

CYCLE CLASSICS

THE TOUR OF THE BLACK COUNTRY 2019

Rider Information Pack



Thank you for entering the 2019 Tour of the Black Country.

This rider pack includes information about the route, maps, profiles, safety information, start times and advice on choice of equipment – particularly tyres and wheels.

Riders will pick up their numbers from the registration area on the morning of the event, which will be open from 0900 onwards. Riders will set off in waves between 0930 and 0940.



1. ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Start date: Sunday 09 June 2019. **Sign on from 0900. Start from 0930-0945.**

Event Type: Cycle Sportive (non-competitive).

Venue/HQ: Aldersley Stadium, Aldersley Leisure Village, Aldersley Road, Wolverhampton, **WV6 9NW**.

Venue/HQ Website: wvactive@wolverhampton.gov.uk. Telephone: 01902 551010

Event Website: cycleclassics.co.uk

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/touroftheblackcountry>

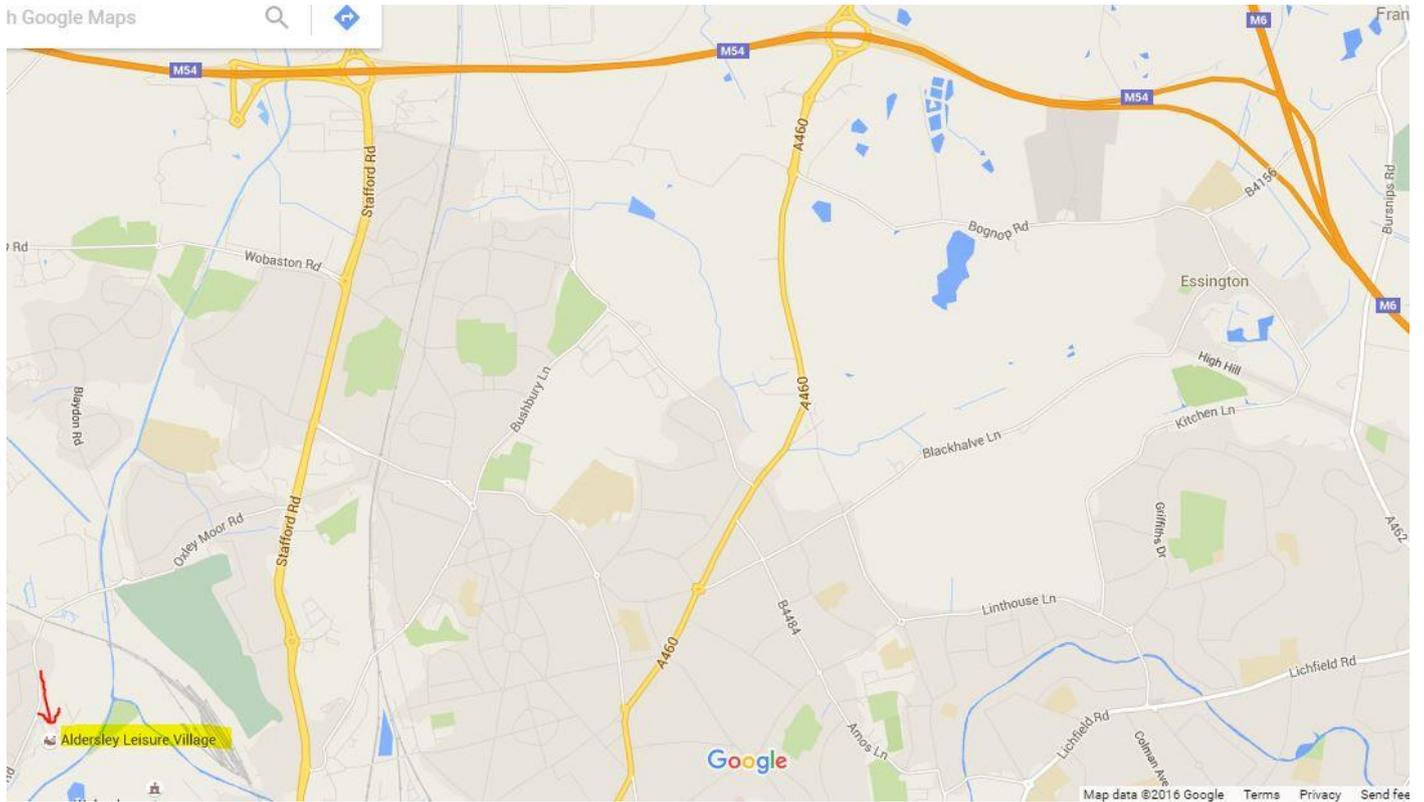
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/TotBlackCountry>

