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Getting started
London Cycle Map
Cycling in tandem
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Issue 3

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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

Ever been sitting in a crowd while the people around you keep standing up to try to get a better view?

A few people stand up, then a few more, until everyone's got to stand up, necks craning and legs aching, because otherwise no-one can see. If only people could stay seated, everyone would be able to see just fine, and everyone would be better off.

Lots of Londoners know a similar dilemma only too well. Every day, they could be viewing London's glorious riverscapes, gorgeous winding streets and breathtaking architecture from the breezy vantage of a bicycle seat, healthier and happier. Yet so many people use their cars to try to get around faster, Londoners get too scared to cycle. Soon everyone's stuck in a traffic jam, going nowhere and spewing out fumes and fury. If only people were on their bikes, everyone would be better off.

Thankfully, choosing between cycling and driving is not quite as clear-cut as choosing between sitting and standing in a crowd. When too many people stand up, the others simply must get out of their seats if they want to see anything. But when too many people drive in London, people only *think* they can't cycle. And they're wrong. You *can* cycle in London. Right now. It's safer, quicker and easier than you think.

Cycle Lifestyle is a free magazine dedicated to showing more Londoners the truth about cycling. We'll show you how to get started, plan a route and cycle safely. We'll show you ways to cycle sociably – whether exploring on a tandem or travelling to a football game. And we'll unveil our new 'London Cycle Map Campaign' which promises to make life even better for cyclists in the capital.

So... sit back... relax... and enjoy your cycle lifestyle.



Ben Irvine



Get Set...

It's as easy as... riding a bike!



Get real

The main thing to do at the start if you're considering cycling in London is to forget some of the misconceptions you may have.

First and foremost, cycling's not "too dangerous". It is estimated that the health benefits of cycling outweigh any risks by a factor of 20 to 1, so maybe that's why cyclists on average live longer than non-cyclists.* It is, of course, advisable to plan your route thoroughly – taking backstreets, canals and parks, where traffic is lower or non-existent – and it's a good idea to get some cycle training if you're lacking confidence or road skills. Don't let uninformed scaremongering put you off.

Second, you shouldn't worry about London being "too big". Amateur cyclists regularly cover up to 100 miles in charity events, and London's tiny in comparison. Plus it's mercifully flat. Miles are just minutes on a bike when you know where you're going.

Third, don't let anyone tell you cycling makes you "too sweaty". It's no worse than sweating it out in a sweltering train, bus or car. When you arrive, have a quick rinse in the bathroom and put on a bit of deodorant, and you'll be the most fragrant person around.

Fourth, cycling's not "too tiring". It's not like jogging, which can make you knackered after 100 metres. You often feel like you could go forever on a bike, most of the time cruising along without pedalling. Even if your route is longer or more demanding, don't forget your fitness will improve rapidly.

Last, but not least, don't be put off by people moaning that "the British weather's too bad". It only rains 6% of the time in London, and when it does you can just wear waterproofs or wrap up your spare clothes nice and dry in a pannier. What's even better is that, in the heat, cycling gets you out in the open air and cools you down, while in the cold it warms you up.

What is true about cycling is that it's healthy (it helps you lose weight and protects against a variety of medical problems); fast (on average it's 5mph quicker than driving in London, and comparable in journey time to getting the train); fun (it gives you a buzz that lasts all day and makes communities happier and friendlier); environmentally-friendly (with zero emissions and noise pollution); and economical (you can save around £150 a month through not buying a travelcard).

Get a bike

There are different kinds of bike for different kinds of journey, so you need to choose the right bike for yours.

Road bikes ('racing' bikes) are designed to be lightweight, aerodynamic and fast, with handlebars that curl downwards and skinny tyres.

Touring bikes are sturdier versions of road bikes, designed for long distances carrying luggage.

Mountain bikes are designed for rough terrain, with knobbly tyres, strong frames, a wide selection of gears, and often suspension.

Hybrid bikes offer a compromise between the speed of a road bike and the strength and gearing of a mountain bike. With smooth tyres and an upright riding posture that's good for visibility, they're a popular option for commuting.

Folding bikes can be folded away and carried like a briefcase. Useful for commuting, they can conveniently be taken on the train or bus. They have small wheels and fewer gears, and can be stored easily at home if you don't have much space.

Electric bikes are a more expensive option, with an electric motor offering assistance for getting up hills or on longer commutes.

Second-hand bikes come in all shapes and sizes. Their quality is variable, however, so take a knowledgeable friend with you to make sure that the frame and parts in particular are in good order.

