

cycle

lifestyle

Getting Started
Planning a Route
Cycling Safely
Romantic Cycling
Cycle Fashion

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This winter, thousands of commuters will be handed a copy of *Cycle Lifestyle*, the freewheeling alternative to London's rash of free "news" papers. We want to show that travelling in London is about the A to Z, not just the A to B: that on a bike you can go wherever you like, whenever you like and whichever way you like.

We think riding in London's so convenient we're using a bicycle to carry our magazines to their distribution points. It's a no-brainer for us: we can beat the congestion – and the congestion charge – so it costs us, and the environment, nothing. And a little legwork saves us from lugging heavy bags up and down escalators.

To get the job done, we've teamed up with leading trailer manufacturer Carry Freedom. With one of their award-winning bicycle trailers we can transport up to 500 magazines at a time. It's an underappreciated way to carry a load – whether you're heading to work, running an errand or doing the weekly shop. So thanks to Carry Freedom for getting a load off our minds, and onto a bicycle trailer. Find out more at

www.carryfreedom.com



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Foreword

Imagine an amazing machine that can transport you around London faster than a train, a car, a bus or on foot. A machine that is fun and free to use, environmentally friendly, and stylish too. One that literally makes you fitter, healthier and happier the more you use it. Imagine yourself on a bicycle

Welcome to the first issue of *Cycle Lifestyle*. This free magazine

is for every Londoner who is looking for an exciting and cool way to get around. We'll show you that cycling is the key to unlocking the city's gridlock – opening up a cycle-friendly London that often gets overlooked, with its network of beautiful canals, backstreets and parks. We'll show you how to get started, plan your route, stay as safe as any other road user, choose the right bike (for yourself, or as an inspired gift), and keep it maintained (because a bike's not just for Christmas!). We'll introduce you to Londoners who have already adopted the cycle lifestyle, and to others who are new to cycling but willing to give it a go. And we'll showcase some of the ways in which cycling can be sociable – whether on a community cycling event, a cycling holiday or a romantic 'cycle date'.

Cyclists sometimes get a bad press. This magazine has been created to dispel some of the myths: to paint a truer picture of cycling in the capital, and to encourage more Londoners to discover the benefits. London is a city where the journey to work can be a refreshing workout, alongside one of the world's finest riverscapes. Where you can just as easily ride to the shops in style as in an overcrowded bus or train. Where meeting up with your mates means cruising through town, buzzing with the sights and sounds of London's eclectic streets at your fingertips.

That, in a nutshell, is the cycle lifestyle.

Best wishes,



Ben Irvine

First Bike

There, at the bottom of the river.
Time stops. The leaves are the leaves
of decades past, golden still, like treasure.
The current turns one wheel as if

you had just laid it down to run
from year to year, from bright to shade,
across the bridge from being young
to here where you stand, unwise and afraid,

in stiff-soled shoes. Your father's hand
once steadied you. When he let go
you rode, because you didn't know,

across the yard at dusk to find
your balance always was your own
to ride on after dark alone.

Jacob Polley

Jacob Polley is one of Britain's finest writers.
His poetry collections include *The Brink* and *Little Gods*.
He recently published his first novel *Talk of the Town*.

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Ride here, Ride now

The truth about cycling in London

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Or shall I just point out that you're not quite as frosty as I'd expected? It's usually better to accentuate the positive. Well, that's the easy bit when it comes to cycling – especially when you compare it to travelling in London by car, bus or train.

Cycling is healthier, cheaper, better for the environment and often faster. Cycling makes you more alert, motivated, happy and self-confident. Cycling is more convenient, with no delays, queues, cancellations or traffic jams. Cycling gives you more time, because it counts as doing a workout twice a day without going to the gym. Cycling is less stressful than, say, rocking back and forth with your head in a stranger's armpit, or waiting at a green light because the traffic's seized up. And, above all, cycling in our fantastic city is so much more fun!

But something tells me you won't be convinced yet. There are so many myths about cycling, it's not enough to accentuate the positive. The myths need to be exposed, one by one. Allow me – right here, right now.

First and foremost, **cycling is safer than you might expect.** It's common to hear people say otherwise, but they're not experts. One study suggests that cycling is no more dangerous than driving. Another suggests that it's safer than being a pedestrian. These studies are based on national statistics, so some might say that things are much scarier on the capital's busy roads. But in a way that's the point. Most cyclists are canny enough to avoid London's traffic, taking a pleasant cruise through its charming backstreets instead. No wonder cycling is increasingly popular in the capital – which is itself encouraging, because the more cyclists there are, the safer it gets to cycle.

It's also worth pointing out that **cycling is much safer for the community**, since cyclists hardly ever cause physical harm to other road users. What's more, unlike cars – which pump out carbon monoxide and exacerbate problems like asthma – bicycles make zero contribution to London's poor air quality. And, before you mention it, studies show that in rush hour traffic cyclists are themselves exposed to less

air pollution than car users. Finally, cycling creates a more pleasant environment for everyone through its minimal levels of noise pollution.

When you also consider that **cycling protects against cardio-vascular disease** (the main cause of death in Europe, accounting for 4.35 million deaths each year), obesity, stroke, dementia, diabetes, high blood pressure, some cancers, as well as helping to build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, joints and even sleep patterns, it seems that the real risk isn't cycling but being inactive.

For that matter, **cycling isn't too tiring.** It's not like running, which can make you feel out of breath as soon as you've begun. You often feel like you could go forever on a bike. After all, you're sitting down and transferring low levels of energy into rolling across London's predominantly flat landscape. Quite often you're just cruising without pedalling.

And although it's Britain's biggest city, London isn't too big for cycling. It may seem that way when you're being processed in its labyrinthine transport network, but the more you cycle the more you get to know the streets for yourself, with the city shrinking as your mental map of it grows bigger and more enriched. You soon discover that miles are just minutes on a bike.

“Although it's Britain's biggest city, London isn't too big for cycling”

Cycling doesn't make you too sweaty either. Indeed, it can be more refreshing to cycle than to stand and swelter on public transport. Workplaces are increasingly providing showers for cyclists. If yours doesn't, then go equipped with a towel, wet wipes and deodorant and you'll probably be the most fragrant person in the office.

Last, but not least (especially for us Brits), **the weather isn't too bad for cycling.** Believe it or not, it's dry 94% of the time in London. On the 6% of days when it does rain, you can just wear a waterproof jacket and carry your proper clothes in a rucksack or pannier. It's easy to forget that the weather is the same for people walking or riding down the street. It can even be an advantage to cycle in bad weather: packing your clothes up nice and dry, or warming up on wheels while the rest of the city shivers its way through the cold. London never gets that cold anyway – even in winter. Maybe comparing it to a summer's day is taking it a bit too far, but it's not quite as frosty as you'd expect. ●

For more information about cycling, safety and health – including references for the studies we've mentioned – check out Cycling England's Cycling and Health report, available at www.dft.gov.uk/cyclingengland

Pedalite

Cycling is soaring in popularity; it is a green and cheap way of getting around, enjoyed by all the family. However, with more cars on the roads than ever before, cyclists are amongst the most vulnerable road users. Research amongst cyclists at the National Cycle Show revealed that for over half of cyclists the biggest worry was not being seen.

