



Hurricane Irma had left its mark

DODGING HURRICANES

Last September, **Rob Callaghan** and son **Tom** cycled down the east coast of the United States

Taking on a 1,500 mile self-supported tour from Boston (Massachusetts) to Daytona Beach (Florida) against a prevailing southerly wind in the peak hurricane season might seem foolish. But if you get lucky, you could have the sun on your face all day and the wind on your back. We got lucky. Two weeks earlier, Hurricane Irma would have forced abandonment; two weeks later, Jose would have delayed our start.

We picked up ex-rental Kona Dew hybrids from UrbanAdventours in Boston. Our route was based on the East Coast Greenway (ECG) trail from Maine to Florida. The ECG urban route



Approaching Savannah, Georgia

south of Philadelphia was brutal: we cycled on the shoulder of a three-lane highway with trucks zooming by. As we crossed into Maryland, my derailleur hanger snapped. Who knew that such a simple part was so bespoke to brand, model, and year? The nearest part was in Washington DC. My son Tom cycled solo for the next 120 miles.

After DC, the cycling was great, along a mix of back roads, trails, and bike lanes adjacent to highways. The 30° heat and 90% humidity meant we were soaked within five miles of the start of each day. The Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida are pan flat and the tree-lined roads are straight as far as the eye can see. We might as well have been cycling in front of a video screen in a sauna. The only hills were the bridges taking us across the rivers used for commerce.

The damage from Hurricane Irma that we first saw in Charleston became more devastating the further south we went. Our hosts along the way told us of mandatory evacuations and days without power. We were lucky.

At the finish we donated our bikes to Hub Cycling, who refurbish bikes and give them to a children's charity.

Scandi non-drama

ANDREW STEVENSON ENJOYED AN EASY 270KM BIKE ROUTE THROUGH SWEDEN

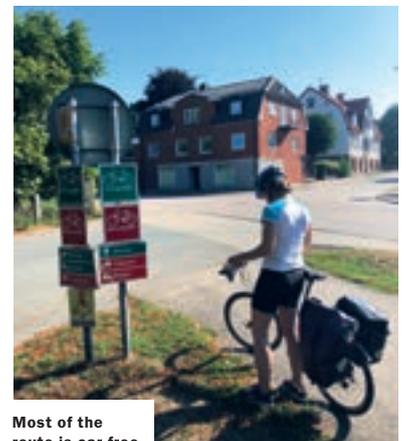
Sydostleden: we had seven days to practise pronouncing it. The name of this 273km route through southern Sweden appears regularly on brown signposts. It runs from Simrishamn to Växjö or vice versa. We rode the former.

From Copenhagen airport, we caught the 20-minute train shuttle to Malmö, over the bridge. For lovers of Nordic noir, that's 'The Bridge'. An Öresundstag train took us and our bikes to our start at Simrishamn.

The seven stages of Sydostleden average 30-45km, through diverse landscapes with one common denominator: they're safe. Sydostleden steered us away from the traffic. Yes, some sections run beside roads, but are separate from cars. More often, we wound our way along decommissioned railroads. Often there were forest or seaside paths.

We took refuge in the still, clear water during the exceptional 30° heatwave we encountered, as there are lots of lake and seaside beaches. And if the water was a little cold even on a hot day, there was always Swedish filter coffee to warm us up.

Sydostleden is a simple breeze of a bike ride. Seven stages, five syllables, no hills. You can double up the stages if you're feeling fit. All there is to worry about is how to pronounce Växjö...



Most of the route is car-free



Château d'Arsac

FRENCH CONNECTION

Anne Greenhalgh and ten clubmates visited Bristol CTC's twin club in Bordeaux

Bordeaux: the name conjures up visions of grand châteaux and rolling vineyards. The city of Bristol is twinned with Bordeaux, and 11 of us embarked on a tour to Bordeaux, arranged by Bristol CTC's twin cycle club, Club Independent Bordelais, and our own Jane Chapman.

We stayed in a campsite 15km from the centre of Bordeaux. Our hosts organised rides that took us in every direction, crossing all the main rivers – the Garonne, Gironde and Dordogne. Bordeaux has a stunning waterfront, with the shape of the river likened to a series of crescent moons. It's used as a symbol for many Bordelaise, including the cycle club.

Hailstones had fallen the day before



The hosts led daily rides

we started the tour and had damaged many vines, limiting the 2018 vintage. This was particularly noticeable in the Medoc, an area famed for vineyards and lovely châteaux. Some châteaux have English names – Brown & Smith, for example – as they were bought by the English in the 19th century. Another English connection is the Richard the Lionheart lion, which appears in the Aquitaine coat of arms. A surprising landmark was Cubzac les Ponts, where Jacques Cousteau is buried. Quite far from the sea, I thought.

As Bristol is twinned with Bordeaux, we were given a reception at the town hall. It felt strange to go into the Hotel Du Ville in our cycle kit and to be escorted to a magnificent state room. We look forward to welcoming the Bordeaux club in Bristol.

Share your story

Cycle wants your Travellers' Tales. Email the editor – cycle@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk – for advice on what's required.

Touring in 1923

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF **HARRY SAUNDERS**, FOUND BY GRANDSON **MIKE FREEMAN**

Betws-y-Coed & back (to Birmingham), 4-5th August 1923: This was my first

attempt at riding for 24 hours, and we (I was accompanied by C Wigley) decided afterwards that we had chosen too stiff a course. We were both overgeared (75 fixed each) but managed to reach Betws-y-Coed (103 1/2 miles) in about ten hours. It was here at 5.30am that I saw the most glorious sunrise.

We had an excellent breakfast at a hotel (2/9 each) and started the homeward trip after seeing the Stepping Stones, Swallow Falls, and a distant view of Snowdon. The ride across the 'desert of Wales' to the Saracen's Head, coupled with a fierce sun and a strong headwind, made the going something to be remembered.

When we ultimately reached Boningale (Wolverhampton) we had sufficient energy to ride up the long hill there, which is known to most tourists. We eventually finished the 207 hilly miles in 23 hours 40 minutes.

Langollen, 16th September 1923: Three of us started this ride but one had to retire at Shifnal. My brother and I pushed on, but I had two punctures at Shrewsbury, both in the rear tyre. These I repaired, but at Wellington on the return journey I broke the left pedal out of the crank. Being a fixed gear, I endeavoured to ride one-legged, which I successfully managed for an a mile or two until the chain broke. This compelled us to walk the better part of 20 miles, which occupied 7 1/2 hours, and we arrived home at 3am.



Harry Saunders and his fixed-wheel bike