

cycle

**MTB
special**

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tactics**

A buyer's guide to
full-suspension bikes

**Welcome
to 2009**

Next year's products
on show now

OFF-ROAD IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS ■ BUYER'S GUIDE TO FULL-SUSPENSION ■ TOURING AFGHANISTAN ■ THE BEST OF THE AUTUMN BIKE SHOWS ■ TRAIL CENTRES FOR KIDS



BIKING MOUNTAINS

Off-road Highland epic with
tents, bikes & backpacks



Founded in 1878



Founded in 1878



**CYCLING ACROSS
AFGHANISTAN**
Touring in a war zone



**TRAIL CENTRE
BIKING FOR KIDS**
The route to happy trails



**WHO STOLE
THE GEARS?**
London's fix-ation

FROM THE EDITOR



Mud's good. The leaden skies and shorter days of autumn seem much less oppressive when you're hammering along on a mountain bike, grinning like a child, clothes spattered with liquid geology.

You can have too much of a good thing though. That thought came to me one October on a byway-open-to-all-traffic south of Shere, Surrey, when I went to dab a foot and my leg disappeared halfway to the knee. Pools of tea brown water that nearly came up to the hubs on my 29er were surrounded by sodden soil with the consistency of blancmange. It was the kind of mud that swallows bike shoes. Or mammoths.

That's why trail centres are such a good alternative off-season. Rain doesn't stop play. Trails that are designed to drain, and that have a man-made surface that doesn't transform into a swamp, can be ridden year round. You can get out and get dirty without foot-slogging through sludge that stops your wheels going round. So: where to this weekend?

Dan



Near left: Al Churcher. Above: courtesy of Specialized

CONTENTS

Cycle is the magazine of CTC – the UK's national cyclists' organisation. The magazine promotes the work of CTC and the CTC Charitable Trust (Registered Charity No. 1104324). Formed in 1878, CTC is the UK's largest cycling membership organisation with 70,000 members and affiliates. To join CTC, turn to page 80 and contact the Membership Dept.
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CTC Patron: Her Majesty the Queen
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CTC Council Chair: David Robinson
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 CTC (Cyclists' Touring Club) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England No. 25185

Cycle Magazine
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Creative Director: James Houston
Publisher: James Pembroke
 Cycle is published six times per year on behalf of CTC by James Pembroke Publishing, 90 Walcot Street, Bath, BA1 5BG. Tel: 01225 337777. Cycle is copyright CTC, James Pembroke Publishing and individual contributors. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission from CTC and James Pembroke Publishing is forbidden. Views expressed in the magazine are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the policies of CTC. Advertising bookings are subject to availability, the terms and conditions of Mongoose Media and final approval by CTC. Printed by St Ives (Plymouth) Ltd, Eastern Wood Road, Plympton, Plymouth, PL7 5ET. Tel: 01752 349431

Cover photo: above Ullswater in the Lake District, by Seb Rogers

Features

- 20 Biking mountains**
Off-road cycle-camping in the Scottish Highlands
- 26 Afghan rebel**
Touring through northern Afghanistan
- 33 A cycling safari**
Big game spotting in Cheshire on an autumn audax
- 37 Anytime trails**
Taking your kids to trail centres in autumn
- 40 Shock tactics**
Full-suspension mountain bikes: how they work and which to buy
- 48 Welcome to 2009**
What to see at Cycle 2008 this month
- 52 Fixed capital**
London's fascination with fixed-wheel bikes

Regulars

- 04 **CTC shop**
- 06 **News**
- 12 **Events news**
- 14 **Your letters**
- 30 **Holiday guide**
- 54 **Health**
- 56 **Cycling answers**
- 62 **Gear reviews**
- 68 **What's on**
- 69 **Prize draw**
- 69 **CTC small ads**
- 78 **CTC member benefits**
- 80 **CTC contacts**
- 82 **Travellers' tales**
- 83 **CTC Cycling Holidays**

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