



● Sebastian set off from Dhaka, Bangladesh, and is heading for Mumbai



● John's 240-mile trip took in monuments, war graves, and museums en route

## BELGIUM'S BATTLEFIELDS

*John Kennedy organised a short history tour from Dunkirk to Brussels*

I'M ONE of the volunteers with SeaAbility in Leatherhead, riding tandems with visually-impaired stokers. Each year, we organise a ride for ourselves on our solo bikes. This year we rode from Calais to Brussels.

A wet start to get trains to Dover was the only rain we had. Our first night stop was at Bergues, just south of Dunkirk. Then we rode to Poperinge to visit the grave of a relation of one of the group.

Next we went to Brandhoek to see the grave of one of the three men to have won both the Victoria Cross and Bar. In Ypres, we visited the museum in the rebuilt cloth halls and cycled out through the Menin Gate. We had to leave too early to hear the daily sounding of the Last Post.

We spent the night in Roeselare, travelling to Bruges for sightseeing – and climbing the belfry – in the afternoon. There was a choral concert in St Saviour's Church in the evening.

Sunday took us to Oudenarde, site of the 1708 battle of the War of Spanish succession. It's now a flat agricultural area. Monday was our longest day at 53 miles, with a stop at Ronquieres to see the inclined plane on the canal.

Tuesday took us to the Waterloo battle site, where there's a museum at Napoleon's last HQ, and a lion-topped monument at the site of the allied position. The farm of La Haye Sainte is still there, with plaques to the units who fought there.

When we at last got to Brussels, we took the Eurostar home.

# India, coast to coast

*Sebastian Tomlinson was still cycling across the sub-continent when he sent this report*

**T**he idea to cycle across India came from my dad, who noticed how much more economical it is to purchase a return flight than a single. I had intended to begin in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and just cycle around for four months before returning home from wherever I ended up. Instead, I booked a homeward flight from Mumbai. I had a target.

At the time of writing, I'm half way down the east coast and have covered 1,700 miles. The roads have been a random mixture, from smooth highways to gravel dirt tracks. Some of the accommodation has been pretty grim, and you have little choice when crossing open stretches of the country. Mind you, it can cost as low as £2 a night, and it makes arriving at a nice place all the more rewarding.

You rarely spend more than a quid or two on a meal either. Everywhere I've been, there are many roadside stalls for tea and biscuits, hot food, and sweet refreshments.

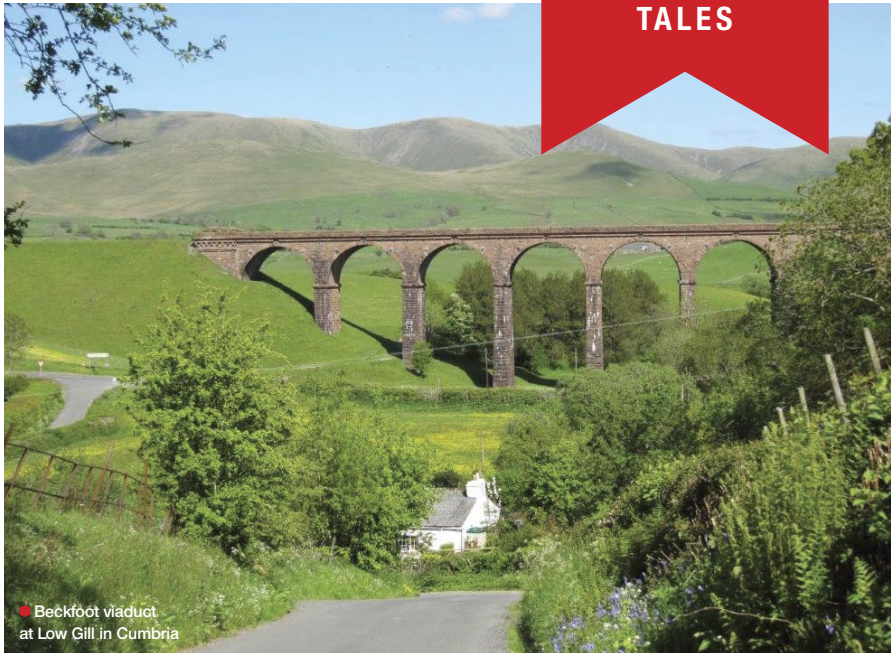
The attention from passers-by is mind blowing. Touring by bike seems to give you the celebrity status of a Premier League footballer. Everybody, young and old, asks about the trip. The inquirers like to have their photo taken with me. I'm stopped and asked this a dozen times a day, every day.

