

THE ORANGE COUNTY BICYCLE ROUTE SYSTEM

consists of four numbered, signed routes and several unsigned connectors. This 206 mile route system uses lightly traveled, paved roads favored by local bicyclists to link towns, points of interest and recreational areas in the county. Most roads have low traffic volumes throughout the day, but higher traffic volumes in some areas during commuting times require extra caution. Orange County's terrain mixes rolling hills with a few steep climbs and some relatively flat sections, making for pleasant bicycling.

Convenience stores are widely scattered on these routes with restaurants and other services available in most towns. Because of the primarily rural nature of these routes, bicyclists are advised to plan ahead and carry ample snacks and water with them. Three bike shops in Carrboro and one in Chapel Hill can assist bicyclists with necessary products and services.



The routes, marked with signs like the one shown here, are briefly described to help you plan your rides. Routes are designed so you can follow all or part of a single route or combine them to create your own tour. All routes may be ridden in either direction, however the descriptions indicate the direction perspective. Names in **BOLD** indicate points of interest – described further in that section. Regardless of how you choose to ride these routes, you will discover the natural beauty and distinctive features that make Orange County a great place for bicycling.

ROUTES

PERIMETER, ROUTE 1 (83 MILES)

Description starts at Carr Mill Mall at the intersection of Greensboro and Main Streets in Carrboro.

This loop route skirts the perimeter of Orange County, with brief sections that dip into the adjacent counties of Alamance and Durham. From Carrboro heading clockwise, the route links to Mebane on the west side of the county and connects to Chapel Hill on the southeast side after exploring myriad country roads. Greensboro Street in Carrboro – wide with bike lanes on both sides – quickly leads from busy town life to quiet country roads where wildflowers abound in warm months and dairy cattle graze lazily in green fields.

You'll quickly see from the numerous silos, hay bales and pastures how Dairyland Road got its name. Some farms use their dairy milk to create products such as ice cream and butter, with signs posted along the route. Of course, ice cream is always a favorite for area bicyclists. Other farms in this area offer eggs and produce to those with an interest and carrying capacity. Straight stretches of road offer scenic views across the peaceful countryside, with small forest groves providing shade and breaks in the landscape.



On the north side of Mebane, **LAKE MICHAEL PARK**, operated by Mebane Parks & Recreation Department, offers restrooms and a shady picnic area, with lovely views of the lake. Look for a farm on Harmony Church Road that displays large metal sculptures, an unusual scene in the countryside.

Where the route crosses NC 86 on Carr Store Road, a short, 0.3-mile jaunt north on NC 86 takes you to **CEDAR GROVE PARK**. This Orange County-operated park provides restrooms and picnic tables in addition to ball fields and recreation facilities. On the east side of the county, **LITTLE RIVER REGIONAL PARK** is just off New Sharon Church Road on Guess Road. This fairly large park includes group camping facilities and hiking and biking trails, as well as picnic shelters and restrooms for bicyclists who need a break.

A few miles farther south lies another respite for cyclists: **ENO RIVER STATE PARK**. The park entrance, located about one mile west on Cole Mill Road from Pleasant Grove Road on the Perimeter Route, provides ready access to restrooms and picnic areas as well as abundant hiking trails and great canoeing. Historically and ecologically significant, the Eno River provides 12 miles of forested river banks for exploring its natural beauty.

Four separate divisions of **DUKE FOREST** with recreational opportunities are situated on either side of the route, which also passes the **JOHNSTON MILL PRESERVE** just north of Chapel Hill.



Continuing south into Chapel Hill, the route uses a short section of greenway so cyclists can avoid riding on very busy US 15-501 (Fordham Blvd.) on the east side of Chapel Hill. Finding the greenway can be tricky. After you cross US 15/501/Fordham Blvd. on Willow Drive, turn right onto Hickory Drive, then left onto Walnut before again taking a right turn onto Hickory Drive. Turn right onto Ridgefield to access the greenway, which is on the left, near US 15/501/Fordham Blvd. The greenway connects to Cleland Drive before heading south to Mason Farm Road, which accesses **THE NORTH CAROLINA BOTANICAL GARDEN**.

