **North East** there are three big green areas: the Northumberland National Park (Langleeford, Thirl Moor, Winter's Gibbet and also Carter Bar that's listed in the Scottish list), Kielder Forest Park (the unpaved Deadwater Fell) and a part of the North Pennines AONB (Cuthbert's Hill, Crawleyside, Peat Hill, Harthope Head, the BIG - Westernhope Moor and also now Shot Moss). The Stang is on the limit of the Yorkshire Dales NP and Boulby Bank on the edge of the North York Moors NP. At the bottom of High Hesleden, on the seashore, we find Blackhall Rocks Nature Reserve.

Concerning culture, three places must be visited:

- Hadrian's Wall, the northern border of the Roman Empire (Whittington Fell)
- Halidon Hill battlefield (1333)
- Chillingham Castle at the bottom of Hepburn Moor



Deadwater Fell



Hadrian's Wall

North West

On the Isle of Man, the Snaefell Mountain Railway gives the possibility to cycle past « The Bungalow » to reach the summit at 620m. We chose 14 climbs in the Lake District NP. It is one of the most beautiful regions in England, with walls of the BIG Superlist (such as Wrynose, Hard Knott, ...) and media climbs like Whinlatter, Honister or Kirkstone. A few scenic and wild newcomers: Newlands Hause, Martindale, Tow Top, ...



Cumbria has another part of the AONB North Pennines (the majestic Great Dun Fell, Hartside Cross, Killhope Cross and nearby Nunnery Hill), as well as a small part of the Yorkshire Dales NP (Coal Road and Whernside). Bankshead is an alternative way to reach Hadrian's Wall.

In Lancashire, we'll visit the AONB Forest of Bowland (Bowland Knotts, Jubilee Tower, Trough of Bowland and the Nick O'Pendle Hill Climb). Near Crow Point, an amazing metallic sculpture: Singing Ringing Tree.

The Peak District is shared out among several regions: In Greater Manchester, we selected Chew Reservoir. The eastern part of Cheshire offers climbs of very different kind (Lyme Park National Trust, The Corkscrew, Pym Chair and Cat & Fiddle).

Yorkshire & The Humber

In North Yorkshire, 8 climbs are in the Yorkshire Dales NP and AONB Nidderdale (Tan Hill, Buttertubs, Fleet Moss, Kidstones, Park Rash, Trapping Hill, Malham Cove, Greenhow Hill) and 7 in the North Yorks Moor NP (Carlton Bank, Sutton Bank, Sleights Moor, Rosedale Head, Rosedale Chimney, Robin Hood's Bay, Dalby Forest).

- The other side of Sutton Bank is overlooked by the Kilburn White Horse, a hillside design of 100x70m cut into the chalk in the XIXth century.
- The ruins of the Benedictine Whitby Abbey towers above the sea and the dreadful Donkey Road.
- The Scarborough War Memorial on Oliver's Mountain with a lovely viewpoint.



Kilburn White Horse



Whitby Abbey

West and South Yorkshire are less rich: Cow & Calf Rocks, the « Surprise View » at the Chevin, a small part of the Peak District NP (Holme Moss and Thorpe's Brow) and the ruins of Wincobank Fort, above Jenkin Road, with a panorama of Sheffield and surroundings.

East and West Midlands

The largest part of the Peak District NP is in Derbyshire, with 6 climbs selected (Whiteley Nab, Snake Pass, Mam Tor, Burbage Moor, Curbar Edge and Monsal Head).

- River Castle is very nice from outside, but unfortunately the entrance is forbidden.
- At Alport Heights stands a 6 meter high stone.
- Heights of Abraham is a hillside Country Park with caves and a cable car (admission charge).



Silverhill

In Nottinghamshire, no significant elevation gain in the Sherwood Forest, but an artificial hill (Silverhill) with a coal's miner Statue on the top.

The AONB Lincolnshire Wolds is in the list thanks to Normanby le Wold (Mt. Pleasant) and Tetford Hill. Beacon Hill (Leicestershire) allows us to visit the eponymous Country Park. Upper Hambleton is a hillock on a peninsula in the middle of an amazing artificial lake (Rutland Water).

The dissection of the Peak District comes to an end in the West Midlands (Staffordshire): The Roaches, The Mermaid and Ilam Moor. Penkridge Bank helps to go through the Cannock Forest AONB.

Telford and Wrekin is a small district, enough to offer a wonderful 360° panorama above The Wrekin. One side starts at Iron Bridge, first bridge ever constructed of iron. The whole gorge belongs to the UNESCO World Heritage List.



The Wrekin

4 climbs were selected in the Shropshire Hills (The Long Mynd, Abdon Burf, Brow Clew and Titterstone Clew).