I'm often asked to go back to people's homes to meet the rest of the family, and when I have done I'm treated like royalty. I once had two journalists ride up next to me on a motorbike, asking questions. The following day there were crowds of kids running up to me, calling my name, holding a newspaper, and asking for an autograph!

For anyone thinking of doing a similar trip, I'd advise you to spend less time thinking about it and just do it! You can follow my progress at [sebsindiatrip.blogspot.co.uk](http://sebsindiatrip.blogspot.co.uk). I'm raising money for a homeless foundation in a West London.



● Cycle tourists attract curious crowds



● Beckfoot viaduct at Low Gill in Cumbria

## THE BRECONS BECKON

*Having a few days to spare in July, Alan Mason headed into the Brecon Beacons National Park*

● Mid Wales means peaceful roads and – on a good day – great views



THE TAFF TRAIL took me out of the centre of Cardiff, where I live. It's a rail trail, with tarmac all the way to Pontypridd. Then I joined the A4054 to Merthyr Tydfil. I made one small detour to visit Aberfan, as I wanted to see the memorial to the disaster.

After Merthyr, I took the A470 up to the Storey Arms. I love the view from here across the rolling farmlands of mid Wales, so took a break before heading downhill. From Trecastle, I turned uphill onto the sheep-cropped moorland.

I stopped for tea at the Red Kite Café, where they welcome cyclists. After this I rode the short distance to the hostel at Llandeusan.

Next morning, I made my way to Carreg Cennen castle over undulating minor roads. I was rewarded with sightings of red kites, buzzards and a heron. At length the castle appeared, perched on a crag and looking very battered. An easier road took me through Bethlehem to Llandovery, then the A40 led to Brecon and a welcome lunch break in the shade. The last stretch was a trip to see Llangorse Lake, then to the hostel just outside Talybont on Usk.

My final day dawned overcast. I cycled along the wooded edge of the reservoir before hitting the steep slope at the head of the valley. I walked most of it. Then it was downhill to Pontsticil Reservoir, and soon I was back on the Taff Trail.

# Walney to Whitby

*Nick Edwards spent three glorious summer days cycling across northern England*

**I**nspired by an article on the W2W coast-to-coast route in Cycle, I decided to do it myself. I chose the southerly leg, riding from Walney Island in Cumbria to Whitby in North Yorkshire rather than to Wearmouth in Sunderland.

I could not have had better weather. I cycled in warm sunshine, and everything looking wonderfully green. I'm sure I still would have enjoyed the trip even if the weather had been less benign.

It was a delight to follow a route that had clearly been planned by people who wanted to keep me away from traffic. There were quite a few times when the route arrow would point up a hill when I knew I could get to the next village by just following on down a minor road. But it was always well worth the extra climb to get even more stunning views.

Sustrans do an excellent map to cover the whole of the Walney to Wearside route, but you need to download the equivalent for the Barnard Castle to Whitby section from the W2W website ([cyclingw2w.info](http://cyclingw2w.info)).

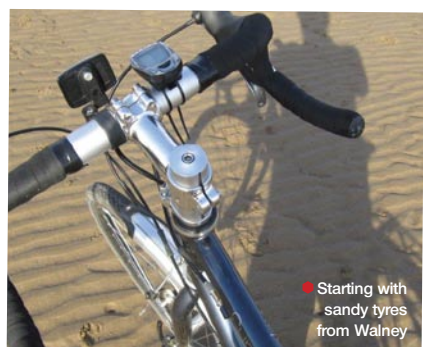
I travelled up from the south by train to Barrow, and returned from Scarborough – another 20 miles south

from Whitby, but it has a direct train to York which made for a much quicker journey back south for me.

I made two overnight stops on my W2W route: The George Hotel in Orton, just after the route crosses east of the M6; and the Four Alls in Ovington, five or six miles east of Barnard Castle. Both had secure storage for bikes and offered reasonably-priced food.

The highlights of the ride were the fabulous views, the abundant bird-life, the quiet back-roads, the charming small towns of Ulverston and Grange over Sands, the Beckfoot viaduct, the slog up Tan Hill, and the views as you circle through the northern edge of the North York Moors National Park.

It's a wonderful ride. Just be sure to book your weather!



● Starting with sandy tyres from Walney



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