The southernmost part of the route gives you a tour of the heart of the **UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA'S** flagship campus with its many sights and activities. In Carrboro the Libba Cotton Cycle Trail links S. Merritt Mill Road to Robertson Street and then to S. Greensboro Street to complete this loop route.

SEGMENT OF MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA BICYCLE ROUTE, ROUTE 2 (17 MILES)

This southernmost East-West Route is a portion of North Carolina's 700-mile Mountains-to-Sea Route that travels the width of the state from mountains to coast. From the Haw River at the border with Alamance County on the west, this route crosses Route 4 (North-South) on its

meander across the southern part of the county. The route diverts into Carrboro and Chapel Hill before heading south into Chatham County, passing the **UNIVERSITY LAKE** recreation area just west of Carrboro.

EAST-WEST, ROUTE 3 (25 MILES)

On the west side of Orange County, this route joins those in adjoining Alamance County. The town of Mebane anchors the westernmost point on this East-West Route that also visits Efland and Hillsborough before meandering northeast through fertile farmland to the border with Durham County. After you turn right on Ben Johnson Road from the I-85 Connector, you will see signs for **KINGS HIGHWAY PARK**, a small natural area with walking trails. On the west side as you enter Hillsborough, you can find picnic tables and restrooms at **GOLD PARK**, on Dimmocks Mill Road near the intersection with Eno and S. Nash streets.

NORTH-SOUTH, ROUTE 4 (33.5 MILES)

This North-South Route links Orange County to Chatham County on the south and Caswell County on the north. The historic town of **HILLSBOROUGH**, situated at the route's midpoint, provides amenities for bicyclists as well as sightseeing opportunities. Take time to explore the antique shops and admire the historic buildings in this lovely town.

In Hillsborough the intersection of this route with Route 3, running east-west through the county, gives bicyclists a

POINTS OF INTEREST

Orange County, with its rich tradition of farming and its significant role in history, offers many points of interest along these routes as well as numerous accommodation and dining options in its charming towns.

HISTORIC HILLSBOROUGH † located along Route 3 & 4, has many late 18th- and 19th-century structures that convey the history of earlier times. In addition, Hillsborough has several historic cemeteries such as the **OLD TOWN CEMETERY**, circa 1757, with graves of prominent North Carolinians such as William Hooper, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and William A. Graham, governor and statesman. **THE ALEXANDER DICKSON HOUSE**, a late 18th-century farmhouse, now houses the town's Visitor Center, which is open 10am-4pm, Monday-Saturday, and 12pm-4pm on Sunday. Restrooms at the Visitor Center are open 24-hours.

AYR MOUNT HISTORIC SITE, adjacent to Route 3 on St. Mary's Road in Hillsborough encompasses 265 acres and features the Federal-style **AYR MOUNT PLANTATION HOME**, built by William Kirkland of Ayr, Scotland in 1815. Until 1985, four generations of the Kirkland family occupied the house, which is now restored with period antiques and some of the family's original belongings. Guided tours (one hr/fee charged) are provided Wednesdays-Sundays from March-December at varying times. The one-mile long **POET'S WALK TRAIL** meanders through the woods and meadows around the Ayr Mount Plantation Home. The path parallels a segment of the Great Indian Trading Path, a historic trading route used by Native Americans and Europeans that runs from Virginia to Georgia. The trail is open daily from 9am until dusk. Free. For more information: 919-732-6886 or visit www.presnc.org/seestorestorations/ayrmount/ayrmount.html



OCCANEECHI INDIAN VILLAGE is a reconstructed late 17th century Native American village with a stockade fence, huts, cooking site and sweat lodge, located in River Park, along the Eno River. The village is open 24-hours daily for self-guided tours. For more information: www.occaneechi-saponi.org

RIVER PARK, near the intersection of Margaret Lane and Cameron Street on Route 3, includes 12 acres of open space, walking trails, and the Public Market House. It is also home to the Eno River Farmer's Market.

Other Hillsborough points of interest:

THE BURWELL SCHOOL, 319 N. Churton Street. Site of Rev. and Mrs. Burwell's School for Young Ladies from 1837-1857, is currently open as a museum that preserves and interprets the history of its antebellum and Civil War-era residents.