Applying simple safety rules such as wearing bright and reflective clothing and using lights will improve cycling safety. However, the need for lighting in daylight is often overlooked. Consider how a single cloud passing in front of the sun can affect the light; how quickly the sky darkens with a change in weather; and how shadows from large buildings can affect a motorist's vision and render cyclists without lights less visible.

Pedalite's award-winning suite of battery-free lights provides a 'fit and forget' solution that enables cyclists to be seen clearly by motorists from 1km away and at all angles. These eco-friendly products will keep cyclists safe all year round, any time of the day or night, whatever the weather.

The award-winning, 360 degree Pedal Lights are uniquely powered by cycling energy and light up as soon as the cyclist starts to pedal. The lights also harvest and store cycling energy, enabling them to stay on for up to five minutes when pedalling has stopped. This means that when a cyclist has stopped at a junction the lights can still be seen. The Pedal Lights also define the width of the cycle and create a virtual cycle lane, prompting cars and lorries to give cyclists using the lights a wider berth.

Our solar powered Baglite and Anklelite products are also ideal safety devices for cycle commuters, walkers or joggers. Baglite fits any size or shape of backpack, while the ultra lightweight Anklelite illuminates ankles or arms. Both charge in daylight or in artificial light at home and provide up to six hours of lighting when set to flashing mode.

Cycling safety doesn't have to cost the earth either. Pedalite products use solar (ordinary house lights or sunshine) and kinetic energy, so expensive replacement batteries are not needed. **Cyclists can rest assured too that their old batteries aren't going into landfill** – even the packaging is recycled cardboard! ●

Competition

Cycle Lifestyle has teamed up with Pedalite to give away three pairs of Pedal Lights to our readers. For a chance to win, complete the following statement and email it to competition@pedalite.com:

I love cycling in London because...

The top three entries will win a pair of Pedal Lights and be published on www.pedalite.com, as well as in the next issue of Cycle Lifestyle. Good luck!



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Good to Go...

The Sustrans guide to choosing and using your bike

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity

Buying the right bike for you

Buy the right bike and it'll become your indispensable travelling companion and take you everywhere. But different bikes have different uses, so choose the type of bike which reflects the majority of journeys you intend to make.

Road bikes are lightweight with skinny tyres. Often called 'racing bikes', most have drop handlebars (ones that curl downwards) and they're designed to be aerodynamic and speedy. Touring bikes are sturdier versions of racing bikes suitable for long distance rides with luggage.

Mountain bikes have sturdy frames, knobbly tyres and highly effective brakes. They often have suspension and a wide selection of lower gears, making them capable of handling all types of terrain.

Hybrid bikes are a cross between the speed of a road bike and the strength and gearing of a mountain bike. They are lightweight but sturdy with smooth tyres and an upright riding position suitable for a variety of surfaces. A good everyday option.

Folding bikes are ideal for people who commute on public transport but use their bikes at either end of their trip. These bikes fold down compactly, and have smaller wheels and fewer gears.

Electrically assisted bikes are great if you need help to get up hills, or have a longer daily commute.

A good fit

The most important thing is to buy the right size frame for you. However, unlike children's bikes, there are no standard guidelines on different size frames for adult bikes. The most important thing is that if you need to stop quickly you'll be glad that you chose a frame size that gave you clearance from the cross bar of at least an inch or more.

Riding position

Your riding position can be altered by adjusting the saddle and handlebars. There are three things you want to achieve:

- The right saddle height – to make the most of your leg power or to make sure you can put a reassuring foot on the ground.
- Good contact with your pedals – to maximise the power in your legs.
- Ability to reach the handlebars and your brakes – for good control and comfort.

Everyone is different so you will need to find a comfortable balance that suits you.

Saddle position

Getting the saddle in the right place will help you get the most from your pedal power without straining your body. For height adjustments use an adjustable spanner or an allen key (depending on your bike) to loosen the bolt underneath the saddle at the top of the seat post. When sliding the saddle up or down make sure you don't go past the minimum mark.



"For the majority of short local cycling trips there is generally no need to wear special clothing"

If your seat needs to be higher than the seat post allows, you need a longer seat post or a bigger bike.

Adjusting saddle height

To find the right height for your saddle:

- Place your bike next to a large wall.
- Hop on and put one hand on the wall for balance.
- Put the ball of your foot on the pedal at its lowest point without stretching. Your leg should be straight.
- If you find you're rocking from side to side when you ride, you're probably too high and cycling will be harder work.

Cycle Lifestyle tips

There are lots of clever accessories out there that can make your riding experience safer and more pleasurable. You can buy great gadgets like Ledals – pedals that flash white at the front and red at the back and switch on automatically at dusk, helping you to be seen on the road. There are other accessories that, just as importantly, help you to see other road users. For instance, you can attach mirrors, such as the Bike-Eye, which help you to see what's going on behind you, reducing the need to turn round and check.



- If you find yourself wanting to slide forward or backwards as you ride, you can also adjust the tilt on the saddle one way or the other to compensate.
- Tighten it well before trying it out!

Different saddles

Women tend to have wider hips than men, so women's saddles are wider than men's. Do make sure your saddle is comfortable – it can make all the difference to the enjoyment of riding your bike.

Handlebar position

Well-positioned handlebars are crucial for your comfort, and important for control of your steering and brakes. Handlebars vary in how they can be adjusted. A good position to start with is having your handlebars at the same height as your saddle. If you prefer a more aerodynamic 'head down' position, lower the bars. If you want a 'head up' riding position that's easier on your back and gives confidence in traffic, raise the bars.

Care for your bike and it will care for you

Like any machine, a bike will work better and last longer if you care for it properly. Get in the habit of checking your bike regularly – simple checks and maintenance can help you have hassle-free riding and avoid repairs. For more info check out Sustrans 'Get Cycling' Guide, available at www.sustrans.org.uk →



Photo © J Bewley/Sustrans

Don't lose it, lock it!

Always lock your bike and remove lights and panniers. Almost 400,000 bikes are stolen every year in England and Wales, so taking precautions will help keep your bike safe.

Invest in a strong lock. Some locks are stronger than others and price influences their quality. D-locks are sturdy, and cable locks are useful to secure any parts of the bike which are quick release such as the saddle or front wheel.

Think: location, location, location. Where you lock your bike is critical. Leave it on a well-lit and busy street so any potential thieves are conspicuous.

Accessories

Carefully chosen extras can transform any bike from a leisure vehicle into a valuable mode of transport.

