



Walkers Cycling

45 Main Street, Kilmaurs, Ayrshire, KA3 2SY

Tel: 01563 544488 / Fax: 01563 558885

we understand cycling

An Introduction to: Leisure Cycling

Leisure Cycling

How do we define Leisure Cycling? Well – for the purposes of this fact sheet – any form of cycling that doesn't involve racing. That covers a lot of cycling!

In excess of 2 million bikes are sold in Britain every year. While some are used in the many different aspects of cycle sport, the majority are used for non-competitive cycling of one kind or another.

Statistics reveal that in the UK: over 3.5 million people use their bicycles every week; over 1 million people use their bikes to commute every day; 40 percent of people use their bikes for leisure purposes.

Commuting

While cars, buses and trains carry the majority of people to work, thousands of people ride a bike to work every day. This is particularly popular in cities and towns with few hills and those with dedicated cycle route provision, such as Edinburgh. As well as keeping the rider fitter and healthier, commuting by bike also helps ease road congestion and reduces pollution in built-up areas. Many employers are beginning to recognise the benefits of cycling and are providing facilities such as secure cycle parking and showering facilities for use by their cycling employees.

Touring

Cycling is a great way to see the United Kingdom, or any other country. You can cover three to four times the distance on a bike as by foot. In the UK cycle tourists can take advantage of the growing network of roads, cycle routes, trails, bridle paths and canal towpaths. Throughout Britain many local authorities and other organisations such as Forest Enterprise have created clearly sign-posted cycle routes, often with accompanying information guide leaflets and maps. These can often be obtained by post, ordered on-line or picked up at local tourist information centres.

Cycling for Fun and Fitness



Any type of cycling is fun! A bike is also one of the most enjoyable ways of getting, and keeping, fit. Steady cycling burns approximately 300 calories per hour and just 30 minutes of cycling per day will burn 11 pounds of fat in a year. Because the cycling is daily, the weight is likely to stay off and weight loss will be even more effective when combined with a healthy diet.

Many people are put off cycling due to the noise, hazards and pollution of traffic choked roads but there are many other places to ride whether it's just for a quick spin around a local park or maybe further afield at one of the growing number of venues that exist to cater for leisure cycling.

There are a growing number of off-road trails and tracks throughout the UK. Forest Enterprise is just one of many landowners who are recognising and fulfilling the need for dedicated off-road cycling facilities, many of which are suitable for touring and hybrid cycles.

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Some facilities offer a choice of graded trails to suit everyone from the family looking for a gentle, slower paced ride to the enthusiasts keen to test themselves on a more challenging route. Many local authorities produce information leaflets and route maps for their area – check at your council offices.

Cyclists Touring Club

The CTC was formed in 1878 making it the oldest cycling organisation in the UK - and probably the world. It has around 60,000 members. But don't be fooled by the name! Although the CTC is the organisation of choice for much of the touring fraternity it acts for all cyclists including commuters, mountain bikers, families, leisure and long distance riders.

It is the only national body campaigning for cyclists' rights, facilities, routes and representation in local, national government and other agencies. The CTC played a key role in forming the government's National Cycling Strategy. Their campaign work, for safer roads, and access to the countryside and public transport is relevant to all cyclists.

National Cycle Network

Sustrans, a registered charity dedicated to sustainable transport, is constructing a network of cycle routes the length and breadth of mainland Britain. The finished network will comprise over 8,000 miles of cycle routes and quiet roads. Many sections are dual purpose – being shared with walkers. Sustrans are also behind *Safe Routes to Schools* - for children to use when cycling to school – and many other innovative schemes to encourage and develop cycle use.

Cyclo Sportives

The Cyclo Sportive is a mass-participation, semi-competitive event often held over the same challenging course as a classic road race. The participants in these events are typically experienced road cyclists but a growing number of sportives cater for a variety of ability and experience with distances to match. Many sportives have been born out of popular charity bike rides and are held in aid of one or more worthy causes.

Perhaps the best known sportive is the Etape du Tour (Stage of the Tour) which, each year, sees thousands of riders tackling one of the more demanding stages on that year's Tour de France route a few days before the professionals do it in the big race. The event is enormously popular and demand for places is high with entrants waiting anxiously to see if their application has been successful.



The sportive phenomenon is really taking off in the UK with an ever increasing number of events appearing on the calendar year-by-year. The Sportives section of the British Cycling website (see Contacts below) is a good starting point for information on sportives in the UK.

