



The lightweight Pakit (from 15lb) is easy to carry folded



Germany

Cruising around Lake Constance

Which way? Luckily Darrell High had daughter Heather on hand...

IT WAS AN inauspicious start to our first family cycle-camping trip: after only 6km, we had lost the lake and were disorientated in the middle of Konstanz University. A friendly student came to our rescue, and we were soon reunited with the Bodensee Rundweg. Our 11-year-old daughter Heather took over responsibility for spotting the signs!

By lunchtime the route had returned to the lake shore, where it stayed for the next three days. We sped along, the track beneath our wheels varying from gravel to tarmac. We'd never seen so many cyclists – tourists, retired couples, and families.

We averaged 50km most days, finishing by mid-afternoon so that we could enjoy the beaches and the warm water of the lake. In between, we cycled through acres of fruit trees, pausing only to gorge ourselves on

the cherries and strawberries bought from path-side stalls.

On the third day we started in Germany, crossed Austria during the morning, and camped in Switzerland! When we finished, Heather said that she wanted to come back next year to do it again. ▶

United States

Friday on my mind

Returning to the United States, Mary Ann Hooper ordered a new Bike Friday direct from the factory

Ten years ago, I undertook an epic train trip from the East Coast of America to San Francisco, using a American folding Bike Friday for transport at the places I stopped. On my return I wrote a book about my travels – 'Across America and Back: Repeating My Great Grandparents' Remarkable Journey'.

In April 2018, I travelled back to the Western United States, promoting the book I wrote after my 2008 trip, and also to visit the Bike Friday factory in Eugene, Oregon, to trade in my old folder and buy a new one.

Ten years older and my cycle touring had diminished, so I decided to buy a Bike Friday PakiT. It's lighter in weight and easier to fold – more of a commuting bike and better for travelling by public transport around the UK. I went over the specifications with Steve Strickland (who was there in 2008 too) and ordered a stunning canary-yellow bike.

Five months later, I was in America again, this time in the east. My new bike was there, waiting for me at my brother's house in a box. Between us, we assembled it, despite having inherited our father's gene for mechanical dyslexia.

I christened the bike on a journey to a friend's 76th birthday party in the Vermont Green Mountains at a farm on the top of a hill. The first 18 miles were along the West River Valley, then the last five climbed steeply upwards. The gears had been troubling me but at this point I had to get off and push anyway.

I was offered and accepted a lift. At the party, my hostess kept introducing me in an awestruck tone: "This is my long-time friend Mary Ann, and she cycled all the way from Brattleboro!"

The ride back was all downhill so it was lovely – but the gears were still problematic. I took it to a bike shop. "Ah," the mechanic said. "You've installed the handlebars upside down!"



Above: Heather leads
Right: Old Town Hall at Reichsplatz, Lindau



Above: Taking a breather in Transylvania
Below: Many roads were almost deserted



This was Stephen's first tour in 13 years

Spain & Portugal Seville liberty

Stephen Psallidas rediscovered the freedom of touring in Spain

In May 2018, I rode a five-day, 450km cycle tour, heading in a big circle westwards from Seville. What an enjoyable trip it was, despite my initial lack of fitness!

The first day to Huelva was a straightforward run on the old main road, but the real adventure started on day two, when I turned onto remote and hilly rural dirt roads. I passed babbling brooks, cows, and sheep aplenty, and best of all, a trio of wild stags that thundered by just 100m in front of me.

After crossing into Portugal in style on a 750m zip-wire across the Guadiana River, day three saw me sweating to the medieval town of Mértola, and then on to an isolated farmstay in the National Park, where I was the only guest. The next day I re-entered Spain on more spectacular dirt roads, and stayed in a friendly 'pueblo blanco' (white hilltop town).

My final day was dominated by blasted red quarries, as well as tiny villages where I enjoyed chatting over a well-deserved beer or three! Rolling back into Seville, I was surprised to see the day's total of 140km, with just short of 2,000m of ascent. I must have got fitter fast!

Eastern Europe

Riders of the storm

Ben Edwards's tour from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, to Kraków in Poland didn't start smoothly...

Finding a country the size of the Ukraine should be easy. It's twice the size of the UK. But we were at a loss to locate the border crossing from Romania. There were no signs to help us. Luckily, we chanced upon the bridge over the River Tisza – and the route to the next leg of our adventure.

We were only three days into our two-week pedal around Eastern Europe, and had already had a wee bit to contend with. The first thing was a buckled back wheel, caused by baggage handlers at the airport of Cluj-Napoca in northern Romania.

Then a wonderful first day – biking along deserted country roads – was

interrupted by the most extreme hailstorm we had ever experienced. Hailstones bruised our arms and legs; branches were ripped from trees!

As the storm drew to a close, we limped the last of that day's 80km to our B&B in a town cloaked in darkness. Dinner was by candlelight – very romantic!

The next day dawned bright and sunny. A 30km ride took us across a flat plain, past bucolic scenes not out of place in 19th-century England, to a beech-cloaked range of hills. Near the summit, we were stopped in our tracks by chainsaw-wielding workmen. There was no way through; it was blocked for 2km with fallen trees. It had been some storm the day before!

By mid-afternoon, we were back where we had started. Our next B&B, near the Ukrainian border, was 100km away. Thankfully, we found a drinking companion from the night before who conjured a man with a van who could drive us and our bikes to that night's pension. We were back on track!



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