Helmet

A helmet will not prevent accidents from happening but can provide protection if you do fall off your bike. They are particularly recommended for young children. Ultimately, wearing a helmet is a question of individual choice, but parents need to make that choice for their children.

Bell

A bell is a must for any considerate cyclist. A friendly tinkle will let people know you're approaching. But never simply assume they can hear you.

**Pop it in your pannier!**

Rucksacks are fine for carrying light loads but they can make you hot. For heavier loads, longer or more regular journeys, bicycle panniers are recommended. If you don't want to invest in panniers, strap your rucksack to a bike rack, or put a basket on the front. If you want to carry really heavy loads use a bike trailer.

Lights

See and be seen! When cycling in the dark, you are required by law to have a white light on the front and a red light on the rear. These can clip onto your bike, backpack or your clothes.

Pump

It's a good idea to have your own pump so you'll always be able to sort out a flat tyre. If you're out in town and have left your pump at home, a friendly cyclist is sure to come to your aid soon enough. Or, walk to the nearest bike shop.

What to wear?

For the majority of short local cycling trips there is generally no need to wear special clothing, any more than you would for a walk to the shops. In fact, it's possible to cycle in smart clothes, provided they give you enough freedom to pedal.

Glow in the dark

If you ride at night or in heavy traffic, it's important to make yourself as visible as possible to other road users. A reflective vest or jacket is ideal. Vests are a cheap solution and easy to stow in your bag; and reflective bands for ankles and sleeves are also good to get you seen.

Cold extremities?

Wear gloves to keep the cold away, and ear muffs can be handy.

Don't let a little rain hold you back

Once people start riding, they generally don't want to stop! People even enjoy riding in the rain – honestly! All you need is a waterproof jacket and trousers plus some reflective gear.

Where do I find out more?**Phone a friend**

Most of us know at least one person who already cycles. They'll be an invaluable source of local knowledge on good bike shops, nice quiet streets and bike-friendly paths.

Surf the Web

Get online at www.sustrans.org.uk, or at www.bikebelles.org.uk – Sustrans' dedicated resource for female cyclists. ●

Bigfish

There's a new folding bike making headlines in the capital city. Fresh out of Italy, the Bigfish looks set to add some much-needed style to the folding bike market. The name 'Bigfish' comes from the distinctive shape of the frame, and it's certainly a head-turning bike.

But there is plenty of substance to back up the style. **Engineered perfectly for the city, the 16 inch wheels make the Bigfish super-nifty**, the ultra-reliable 3 speed Shimano Nexus hub gears are perfectly set for those nippy stop-start journeys, and you can even change gear when you're not in motion (great at the lights when you've stopped in 3rd and want to get down to 1st for a head start over the other traffic). Quick off the mark, you can get a good speed up in no time.

The folding mechanism on the Bigfish bike is also impressive, taking around 10 seconds. Without the use of tools, or screwing of parts, it all happens on a quick-release basis, complete with a satisfying click-clack.

Where does the Bigfish differ from all the other folders out there? **One great feature is that there is no hinge in the frame.** This is fundamental to the patented folding design, because it means there's no weakening point in the frame, giving you a sturdier ride. And while the Bigfish has the same dimensions as a full-size bike when unfolded, when it folds up it becomes extremely flat, making it easy to store under your desk or in your hallway.

Another difference is the price: the Bigfish is cheaper than other similar high-end folding bikes. And it comes in a unique range of colours which were chosen specifically to be appealing to both male and female cyclists, as well as would-be cyclists. (You can choose from Matte Black, Orange, metallic Pink and Gold)

There are lots more really nice touches with this bike – such as the little 'feet' which keep its wheels off your carpet, or the fact that you can wheel it along when it's folded, making the rush along your railway platform that bit easier, and saving you from a strained back and damaged clothing. You rarely ever have to carry a Bigfish bike. And, of course, because you take it with you wherever you go, it lessens the threat of bike theft.

A folding bike like the Bigfish can massively increase your personal mobility. It enables you to mix and match different types of transport in the same journey; for instance you can cycle to the station, get on the train and cycle the rest of the way, avoiding the underground entirely. And when you're not using your Bigfish bike you can just keep it in the back of the car, tucked away safe with plenty of room for other stuff – so you know if you want to use it, it's there for you. ●

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BIGFISH

Planning Your Cycle Route

Find your way through London's streets

by Brian Deegan

As the Development Manager for the London Cycle Network, I am often asked by members of the public how to plan a cycle route. I soon start to baffle them with lots of options, but it really isn't that complex. When used in combination, all the great resources out there make it simple to find a safe and enjoyable route through London. The trick is to allocate a little time to planning whenever you try a new route. A piece of paper will come in handy so you can jot down your turnings and signposts and then take it with you. The process is actually quite fun, and, anyway, you soon get to know your way around off by heart. I hope this brief guide proves useful.

Transport for London (TfL) cycle guides are available at www.tfl.gov.uk. These are the most definitive maps for cycling in London. By colour-coding cycle routes according to type (parks, canals, quiet routes or busier roads), they give an indication of what to expect. You can order the maps online.

LCN+ maps are available on their website at www.londoncyclenetwork.org.uk. Many of these routes have had significant investment over the past seven years. Be warned, however, that some routes are more rideable than others. A third of the LCN+ routes lie on the Transport for London Road Network (Red routes) and these are generally not suitable for inexperienced cyclists. Your local London Cycling Campaign (LCC) group should be able to advise you on this. Contact www.lcc.org.uk to find out their details. The LCN+ website is especially useful since it contains a webmap, enabling you to do all your planning online.

Local borough maps are available at your local council offices. These can be a bit 'pot luck', as some boroughs have produced excellent cycling maps showing every possible route while some are nonexistent. Lambeth have helpfully rated routes for rideability based on your bikeability level. They all help to provide a little bit more information for your route planning.

Google map information, available from various sources. Many local cycling campaign groups have put together their own maps, which can be accessed using the Google map interface. Some of these are a great place to start (Hackney and Camden's spring to mind). Indeed, I could easily have put these at the top of the hierarchy but the only thing holding them back is that they do not cover the whole of London. If you live in central London, however, then you are in luck. A good national resource which uses the Google map interface is www.bikehike.co.uk. It enables you to trace your route on the screen, and provides you with distance and gradient data. Really useful.

National cycle route planning, available at www.transportdirect.info. I am a huge fan of Transport Direct and if their new cycling component covered London this would be at the top of the list. At the moment there are only nine areas covered but if you want to see what can be achieved in mapping it is definitely worth a look. They are also looking for feedback, as this is a new system. It allows you to pick your style of route – quickest, quietest or most recreational – plus you get a printable map of the route and a stage by stage plan. You also get a handy gradient guide so you can plan routes avoiding hills. For the more techie out there you can even

“You’ll soon discover that planning your route is all part of the pleasure of cycling in London”

upload the route to your iphone or GPS tracking device and eliminate any chance of getting lost. This is the premier system at the moment but as we don't have it in London, it has to stay down the bottom.