Emergency Mobile Numbers: 07708 648106 (Medical and Mechanical).

GPX, Maps and Profiles: <https://www.plotaroute.com/route/845137>

Getting There

By car the easiest approach is to come south on the A449 (Stafford Road) from Junction 2 of the M54 (top left of the map below). The M54 can be accessed from the south from the M6 (Junction 10A – top right of the map below) and from the M6/A460 (Junction 11) from the north. The A449 leads south to a right-hand turn into Oxley Moor Rd, which becomes Aldersley Road. The stadium is accessed via Hugh Porter Way. **WV6 9NW**.



Parking & Event HQ: There is plentiful free parking at Aldersley Stadium, which serves as the event start and finish and HQ.

Hotels: There is no shortage of accommodation in the area. The Premier Inn Wolverhampton North is conveniently located at Junction 2 of the M54, approximately 3 miles north of the HQ.

Event Cancellation

The ride will only be cancelled if it is snowing or there is ice on the course. The current forecast is dry and 12-14C, but the event will still go ahead if it is raining; the Tour of the Black Country, just like Paris-Roubaix, is even more epic in the wet!



Wilfried Peeters – rain-soaked 2001 Paris-Roubaix.

Good luck & see you at the event.

The Tour of the Black Country Organising Team.

Email: info@cycleclassics.co.uk

2. ROUTE INFORMATION

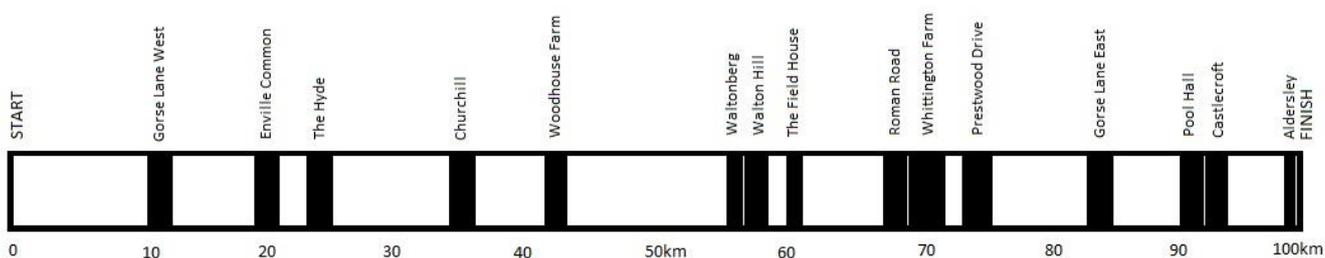
The Tour of the Black Country is a 63-mile (102km)-long cyclosporitive which takes in 15km of cobbled roads, stony farm tracks and bridleways in the West Midlands, Worcestershire, Shropshire and Staffordshire. Modelled on the epic European Classic 'Paris-Roubaix', it includes 12 unpaved gravel and cobbled sectors, varying in length from 300m to 1800m, all of which are passable on a standard road bike. Each sector is rated according to difficulty; one star being the most straightforward, five stars being the most difficult. The route is relatively flat, albeit with one very challenging cobbled climb: the five-starred Waltonberg which sits atop Walton Hill. The majority of the roads are virtually traffic-free, despite being located close to Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and the majority of the unpaved sectors are closed to traffic. The route finishes, as does Paris-Roubaix, on a large outdoor velodrome, at Aldersley Stadium on the outskirts of Wolverhampton.