In Herefordshire is Arthur's Stone, a neolithic burial chamber and British Camp is situated at the bottom of a Roman camp in the Malvern Hills, AONB overlooked by Worcestershire Beacon. Near the top of Clent Hill, we find the Four (standing) Stones.

Finally in Warwickshire is Sun Rising Hill for the AONB Cotswolds and Burton Dassett Hills, a Country Park.

East of England and Greater London

3 places of interest were selected in these regions:

- AONB Norfolk Coast (Beacon Hill),
- AONB Chiltern Hills (Bison Hill), more present in the South East list,
- Highgate Park and Karl Marx's tomb, at the top of Swain's Lane.

South West

In the Cotswolds AONB the selection is: Dover's Hill, Bushcombe Lane, Wyke Beacon, Haresfield Beacon and Bear of Rodborough.

In the very romantic Wye Valley we chose Symonds Yat Rock, and also Tintern Abbey for the Welsh part.



Symonds Yat Rock



Gorges de Cheddar

In Wiltshire,

- A « White Horse » (Hackpen) in the North Wessex Downs.
- Longleat Park Hill in the AONB Cranborne Chase.
- Unfortunately nothing around Stonehenge, but a prehistoric settlement (Old Sarum, Salisbury) at the bottom of Camp Hill.

Avon & Somerset are very touristic.

- At the end of the visit of the AONB Cotswolds (Weston Hill and Prospect Lane).
- There is the Cheddar Gorge (AONB Mendip Hills).
- Crowcombe Combe in the AONB Quantock Hills.
- Two monuments at the top of hills (Admiral Hood and Wellington).
- Exmoor NP with Dunkery Beacon and Porlock Hill.

In Dorset, the Cerne Abbas Giant (55m high), an ancient design cut into the chalk, and the Hardy Monument (in memory of one important figure of the Battle of Trafalgar). Both sites belong to the AONB Dorset, like the Purbeck Hills. The very short and steep cobbled Gold Hill is a picturesque street in Shaftesbury, chosen for scenes in movies and commercials.

Devon boasts of three important natural areas: the Dartmoor NP (Haytor Vale and Bush Down), the AONB North Devon Coast (Challacombe Hill and Clovelly) and East Devon (Chineway Hill). The former Otto Overbeck's house is nowadays a National Trust museum with tropical gardens.



Cerne Abbas Giant



Cobbles in Clovelly

Cornwall has plenty of AONB:

- Cornwall Heritage Coast and its mythical castle of Tintagel (King Arthur) + Millook
- Tamar Valley (Kitt Hill)
- Polperro Heritage Coast (Talland Hill)
- Penwick Heritage Coast (Cove Hill)

South East

Chiltern Hills are one of the attractions in the region (Kingston, Britwell, Watlington, Whiteleaf/Kop, Streatley Hills and The Crong).

In the AONB North Wessex Downs, situated in Oxfordshire and Berkshire, Combe Gibbet (on Dragon Hill) is the third White Horse of the list.

In Hampshire, we've covered the South Downs NP with Buser Hill. The Ports Downs overlook Portsmouth, there you'll climb Fort Nelson.

No particular place of interest in the two climbs on Isle of Wight, but the island itself and its panoramic views are worth seeing.

Beside its nice media climbs, Surrey has two protected natural sites: AONB Surrey Hills (Barhatch Lane, Leith Hill and Box Hill) and the South Downs NP (Devil's Punch Bowl and White Downs).



Sussex Hills from Devil's Dyke



Dover castle above the white cliffs

In Sussex (West and East), all the climbs are places of interest:

-7 out of the 12 are in the South Downs NP (Bignor Hill, Goodwood, Steyning Bowl, Devil's Dike, Ditchling Beacon, Firle Bostal and Butts Brow).

-Black Down in the AONB Surrey Hills.

-Cob Lane, Kidd's Hill and Brightling Needle in the AONB High Weald.

-Hastings for the famous battle in 1066.

Finally, Kent:

-The AONB Kent Downs with Blue Bell and White Hills.

-The one of High Weald with Pixot Hill.

-The climb in Dover runs along the castle and the Bleriot Memorial, and ends above the white cliffs.

3- MEDIA CLIMBS

Climbs of United Kingdom aren't the most well known at the international level, but the cycling activity is, however very intense. Stages of the Tour de France in 1994, 2007 and 2014 (waiting for 2021?) show how British people love cycle races. ASO recently created the « Tour de Yorkshire » and the same region organized the World Championships in 2019. Sportives abound and hill climbs (as individual time trials) are, in the end of the season, a phenomenon, that is almost unknown on the European continent, with a National Championship (NHC in the following text). A quick snapshot through the Challenge:

In the North East, 4 climbs were National Hill Climbs: Crawleyside in 1984, Harthope Head/Chapel Fell in 1992, Winter's Gibbet in 2004 and The Stang in 2013.

