



Jessie leads through Thetford Forest

time in a bell tent strewn with fairy lights, beds and blankets. We played charades and listened to music by a wood stove before turning in.

### RETURN BY RAIL TRAIL

We rode back into Aylsham on our final day and spotted an old steam train on the Bure Valley Railway, Norfolk's longest narrow-gauge railway. The workers there let us in to see it up close. Much of the rest of the day was spent beside the train tracks on a parallel trail surfaced with what I call 'kitty litter gravel'. This trail took us all the way to Hoveton, where virtually all of the shops are called 'Roys' after a pair of local businessmen brothers.

After riding along Hoveton's pretty riverside for a while, we turned back towards Norwich. More lovely lanes and a bit of bridleway got us most of the way there, then a busier road took us back into the heart of Norfolk's county town. We agreed that, before catching our various trains home, we had one last stop to make: Kett's Heights, where Robert Kett and his 10,000 followers gathered before they besieged the city in 1549 to protest at the 'redistribution' of common land.

Over five days we'd had an enjoyable journey through centuries of Norfolk's history. On top that, it had been a pleasant and easygoing bike ride. I come from an ultra-cycling background, so this route was a breath of fresh air. I could confidently bring my sister on this ride – or a friend who is just getting into cycling. Yet there's enough to entertain my mates who are experienced bikepackers. Flat does not mean boring. ●

### My ride



#### Jessie: novice bikepacker

"I was riding my Trek Marlin MTB, which I found super comfortable – particularly on some of the off-road stuff. I think a gravel bike would also have worked well. On the back I had an Alpkit Sonder Mool pannier rack with a dry-sack strapped on with a bungee. This contained my sleep system. On the front I had an Alpkit handlebar bag containing all the other stuff, mainly snacks. I also wore a small Apidura rucksack which contained my phone etc. I really liked my setup and found it to be light(ish) and compact."



#### Mildred: experienced bikepacker

Mildred has done plenty of bikepacking, including riding Cycling UK's Cantii Way earlier this year (which you can read more about online at [cyclinguk.org/cantii-way](http://cyclinguk.org/cantii-way)). She likes to carry quite a lot of stuff. To make sure it stays dry, all her bags are waterproof. "I was riding my Stayer Groadinger UG bike with a Tailfin Aeropack, mini panniers and fork bags, and an Ortlieb handlebar bag," she said. "This setup was fine – more than adequate. The route is well suited to a gravel bike with a streamlined bag setup."



#### Robby: videographer

"I rode my Genesis Vagabond, using traditional panniers, trunk bag and handlebar bag. Although this made for quite a heavily-laden bike, all my gear was easy to access on the fly and pack/unpack without fuss. I also had space to accommodate some of my fellow riders' items when a 9kg watermelon required a redistribution of our stuff. A couple of bungee cords were needed to provide extra security on the rough-stuff. I think this is a cheap albeit heavy system, with great accessibility and flexibility."

### i Experience project

As one of 14 partners on the EXPERIENCE project, Cycling UK is working to deliver sustainable new off-season tourism experiences, including long-distance routes like the Rebellion Way. We're also supporting businesses to attract cyclists with the Cycle Friendly Places accreditation.

The €23.3 million project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, €16 million) through the Interreg VA France (Channel) England Programme 2014-2020, and aims to boost visitor numbers in six pilot regions including Cornwall, Norfolk and Kent.

[cyclinguk.org/experience](http://cyclinguk.org/experience)



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