The Tour of the Black Country is based around unpaved gravel and cobbled sectors. The central idea behind this event is that these unpaved sectors should be ridden hard in a big gear! This will both increase the stability of your bicycle and maximize the sensations of speed that riding on rough roads provides – just like in Paris-Roubaix, the Cobbled Classic race which inspired the Tour of the Black Country. We do not recommend riding slowly and carefully in an attempt to avoid every bump and pothole!

The twelve unpaved sectors (with approximate distances from the Start) are:

DISTANCE FROM START	SECTOR	LENGTH	DIFFICULTY
12 (11 km)	Gorse Lane West	1300m	* *
11 (32 km)	Churchill	1600m	* * * *
FEED 1 (38 km)	The French Hen		
10 (51 km)	Waltonberg (22% max)	600m	* * * * *
9 (52km)	Walton Hill	1300m	* * *
FEED 2 (58 km)	The French Hen		
8 (66 km)	Roman Road	1200m	* * *
7 (67 km)	Whittington Farm	1800m	* * * *
6 (72 km)	Prestwood Drive	1600m	* * * *
5 (86 km)	Gorse Lane East	1300m	* * *
4 (91 km)	Furnace Grange	1100m	* * *
3 (93 km)	Trescott Ford	100m	*
2 (94 km)	Pool Hall	1100m	* * *
1 (101 km)	Aldersley	300m	*
FINISH (102km)	Velodrome	750m	

UNPAVED SECTORS



Note that the Enville Common, Hyde, Woodhouse Farm and Fieldhouse sectors, which appear on the above profile, will not be included in 2019; they have either degraded or have been the subject of resistance from residents. This has shortened the course by approximately 10km from previous years. In addition, the Castlecroft sector on the above profile has been resurfaced with tarmac, and has been replaced by the new Furnace Grange/Trescott Ford sectors. Please note that the route signage on the day of the event will take precedence over maps and GPX files previously posted in advance of the ride. This is to compensate for any last-minute route changes that may be necessary.

The unpaved sectors are concentrated in the final 40km of the route, with the last sector at Aldersley leading directly onto the back straight of the velodrome. Riders will then complete half a lap, where they will hear the bell indicating one further lap to go. In total, therefore, every rider will ride one-and-a-half laps of the track.

If you are unsure about riding on the banked track of the velodrome, it is perfectly possible to ride around the flat area at the base of the track. The banking is not steep, however, (about 20 degrees) and should not pose too much of a problem to most riders.

A GPX file is available on the event website at <http://cycleclassics.co.uk/tour-of-the-black-country-sportive/tour-of-the-black-country-course-details/> and at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/10f7IHNLNmbcUa8dOOYrBcPIJ3S7CuI2N/view?usp=sharing>

Although the route is very well signposted, we do urge all riders to familiarize themselves to some degree with the course maps in advance – also at <http://cycleclassics.co.uk/tour-of-the-black-country-sportive/tour-of-the-black-country-course-details/>. It would be helpful to print out the map and carry it with you (perhaps in a Ziploc sandwich bag) during the ride. And downloading the GPX file onto a Garmin-like device would further reduce the probability of going off-course.

There is a video below showing part of the course, including the Waltonberg cobbled climb and the approach and entrance to the velodrome. Click on the image below or here: <https://vimeo.com/126691061#t=227s>
Click on the HD icon to get the best resolution.



The final gravel sector leads directly onto the velodrome.

The profile of the Tour of the Black Country is dominated by the epic Waltonberg cobbled climb (600m, 22% max gradient). The approach to this climb begins around 5km before the summit at the Walton Hill trig point (316m).



It climbs at roughly 4-5% before reaching the cobbles towards the top. There is an initial gravel track descent from the top (roughly 200 yards), followed by the smooth tarmac descent of St Kenelm's Pass (10% max) to the feed station. While the rest of the profile looks relatively flat, the route is only flat relative to the central climb! Much of the course is quite rolling with many undulations.