Shed bikes are bikes that have been gathering cobwebs in your shed for years! Check them over before you get back on.

For people with disabilities there are adapted cycles, tricycles, tandems, side-by-side cycles and recumbent cycles – making cycling accessible to almost anybody.

Get ready

Before you set off you'll need to make sure your bike is safe to ride. Start with the following checks:

- ▶ Both brakes work well.
- ▶ Both tyres are pumped up (this will make your bike easier to ride as well as safer).
- ▶ The saddle height is correct (so that when sitting on the saddle your heel rests on the pedal with your knee very slightly bent). Also make sure that when adjusting the saddle height the seat post limit has not been reached.

► The handlebars are tightened. Ensure that they cannot be turned with the front wheel between your legs, and that they do not move when pressure is applied from the top.

► The gears work smoothly.

If you are unsure then take your bike to the nearest bike shop for a quick service. When you buy your bike from a shop you can expect them to help you with these checks.

Get dressed

For most urban cycling trips there's no need to wear special clothing, any more than there is for a walk to the shops. You can even cycle in smart clothes, so long as you're comfortable. Some general advice:

► Make sure that your clothing is neither too baggy (to prevent it catching in the chain) or too tight (restricting your pedalling).

► In wet conditions it's a good idea to wear a waterproof coat (and overtrousers, if it's pouring). Another option is to carry spare clothes separately.

► It's important to be visible, especially at night or in heavy traffic, so consider wearing light-coloured clothes or a reflective jacket/vest.

► A hat and gloves will keep your extremities warm in cold weather. Cycling is usually the warmest option for travelling in cold weather, since your body heat rises to a comfortable level within minutes of pedalling.

Get accessorized

Some basic accessories are essential:

► Lights. By law you must have a front white light and a rear red light when cycling at night, and a rear reflector and pedal reflectors at all times.

► A lock. Theft is a problem in London so spend as much as you can afford to get a stronger lock (and if possible multiple locks). Always leave your bike in a well-lit and busy place to deter thieves.

Others accessories are really useful:

► A bell. You'll find pedestrians really appreciate an early, gentle warning of your presence if you're on a shared path.

► Mudguards. These will help keep splatters off your clothes.

► A rack and panniers. Panniers are bags that attach onto a rack at the back of your bike. They're useful because they enable you to be unencumbered while riding. The next best option is a rucksack because this keeps your arms free. Never dangle bags from your handlebars.

► A pump and a spare inner tube or puncture repair kit. Punctures are rare, but it's good to be prepared. →

Spoke

Now, one birthday,
Daisy's silent bloke
gives her this bike
he's built from scratch;
that says it all.

He finds the frame –
a blood-red de Rosa –
buried in briars
by the heavy water
of the Lea.

He picks the brakes
from a skeletal Bianchi
locked and abandoned
outside the Hoop & Grapes
near Leadenhall.

The wheels?
a skip in Putney;
and he tunes them
pitch-perfect
by hand and ear.

All recycled, built with such care
that Daisy only hears
the nervous clicking
of the freewheel
waiting for her answer.

Luke Hacker

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

You can find out more about getting started from Sustrans at www.sustrans.org.uk, the London Cycling Campaign at www.lcc.org.uk – or just phone a friend who cycles.

beginner's guide

► It's not compulsory to wear a helmet to cycle in London, but many people choose to. If you do, ensure that your helmet is of good quality and properly fitted.

Get a route

Preparing a good route is essential for cycling in London, but luckily it's one of the most fun parts. There are lots of helpful resources, including:

- Transport for London cycle guides. You can order them online at www.tfl.gov.uk.
- LCN+ maps. These can be viewed online at www.londoncyclenetwork.org.uk.
- Local borough maps. Contact your local council offices to find out more.
- Google maps. An especially useful resource which uses the Google map interface is www.bikehike.co.uk. You can interactively plot your route onscreen and find out gradient and distance data.
- www.cyclestreets.net – a journey planner for cycling which allows you to type in your start and destination locations and advises a route for you.
- A good old-fashioned A to Z!

When you plan your route you should aim for:

- Quiet roads or roads with cycle paths
- Low speed limit areas
- Parks and open spaces which allow cycling

And you should avoid:

- Very busy junctions
- Large and fast roundabouts
- Dual carriageways
- Routes heavy with lorries
- Pavements. It's illegal to cycle on the pavement, unless it's signed as a shared-use path for cyclists and pedestrians.