The National Cycle Network (NCN), available at www.sustrans.org.uk. In London, there are several NCN routes that form part of a wider national network. If you want to cycle from Clapham to Cornwall then this is the map for you.

I should also mention some newer cycling initiatives that have yet to make it onto any maps. Watch out for the cycle highways coming in 2010; the faster moving cyclists amongst you should gain great benefit there. Also watch out for the TfL/Sustrans Greenways Network, a huge network of interconnected “green” routes that is intended for leisure cyclists. Some of these completed routes are represented on the TfL cycle guides.

Finally, good luck! You'll soon discover that planning your route is all part of the pleasure of cycling in London. And remember that TfL, LCC, CTC, Sustrans and your local borough cycling officers are there to help you. ●

Safe Cycling

Cycle Training UK's top ten tips for safe urban cycling

1 Have a roadworthy bike that fits you. Regularly check the brakes and tyre pressure, and don't ignore any strange noises, vibration, or jumping gears you notice as you are riding - they probably indicate a problem. A new bike bought from a traditional bike shop should be safe, but beware of mail-order 'bargains' or bikes bought from supermarkets. If in doubt, take it to a bike shop for advice (or sign up for a Cycle Training UK maintenance course!).

2 Use the road! Pavement cycling is slow, dangerous, annoying to pedestrians and illegal. It demonstrates a lack of confidence in the cyclist. Join the road where you can see and be seen by people already moving on the road. Remember they have priority as you join.

3 Think positioning! If you do have enough space for drivers to overtake you comfortably (on wide roads) ride away from the kerb, never in the gutter, and be aware that drivers tend to leave you the same room on your right as the room you leave for yourself on the left. Ride in the stream of traffic when you can match its speed or when you need to avoid car doors or the mouth of a side road. If forced to ride close to parked cars or slower moving traffic do so slowly so you have time to react to hazards such as an opening door. Avoid going down the left of lorries.

4 Check behind frequently, especially before changing position on the road. Looking behind attracts the attention of drivers as well as ensuring that you know what is happening around you.

5 See, be seen, communicate! Communicate your intentions with hand-signals, and by correct road positioning. Don't signal without looking behind first - it may be unsafe to signal if someone is overtaking at that moment, or it may be unnecessary to signal if no one is there! Also, a driver is more likely to see your signal if you have looked behind first. Consider wearing light clothing at night, and don't forget that front and back lights are a legal requirement.

6 Aim to arrive at junctions in the middle of your lane whether you are turning left or right, or going straight ahead. This prevents dangerous overtaking. On approach to lights the least safe option is to undertake on the left, so either wait your turn or consider overtaking on the right to get to the front, pulling into the stream of traffic if it starts moving.

7 Roundabouts. Arrive at, and move through roundabouts, in the middle of the most appropriate lane.

8 Winterise! If you aim to commute all through the year, fit your bike with full mudguards, get some lights, gloves, and invest in a lightweight breathable waterproof jacket and over-trousers. A peaked cap will keep the rain out of your eyes or off your glasses.

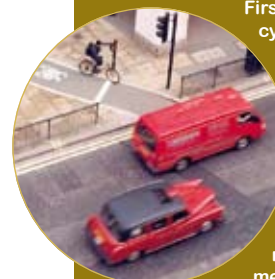
9 Have great bike control skills. You should understand how to shift your body weight when making an emergency stop, be able to swerve safely, make efficient use of your gears, keep good control of the bike while looking directly behind, and confidently ride one-handed. Ride with your fingers on your brake levers. If this seems uncomfortable you need to adjust the brake lever position to fit you.

10 Get some cycle training. Reading these tips is a small start, but there is no substitute for on-road cycle training. Even the most experienced rider usually becomes a more effective and assertive cyclist. Find out more at www.cycletraining.co.uk.

Resources for Safe Cycling

by Sean Lally

Although rural cyclists face their own set of safety challenges such as poor facilities, fast vehicles on narrow country lanes and less 'cycle aware' drivers, urban environments can be the most intimidating for new or returning cyclists, who often have limited experience of bike handling and modern road conditions. It helps to make good use of the excellent resources for safe cycling.



First and foremost is some form of cycle training. Not the old 'Cycling Proficiency' - rather a graded system of training to prepare the rider for modern, urban road conditions. Many local authorities and some employers now provide free lessons with specialist companies. This training, often undertaken on a cyclist's usual commuting route, is the single most effective measure for increasing cycling safety.

Just one or two, two hour lessons of one-to-one instruction can increase a cyclist's skills and understanding of the important concepts of priority, positioning on the road, and the common faults which can lead to serious accidents.

More information on cycle training can be found on the Bikeability homepage at www.bikeability.org.uk. Cycle Systems offer National Standard Cycle Training accredited Bikeability courses: find out more at www.cycle-systems.co.uk. A good resource for data on cycling accidents can be found on the Cyclist Touring Club website at www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/Cycling_Statistics.pdf.

For Londoners who want some support while trying out cycling, Transport for London (www.tfl.gov.uk) and the London Cycling Campaign (www.lcc.org.uk) have been pioneering 'Cycle Fridays', where an experienced group of cycle instructors will lead an informal group of cyclists from an outer borough into central London. The emphasis is on safety awareness and training, and these 'buddy rides' have been a huge success in getting new cyclists riding to work.

The most important resource of all is a well maintained bike. A bicycle which is suffering neglect will not only be unpleasant to ride, but may have defective gears or brakes or even loose bolts just waiting to come undone at that busy roundabout. Wear and tear will happen incrementally - such as a chain stretching or brake blocks wearing out - so cyclists may gradually get used to their bike's 'feel' and be amazed when, after a service, it is transformed. Ensure that your bike is serviced by qualified, experienced mechanics at least twice a year. Regular maintenance will also increase a bike's lifespan considerably, making the cost of the work a saving in the long term. Find out more, including information about mobile cycle repairs, at www.cycle-systems.co.uk.

Sean Lally is the Director of Cycle Systems. Cycle Systems run 'Cycle Skills' Bikeability courses, with National Standard Cycle Training accreditation; 'Cycle Systems Academy' professional City and Guilds cycle mechanics training; and 'Cycle Systems', the service arm for corporate and public service clients. Contact them on: www.cycle-systems.co.uk, www.cycle-systems-academy.co.uk or call 020 7608 2577 or 07726 921 002

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The Peddler

A day in the life of a London cyclist

by Adam Copeland

Let me start with a confession. After all, this column is all about the secret thoughts of a cyclist. Thoughts you're free to think away from the filth and fug of public transport; thoughts that come to you as you explore the secrets of London; thoughts you have (if you happened to cycle through Peckham last Tuesday) when you see a pigeon trapped in a wig shop and wonder how easy it is to get bird poo out of a cornrow.

