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Cover photo: Teenage boy mountain biking in the Quantock Hills AONB by Jon Hicks/Getty Images



From the editor

As the seasons turn, some cyclists will be switching to their winter bikes – older or cheaper bikes dedicated to the wet, cold, muddy and road-gritted conditions of the bleaker months. It makes sense. Your best bike won't have its shiny drivetrain, brakes and bearings ground down because it will sit out the bad weather indoors.

I've never had a winter bike.

This has puzzled new riders turning up for local club rides: "Is that your winter road bike?"

"Er, no. It's my everything road bike."

Maybe it's the fact that it looks fairly inexpensive. More likely it's the mudguards, which seldom come off. Any bike with guards is, potentially, a winter-ready bike. That's why mudguards feature heavily in this issue's feature on autumn and winter cycling. They're the first thing you need.

Adapting your best or only bike for the off season makes economic sense. Higher-end component wear might be more costly and you will need extra, but not necessarily expensive, equipment. But you're saving on the price of another bike. Mudguards, tyres and a new chain cost less than a new winter road bike. A set of pivot bearings for a full-suspension mountain bike costs less than a new hardtail.

It also makes sense in terms of enjoyment. Why have a bike you really love riding and use it for only half the year? Wear and tear is what happens to a bike you love to ride. Embrace what Grant Petersen, in his book *Just Ride*, calls 'beausage' – the idea that beauty comes from usage not unblemished perfection.

Winter bikes are useful. A bike you're happy to use all year round is better still.

DAN JOYCE

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