

GET CYCLING

...IN SWINDON 



GETTING STARTED

CHOOSING THE RIGHT BIKE

JOIN THE FOLD

MAINTENANCE TIPS

www.cycleswindon.org.uk





“I thought of that while riding my bike.”
ALBERT EINSTEIN, ON THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY



“My whole day is built around meetings that can be achieved around bike rides. My contract actually offers me a free car from my home to my office and back, but I suppose I am addicted to cycling.”
NEWSCASTER JON SNOW

“It’s easily the quickest way around central London, faster than bus, Tube or taxi. You can predict precisely how long every journey will take, regardless of traffic jams, Tube strikes or leaves on the line. It provides excellent exercise. It does not pollute the atmosphere. It does not clog up the streets.”
NEWSCASTER JEREMY PAXMAN

“Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride.”
JOHN F. KENNEDY

“Marriage is a wonderful invention; but then again, so is a bicycle repair kit.”
BILLY CONNOLLY

“When I see an adult on a bicycle, I do not despair for the future of the human race.”
H.G. WELLS

“Bicycling is a big part of the future. It has to be. There’s something wrong with a society that drives a car to workout in a gym.”
BILL NYE

“Cycle tracks will abound in Utopia.”
H.G. WELLS

“Think of bicycles as rideable art that can just about save the world.”
GRANT PETERSON

“Bicycles are almost as good as guitars for meeting girls.”
BOB WEIR, GRATEFUL DEAD

“[Commuting by bicycle is] an absolutely essential part of my day. It’s mind-clearing, invigorating. I get to go out and pedal through the countryside in the early morning hours, and see life come back and rejuvenate every day as the sun is coming out.”
GENERAL JAMES L. JONES, US SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE

Specialized Cycles



TOWN AND AROUND

EXCUSES, EXCUSES...

- “IT’S TOO DANGEROUS”
- “I’VE GOT TOO MUCH TO CARRY”
- “IT’S TOO FAR”
- “I NEED TO DROP THE KIDS OFF AT SCHOOL”
- “I CAN’T ARRIVE LOOKING HOT AND SWEATY”
- “I’LL GET SOAKED IF IT RAINS”
- “THERE’S NOWHERE SAFE TO LEAVE MY BIKE”
- “IT’S NOT GOOD FOR MY IMAGE”

- REASONS ABOUND FOR NOT CYCLING TO WORK. WE WON'T GO IN TO ALL OF THE DETAILED COUNTER ARGUMENTS HERE, BUT HERE ARE SOME FACTS:

- It doesn't rain heavily that often! In many parts of the UK only fourteen or so days in the year, and no-one says you have to ride your bike every day.
- The British Medical Association has calculated that the health benefits of cycling outweigh the road accident danger by a factor of 20 to 1.
- In Switzerland, not noted for its flat terrain, 15% of all journeys are by bicycle: only slightly less than the Danish level.
- 58% of car trips are under 5 miles and 25% are less than 2 miles.

Cycling is an excellent way to fit exercise into a busy life. You have fun, while getting to where you want to be anyway! It's the ultimate independent transport, taking you door to door, leaving traffic behind. Cycling is regularly proven to be the quickest way to get from A to B in town. Along with walking it offers the most predictable journey times, but gives you five times the range, and much greater luggage carrying capacity.

If you're riding to work you get there on time, feeling good, with your brain alert. If you're on a shopping trip you can park easily, next to your destination.

Any bike you choose will go from A to B but there's the question of comfort, convenience, and speed to consider, so it's worth weighing up the options. While mountain bikes are in many ways better

suited to potholed urban roads than road racing bikes they're far from perfect. The commuter rarely needs knobby tyres, dozens of gears, heavy suspension, and a look that attracts thieves. It's often best to choose something designed to be ridden around town, such as a hybrid or new generation roadster.

If you're concerned mainly with getting to your destination on time in all weathers, you want a bike that's reliable, robust and simple to maintain, ideally complete with mudguards, racks, lights and perhaps even the new generation of hub gears. There are now some superb city bikes available. Lightweight frames and parts give you good acceleration along with swift, reliable gear changes and brakes that inspire confidence, which all help you integrate well with traffic and stay safe.





SWINDON IS A GREAT BOROUGH FOR CYCLING.....

It's not too hilly, the weather is mild and most people live within a comfortable cycling distance from work, shops or school.

Although the benefits of cycling are well known, only 3% of the journeys in the borough are made by bike. There are many reasons for this, ranging from fear of an accident to worries about bike theft, or lack of fitness or training. Swindon Borough Council is tackling these issues, along with our various partners, and encouraging more of us to get on our bikes. This is in response to local demands for better provision for cyclists. There is an increasing awareness that something must be done to curb the upward trend in car use, particularly for short journeys.

