



**Above:** Basuto ponies in the Drakensberg  
**Below:** Snow on the mountains of Western Cape

**Africa**

# South African epic

**Graham Denny and his son Matthew entered the Freedom Challenge off-road endurance event**

The route runs 2,300km through remote areas of South Africa, crossing six mountain ranges. There are hiker-bike portages, river crossings, historic wagon trails, farm roads, footpaths, and animal tracks. And GPS navigation isn't allowed; it must be done by map! More than just a non-stop ride, the Freedom Challenge is a real test of rider and bike.

Winners ride virtually non-stop; the record is an amazing 10.5 days. However, 26 days are available. Support stations offer food, shelter and a bed, so if you do not get lost a comfortable night is assured. My son Matthew and I rode it in 2018. The event starts

near Durban, crosses the Drakensberg mountain range, traverses the Eastern Cape highlands, drops down into the near desert of the Karoo, then climbs the ranges of the Western Cape to finish near Cape Town.

It takes place in winter, when daylight is limited to around 10 hours. Navigation in the complete darkness of rural South Africa is a true test of map-reading skills!

Our adventure took 20 days. It was never easy but was filled with memories to cherish. The weather was a challenging mix of warm days, cold nights, snow, rain and wind. I was pushed both physically and mentally to complete the event, but like many others I would do it again.

Riding the Freedom Challenge is about freezing mornings, fantastic sunrises, challenging climbs, sweet descents, chance encounters with wild animals, long days in the saddle, fear of losing the trail, relief on re-finding the route, and the welcoming glow of an isolated farmhouse.

Visit [freedomchallenge.org.za](http://freedomchallenge.org.za) for more information about the event.



**Ireland**

# Wild Atlantic Way

**Tricia Farnham and her husband rode an organised Irish E2E**

Having enjoyed riding Land's End to John o' Groats twice, I thought we'd try an end-to-end in Ireland. The coastal route along the west side of the Republic of Ireland is called the Wild Atlantic Way. Cyclists usually start at Mizen Head, in the south west, and ride to Ireland's most northerly point, Malin Head. The distance is about 600 miles and our trip with Wild Atlantic Cycling was for 12 days.

My husband and I flew with our cycles to Cork and were then taken by coach to Mizen Head. I hired a bike computer from the organiser, Paul Kennedy, which was pre-programmed with each day's route. We cycled on quiet roads, admiring the green and pleasant land, often beside the wild Atlantic, watching the waves breaking on rocks. Each night we stayed at a comfortable hotel.

We travelled northward through Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway, Connemara, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal. On day 11, Storm Ali hit.

Strong, blustery winds and heavy rain made cycling risky, so Paul

arranged coach transport for us all. The next day was calmer and we were able to cycle to the finish at Malin Head, where Paul presented medals.



Left: Liz King



**Above:** Ireland's northern tip  
**Below:** The coastal route lives up to its name



**Above:** Take your camera. (Remember to pause Strava)  
**Below:** Sa Calobra climbs 668 metres over 9.4km



Pfalzgrafenstein Castle, near Kaub, Germany

## Western Europe

### Bromptons down the Rhine

*Neil Hutchon and his wife rode from Austria to the Netherlands*

**We began our** trip down the Rhine from Bregenz in Austria to Arnhem in the Netherlands apprehensively. We've done long tours before but not for years, and the difficulties of getting our tandem to central Europe meant we were using Bromptons instead. They can be carried onto trains, including Eurostar, as luggage.

The Rhine cycle route was perfect for us. It was downhill almost all the way. The walled medieval towns, quaint villages and wooded hillsides of the High Rhine (Bodensee to Basel) were followed by the plains of the Upper Rhine (through Strasbourg and onto Mainz). Then we rode through the spectacular Rhine Gorge, seeing more medieval towns, vineyards, and the hilltop castles of the Middle Rhine.

After industrial Duisburg, the flatness and big sky of the Lower Rhine towards the Dutch border was a bit of a shock. Our route was mostly on well-marked cycle paths along the river. Our daily average was 35 miles. We took a couple of short hops on local trains to shorten longer days.

The folders were great. We're planning to explore central or southern Europe with them next. Or should we dust off that tandem?

## Mallorca

### Sa Calobra in spring

*Becci May and nine of her clubmates spent a week in Mallorca last April*

Last April, when the spring sun was shining for the first time at home, ten of us from Alton Cycling Club stepped off an Easyjet plane in the rain. We were heading to Platja de Muro, near Alcudia, on the north east coast. The hotel was perfectly set up for cyclists, having underground bike storage area and hire bikes available.

Our first day's warm-up ride started with most of us feeling a bit fragile after a few glasses of local wine the night before. But it was dry and sunny and we were happy to be on our bikes.

Mallorca is a cyclists' mecca. Not only does it have perfect cycling weather in April, it has great mountain climbs, some with wonderful sea views. Quiet lanes wind through rural areas and old towns. There's the scent of orange blossom and wildflowers in the air, and groves of almond, fig, olive, and oak trees.

We whizzed down (and up) a few hairpin bends, some with sheer drops on one side. The ride to the lighthouse north of Alcudia, which attracts thousands of cyclists and the occasional vehicle, has fantastic – and sometimes precipitous – views.

We rode between 60 and 140km a day for six days solid. On our final full day, the crazy, curvy infamous Sa

Calobra descent was calling – as was the returning climb, because once you reach the sea you can't go any further. A few of us stopped at the top of the awesome ascent to spectate and cheer on the others.

After struggling through some dismal winter weather, this was a wonderful kickstart to spring club riding. It was a great way to emerge from the winter blues. So: where to next year?



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