Anyway, that confession. Here goes: I once cycled straight into a lamp-post because I couldn't work out the pros and cons involved in going to the left of it or going to the right of it. Neither option seemed better. The closer I got to it, the harder the debate became. In the end, I effectively crashed into my own indecision.

With that in mind, I tend to play games in my head where I force myself to make snap decisions. You have to swap bikes with one of the next three cyclists. Which will it be? You're allowed one free house on this street. This one or that one? You have to pick a wife from the women at this bus stop. Can you avoid the one that looks alarmingly like your own mum?

In fact, there's a whole game to be made of that particular sport. Basically it involves allocating a street at the start of your journey, then choosing a spouse from the people you see there. You're only allowed one (that's more of a law than a rule, really), you cannot change your mind, and you probably shouldn't tell the lucky stranger the good news.



So that's vaguely misogynistic indecision covered. Sadly, I recently discovered another thought I should have kept to myself. It involves rubbish, swimming trunks and fists, and it goes like this:

As I peddled past the Oval one morning, a driver overtook me in a van and threw some rubbish out of his window. All my indecision was gone: this was without doubt a Bad Thing. It was a time for action.

I cycled up to his open window, and, like the wise leader of a fierce but slightly smug army, shook my head disapprovingly. I wanted to give him a littering epiphany, to fundamentally change him from the sort of person who drops rubbish willy nilly, into the sort of person who definitely doesn't because he will forever have flashbacks of the dreadful stare that once pierced his soul near the Oval.

Instead, he just told me to 'clear off' (but sexually). "What's your problem, anyway?" he asked. Foolishly, I decided to get to the heart of the issue: "I just don't really like it when people drop rubbish."

This didn't go down well. He thought for a moment, and then announced that I "look like a f*!?!ing ****". While I didn't much care for his language, I had to admit he had a point – I was wearing swimming trunks and boots. (There were two reasons for this: 1. I thought it was going to rain but didn't have space in my bag for extra shoes. 2. I am indeed a f*!?!ing ****.)

Anyway, things were about to get worse. He had opened his door and decided he'd like to continue our conversation face to face. Using fists. I had nowhere to go. This was it. I was going to be murdered in Vauxhall, simply for being right about rubbish.

Then suddenly, I was saved – the lights changed and the traffic moved. We were off – he to rant to LBC about the cycling Stasi taking over our streets, and me to choose a stranger at a bus stop who looks like she wouldn't mind marrying a terrified weirdo in swimming trunks. ●



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Give it a Go...

The diary of a first-time commuter cyclist in London

by Gareth Jenkins

"Loved it. The ride went by in a heartbeat. Nice and sunny, nice route. Arse didn't hurt. Hands didn't hurt".

So said a text message we received from Gareth Jenkins on 15th September 2009, the first day he commuted to work by bicycle. Gareth had been a stalwart train commuter for 10 years and something of a cycle-sceptic. We had persuaded him to ride to work for a month – 12 miles from Woodford to Soho – and keep a cycle diary. Here's how he got on.

Day 1

I got up earlier than normal and was relieved to see that it was quite sunny. I had already packed my work clothes, towel, shower stuff and waterproof jacket in a plastic bag ready to put into my pannier bag. No, I didn't know what a 'pannier' was either. It's the bag thing that clips on a rack above the back wheel. I was calling it a "pannetta" for a while before someone took pity on me and put me right.

The night before's panic about what to wear and pack seemed like a distant memory as I strode down the steps to get my brand new bike in my shiny white tracksuit top and shiny blue shorts. I felt like an Alpha male, like I'd cast off the shackles of everyday man and was getting out there and adventuring my way to work. I was very conscious, however, that I had no specialist gear or accessories which, aside from maybe being naive, made me assume that other cyclists would laugh at me because of my rubbish novice cycling clothes.

I also didn't have any real knowledge of exactly where I was going. I had done a 'dry run' on a Sunday morning about a week before. That time I had been led by my friend Ben (*Cycle Lifestyle's* editor) who showed me the way around the empty, picturesque streets of unseen London on a borrowed bike. We had made it in 1 hour 20 minutes at a reasonably leisurely pace and so I was confident... well, reasonably confident.



"I didn't know what a 'pannier' was either. I was calling it a "pannetta" for a while before someone took pity on me and put me right"

This time I had a new bike, no friend, peak hour traffic to contend with and a double-sided page of his directions (which consisted of honestly 77 different "Turn Rights", or "Carry on Downs") flapping around in my hand as I rode. With this in mind I had left myself 2 and a quarter hours to get to Soho, which allowed for non-fatal crashes and getting lost. I also wanted to have 10-15 minutes to grab a shower and change when I got to work. 6:45 am should be fine.

The first kilometre was downhill and the wind rushed through my tracksuit and shorts like I had decided to wear paper to the North Pole. I wanted to go home. I thought I was going to be absolutely freezing but, as I pedalled more, I heated up and the temperature wasn't a problem. I realised that what to wear each day was going to be trickier than I had previously thought.

After 500 yards it also became clear that I should have taken the bike for a little bit of a longer test run beforehand. The seat was a little too high and needed to be adjusted, but with no allen keys I couldn't change it... school boy error.

Around about Balls Pond Road I received my first cyclist badge of honour... a proud moment... a cabbie swore at me! I believe he may have had to wait an extra 4 seconds before I passed. I wish he could have stuck around as I want to write a letter of apology to his home address for any inconvenience caused. →

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Protect a Cycle

Cycle theft in the UK is a serious problem. Last year over 440,000 bicycles were stolen, a large percentage of which were removed from poorly protected sheds and garages at private residences.

The government has recently invested £100m in schemes aimed at encouraging cycling. But the increasing interest in cycling, and rapid rise in cycle ownership, generates its own concerns regarding security. So there is a real need for an affordable system to secure bicycles, especially at home.

Trimetals Ltd boasts a 40-year record of designing and manufacturing metal storage buildings. They launched Protect a Cycle at last year's London Cycling Show. Submitted to the cycling press for independent testing, the product has been praised and highly recommended by the UK's leading cycling magazines, with the foremost publication, *Mountain Biking UK*, rating it simply as a "Superb Product".

Protect a Cycle is the first and only bicycle store that has been awarded the Secured by Design mark (Police Preferred Specification). It has also been tested and certified by the Loss Prevention Certification Board, and approved by leading

insurance companies including Butterworth Spengler (the official insurer of the British CTC and London Cycling Campaign).

The product is supplied as a comprehensive package which includes an integral metal floor, two stainless steel metal hasps with padlocks and a ground anchor with flexible metal security cable. Fixings for securing the unit to a concrete base are also supplied.

The clever operation of Protect a Cycle allows for complete and easy access and the unit can usually store up to three adult bikes.