If any of these are unavoidable, you can always get off and push!

Get safe – the Sustrans guide

Tips for cyclists on roads

- Ride in a position where you can see and be seen.
- Beware of vehicles turning left.
- Make eye contact with other road users, especially at junctions – then you know they've seen you.
- Signal clearly at all times.
- Follow the Highway Code – don't jump red lights and don't cycle on the pavement unless it's a designated cycle path.
- Consider wearing a helmet and bright clothing, especially in towns, at night and in bad weather.



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- In wet weather watch your speed as surfaces may be slippery and it will take you longer to stop.
- Consider getting some cycle training. All London's boroughs provide free or subsidised training.

Tips for motorists

- When turning left watch for cyclists coming up on your near side and don't cut them up.
- Give cyclists a wide berth when overtaking.
- Dip your headlights when approaching cyclists.
- In wet weather, allow cyclists extra room as surfaces may be slippery.
- Cyclists and motorists are equally entitled to use and share the same road space.

Tips for cyclists on shared-use paths

- Don't go too fast – it can intimidate others.
- Use your bell to let others know you are approaching, but don't assume they can hear or see you.
- Give way to others and always be prepared to slow down and stop if necessary.
- Keep left or on your side of any dividing line.
- Be careful at junctions, bends or entrances.

Tips for other path users

- Keep your dog under control.
- Keep to your side of any dividing line. ●

Dr Bike will see you now

Free cycle repairs in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Cycling makes you healthier, fitter and happier. That's why more and more Londoners are looking after themselves by turning to two wheels. But what happens when your bike needs a bit of TLC? The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is running the 'Dr Bike' programme, as part of their policy of encouraging people to enjoy a safe and effective commute across the Borough.

Dr Bike offers safety checks and minor repairs and adjustments, to keep people on the road.

Once a month, commuters can pull over and get a quick check of their bike while they are on their way home. There are three locations used in rotation for these public Dr Bike sessions: the canal towpath in the north of the Borough, Kensington High Street/Holland Park in the centre, and Brompton Cemetery in the south. The sessions are held from 4pm to 7pm in the evenings, timed for the journey home when people have time to stop for a few minutes for a quick safety check. Any major work is referred to local bike shops.

The Borough also offers 'workplace' Dr Bikes, for larger companies that are striving to encourage more staff members to ride to work. Companies that work with the Borough in producing a travel plan can access this service, with regular visits currently being made to organisations such as the Royal Brompton and Royal Marsden Hospitals, and the Natural History and Science Museums. Other companies are welcome to get in touch with the Borough if they would like to have a Dr Bike visit. Contact marina.kroyer@rbkc.gov.uk

All Dr Bike sessions in the Borough are delivered by Bikeworks, who were named as the best new social enterprise in the UK in 2009. Bikeworks are also opening a new venue in North Kensington in the summer. Building on their existing base in east London, it will act as a centre for cycle mechanics courses, recycling bikes, and all ability cycling sessions, as well as a retail outlet. ●

Forthcoming public Dr Bike dates

August 3	4pm – 7pm	Holland Park (south gate)
September 7	4pm – 7pm	Grand Union Canal (Meanwhile Gdns.)
October 5	4pm – 7pm	Brompton Cemetery (Inside northern entrance)
November 2	4pm – 7pm	Holland Park (south gate)



Get ready for the Cycle Hire scheme

The launch of the Mayor's Cycle Hire scheme is imminent, with docking stations starting to appear on roadsides throughout the capital. Londoners will soon be able to hire a bike, use it as they like, and then drop it off ready for the next person. The

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea will host approximately 50 docking stations. A map of their locations can be found at rbkc.gov.uk, but you'll never be far from one in zone 1.



The hire scheme bikes will soon become a familiar sight throughout the Borough, in their blue livery. But if you are thinking of returning to cycling using the hire bikes then it would be a good idea to do a basic training course to get used to the bike and cycling in traffic, under the guidance of an experienced trainer. The Borough has a team of trainers and a small fleet of Cycle Hire scheme bikes for people to learn on. They are good solid bikes, simple to ride. But a familiarisation session with an instructor will help you to master both the bike and the operation of the docking stations, giving you access to convenient cycle trips across central London. Training sessions are free and available by emailing road.safety@rbkc.gov.uk and requesting a hire bike training session.

