

Great Rides

A LONG RIDE HOME

USING THEIR HASE PINO E-TANDEM AND A FERRY, **MAXINE AND PAUL ROGERS** CYCLED FROM THEIR HOUSE IN SHROPSHIRE TO THEIR SECOND HOME IN DÉNIA, SPAIN

How about riding the Pino down next time?" Paul asked, as the long hours passed on a drive back up to Santander. It was March and the high plateau seemed devoid of life, thick with apparently dead vines, interesting geological features and snow on the higher mountains.

My love of cycle touring had recently been reawakened. Major surgery in 2015 had left me weakened but not beaten, and the motor on the Hase Pino tandem helps both of us enjoy riding a tandem again. But could we really cover such a large distance on it?

We'd made the journey to Dénia so many times in winter (at one time leading CTC tours there) that we'd ended up buying a small home there. But it seemed a long way to ride. We did some planning, splitting up the route into bite-sized pieces. Some months later, with one pannier each and a spare battery in our racktop bag, we set off.

PLYMOUTH TO SANTANDER

Our strange-looking tandem attracts incredulity wherever we go. With the pilot sitting at the back and the stoker in a recumbent position at the front, conversation between us is easy. But for me as the stoker, going downhill

is sometimes just a little too exciting!

We spent four-and-a-half days riding through England, through the Forest of Dean, the Somerset Levels and the savagely hilly but beautiful Devon countryside. We met up with friends along the way, and we also had an opportunity to put our waterproofs to the test.

Our overnight ferry crossing was sandwiched between easy days, so our first day's riding in Spain was along a flat via verde (disused railway line) with a velvety smooth tarmac surface. We rode among mountains cloaked in the deep greens of broadleaf woodland, with cows and sheep grazing beside our route. When we reached our hotel, we found that we would be sleeping beneath lace-edged sheets, apparently a Cantabrian custom.

Away from the coast the Spanish landmass rises up to an average of around 1,000m above sea level, forming an undulating high plateau known locally as La Mesita (the little table). On our second day in Spain we climbed onto it – a steep and challenging climb, during which we watched the geological and agricultural landscape change as we rode over the watershed of the northward-flowing rivers towards the mighty River Ebro, which flows towards the Mediterranean Sea. ▶



Above: Cathedral of Saint Mary of Burgos in Castile and León

Below: Wye Valley near Symonds Yat in Herefordshire

Centre right: Wilting sunflowers near the River Ebro in northern Spain

Below right: Street scene [Calle Puertas de Pro] in the city of Soria, Castile and León

