

We need you!

Cycle wants your Travellers' Tales. Write or email the editor – details on page 80 – to find out what's required.

TRAVELLERS' TALES

New Zealand unplanned

DAVID GARNSEY AND ROBERT DAVIES IMPROVISED A ROUTE AROUND SOUTH ISLAND

MY RECKLESS lack of planning meant that we arrived in a city recently devastated by a major earthquake, and the route we followed missed out many of the popular sights. Still, we stuck to the two golden rules; no moaning; and whatever happens, it's not my fault.

However, pretty much everywhere you go in the South Island is amazing: there are wild landscapes, big skies and quiet roads. It's Scotland with an Alpine-backdrop and Mediterranean climate (sometimes), unusual road kill, and odd-looking birds.

We used the BBH hostels, which are brilliant, clean, friendly and cheap. If you can manage to stay for a few weeks, in several places, it's even possible to do some chores in exchange for free board.

The landscapes are, of course, breathtaking, but most of all it's the people that you meet on the way that make the trip memorable. Possum Pete, for example: take your road kill to his café and his wife will bake it into a pie. Interestingly, she's a vegetarian.

Whilst heading north along the west coast, we were moved by the sight of a young Australian girl pedalling south, disappearing on the deserted highway into the vastness of the landscape after checking to see whether we were all right.

Phil the Australian, whom I sat next to on the flight out, said: 'It's a long way to go for a little bike ride.' He was wrong. It's a hell of a long way to go. But worth it.



The Way of the Roses

Richard Chew and his friend Matthew rode their Bromptons from Morecambe to Bridlington

The Way of the Roses is the newest of Sustrans' coast-to-coast routes, running further south than the classic C2C, which goes from Whitehaven to Sunderland. We decided to ride it last September to celebrate my 40th birthday.

On a bright morning, the Lakeland mountains gleamed across Morecambe Bay. Our route that day would take us to Settle, a town familiar to me from childhood. The going was pretty easy through Lancaster but became hillier as we reached the Yorkshire Dales.

We decided to take the alternative route from Clapham, which the map warned us would have a steep hill,

poor surface, tunnels, pedestrians and dogs. It was borderline to call it a cycle route. We pushed the bikes for over a mile before remounting and descending carefully to Wharfe.

Our second day began with an heroic climb out of Settle. We were soon off and pushing again. The weight of Matthew's luggage, and his inclusion of an electric toothbrush, started some friendly banter.

We rode on through my grandfather's country around Winterburn. Despite the hills, I was enjoying the bike, a recently acquired 3-speed with touring handlebars.

The day's highlight was Fountains Abbey.

Speeding through Studley Royal deer park, I realised I had done the same thing 30 years before. The scenery was vast and beautiful. I looked up into the skies near Brimham Rocks, spotting a curlew.

After an overnight stay in Boroughbridge, we embarked on a showery day heading towards York. Glorious weather accompanied us through the delightful Yorkshire Wolds and the 'big skies' beyond. Hutton Cranswick was a disappointing overnight stop, but our final short day soon brought us to Bridlington. After celebratory fish and chips and postcard writing, we boarded the train home.



▶ The Southern Alps divide South Island and make the east much drier than the west



▶ New Zealand's low population mean it is spread out, with long roads tempting drivers to 'make time'





Two tandems in the tropics

Jackie, Steve and Lauren Bateman joined a CTC tour of southern India

We joined the CTC tour of Kerala and Tamil Nadu after persuading Sheila Simpson that it would be a good idea to take a 10-year-old on a trip where the average age was at least 50, and finding a willing pilot, Jean Harris, to ride our second tandem with Lauren, our daughter. Steve, who is partially sighted, would stoke our other tandem.

The trip covered approximately 600km, travelling from the Kerala coast into the Western Ghats and Tamil Nadu, taking in visits to beaches, temples, tea, coffee and spice plantations, plus other points of interest as we went. The roads chosen by our support crew were usually quiet, except for the constant honking of horns by all vehicles to remind us that they were there!

Some of the terrain was undulating and challenging, reaching altitudes of 2,000 metres. At other times, potholes or sandy surfaces brought their own difficulties.

All our efforts were made worthwhile by the stream of encouragement, delighted shouts of 'double cycle', and constant smiles of the locals we passed.

Good weather, delicious food and the occasional beer or toddy (local brew) at the end of the day added to this unforgettable experience. So much so that we are now planning to return next year with a group of visually impaired people plus their sighted guides (without bikes this time). If you are interested in getting involved, please contact us at bateman948@aol.com



◀ Even in February, the weather in southern India is excellent for touring

The Camino, off-road

ROB BATHO RODE THE CAMINO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA BY MTB

AS I'VE just retired, I decided, having dreamed about it for over 20 years, to cycle the ancient pilgrim route across Spain. In May, I took the European Bike Express from Dover down to Bayonne in south-west France, and from there cycled to St Jean Pied de Port, the most popular start point for the Camino.

You can cycle the Camino on the road or follow the walkers' off-road trail. For me it had to be off-road: I love the absence of traffic, the closeness to the countryside, and the demands it makes on my bike handling and endurance.

Some days the trails were very tough. The first day from St Jean up and over the Pyrenees to Pamplona had over 5,000 feet of ascent, and I had to get off and push as the trail was so steep and rocky that my front wheel kept lifting up. The hairy 25% descents were also technically demanding but equally thrilling.

I stayed in cheap hotels, which I didn't need to book in advance, and one auberge (okay if you like dormitory accommodation and snorers all night).

The Camino from St Jean to Santiago is 500 miles and it took me 12 days with one rest day, via beautiful Spanish cities like Burgos and Leon. I was glad to have disc brakes, front suspension and a bell. As one walker said: 'Thank you for ting-ting. I wish others did same.'

It was an unforgettable trip.



DROPPING THROUGH YOUR LETTERBOX IN TWO MONTHS:

SALSA FARGO

The ultimate rough-stuff tourer?

A SCOTTISH END-TO-END

Making the most of autumn

2013 BIKES AND GEAR

Next year's products that caught our eye at Eurobike

HAND CYCLING

Different cycling solutions for disabled riders. For sure, this time