

Cycling WAYS

From painless pedalling to serious chain gangs, cycling trips can suit all sorts

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Travelling on two wheels is booming in popularity. A fifth of Brits cycle at the weekends, while one in 20 get on their bikes every day, according to Mintel.

That's an awful lot of people – over three million if you count only the everyday cyclists – who might be interested in taking a

cycling holiday. Compare this to the number of Brits who cruise – still under two million – and you get a sense of the potential size of this market.

Whatever the inspiration, be it getting healthy, or the example of British triumphs at the last two Olympics and Tours de France, we're cycling more, [→](#)

EASY



MODERATE



CHALLENGING



PICTURES: HAVEN; IG ADVENTURES/MARC-ATTIL PATTEL; EXPLORE



LEFT:
Learn-to-ride lessons

RIGHT:
Cuba



PICTURES: HOSEASONS; INTREPID TRAVEL; CLUB MED

→ and on holiday too. Adventure operators have increased their bike tour programmes, with options for road cycling fanatics and hardcore mountain bikers, as well as gentle ambles through beautiful landscapes, while active resorts offer families everything from cycling lessons for kids to tougher trails for parents.

Here, we round up a range for cyclists of different abilities to get your sales freewheeling.

▶ EASY

A cycling holiday needn't be all about sweat and Lycra – it can be about views and vintages instead, as Bspoke Tours eight-day Magic Moselle Wine Route proves. Following the river valley and covering about 20 miles a day, the route passes

medieval towns, craggy castles and vineyards with cellar doors where clients can dismount and try the rieslings and piesporters for which the area is famed. Tours include three and four-star hotel accommodation, flights, airport transfers, luggage transfers and bike hire, and departures in June and July start from £1,095. For anyone who wants to make the tour extra-easy, the operator offers electric bikes for hire as well as standard ones.

Inntravel says its relaxed trips are suitable even for novice cyclists, particularly as they are self-guided, so guests set their own pace. A week-long trundle called The Quiet Side of Tuscany avoids the area's thigh-testing hilltop towns and concentrates on the coast and countryside of La



A week-long trundle in Tuscany avoids the thigh-testing hilltop towns to focus on the coast and countryside

Maremma, staying in comfortable agriturismo with pools, so clients can really dial down the effort if they want to. Suggestions for some days include cycling to spas, sandy beaches and picnic spots, and there are options to swap some rides for wine tours. The seven-night, half-board trip starts from £878 including bike hire but not flights.

And don't forget, a holiday can be the ideal chance for parents to get their kids to learn to ride. Haven offers Learn2Bike lessons for kids aged two to six from £6 per child, and cycle hire is on offer for adults and kids from £6 per hour – just be sure to check your location as both are on offer only at selected parks.

Hoseasons offers Balanceability learn-to-cycle sessions for threes to sevens from £5-£10 per hour at over half its Go Active Breaks locations, and bikes can be hired from £10-£20 per hour at three locations: The Bay, Finlake Lodges and Lochgoilhead Lodges.

For adult and older kids who want to improve their skills, Club Med offers Mountain Biking School at certain resorts including La Palmyre





ABOVE: An Explore cycling group at Angkor Wat, Cambodia

→ Atlantique on France's Atlantic coast, which offers two 30 to 40-minute rides a day for over-12s led by guides as part of the package, plus children's rides in the Mini Club Med kids' club, for over-sixes.

► **MODERATE**

As Cuba opens up to wider markets it seems to be on every 'must-visit' list, and clients can get a unique perspective with Intrepid Travel's new Cycle Cuba, an eight-day, two-wheeled trip visiting Havana, Vinales and the infamous Bay of Pigs. A decent level of fitness is required - days tend to cover around 20-35 miles - but the support vehicle is nearby for those that need a break, and as well as cycling there's time to sightsee in Havana, learn to roll a cigar at a tobacco farm, swim in Playa Larga's blue waters, and explore Che Guevara's cave HQ. Starting

from £780, the trip includes accommodation, luggage transfer and some meals. Clients can hire or bring their own bikes.

Also new this year is Explore's two-week Bangkok to Saigon by Bike tour, which neatly weaves cycling into sightseeing in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Clients will take a night ride and food tour in Bangkok, explore the temples of Angkor Wat by bike, and cycle along the canal that once marked the border between Cambodia and Vietnam. Guests cover around 25-30 miles a day, and bike hire is included in the £2,069 cost, along with luggage transport, accommodation, breakfast, guiding and flights.

One of the benefits of cycling is the chance it gives to really experience a landscape, and Exodus's new Cycling the Lake Districts of Chile and Argentina gives clients access to some of the most stunning views on the

planet, with active volcanoes, turquoise rivers, gigantic lakes and ancient native forests - perhaps with an Andean condor circling overhead. Cycling about 35 miles a day mainly on good roads, clients need to be relatively fit. Starting from £2,899, the 16-day trip includes flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast and some other meals, bike hire and guiding.

► **CHALLENGING**

Truly tough cyclists with lots of experience who want something to get their teeth into can sign up for KE Adventure Travel's new Thailand - Hell of the North trip. They'll cycle the Mae Hong Son Loop, southeast Asia's toughest road circuit, over a fortnight, with just one rest day and a total of 15,000 metres of ascent and descent, finishing on a high at the summit of Doi Inthanon, Thailand's highest mountain. Roads are good but climbs are long and sustained, and descents steep with technical hairpins. However, traffic is light and locals are encouraging, and there's time to explore Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai, the highlights of Thailand's Golden Triangle. The trip starts at £2,495 including flights, guide, transfers, vehicle support with luggage transfers,



RIGHT AND BELOW: Cycling for devotees in Thailand and Scotland



PHOTOS: KE ADVENTURE TRAVEL; WILDERNESS COLLECTIVE

accommodation in hotels and guesthouses, and most meals. Excellent bike hire is available locally from \$460.

Clients needn't fly to Asia to really stretch their skills - they can do it much closer to home, in Scotland. Serious mountain bikers can take on the trails of the Isle of Skye, Outer Hebrides and Highlands with The Wilderness Collective's week-long Skye, Harris & Torridon itinerary. This includes some of the best backcountry single-track cycling in the UK, finishing with the incredible scenery of the Torridon Giants. Tours depart in May and September, start from £1,095 and include guiding, six nights' hotel accommodation

with breakfast and transport from Inverness. Bike hire isn't included as most clients prefer to bring their own.

For those who want to tie in their more challenging cycling with some classic sightseeing, G Adventures' new 12-day Cycle China tour starts in Hong Kong and finishes in Beijing, stopping in Xi'an, home of the Terracotta Warriors, en route. In between, there are four days of relatively demanding cycling through the countryside and villages around Yangshuo. The trip starts from £1,649, and bike hire, luggage transfers and guiding is included.

And clients needn't sign up for a full tour to get their fix of tricky riding. This year, Neilson

is upgrading the cycling at its Retreat Beachclub in Sivota on the Greek mainland and at the Messini Beachclub on the Peloponnese peninsula to include new expert tours in mountain biking and road cycling as well as a premium book-a-bike service.

Expert road and mountain bike tours are designed for those who crave challenging and technical terrain. In addition to the standard fleet of bikes available to all guests, premium full-suspension mountain bikes and carbon fibre road bikes are available to reserve for exclusive use. Each bike will come with custom set-up and a Garmin GPS loaded with carefully selected routes, for £95 per week. **TW**



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