The North West is a big section:

The Bungalow (Isle of Man) is a must, in particular in the Manx Race.

The Tour of Britain uses to good advantage the walls in the Lake District (Cumbria). In 2018, Whinlatter Pass was twice used as a finishing line (even for a team time trial). In 2015, it was the turn of Hartside Cross. Honister and Kirkstone were also Kings of the Mountain (KOM) 1st cat. The Fred Whitton Challenge details a course round the region (Kirkstone, Honister, Newlands, Whinlatter, Hard Knott and Wrynose): <https://www.fredwhittonchallenge.co.uk/route/>

Nick O'Pendle is one of the darlings of the National Hill Climbs (1962, 1980, 1988). Also in Lancashire, Trough of Bowland was KOM 2nd cat. in the Tour of Britain.

In Greater Manchester, The Rake was three times NHC (1999, 2005, 2012) and 1st cat. in the Tour of Britain.



Steve Joughin at the finishing line - Nick O'Pendle (NHC 1980)



The Corkscrew – 45% declared!

The Cheshire Cobbled Classic is a mix of Tour of Flanders and Liège-Bastogne-Liège: dirty cobbles (Swiss Hill, The Corkscrew), a few tough walls (Mow Cop, Pym Chair) and a last unpaved section up to the AONB LymePark:

<https://www.facebook.com/cheshirecobbledclassic/>

Mow Cop was NHC in 1952 and attracts a lot of cyclists. The very long Cat & Fiddle was NHC in 2002 and 1st cat. in the Tour of Britain.

Yorkshire & The Humber

North Yorkshire is a cycling paradise. In 2014, the 1st stage of the Tour de France crossed Buttertubs and Kidstones (both were included in the long circuit of the World Championships 2019, but they were cancelled because of the bad weather). Trapping Hill was the key spot in the women's race.

Rosedale Chimney (1987), Park Rash (1991) and Carlton Bank (1996) were NHC.

The Tour of Yorkshire is also very well covered: Greenhow Hill, Sutton Bank, Sleights Moor, the BIG Rosedale Head, Brow Top, Dalby Forest and Olivers' Mount.

Towthorpe is a short, but hard, hill of the Humber (« Wold »).

West Yorkshire is not left behind. The 2nd stage of the Tour 2014 went there (Oxenhope, Ripponden, Holme Moss). Jackson Bridge and Halifax Lane were NHC in 1993 and 2004. Cow & Calf and the Chevin are often KOM in the Tour of Britain and Yorkshire.



Van Vleuten 's decisive attack in Trapping Hill (Lofthouse, CM2019)



Up the Buttrass!

Grade A for the Hell of Worth, a sportive with 22 very bad cobbled climbs (list for 2016):

1. Crooked Lane;
2. Hough;
3. Shibden Wall;
4. Ploughcroft Lane;
5. Exley Bank;
6. Crossley Hill;
7. Haigh Lane/Shaw Lane/Boys Lane/Shaw Hill Lane;
8. Trooper Lane;
9. Cribb Lane;
10. Gibb Lane;
11. Woodhouse Lane;
12. Gainest;
13. Wakefield Gate;
14. Old Lane;
15. Delph Hill Lane;
16. The Buttrass;
17. Heptonstall;
18. Household;
19. Butt Lane;
20. Haworth;
21. Thwaites Brow;
22. Hainworth Lane.

Identity cards can be read on <http://thehelloftheworth.blogspot.com/>.

5 have been selected: Shibden Wall, Trooper Lane, Gibb Lane, Heptonstall (with the very spicy short cut of the Buttress, as first part of Extwistle Moor) and Thwaites Brow.

And last but certainly not least, in South Yorkshire, Jenkin Road is a must. It was the last KOM of the 2nd stage of the Tour de France 2014 in Sheffield. We've prolonged it up to Wincobank Fort, to give it a tourist end. Pea Road Lane was NHC in 2009 and 2014.

Midlands (Est et Ouest)

Derbyshire is a Hill Climber's haven: Mam Tor (6x), Jackass (included in Alport Heights, 1946 and 1955), Riber Castle (1986), Rowsley Bar (1997) and Slack Hill (2008). And Snake Pass was 1st cat. in the Tour of Britain.

The rest of the area is more quiet:

- Michaelgate is the attraction in the GP.
- Gun Hill was many times 1st cat. in the Tour of Britain.
- Long Mynd was NHC in 1989 (under the name of *Burway Hill*).

