

cycle

lifestyle

Ride away from
it all... on a
cycling holiday

"Cycling transformed
my student years"

South London's
dizzying summits
conquered



Plus cycling dos and don'ts,
Norwegian hill climbing tricks,
and lots, lots more...

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Issue 5

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?



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Foreword

There's nothing special about cycling. Don't get me wrong: I think the bicycle is a good candidate for the

best invention in history, and riding one – rather than driving or using public transport – is almost guaranteed to make city living better. What I mean is, there's nothing special about cyclists. Anyone can be one: young

or old, large or small, rich or poor, male or female, gay or straight, jobless or overworked, Spurs or Arsenal. Even my mum – the biggest worrier in history – can ride a bike.

That's why Cycle Lifestyle magazine is for regular people, not just regular cyclists. Inside this issue you can find out how to get started, buy a bike, plan a route and stay safe.

You can read about new cyclists giving it a go, students using hire bikes, electric bicycles helping us up those hills, and the best streets to cycle on in London. And you can laugh at our daydreaming columnist 'The Peddler' musing about the familiar occurrence of fighting off a leopard with a bike, and our bumbling novice 'New Bike on the Block' reminiscing about the simple pleasure of using a cycle escalator in Norway.

At Cycle Lifestyle we think cycling is so easy that we want to make navigating by bike in London easy too. Our **London Cycle Map Campaign** is calling for an iconic map – like the Tube map – together with coloured signs on the roads, to make the thousands of kilometres of cycle routes in the capital more accessible. We want cyclists to be able to get from anywhere to anywhere in London by following just a few coloured routes, rather than making a special effort to remember hundreds of street names and directions. We want inventor Simon Parker's incredible London Cycle Map design to lead the way for Londoners and the rest of the world in time for the 2012 Olympics.

Cycle Lifestyle magazine isn't trying to be special either. By that I mean: you won't find sensational stories, scandals and shocking news inside. Just everyday people and their real lives. We think that's much more inspiring, especially when it comes to cycling.

Best Wishes,

Ben Irvine



All about the Cycle Lifestyle

C is for **'cheap'** – you can pick up a second-hand bike for fifty quid and never need to pay for another travelcard. Bikes run on porridge, which costs less than petrol.

Y is for **'you choose'** – when, where and how you want to go. Cyclists don't need to worry about delays or traffic jams, or trains that stop in tunnels.

C is for **'commuting'** – increasing numbers of Londoners are getting to and from work on a bike. For cyclists it can be the most enjoyable time of the day.

L is for **'London's not too big'** – amateur cyclists regularly cover up to 100 miles in charity events, and the capital's nowhere near as big as that. Plus it's flat and densely interconnected, which makes it perfect for cycling.

E is for **'English weather isn't that bad'** – it only rains 6% of the time in London, believe it or not. And even when it does you can just wear waterproofs or wrap spare clothes up in a pannier to keep them nice and dry.

L is for **'leisurely'** – you don't have to ride like Lance Armstrong, and get all hot and bothered. Take it easy and you'll be no more sweaty than you would on a crowded bus or train.

I is for **'improving your mood'** – cycling gives you a buzz and makes you feel happier. It'll wake you up in the morning and cheer you up in the evening, and it's fun to get out in the open air, exchange smiles with a fellow cyclist, and experience your city in a new and exciting way.

F is for **'fast'** – cycling is often just as quick as getting the train or bus. And the average speed of a car in London is 7mph, much slower than the 12-15mph achieved by the average cyclist.

E is for **'everyone'** – cycling's not just for trendy 80s-throwbacks in Hoxton; it's for my mum (or so I keep telling her) and anyone else who's never worn a luminous lycra leotard.

S is for **'safer than you think'** – it's estimated that the health benefits of cycling outweigh any risks by a factor of 20 to 1. Cyclists, on average, live longer than non-cyclists.

T is for **'training'** – free or subsidised training is available from most London boroughs. Contact yours if you want a cycle confidence boost.

Y is for **'your time'** – cycling makes you feel independent and gives you a chance to think. Einstein came up with his theory of relativity on a bicycle!

L is for **'looking after your health'** – cycling protects against a variety of medical problems and can help you to lose weight. Fitness doesn't come easier; you can exercise twice a day, getting to and from work.

E is for **'environmentally friendly'** – cycling is a zero-emission form of transport, including air and noise pollution. So using your bike not only creates a better world, but a nicer place to live for your fellow Londoners.

Electric bikes

de-mystified

by Richard Peace, co-author of
Electric Bicycles – The Complete Guide

Why do people buy electric bikes?

The usual answer to this question is to list certain groups of people that might want an electric bike (the elderly, those with heavy loads, etc.), but really the majority of people might benefit from using one. The bottom line is, get the right electric bike and you have a superb combination of fast, green and economical transport that's great fun to ride too.

Do I need to get road tax?

No – as the motor power is limited they are classed just the same as non-electric cycles. No need for any red tape whatsoever.

How fast will they go?

Electric bikes are limited to a top assisted speed of around 15mph by law. There is nothing to stop you pedalling them above this speed, just like a normal bike.

Aren't they really expensive?

Cheap and cheerful models are available for a few hundred pounds – much less on e-Bay. Reputable companies offer bikes complete with service backup and a decent guarantee from around £600.

£1000 will get you a good bike by one of the recognised bike companies such as Raleigh or Giant.

Are they eligible for tax-breaks schemes such as Cyclescheme?

Yes.

Aren't they really heavy?

