

End to End to End

French cyclist **Claire Carvallo** and her friend **Christophe** did a double End to End last year

As training for Paris-Brest-Paris, my friend Christophe and I had decided to use our six weeks of holidays cyclo-camping in the UK. We settled for a Paris-Land's End-John O'Groats-Durness-Dover-Paris itinerary (about 2,800 miles), most of it following the CTC-recommended routes. We thought that this way we would escape a potential heat wave in France.

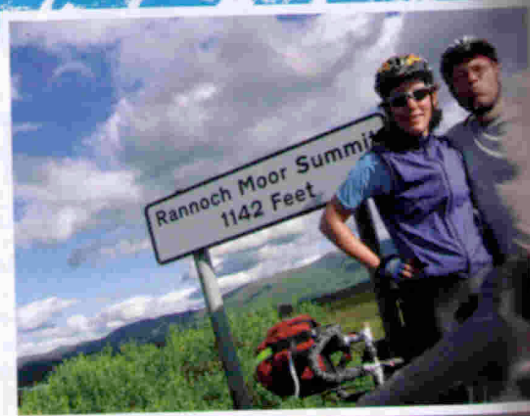
Obviously we succeeded in that respect, because we had never cycled under so much rain in our entire lives. Some days it rained continuously, and the first day without rain came about three weeks after the beginning of the trip. We arrived in both Land's End and John O'Groats under heavy rain, with a strong head wind, in very thick fog, which made us believe that the two places were very similar!

We were very impressed by the number of cyclists riding LEJOG, each at their own pace, but always in a way that would make it challenging. We enjoyed the spirit of solidarity and mutual help amongst all cyclists, true sportsmanship in our opinion. Throughout the trip, numerous people helped us, by letting us camp in their gardens, offering a shower, some coffee, or even a beer...

We appreciated the diversity of the UK: while we had our share of narrow, winding and sometimes very steep roads in the south, the north of England and Scotland offered us long, steady climbs in very remote areas, with beautiful unobstructed views of wild hills and mountains.

Cycling through the Grampians and Highlands was definitely a highlight. Thanks to the flatness of Lincolnshire and Kent, and to some last minute sunny days, we were able to finish our trip with large mileage days and to catch our ferry back to France from Dover.

Two weeks after we returned to Paris, I was able to complete PBP, mostly in the rain, but feeling great almost all along!



Escaping the city

Terry Ratcliffe and friends **Dave** and **Bob** explored canal towpaths around London

The Grand Union and Prince Regent canals form a semi-circular arc around the outskirts of London. We decided to follow them one summer's day, using a route devised by CTC Right to Ride Rep (and CTC Councillor) John Meudell of Dorking.

Start point was Dave's flat in Paddington. We were up at 6.30 to take tube from Earl's Court to Richmond – you can take your bike on the underground before 7.30. The roads and the tube were very quiet and the sun was shining. At Brentford, we got onto the canal towpath. There are some fiendishly designed gates along here, which just about allow the passage of a bicycle. It was easier to swing out over canal holding the bike in one hand and the corner post in the other.

You really don't feel like you're in London on the towpath. It's quiet enough not to disturb the herons, standing stock still, and we didn't disturb the anglers we encountered. We remembered to turn right along the Paddington Spur – otherwise you continue all the way to Birmingham! The aqueduct across the North Circular road at Alperton is memorable sight. We completed the 35km to Paddington Basin (Little Venice) by 1pm and stopped for a pub lunch.

We failed to get a lift on a narrow boat through Maida Vale tunnel but easily found the canal again to take us



'underneath' Regents Park Zoo (the canal is in a deep cutting) to past Camden Lock. From Camden the canal drops progressively, twisting under narrow arches and around locks, which can be tricky, on its way back to the Thames. The Caledonian tunnel meant a detour through the centre of Islington.

The trip to Tower Bridge was uneventful but, after crossing the bridge, we had to negotiate crowds and traffic. Once we reached St James's Park, Green Park and finally Hyde Park our journey was most agreeable.

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