

Profile

Keeping up with Grandma

All three generations of Sarah Jasat's family now cycle together thanks to an e-bike taster session attended by her elderly mum

PEDALLING up a hill, my lungs are burning and my leg muscles screaming. I'm getting slower and slower when I hear a tell-tale whirring approach. Seconds later a cyclist overtakes me with ease, undaunted by the incline, the rear hub motor giving away the fact that they're riding an e-bike. It's humiliating at the best of times. Now imagine that it's not a stranger, but my 70-year-old mother cruising past.

"Wait for me at the top!" I gasp. But if she hears me she gives no sign, zooming away out of sight and leaving me to continue on in my lowest gear.

When my husband and I started cycling more with our kids, I thought my mum would enjoy having some time to herself. Living with us, she was on full-time grandma duty, and I assumed she would like a break. Instead, she decided to get an e-bike.

Mum had cycled as a child in 1960s South Africa, and she'd taken my brother and me on bike rides as kids. Even so, I had never actually thought of her as a cyclist. Frankly, I was cautious about the idea of her cycling; a fall at her age could be disastrous. But as she tried cycling at local events, I was surprised by how confident and stable she was.

Grandma takes charge

One day there was an opportunity to try an e-bike in Leicester city centre with Cycling UK's Making cycling e-asier programme. Mum took the bus and my daughter and I followed by bike.

"I don't think Nani will ride the bike until we get there," my daughter said.



Making cycling e-asier

Cycling UK's e-cycle scheme offers free try-out sessions and loans to encourage people to consider e-cycles as an active travel option for everyday journeys.

Making cycling e-asier is currently available for communities in two regions: Manchester and Luton & Dunstable. For details, visit cyclinguk.org/making-cycling-e-asier.

"She'll be too scared."

And yet when we arrived, Mum was already on a bike, riding up and down the town square. "It feels wonderful," she said when she dismounted. A few months later, she got her own e-bike.

Initially, I worried how Mum might deal with busy routes and complicated junctions, but she's found a way of cycling that works for her. She usually dismounts to cross the road, and joins led rides that follow dedicated infrastructure.

Since getting her e-bike, Mum has become a confident advocate for cycling here in Leicester. She happily recommends cycling routes and cycling events to anyone who is interested. She also loves to encourage ladies who are just starting out. "If I can do it in my seventies, then you can definitely do it," she says.

Cycling with Mum has shown me what a game-changer e-bikes can

Sarah attempting to keep up with her mum, who became a keen cyclist at 70 after trying out an e-bike with Cycling UK

be for removing barriers to older riders. This year we went on a family holiday to the Netherlands, where Mum enjoyed miles of protected cycle routes. She's keen to go back for a proper multi-day cycling trip – something she would never have considered without electric assistance.

A power of good

It's a privilege to be able to cycle with my mum and to see her take time for herself after a lifetime of taking care of others. She also sets a wonderful example for my daughters, who are proud to have a cycling grandma – and who also enjoy her habit of carrying a few 'emergency sweets' in her pocket on rides. Though it pains my pride to have to huff and puff to keep up with Grandma whizzing along on her e-bike, I wouldn't have it any other way. 🍌