London Cycle Map Campaign

Join the campaign for a safe and simple cycle map for the capital

Cycle Lifestyle's new campaign and petition promises to change the capital forever, by giving more people the confidence to cycle and to do so in safety. The big idea is to create a single 'London Cycle Map' that's clear and easy to use and corresponds to a unified network of signed cycle routes throughout Greater London: the cycling equivalent of the London Underground Map.

A London Cycle Map would make cyclists much less vulnerable, because its network of routes would use quieter roads (as well as parks and canals), with signs telling drivers what to expect. And navigating by bike would become so much easier, with signs guiding cyclists unerringly to their destination just like on the tube. Wherever you were in London, you'd be within minutes of a cycle network that could lead you wherever you wanted to go.

Decent cycle routes already exist in the capital, but there's no consistency in their signage, and you need

bunches of different maps to cover Greater London. In 1931, Harry Beck's famous tube-map succeeded in taming a complex system of underground lines. Something similar is needed today for the capital's cycle routes. Instead of remembering hundreds of 'turn rights' and 'turn lefts' you could just remember a few routes, plus where to change from one to the other.

A London Cycle Map would transform the capital – into a greener, cleaner, quieter and friendlier city. You can support our campaign by:

- ▶ signing the petition at www.petition.co.uk/london-cycle-map-campaign
- ▶ joining the campaign's Facebook group
- ▶ putting up your free campaign poster (enclosed)
- ▶ and telling all your friends... ●

Learn more at www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk and see Simon Parker's fascinating design for a London Cycle Map.



Campaign T-shirts



Support the London Cycle Map Campaign by wearing one of these stylish, 100% organic cotton T-shirts. Manufactured under fair labour conditions and without the use of harmful chemicals, these unique T-shirts feature the London Cycle Map Campaign logo on the front and the *Cycle Lifestyle* logo on the sleeve.



Available from www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk for just £15. (Unisex). Postage and packaging FREE.

Large Campaign Posters

Help promote the London Cycle Map Campaign by displaying a larger campaign poster on the wall of your shop, workplace, sports club, community centre, living room.... or wherever you like! Printed on FSC certified recyclable paper, the posters feature the iconic London Cycle Map Campaign logo. Choose your own size.



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New Bike on the Block

During a conversation I had last week I was trying to describe some of the funny and unusual stuff that happens to me on my cycle to work. I thought of loads, but I've got them down to my 5 favourites...

January 28 – Walthamstow

Whilst stopped at the lights I jokingly challenged a Porsche driver to a drag race and he played along and revved his engine. This is the type of thing that I think should be the headline on a local newspaper. "Man in Porsche Jokes with Man on Bicycle – Isn't Life Great?"



February 18 – Hackney

Easy to describe this one. Down a quiet backstreet someone had inexplicably left a football by the side of the road in the gutter. Without stopping I kicked it and it went through some garden gates. I naturally made a 'crowd goes wild' noise like I was in Wembley Stadium.

May 12 – Farringdon

Around 15 cyclists lined up across the green cyclist section at the lights... in silence. We waited for ages until the amber light showed, then one of them shouted "On your marks" which made everybody laugh out loud.

June 2 – Soho

Someone stopped me as I got on my bike and said "Hey, I like your bike". Now, I was absolutely brimming with pride, because it was new... but as a 31 year-old it's hard to react appropriately to that comment. No-one has said that since Neil Godley in infants, after my dad bought me a blue and white Peugeot mountain bike (15 gears, oh yeah). All I managed to do was say to the guy "Thanks man" and pat the saddle as a cowboy would his trusty horse. He didn't mention it but we both knew that I put way too much emphasis on the word "man" to be truly cool. He just smiled and left me staring adoringly at my shiny bike.

March 17 – Stoke Newington

The weather and the elements are always one of the main arguments for not cycling, but a few months ago I was heading home and it was dark and windy and absolutely hammering it down – I'm talking swirly, sideways rain that slaps you in the face. I was hunched and grimacing as I peddled against the elements, when all of a sudden I realised that all the tension was just a learned reaction. Normally, when you've got your regular clothes on and you start to get soaked and cold, you turn your collar up and run to shelter and it generally ruins your day. But I was prepared. I had waterproofs and warm gear on. The world suddenly slowed down and I relaxed like I was Neo and I had just discovered what the Matrix truly was. London was absolutely beautiful in the rain. The water was bouncing off the shiny inky black asphalt and forming little rivers that looked like dark wine, reflecting neon. The lights of the hi-rises glowed with an aura around them that the rain had created. I was soaking but it was life-affirming.

Give it a Go...

