



Leeds YHA Local Group

“Leading the way for safe & enjoyable cycling.....”

Guidance for members joining group cycle rides



Thank you for taking the time to read this help sheet before joining one of the group rides. By taking note of its main points we hope this will ensure an enjoyable & safe ride for all.

The right bike for you...and for the ride

For your own safety, please ensure you are adequately equipped with the right cycle.

- If you're looking to use just one bike for our group rides then a good quality Hybrid (cross between a mountain and a road) bike, with large wheels, semi-slick tyres, a wide range of gearing, pannier racks and mud guards will give a good range of options for differing terrain, distance, comfort, efficiency etc.
- It may be possible to borrow a spare bike from a fellow member if you are coming along for the first time. If buying new, consider a reputable bike shop as the first option, to ensure good advice on the right frame size, positioning of seat and handlebar.
- Buy a high quality lock, preferably lightweight & flexible enough to secure both frame & quick-release wheels.
- Fit a bike bell to help communicate with & warn other roads users of your presence.
- A good set of front & rear (LED) lights, preferably quick-release, are essential late in the day and for return from a ride later than expected – bring spare batteries.
- A whistle is also useful for longer distance emergency communication with the next rider along from you e.g. if you've dropped to the back due to mechanical problems.

Bike Maintenance & Repair

- Please bring your own basic maintenance/repair kit. Although we will try to help anyone in need any delays, spent repairing existing or preventable mechanical problems means less time available to cycle for everyone. It also helps to avoid breaking down in remote areas.
- As a bare minimum, bring along: a correctly-sized spare un-punctured inner tube, the means of removing your wheel (i.e. a spanner) if not quick-release, a pair of tyre levers & a good hand pump, preferably “double-action” set to match your type of inner tube valve (presta or schraeder – don't mix them on your bike.) A cycle multi-tool is also useful for the occasional tightening & adjustments required en route. Keep your bike well lubricated, especially the chain /gear mechanisms but not the brakes.
- Ensure there's plenty of rubber left on brake blocks & that they make full contact with the rim, not the tyre.
- Make sure your tyres are pumped to the correct pressure.

Clothing

- Clothing uses for other active outdoor pursuits, like walking, will normally be adequate, along with a few extra considerations, depending on the weather.
- Remember, the effect of the “wind chill” factor when cycling at speed. Several removable, thin wickable upper layers are a good idea, supplemented perhaps with a fleece & a breathable, brightly coloured / breathable waterproof top. Leggings, tricksters or even shorts will normally suffice.

- Long fingered & waterproof gloves are a must in cold weather, Likewise sun lotion in spring/summer. Stiff soled shoes are usually better than trainers, especially if using toe clips.
- For your own protection, wearing of a correctly sized and fitting approved helmet during rides is always encouraged & recommended.
- Bring more than enough food and drink for the day, even if we are stopping at refreshment stops. Chocolate bars and sugary foods are a good way of replenishing lost energy when you become tired or run out of energy.

Cycle Ride Accessories

- On short summer evening rides a bum bag & saddle pouch, while not ideal, may suffice. On longer winter rides, a small rucksack may be needed. A better option is to use a set of evenly packed pannier bags to allow your bike to take the weight off your back.
- Always exchange mobile numbers with the ride leader before the start and make sure your phone is turned on from the start.
- Bring a few first aid supplies of choice e.g. pain killers, plasters, antiseptic cream & wipes to deal with any cuts or scrapes.
- Bringing your own relevant route map (1:25,000 or 1:50,000) is always useful. Alternatively, ask the ride leader in advance for a description / photocopy of the route.

Safety when cycling in a group – sharing space with others

- The ride leader will usually navigate from the front, while ensuring a nominated back marker keeps a watch (and a headcount) for any problems or concerns within the group. Keep alert to riders behind, in front & often to the side of you.
- Our rides try to make maximum use of quieter & minor roads, with lower speed limits, often on designated traffic-free & calmed sections, such as bridleways, towpaths, disused railway lines, as part of the National Cycle Network.
- It's helpful to brush up on the cycle-related sections of the Highway Code. For off-road rides, check the Countryside code. Remember: If you can be seen by other roads users, you'll be safer, so give yourself a metre's space in from the kerb.
- Take extra care at junctions, roundabouts, blind corners & when crossing the path of traffic. Consider slowing down on steep downhills, especially when it's wet or muddy.
- Give clear hand signals or call out your intention to turn, slow down or stop – consider your stopping distance from the rider in front. Focus attention on where you want to go, use eye contact with drivers & manoeuvre decisively, having firstly checked over your shoulder to see what's going on behind.
- Warn other riders behind you in good time of oncoming hazards e.g. traffic/potholes/slippery surfaces etc. On narrow country lanes, if riding side-by-side be ready to "single out" immediately a car approaches or is behind - the outside rider usually goes behind.
- Be prepared to bunch up in to single file groups of about five to help traffic behind to overtake.
- If in doubt go on an easier ride before trying a harder one.

Please be on time

Please turn up on time for a bike ride. It is unfair on those who have made the effort to be on time when someone is late. It can compromise a planned ride if available daylight is short or cyclists must catch public transport.

Please consider your ability and what the cycle ride involves

Some cycle rides are intended to be difficult, in order to provide a challenge to the stronger, more experienced cyclists in the group. We provide cycle descriptions in our programmes. Will your current fitness & experience enable you to keep the pace & last the distance? The average speed **while travelling** during rides is usually at a pace to allow for conversation e.g. 8-14mph. If in any doubt, always speak to the ride leader **before** the day of the event with any concerns or queries. Our cycle rides are all graded 1-5. Please see the programme of events for information.

Safety

Always inform the ride leader if you intend to leave the ride early. This saves the group having to organise a search party for you. Inform the leader of your expected route and destination once you leave the ride.

Enjoy the Rides !