



Anne Young

SITTING EXHAUSTED in the organiser's kitchen with a mug of stewed tea and a triangular cheese sandwich, I reflected on the ride I had just completed. That was the Hartside 200km audax. Three weeks earlier I hadn't heard of audax or Hartside, one of the highest passes in England, and didn't believe it was possible to ride 125 miles in a day. I wasn't familiar with kilometres either. On that day in May 1996, my love of audax was born. It was an ideal way to ride further and explore new areas.

At the start of 2003, some of my clubmates were talking about an event in northern France called Paris Brest Paris, a 1,200km audax that has to be ridden in 90 hours. I didn't consider myself to be experienced enough, but after completion of my first 300, 400 and 600km audax rides the same year, I decided to give it a go. My first setback was having a request for holiday leave denied from my accountancy job. So I handed in my notice. Well, I was ready for a career change anyway, so what did I have to lose?

And what an experience it was: riding with around 4,000 other cyclists of different nationalities across northern France and back in under four days. I have lasting memories of the French locals lining the route cheering riders on, and of the pop-up crêpe and coffee stalls.

I went on to study medicine, the training for which meant cycling took a back seat for some years. In 2014 I

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rediscovered audax and found that riding events at weekends, ranging from 200km to 1,000km, provided an escape from the stresses of being a GP. I encouraged my boyfriend, Ulrich, to ride audaxes. He often joins me on rides now.

What I enjoy most about audax is the feeling of freedom and adventure from being on your bike all day, together with the challenge of riding a long distance, sometimes with hills and adverse weather thrown in, along with the achievement of completing an event within a specified time limit. There is something unique about arriving at a McDonalds or a 24-hour garage in the early hours to be reunited with a group of fellow riders who are all sharing the feelings of hunger and fatigue. Fuelled by caffeine, we

continue together into the night and on into the breaking dawn.

It's hard to pinpoint a favourite ride; they all have their own personality, ranging from full support to being left to your own devices. It is often the harder rides that stick in your memory. Paris Brest Paris is probably the most iconic I've ridden; I am hoping to complete my fifth PBP next year.

I have been a non-executive director of Audax UK for the last



What I ride

Bike: Sonder Colibri for winter. Specialized Roubaix with dynamo front light for summer

Long-ride essentials

- Decathlon waterproof trousers (£14.99) – these are lightweight and pack small. They're essential on cold wet rides
- M&S Xmas cake (£4 approx for a bar cake) – a few slices per ride to provide a boost when energy is low
- Teaspoon – for use at petrol stations and shops to eat food such as yogurt
- Shokz Bluetooth bone-conduction headphones – with a variety of podcasts and music to listen to
- A power bank – to ensure that my Garmin, phone, watch and Shokz all stay charged!



Top right: Aidan Hedley, Dean Clementson, Anne Young and Howard Knight during the Audax UK reunion in March 2025

couple of years, and this has provided the opportunity to be involved in the development of long-distance cycling. As part of our half-centenary celebrations, we're promoting events branded 50:50@50, with the ambition of having women making up half the starting lists on rides. →

Above: Bernard Marsden. Others: Anne Young