Ocean's 12 let loose in London

by Wendy Johnson

Spend any time around the Ocean Estate in the London borough of Tower Hamlets and you might spot some of the local women riding their bikes on their way to work, the shops, or the local community centre. What won't be obvious is that three months ago, many of these women had never even sat on a bicycle before.

After twelve weeks of training with sustainable transport charity Sustrans as part of the Tower Hamlets Healthy Borough Programme, twelve women from the estate – dubbed the Ocean's 12 – have completely embraced two-wheeled travel.

Rebecca Davis, Sustrans Project Coordinator, has been working with the Ocean's 12 since their very first training session back in the spring. 'These women have had to overcome so many barriers

to get where they are now' she says. 'They come from a culture where women on bikes are not the norm and challenging that has taken real guts and determination.'

'I think they would all agree that it's been worth it, though, and they are already feeling the benefits. Being able to ride a bike is incredibly liberating, fun and a great way to keep fit.'

Helping to improve fitness is a key part of the project. As many as 30 per cent of adults in Tower Hamlets are estimated to be clinically obese, but the problem begins long before adulthood – the borough has the third highest obesity rate for four to five year-olds in the country.

'Giving these women the skills and confidence to cycle means they can share that with their children',

"I never thought I would cycle to get around, go to work and things like that, but now I am"



Rebecca explains. 'One of the women now intends to teach her young son to ride a bike so they can go out together as a family. **Instilling that familiarity with cycling at a young age can really help children embrace healthy habits that will stick with them into adulthood.**'

Sureya Bibi, a primary school teacher and young mother of three year-old Yahya, is one of the Ocean's 12. 'I was excited but nervous when I started,' says Sureya, 'but I was really determined to learn. People do still stare at me because I'm an Asian woman on a bike, but I'm having too much fun to care. I could happily just ride all day.'

'Before I began learning, I wanted to cycle to have fun and as a form of exercise. I never thought I would cycle to get around, go to work and things like that, but now I am. My next step is to get more confidence on the roads. I just want to get out there.'

Rebecca continues: 'Sureya came onto the training course with huge enthusiasm to learn to ride a bike, and went from simply mastering her balance in a school playground, to changing gears and conquering hills in a nearby park, then making small journeys on the local roads. She plans to start cycling every day to her new job, so her new cycling skills are already changing her day-to-day life.'

Confidence on the roads is something many women say they lack. Last year, Sustrans surveyed women across the country to find out why 79 per cent of British women never cycle at all. The most common reason was that they didn't feel safe enough, with many claiming that cycle lanes entirely separated from other traffic was what it would take to encourage women to cycle more.

In London, Sustrans is working on exactly that, and has just opened a brand new series of greenways with Transport for London and London boroughs that are ideal for people like Sureya and the rest of the Ocean's 12. They are quiet and attractive cycling and walking routes to and within green spaces that link up to family-friendly destinations. They're perfect for the new cyclist, those with young children or anyone returning to cycling after a long break, so it's worth checking them out this summer.

Recently developed routes in Tower Hamlets include a new cycling and walking bridge over the Regent's Canal at Mile End Park, which connects to people's homes and is used daily by thousands of people. The bridge is part of what will eventually become a two-mile greenway linking Bethnal Green with Victoria Park and the Olympic Park.

Other routes in London include a new greenway which opened in June, alongside the Ravensbourne River in Lewisham. It's a very pleasant environment for cycling, within the wildlife, woodland and wetland haven of Becken-

ham Place Park, and makes a new connection between two existing sections of pedestrian and cycle routes, so it's great for practical journeys to work, school or the shops, as well as just for fun at the weekends.

Both projects are among the many that are part of Sustrans' GOAL project – Greenways for the Olympics and London – to create a network of great quality walking and cycling routes across London.

As for the Ocean's 12, cycle training is only the start of their relationship with two wheels. Their passion for cycling is infectious and is spreading in the borough. Many, like Sureya, plan to get their families cycling too. Sheouli Khatun, another of the group, persuaded her sister-in-law to take up cycle training and is herself applying for a bursary to become an instructor, teaching cycling to other women at her community centre.

'I always wished to cycle but was too afraid,' Sheouli says. 'I thought it was not possible for me but now I really like it. I think many more women should enjoy cycling.' ●

To find out more about Sustrans in London, please call 020 7017 2350, email london@sustrans.org.uk or visit www.sustrans.org.uk/london

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Cycle to Spurs

The way to travel to the beautiful game

by Gareth Jenkins

O kay, I'm going to White Hart Lane today to watch live premiership football. I'll just do a last minute check. Wallet, check. Keys, check. Phone, check. Tickets, check. Bike, check. Hang on a minute... Yep, that's right, I said 'bike'. It's a concept that is perhaps new to many football supporters across the country – me included.

