



Derbyshire's rail trails are ideal for family cycling



AN AFRICAN ADVENTURE

Ewan Wilkinson cycled 400 miles across Uganda and into Rwanda

We left the guesthouse in Entebbe, Uganda in the cool of the morning and dropped down to the shores of Lake Victoria. Our bikes were loaded into a small boat and we puttered across the bay. We reassembled the bikes and set off down the dirt road on our journey to Kigali. There were three of us: me, from the UK; and two Ugandan friends – Bosco, a driver, and Isaac, a computer science student.

Avoiding the busier, more dangerous routes, we used a mixture of dirt and tar roads to weave our way southwest across Uganda. Most of the tar roads were good, many with a metre-wide shoulder, making us feel safer from

the occasional bus roaring by. Some of the dirt roads were hard going: rough with loose grit, and with some steep hills. But we saw so much of rural life away from tourist routes. Children were excited to see a 'mzungu', a white person, cycle past.

After a rest day and some maintenance, we headed off for our last leg. A gradual ascent up the valley became a stiff climb over the ridge. Then it was on to the Rwandan border and a steady slog, with 3,000 feet of climbing, up to our accommodation. We relished the glorious, 20-mile descent the next morning. The views over the valleys were great. We shared the road with men on bikes laden with 40 litres of milk on the carrier, all heading to Kigali.

Then we turned a corner and, in the distance, saw a group of multi-storey buildings on a hilltop: Kigali, our destination. Eight miles later we were there. We celebrated with a banana split, having seen nothing like that for days! We'd ridden 403 miles with no punctures, no hassles and no security problems. It was a wonderful way to experience rural Africa.



The morning milk run to Kigali in Rwanda – fortunately downhill

High Peak perfection

LIZZY LOVATT DESCRIBES HER FAMILY'S FIRST CYCLE-CAMPING HOLIDAY

As the bank holiday weather offered blue skies and warm sunshine, we decided to try cycle-camping on Derbyshire's rail trails. Starting on the High Peak Trail at Middleton Top, we headed for Biggin, 15 miles west. Teddy (6) and Alice (5) had mini rucksacks, while I had panniers and dad Paul towed a trailer.

A flurry of butterflies accompanied us on our first few miles, seemingly enjoying the sunshine as much as we were! We soon faced the challenge of the 'Hopton Incline' but valiant efforts were rewarded with Haribo at the top. Buttercup-strewn fields flanked the trail as we approached Harborough Rocks, where we saw climbers.

Clear weather meant lovely views across the High Peak. We stopped often, enjoying a nice interlude at historical Minninglow and ice creams at Parsley Hay. We had just two miles on the Tissington Trail before taking Sustrans Route 548.

The swallows swooped past as we freewheeled into Biggin and the Waterloo Inn campsite, where grandparents and Bonnie the dog were waiting. The following day we retraced our route, bringing our two-day mileage to 34. As Alice commented: 'Not bad for little legs!'





Left: John Ferguson. Below: Zoe Binden



Larna holds on tight for the 40-mile descent

HAPPY 138TH BIRTHDAY

Frank Burns spent a week in Suffolk at the CTC Birthday Rides

Riding home into a ferocious headwind from the CTC Birthday Rides at Framlingham College, I cursed the weather gods with abandon. The strength in my legs wasn't what it had been after a truly memorable week of cycling in the company of over 450 like-minded wheelers.

The last five years of this annual cycling bonanza have seen us exploring narrow lanes and cresting tough climbs throughout the length and breadth of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Yorkshire, Cumbria, and now Suffolk. Framlingham College provided the perfect setting, with its manicured lawns and cricket squares, and a picture-postcard view of Framlingham Castle bathed in the evening sunlight.

Although the whole purpose of the festival was to ride our bikes in new



surroundings, the days' rides (over 20 routes of varying distances) were encased within a framework of evening entertainments, which included talks, films, quizzes, music and photo competitions. Then there was the social networking of so many old friends.

I sometimes sat near the wall display of OS maps, marking out the routes and, invariably, was surrounded by clusters of animated people energetically discussing the details of their next day's rides, excited about discovering recondite corners of this beautiful little county.

Local club members had put together routes that teased us towards destinations like Aldeburgh and Snape Maltings, Sutton Hoo with its Anglo-Saxon excavations, the wild expanses of Dunwich heath, and the Steam Museum at Bressingham. Our routes were littered with ancient churches, Napoleonic Martello towers, weavers' cottages and old coaching inns. If you stopped at *everything*, you wouldn't have travelled more than 10 miles in a day.

Death Road

LARNA BROOKS ENJOYED A GUIDED RIDE DOWN THIS SCARY BOLIVIAN DESCENT

Riding along a wide, tarmac road in the sunshine, I wondered what all the fuss was about. Then I realised we hadn't even started the difficult part of the descent of El Camino de la Muerte – in English, Death Road. My confidence plummeted (sic!) as I found myself on a busy dirt road with a sheer drop to one side.

Built in 1930, it links the capital La Paz with the jungle region of the Yungas. Until recently, there were no guardrails or barriers protecting you from the abyss. An alternative paved road now carries a lot of the motorised traffic and has dramatically reduced the 200-300 deaths each year, but there are still occasional fatalities. So why ride it? It's a rite of passage for those travelling through South America.

The views are breath-taking. If something were to go wrong, however, there would be little point calling an ambulance... So, gripping tightly, I juddered down, trying not to focus on the drop to my left.

I could think of nothing other than trying to stay upright, despite rocks on the road and fog affecting my vision. My arms were fatigued within minutes and my hands ached from braking for so much of the 40-mile, 12,000ft descent. It was exhausting and thrilling – and I've never felt more alive!



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