In Worcestershire, Walton Hill has been renamed « Waltonberg » to tell how this rut smells like Flanders. The local sportive is called « Tour of the Black Country ». A foretaste on:

<https://cycleclassics.co.uk/tour-of-the-black-country-sportive/tour-of-the-black-country-course-details/>



Koppenhill



Gas Hill in Norwich

East of England and Greater London

The Tour of Britain often comes to the East, but KOMs (always last cat.) are more a pretext to give points for the jersey than real hard climbs. English cycling newsgroups are unanimous about that. However, in Norwich, Gas Hill is worth climbing: <https://www.facebook.com/gashillgasp/>

Bison has its own Hill Climb, and the beast doesn't seem easy. In London there is an « Urban Hill Climb » on Swain's Lane.



South West has a strong start with Dover's Hill (Gloucester), 5x Nat. Hill Climb at different times (1968, 1973, 1982, 1998 et 2010).

In Wiltshire, Park Hill/Longleat is known for its Speed Hill Climb (and its Safari Park) in a very classy setting.

Avon and Sommerset are more interesting for us. There we find the unavoidable Cheddar Gorge (NHC in 2007 and KOM in the Tour of Britain). Weston Hill (aka Lansdown Lane) was also NHC in 1948 and 1983. Dundry Hill has its Hill Climb (called « Dundry Hill Drubber »). Porlock as well.



A few nice classics in Devon. Haytor Vale, Nat. Hill Climb in 1979 and finishing line in the Tour of Britain (2013 and 2016). Challacombe was NHC (in 1985) and KOM 1st cat. in the Tour of Britain, like the BIG Chineway Hill (2nd cat.).

In Cornwall, the roller coasters on the seashore are greatly prized. Millook has been chosen.

South East

The Chiltern Classic Sportive has an interesting list of 10 climbs, rated on 10. Whiteleaf Hill gets a 10, Kingston Hill an 8 and The Crong a 7.

South of London (in Surrey), Box Hill is the place to be. Just a few climbs in the world have the Olympic label. Barhatch Lane was several times KOM 1st cat. in the Tour de Britain and Leith was 2nd cat.



Box Hill – London 2012

In West Sussex, on the former Goodwood airfield, changed into racing circuit, were organized the Road World Championships in 1982. The climb led to the Racecourse (Kennel Hill).

Ditchling Beacon is the most media climb in East Sussex (Tour de France 1994, NHC in 1995 and also KOM 1st cat. in the Tour of Britain).



The Tour de France in Ditchling Beacon



York's Hill Climb

Lastly visiting Kent, where the oldest race ever was organized in 1887. Firstly on Westerham Hill, then on York's Hill, which we've chosen. White Hill was KOM in the Tour de France 1994.

4- SPORT

The average English climb in the Challenge measures 4km for 188m elevation gain and 182 europoints.

Besides the 5 climbs mentioned in the British Top (Great Dun Fell 680pts, Dunkery Beacon 618, Hard Knott 563, Kirkstone 501 and The Wrekin 484), the hardest in europoints are Porlock Hill (482pts), Abdon Burf (442), Exe Plain (440), Pym Chair (431), Wrynose (429),...



Pym Chair



Abdon Burf

As far as elevation gain is concerned, Great Dun Fell is the best (633m) again, far before Hartside Cross (488), Dunkery Beacon (476), Cuthbert's Hill (461), Bush Down (450) and Snake Pass. Among the new ones, Tittlestone Clee (437), The Bungalow (419m, Isle of Man), Stoneside Hill (384), Cat & Fiddle (381), Haytor Vale (364), Deadwater Fell (361),...



Simon Yates above Haytor Vale
(Tour of Britain 2013-06)



The Bungalow (Man)

Bombs

The top10 in UK is almost exclusively English: Hard Knott 45pts, Clovelly 44, Wynniatts Way 43, Corkscrew 41, Whitby Abbey, Abdon Burf, Heights of Abraham et Wrynose 40, Trooper Lane 39,...

Scotland



1- Short introduction to geography

Scotland has an area of 80,000km², namely 1/3 of the United Kingdom of which it's a part, or 1/8 of France, twice Switzerland, three times Belgium,...

Physically the « continental » Scotland is made out of 4 big areas, from north to south: North West Highlands in the extreme north, Grampian Mountains (Aberdeen), Central Lowlands (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee) and Southern Uplands (Ayr). Here there are 82 out of the 100 climbs selected.

The 18 others are situated on islands: the northern archipelagos (3 on the Isles of Shetland, 2 on the Isles of Orkney and 3 on Lewis and Harris) and the western isles (3 on Skye, 3 on Mull, 1 on Jura, 1 on Islay, 1 on Arran and 1 on Great Cumbrae).



2- Tourism

Scotland has two National Parks: Cairngorms in the north, where 5 BIGs were already selected (Cairn Gorm, Lecht Road, Tom Dubh, The Strone and Devils's Elbow) and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs (with Loch Arklet and Dukes Pass).