From the first time you go to a game as a kid you learn that watching the match and supporting your team isn't just about seeing 90 minutes of football. It's about much, much more. The excitement of a game starts way before kick-off. It starts in ordering your ticket, getting it through the post, and organising who's going. It starts in studying the two teams' form and the availability of the players, then talking about the probable starting XI and formations, and what good business the club could do this summer.

But, above all, travelling to the game is part of the excitement. **It's important to meet up beforehand with your mates, settle your nerves, soak up the atmosphere and have a bit of banter with the away fans.**

I usually go to Spurs in one of three ways – two buses then a walk, a cab then a walk, or a drive then a walk. It's notoriously hard to get anywhere near the Lane by most means of transport, especially on busy match days, so there's always a walk involved at the end.

It's the walking section that enables me to really feel the excitement of the build-up. The stadium looms closer and the fans number more and more. The aroma of hot dogs and fried onions swirls around and pockets of fans sing songs. It's all part of the fun – working towards the crescendo, stringing out the enjoyment of the day.



Being on the bike gave me that feeling throughout the whole journey, not just the usual walking part. We were in the elements with the tension of the game bubbling and simmering as we drew closer. Our route took us through quiet back streets as we pedalled and talked about the game. We went through a park where there were kids playing football next to a half pipe. There were BMXs flying up and down it, but just this once I decided I wouldn't get involved – I hadn't brought my safety knee and elbow pads, or my sense of balance.

We rolled past rivers and streams and underneath the coughing A406. We had a laugh with fans walking to the game and ghosted past the endless queues of traffic as we got closer to the ground.

We passed a handwritten sign saying "Matchday, Parking £8" and decided that we'd spend our £8 on lunch instead.

It was pretty satisfying to turn up at the Paxton End without breaking a sweat, or spending any money. Easy peasey.

It wasn't quite as easy to find out where the bike racks were located. We'd been told by the club that they had recently been installed, but most policemen and stewards hadn't heard of them. One steward's response of "Nah, we haven't got any" made us register just how little bikes are

used to get to games.

We eventually found out the racks were somewhere in the main club car park in Bill Nicholson Way. Exciting for us... but this is the main entrance for the players, Tottenham Hotspur Execs, club employees, Executive Box owners and the generally rich and famous. This wasn't the shiny new facility encouraging hundreds of fans to cycle to games that I had been expecting. It clearly wasn't there for your average supporter.

"We had a laugh with fans walking to the game and ghosted past the endless queues of traffic as we got closer to the ground"

Or any supporter in fact. It turned out that we weren't able to use the bike racks as they weren't accessible. Why? They were completely hemmed in by Bentleys, 4x4s, BMWs and sports cars which were parked in front of them! We simply couldn't get to them. I spoke to the steward (who was a lovely bloke and really apologetic). "I guess there's more

money in those guys (car drivers) than there is in you two" he said, smiling, and I guess he's not wrong. We parked our bikes against some railings instead.

To be fair to Spurs, they've been proactive recently in pursuing an environmental agenda, helping to launch the new 10:10 project last year where organisations commit to cutting carbon emissions by 10% in 2010. The club has invested in lower-wattage floodlights and installed recycling points for fans to use on match days, and their matchday programmes now offer tips on being green.

And it turns out that the bike racks had been installed as a resource for staff members rather than fans, due to space restrictions in and around the current stadium. In fact, they were such a recent addition it's understandable that it wasn't yet common knowledge among club employees where they were (or indeed who they were for). The club's current environmental measures are about implementing a green culture within the existing framework, but the future promises a fantastic new stadium, currently in the advanced stages of planning. Not only will this project rejuvenate the local area, it promises to include environmental sustainability as a major component.

I'd urge the club to make sure the new stadium incorporates ample cycling facilities for Spurs supporters as well as employees. Until then, if you are going to cycle to Spurs (an experience I wholly recommend), you'll have to find a suitable place to park and lock-up in the surrounding public areas.

Our disappointment about the racks was tempered when we discovered that the tickets the club had provided were actually in an Executive box. Blimey, thanks! Never watched football in a box before, especially not at Spurs!