Currently the lightest production electric bike in the UK weighs in at around 12.9kg (Cytronex), though this comes with a hefty price tag. However, sub-20kg electric bikes are now relatively easy to come by, and no electric bike these days should weigh much over 25kg, even fully equipped with rack, lights, mudguards and panniers and a large capacity battery.

What are the main designs and their pros and cons?

Pedelecs are electric bikes that deliver the power when you press on the pedals. Pedelecs are generally easiest to use – select the right gear (as you would with a normal bike) and the appropriate power level and away you go. They also tend to be more reliable, though pricier, than E-bikes.

E-bikes are more comparable to mopeds – you will have a throttle (or more rarely a lever or push button) but, on road legal models, the very least you will have to do is spin the pedals round (though not necessarily put any effort in) to activate the power. E-bikes tend to be more useful for those with serious fitness or health problems, as the motor can be made to do more work than your legs and lungs. Also certain E-bikes tend to be better climbers of very steep hills if geared correctly.

Bikes can also be classed according to whether they have a **crank motor** (usually located near the bottom bracket axle and driving through the chain) or a **hub motor** (located in the front or rear wheel hub). Crank motors are usually more reliable but more expensive and may not be as good at speedy hill climbing as some hub motors.

What's the average mileage range of an electric bike?

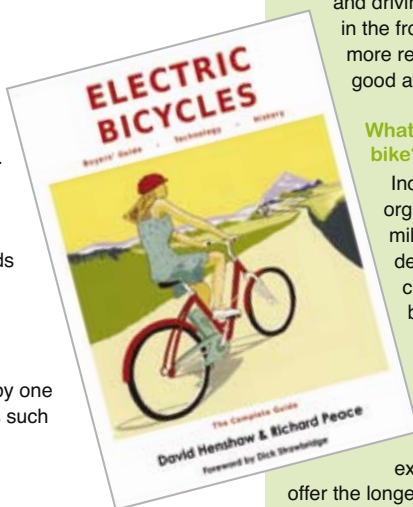
Independent tests by *A to B* magazine (www.atob.org.uk) show recent bikes averaging around 20-30 miles over a moderately hilly Dorset test course, depending on battery size. However, the latest crop of larger batteries mean 40 miles and up is becoming more common.

What kinds of batteries are available and how long do they last?

Most electric bikes use lithium batteries of one description or another that have a life expectancy of around two years. A few brands still offer the longer-lasting NiMH (nickel metal hydride) chemistry – kg for kg they won't take you as far as lithium batteries but they last several years longer. If opting for the greater range of a lithium battery, try to get a known brand (good examples are Panasonic and Samsung) with at least a year's warranty, preferably two.

Does it recharge when you pedal?

A small number of models will put some charge back into the battery, but the technology – and the laws of physics – means you are unlikely to get much more than a 5% increase in range from such models even in the best circumstances.



Electric Bicycles – The Complete Guide

256 pages, full colour, £12.95

ISBN 978-1901464-24-5

For more details and ordering visit www.electricbicyclesbook.com or call *A to B* magazine on 01305 259998

Don't just try cycling once...

It can take a few goes before you get into the routine of cycling – but once you do, you'll find it hard to imagine what your life was like before. Here's our handy guide to getting organised when you first adopt the cycle lifestyle. It will soon become second nature.

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Choosing your 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.

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



Checking your bike

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 (normally this is a marked band about 3 inches from the bottom of the seat post).
- 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.



What to wear

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 (catching in the chain) nor too tight (restricting your pedalling).
- In wet conditions it is 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.



Accessories

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.

Other accessories are really useful:

- A bell. Pedestrians really appreciate an early, gentle warning of your presence if you're on a shared path – a couple of tinkles when you're still 10 metres or so away works well.
- 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.

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.

...try it twice

beginner's guide



Planning your 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.
- 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!

Sustrans cycling safety tips

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 or reflective clothing, especially in towns, at night and in bad weather.
- 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.
- At night, 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.

You can find out more about getting started on www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk or www.sustrans.org.uk – or just phone a friend who cycles.

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Join the growing community of qoroz riders at www.qoroz.co.uk and follow qoroz on Twitter and Facebook

ROADWON



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On 22 May over 2,000 cyclists will take part in the Thames Bridges Bike Ride, cycling 33 miles and crossing fourteen of London's most famous bridges to raise much needed awareness and funds for The Stroke Association.

This is a fantastic day out for a great cause. Why not join the fun and secure your place by registering at www.stroke.org.uk/thamesbridges

Starting at Southwark Park, this amazing route travels through the historic city of London and along the picturesque towpaths of the River Thames. This is city cycling at its best!

Cyclists cross many of London's most famous bridges including Tower Bridge and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of Battersea and Richmond Park.

On crossing the finish line in Hurst Park, participants are invited to relax and enjoy the entertainment with friends and family.

A band will provide the perfect background music, while street entertainers mingle with guests along with a bouncy castle to keep the children amused!

Each participant receives an entry pack, containing a t-shirt, detailed route map and the all important sponsorship form. In addition, all those who successfully cross the finish line receive a medal to mark their fantastic cycling achievement.



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Cycling holidays are a great way to let off steam. Unlike some breaks, they're truly revitalising, and make you feel freer than ever.

Whether in Britain or abroad, inland or coastal, lowland or upland, sunny or snowy, urban or rural, cycling holidays enable you to experience a new part of the world in an authentic and exciting way.

