



Melting in Cheddar

Where: South-west England
Who: Tom Daltry
When: July 2025

Last summer, Stroud Valleys Cycling Club (a Cycling UK member group) went on a touring and camping weekend in the Mendips. Friday saw us ride from Stroud, east of Bristol, to the campsite.

Our route on the Saturday took in some fantastic scenery. We climbed Cheddar Gorge and were rewarded with views across the Somerset Levels. Then we descended to the beautiful city of Wells. After riding across the Levels, we climbed to near the top of Glastonbury Tor, then down into the town.

There was a final sting in the tail: a long, steady climb back into the hills to our campsite. We had been mentally prepared for the ascent of Cheddar Gorge but not for the final, less spectacular

climb at the end of a long, hot day. And, boy, was it hot! With temperatures well into the 30s all weekend, we had to work hard at keeping hydrated, watching out for signs of heatstroke. Cooling-down ploys included tipping water over our heads and lingering in the haven of air-conditioned shops when buying the next round of cold drinks.

We cycled back to Stroud over the Avonmouth Bridge on the Sunday. Some of our group espoused a purist touring ethos, carrying all their camping gear on their bikes – quite an achievement in the gruelling conditions. Others were only too grateful to use an accompanying campervan for the transport of gear.

As always, a successful trip of this nature owes much to those who do the planning. In this case, ex-military man and club stalwart Paul Rothwell was chief planner. His rigorous preparation included an epic, 120-mile ride some weeks earlier, also in sweltering conditions, to check out routes and camping arrangements. Paul, your distinguished service (tropics) medal is being minted!



Rider on the storm

Where: England
Who: Nadia Kerr
When: August 2025

What was meant to be a 1,540km London-Edinburgh-London audax cycling adventure with 2,000 riders in 2025 was cut short by Storm Floris. I set off from Writtle at 5am on Sunday 3 August. I had cycled 470km to Richmond, North Yorkshire, by noon on Monday when the event was suspended. By evening, it was cancelled.

Around 1,000 riders groaned in unison. Richmond was the last control before the Pennines. Sending us on would have meant battling storm-force winds at one of the highest points. Safety came first but, after eight months of training, the disappointment was huge.

The cancellation created a major logistical task. Beds, blankets and food were suddenly in the wrong locations. My ride back to Writtle became a very different experience: sociable, relaxed and in near-perfect weather. Riders heading south were in good spirits. No stopwatch, no racing through food stops, just steady miles and conversations.

In the end I had a 940km ride that was far more leisurely than planned. Will I return in 2029? Quite possibly!
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