Loch Arklet

3 other climbs are connected with UNESCO sites:

Edinburgh Castle

The climb is rather easy (35m elevation gain), but the quite steep (14%) and cobbled Ramsay Lane links the Scottish National Gallery to the castle perched on a hill.

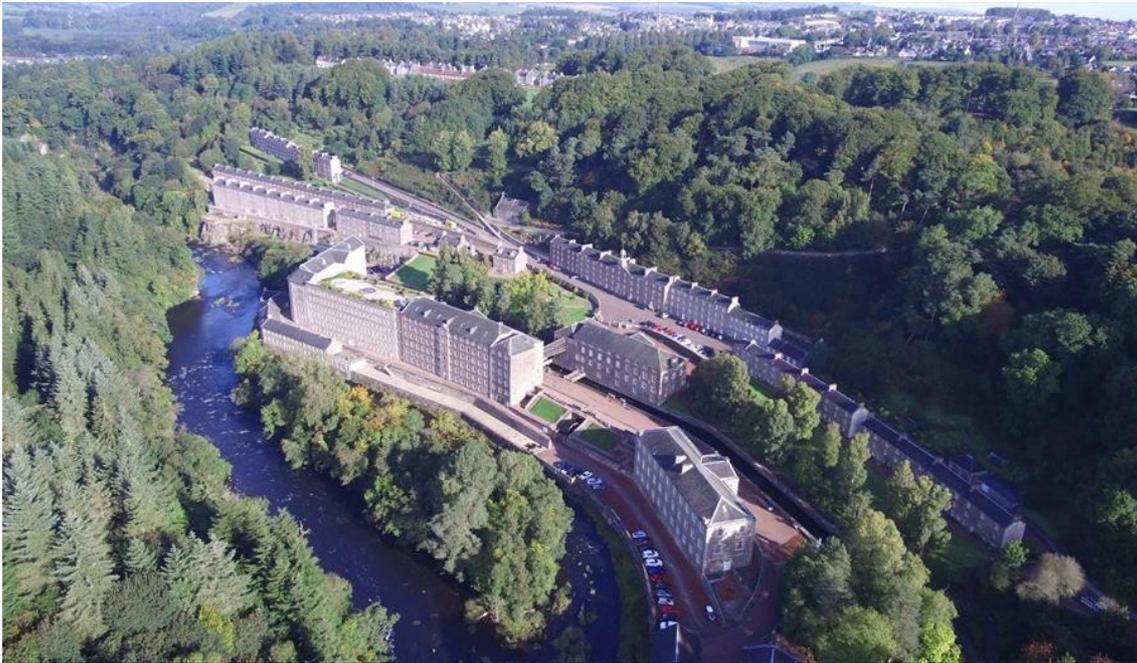


Falkirk Millennium Wheel

It is a rotating lift, built in 2002, which helps boats to pass from one canal to the other above a hill. The climb (1.5km-54m elevation gain) runs along the inclined plane and goes through a narrow and small tunnel.



Industrial art is emphasized in **New Lanark**, a unique village sitting, built in the 18th-century near cotton mills by the River Clyde. Like in Edinburgh and Falkirk, the easy climb (80m elevation in 1.5km) is a pretext to discover the Scottish heritage.



All in all, about thirty places of interest are highlighted:

*prehistoric sites: Wideford Hill Chambered Cairn (Orkney), Caterthun Forts and White Castle.

*historic sites: Stirling and Hume Castles, Sheriffmuir Battlefield, Balmerino Abbey (at the bottom of Coarse Brae), Dunrobin Castle.



Stirling Castle



Panorama from Struie Hill

*a few scenic roads: Ord of Caithness, Struie Hill, Quiraing (on Skye), Glen Docherty and Scott's View (with an explicit literary reference).

*water is very present in the Scottish list: a lot of coastal climbs, valleys (called « glen ») and lakes (« loch »), among which the Loch Ness, seen from General Wade's Military Road and MacBain Hill.

3- Media climbs

The traditional Anglo-saxon National Hill Climb is usually programmed in autumn. Up the Kirk (1st part of Sheriffmuir in the list) is very much appreciated, like Stow, Purin Hill and Fairlie Moor. Crow Road was also used in the Robert Millar Sportive. The Wall of Talla is unavoidable and the hairpins of the Serpentine in Rothesay aren't difficult, but funny.



Purin Hill



Wall of Talla

From the sportives we've also selected the Ross on Arran, Tak Ma Doon, in a circuit with Crow Road, Leithen and Note o' The Gate.