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Mode de Vie Velo*

Student Katie Sands discovers Paris and its cycle hire scheme, the 'Velib'

Paris: the city of lights, love and ludicrously tasty patisseries. And, as of July 2007, Paris has become the city to cycle. Either passing under the Eiffel Tower, through the seductive Moulin Rouge, or bravely tackling the Concorde roundabout, the Velib is the new fashion accessory not to be missed. Launched just three and a half years ago, Velib-ing has seen an explosion through the city: with 17,000 bikes and over 1,200 stations to choose from, it is a hobby hard to resist. After all, 'la ville est plus belle à velo.' With each bike equipped with a basket the perfect size to transport two baguettes, some smelly Camembert and that all-important bottle of Bordeaux wine, to Velib is rapidly becoming a true part of the Parisian commuting culture. No doubt, soon, it will gain itself a place in dictionaries nationwide!

“experiencing Paris by pedal power has added a whole new and exciting dimension to my French lifestyle”

I am a geography undergraduate at the University of Bristol, and am currently on an exchange programme at Sciences PO in Paris, the fast track entry route into the French political system and a previous home to Sarkozy and Chirac. As a student, I cannot think of a better city in which to spend my Erasmus year, and experiencing Paris by pedal power has added a whole new and exciting dimension to my French lifestyle, and one which I will certainly never forget.

As a geographer, living sustainably is certainly at the top of my agenda. Cycling is the perfect, yet presently understated, accompaniment to the student lifestyle: it is free, fun and friendly – both in an environmental and social sense. Cycle hire schemes are increasingly being integrated into sustainable city initiatives to promote healthy and active living, with Paris as no exception.

For just €29 (£24), the Parisian student has unlimited access to bikes all over the city, 365 days a year. The idea is

* French for 'Cycle Lifestyle'!

simple: one can take a bike from any docking station, cycle along the numerous specially designated paths to the chosen destination, and then drop the bike off at the nearest station. It could not be simpler, and if the station is full, the ingenious system will direct you to the nearest free space, which will undoubtedly only be minutes away.

Jealous? There is no need to be, as this phenomenon is fast emerging in our own capital. Whilst in its infancy, Barclays Cycle Hire will hopefully help transform London into a cycling paradise, giving those boisterous black cabs a run for their money. Whilst I argue that London's bikes lack a certain 'je ne sais quoi' in their appearance and design, the principle of the scheme remains identical, and I cannot emphasise enough how much easier cycling makes student life. It enables you to discover parts of a city that are totally inaccessible by car, and no parking costs means more money to spend on enjoying yourself.

One final word of advice for students and workers alike: remember that even as a cyclist, red traffic lights are a no-go! Running extremely late (and in all probability still half asleep) for an 8am lecture, I continued straight through a red light on Rue de Varenne, the road which is home to France's Prime Minister, François Fillon. I heard an "arrêtez-vous" behind me, and a youthful looking policeman had caught me in the act. No wonder I hadn't seen him – he was casually strolling out of the boulangerie after purchasing his morning pain au chocolat. The combined effect of pretending my knowledge of French was minimal and smiling sweetly to him luckily meant no further punishment for me, but I definitely learnt my lesson!

More about London's Barclays Cycle Hire: if you plan on using the bikes regularly, taking out the 'Annual Access' pass at £45 is the most economical option. If not, 24-hour and 7-day access are also available for purchase at the docking station terminals. All account activities can be managed online, with the possibility to renew the access period at any time. Boris Johnson hopes that "by 2012 Barclays Cycle Hire will be even bigger"... Let's help realise this vision.

Cycle Breaks

If you like your holidays to be uplifting and fun then look no further than Cycle Breaks.

Specialists in providing two-wheeled getaways since 1991, Cycle Breaks offer leisurely cycling holidays in England, France, Austria, Italy and Germany. Each of their pre-planned routes uses local knowledge to show you the best the region has to offer.

Their tours are self-guided, with Cycle Breaks transferring your luggage between hotels so you can just enjoy the ride. They also plan the most interesting and attractive routes, and, to give you peace of mind, provide on-call back up.

You'll also get great accommodation when you holiday with Cycle Breaks, with delicious locally sourced food to fill you up for the day's riding. Hire of a good quality hybrid bike is included although you can choose to bring your own trusty steed.

Only an hour from London, Cycle Breaks offer tours in

beautiful, rural Suffolk. With its rolling countryside, quiet lanes, heathlands and picture-book villages, 'Constable Country' feels like a world away. And there's no better way to experience Suffolk's unspoiled Heritage Coast and pretty coastal villages – Aldeburgh, Southwold and Orford – than by bike. The RSPB nature reserve at Minsmere is another local treat.

Further afield is the Mur River Path tour in Austria. Mostly downhill on a traffic-free riverside route through Alpine meadows, this unforgettable Cycle Breaks holiday will take you from snow-capped peaks to the plains of the Slovenian border. Pedalling via Graz, Styria's lively capital, the tour takes you through a National Park rich with birdlife. And as you pass through the forests, farms and fertile plains that accompany the river, you can relax at the end of the day in specially selected 3 and 4 star accommodation.

