

## Cycling alongside a canal in Pennine Lancashire with the hills stretching out before you and a picnic basket strapped to your bike is the making of a truly relaxing day out.

Canal towpaths could simply provide a picturesque way to get you from one place to the other, but they also make the perfect places to explore the outdoors.

At Higherford Mill in the beautiful village of Barrowford, an artists' community has been created. Joe Hesketh is just one of the residents. Working mainly with oils, her work has an energy and vibrancy that radiates from the colours and textures on the canvas.

"I'm inspired by everything and everyone I see, it all goes into my work. I go for a big walk every morning and just take in whatever's around me. In fact, at the back of the mill you can walk up a bit of a hill and it's like you're in the middle of nowhere. It gives me space to breathe and time to think."

With her schnauzer, Montee, at her side, Joe can often be found cycling along the canal. "I get on my bike and go through the fields, under the bridge, along the canal and past the locks and the barges. Montee wasn't too sure at first but he's getting used to it now. I've got a basket on my bike too so he can always pop himself in there!"

The cycleway brings you out into a park in the centre of Barrowford with its shops, pubs, cafés, Pendle Heritage Centre and restored toll house. It would be easy to spend an afternoon ambling along the main road, popping into the shops and playing in the park.

The lure of tea and cake is always hard to resist and you are spoilt for choice at

the Pendle Heritage Centre with its range of delicious homemade cakes, pies and pastries. As well as the café, there is a gift shop, walled garden, art gallery and museum with a special Pendle Witches exhibition. As the tea and cake arrives, Montee is obviously wondering what's for him, but he manages to pinch a bit of cake when nobody's looking!

### *Itinerary*

There are canals and cycleways right across Pennine Lancashire but Joe started out from Barrowford. There's a car park at the Heritage Centre, Park Hill, Barrowford, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 6JQ.

Higherford Mill dates from 1824 and was featured on BBC Two's Restoration Programme. Twelve artists' studios have been constructed and future plans include an art gallery and educational resource centre. Gisburn Road, Higherford, Barrowford, BB9 6JH.

You could also have lunch or dinner at the award winning Fence Gate Inn, a beautifully restored 17th Century former cotton merchant's home, Wheatley Lane Road, Fence, BB12 9EE.

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Heritage Trust North West – [htnw.co.uk](http://htnw.co.uk)

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Joe Hesketh – [joehesketh.co.uk](http://joehesketh.co.uk)

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Bowland Arts Festival – [bowlandsarts.co.uk](http://bowlandsarts.co.uk)

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Fence Gate Inn – [fencegate.co.uk](http://fencegate.co.uk)

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Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board – [visitlancashire.com](http://visitlancashire.com)

