

Great Rides

# DUSK 'TIL DAWN

Cycling through the night is an achievable adventure that's best enjoyed with company. Matilda Welin is a member of night-riding group the Fridays



**MATILDA WELIN**

Matilda is a Cycling UK member whose day job is working for the BBC

**J**ust after midnight on the last night of April: our group of seven had pedalled for what felt like hours through dark, freezing Cambridgeshire fenland. Finally, we emerged onto a bigger road. A much-anticipated petrol station was lit up next to a junction. Hands almost numb, I approached the night hatch.

"Do you serve hot beverages?"

"Hot beverages? No."

I was on an overnight ride from Ely to King's Lynn and back with the Fridays Cycling Club, a Cycling UK affiliate. Tonight's guide, Claire Geary, had said that while the garage would likely serve coffee and tea, we couldn't be sure. Now we felt our spirits drop. Claire approached the hatch beside me.

"You don't serve hot drinks?"

"Drinks? Of course."

Ah-ha! My accent and frozen lips had muffled my delivery. Lesson number one for exhausted, overnight cyclists: don't attempt four-syllable words when one-syllable ones will do.

Hot drinks for the Fen Bridges riders!



**FRIDAY NIGHT'S ALRIGHT (FOR RIDING)**

The Fridays has been arranging overnight rides from London to the coast for almost two decades, with groups containing anything from a handful of people to more than a hundred. Always moving at the pace of the slowest rider, the group has 'tail-end Charlies' at the back, leaders at the front and wayfinders who stop to point directions at junctions. The rides are almost like a night-time parkrun for cyclists – invigorating and adventurous but gentle and relaxed, too. Participants range from Lycra-clad roadies to recumbent cyclists and bearded 70-year-olds on Bromptons.

I first took part in the late 2010s. Back then, I was an everyday cyclist, riding a city bike around town and enjoying the odd, gentle cycle holiday with my family. But I sensed there was more. In 2016

I heard about the Dunwich Dynamo, a 180km ride from London to Dunwich on the Suffolk coast. I was keen to try it but I rode a secondhand mountain bike and dressed in worn-out

Top: No one gets left behind on the Fridays' rides. They're group rides from start to finish

Photos: Titus Halliwell, Barry Wilson, Matilda Welin