www.cyclebreaks.com

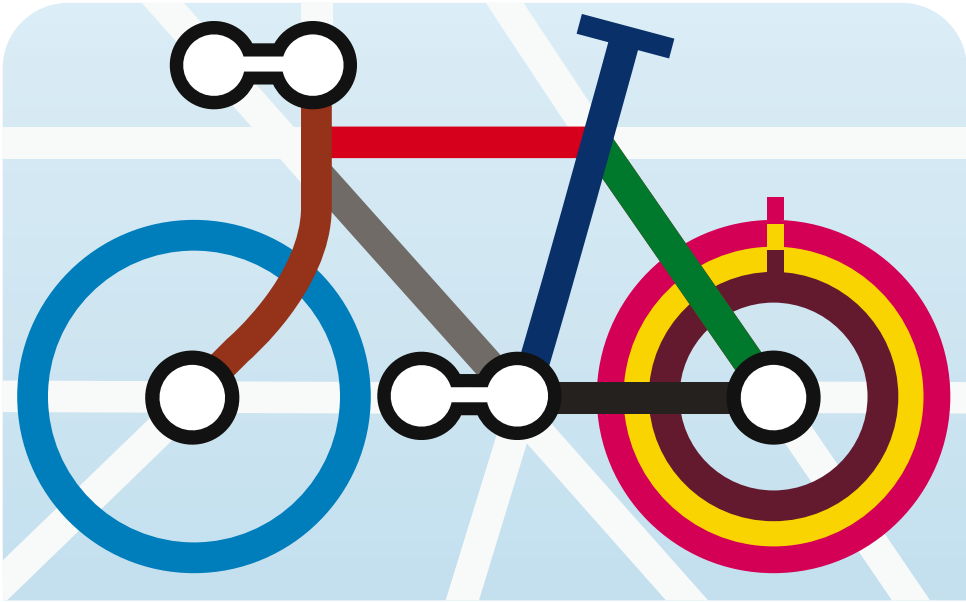


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London Cycle Map Campaign

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We believe there should be a single
'London Cycle Map' that's clear and easy to
use and corresponds to a unified network
of signed cycle routes throughout Greater
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www.petition.co.uk/london-cycle-map-campaign



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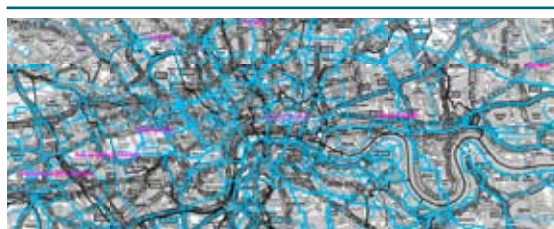
Simon Parker's London Cycle Map

There are thousands of kilometres of cycle routes in London, like a huge tangle of spaghetti spread across the city. Hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent adding cycle lanes and other useful infrastructure improvements to these routes, many of which were developed as part of the London Cycle Network (LCN) project that began nearly 30 years ago. Its founding aim was to enable people of all ages and abilities to cycle throughout the capital on a comprehensive, joined-up network of quieter, safer streets.

“Almost as marvellously simple an invention as the bicycle itself”

And you can, in theory. In practice, it's a different story. Before you've even set off it can be hard to decide which route to take, because there is no easy-to-use map showing how the LCN links the capital together as a whole. Unless you're planning a short local ride, you'll need to unfurl up to 14 folding cycle maps covering London's different areas. Then, once you're on your way, you'll need to remember all the street names and directions – sometimes hundreds – for your journey because the signs on the LCN aren't regular or informative enough to allow you to follow them as you go along. All this can be a bit too off-putting for many would-be cyclists. Yet if only there was a way of getting more of them flowing round the LCN, it could become a vast set of capillaries, cleaning and revitalising the capital.

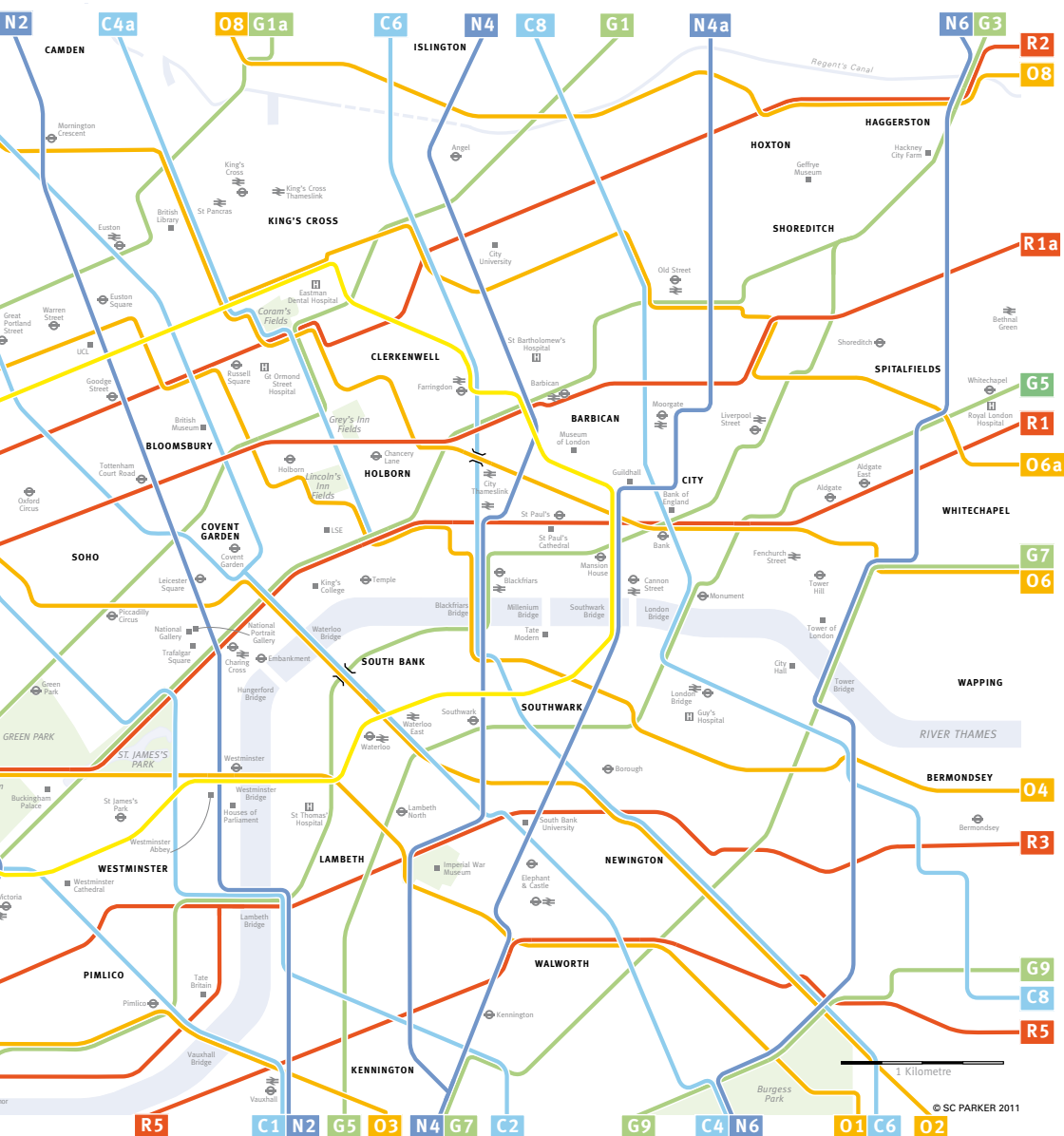
Simon Parker has come up with an amazing proposal for achieving this: a London Cycle Map. His great contribution has been to identify an incredible pattern in the capital's tangle of cycle routes. Like a magic eye, his map shows that within the complexity there's structure: a series of long straight routes transecting London in all directions like waves, providing a direct connection between any two areas. His design is 'almost as marvellously simple an invention as the bicycle itself', as one commentator on cyclelifestyle.co.uk has said. Using Parker's map, you could cycle from virtually anywhere to anywhere in the capital, by remembering no more than a few coloured routes