RUFFIN-ROULHAC HOUSE, 101 E. Orange Street. Hillsborough's Town Hall, built starting in 1821, once belonged to Chief Justice Thomas Ruffin.

OLD ORANGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE. North Churton and East King Streets. Outstanding example of Greek Revival architecture built in 1844-45, attributed to Captain John Berry.

COLONIAL INN. Margaret Lane. Stately two-story inn, built around 1838, with doubled columns outlining upper and lower front porches.

MONTROSE GARDENS. First developed by Governor and Mrs. William Alexander Graham in the mid-19th century, featuring large trees, a rock garden, woods garden, and sunny perennial borders along with several remaining 19th century buildings and architectural items. Open for special events.

Learn more about Hillsborough and Orange County history by visiting the **ORANGE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM** at 201 North Churton Street in Hillsborough. The museum exhibits 1,500 artifacts representing many eras of Orange County's existence: colonial tools, a rare complete set of weights and measures from Colonial 1760, large textile and ceramic collections and historical documents. The museum is open Tuesday-Sunday until 4pm, morning hours vary. Free. For more information: 919-732-2201 or visit www.orangehistory.org. For more information on Historic Hillsborough: 919-732-7741 or visit www.historichillsborough.org

CHAPEL HILL † located along the southern leg of Route 1 (Perimeter Route), is best known as the site of the University of North Carolina System's first campus. Here you'll find many dining options and points of interest to explore.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL (UNC-CH), the oldest public university in the nation, was chartered in 1789 and opened to its first students in 1793. The 729-acre central campus, among the most beautiful in the nation, houses not only classrooms and libraries but also various historical and scientific collections in addition to other attractions. The campus itself, spreading over a wide area around Franklin Street, connects seamlessly to the town of Chapel Hill and draws visitors onto brick sidewalks snaking through campus under stately trees. A visitor could spend many days just exploring the activities, museums and historic sites on and around campus (see descriptions below). For guided tours or a self-guided tour map, contact the UNC Visitors' Center at 919-962-1630 or visit www.unc.edu/visitors/

ACKLAND ART MUSEUM on South Columbia Street opened in 1958 and now houses over 15,000 objects depicting art from Asia, Africa, Europe and America from ancient times to the 21st century. Open Wednesday-Sunday; morning hours vary;

donations suggested. For more information: 919-966-5736 or www.ackland.org/index.php

MOREHEAD PLANETARIUM, one of the largest planetariums in the United States, features a 68-ft. domed Star Theater, educational exhibits on topics ranging from black holes to space travel, and a sundial rose garden. Since its opening in 1949, it has provided training in celestial navigation for many U.S. astronauts. The planetarium is open daily; hours and show times vary. For more information: 919-549-6863 (recorded information), 919-962-1236 (reservations), or www.moreheadplanetarium.org

THE OLD WELL serves as the official symbol of UNC-Chapel Hill and was the original water supply for the campus for over a century. In 1897, it underwent a beautification project to become the Greek Revival structure that is often photographed today. Drinking from the well on the first day of school will supposedly bring students good luck.



NORTH CAROLINA BOTANICAL GARDEN, located just off Route 1 on Laurel Hill Road, is nationally known for its conservation efforts, educational collections and diverse programs including native plant studies, botanical illustrations and horticultural therapy. In the years since its founding in 1952, the garden has grown to some 700 acres, not including a number of nature preserves held by the Botanical Garden Foundation (210 acres). As the garden has grown, it has developed programs and collections of national significance, such as the Southeastern Carnivorous Plant Collection, and is one of the founding members of the Center for Plant Conservation, responsible for research and protection of our nation's rarest plants. The gardens are open daily year-round, but hours vary. For more information: 919-962-0522 or www.ncbg.unc.edu

COKER ARBORETUM, a five-acre naturalistic garden, contains 400 varieties of ornamental plants and shrubs. It bears the name of William Chambers Coker, the university's first professor of botany who began planting a teaching collection of trees and shrubs on the central campus in 1903. This collection, which became the Coker Arboretum located on the University of North Carolina campus, is now part of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, functioning as an outdoor laboratory as well as a park.