A modern PVC-coated galvanised steel is used in construction. This material has been chosen for its excellent performance: it is maintenance free, fire resistant and guaranteed against corrosion for 25 years even in coastal locations.

Designed for easy and rapid assembly, the Protect a Cycle is available in a choice of all-cream or a two-tone green. It is delivered flat-packed with easy to follow step-by-step colour instructions.

Protect a Cycle is the latest addition to a comprehensive range of quality storage buildings manufactured in the UK by Trimetals Ltd, including a wide range of sheds, garden stores and gas cylinder enclosures. ●

For more information on Protect a Cycle call 01258 459 441 or visit www.protectacycle.co.uk



This must have put me off my groove as just after that I got lost. I couldn't find the road I needed and recognised nothing around me. One thing I have learned already is to stop when you're lost – don't roll around trying to focus on a shaky bit of paper in the road.

Back on track eventually, I raced toward the friendly canal, which gives you a little bit of utopia on your way in. People smile and wave as the water meanders past you. Fellow commuters beckon you on "No, YOU go first, after you!". Brightly painted long boats wink at you knowingly. "You've beaten the rat race", they whisper.

As you pull away from the towpath, London resumes its normal persona. White trucks fart fumes at you and people request you to f**k off out of their way.

I was a little bit aware that time was ticking on so there was a touch of worry setting in. I knew I couldn't afford another wrong turn. Fortunately it didn't happen and after putting my foot down a bit I pulled up at the front of my building, five minutes late, sweaty, out of breath with something that once was a hairstyle on my head.

But I felt extremely awake and switched on and I had enjoyed it immensely. I had pre-warned my boss too so I didn't get in trouble, although I did get a few requests from the girls in the office to put my legs away as soon as possible.

"I felt extremely awake and switched on and I had enjoyed it immensely"

The afternoon came along really quickly and I felt good – less tired than I thought I would. I was actually looking forward to riding home again. It was something different from the same old train I had always taken, standing by the exact door you need at the platform to optimise seat potential.

I remembered the route back a little better and save for one little wrong turn I made it back ok in 1 hour 45 minutes - shaving a good 15 minutes off my way in! ●

You can read the rest of Gareth's cycle diary at www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk. He now owns his own bicycle and is cycling to work 3 or 4 times a week. He's fitter too, and has got his journey time down to around 1 hour 15 minutes. His arse still doesn't hurt. If you have any questions for Gareth about his experience, email them to askgareth@cyclelifestyle.co.uk

Thank you to Two Wheels Good for lending us the equipment needed for this feature. www.twowheelsgood.co.uk



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Cycling in Tights

Lose the fear of winter cycling

Debbie Burton from cycling fashion company Minx shares her tips on how female cyclists can stay warm this winter...

It's getting to that time of year when lots of riders feel the start of a wobble about making the commitment to riding through the cold months. **It's not just the fear of the cold, but what you need to keep the cold out. Yep – it's all about tights.** Even among hardcore cyclists, tights usually aren't viewed as anything other than a necessary evil: pretty much no-one loves the reflection in the mirror, but they are worn for the simple reason that they work. There's nothing quite like the tummy-to-ankle coziness a pair of tights provides. So what's a girl to do if she wants to commute more than a couple of miles in cold weather in comfort AND style?

First find the right tights. Yes you can pull a pair of old running tights over your summer padded shorts, but buying tights with a built-in chamois pad makes



All products mentioned are available from www.minx-girl.com

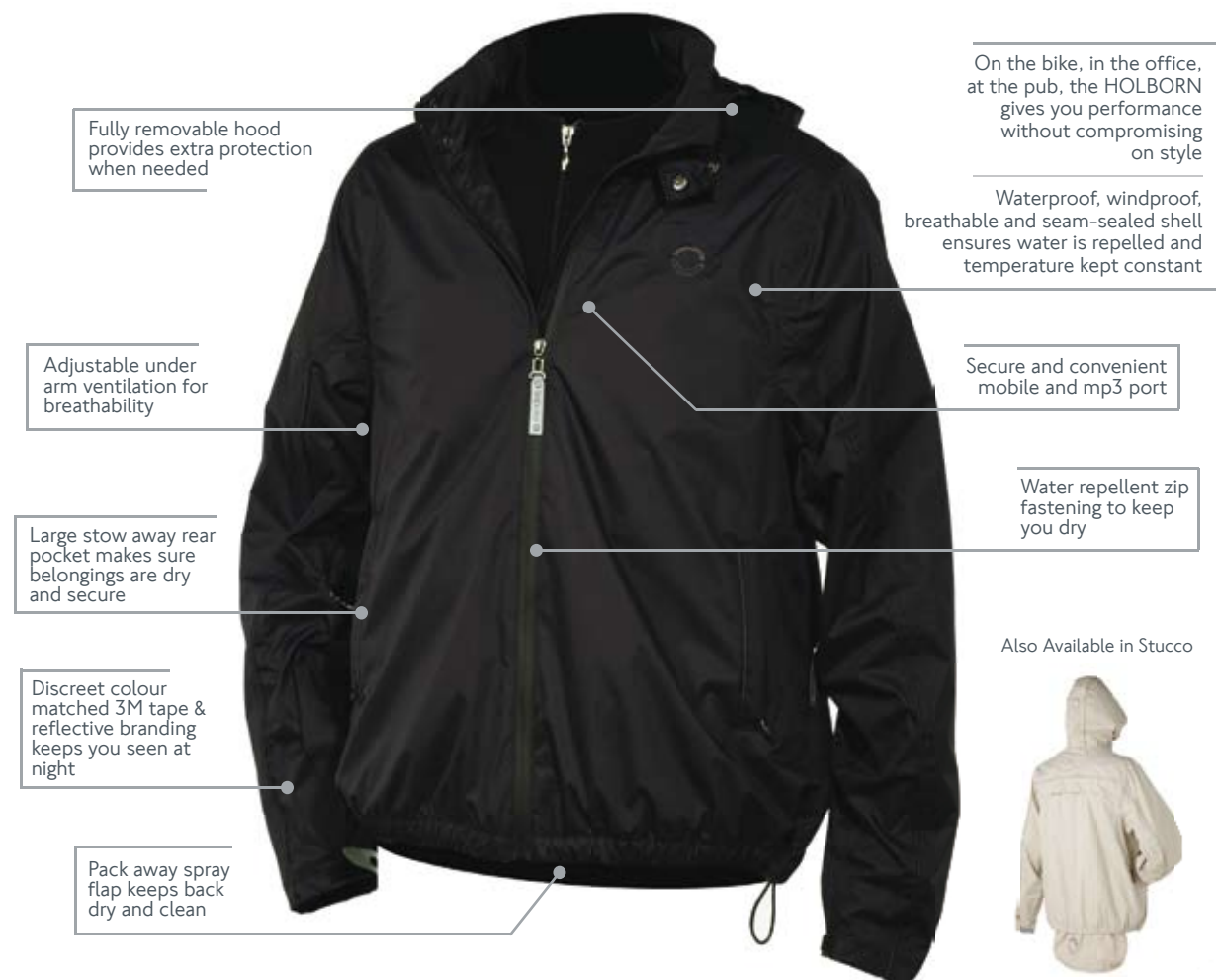
for a sleeker and more comfortable shape – plus there really is a difference in the flattering quality of tights with panels cut for a cycling action. Invest as much as you can afford, because more money buys you a higher quality chamois that will conform to your shape and then move with you rather than bunching. More money also buys you a better grade of fabric; you really don't have to suffer with the high gloss effect everyone usually associates with Lycra, since there are non-shiny versions available. Look for brushed inner surfaces too for extra warmth. **My personal favourites are the Terry Coolweather tights (£55)**, so dense and matte that they are a joy to wear and often mistaken for expensive designer leggings. Their high-tech pad is ultra low profile so your bum really won't look big in it either.