The route is ridden anti-clockwise, with the unpaved sectors being taken in descending order from 12 down to 1.

Interactive animated maps and profiles are also available on the event website at:

<http://cycleclassics.co.uk/tour-of-the-black-country-sportive/>

3. WHAT TO BRING AND CHOICE OF EQUIPMENT

- ID in case of an incident.
- Food and energy drink (although there will be food available at the feed station, located at 50km).
- Money/credit card.
- Mobile phone (emergency contact numbers are printed above and on your number)
- Basic multi-tool, ideally with a chain-splitter.
- Pump, tyre levers and ****at least two spare inner tubes****.
- Helmet (mandatory).
- GPX device or mobile phone with maps.
- Two water bottles

Given that the road contains unpaved sectors, there is an increased risk of punctures. We therefore suggest thicker, reinforced, wider tyres (25-30mm ideally), paired with wheels that are not too rigid. Old-fashioned boxed rims (e.g. Mavic Open Pro) are ideal. These measures will also provide a less jarring ride over the rougher roads. You might wish to double-wrap your handlebars with tape, but this is not really necessary. A full-carbon frame is a perfectly good choice but other materials such as steel would be equally good. If you are worried about damaging an expensive bike on the rougher unpaved roads or cobbles, however, you may prefer to bring a training/winter bike or possibly non-carbon bike. Please make sure that your bike is in good condition, cleaned, and that you have carried out the standard safety checks before your ride. Pay particular attention to the condition of your tyres. It is not a good idea to ride this event with old or even slightly worn or nicked tyres. Further advice on bikes and choice of equipment can be found here: <http://cycleclassics.co.uk/bike-equipment-choice/>

The most important factor in avoiding punctures, however, is not holding the bars too rigidly over the unpaved sectors. In addition, absorbing shocks by bending your knees and lifting yourself slightly above your saddle ('hovering') will greatly reduce the probability of frustrating punctures.



4. MEDICAL SUPPORT

The venue staff at the HQ are all fully-trained first aiders, and there will be mobile medical vehicles circulating during the event. In the event of a minor medical incident, the phone number for medical support is printed on your race number. You are advised to enter this number into your mobile phone before the ride. For more serious incidents call 999 immediately. It is essential that all riders carry a (charged) mobile phone during the ride for such an eventuality.

5. MECHANICAL SUPPORT

Riders must be self-sufficient in the case of minor mechanical incidents such as punctures, and should carry at least two spare inner tubes, tyre levers and a working pump, together with a simple multi-tool, ideally including a chain-splitter. For more serious mechanical failures, a broom wagon and a mobile mechanic will be able to provide assistance. If a mechanical incident occurs on an unpaved sector that is closed to traffic, riders are advised to proceed to the end of that sector, call 07708 648106 (or preferably text – to prevent lines becoming engaged) the and await the mechanic. For more serious mechanical failures, it may be necessary to wait for the broom wagon, which circulates at the back of the field.

6. HQ FACILITIES

There are changing rooms, toilets and showers at the venue, together with lockers if needed. There will be a range of food and drinks available, provided by the venue staff at the Costa Coffee café inside the venue – this includes sandwiches, hot dogs and a variety of other snacks. Please note that the contract between Costa and WVActive at Aldersley velodrome does not allow outside vendors either outside the venue or on the velodrome infield. The Café will be open from around 0800 and will remain open all day.

7. PRE-RIDE

Registration: Open from 9:00am.

You should sign your name on the sign-on sheet at the registration desks (which will be located outside the Aldersley Stadium building). You will be provided with a number. You should affix your number to your bars. You can then make your way to the start area along the north side of the leisure centre, facing away from the car park.



Rider Briefing: A safety briefing will be given to riders immediately before the start, reminding them of the main safety issues discussed in this pack. This should last less than one minute.