the status quo: a complex spaghetti of cycle routes

then simply following roadside signs.

Well, you could if the signs were put in place. The cost of doing so would be considerably less than the government has spent on the Cycle Superhighway and Cycle Hire schemes – it could



almost certainly be covered entirely by sponsorship – and the rewards would be immense. Potential, not just regular, cyclists would soon know they could confidently navigate beyond their local comfort zone; all Londoners, including the poorest, could get around in the capital for free; and visitors, especially during the 2012 Olympics, could experience the real London firsthand, cycling on its beautiful, bustling and cosmopolitan streets.

The novelist Victor Hugo once said: 'an invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come'. The time has come for a London Cycle Map; but like all great ideas it needs support. Please sign the petition at www.petition.co.uk/london-cycle-map-campaign.

Visit cyclifestyle.co.uk to find out more about Simon Parker's London Cycle Map, and browse an interactive map showing which streets his routes are on.

Profile: Simon Parker


After getting lost on a bike one too many times, Simon Parker resolved to do something about it. He began analysing maps, and sketching better ways of representing London's cycle routes. Excited by the possibilities, he soon decided to quit his college course and took a job as a minicab driver – to get to know the capital inside out. Over time, Parker succeeded in identifying an incredible pattern in London's existing cycle network, and produced a groundbreaking map that promises to change the capital forever. Today, he lives on the south coast, and continues to lobby for his proposal, while responding to feedback and developing his ideas.

Contact Simon Parker at cyclemap@yahoo.co.uk.


Supporters of the London
Cycle Map Campaign:

bikedocksolutions.com
the bike parking specialists

Petition comments that say it all...



I have not yet seen a better potential cycle map of London than this one. This captures the way we cycle.



An excellent idea which will help to make travelling around London easier, safer and greener.

This is a great idea. Let's get it implemented and make London the world's cycling capital!





Great idea! Why has the Mayor not pushed for this already?

This small investment will have HUGE payoff for years and years to come.



This is a matter of urgency. If we want more people cycling then a unified cycle map is a necessity.



I spend a lot of time in London, and commute to work by bike when staying. A map would be good for letting me know how to get around at weekends.

Make it happen!



Really happy with moves to support cycling so far but this would help still further.

If Boris really wants to make London a 'cycling city' then this is a must!

14 huge cumbersome maps. Great if you are only going a short distance and can keep the map folded. Awkward if you want to travel any distance.

I cycle every day to work, but to venture outside of my normal route is hard without a GPS. We need a map.

I've cycled on roads and cycle routes in London for years and I feel it's safe to say we're a bit behind the times when it comes to provisions for cyclists. More needs to be done to encourage people to cycle more; a clear, simple map could really help, along with clearly marked out routes.

This is a superb idea and I would really like to see it taken forward. It could make a huge difference for cycling in the capital.

Would be great to arrive in London by train and explore it easily on my own bike. Let's set an example to the world and show it off in 2012!

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Why I am backing the London Cycle Map Campaign



By Brian Deegan, Development Manager for the London Cycle Network

It is true to say that Simon Parker's colour-coded Tube-style mapping system has met with mixed reviews from the current cycling establishment. Some believe the system to be too complex, too much of a departure, or not aligned with their own policies. Some prefer signing using London Cycle Network route numbers, or bikeability ratings, while others concentrate on greenways and leisure routes.

“Simon Parker's system is a great invention and the compass colour methodology is ingenious. I wish to give his work and Cycle Lifestyle's London Cycle Map Campaign my full backing and support.”

The trouble is, with 33 different local authorities, TfL, The Royal Parks and British Waterways adopting different policies towards cycle signage, the result is a somewhat confusing mess. The current state of affairs – with several cycling mapping systems in operation – is simply not acceptable and in my view discourages and impedes cycling growth. I think we all need to put our heads together and agree on one system then implement it consistently across London.