That done, start to think about layering. Summer baggy shorts worn over tights doesn't just channel your inner bike messenger, it keeps those important thigh muscles warmer, stops random spray and tends to ward off the hysterically funny comments from passing van drivers' mates that tights worn solo seem to attract. **The most well-kept secret is waterproof shorts. Sounds weird but actually they are the work of genius.** They keep the worst of the rain off without the overheating and flapping associated with overtrousers. The absolute best ones are made by Gore (Alp X Lady Shorts £90). Yes they are expensive, but made from Gore PacLite they pack tiny, breath well and are the perfect cycling cut.

Shorts over tights all too tomboy? Wear a skirt on top instead. You can get cycling specific versions (in a wrap-over style, which don't get caught on the saddle as easily). But what the hell, get customising. I have a friend who has ripped off a denim mini that's short enough to ride in, and another who got a cheap mini kilt from the market so she doesn't stress about mud splatters. It swirls in a very fabulous way too, and is a rocking look on or off the bike. Once you learn to love your cycling tights you'll find that by the time Spring comes around you'll be reluctant to part with the reassuring coverage... now get out there and ride. ●



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Cycle Challenges

Get cycling and raise money for a good cause at the same time!

Take to the Highlands

Heading into its fourth year, the Macmillan Cancer Support Etape Caledonia is ready to set off on 16th May 2010. Last year's event saw 3,700 cyclists raise over £380,000 for the charity in the beautiful Highlands of Perthshire – and 2010 hopes to surpass that.

The Etape Caledonia is the only closed road cycle event in the UK and offers an inclusive ride for cyclists of all abilities. Participants require a certain level of fitness but the undulating course is achievable for most recreational cyclists. TV presenter Aggie MacKenzie completed the course in 6 hours 39 minutes in 2008!

Riders are able to enjoy the 81-mile route, meandering through the rolling picturesque landscape, passing by two stunning lochs – Loch Tummel and Loch Rannoch – and conquering the landmark climb, Schiehallion, which peaks at a breathtaking 1083m.

"Outstanding countryside with a breezy section alongside Kinloch Rannoch where we even caught a little sun, while the rain held back most of the day. There was a great deal of cheering along the way and the odd dose of stirring bagpipes to keep the legs moving. The event was well organised and professionally managed and should grow to form part of the ever expanding landscape of such cycling sportives in the UK." *Daily Telegraph*

Nestling in the shadows of the Highlands is the host town Pitlochry, the perfect venue providing an ideal home for cyclists for their stay. With quintessential Scottish pubs selling traditional Scottish food, it is an idyllic spot for a weekend break.

The Macmillan Cancer Support Etape Caledonia has continued to grow in popularity since its first staging in 2007, when 1,200 riders lined up at the start. Riders across Britain are drawn to the event



for a unique experience; as the only closed road cycling event in the UK it enters the realms of the L'Etape du Tour de France. The winding route does not veer from a smooth tarmac surface for the whole 81-mile distance, so makes for a long but comfortable ride that isn't punishing to bikes.

The sport of cycling is growing rapidly and the Etape Caledonia is the perfect entry point for those wishing to try a bigger cycling challenge. Its exclusive closed road format provides a safe environment for people to experience a mass participation cycling sportive for the first time.

For further details and to sign up for the event now, please visit www.etapecaledonia.co.uk and prepare yourself for a fantastic ride on 16th May 2010.

Looking for a new cycle challenge?

Action Medical Research runs a wide range of popular bike rides all over the UK and beyond, from our flagship London to Paris event to our 100-mile regional bike rides. With twenty 'Take Action' events in the programme for 2010, there is no excuse for not getting on your bike and fundraising for us! We guarantee an enjoyable experience, whatever your standard of cycling.

Our London to Paris cycle challenge is now in its tenth year and has five different routes to choose from, including a new faster option for those really looking to test themselves. You could join us and be a part of our well-established, 300-mile, three/four-day trip.

More than 750 riders will be going the distance in 2010. You could be among them, soaking up the atmosphere en route before celebrating your success at the Eiffel Tower. We arrive in time to catch the finale of the Tour de France. Full fundraising support and training plans are provided, plus fantastic memories...

If you're looking for something closer to home, try one of our 100-mile challenges. These rides take place in various parts of the UK and there are seven new events for 2010. Whether you are new to cycling, an old hand or returning after a break, we will cater for your needs.

Action Medical Research is a leading UK charity focusing on children's health. We fund vital work that aims to prevent, cure or treat conditions that devastate the lives of many thousands of babies and children and their families. By taking part in our events you can help us make a difference and continue our pioneering work. For nearly 60 years we have been instrumental in the development of some of the most significant breakthroughs in recent medical history, including the UK polio vaccine, ultrasound scanning in pregnancy and discovering the importance of folic acid during pregnancy. ●

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Q&A

The experiences of Cycle Lifestylers

Zebbie Yousuf is a 28 year old from Belfast, who lives in Brixton and is studying for a PhD in International Politics at King's College, London.

Why do you cycle in London?

It's cheap and it's good exercise when I don't have time between studying for anything else. Did I mention it's cheap?

Where do you cycle in London?

Everywhere! Mostly from home to university but also as general transport all over – typically zone 1.

What kind of bike do you ride?

Mountain bike, though I'm hoping to get a Dutch one. I rode one in Berlin and they are fantastic – you feel like you are strolling along.

What bicycle accessories do you have?

Minimal – some clip-on lights and a lock. For me, deodorant and wet wipes are the best accessories when you can't have a shower at your destination, especially in summer.

What do you wear when on your bike?

The same as if I'm not cycling: jeans, skirt, dress, boots, though I always have a change of top/t-shirt. I think it's just as easy to do in your jeans or dress. I did



make a mistake once when I foolishly wore a pair of stockings with a skirt which kept riding up revealing the tops of the stockings. I got some admiring looks that day! In the end I took them off and went bare legged.