8. START

Riders should begin assembling behind the Start arch from roughly 0925. Riders will be set off in groups at two-minute intervals, as per British Cycling safety guidelines, starting at 0930. The safety briefing will take place in the two minutes between the departures of successive waves of riders. Please proceed west under the railway bridge and out onto Aldersley Road. Please note that the ride exits the venue in the opposite direction to previous editions of the event.

For those wishing to arrive and start as soon as possible, please arrive just before 0930, sign on and go! All riders must depart between 0930 and 0940.

9. DURING THE RIDE

Signage

The signs are A3 and A4-sized and have fluorescent yellow or white backgrounds with black arrows or 'CAUTION' warnings, etc. All bear the *LAPIERRE* name and logo. Again, please note that these arrows take precedence over maps and GPX files previously posted in advance of the event.

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LAPIERRE 

The Field House

600m ★ ★

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www.cycleclassics.co.uk



Hazards

There are five principal types of hazard on this route:

- a) Crossing A roads, and turning right across traffic onto or off A roads.
- b) Entering unpaved/off-road sectors, if this involves crossing traffic (esp. A roads).
- c) Leaving unpaved/off-road sectors and re-joining normal roads.
- d) The unpaved sectors themselves.
- e) Narrow roads with blind bends.

The main areas where caution is required are below. Of these only six (F, K, M and P – double-asterisked) require extreme caution:

- A. Leaving Sector 11 (Churchill) to join the road – quite sharply downhill. View restricted. CAUTION.
- B. Crossing the A449, A 451, A456 and A450 just after Churchill.
- C. There is a traffic-lighted, slightly offset crossing of the A491 just after Belbroughton.
- D. The Shut Mill Lane ascent just before Waltonberg is narrow with restricted views.
- E. The Waltonberg Sector (Sector 10) is steep and cobbled and may be slightly slippery when wet.
- F. ****The descent from Walton Hill (Sector 9) is a short but steep bridleway. Requires EXTREME CAUTION.****
- G. The descent into Clent is via St Kenelm's Pass is a somewhat narrow road with one blind bend. Requires caution.
- H. There may be walkers on certain unpaved sectors who may not expect your presence, since some sectors also serve as private roads/footpath. Please be extremely careful.
- I. Sector 8 (Roman Road) is used by pedestrians and dog walkers – and occasional horses. Please give a clear indication of your presence to other users.

- J. Sector 7 (Whittington Farm) is used by pedestrians and dog walkers (there is a Dog Kennels half way along this sector). Again, please give a clear indication of your presence to other users.
- K. ****Turning right from the A458 onto Sector 7 (Prestwood Drive). EXTREME CAUTION required.****
- L. Sector 6 (Prestwood Drive) is a little bumpy and cars occasionally use it. KEEP LEFT.
- M. ***Left turn onto A449 after Sector 6 (Prestwood Drive).***
- N. Right turn onto Sector 5 (Gorse Lane East)
- O. End of Sector 5 (Gorse Lane East). Re-joins road. STOP!
- P. ****Right turn off A454 into Trescott Ford (Sector 3). EXTREME CAUTION REQUIRED.****
- Q. Sector 2 (Pool Hall). Bumpy. Blind summit. Keep left.
- R. Right turn towards stadium at finish crosses traffic.
- S. On the velodrome itself. Be aware of other riders. Be cautious if you decide to ride on the banking. Riders enter the velodrome on the back straight and after completing half a lap of the track will hear the bell indicating one lap to go.

Feed Stations: The feed stations (with toilets and water) are located at the French Hen pub in Clent at approximately 38km and 58km. Given the nature of the terrain, these feed stops are positioned at roughly one-third and two-thirds of the way around the course, in terms of riding time. The feed station is accessed by a short out-and-back detour from the main route (300m) from a roundabout under a flyover. The approach and return to the feed station will be along the same road, so don't be surprised to see riders returning from the feed station coming in the opposite direction. This will all be clearly signposted on the day. Please exercise caution when approaching the French Hen – there may be a few cars in the car park behind the pub. Please take two bottles of water at the start (or enough to get to the first feed at 38km) and fill up at the feed as required.



