

We're all going on a . . . cycling holiday



Lancaster and District Cycle
Campaign

USEFUL INFORMATION

Dukes, Lancaster – 23 April 2009

uk.geocities.com/dynamocyclecampaign

GENERAL

- The CTC is a good place to start (www.ctc.org.uk). You have to be a member to browse the route plans, but their forum (<http://forum.ctc.org.uk/>) is accessible to all and very useful.
- Sustrans (www.sustrans.org.uk).
- The Cyclotourer website is always a pleasant way to pass a rainy hour (<http://www.cyclotourer.co.uk/index.shtml>).
- Travelling by train across Europe with your bike - <http://www.seat61.com/Europe.htm#Bicycles>

LOCAL CYCLE ROUTES

- For cycle maps and leaflets to download, see <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/view.asp?siteid=4595&pageid=21904&e=e>
- Join the Pennine Cycleway at Kendal - <http://www.cycle-routes.org/penninecycleway/>
- Walney to Wear cross-country route - <http://www.sustrans.co.uk/default.asp?sID=1154511794281>

PEMBROKESHIRE

- Cycle Wales: <http://www.cycling.visitwales.com/server.php?show=nav.2313>
- Celtic Trail (Pembrokeshire): <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/default.asp?sID=1095083832359>

We went in the week of the late May bank holiday 2006 for 5 days
We got there by train to Carmarthen from Lancaster (1 or 2 changes)
There were 2 of us
Accommodation: We booked B&B and the hostel at Trefin in advance
We cycled 30-35 miles a day
Terrain: Hardly a flat bit in it. There were some 1:4 hills too. All on minor roads (some so minor that they had grass growing in them) and a very short section on a promenade.
High spots: Tenby; discovering how quiet the roads were; the Preseli hills
Low points: The first hill out of Carmarthen in the rain; the sheepdog that chased after us.
Amount of planning: We bought the Sustrans Celtic Trail map and guidebook and booked all accommodation.
Useful websites/books: The Visit Wales website and the Sustrans website.
What I would do differently: Spend more time in Tenby.

C2C AND THE REIVERS ROUTE: Whitehaven to Tynemouth and back

- C2C website: <http://www.c2c-guide.co.uk/>
- Reivers Route website: <http://www.reivers-guide.co.uk/>

We went in May, setting off on the first bank holiday Sunday
We got there by taken by car (there are trains, but Sunday is not a good day to catch them)
There were 2 of us
Accommodation: We booked B&B accommodation in advance.
We cycled 30 to 50 miles a day (our longest was 56)

Terrain:	Mostly minor roads, with some off road on well surfaced cycle tracks. We did a couple of off road alternatives on rougher and in some places rutted terrain, but these sections were avoidable. Mostly it was undulating, with some hilly, and some flat sections
High spots:	There were so many it's impossible to list them all - being in remote areas, getting to the top of Hartside, the fast downhill stretch out of Rydal, the wildlife we saw, Bewcastle - just coming across the castle and old church with the ancient Saxon carving, which was just there for anyone to see - no car park, no admission charge, and no gift shop.
Low points:	Consett, a town with a vandalism problem, after all the wonderful countryside, the accommodation we had in Beamish, The hilly rough track North of the Keilder reservoir at the end of a long day - but satisfying when we had done it.
Amount of planning:	We looked at maps, both Sustrans and OS 1:50,000. We photocopied small sections of OS maps to take with us. We booked all accommodation in advance.
Useful websites/books:	The Sustrans website to purchase maps and a guidebook, which was very useful. It is "Coast to Coast cycle routes" by Mark Porter. It contains advice on which alternative sections to choose, and a list of B&Bs with distances from the route, and where evening meals can be obtained.
What I would do differently:	Probably try some of the other alternative sections, just for variety, and we would book an evening meal at weekends and bank holidays (we had a bit of a problem when one pub was fully booked and we had just turned up expecting to buy a meal.

NETHERLANDS

- Long distance cycle routes (LF routes): <http://www.landelijkefietsroutes.nl/home-lf/> (it's in Dutch, but click on the map to get an overview of routes)
- B&B: <http://www.bedandbreakfast.nl/index.php?lang=en>
- Vrienden op de Fiets – B&B for cyclists in ordinary homes, a good way to get a taste of ordinary Dutch life: <http://www.vriendenopdefiets.nl/>

We went in	summer 2007 and 2008
We got there by	train from Lancaster to Manchester, then train to Hull, then rode to Hull docks. In 2007 we took the ferry to Rotterdam, in 2008 we went to Zeebrugge (in Belgium, but then cycled straight into the Netherlands).
There were	2 adults, 2 kids, 2 teddies
Accommodation:	Camping – not prebooked, just looking for camping symbols on the map. A few times we stayed in a trekkershutten – a wooden hut with bunk beds, table and chairs – which some campsites have.
We cycled	20 miles a day
Terrain:	Flat, sometimes undulating, mainly tarmac or good offroad surfaces.
Language:	We tried to speak Dutch a bit, the Dutch smiled indulgently and spoke to us in English. Expect some old chap in clogs who thought that Dave's nods meant he understood, who proceeded to tell him the way in Dutch. For about ten minutes.
High spots:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riding through the dunes with loads of other cyclists. • Enjoying clean beaches and chips with mayonnaise. • Exploring inside windmills. • Gatecrashing the opening of a cultural event of some kind in a beautiful historic courtyard. With free wine. • The adventure of a special boat-and-truck-for-cyclists-only ride to get from Texel to Vlieland. • The almost car-free island of Vlieland.
Low points:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riding in the rain along a farm track covered in sheep poo, with Bob wailing because it was all flicking in his face. • Sometimes searching about for campsites which we couldn't find. • Riding into headwinds.
Amount of planning:	A bit of web searching, bought maps, booked the travel.

