



Just off the cable car, high above Saalbach-Hinterglemm



Saartje and Pete at the Black Sea

Europe

Touring on the cheap

Pete Younger and partner **Saartje** rode across Europe on bikes worth £80 the pair

"I HAVE COME across Europe from Scotland to the Black Sea. Please take me and use me well." We Google translated that message into Romanian and wrote it on notes tied to our bikes.

It was the evening of 17 May 2024. My partner, Saartje, and I had just completed our project to cycle across Europe from the North Sea to the Black Sea, following the Rhine and Danube. Our route had taken us 4,000km in 53 days of cycling through 11 countries.

In planning the project we knew that work commitments wouldn't allow more than two or three weeks' cycling per holiday, so it would require several instalments. But it would be too expensive and inconvenient to fly our 'good' touring bikes out and back for each trip. So we decided to use cheap bikes we could leave with friends across Europe between trips, and which need never make the journey home.

We bought both bikes locally – my Viking Alghero town bike for £50 and Saartje's Merida Dakar MTB for £30. After a little sprucing up, they set off with us to the Netherlands by ferry from Newcastle. Both bikes did us proud.

That final evening in Constanta we left our newly labelled bikes outside the main station. Next morning we returned to catch a train for Bucharest and our flight home. Both bikes were gone.

I hope their new owners get as much pleasure from them as we did.

Austria

Mountain highs

*The sound of an e-bike motor brought the hills alive for **Ann Shrimpton**, who spent six days in Austria*

When you think of Austrian mountains, you probably think of skiing or Maria von Trapp. But in the summer Saalbach-Hinterglemm becomes the largest biking region in Austria.

Words can't properly describe how beautiful it is here, surrounded by a 360-degree view of mountain landscapes, with snowy Alps in the distance. There is something for all cyclists, from the serious mountain bikers who go to the top of the mountain and ride down fast, to the gravel cyclists like us who just love exploring.

There are more than 400km of cycling trails in this region. You can get to the top of them using chairlifts and cable cars. You take your bike in the gondola up the mountain, which allows you freedom to explore further. There are extraordinary views from the top, stunning mountain trails and amazing descents.

We rented a self-catering apartment in the small village of Hinterglemm, with a balcony overlooking the mountains. It was amazing to have our breakfast and our evening après-ride glass of wine enjoying the view and breathing in the crisp mountain air.

Due to the mountainous terrain, we rented e-bikes on this trip. They opened up



the entire region to us. Rides and climbs that would normally be out of reach for us were completely attainable. We cycled to the summit of three different mountains higher in elevation than Ben Nevis!

By using the maps of the region and finding trails on Komoot, we managed to pull together a fabulous six days of riding. These included cycling through the idyllic Glemm Valley, as well as climbing to the top of those mountain peaks.

The trails, the views, the mountains, the gondolas, the strudel, the warm hospitality of the Austrians, the mountain air and the constant desire to burst into a Julie Andrews-style rendition of 'The hills are alive' would bring me back again and again to this region.

To read more or view the routes, see my blog [veloann.com/post/the-hills-are-alive](https://www.veloann.com/post/the-hills-are-alive).



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