



Take part in a CTC Challenge Ride (left) and/or become a cycle-trainer (above)

NEW YEAR'S REVOLUTIONS

Make variety the spice of your cycling life this year by trying something new with CTC. **Matt Mallinder** re-writes his resolutions

Only one month into 2008 and those New Year's resolutions to get fitter, take that dream holiday or find a new job could be fading fast. It's easy to get stuck in a routine, and that applies to cycling as much as anything else. You can find yourself ploughing the same groove of a favourite cycling route or re-enacting the same cycling activity of the year before. Why not try something different in 2008?

You've got a second chance for resolutions. The Chinese New Year begins on 7th February. It's the year of the rat, which is auspicious for pioneers, apparently. Here's just a sample of different things you can try with CTC.

TAKE THAT DREAM HOLIDAY

After hours on the daily commute dodging potholes and buses your bike may seem like an odd holiday companion. Yet that same freedom from transport worries makes the bike the perfect Passepartout. To see the world from the saddle is a luxury far removed from the package holiday experience. You can go where you want, on road or off.

CTC Cycling Holidays offer more than 80 holidays worldwide. Whether you're blowing the cobwebs away on a weekend break or going for that once-in-a-lifetime experience in a far-flung destination, there's a tour to suit. This year's tours could see you exploring the foothills of the Cévennes from a villa in southern France; riding from Marrakech over the Atlas mountains to the orange-growing Souss Valley; or exploring the Lake District over Easter. www.cyclingholidays.org.uk

DO THE END TO END

Record holder Gethin Butler completed the 850-mile journey in just over 44 hours, but most End-to-Enders take two weeks to enjoy one of CTC's 20 or so on and off-road routes. Whether for charity or personal achievement, cycling the length of mainland Britain from the toe of Cornwall through to the tip of Scotland is an ambition that many cyclists aspire to, and thousands achieve each year.

CTC's 1,000-mile scenic (hilly!) route offers the perfect balance between directness and peaceful

cycling. Averaging 70 miles per day the route travels through north Cornwall and Devon, up along the Welsh borders, through the Peak District and Pennines, the Borders, Grampians and Highlands. CTC also offer led and self-led E2E holidays and CTC's information officers can offer expert advice, tips and itineraries. www.ctc-maps.org.uk

GO RIDING WITH A GROUP

We've all got our own well-worn local route – the route that we turn to when we need a quick cycling fix. But there is a fine line between revisiting a route and cycling on auto-pilot. Riding with one of CTC's 250 local groups is the perfect antidote to solitary cycling. Many local groups have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the local lanes, climbs, vistas and more importantly the tea stops. And just being out with fellow cyclists makes any ride more sociable. www.ctc.org.uk/groups

BE THE BEST ALL ROUNDER

The CTC Tourist Competition is for cyclists who want their recreational cycling to have a purpose or a competitive edge.

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Points are awarded for riding a range of events from more than 400 nationwide. There are fun events, 50km rides, off-road rides, and even overnight rides of 600km. For those completing a total of 1,000, 2,000 or 3,000km in these events the Mille Miglia Challenge awards Bronze, Silver and Gold medallions. Or you can select up to 10 events to count in your attempt to become the Best All Rounder, with trophies for the first man, woman, veteran, and junior girl and boy. www.ctc-competitions.org.uk

GO TREASURE HUNTING

If you enjoy devising your own routes and visiting obscure places, try the British Cycle Quest. It involves tracking down answers to 402 questions. You're given the map reference for each place you need to visit and the questions are simple – they exist to prove only that you were there.

There are six sites to visit in each of the UK's 67 counties or islands, and you can obtain county cards and a wall chart to record your progress. Awards are available for those visiting 50, 100, 200, 300 and all 402 sites. www.ctc-competitions.org.uk

BE CHALLENGED

A route sheet, a pocket full of energy bars, and the company of 1,000 other riders are all that's going to get you to the end (or at least to the next feed station) of one of CTC's 100 or 150km Challenge Rides. Cycling legends Phil Liggett (31st August), Ron Kitching (21st June) and David Duffield (1st June) lend their names and favourite routes to the CTC Challenges.

Over 2,000 riders take part in the sportive rides, which all follow a simple formula: great camaraderie, rewarding routes, stunning scenery and a sense of satisfaction in beating the route and your own expectations. Ride all three or pick off places where you've never cycled before, with events from the South West up to the Peak District and the North Yorkshire Moors. www.ctc.org.uk/challengerides

GET CAMPAIGNING

Cycle campaigning changes the world we ride in. When 11,000 cyclists lent their support, the Government backed down on proposed changes to the Highway Code. That's just one campaigning



Rallies, such as York Cycle Show, make great breaks. There are events for even the youngest family members

success of many. There's plenty to be done – from checking your local paper and responding to any anti-cycle rant, to attending meetings with local councillors or 'local strategic partnerships' to help steer them in the right direction.

In 2008, you could sign up to

New Year's new job. You could make cycling part of your paid-for or voluntary working life.

Why not become a cycle trainer? Full accreditation involves passing an intensive and practical four-day course and two assessments. This gives you all the skills and knowledge you need to help others to learn to cycle safely using a progressive and structured system, from learning to ride a bike, to tackling the urban jungle of roads and other complex junctions with ease. www.ctc.org.uk/cycletraining

GO RALLYING

Imagine having your own cycling concierge service – someone to organise a choice of rides every day and take care off your every cycling whim. You could be offered a morning spent mountain biking with a stop for lunch at a hand-picked cyclist's eatery. Or a chance to see and buy the latest bike parts before a 40-mile afternoon spin discovering local beauty spots, rounded off by an evening spent watching classic cycling films. That's what cycle rallies offer. Try the CTC's Heart of England Rally (17th-18th May), York Cycle Show (21st-22nd June), Welsh Festival of Cycling (24th-28th July) and the Birthday Rides (2nd-9th August) in the Cotswolds. With catering, camping and hotels they've planned everything for you and your family

'Revisiting familiar routes can mean cycling on autopilot. Try riding with one of CTC's 250 local groups. It's the perfect antidote to solitary cycling.'

one of CTC's campaigns, join our nationwide Right to Ride campaigning network, or even set up a local cycle campaign group to spread the workload. If you commute by bike, why not start a bicycle user group, to lobby your bosses for secure cycle parking, showers or lockers to store your clothing?

Whatever you do, check out the campaigns section of CTC's website for updates and advice. www.ctc.org.uk/campaigns

GET A JOB

Being a professional cyclist is about as likely as being a professional footballer for most of us, but what about a 'cycling professional'? Topping the list of resolutions is the

so that all you have to do is check your saddlebags at the door. www.ctc.org.uk/events

BUY THAT NEW BIKE

In 1895 Ann Strong wrote in the Minneapolis Tribune: 'The bicycle is just as good company as most husbands and, when it gets old and shabby, a woman can dispose of it and get a new one without shocking the entire community.'

We wouldn't advocate putting a loved one out to pasture, but with all the extra riding you'll be doing this year the savings on commuting costs alone could justify a new bike. Don't forget that as a CTC member there are discounts available to you at CTC Shop. www.ctcshop.com