



Morocco's High Atlas Mountains



About to ride along the banks of Loch Ness

Scotland

Riding the Caledonia Way

After lockdown, **Derek Fyfe** cycled up Scotland's west coast

CORONAVIRUS HAS A lot to answer for. Having recently retired, a number of cycling exploits beckoned. I had a blank canvass to exploit. Then Covid shut everything down. Typical.

In September restrictions eased a little, and living in Glasgow I had easy access to the Caledonia Way. This trip at least looked promising. After booking B&Bs and hotels, my wife and I drove to Campbeltown via the Mull of Kintyre lighthouse. The views across to Northern Ireland were stunning.

Next day we visited Davaar Island, which has a cave with a painting of Christ on the inside. The causeway you walk across is only usable a few hours either side of low tide. Fortunately we got our timings right.

My solo cycling trip began the following morning as I headed off up the east side of the Kintyre peninsula, while Joyce took the car. Fantastic scenery follows you north. Remember to stop, look, and savour the landscape that surrounds you.

It took me five days to ride the 234 miles to Inverness. After 69 miles on the final day, my legs felt like they didn't want to be part of me any more. But it was great to complete the Caledonia Way, notwithstanding the inclement weather and the virus.

The scenery along the west coast of Scotland has to be some of the best in the world. If you take the time to immerse yourself in it, and absorb it, you will find yourself enriched forever.

Africa

Going solo to Ghana

Two years ago **Nikki Ray** was on the tour of a lifetime from Spain to West Africa

I've been feeling so thankful that I cycled to Ghana when I did. In August 2018 I set off from Santander in Spain, and 10,000km later arrived in Accra, the capital of Ghana (West Africa). It was a journey that I had dreamed of for years.

I pedalled through 13 countries – Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte D'Ivoire, and Ghana – on a steel frame bike I built up myself, with my ukulele in tow.

I rode over the Rif, High Atlas and Anti Atlas mountain ranges in Morocco, through intense headwinds in the Sahara desert, and into the tropics of West Africa in humid 40° heat. Sometimes I wild camped but on the majority of occasions I was invited inside a kind stranger's house and offered a bed and sometimes food.

Of course there were highs and lows mentally, physically, and geographically. I did tire of being told that it was dangerous to be a woman travelling alone, and being asked where my husband was. However, the visibility of women cycling long

distances was an element of great importance to me. I enjoy riding solo because of the increased opportunities to meet people on the road, especially local women.

This year I have been so happy to see such an increase in women riding in London, one positive that this year's early lockdown afforded us. Whether touring at home or overseas, when it's possible, I hope that this year's bike revival will see more women touring with friends or alone. Go on: try it! You might be surprised how much fun it is.

Nikki's blog of her trip is at readysteadyslow.wordpress.com.

The Western Sahara: headwinds and unchanging views





Social distancing in Scotland via solo wild-camping



Joseph en route to Niederkrossen, central Germany

Germany

Radweg rookies

Three days on German cycleways sold **David Futter** on touring

DESPITE BEING A lifelong cyclist, my touring was limited to day trips. My son, Joseph, decided this should change. Last August he planned us a quick jaunt from our home in Rudolstadt in central Germany to Magdeburg. We were able to follow well-maintained and signposted 'radwege' throughout – first along the River Saale to the Elbe, then downstream to Magdeburg.

The first section was familiar. We rode it in the clear light of a fine summer morning. Soon we were into new territory, passing castles, vineyards and villages nestling in the steep-sided valley. As the day wore on, the valley became flatter, the shade harder to find, and the temperature hotter, reaching the mid-thirties by late afternoon. We reached our first destination – Weiffenfels – fried from the sun.

Overnight the weather broke, but the torrential rain was over by the time we set out. The day stayed dry and overcast – a relief after roasting the previous afternoon. The terrain was quite different now: a wide valley with the Saale meandering through it. Halle was our lunch stop, with the statue of Handel watching us. From there we went through farmland and villages to our next destination, Calbe.

The final day was a short trip to the end of the Saale, and onwards to Magdeburg. I came back on the train, whilst Joseph extended his trip to Wittenberg.

Scotland

Cairngorm wild-camping

Last September, **John Phillip** managed to pack an adventure into four panniers and five days

A long with limited leave from work, the pandemic complicated plans I had for a cycling trip in 2020. My solution was a five-day wild-camping cycle trip in Scotland when the lockdown lifted. I could pack an adventure into a short, Covid-secure break.

I started at Inverness, having arrived by train from York, and cycled out of the city in the afternoon. Riding past the Culloden battlefield towards Nairn, I was soon among gorgeous woodland. My first night's camp was at Loch Lochindorb, where I was greeted by fabulous views and hungry midges. Repellent was the one thing I had forgotten...

To make the most of the early autumn light, I rose early. A lovely descent to Carrbridge for provisions was followed by a spin along a minor road to Grantown-on-Spey. I followed a quiet main road into the Cairngorms proper, spending my second night at the old Lecht mine workings. At an elevation of 700m, I was mostly out of

the reach of the insects.

From the Lecht ski area next morning, I had a magical view of a temperature inversion. Past Cock Bridge and Corgarriff Castle, I followed the lonely military road through grouse moorland towards Balmoral Castle. In the woodland between Ballater and Aboyne I spotted red squirrels. Leaving Deeside, I had a steep climb up towards Cairn O' Mount. I pitched camp above the river in Glen Dye on a glorious evening.

I was woken by grouse calling – thankfully without answering guns. Another steep climb rewarded me with views across the Howe of the Mearns and all the way to the sea. I descended from the Cairngorms and had a cuppa at a hotel in Glen Cova. As the day-trippers headed home, I began my search for a camping spot.

My last day took me to Dundee for the train home. I spent around £90 on train fares (advance tickets) plus £50 on camping food and café stops. Wild camping means you get a lot of bang for your buck.



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