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Is it realistic to make cycle routes that are family and disability friendly? And how do you go about actually getting out the front door and having an adventure when you're responsible for more than just yourself and your kit?

**WHY DO IT**

Firstly, we need to address motivation. Why on earth are you even attempting to do this? For me it's partly selfish. The amount of care that I need to arrange and fund to get away on my own makes it infeasible on anything other than a day-by-day basis. Quite simply, if I take CeCe with me, I stand a better chance of getting out on an adventure and I get the extra pleasure of exploring together.

Secondly, I was brought up having adventures with my parents (largely on boats rather than bikes but the principles are the same) and I've adopted the same parenting style with my kids. They see you deal with uncertainty; they see you enjoying the freedom that time outdoors offers; they see you working hard but also they see you sitting back and enjoying the ice-cream or cuppa and laughing about the highs and the lows of the trips. In my book, this is all part of learning to be an active adult.

Children, young people and folk with disabilities often feel they lack autonomy in their lives and their family units. Bikepacking adventures where they can carry their own kit, help plan the route and even help fix things when they go wrong are powerful tools in helping that individual grow in self-esteem and confidence. They are no longer the 'child' in the equation but a fellow team member.

Over the course of one section of the Cinder Track between Scarborough and Whitby, we went from showing CeCe how to negotiate the slalom gates to her heading on and doing it herself with the rest of us following in her wake. A couple of



Left: Child trailers are handy for small travellers who get tired  
 Above: Phoebe (right) and Sabine, North Bay, Scarborough  
 Below: Celebrating at the Hayburn Wyke Inn, near Cloughton



kilometres later the same thing happened with a washed-out section of the track. Where, previously, she'd struggled with the confidence to ride over some loose ground, suddenly she had the self-assurance and muscle memory to navigate the ruts without stopping to assess them first. The grin on her face told us everything we needed to know about just how happy it had made her feel.

**WHERE TO RIDE**

The relics of the UK's industrial revolution have become the future of accessible bikepacking in my eyes. Former railway lines, predictably

straight and flat, have become multi-use paths that cyclists and walkers can share. Victorian seaside promenades, like those that line the Viking Trail in my local Kent ([bit.ly/vikingtrail-komoot](https://bit.ly/vikingtrail-komoot)) are a treasure-trove of accessible cycle tracks. The difficulty comes in linking them together, but route planners don't need to worry about that too much.

The main thing we've learned over the last couple of years as bikepacking mums is that we rarely need more than 5-10km to have an adventure. We're not aiming to recreate the long distances that other cyclists crave. Simply getting



Careful route planning is invaluable

Photos: Emmie Collinge and Vicky Balfour, except where noted