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TRAVELLERS' TALES



Channel Island wandering

ROGER OSBORN AND HIS WIFE HAD A FEW HOURS IN GUERNSEY, IN BETWEEN A FERRY FROM SARK AND ANOTHER TO POOLE

WE ARRIVED in St Peter Port, Guernsey with our two Bromptons after having spent a fantastic week on the car-free Channel Island of Sark. It was a lovely and sunny spring morning, so with our bags stowed at left luggage and a few hours to kill before our ferry back to Poole, we set off to find a bay called L'Ancrese in the north of the island.

We picked up the cycle path running alongside the sea, negotiated some quiet roads, and half an hour later found ourselves in a café by the beautiful beach at L'Ancrese. Having refuelled – and after watching two brave ladies swim in the sea – we set off down some picturesque 'Ruettes Tranquilles'.

A short ride later, we came across Déhus Dolmen, a spectacular Neolithic passage tomb with a carving, believed to be an archer, on one of the capstones. The tomb was free and open to venture inside, and situated along a lane with rows of greenhouses. We have no idea what was growing inside, but couldn't help a second glance as the workers inside all seemed to be in swimwear!

On the return journey to St Peter Port, which involved a short section of tricky cobbles, the drivers were considerate of us as we meandered along. With a speed limit of 35mph – or 25mph in built-up areas – the cycling was fun and free from the dangers of speeding traffic. We hope to go back for a longer stay soon.



Riding across America

Chair of CTC Scotland Chris Oliver and daughter Catherine cycled 3,415 miles across the USA

Cycling 80 or more miles a day for seven weeks was mind numbing. Countryside, urban sprawl... states and hotels merged into one. The journey was, however, fantastic.

It was an affirming experience but for me not totally life changing. That had happened 2006. I was 27 ½ stone and could ride a bike only 200 yards. I had an adjustable gastric band fitted, lost 170lb, and

cycled more and more. Two weeks before the TransAmerica ride, I reluctantly had the band relaxed so I could eat normally and consume enough energy.

The 46-degree heat in the Mojave Desert in the first few days felt like riding in an oven. Climbing was tough too, as I am still heavy at 15 stone – and not just in the Rockies but the roller-coaster hills of Missouri. I dumped my racing saddle early on and got a lovely

Brooks green leather saddle in Flagstaff.

As it was a supported trip with Crossroads (crossroads.com), we weren't carrying luggage. But my Scott CR1 Team road bike still wore out two tyres, a rear wheel and a shifter, and it needed a major gear overhaul.

The USA was full of surprises. Rude drivers in Missouri and Massachusetts would push cyclists off the road; friendly truck drivers in Arizona passed giving thumbs-up signs.

It was an emotional time going over my first big mountain pass, then crossing the Continental Divide, and finally riding into Boston.



▶ Low speed limits make Guernsey a pleasant place to cycle – and you're never far from a beach



◀ Chris ceremonially dipped a wheel in the Pacific and the Atlantic. He says he'd like to do the trip again in ten years





North Wales weekender

BARRY RAYNOR RECALLS SHEFFIELD DISTRICT CTC'S SPRING HOSTELLING WEEKEND TO LLANGOLLEN

WE'VE BEEN holding spring hostel weekends for several years now, and for 2013 we booked Llangollen's independent hostel. Twenty-eight of us set off on a cool and breezy morning. Thanks to the recently opened Wye Valley Trail, the journey to the first café stop on the Cat and Fiddle road felt easy.

The sun was out by the time we dropped to Macclesfield, a town bedevilled by busy traffic. After lunch it was south and west through Middlewich, Church Minshull, Bunbury and past the impressive Beeston Castle. We stopped at Tattenhall before entering Wales, crossing the River Dee at Bangor on Dee.

On Saturday, two rides were on offer. Tony led a group on a shorter ride along a back road to Corwen and over the Wayfarer's Pass, before moving onto Chirk and returning to Llangollen. My group also called at Corwen via the A5, and then moved onto Bala before the long but stunning scenic ride over the Hirnant Pass to Lake Vyrnwy visitor's centre for lunch. In the afternoon, we visited the largest waterfall in Wales, Pistyll Rhaeadr, then tackled the longest steepest hill most of us had ever seen out of Glyn Ceiriog, before dropping into the Dee valley at Llangollen.

Saturday night saw the entire group out for a pre-arranged pub meal in the town, helped by the odd pint or two. On Sunday, we had a 9am start for the 101 miles back to Sheffield.



Barry's Saturday ride stopped in the market town of Corwen, at the foot of the Berwyn Mountains

Bolivian riches

On a tour of South America, retirees Ann Nicholson and Neil Stirling cycled to the world's highest city

POTOSI IN Bolivia is the highest city on earth, and it made the kings of Spain rich beyond their wildest dreams. We decided to ride our bikes from La Paz to Potosi and visit Cerro Rico mountain, the source of silver that financed an empire.

After Challapata, the road kicked uphill into a world of alpacas, llamas, weather-beaten faces and the Alto Plano. A road construction gang was finishing work. '1km to Thola Palca,' we were assured by a balaclava-hooded man on a bike, complete with shovel and traffic cone. In fact, it was eight torturous

miles and he could climb like Wiggins.

In a village of dusty streets and mud brick houses, the concrete school was an oasis of civilisation. There was no accommodation, so when the adult literacy class finished we bedded down on the school floor. Children's faces pressed to the windows.

Next morning was freezing. There was no water from the tap, no food in the shop. The altitude had our hearts racing. The landscape was incomparable, all blues and greens, juxtaposed with ochre. We crested the final pass, 14,107 feet, and

headed downhill past lorries crawling down in first gear.

The final six miles to Potosi, I guess we walked for two hours uphill. Both of us were near physical and mental wrecks. But Potosi was the city of our dreams too: a hot shower, a toilet, a bed! There was no silver fortune for us, but we had memories of people prepared to share everything and us and felt richer for having met them. One woman had swept the concrete floor in the school and laid blankets on it for us, while a 12-year-old had cooked rice and veg and made us welcome.

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How to create a dynamic cycling group, whatever its focus

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Riding up Cadair Idris – by handcycle.

