



The Oregon coast road

DOWN THE PACIFIC COAST

Sandy D Franklin cycled from Vancouver in Canada to the USA-Mexico border

The ferry made its way over the silk smooth waters from Vancouver Island to Vancouver. As I watched sea otters and porpoise, I thought: this is not a bad way to start a bike ride.

First we cycled through the state of Washington, crossing over Deception Pass and continuing on to the San Juan Islands. After traversing the Straits of Juan de Fuca and travelling down Puget Sound, we followed the mighty Colombia River to Astoria, Oregon.

The road down the Oregon coast, soberingly named 'the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veteran's Memorial Highway', was wild, stunning, and atmospheric. The Coastal Range mountains dipped down to the sea, and mist, spray and surf were rolling in. We

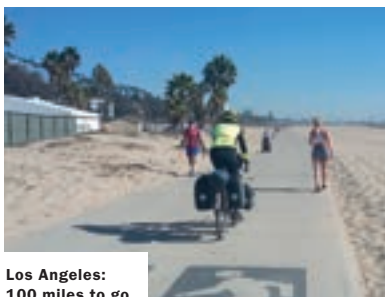
saw five grey whales offshore as we rode along the clifftops.

The old-growth coast redwoods of Northern California were spectacular. I silently thanked the 'Save the Redwoods League', who campaigned in 1918 to save them.

We stopped at hiker/biker campsites, which offered simplicity and transient friendships, and enjoyed great cafés. Catching sight of the Golden Gate Bridge was another highlight.

In central California, we entered a world of strawberry growing where Mexican immigrants worked under a relentless sun. In southern California, the surfing lifestyle was like a religion, with beachcomber cafés galore, more surfers and surfboards than cars, and more pelicans each mile than seagulls in Scarborough.

After Santa Barbara and its Spanish architecture, we rode through Los Angeles. The last two days were stunning: cruising along great cyclepaths through San Diego, across a six-mile sandy isthmus, and through small towns where English was a foreign language. We arrived at the Mexican border after 1,968 miles, having seen enough sunsets to last us a lifetime.



Los Angeles: 100 miles to go



The start at Whitehaven harbour

Going solo on the coast-to-coast

GARETH CURWELL TOOK THE C2C ROUTE FROM WHITEHAVEN TO TYNEMOUTH

M My wife looked concerned. 'Just be careful out there!' she said, pecking me on the cheek, having witnessed me slipping on the greasy C2C start ramp at Whitehaven marina, after the customary dipping of the rear wheel in the Irish Sea.

'Don't worry, I'll be fine,' I replied. I may be 62 and profoundly deaf (I wear a cochlear implant), but as I rode gently out of Whitehaven on that bright and sunny summer morning, with blue skies overhead and birds singing, I felt like a teenager. It was life-affirming stuff – riding in the tranquility of the Lake District, along flowery lanes, past verdant fields where sheep and cattle grazed, the sun's rays bouncing off the distant ripples of Loweswater Lake.

Sitting on a bench at Whinlatter Forest visitor centre, coffee and cake at hand, I soaked up the atmosphere as young families with excited children mingled with brightly-clad mountain bike riders heading for the nearby trails.

With overnight stops at Penrith and Parkhead Station, this was quite a challenging ride. But the incredible scenery, the camaraderie of fellow cyclists I met en route, and the sheer spiritual joy I felt throughout this mini adventure made it all worth it. I eventually made it to a rain-soaked Tynemouth to dip my front wheel in the North Sea.



Croasdale, Cumbria

Left & above: Alamy



Mont Saint-Michel



Poland's Masurian lake district

Pedalling Poland

JOHN FLETCHER HAS A DIFFERENT DESTINATION IN MIND FOR RETURN VISITS

I've just returned from my third tour of Poland, my favourite cycling destination. We rode from Warsaw, north through the beautiful lake district of Masuria, and on to the Baltic coast and Gdansk. Turning south, we passed by more lakes in Kashubia en route to Torun, the birthplace of Nicholas Copernicus. We finished in Wroclaw for the flight home to Manchester.

So what makes Poland special? The cities of Warsaw, Gdansk, and Wroclaw have all been lovingly reconstructed after the devastation of WWII and the austerity of the communist era. Medieval Torun escaped undamaged, as did the beautiful Krakow. In the old towns, walking tours tell you of Poland's rich and varied history. New cycle lanes are appearing all the time.

The centre of the country is flat or gently rolling. The north has a few more hills, while the far south is mountainous. There are vast areas of native forest, with wild bison and beaver. A network of minor roads crisscrosses the whole country, the surfaces ranging from soft sand, compacted dirt, and cobbles, to tarmac in various states of repair.

The real draw, however, has to be the Polish people. On the surface they may appear reserved but they're very hospitable. Do try a few Polish words if you can; you can't rely on everyone speaking English.



Gdansk was rebuilt after WWII

CHANNEL HOPPING

Vic lent took three tours of the Cotentin Peninsula in three years. Here's why

You can get to the port of Cherbourg on a fast ferry from Portsmouth in only three hours. I recommend it. Taking dedicated cyclepaths out of Cherbourg, you are soon on the peninsula's quiet country lanes. This was my third year of visiting the Manche département, and each time there has been more to discover.

In the first year, it was a four-day trip with a small group. We left Cherbourg and cycled 16 miles to join an old railway track, which has been turned into a multipurpose path stretching down the peninsula. On the second trip, we were a mixed-ability party of 15 on a longer version of the first route. In summer 2016, we were a small party again.

This time we travelled south-east on quiet roads, joining a cycle track alongside the River Vire to the ancient



Normandy's variable weather

fortress town of St Lô. Then we headed west to the town of Granville. We rode down the coast to join a cycle track beside a wide estuary, and then along a seaside cycleway to the iconic monastery of Mont Saint-Michel, set on an island just off the sandy shore.

Our journey finished at the ancient fortified port of St Malo. It was a six-day trip with a relaxing train and ferry journey on days one and six, leaving us with four full days of cycling. We averaged just over 40 miles per day. Accommodation was in hotels and guest houses.

This type of trip suits those who enjoy a bit of sightseeing and good food, as well as the joy of cycling in the countryside, beside rivers and along the coast. I will be arranging another trip next year.

Share your story

Cycle wants your Travellers' Tales. Email the editor – cycle@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk – for advice on what's required.