But now it was our turn to feel sheepish. Before we left for the football I was doing a bit of gardening at my cricket club's grounds in preparation for the forthcoming season (I'm not monogamous with my sports; in fact, in the winter I even cheat on football with rugby). Ben had offered to help out for a couple of hours too.

It was, however, very muddy. So much so that an intelligent person would have brought spare clothes. A less intelligent person might have worn jeans, white socks and smart shoes then gone to a football game completely covered in mud. As it turned out, we walked through the Executive lounge surrounded by sharp-suited ex-players and businessmen while Ben's muddy footprints sketched his route over the expensive Spurs-crested carpet. Five minutes previously I had successfully persuaded him to un-tuck his jeans out of his muddy white socks and reassured him that buying some trousers from a second-hand shop wouldn't necessarily be a better option.

With him being the editor I wonder if he'll keep this bit in!? We'll see.

So we had our own box and a TV which had the commentary on and we sat above the regular public in our glass room on comfy chairs. Have it.

It certainly was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and an amazing day. We won 2-0 and as the game went on and the muffled crowd noises ebbed and flowed, it suddenly dawned on me that I was missing being pitch-side. The game was framed by glass, so I couldn't hear the normal cheering, chanting and inane swearing. It was a little bit stuffy, to the extent that I might as well have been watching it on TV at home.

That's when it occurred to me that this was why I enjoyed the ride here much more. **Cycling to the ground was like watching the build-up to the game "live, pitch side"**. Being in a car or bus is just like being in a box: not quite as cool as it looks, and probably not quite worth the money. Glancing left towards the next box along, where the *Donkey Lifestyle* delegation were sitting glumly in their sombreros, I got the feeling we weren't the only ones.

As we were leaving, and I was grappling with my bike lock and the fence, the club's big iron gates were opened and I had to get out of the way of a big 4x4 carrying Jude Law and his driver... straight into a massive traffic jam. I bet he wishes he had a bicycle like mine. ●



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Cycling a Deux

The truth about cycling in tandem...

by Cathy Wallace

Tandems are an awful cliché. Think 'tandem' and inevitably you think 'loser', don't you? I always did. But I've always had a strange obsession with two-seater bicycles – there's just something about the idea of riding a deux in perfect harmony that is so cheesily appealing.

And that's why I found myself aboard a tandem, riding from London to Brighton, overnight. The Friday Night Ride to the Coast (FNRTTC) is a well-organised, regular event run by some hardcore Cyclists Touring Club (CTC) members that sees anything from 40 to 150 cyclists set off from London's Hyde Park at midnight and cycle to a coastal destination, arriving at dawn for a cooked breakfast by the sea. I had been on several of these rides with my cycling buddy Rachael, author of the rather fantastic blog *Roger and Me*, and it was she who made contact

with a tandem owner who offered us the use of his double-seated steed whenever we liked.

Naively, Rachael and I took the 'if you can ride a bike, you can ride a tandem' approach and didn't bother test-driving the thing before embarking on the FNRTTC from London to Brighton. We were more preoccupied with making sure we were wearing matching outfits than considering how we were going to tackle the ride. The folly of our thinking was realised when we tried to actually ride the tandem, just 15 minutes before our official departure. Girly shrieks accompanied wild wobbling as we pedalled a deeply unsteady practice lap of Hyde Park Corner.

Here's the thing about riding a tandem. It's quite tricky. The CTC, bless it, says on its website that 'riding a tandem is not so difficult.' Oh yeah? You try manoeuvring one through central London after just 15 minutes practice, buddy.

The key to riding a tandem is the partnership between yourself and your co-rider. The person who sits at the front of the tandem and steers and brakes is called the 'captain' and the mug who sits at the back pedalling madly, unable to stop, turn or in fact see half of the time, is called the 'stoker'. Rachael and I, as it turned out, had preconceived ideas of which position we would prefer – she wanted to be captain, I wanted to be stoker. This harmonious agreement was a sign of things to come. **As CTC says: 'the stoker needs to have complete trust in the captain and if the trust is not there from the outset it can be difficult, as a nervous stoker makes the machine difficult to balance and steer smoothly.'** Trust is no word of a lie. As the stoker you are completely powerless. You can't stop the bike. I cannot emphasise what a shock this is when you are used to riding your own bike, quite independently.

You also can't steer as your handlebars are fixed (usually to the captain's seat) and, again, I can't stress enough how downright weird this is. Steering and braking becomes instinctive and, in much the same way that a nervous passenger in a car will shoot their feet forward to 'brake', it's quite hard to stop yourself from attempting to 'steer' the tandem by wrenching fruitlessly away at your fixed handlebars.