This system would have to be expansive yet inclusive

of work on both a macro and micro level, be elegant yet informative, and not be confusing or overcomplicated. Like many cycle planners, I have spent years trying to find this system, and in my opinion the best idea to have come along is the Tube-style approach based on the compass colour system devised by Simon Parker. This has the highest potential to attract new cyclists, as well as offering schematic simplicity and engaging design. It will take a lot of work and commitment to establish this system, but I believe it is one that can fulfill all of our diverse requirements as planners.

I do not in any way want to disparage any effort to promote cycling through mapping systems developed so far. In fact, I applaud them and am personally responsible for some of them. My reason for providing this testimonial is that we are now in a position where cycling can truly become a mainstream transport option in London, and I believe we need a sophisticated mapping system to make the best planning tools and information available to cyclists, enabling them to better plan their journeys in a convenient way.

Because London is a complex and unique city, it is hard to find systems that can be translated from other cities to ours. So we need to invent our own. Simon Parker's system is a great invention and the compass colour methodology is ingenious. I wish to give his work and Cycle Lifestyle's London Cycle Map Campaign my full backing and support.

The views stated above are very much my own and not those of the organisations I represent. I write this testimonial to applaud the effort of the amateur, which is in keeping with the true spirit of cycling.

Give it a Go

'Cycling transformed my student years'



Every year hundreds of thousands of students accept places at UK universities. For many, moving away from home is part of the university experience, but the resulting change of lifestyle can be dramatic, both emotionally and physically.

Shortly after starting a Linguistics degree at University College London at the age of 19, Sara Redgewell, originally from Essex, was like many students – drinking more, eating poorly and doing little exercise.

'I was broke, which meant I was eating cheaply and not very healthily, and I wasn't really exercising,' says Sara, now 26. 'As a result I gained quite a lot of weight. By the end of my first year I was 16 stone and needed to tackle it.'

'I couldn't afford to join a gym, and when you're big your confidence can be low and it's embarrassing to go to the gym or join in with team sports. I felt self-conscious about exercising around other people, so I bought a bike knowing it was something I could do alone and at my own pace.'

'My low budget meant the bike wasn't expensive or flashy – in fact it was quite a girly sit-up-and-beg style, totally different from the one I have now. But it was perfect to use as a run-around for getting across London, travelling between lectures and for going over to friends' houses or on nights out.'

Cycling turned out to be the perfect solution. Not only did

Sara notice a difference in her fitness quite quickly, she was saving money too.

'I did away with my monthly travelcard, which was costing around £70 every month, and cycled everywhere instead.

'In the end I lost seven stone. It took a couple of years, and it wasn't just exercise – I had to change my eating habits, too – but cycling was definitely the catalyst. It helped me begin my weight loss and once I started getting in shape I got more confidence to do other activities and work out with other people.'

"Lea Valley is one of eight routes nominated by Sustrans that will allow people to get to and from Olympic venues on foot or bike."

It was a habit that Sara has sustained beyond her years at university. Having graduated in 2007, Sara still rides everywhere. She now lives in Seven Sisters, North London, and every day cycles three miles each way to and from Homerton Hospital, where she is training to be a nurse. She also goes out on weekend canal rides along parts of the National Cycle Network in London.

'My favourite route is Lea Valley – Route 1 of the National Cycle Network. It's a tranquil little escape from the hustle of the city centre, away from the roads and passing through some of London's beautiful parks and green spaces.'

It's been an exciting 18 months along Route 1 of the Network. The Meath Bridge has become a popular traffic-free crossing over the Regent's Canal after opening in Autumn 2009 as part of Sustrans Connect2 project, in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund, Transport for London and Tower Hamlets Borough Council.

Also, Lea Valley is one of eight routes nominated by Sustrans that will allow people to get to and from Olympic venues on foot or bike. The Olympic Delivery Authority and Transport for London have put money into improving the eight routes and will officially open them as Olympic routes in June.

'London has certainly improved for cycling since I've been doing it,' Sara continues. 'There are noticeably far more cyclists now, so everyone is more aware of bikes on the road and there's a feeling of safety in numbers. I also participated in the free cycle training my local borough offers, which helped me to build my confidence on the bike and improve my road riding skills and awareness.'


'When I started I didn't know anyone else that cycled, and now lots of my friends do. I know I've directly inspired a few people to take to their bikes. A flatmate started cycling because I was doing it, and another friend recently asked me to go with her and help her choose a bike. Once you start and realise how much easier, quicker and cheaper it is to get around London by bike it's a real revelation.'

To find out more about cycling routes in London email london@sustrans.org.uk or telephone 020 7017 2350.

Tuesday 31 May, 2011: A talk by Dominic Gill
At: The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street,
London, EC1M 6EJ

Dom will be talking about his ride from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, approximately 18,449 miles down the west coast to Ushuaia, the most southerly city in South America. He did the journey on a tandem giving people a lift along the way and has now written a book about his experiences.

For more information email supporters@sustrans.org.uk or telephone 0117 915 0115


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New Bike on the Block

I've just spent a week in Norway hunting for the northern lights. I tell you this mainly to show off, but also to let you know about an amazing cycling scheme I found in Trondheim, a city just north of the Arctic Circle.

My cycling takes me to many places: Leyton, Hackney, and sometimes even Islington. But the snow and icy climes of one of Europe's coldest countries was not an environment where I thought I could get in a cheeky cycle. How wrong I was! It turns out loads of Norwegians cycle around, even in the most freezing conditions.

With a mixture of careful tyre choices, good clothes and loads of help from the road authorities, the cyclists were all buzzing past me in the many snow-covered bike lanes that twist through Norway's cities.