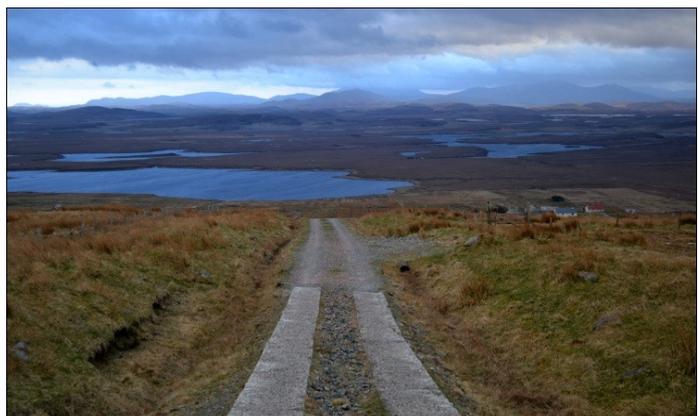
In Glasgow, Cathkin Braes was the site of the mountain bike race during the Euro 2018. One side is asphalted, but the other climbs the hillside on a (rideable) track.

4- Sport

The average Scottish climb in the list measures 4,9km for a 210m elevation gain and has 179 europoints. Hardest in europoints: Bealach na Ba (583pts), Lowther Hill (493), Bealach Feith (486), Mull of Kintyre (450), Glen Quaich (447). Among the new ones: General Wade's Military Road. (349), Cairn O'Mount (342),...



Descent down to Mull of Kintyre



Eitshal TV

As far as elevation gain is concerned, the best are BIGs: Bealach na Ba (614m), Lowther Hill (597), Glen Quaich (427), Cairngorm (411m). The best new ones: Ben Lawers (355m), General Wade Rd. (346m above the Loch Ness), Cambret Hill (335),...

2 bombs stand out: Bealach Feith (38pts) and Mull of Kintyre (37). Then Bealach na Ba and Eitshal TV (30), Bealach na Ratagan and Glen Quaich (29), Craigowl and Collafirth Hill (28),...

Wales

1- Short introduction to geography

Wales has an area of 20,000km², with a lot of low altitude mountains (300-500m), overlooked by Snowdon (1085m), several hilly areas (Pembrokeshire Coast in the south-west and on Anglesey, an island in the extreme north-west) and almost no flat places. That's the reason why the number of climbs selected in the principality is relatively high compared with the other nations of United Kingdom. The Cambrian Mountains were a priority. They cross the north and the centre of Wales, while the Brecon Beacons cross the southern part. Other mountain ranges, less important, are also visited: the Clwydian Hills in the north-east, the Black Mountains in the south-east and Mynydd Preseli in the south-west.



Triple word score

2- Tourism



Wales has three National Parks. The highest point gives its name to Snowdonia. There we've selected 8 climbs (Llanberis, Rhyd-Ddu, Llyn Du, Bwlch Pen-y-Feidiog, Hirnant Pass, Bwlch-y-Groes, Aberllefenni and Aberdovey Panorama).



Hirnant Pass



Speed Hill Climb at Llys-y-fran Reservoir (bottom of Mynydd Preseli)

In the south-west, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park has 3 climbs: Newgale Hill, Newton Mountain in the Cleddau Valley and Mynydd Preseli.

There are 5 in the Brecon Beacons, in the south-east: Bwlch Cerrig Duon, Devil's Elbow, Brecon Beacons itself, Cefn Onneu and Black Mountain.



Devil's Elbow



Cleydau Valley

The United Kingdom emphasizes its natural heritage thanks to the label « AONB » (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty »). 4 areas and 9 climbs are concerned:

- Seaside, on Anglesey: South Stack
- Llŷn Peninsula, in the north-west: Nant Gwrtheyrn and Rhiw Hill
- Clwydian Hills & Dee Valley in the north-east: Moel Famau (highest point), World's End, Horseshoe Pass, Gwaenysgor Hill and Moel-y-Parc
- Gower, in the south: Cefn Bryn



Lighthouse in front of South Stack



Moel Famau

Other places of interest are worth seeing:

- castles listed in the UNESCO World Heritage: Conwy (bottom of Sychnant Pass) and Harlech
- Powis Castle ; the Roman road at the Pass of the Two Stones
- medieval Tintern Abbey, painted by Turner
- scenic roads: Nant-y-Moch and Dylife Panorama
- Pistyll Rhaeadr Waterfall,...



Conwy Castle



Tintern Abbey

3- Sport



Marchlyn Mawr Reservoir, number 2 in points and best elevation gain

3 climbs exceed 500 europoints: Moel Famau (613), Marchlyn Mawr (531) and Bwlch y Groes (521). Then another BIG, Devil's Staircase (467), the monster Church Hill (431) and the well named Road to Hell (398).



