



L: Cajamarca  
R: nr Villeta



Cycling out, train back – unreserved

## South America

# Colombian climbing

Thirty years ago **John Heath** enjoyed his best ever tour, led by CTC's Peter Crofts

“**T**here's still two places on the CTC Colombia tour,” I said to my wife in 1992. “Why don't you go then?” she replied. So I did – although I didn't realise that the stage from Ibagué to Armenia would be 85km, with a total ascent of well over 3,500 metres.

Peter Crofts led as many as six CTC tours a year, including ones to Latin America. I thought he must be joking when he said to me: “You must be the one who speaks Spanish? That's good – you can be our interpreter.”

While I was able to help, Peter would sort out the hotel bill after we had all left each morning, then race past us to the next hotel to check that everything was okay.

One day, freewheeling towards the River Magdalena, the drizzle we'd been riding through turned into heavy rain. Then we got to a landslide: 300 metres of soft wet clay that came up to our knees.

When we'd finally managed to reach the other side, fellow rider Jeff asked me what the Spanish was for 'bucket'. He then went to the nearest house and shouted that. He was given a plastic basin and a broom, then shown a cistern at the side of the road where we

could clean up.

At breakfast in Villa de Lleyva, Peter said: “At first the road will be 20km of dirt but flat.” Unfortunately his map had contours at 1,000 metre intervals. That first 18km took us about three hours, during which we climbed perhaps 600m up the flank of the mountains, which overlooked a beautiful valley to the west.

That's what I remember most from the trip: magnificent views across enormous valleys, along with an incredibly warm welcome from the Colombian people. Thanks, Peter, for the best holiday of my life.

The landslide was just passable with a bike



## England

# Railing against restrictions

**Tom Culver** recalls a time when trains carried tandem tricycles

**MY WIFE AND** I lived in London from 1978 but she is a country girl who didn't really like the city. So we resolved to get out in the country every other weekend. Our means of travel was our tandem trike.

I am now amazed at the distances we cycled: east to Canterbury; north to Cambridge; west to Gloucester; and south to the New Forest. We would stop at a B&B we'd found in the CTC handbook on Saturday night, then keep riding on Sunday.

We were able to do these distances because we didn't need to cycle home. We knew that we only had to find a railway station. We would put our trike in the guard's van to be carried back to London. We didn't need to book a space because nearly all passenger trains had a guard's van and there was nearly always plenty of room. I remember 50 bikes on one train.

The privatisation of the railways destroyed this possibility. The train companies charge per person but must pay the rail provider per carriage. If their shareholders are to enjoy big dividends, they must stuff as many people as possible into as few carriages as is feasible. Guard's vans have disappeared. Most trains carry a couple of bikes but it's no longer practical to just turn up with your cycle and go.

If every train had a guard's van for cycles, and there were no restrictions or requirements for boarding with your bike, cycling and rail could be the answer to inter-urban travel today.



## Shropshire

### Never Mynd the hills

A new e-bike inspired **Haydn Greenway's** 100-mile weekend

**AT 67, AFTER** four decades of cycle commuting and day tours, I've become an e-bike convert. I bought a Cannondale Synapse e-road bike – and felt I could cycle forever!

The idea of an 'epic ride' began to form. I asked my friend Martin, who is 66, if he fancied riding out to Church Stretton, camping overnight, and cycling back. It would be a round trip, for me, of 100 miles. We booked a 'pod' at the Mountain Edge campsite in south Shropshire.

We met up at Ironbridge. Martin lives in nearby Telford. He also rides an e-bike. It was a drizzly morning when I set out from Cannock and rode the 25 miles to Ironbridge. After coffee opposite the famous bridge, we set off.

Church Stretton is situated in spectacular countryside on the edge of the Long Mynd. The road to the summit, the Burway, is a formidable challenge. However, using a combination of a low gear and electrical assistance, I was able to 'twiddle' the pedals and climb the 1,300ft to the top of the hill. The views were awe inspiring.

After a hearty meal and drinks we collapsed for the night. Meanwhile our bikes recharged their batteries. The ride home took us through beautiful Shropshire countryside: Wenlock Edge, Much Wenlock and Ironbridge, where we parted. I rode home to Cannock after a memorable ride.

## Across Britain

# Biking for butterflies

**Simon Saville** combined his *End to End* journey with his passion for butterfly conservation

**T**he End to End was a trip I'd wanted to do for a long time, as I'm sure it is for many cyclists. After retiring I decided to combine the journey with fundraising for my favourite charity, Butterfly Conservation, for which I'm a trustee and local volunteer.

My route was based on the LEJOG route on Sustrans' National Cycle Network, but I modified this to take in as many nature reserves and wildlife sites as I could along the way. Local volunteers showed me around, so most days involved a few hours walking as well as 40 miles of cycling. My End to End journey was longer and slower than most: 1,200 miles over 30 days. Most of the time I rode alone, although I had a bike buddy with me on seven days.

I rode through Exmoor, over Bodmin Moor, over the Mendips, and through the Cotswolds. Then it was the Wyre Forest and the Cheshire Plain, followed by torrential rain and a waterlogged satnav in Manchester.

After climbing over the Forest of Bowland I explored the Silverdale area around Morecambe Bay, which is excellent for wildlife. In Scotland my route went from Glasgow to Stirling,

along the Forth and Clyde Canal, then up into the Cairngorms and on to Inverness, Cromarty Firth, Lairg and the Flow Country.

It was a voyage of discovery in so many ways. I learned to love hills – there's never any shame in using a lower gear – but to hate headwinds. I visited over 40 wildlife sites, ranging from large National Nature Reserves to small urban wildflower meadows, and spotted 34 species of butterfly.

My trip enabled me to raise over £30,000 for Butterfly Conservation. I'm now planning to publish my route as the Land's End to John o' Groats Butterfly Route. And I'll be doing another Bike for Butterflies ride in 2022.



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