CARRBORO † located at the intersection of the Routes 1 & 2, maintains one of the largest networks of on- and off-road bicycle facilities in North Carolina. To download a PDF of the bikeways online, visit <http://townofcarrboro.org/GIS/downloads/printmap/bikeway.pdf>

CARR MILL MALL, in the heart of downtown Carrboro, represents an adaptive re-use of an old 1898 cotton mill. Used as a hosiery mill until World War II, the building briefly served as a munitions factory. After the war, it was reconverted to a textile mill, making woolen military cloth. In 1977 after much restoration, the community reopened the building as Carr Mill Mall, offering a variety of shops and restaurants. Monday-Saturday, 10am-6pm; Sunday, 1pm-6pm. www.carmillmall.com

CARRBORO FARMERS' MARKET offers shoppers a variety of locally grown farm products, prepared foods, and artistic crafts from vendors within a 50-mile radius of Carrboro. All items are sold only by the original producers, who not only represent their own products, but run the market as well. Special events and demonstrations are held at the market on a monthly basis. Two outdoor locations sell goods on different days and at different hours. For more information: 919-493-2906 or www.carrborofarmersmarket.com

RECREATION AREAS †

JOHNSTON MILL NATURE PRESERVE, located along Route 1 on Turkey Farm Road, protects a mature stand of hardwood forest. This preserve, administered by the Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC), offers local residents the same quiet, natural diversity and recreational opportunities as North Carolina's more well-known public lands. Open to the public year-round, Johnston Mill harbors a number of rare plant and animal species and historic mill sites, with a number of creeks criss-crossing the nearly 300-acre site. The preserve is rarely crowded, which adds to its appeal.

ENO RIVER STATE PARK, bordering 12 miles of the winding Eno River on Route 1, was used by early settlers and Native Americans. One of five access points for the park, Fews Ford on Cole Mill Road further into the park, offers entry into the largely unspoiled environment, with primitive, family and group camping sites, and fishing. In spite of nearby urban development, the park provides a peaceful haven with 2600 acres of deep forests and abundant wildflowers complemented by diverse wildlife. The park is open year round but hours vary with the access point and season. For more information: 919-383-1686 or www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/enr/main.php

LITTLE RIVER REGIONAL PARK, an Orange/Durham County partnership, is easily accessible from Route 1 off New Sharon Church Road. Little River offers picnic shelters, group camping, grills and restroom facilities along with miles of hiking and single-track mountain biking trails. The park is open year round from 8am (October-April) or 7am (May-September) until dusk. For more information: 919-732-5505 or www.co.orange.nc.us/RecParks/little_river_park.asp

OCCONEECHEE MOUNTAIN STATE NATURAL AREA, on Dimmocks Mill Road off Routes 3 & 4, is recognized as one of the most important natural areas in the Triangle, with 124 acres of land and nearly two miles of trails. Rising more than 350 feet above the Eno River, this summit at 867 feet is the highest point in Orange County and in eastern North Carolina between Hillsborough and the Atlantic Ocean. The mountain's various habitats support rare species that are significant in this region, believed to have remained relatively unchanged since the last Ice Age. For more information: 919-383-1686 or www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/ocmo/main.php

KINGS HIGHWAY PARK, 1001 Ben Johnston Road on Routes 3 & 4, is an 18-acre natural area that includes over a mile of natural walking trails. The park is surrounded by the mighty Eno River and a small pond, both of which are suitable for canoeing. Users are asked not to remove any found objects from the park because it is a historic site still under study. Open daily from 8am to 30 minutes past sunset.