Bwlch-y-Groes
Milk Race 1988



Down from Great Olme

Elevation gain. The maximum is at Marchlyn Mawr Reservoir (537m). Some other nice climbs: Moel Famau (484m), Dylife Panorama (472), Gospel Pass (453), Cefn Onneu (447), Bwlch (443), Bwlch y Groes (393), The Tumble (392),...

Constitution Hill and Church Hill are the best Welsh bombs (37pts). Mutton Dingle and Moel-y-Parc are very close (36). Then Moel Famau (35), Nant-y-Cerrig (34), Great Orme and Plas Uchaf (33),...

4- Media climbs

In the north, BIGs are appreciated (Llanberis, Horseshoe and Bwlch-y-Groes). The Road to Hell sees the Conwy Gran Fondo and Stwlan Dam was used for a Himalayan experience: <https://www.sirguylitespeed.com/everesting-5-stwlan-dam-snowdonia-wales/>



Hairpins in Stwlan



The place to be is for sure Harlech Hill Climb and its 40%.



In the centre, Brecon Beacons often sees the Tour of Britain and gets its own sportive. Other sportives (Dragon Ride Devil, Iron Mountain Sportive, Autumn Epic) cross Cefn Onneu, Devil's Elbow, Gospel Pass, Devils Staircase, Glascwm or Elan Valley. Finally, the Aberystwyth Cycle Festival organises a Hill Climb on Cefn Llan and crosses Nant-y-Moch and The Arch in a circuit.



Glascwm: cross with the road?



Dandy horse on Cefn Llan

In the south, 3 climbs seem to be part of the furniture:

-The Bwlch, National Hill Climb in 2001, always KOM in the Junior Tour of Wales and unavoidable in the sportives.

-Caerphilly, often KOM 1re category in the Tour of Britain.

-The Tumble, major spot in all the events (races and bike rides) in the south-east.



Martin attacks, Quintana responds
Tour of Britain 2013



A real road sign, like the big climbs

Rhigos and Black Mountain are also regularly visited. And we'll end the zakuski with the short, but lethal bomb Constitution Hill, defused by Albasini in 2010.



Northern Ireland

1- Some geographic information

Northern Ireland is 1/6 of the whole island of Ireland (14,000 km² out of 84,000). It is made up of 6 out of the 9 counties of the traditional province of Ulster (Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, Tyrone). The 3 others (Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan) are in the Republic of Ireland.



There are three mountainous ranges. In the south-eastern part, the Mourne Mountains, where the highest point is (Slieve Donard, 850m) and one of the two BIGs (Spelga Dam). The Sperrin Mountains tower above the north. The second BIG, from which it takes its name is there, on the hillside of Sawel Mountain (678m). The north-east area is covered by the Antrim Mountains (Trostan, 556m). The Challenge visits them thanks to the Glenariff Forest.

Northern Ireland also has 4 main loughs:

-Lough Neagh in the centre, west of Belfast. The region is too flat for the Challenge.

-Lough Erne (Lower and Upper), 75km long in the south-west. Cliffs of Magho is probably the best climb to appreciate it.



Lough Erne from the cliffs of Magho

-In the south-east, Lough Strangford isolates the Ards Peninsula. In this region, we've selected Scrabo Tower, near Newtonards.

-Lough Foyle opens the door to the Atlantic Ocean, from Londonderry/Derry. Two climbs allow to discover it: Binevenagh, in the east, and Glenagivney, in the north, in the Inishowen Peninsula (Republic of Ireland).

2- A challenge made of mounts and hills

No high mountain in the list, the highest altitude is reached at Slieve Croob, 516m. The average climb is 5.6km long for 245m elevation gain and has 201 points, more or less the same as the Welsh list, and a little more than Scotland and England. The local beast is called « Benbradagh », 430 points (680 for Great Dun Fell), 5.8km long and 358m elevation gain, with 2km at 13%. It is integrated into the circuit of the sportive Man of Sperrin.



The monster

No easy picnic neither at Slieve Gallion (372pts), Divis (361pts), Slieve Croob (352pts), Bernish Rock (348pts), Torr Head (304pts), Binevenagh (300pts) and Sperrin (261pts).



Top of Slieve Gallion

These climbs have an elevation gain higher than 300m: Slieve Croob (484m), Slieve Gallion (438m) and Divis (423m) for the Top 3. In this ranking Glenariff Forest (326m) stands out from the rest.



Divis

Not many climbs are longer than 10km: Spelga Dam (14km), Slieve Croob (13km) and Glenariff (12km). Only Torr Head (9.4%) and Brougher Mountain (9.3%) have an average gradient higher than 9%. The others are about 5%.



Torr Head Challenge



Torr Head panorama

The highest gradients are more interesting: 17% in their best section for Benbradagh, Sperrin and Torr Head, 16% in Brougher Mountain and Windy Gap, 15% in Bernish Rock, Binevenagh and Scrabo Tower. A few none - mentioned climbs: Carnmore (14%), Spring Hill (13%), Pigeon Top (12%), ...