10. POST-RIDE

After crossing the finish line and passing under the 'FINISH' sign on the track, you should ensure that you do not impede the riders who are just entering the velodrome through the open wooden gates on the back straight. You should leave the cycle track before this point by rolling slowly onto the athletics track along the back straight, as guided by marshals.



Increased safety regulations and restrictions on commercial traders at the venue mean that there will be no facilities available in the track centre at the end of the event. We realise that this detracts somewhat from the atmosphere at the finish, but it is a condition of our continuing use of the velodrome that riders vacate the infield safely and promptly, so as not to impede other riders. Please note, however, that riders may use the stands and spectator area immediately outside the track, and the large café and seating area immediately inside the building will be open throughout the day. There are a variety of water taps and fountains inside the main venue building.

If you leave the infield/track centre and cross the cycle track, you should do so very carefully, under the guidance of a marshal.



The route featured 15 sectors in total, none tougher than the 22 per cent 'Waltonberg'

RIDE REPORT

TOUR OF THE BLACK COUNTRY SPORTIVE

LOCATION Wolverhampton

DATE 04/05/2014

DISTANCE 100km

PRICE £25

TERRAIN Rolling hills, cobbled roads,

stony farm tracks and bridleways

www.club.v-sprint.com

I RODE THIS

"A very well organised and professional event with first class facilities. Beautiful roads with some very tough climbs."

STEPHO CONNOR

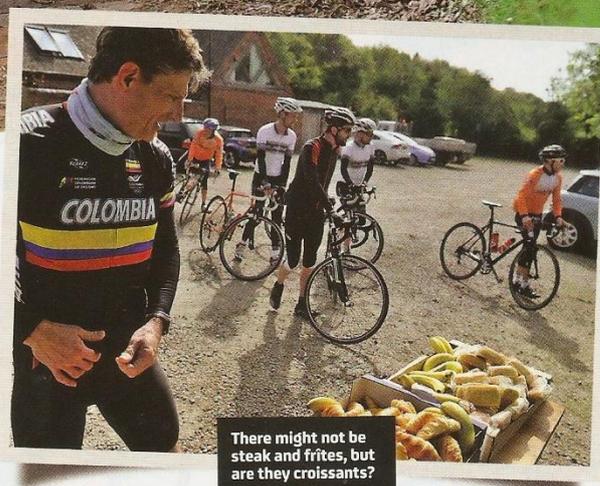
LOTS OF SPORTIVES like to give their riders a feel of the Classics by sticking in a bit of pavé here and there. West Midlands-based V-Sprint has taken this to a bit of an extreme. Its Paris-Roubaix themed Tour of the Black Country contained no less than 20km of unpaved roads in its 100km and capped it all with a sprint finish in an outdoor velodrome.

Undecided on what bike to use, I eventually plumped for my trusty singlespeed cyclo-cross bike. I

figured that the lack of gears would be compensated for by the large volume tyres when we hit the cobbles.

In fine weather we were sent on our way by local cycling legend Hugh Porter, swiftly finding ourselves on rolling rural roads. The first 'sector' was met with a flurry of punctures and I was feeling fairly smug as my 35mm tyres made light work of the potholes, mud and gravel.

The off-road sections were great fun, particularly a grassy plummet



There might not be steak and frites, but are they croissants?

that tested nerve and balance. The route featured 15 sectors in total, none tougher than the 22 per cent 'Waltonberg' – cobbled and strewn with loose bricks. My lack of gears defeated me before the top.

Most riders coped well with the rough stuff on standard road bikes although a special mention should go out to the two gents who, dressed in their plus-fours, tackled

the route on Pashley Guvnors.

A welcome tailwind made the last miles go quickly and after an exciting lap of the velodrome we were awarded a glass of champagne and a piece of Black Country coal (in place of a Roubaix cobble). Tougher than its 100km suggested, this was an enjoyable ride and definitely not a 'Sunday in Hell'. 

Andy Ward