LAKE MICHAEL PARK, located along Route 1 on Lebanon Road, contains a beautiful 59-acre lake with two piers and boat access for fishing as well as 200 acres of natural area with trails, picnic areas, restrooms, boat rentals, overnight group camping, sand volleyball, special areas for tots, covered shelters and disc golf. The park is open Thursdays-Mondays from March-October. For more information: 919-563-4573, 919-563-3629 (ext. 8) or www.cityofmebane.com/lakemichaelpark.asp

CANE CREEK RESERVOIR, built in 1989 to complement University Lake, offers restrooms, free picnic and sunbathing areas with rowboats and canoes available for rent. The entrance to the Cane Creek Reservoir recreation area is on NC 54 just west of Stanford Road, south of the Bradshaw Quarry connector route. Open Saturday, 6:30am-6pm. For more information: 919-942-5790 or <http://carrboro.com/html/owasaopenslakes.html>

UNIVERSITY LAKE was built in 1932 by the University of North Carolina as a source of drinking water for the university and local communities. Recreation facilities including picnicking and sunbathing were added to the 213-acre lake in 1993. Rowboats, canoes and paddleboats are available for rent. Open Friday-Sunday, 6:30am-6pm. For more information: <http://www.carrboro.com/universitylake.html>

DUKE FOREST has four divisions with public access near Route 1 within Orange County: Blackwood, Durham, Eno and Korstian. The Duke Forest is private land, owned and managed by Duke University as an outdoor laboratory. Limited public recreation is permitted in the Duke Forest as long as it does not conflict with teaching and research

shady rest spot at Kings Highway Park and the options of extending the distance or seeing different sights. Except for Hillsborough, this route travels past myriad dairy farms on paved roads that range from narrow and curvy to smooth and rolling. The speed limit also varies, so stay alert.

Some dairy farms post signs offering ice cream and other milk products, providing bicyclists a welcome stopping point. Other farms may offer produce such as fruits or vegetables in season.

This route passes several historic landmarks in downtown Hillsborough: the **COLONIAL INN** (1759), the classically styled 1844 **ORANGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE** with the arrowhead in front commemorating Daniel Boone's expeditions, and the **ALEXANDER DICKINSON HOUSE** that houses the Visitor Center.

The town's **RIVER PARK** and reconstructed **OCCANEECHI INDIAN VILLAGE** are situated just south of Margaret Lane. On St. Mary's Road, look for historic St. Matthews Episcopal Church (1825) in town. Just off St. Mary's Road stands **AYR MOUNT HOUSE MUSEUM** with its Poet's Walk and lovely grounds, including picnic tables for visitors.

UNDESIGNED CONNECTOR ROUTES (48 MILES)

Highlighted in dark yellow, the unsigned connector routes link designated, signed routes and provide opportunities for bicyclists to customize routes as they please. Countless, diverse route configurations invite bicyclists to explore the county from border to border.

projects. Permissible activities include hiking, biking and horseback riding on the established roads, as well as fishing and picnicking. Group activities must be approved in advance. For information or a detailed map: 919-613-8013 or www.nicholas.duke.edu/forest/location/index.htm

FARMING † comprises a vital part of the economy and culture of Orange County. Despite increasing development pressure, Orange County still boasts over 600 farms with an average size of 113 acres. Some farms let visitors pick their own fruits and veggies while one serves some of the best ice cream you'll ever taste. Orange County farms and dairies not only preserve the rural heritage of the county but also let visitors experience rural farm life through farm tours, classes or by sleeping (and doing chores if you want!) on the farm overnight.



For more information and a searchable index of Orange County Farms: www.orangecountyfarms.org/index.asp. For more information about the Carrboro Farmers' Market: 919-493-2906 or www.carrborofarmersmarket.com

HISTORIC PROPERTIES † along these rural Orange County routes encapsulate the area's history and add local color.

PAISLEY-RICE LOG HOUSE on Route 1, one of the oldest surviving log dwellings in Orange County, is noted for its three-room "continental" plan and its original interior finish. The property now serves as a bed and breakfast, called The Old Place.

BINGHAM SCHOOL, south of Route 1 and connector – Established by William J. Bingham of Hillsborough as a prestigious academy for young boys from 1845-1864; the headmaster's home on the site of the school is now a bed and breakfast.

MOOREFIELDS, west of Route 4 – Built for Alfred Moore (circa 1758), hero of the American Revolution, one of North Carolina's foremost jurists and the second North Carolinian named to the United States Supreme Court, this restored estate is open to visitors by appointment at 919-732-4384.

READY TO EXPLORE?