"I once heard a friend of mine say that his perspective on what it was to be a considerate lover was essentially 10 minutes of crippling, uncomfortable, unnecessary effort followed by a short-lived exciting bit at the end. This is pretty much how I feel about hills."

There is a cycling expression that explains when something is "Bad Luck" or "Just Typical!" and it goes like this: "Isn't that just like the old lady to use the zebra crossing halfway up the hill?" Ok, I just made that up, but it keeps happening to me on this one particular hill that is a bugger to pedal up. You stop and lose all your momentum, and when she's finally crossed you can only continue at a worm-like speed, using the same amount of energy required to run 16 medium-sized food processing factories.

Me and hills don't see eye to eye. I have long since mused on whether the freewheeling, wind in your hair, zoom down a hill is worth all the effort to get up it in the first place. I once heard a friend of mine say that his perspective on what it was to be a considerate lover was essentially 10 minutes of crippling, uncomfortable, unnecessary effort followed by a short-lived exciting bit at the end. This is pretty much how I feel about hills.



The Norwegians don't have any of these issues. Not only are they fantastic and naturally limber lovers, they also have a solution to the "cycling up difficult hills" problem, I soon discovered.

The laid back Norwegians were always helpful to everyone, so I had stopped to ask a passerby why there was a man waiting on his bike not doing anything by the side of the road.

He replied, beaming, "Ah! He's waiting for the tramp to help him up the hill! We are very proud of our tramp!"

More than a little confused, I squinted at the horizon to catch a glimpse of this famous homeless man who can single-handedly carry cyclists up hills. He must be huge. I was envisioning Harry Potter's mate, Hagrid, rumbling down the hill, ready to pick up the next cyclist under his arm and skip back up to the top. I wondered how someone who had these skills could potentially be homeless and not rich and famous.

The mystery was quickly solved when I found out there was a mechanical cycle lift there which was called the "TRAMPE".

I'm not going to lie, I was disappointed. My imagination had got the best of me and I had set my expectations a little too high. But in the absence of the giant charitable hobo I longed for, it turns out the TRAMPE was the next best thing.

The system works like this. Place your bike next to the cycle lift at the bottom of the hill. Sit in the saddle. Put in your card or your money. Get ready, and wait for the foot support to come. Then place your right foot on the step and it will pull you and your bike up the hill at about 3-4 mph. Genius. Awesome. Inspiring.

This is the point where, if you can, you should search for the TRAMPE on youtube and have a look. I found one clip which seems to have been an advert for it. It uses effects and graphics that would have looked out of date in 1982. It's brilliant.

Ok, the name isn't the greatest, but I'm sure that it's some

sort of acronym that makes sense to the Norwegians. The mechanics of the TRAMPE are so simple they seem like they've been dreamt up by an 8 year old who is daydreaming and doodling in class. In action it is a thing of beauty, and you find your own creativity running wild. (In fact, it was at that moment I dreamed up the Hover-Bike – but that's another story for another time.)

To my knowledge, not one other city has implemented this fantastic invention. The reason for this is probably that it hardly helps anyone and it doesn't really encourage the extra cyclists it claims to. But the fact that they have thrown caution to the wind and put such an interesting and risky venture into place speaks volumes about the Norwegians.

I find the idea of just giving new things a go extremely romantic. The message they are sending with the TRAMPE is that "ideas are good" and "cycling's good" and we will back you up in both of these always. When you look at the reams of red tape that you must go through to get any new schemes through in Britain, you can't help but long for a bit of reckless impulsiveness over here.

The TRAMPE is one of my favourite things I have ever seen on my travels. It captures the imagination – so expect to see my Bubble-Gum Hover-Bike levitating to a store near you soon.

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Barking and Dagenham: an Outer London Biking Borough



The end of the financial year provides an opportunity for us to take a snapshot – a look back at Barking and Dagenham's contribution to the cycling revolution in London.

Being awarded 'Outer London Biking Borough' status from Transport for London is a proud achievement for the borough, demonstrating our dedication to encouraging, facilitating and promoting cycling – as emphasised by the increasing number of cycle journeys being made here, year on year. The recognition has led us to produce a single overarching cycling strategy that emphasises the importance of the cycling agenda and how it can benefit the entire community in the short, medium and long term.

Being selected as the Home Zone for the new pilot Cycle Superhighway route 3 means not only that local residents are able to cycle on a direct and clearly defined route between Barking and Tower Hill in the heart of London, but also that there have been opportunities to improve local cycling facilities too.

Convenience for cyclists has also been enhanced by the provision of 160+ new cycle parking spaces, complemented by improved way-finding and cycle information points located at key destinations within the Barking area, including transport interchanges, shopping hubs, leisure centres and the Broadway Theatre. Hosting a local cycle event in Greatfields Park enabled us to engage with the local community and to highlight the benefits and ease of cycling whilst demonstrating firsthand its fun side. Cycle Training, a busy Dr Bike Session, and a game of cycle polo all contributed to a positive feel for cycling among local residents.

One of the most vital contributions we as an authority make to the cycling revolution is free cycle training – for all residents, pupils, workers and visitors. Guided by qualified cycle instructors, it gives people the opportunity to gain the knowledge, experience, skills and confidence to be able to cycle within the borough safely, and has assisted with the surge in local cycle journeys. This year alone, in excess of 2,000 of the borough's school pupils have successfully completed cycle training to National Standards. In addition, an educational cycle awareness course targeted at freight drivers, emphasising professionalism and raising awareness of the continually changing streetscape of London, has helped to improve road safety. The course has been completed by 360 drivers in 3 months, with demand being so great the programme has been extended.

