



[L to R] Peter, Ron, Bob, Ross, and Andy

**Spain**

# Spanish fire escape

*A ferry engine in flames couldn't derail **Roger Grosvenor's** CTC Cycling Holiday*

In the run up to the CTC 'Spain End2End' tour from Santander to Gibraltar in May, we were keeping a weather eye on possible delays. Brexit border checks? No. Roadworks around Portsmouth, where we were sailing from? No. Then, a week before departure, came the news that our ferry to Spain had caught fire! It had been towed into Brest for repairs.

Brittany Ferries had no spare capacity, so most of us started checking our insurance policies for cancellation terms. But in very short order, tour leaders Julie and Nic Hodgetts had contacted us all and then spent half a day with their local travel agent, emerging with airline tickets to get us all from four different UK airports to Santander, via Madrid.

Most of us had to take our bikes to their house, to be dismantled and packed into their vehicle, then driven across France to meet us at Santander airport. As for costs, it was a case of "Don't worry – CTC Cycling Holidays' insurance will take care of that!"

After all that, the tour went well, with the hoped-for sunshine and some 'steady' climbs en route. Endless plains were punctuated by mostly delightful cities. Evening meals

usually included wine – no objections were raised. The support vehicle was waiting at almost every road junction, and on one hot afternoon was even equipped with a bag of ice blocks ready for insertion into one's clothing! At one hotel, where the water supply was known to be brackish, 14 large bottles of water magically appeared. That's attention to detail! Amusement was provided by one rider veering into freshly laid concrete and requiring a thorough wash-down.

On arriving at Gibraltar, a retired GP threw herself fully clothed into the sea. Gibraltar's permanent cloud reminded us that both climate and culture were returning to 'normal'.



Top: Cantabrian Mountain pass  
Bottom: Andalusia

**Northamptonshire**

# The Northampton Ninety-Nine

***Bob Caldwell** rode a century with septuagenarian companions*

**DESPITE MOST OF US** nudging 80, the Rugby Wednesday Riders still ride each week, as we have done since 1993, usually with our founder, Avril Eyre, who is 85. Our annual 100-miler has grown into three separate hundreds, the latest of which was a tour of Northamptonshire: the Northampton 99.

We began at Rugby, soon leaving the hilly part of Northamptonshire and arriving at Boycott Farm near Buckingham, where there's an excellent café. The next stage was to cross the A5, which we managed via an excellent flyover-type cycle path.

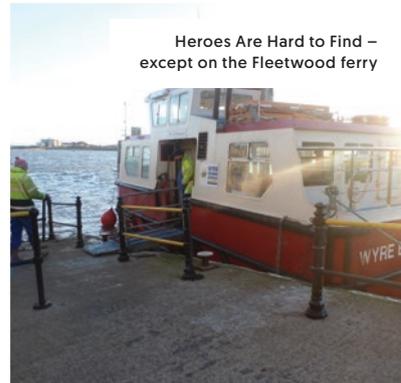
With that noisy and dangerous dual carriageway behind us, we continued to Weston Underwood for lunch at the Cowper's Oak. The pub's name refers to an ancient and long-gone oak, beneath which William Cowper sat composing poetry.

After lunch, our ride passed quiet villages like Ravenstone and Stoke Goldington en route to Stoke Bruerne, where there's another lovely café at the Waterways Museum.

We arrived in Rugby at about seven o'clock, all with a mileage comfortably in three figures. The following day was spent poring over maps to see what improvements could be incorporated for next year.



Above: You can view Stephen's route at [tinyurl.com/yxfrgels](http://tinyurl.com/yxfrgels)  
Below: Mt Olympus



Heroes Are Hard to Find – except on the Fleetwood ferry

## England

### Falling for BCQ

On an icy winter's day, **Brandon Edgeley** went hunting for British Cycle Quest checkpoints

**CATCHING AN EARLY** train from Crewe, I was in Lancaster before 7am. I rode through the slumbering city and out towards the Trough of Bowland to tick off the Jubilee Tower climb. It was just above freezing so the climb kept me warm. On the descent, I safely crossed a slippery cattle grid only to crash just past it.

Somewhat sore, I remounted and pushed on; I had to be at Knott End ferry by about 08:50. It was tight. Halfway down the jetty, I spotted the ferry moving away, its ramp rising. Then it came back for me!

As we approached Fleetwood, the ferry operators had Fleetwood Mac on the stereo. Brilliant! I visited both the lighthouses in Fleetwood and went past Rosall Point watchtower. Later, heading for another BCQ question at Inglewhite, I hit black ice – and the ground – again.

After lunch at Croston, I stopped at the top of Parbold Hill for another BCQ question. Bike lanes took me past St Helens and through Warrington. Approaching Daresbury, RideWithGPS sent me off-road along the canal. I had to backtrack.

By now it was cold again, so I was riding with care. At Great Budworth, I answered my last BCQ question of the day. Then I headed home, arriving in Nantwich 12½ hours after I started.

## Turkey

# A taste of Turkey

Last February, **Stephen Psallidas** swapped a British winter for one by the Mediterranean

**C**hristmas was cold and dark so I decided to vote for Turkey – a Turkish cycle tour, that is! Two months later, I set out from Antalya on a five-day, 500km tour along the coast to Kas, where I circled back inland.

It was an excellent ride, much hillier than I expected. It included Alpine-style climbs with classic hairpin descents, spectacular Mediterranean beaches, and a cable-car diversion to the snow-covered peak of Mount Olympus (Tahtalı Dağı). The peak is 2,500 metres. I emerged from the cable car into heavy snow and -10°C temperatures. Despite shivering in my cycling top and light waterproof, the

views down to the sea were amazing.

I whizzed downhill to Ciralı. A quick dip in the Med from Ciralı's beautiful beach achieved something I'd wanted to do for many years: being in the snow and swimming in the sea on the same day! Later, I rode over to the strange sight of a hillside covered in small natural gas flares burning out of holes in the rock.

The roads were mostly quiet, the people friendly, and the food and accommodation cheap in the off-peak season. Adventure loomed when I had to lug my bike and pannier on my shoulders around a major landslide on a road in the middle of nowhere, and another day involved a freezing, waist-deep river – escapades duly filed under 'future dinner tales'.

The only downside was the rough road surface. My 28mm tyres were a mistake! I rolled back into Antalya feeling like one of the ancient Greek ruins dotting the city, but a sauna and massage soon sorted me out.

It was a proper Turkish delight!



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