

Cycling with GOC

Cycling outings

A 'standard' cycling outing will involve cycling on public roads where there will be other traffic. The surface will be suitable for 'standard' road tyres, 23-38 mm. Given the state of many of the UK's roads and the possibility of wet weather, treaded tyres are recommended over slick tyres. Mountain bike tyres are hard work on tarmac.

If a mountain bike or hybrid is required for the ride, with heavily-treaded tyres and suspension, then this will be notified in advance.

Rides will normally be described with their length, height gain, places of interest, availability of lunch and coffee stops, as well as start (and finish if different). Expect an average speed of 10 mph (16 kph) on roads, faster will be notified. Rides seldom exceed 60 miles/100 km.

If you are planning to come on a non-standard cycle, e.g. a tandem, trike, recumbent, electric bike or hand-bike, please notify the ride leader. Some routes, especially those on cycle tracks, are difficult or impossible with non-standard cycles.

This guidance is intended to mitigate the risks identified in GOC's generic risk assessment for cycling <https://www.goc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Generic-Risk-Assessment-Cycling.pdf>

We aim to be a friendly bunch, so if there are things in this guidance that you don't understand, please ask someone. Although this document may seem a little stern, the intention is that we stay safe so we can enjoy ourselves. Suggestions for revision are welcomed.

Minimum requirements

Participants should have a working knowledge of the Highway Code as it pertains to cycling.

<https://www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk/rules-for-cyclists.html>

Helmets **MUST** be worn when riding in a GOC group.

Every bike is different, so participants must have with them the following basic spares:

- Spare inner tube of the correct size;
- Serviceable self-adhesive inner tube patches or a puncture repair kit (as well as the spare tube, more than one puncture is possible). These things don't last for ever and need to be replaced every few years;
- 'Quick link' for chain repair of the correct type for your chain;
- Hanger for rear mech of your bike, if relevant (mainly for carbon frames).

If a café stop is planned, and they usually are, you will need a lock. It is also useful to have a mobile phone and the leader's number, in case of accident or getting lost. But be aware that a signal may not be available in rural areas.

Participants must also have the following tools, and should know how to use them:

- Tyre pump;
- Tyre levers;
- Necessary tool to release your wheels if these are not 'quick release'.

It is also highly desirable to have:

- Multi-tool including a chain splitter;
- 'Quick link' pliers.

If participants are unable to repair their own punctures, the ride leader must be notified and will ensure that someone stays with such a rider. There isn't a good excuse for being unable to repair a puncture – make the time and effort to learn how! It's worth practising at home somewhere dry, when it's for real it will be raining! <https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/video-guide-how-repair-puncture-bike>

If out for the day, you will need food and water, and enough clothing etc. to cope with whatever the weather might do. If you have a breakdown, there will be hanging around and it is easy to get cold. You may need sun-block and dark glasses.

Outside the summer months, you may need lights if there are any delays – bring them in case.

Riding in a group

Riding in a group brings its own dangers!

Pay attention to the road, the traffic, and the behaviour of other cyclists. All of these are more important than the gossip. Learn the signals and shouts that improve group safety, but you remain responsible for your own safety whatever.

A group of cyclists is potentially an obstruction to other road users, and we make no friends of motorists or other cyclists by obstructing traffic. It's an offence. Give thought as a group as to how other vehicles are going to pass. 10 cyclists riding in single file is effectively a vehicle 20-30 m long. It's almost impossible for another vehicle to overtake you safely. The maximum permitted length of an articulated lorry is only 16.5 m. The Highway Code does not currently suggest riding two-abreast, although many recommend this as a way of shortening the length to be overtaken. Riding in a tight peloton two abreast requires a great deal of concentration. Alternatively break up into sub-groups of no more than five riders, with enough space in between for an overtaking vehicle to pull in. If as a group you are attracting a tail of traffic wanting to overtake, pull in as soon as is safe and practicable. Be considerate, as you expect others to be considerate towards you.

Leading a group

It is up to the leader to lead the route, so make sure that you have sufficient knowledge, maps etc! With a larger group, it is also very useful to have a 'back marker' who also knows the route. At key points, such as junctions and the tops of long hills, the leader should wait until the riders have re-grouped, choosing a safe location for this.

The group leader has the authority to ask someone to leave the group if he/she judges the person's equipment unsuitable or behaviour dangerous.

See <https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/how-lead-group-cycle-ride> and <https://www.goc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CTC-Guidelines-for-ride-leaders.pdf>

Familiarise yourself with the cycling risk assessment on the GOC web-site <https://www.goc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Generic-Risk-Assessment-Cycling.pdf>

Foreign cycling

Many countries drive on the right, which involves cycling on the right too!

Rules for right of way at junctions and other rules may be different – leaders have an obligation to inform participants of differences from UK practice.

Helmets and hi-viz may be legal requirements. Leaders have an obligation to advise on this.

Bike hire

Check the bike when you collect it. Is there visible damage, are the tyres and brake blocks OK, is the puncture kit all present, do all the gears work properly (cycle round and try them all)? Adjust the saddle to the correct height. Request the supplier to make other adjustments so you are comfortable on the bike and so that you can operate the brakes properly. Sort out all of this before you take the bike away.

Brakes in countries that drive on the right are likely to be the other way around – left-hand front brake – but gears are not. Check when you pick up the bike.

If you use clipless pedals you will need to bring them.

It's worth bringing your own saddle (saddle only, not seat post) because your bum is used to it.