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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

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