

Travellers' tales

While not the hilliest C2C, it does cross the Peak District



TransPennine Trail tale

Where:

Northern England

Who: Ann Shrimpton

When: August 2025

There is something special about traversing the country from one coast to the other. The TransPennine Trail is less well known than some of the more popular coast-to-coast (C2C) routes. It's longer, at 215 miles, certainly flatter and almost all on traffic-free paths or quiet lanes. It's rideable on a gravel bike or hybrid, having no technical sections.

Each day brought something different, and we really appreciated the diversity of England's landscapes as we crossed the country.

Starting in Southport on the shores of the Irish Sea, we passed through Liverpool, along the Mersey Estuary, through the Peak District, Barnsley, Selby, the Humber Estuary and Hull. We reached

the east coast and the North Sea at Hornsea. The path was signposted the entire way and largely followed old railway lines, canals and cycle trails.

Views en route included the beaches of Southport, the Antony Gormley statues on Crosby Beach as we approached Liverpool, and the beauty and wildlife of the Mersey Estuary. Then there were incredible Victorian railway bridges, the pretty Longendale Trail through the Pennines, and the spectacular and remote sections of the moors as we passed through the Peak District National Park.

After we traversed the Pennines, it was predominantly downhill to the east coast as we followed the New Junction Canal. There were vast expanses of low-lying and empty agricultural terrain approaching the Humber Estuary. We enjoyed riding across the longest single-span suspension bridge in the UK: the Humber Bridge.

There were many sections where it was so remote and rural that it was easy to think we were hundreds of miles from any urban sprawl.

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Source to sea

Where: Tyne Valley

Who: Jonah York

When: May 2025

The source of the River Tyne is at Deadwater in Kielder Forest. It's a quiet place, especially first thing in the morning, which is when a group of young dads from the Wheel Good Dads cycling group – part of the North East Young Dads and Lads project – set off on an 85-mile journey to the sea.

The ride was part of the Birds, Bikes, Bees and Trees initiative, funded by the National Lottery Climate Action Fund. It involved cycling, environmental education, and community spirit. Armed with water-testing kits and a sense of purpose, these 'green ambassadors' paused regularly to check the Tyne's water quality. At the source it was crystal clear. One dad said it looked clean enough to drink, although no one did.

On the second day, the landscape shifted from forest to bustling towns. The river widened. Water tests revealed signs of pollution: rising levels of nitrates and phosphates.

Salty sea air signalled journey's end at North Shields. "It was an experience I never thought I'd get," one dad reflected. "Testing the water and seeing the changes made me realise how important this river is, and how much we need to look after it."



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