What kinds of cycle trips do you do in London?

Meeting friends, shopping and going out. It takes a little getting used to and maybe a bit more preparation, but it can be quicker than getting public transport.

How often do you cycle?

Almost every day – bar when it's raining or I'm in heels or know I'll be having more than a couple of drinks.

What's the best thing that's happened to you on a bike?

I got cheered by some male cyclists in Lambeth who shouted "we need more female cyclists – good on you!"

What's the low point of your commute?

Waterloo Bridge on a windy day.

What's the high point of your commute?

The view from Waterloo Bridge on a not so windy day!

What do you like most about cycling in London?


You get to know the streets you don't see on the tube. Also it's quite relaxing after a hard day's studying, and it's a great way to wake up and start the day if like me you are badly motivated in the mornings.

Have you ever been cycling outside of London?

Yep, in Berlin and in Ireland. Having lived in Berlin, where you can take a bike on the trains and metros, I think it would be really good if we had more bike-friendly public transport in London.

Have you got any tips for new/other cyclists?

Be assertive and get out in front of the cars and lorries – that's the only way they will know you're there.



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Romantic Cycling

A new way to date in the capital

Bored of pizzas, bars and cinemas? The same old places to go on dates in London? Then why not try something new and exciting: romantic cycling.

A romantic city break doesn't have to break the bank. There's a beautiful capital on your doorstep, and you can ride around it for free. It's easy to forget it when you're wrestling your way through a crowd of commuters, but London is the perfect backdrop for a romantic day out – with its winding streets, stunning architecture and breathtaking riverscapes that really come alive on a bike.

To help couples get started, we've devised a special *Cycle Lifestyle* route that stays

on quiet roads (mostly on dedicated cycle tracks) yet takes in some of the capital's most romantic places, old and new – including the South Bank, the London Eye, Tate Modern, Angel Canal, the City, St Paul's Cathedral, Shoreditch, the British Museum, Covent Garden and a certain Love Lane! Our circular route also passes Liverpool Street, Kings Cross, Euston and Waterloo, so you can take your bikes onto the train and then set off from one of these stations. The course of true love never ran smoother.

We sent London couple Mike Toone and Dominique Flint on our romantic route. Here's how they got on...



“A romantic city break doesn't have to break the bank. There's a beautiful capital on your doorstep, and you can ride around it for free”

How long have you been together?
18 Months.

Where did you first meet?
At a bar on Brick Lane.

What do you like most about each other?
Our shared passion for fun and food!

Do you go on lots of dates?
Yes, we try and go on as many dates as possible even though we live together.

What's the best date you've been on so far?
Mike: Dom took me to Istanbul for 4 days - that was pretty ace.
Dom: our second date to St Pauls.

Do you usually cycle together?
Yes. Living in East London means we love and rely on our bikes.

Where do you cycle as individuals?
Dom: to work every day.
Mike: to Brussels for my birthday.

Did our cycling route make you feel romantic?
Ah yes – we cycled on a perfect autumn day, which made every part of the ride that much better. London is a great city and the best way to experience it is on a bike... together. →



How did you find navigating round the route?

Very easy, and as we know London well we could 'follow our noses' at various points to really explore. Doing the route on a Sunday meant that the roads were really quiet.

Which was your favourite part of the route?

Waterloo Bridge offers an amazing view both sides. Also, it was great to see the City on the weekend when it was so peaceful.

Where did you stop, and what did you do?

We stopped on the canal in Islington and had a lovely picnic.

Would you recommend romantic cycling?

Yes, definitely! We often cycle together. Another favourite route of ours is to cycle through Canary Wharf and then under the foot tunnel and onto Greenwich park. You can even check out the Olympic park on the way home.

What did you do after your cycle date?

Liverpool beat Man U in the pub afterwards, so Mike was happy. We then had a drink with some friends and went home to watch The X Factor! ●

To see a detailed map of the route, just visit www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk. And please email us at romanticcycling@cyclelifestyle.co.uk to let us know how you got on.

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Dear Boss,

Re: Supporting the cycle lifestyle

We're sure you know that travelling to work in London can be a bit of a drag. They say "start as you mean to go on", yet it's not uncommon for a Londoner's working day to start stressfully: with delays, traffic jams and packed-out trains.

But there is another way to commute. More and more people are starting the day with an energising and uplifting cycle ride to work. Cycling is often just as quick as driving or taking public transport, and there are so many other benefits. **The morning ride makes people more motivated, calm, alert, confident and happy.** It gives them momentum for the day ahead.

The thing is, lots of would-be cyclists are put off by the lack of cycle-friendly features in their workplaces. We'd like to urge you to make an investment in better facilities for ours – such as showers, lockers and cycle storage devices. (Cycle-Works, overleaf, can explain all the storage options to you – including cycle lockers, an efficient and cost-effective solution which many employers are using instead of traditional cycle sheds, and special two-tiered storage systems, as seen at Euston and Liverpool Street, which can be ideal if capacity is an issue.) Investment really is the right word. **Studies show that cycling to work improves employee morale, health, productivity, recruitment and loyalty, and it reduces absenteeism.** It also saves money through reduced costs for things like car parking, travelling expenses and congestion charges. And it improves the company brand by demonstrating a commitment to the local environment.

There are plenty of schemes out there that can help us to prosper as a business and a workforce through supporting the cycle lifestyle.

"There are plenty of schemes out there that can help us to prosper as a business and a workforce through supporting the cycle lifestyle"

Transport for London (TfL) is a leading provider. Their 'A New Way to Work' scheme can help us devise a workplace travel plan that encourages cycling (as well as alternatives like walking and car sharing). TfL can also offer information, support, advice and funding. We could even enter a team into their 'Workplace Challenge', in which employees can login and log the distance they've cycled, and maybe win an award for the most mileage or the most new cyclists. There's also TfL's 'Take a Stand' scheme, which offers funding for improving workplace storage facilities for cyclists. Find out more at www.tfl.gov.uk.

Another great option is to join a 'Cycle to Work' scheme. These enable employers to get tax benefits from leasing bikes and safety equipment to employees, and enable employees to purchase bikes through monthly payments out of their wages while receiving tax breaks on the costs involved. Find out more at www.cycle2work.info or www.cyclescheme.co.uk.

Finally, we could enrol on the 'Corporate Affiliation' scheme offered by the London Cycling Campaign (LCC). This would give us discounts on LCC membership and cycle training for staff, support with promotion and marketing, and access to news updates and audit services provided by LCC. Find out more at www.lcc.org.uk.

More and more businesses are reaping the benefits of promoting cycling, so now's a great time for us to start – and to start each working day as we mean to go on.

Yours Sincerely,

Please add your signature here...

Please tear off this letter, ask your colleagues to sign it, and then give it to your boss





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