The new 'corridor' approach from Transport for London will ensure that future infrastructure development schemes will consider cyclists as a key route user, and help provide more safe and direct facilities. This year's cross-borough corridor schemes on Green Lane and Rainham Road (North and South) will involve the reallocation of road space by removing a running lane and replacing it with a dedicated cycle lane. This will provide a defined 5.8km cycling link between the borough's boundary with Redbridge in the west, and Havering in the east.

Whilst we have made many positive impacts over the past 12 months, we still have a long way to go to fully change attitudes towards cycling. However, our efforts, determination and commitment, backed by investment from Transport for London, will continue in the year ahead, helping to make Barking and Dagenham a borough to be discovered by bike.



The Best Cycling Streets in London

By Elizabeth Hunter

In this issue's 'Best Cycling Streets' we're moving south. Riding around south London can be an absolute delight – there are plenty of green open spaces, so many routes can be planned to take you through at least one park. There are also, challengingly, a fair few substantial hills.

“Denmark Hill allows you to really experience just how jumbled-up the capital is, how higgledy-piggledy is its mix of architecture, population groups, incomes and eras.”

Cycling back from green and pleasant West Dulwich one Saturday, I tackled Herne Hill, the most direct route to get back towards the river and onwards to the north. From the burning in my thighs, it didn't immediately feel likely that this road was going to make it onto my list of favourites. Yes, it is wide, with a marked cycle lane and relatively light traffic, but it is also a long, fairly unforgiving hill lined with unremarkable houses and flats.

As I reached the top panting, though, I immediately knew it was going to be worth it. At the crown of the hill the road becomes Denmark Hill, and beckons you to a long, brilliant freewheel down to Camberwell. Before you kick off, take a moment to admire the view over the city, which is particularly spectacular at night. Depending on the angle (and how much the trees have been pruned) you can see the Gherkin, and occasionally catch a glimpse of the London Eye and Canary Wharf.

Once you've marvelled at how great our skyline is, and how near everything looks, you're ready for the descent. Denmark Hill demonstrates one of the best things about cycling in London: it allows you to really experience just how jumbled-up the capital is, how higgledy-piggledy is its mix of architecture, population groups, incomes and eras. You could sort of get it through the steamed-up window of a bus, but will more likely have your nose in the Metro.

All of life flashes past as you career down the hill on your bike with the wind in your hair; blocky council estates, grand old villas, neon takeaways, elegant Ruskin Park on your left, King's College Hospital on your right.

Enjoy the view, and the exhilaration of the freewheel, and, if you're not in a rush to get anywhere, pull over by Denmark Hill station and get some refreshments in the rather lovely Phoenix pub. Then take a wander a little further east to Love Walk, off Grove Lane, which feels like a perfect little village in the heart of the city. In Camberwell, of all places. You'd never find that from the Tube.

Check out Elizabeth Hunter's blog 'The Trusty Steed' at: thetrustysteeds.blogspot.com



The Peddler

A day in the life of a London cyclist

by Adam Copeland

Cycling in the capital is a joy. The freedom, the large open parks, the potential to run over Grand Slam-winning former international rugby star Jeremy Guscott (if my ride to work last Tuesday was anything to go by).

Cycling in South Africa, however, turns out to be a rather more perilous adventure.

A recent news story told the tale of a brave cyclist in rural North West South Africa ("North West South" basically being all the areas that



"Always, always, always wear a cycling helmet. It represents a serious choking hazard for any carnivorous wildcat."



aren't "East") who used his bike to fend off a leopard.

"The leopard's head stuck out just above the saddle," said Pieta Ncube, who had used the triangle of the frame to trap the creature's head, thereby substantially reducing its ability to eat anyone. According to the report, he then went on to attack the cat with a steel bar that was attached to his bike.

The brave actions of Ncube (which, interestingly, is Afrikaans for Xbox), teaches us all a striking lesson. And that striking lesson is, swing from the hip and aim for the head.

But given our relative paucity of leopards (to say nothing of the impracticality of lugging a steel bar up Archway on a bike), what do his courage and ingenuity teach cyclists in London? I'd say it was pretty clear.

One. Avoid anywhere in the North West South region. As far as I can tell, this just leaves you with Shoreditch.

Two. Always, always, always wear a cycling helmet. It represents a serious choking hazard for any carnivorous wildcat.

Three. Don't dress up as a leopard when Pieta Ncube is about.

Of course, the most dangerous wildlife likely to imperil you in London is a pigeon, or perhaps a fox. Several times I've had to swerve dramatically to avoid a pigeon, either careering

"Unless you spend your whole time riding round and round wheelie bins at night like some sort of nocturnal litter pervert, foxes are unlikely to do anything more threatening to a cyclist than run away looking sheepish."

towards my head, or waddling, apparently deliberately, right into my path. (Any cyclist will tell you about the remarkable ability these birds have to see a tyre bearing down on them, panic, and lurch directly towards it.) Alarming, maybe, but somehow a pigeon doesn't quite have the menace, or indeed jaw power, of an adult leopard.

But what of the fox? (And I'm not talking about Dr Fox, who can easily be avoided by simply not switching on Magic FM on a weekday morning.) Yes, foxes are everywhere, but unless you spend your whole time riding round and round wheelie bins at night like some sort of nocturnal litter pervert, they're unlikely to do anything more threatening to a cyclist than run away looking sheepish. Well, 'foxish', if you want to get technical about it. The way I see it, they're basically the closest I'll ever come in London to owning a dog.

In short, the streets of London are safe for cycling. As long as you can find a way of swerving round Jeremy Guscott, of course.

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