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TRAVELLERS' TALES



A day on La Gomera

PETER OSBORNE EXPLORED TENERIFE'S NEIGHBOUR ON HIS AIRNIMAL FOLDER

LESS THAN an hour's boat ride away, La Gomera is a peaceful contrast to the bustling tourist resorts of Tenerife. I took the ferry from Los Cristianos, arriving in La Gomera's attractive capital, San Sebastian.

Taking the TF-713, I began the long but gentle climb to the sub-tropical rainforest of Garajonay National Park. As I progressed up the climb, the warm November sunshine gave way to increasingly dense mist. Before long I was climbing through thunder, which culminated in a torrential downpour. I had to stop as the rain was so heavy; it was like taking a warm shower. The rain was soon replaced by warm sunshine, which lit up the volcanic landscape.

I stopped for a rest at the Degollada de Peraza, a place offering magnificent views and where several well-signposted trails meet. Continuing the long climb, I passed through areas of burnt woodland, evidence of last August's forest fires which affected hundreds of acres in the National Park.

The highest point of the island is at 1,484m. I did not quite reach it; I was conscious of not missing the last ferry. I began my return to San Sebastian by descending down a canyon covered with lush vegetation towards the TF-711, where the descent became gentler. This allowed beautiful views across the Barranco de Las Lajas, a terraced valley of orchards, vineyards and banana groves.

I arrived early in the capital for the afternoon ferry, giving me time to explore this historic place.

110 miles – aged six

Hannah Killick raised £1600 (and counting) on her three-day ride, as her teacher Mina King explains

Hannah cycled from Bristol, where she lives, to Reading, where both sets of her grandparents live. She was accompanied all the way by her dad, Adrian, and at times by other friends and family. Hannah raised money for New Hope, who care for orphaned and HIV-positive children in India.

Hannah spent the summer months training for this challenge, and also went on a Bikeability course to learn road safety rules. Day

one was Bristol to Devizes – 44 miles. Day two was Devizes to Newbury – 41 miles. Day three was Newbury to Reading – 25 miles. For her final mile, Hannah was accompanied by her whole family, including her four-year-old brother and sister! The ride ended underneath a huge 'finish' banner, where cakes, scones and a celebration party were waiting for her.

It was zero degrees at 7am when Hannah set off on her ride, and it took her a long

time to warm up. That was one of the hardest things of the trip, she said afterwards: 'The cold on the first day and the hills on the third day.'

Hannah had her first wobbly tooth on day two and could not eat much after the ride that day. Luckily, it fell out the next morning so she was able to eat a huge breakfast on the final day.

She said that she loved the autumn leaves and the changing countryside they passed through. Her favourite sighting was 'three deer running across the road and jumping into a hedge.'

'I loved the ride,' Hannah said. 'It was brilliant! I definitely want to do more cycling in the future. I'm really glad that I raised enough money to feed lots of children at New Hope'



Hannah's fundraising page is www.sponsor-me.org/hannahcycles 100miles



La Gomera is a smaller island near Tenerife. Columbus picked up supplies from La Gomera en route to the Americas in 1492



East to West in 10 days

JOHN RUSSELL TOURED 610 MILES FROM LOWESTOFT TO ARDNAMURCHAN POINT

INSTEAD OF the End to End, I decided to tackle a less written about ride that crosses Britain: the East to West, or E2W. It runs from the easternmost point of the mainland, Lowestoft, to the westernmost point, Ardnamurchan Point and lighthouse. To find the start point of Lowestoft Ness, here's a tip: just look for Britain's tallest wind turbine.

The first day saw me caught up in May's deteriorating English weather (hailstones, whiteout, and then rivers of rain on the roads). My route used minor and very minor roads through south Norfolk and the Fens.

I followed the outer line of the Lincolnshire Wolds. My route then went diagonally across to Carlisle, taking in the beautiful scenery of Wensleydale and the Eden Valley.

Once out of Carlisle, I found the new back road, parallel to the motorway, which goes straight into Gretna Green. I took the obligatory photo of the Marriage Room in Gretna and was a witness for three weddings (pity about the lycra)!

The route from Dumfries across the Galloway Forest was superb. By now the weather had turned into a mini heat wave: 25 degrees at least.

The problem was that my kit was for cool and wet weather.

I explored both Arran and Mull. My last day of the 10-day tour was the ferry crossing to Ardnamurchan Peninsular, which offered empty roads, wonderful scenery, a hairy scary highland cow and then... the most westerly set of traffic lights on the UK mainland!



Corsican touring

John and Helen Reay unwittingly previewed the start of the 2013 Tour de France

Two years ago, we undertook our first unsupported cycle tour to Norfolk. This year we chose Corsica. We didn't know it at the time, but much of our route will be ridden on the first three days of the 2013 Tour de France.

We took our bikes by 'plane, packed in CTC plastic bags. Signing a disclaimer at the easyjet check-in didn't fill us with confidence, but the bikes emerged unscathed. Pedals and rear derailleurs back on, the exhilarating sense of freedom as we cycled out of Bastia airport was such that we missed our first

turning, adding four miles to our route into town.

We rode around the narrow peninsula that is Cap Corse, and along the north and west coasts. Much of the riding was on old corniche roads, cut into steep hillsides with the sea far below. Pink granite cliffs, clear turquoise sea and lush, fragrant vegetation were a feast for the senses; Corsica is known as the scented isle for good reason. September temperatures in the mid-20s were perfect for riding and for picnic stops on the beach or in village squares.

From Galeria, a

400m climb took us to the Col de Palmerella. We were passed by a group of French roadies and a line of Italian classic cars, then paused for a photo looking down to the bay of Girolata.

From Ajaccio, birthplace of Napoleon, we took a bus inland and rode for two days in the chestnut forests of Castagniccia. Villages clung to wooded hillsides, each with its own baroque church.

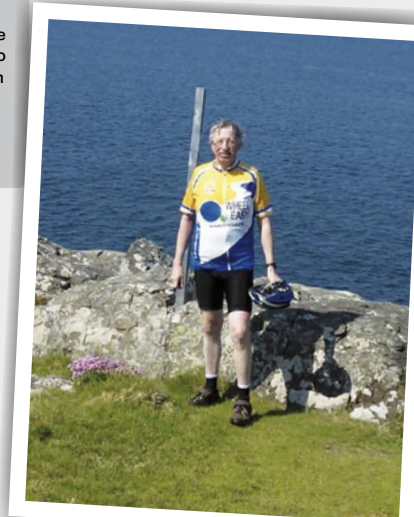
A ferry to Nice, then a four-mile ride around the bay on a cycle path between port and airport, was a fitting end to a memorable trip.



Corsica is a mountainous island that's great for cycling. The Tour de France starts here this year



John was joined by a Harrogate Wheel Easy clubmate for the leg from Brigg to their home town



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