



## England

# Pilgrims' progress

The Cathedrals Cycle Route takes you more than 1,800 miles across England. **Maria and Jim Frazer** are riding it bit by bit

The Cathedrals Cycle Route (CCR) was exactly the challenge we'd been looking for. We'd read about it on the Cycling UK website just before Bike Week 2021: a 1,800-mile route visiting each of the 42 Church of England cathedrals. My husband Jim and I love bike touring, history, and adventure. Before lockdown we'd finished all 214 Wainwrights in the Lake District and we were looking for a new outdoor project. The CCR ticked all the boxes for us.

The inaugural ride started from Newcastle Cathedral, just 12 miles up the Tyne from our home on the coast, on the same day that we'd pledged to do a ride for Bike Week. We witnessed the CCR's 'grand depart', spoke to the route's instigator, chatted to the participants – and felt huge pangs of envy. We followed on the back of the small peloton of riders as they crossed the Tyne, heading south – next stop, Durham Cathedral – and we swore we'd do this route.

We've so far covered 250 miles in two short four-day trips, visiting 11 cathedrals between Newcastle and Lincoln (we include the Roman Catholic ones as well on our travels),

using the train to take us back to where we left off last time. We are about to embark on our next segment: Lincoln to Norwich. We've had so much fun being 'pedal pilgrims', meeting many people en route who want to share stories, visiting places we've never been to before, experiencing the grandeur and history of the cathedrals, marvelling at the diversity of nature along the fantastic route, and rejoicing in our bikes.

It's an amazing ride. You can do as much or as little as you like, starting from anywhere in England. Download the route, pack your Pilgrim Passport and get pedalling!

[cyclingsuk.org/cathedrals-cycle-route-challenge](https://cyclingsuk.org/cathedrals-cycle-route-challenge)

Chesterfield Canal towpath, nr Worksop



## Scotland

# Island hopping

**Sandy D Franklin** toured the Inner and Outer Hebrides in blazing sunshine

**WHEN YOU NEED** to slow your world down, what better way than a tour of the Hebrides? Starting on Arran, my spirits soared as we cycled over The String Road from Brodick to Pirnmill. A curlew called.

Gigha was next, wild camping at the southernmost point with a stunning sunset behind the Paps of Jura. The next morning was wet but by the time we'd cycled to Kennacraig for the ferry to Islay the sun had lit up the landscape. The next day we cycled out to the Oa peninsula and watched a golden eagle landing on a nearby crag. We camped on a windy knoll by Port Mòr on Colonsay. Seals sang, a hen harrier flew over, and the moon cast its beam over the sea.

The tides were right to wade across to Oransay where we hoped to find corncrakes. But, as with our next island, Coll, we did not get to see or hear them. Neighbouring Tiree was full of surfers in this year of the staycation.

On the ferry to Barra we spotted dolphins, porpoise, a minke whale, and rafts of seabirds. I can't imagine experiencing such superb weather in the islands again. It was perfect for a boat trip to the uninhabited island of Mingulay, which is similar to St Kilda.

Cycling north through the Outer Isles, the islands were ablaze with heather in bloom. Eriskay, bathed in sunshine, looked more Greek than Hebridean. We battled a headwind through South Uist and Benbecula, then experienced cloudless skies and more sparkling seas on North Uist, Harris, and Lewis. Finally, we sailed from Stornoway to Ullapool, not wanting to leave.



Wildeshausen, Germany

## Northern Europe

# Loads more fun

*Instead of buying his Danish cargo bike in the UK, **Robin Mager** bought it in Copenhagen and rode it home*

**B**ack in June 2019 I made one of my best cycling decisions when my dream bike shifted from classic steel, through bling titanium, past trendy gravel to... cargo bike! I wanted it simple and usable and settled on the Larry vs Harry Bullitt (non-electric) from Denmark. You can buy these in the UK but I decided it would be more fun to go over to Copenhagen to pick mine up.

Two days, with a mix of trains and Flixbus, got me to Copenhagen. On a bright Monday morning I was at Larry vs Harry's ready to collect. There is a 'getting used to' period with cargo bikes, and perhaps the middle of a strange capital city with different road rules is not the best place to try this out. Still, I survived a quick sightseeing tour and got back to the campsite unscathed.

Then it was a matter of heading west for just over 980 miles, a task that took me 11 days, included six countries, a few wild camps, and luckily no punctures.

I soon learned that the Bullitt can handle singletrack (I was lost) and that it's also pretty nimble. But if you come to barriers, steps or fallen trees you're in trouble, especially if you're carrying a

load. Other benefits include easy and stable parking on ferries, and it can also be used as a washing line support. Handy when you run into the amount of rain Storm Miguel delivered!

The Bullitt made a great touring machine. It was a nice change not to have to be too precise with pannier packing, and I'd always got a seat/table for road side picnics. For cargo bike riders there is a big difference between the infrastructure on the Continent and in the UK. As I rode home across my home country, the days were interspersed with frustrating cycle path barriers.

Three years later the Bullitt is still in almost daily use. It has carried everything from washing machines to the weekly shop.



Journey's end in Romania

## Europe

# Rivers & canals to Romania

*In 2015 Colin Marsh followed Europe's waterways for 1,900 miles*

**AFTER YEARS OF** cycling holidays in Europe with my brothers, I decided that at the age of 72 I was old enough to attempt a solo trip. My plan was to set off from Dunkirk and follow the waterways of Europe to Romania.

I spent months plotting a route, booking low-cost accommodation and arranging nights with Warmshowers hosts. From France I followed canals through Belgium into the Netherlands, then the Rivers Rhine and Main through Germany as far as Bamberg. From there, I rode beside the Main-Danube Canal.

The River Danube was then my guide through the rest of Germany, Austria and Slovakia. My apprehension about entering Slovakia wasn't helped by being chased by two dogs on the outskirts of Bratislava. But my hosts for the next two nights were much friendlier. I reached the border town of Štúrovo the same day I left my second host. There I had a great view of Esztergom and its basilica and castle, perched above the river.

From Esztergom, the Danube Bend took me southwards to the town of Vác, a few miles north of Budapest. After two nights here, I met my brothers near Budapest Airport. Together we followed stretches of the River Tisza through Hungary and the River Mureş through Romania, before reaching the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains and the village of Cisnădioara, the location of the children's home for which my six-week sponsored 1,900-mile ride raised over £8,000.



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