



Clockwise from left: NW, day six: approaching Ben Cruachan, one of the Munros, a 1,127m-high mountain in Argyll and Bute. NNW, day seven: beach near the village of Durness, where Mark stayed the night. NNW, day eight: aboard the little Cape Wrath ferry, crossing the Kyle of Durness. Day nine of what was the longest leg, the NW bearing: Harris in the Outer Hebrides, which Mark reached in November



friends and relatives, to keep the weight down and provide some well-earned comfort at the end of a long day of pedalling.

POINTS OF INTEREST

To keep life from getting too predictable, I made a spinner: a red cardboard arrow pinned to the centre of a circle divided into 16 equal segments. I would spin it to determine my next direction, unless I had a compelling reason to choose one direction in particular (such as catching a paddle steamer or, another time, attending the Hampton Court Flower Show in London with Jenni).

On two occasions I had company for a couple of days, which made a pleasant change to my usual solitary riding. But I was comfortable in my own company for most of each day, taking each ride as it came. Despite my previous cycling adventure across every OS map of Britain in 2022 (cyclinguk.org/ride-all-os-maps), there was still a great deal to discover for the first time, and

even more to see for the first time in ages. It never once got boring or predictable. There really is so much to enjoy in this country if you are curious, and especially if you avoid the crowds.

A long and well-planned journey can be very rewarding, but I learned this time that it is worth taking time out to get to know somewhere better. We met, paused and explored for a day in destinations we would probably not otherwise have given close attention. The likes of Chester, Durham, Lincoln, Ironbridge, Shrewsbury, Belfast and Skipton made for some memorable times together, proving you don't even need to get on a bike to be part of a cycling adventure. It made me more curious to properly explore more of Britain's towns and cities.

We had some fabulous meals, stayed in some lovely accommodation and saw rich examples of our long and colourful history. It was time and money well spent. After which, I got back on my bike and carried on riding in a straight line! ●

NNW, day seven: near Invercassey in the Scottish Highlands



Magnetic attractions

The cycling encompassed too many highlights to list in full. A few of my favourite days included:

- Riding NNW from Skipton along Upper Wharfedale, up and over to Hawes in Wensleydale, then on to Kirkby Stephen and Appleby. After that, tracking along the west side of the North Pennines as far as Brampton.
- Riding from Settle in North Yorkshire, NW via Ingleton and Kingsdale to Dentdale, and then through Sedburgh to skirt the west side of the Howgills range, along the Lune Gorge and right up to Shap. And then along the lovely Lowther Valley and over via Pooley Bridge to Penruddock, in the shadow of Blencathra.
- Taking a late afternoon ferry across the Firth of Clyde to Dunoon and then cycling all along loch sides to reach Inveraray, on the far side of Loch Fyne, at sunset. Sublime.
- Cycling along the SW coast of Cornwall, stopping for breakfast amid tall ships in the World Heritage harbour at Charlestown, then on along the Roseland Peninsula to pretty St Mawes, and then by ferry over Carrick Roads to Falmouth, and past beautiful beach-studded coastline, via Helford Passage ferry, to the tip of the Lizard, Britain's most SW point. A visual feast.
- NNE over the purple-carpeted North York Moors from delightful Helmsley to Saltburn Pier.