3- Green tourism

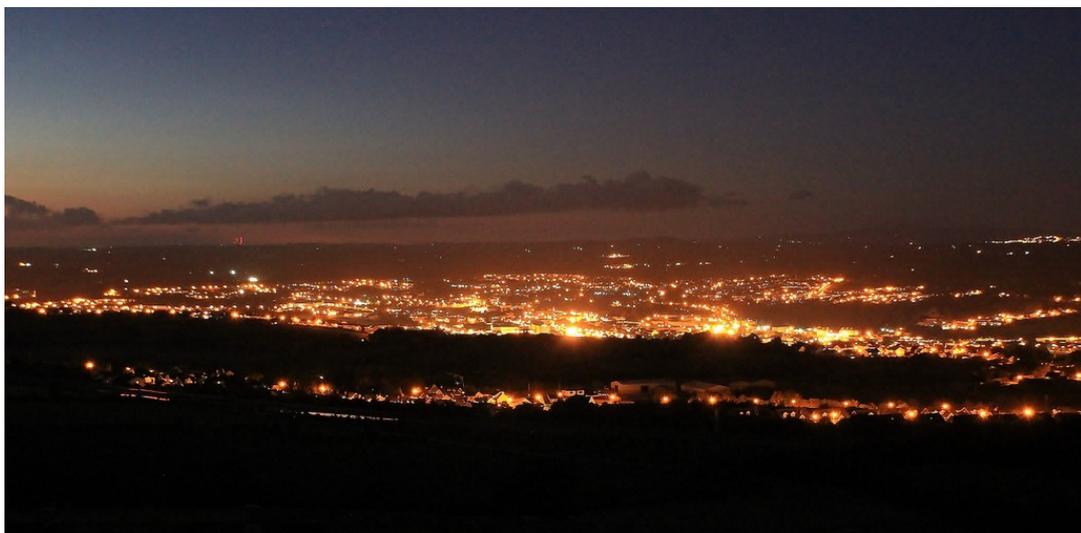
What is amazing in Ireland, for Mainland Europe Continentals accustomed to the Alps, is the colour of the landscape, with monochromes of green and brown, at such low altitudes.

The pearl is the 40,000 basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway, listed on the UNESCO World Heritage.



The Giant's Causeway

Other sites are worth seeing: Slieve Croob, which got the label « AONB » (« Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty »). The mount towers above the Dromara Hills and conceals a few Celtic remains, among which is a traditional « cairn ». Torr Head is a cape reachable by a wonderful undulating and steep scenic road. It is the key spot of a sportive (Torr Head Challenge). From Bernish Viewpoint you'll have a large panorama of Newry, one of the most beautiful in Ireland. There is a Celtic tumb.



Newry by night from Bernish Viewpoint

After having crossed the Lough Navar Forest, you'll be above the cliffs of Magho with a panoramic viewpoint over the lake. Let's close the green chapter with the Glengariff and Gortin Glen Nature Reserves.

North of Belfast, a World War II Memorial stands above Knockagh Hill. This is a memorial to the victims of « Bloody Sunday » is at the start of Springhill, in Londonderry/Derry.

Dungannon Castle was built in the XIVth century. It was the residence of the O'Neill dynasty, who ruled over Ulster for three centuries. One says that, in good weather, their seven counties can be seen in one glance.

Finally, an original stone chair stands at Carnmore viewpoint. It belongs to a 10km walk (Sleave Beagh Walk) which is included in a cross border project (Clones Erne East Blackwater).



Knockagh Cliff



Carnmore Stone Chair

4- Media

The Tour of Ulster is a really important race. Just like in the whole Anglo-saxon world, hill climbing is an autumnal tradition. Sportives are many and are often combined with charities. 7 climbs were or are media highlights:

Spelga Dam has a sportive, it is very often « King of the Mountain » and was three times the National Hill Climb in the early 2000's.

Benbradagh and its 27% climb belongs to the Man of Sperrin.



Torr Head gets a lot of visitors, thanks in particular to the Torr Head Challenge.

In Dungannon, the start and the finish of the Lap of the Lough (Neagh) are situated at the top of « Hill of the O'Neill ».



Start of the Lap of the Lough
with the castle in the background



Devilish Slieve Croob

Slieve Croob and Windy Gap are unavoidable south of Belfast, for instance in the sportive Dromara Hilly (125km). Up to its dead-end summit, the first is also a hill climb.

Last but not least, Fewes Forest (included in Carrigtuke) was « Gran Premio della Montagna », 4th category, when the Giro d'Italia started in Northern Ireland in 2014 (3rd stage: Armagh-Dublin).