Audax Events

Audax is simply organised, long-distance cycling where the rider covers a set route. Events are most often at standard distances of 100, 200 or 300 kilometres.

The word Audax comes from the Latin for *bold* or *courageous*. In 1897 a group of Italian cyclists rode 200 km between sunrise and sunset, and became known as "les Audacieux".

In 1904, Henri Desgrange, the father of the Tour de France, formed an Audax style of riding. It consisted of a team of cyclists riding under the control of a captain at an average speed of 22.5 km/h. While this style still exists in Europe, it is much less popular than the "Randonnee" which later developed to become individual, long distance, touring style cycling.

In 1931 Sir Hubert Opperman, "Oppy", won the 1200 km Paris-Brest-Paris race. No longer a race, and held every four years, this has now become the most famous Randonnee of all, the "PBP".

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Audax UK co-ordinates most of the ultra-long distance rides in Britain. Audax events are held in most parts of the UK. The objective is to ride long distances at a measured pace. This involves cycling independently, and neither too quickly nor too slowly along a pre-determined route, without getting lost, tired, or demoralised.

The fitness levels required are attainable by just about anyone. You don't have to be a member of Audax UK to participate, but members' benefits include reduced entry fees and personal accident liability insurance cover while on rides.

The Leisure Bike

Almost any type of cycle can be used for leisure purposes although there are bikes which have been designed specifically for the types of leisure cycling outlined above.



The ideal leisure bike will have the frame, wheels, tyres, gears and accessories which best suit your leisure riding requirements.

Comfort is often top of the list when choosing a leisure bike. The 'unforgiving' riding position of a racing bike can be avoided using reach adjustable handlebars and a more accommodating saddle, allied perhaps to a suspension seat post. Tyres can be chosen for road and/or light off-road riding and accessories such as mudguards, luggage carriers, prop stands and lights can be added if required.

Where to Buy

The best place to buy your leisure bike, accessories and clothing is at a local, independent cycle dealer who should be able to offer a range of good quality products to suit your requirements.

At Walkers Cycling we aim to get people cycling – and keep them cycling. Our customers can benefit from the knowledge and experience our friendly staff have gained doing most types of cycling. We want you to enjoy your cycling as much as we do and can help you choose the best kit for the job.

Joining a Cycling Club

Club membership opens up opportunities to get help, advice and support from like minded riders. Walkers Cycling Club is an Ayrshire based club that aims to encourage participation in all types of leisure and competitive cycling.

Visit the club web site at www.walkerscyclingclub.com

The national cycling bodies – British Cycling, CTC etc. – maintain lists of affiliated clubs.

Contacts/Further Information

<u>Audax UK</u>	Web: http://www.aukweb.net
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<u>British Cycling</u>	
National Cycling Centre Stuart Street Manchester, M11 4DQ	Tel: 0161 274 2000 Fax: 0161 274 2001 E-mail: info@britishcycling.org.uk Web: www.britishcycling.org.uk

<u>Cyclists Touring Club</u>	
Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 9JX	Tel: 01483 238 337 Fax: 01483 237 051 Email: cycling@ctc.org.uk Web: www.ctc.org.uk

<u>Scottish Cycling</u>	
Caledonia House, South Gyle, Edinburgh, EH12 9DQ	Tel: 0131 317 9704 Fax: 0131 339 9201 E-mail: info@scottishcycling.org.uk Web: www.scottishcycling.org.uk

<u>Welsh Cycling</u>	
Welsh Cycling, Wales National Velodrome, Newport International Sport Village, Newport, South Wales, NP19 4PS	Tel: 01633 670540 Fax: 01633 277116 Email: info@welshcycling.co.uk Web: www.welshcycling.co.uk

<u>Sustrans - Head Office</u>	
National Cycle Network Centre, 2 Cathedral Square , College Green, Bristol, BS1 5DD	Tel: 0845 113 00 65 E-mail: info@sustrans.org.uk Web: www.sustrans.org.uk

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45 Main Street, Kilmaurs, Ayrshire, KA3 2SY	Tel: 01563 544488 Fax: 01563 558885 E-mail: info@walkerscycling.co.uk Web: www.walkerscycling.co.uk
Walkers Cycling WebShop: www.walkerscyclingshop.co.uk	
Walkers Cycling Club: www.walkerscyclingclub.com	

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