Useful websites/books:	We had a good packet of maps – the whole of the North of the country, but split into A4 bits... good for handlebar bags.
What I would do differently:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2007 we covered a lot of ground, and only stayed for more than one night twice. In 2008 we lowered the distances, and didn't move on every day, to cut down on the amount of tent work, and have more of a chilled time. • We should probably lie more often about how many tents we have – we get charged double for our two titchy tents, while people with marquees get charged just the once!

FRANCE: from the Alps to the Atlantic

European Bike Express: <http://www.bike-express.co.uk/>

We went in	Mid-July to mid-August 2007
We got there by	<p><u>Out</u>: Train to Knaresborough, cycle Knaresborough to Boroughbridge on the A1, bivouac. 5 a.m. departure European Bike Express to Lyon, train to Geneva. Cycle Geneva to Royan (on the Atlantic).</p> <p><u>Return</u>: Train Royan - Saintes, European Bike Express Saintes to Leeds, train Leeds to Lancaster.</p>
There were	2 of us
Accommodation:	Camping and occasional B & B or gite.
We cycled	roughly 30 miles a day
Terrain:	Big hills in the Jura, thereafter undulating - never flat.
Language:	One fluent French speaker, one competent.
High spots:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycling in sunshine through the Beaujolais vineyards, with cafe terrace at top of pass. • Finding gite at nightfall in remote village 'mairie' (after knocking up the mayor's wife). • Many great 'menus du jour' in bars and cafes. • People's hospitality, e.g. Day 3 pm, in Jura - family let us dry out all afternoon in the their cafe/bar. • Reaching Atlantic at sunset.
Low points:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day 2 pm: Rain, cold and darkness on the Col de la Biche in the Jura, with 'emergency' camp in field. • Day 3 am: In Jura: cold, grey, no cafes, drank rainwater from gutter. • La Palisse and rural Allier: depressed economy, air of neglect.
Amount of planning:	Started detailed route planning in January.
Useful websites/books:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indispensable book: Michelin Tourist and Motoring Atlas (spiral bound). Cost about £13 in 2007. Maps whole of France at 200,000 scale, showing all minor roads. MUCH cheaper than individual 200,000 maps. Updated annually. At this price, relevant pages can be torn out, making convenient small sheets. • Web sites: Once route planned in outline, Google Departement or locality. Try key term 'velo'.
What I would do differently:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan on using cafe for morning coffee, with picnic breakfast and evening meal. • Plan itinerary to include town or village at midday for good value 'menu du jour'. • Above points remove need for cooking gear and fuel. • As always, will review luggage for non-essentials (e.g. little-used clothing), to reduce bulk and weight

SLOVENIA

We went in	August
We got there by	train
There were	2 of us
Accommodation:	Tourist farms, cheap B&B, WWOOFing
We cycled	roughly 30 miles a day
Terrain:	Mostly hilly
Language:	Learnt the basics and spoke some German
High spots:	Rounding the top of the Vrsic Pass
Low points:	Being lost in the rain and dark
Amount of planning:	Vague route and the first 3 nights accommodation
Useful websites/books:	Slovenia tourist board
What I would do differently:	Plan for shorter days

GREECE

We went in	Easter 2005, for two weeks
We got there by	Easy Jet, but we're going by train this year, honest.
There were	two persons, two rear panniers and a bar bag each. We had rented bikes via the Pame Volta website in Athens. We collected them from their office in Athens. Now they will deliver them to your hotel in the port of Piraeus, which avoids the hairy ride through downtown Athens.
Accommodation:	Pensions and Rooms to Rent
We cycled	Between 25kms and 80kms per day, depending on the size of island
Terrain:	Long climbs and descents, but they follow old donkey drover routes and donkeys don't do very, very steep.
Language:	You can more than get by on English. We both speak Greek but ironically it can be difficult to find Greeks who will speak to Barbarians in Greek. This is somewhat compensated for by the creative way Greeks adapt English for purposes of tourism.
High spots:	Reaching the road summit of Mt Za on Naxos following a 35 kms climb to find the road blocked by mules.
Low points:	Noticing the mules had been hobbled.
Amount of planning:	From the moment the 2004 Greek island Easter tour finished.
Useful websites/books:	Bike rental – www.pamevolta.gr . Rough Guide to the Greek Islands. You can buy island maps – of varying usefulness – when you get there
What I would do differently:	Travel to Piraeus from Lancaster by train.
What you really need to know:	Once you leave Piraeus harbour you are dependent on ferryboats for getting around and critically back to Piraeus. Easter can be very, very windy in the Aegean and ferries do get cancelled – anything stronger than Beaufort 8. So keep your weather eye open and be prepared to catch an earlier ferry back.

OTHER IDEAS

- **Germany** – so many routes and so varied, from flat river valleys to mountainous forest routes - http://www.germany-tourism.de/cycling/interactive_germany_map.htm
- **Austria** – Danube cycle route, Inn cycle route . . . see <http://www.austria.info/xxl/site/en/area/408019/subArea/951857/aid/951892/index.html> or see http://www.esterbauer.com/buecher/uek/oesterreich_rtb_uek.htm for a map of long-distance routes.
- **France** – cycle the River Loire - http://www.loireradweg.org/index_en.htm (although the French website is more informative - <http://www.loire-a-velo.fr/>)
- If you understand German, the Bikeline Radtourenbücher on the Esterbauer website can provide hours of harmless daydreaming: <http://www.esterbauer.com>.