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Fortunately, I do trust Rachael completely, so whilst our ride was technically a little novice-y, mentally we were totally in tune. We have similar cycling styles – we both like to ride in fairly high gears, we both don't particularly want to hurtle down hills at 800mph on a fairly wobbly tandem, we both like to stop at red lights and look before we pull out, and generally we're on the same page. Rachael was kind enough to shout back to me when she was planning on braking, stopping pedalling or changing gear, and I for my part tried not to 'steer' too much and stay balanced at the back for her.

And so we made our stately way to Brighton. In truth it was one of the most difficult things I have ever done, physically. The tandem was small at the back, which made me rather claustrophobic and I also started to experience what I can only describe as vertigo. I became convinced the tandem was leaning to the left, and so pitched my own body-weight to the right to correct the imbalance. Unfortunately the tandem was not leaning, so me flinging myself over to the right made life hard for Rachael up at the front. But good captain that she is, she didn't complain, and obligingly pulled over several times to allow me to find my balance again.

As we approached Brighton that menace of hills, Ditchling Beacon, loomed. Regular London-to-Brighton-ers will be familiar with this monster, a practically vertical slope that just goes on, and on, and on... I had managed to haul myself up this beast on my mountain bike, but Rachael had never conquered the hill, and I was desperate to get us both up there. She felt the same, so as we approached the foot of Ditchling, fuelled by a Kit Kat Rachael had found in her pocket, neither of us wanted to be first to say 'stop'. So we didn't. Up we wobbled on our ridiculous steed, barely able to pass the cyclists who had dismounted to push their bikes up the hill. When we got to the top I'm pretty sure we both wanted to die, but the sense of achievement was absolutely overwhelming.

As we cruised into Brighton, all I could think was 'never again'. On our merry way we'd been told by several hardened cyclists that tandem-riding was addictive. I have to say, despite the glow of pride, the great partnership you create, and the attention you receive (everyone loves attention), as I dismounted the tandem I was in no rush to get back on it. But as it turns out those hardened cyclists were right. Just one month later, there Rachael and I were, on an admittedly much more comfortable tandem, preparing to set off from Hyde Park to ride to Southend. Watch out for two girls in hot-pink, aboard a double-seated steed, rolling your way. ●



The Peddler

The dangers of cycling in London are often overstated. But there is one peril that must never be underestimated. A hazard so great that no-one can ever truly call themselves safe. Yes, I'm talking about the irritating song that you just can't get out of your head.

Cycling through the sticky summer heat the other day, I realised I'd spent the last 20 minutes humming a song that couldn't have been any less appropriate, and certainly couldn't have been any more annoying. "How I wish it could be Christmas every day (ay ay)..." was there, over and over. It had no regard for the seasons, and it cared even less for my sanity.

I only had to wait a day for the curse to strike again. This time, an innocent conversation with some colleagues about the relative merits of various popular biscuits meant my head was ringing with "If you like a lot of chocolate on your biscuit, join our club" all the way home. And when you can't remember anything other than that one line, it gets even more annoying than being saddled with the "Go Compare" jingle. Trust me – I had that one the day after.

This constant repetition of the same tune isn't just irritating – it can seriously damage your mental health. That's why ancient forms of torture were said to include strapping prisoners into bike helmets and making them repeatedly sing "we buy any car (dot com)". And that's a true story.

"The secret is this: any song can be rendered instantly forgettable simply by remembering the tune to Eye of the Tiger"

Fortunately, help is at hand. There is one known antidote to this problem. I should warn you though, you may regret ever learning it. But here goes anyway. The secret is this: any song can be rendered instantly forgettable simply by remembering the tune to Eye of the Tiger. Try it. I guarantee the sheer force of its power-ballad-ry will immediately flush all other tunes from your brain.

It's not all good news, of course. You might have forgotten one annoying song, but you've replaced it with surely the most irritating of all the great tiger-related pop songs. It's a bit like treating third degree burns by prescribing a bath of boiling oil. (Which incidentally could be why I was eventually struck off the GP list.)

By the way, do be careful if you're trying to think of other songs on the irritating tiger-themed pop hits continuum. You don't want to be stuck with 'Tiger Feet' on loop for a whole journey. Although if that does ever happen to you, don't forget: "it's the eye of the tiger, it's the thrill of the fight, rising up to the spirit of our rival." All together now!



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