With this in mind, some of the projects we have been working on include:

- Developing the Swindon cycle network, filling in gaps and missing links
- Installing new cycle parking such as the Brunel and Fleming Way cycle parks in the town centre and donating free cycle stands to small organisations
- Providing cycle training for children in the form of cycling proficiency, Bike It and Bikeability
- Running courses for adults including bike maintenance and cycle training, as well as regular social bike rides
- Giving opportunities for disabled people to participate in cycling
- Holding events during Bike Week such as free breakfasts, festivals and women only rides. Check out www.bikeweek.org.uk for events near you.
- Better maps and information. Over 30,000 copies of the free Swindon Cycle map have been distributed and it is also available online at www.swindontravelchoices.org.uk
- Helping the Bicycle User Group to provide a one stop website for cycling information and we have also set up a Cycle Swindon Facebook group. www.facebook.com/cycleswindon

WE HOPE THAT THIS GUIDE WILL BE A HELPFUL COMPLEMENT TO THE RANGE OF CYCLING SERVICES THAT WE PROVIDE AT THE COUNCIL.

MOUNTAIN BIKES



For most people a 'mountain bike' (also known as an MTB or ATB) is anything with knobby tyres, fat tubes, suspension forks, straight bars, lots of gears, and no mudguards or carrier-rack. Originally designed purely for off-road use they have evolved to become the all purpose bicycle of the last two decades, with prices ranging from £60 to £6000. Most are used as urban workhorses, exclusively on tarmac. Higher up the quality range you find fine bikes which take the technology further, with tough but light frames, good brakes, and generally better parts. These can do almost everything you want, including city riding and off-road.

Suspension increases comfort and is now common. Many bikes have both front and rear suspension systems. The suspension lets the wheels move up and down to absorb small bumps while keeping the tyres in contact with the ground for better control. It also helps the rider and bike absorb large shocks when landing from jumps.

Bare MTBs need lots of extras to make the most of other uses – slick tyres, mudguards, a luggage rack and lights for commuting, for

example. This can all cost more than the bike costs, so unless you really need the genuine qualities of a true mountain bike, go for a hybrid bike which has many of the qualities of a mountain bike, but has all the useful bits on already. You will have something fit

MOUNTAIN BIKES ARE SUPERB, AS LONG AS YOU GO FOR WHAT YOU REALLY NEED

for purpose, and it will work out much cheaper for you.

In particular, test out the reach. To achieve the sporty image, many MTBs have the handlebars set too low for genuine comfort (read also the section in this guide on bike design for women).

If you want to go off-road there are excellent machines available to you, with suspension front and back, a good spread of gears and good brakes. Here the advice of a good bike shop becomes essential. Expect to pay no less than £250-£300 for a bike good enough for any kind of off-road riding. Taking it further, there are specialised 'downhill' machines for serious sportspeople and the fashion/image-

conscious. The idea of downhill is to get yourself down a path, track or dirt road as fast as possible. A downhill bike has a lot of suspension travel, very solid frame and components, and extremely powerful brakes. Mountain bikes have revolutionised

cycle design and can be enormous fun, as long as you go for what you really need. You may well decide that to really enjoy going off-road you need a high-spec machine which is over the top for city riding, or just too attractive to thieves. In which case, why not become the proud owner of two bikes?

Away from the urban core, Swindon has some great places for Mountain Biking. The Croft Trail, opposite Nationwide House, offers both a short family/beginner off-road trail and a longer trail with features for the more experienced cyclist or those wishing to improve their skills. For more details about trails, events and news, contact Mountain Biking Swindon at www.mbswindon.co.uk



JOIN THE FOLD!

QUALITY WELL-DESIGNED FOLDING BIKES ARE BRILLIANT. EVERY HOME SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST ONE!

Forget the old image of the folder as a heavyweight bundle of loose fitting tubes, dripping with oil. Today's folders are light, tight and just right. The best of them ride like conventional uprights and fold in seconds to a compact bundle. Kitted out with quality components, and often with suspension, you can ride them comfortably all day. There are more than 50 models of folding bike to choose from.

It can take practice to be able to fold your bike quickly and easily. You'll attract the attention of curious onlookers as you deftly unfold your pride and joy. Be prepared to answer the same old questions that you'll have heard countless times before...

A portable bike lets you travel mixed-mode on your own terms allowing you to commute by bus, tram or train, using the same bicycle at both ends of your journey. It allows you to take a bicycle almost anywhere – even into a bar or restaurant for safe-keeping, so no worries about somewhere safe to park it outside.

You can even cycle-tour using bike

and train by choosing a rural rail route, stopping off at a different station each day for a circular ride, or cycling between stations. No booking of bikes in advance, no anxiety about room on the train, and no fee to pay for the bike.

The market for modern folders is extremely sophisticated. At one end are bikes designed for short journeys - they fold very well but don't feel quite like full-size bikes. They are perfect for commuting, as you can cycle to your nearest train station or bus stop, quickly fold them up, and put them behind your seat or in a luggage rack.

At the other end are bikes designed for longer distance riding. They are usually equipped with lots of luggage-carrying space, and ride like a full-size bike. These are bikes you can happily ride all day, and are perfect for commuting longer distances or touring. They don't fold quite so quickly or as small, but are still a lot more compact and easy to store than a full-size bike. Most offer an easy-to-straddle low step-through frame, and tend to come in one size suitable for all the family, after a few quick adjustments.



Wheel sizes vary, too. Smaller wheels add to folding compactness, but also usually weigh less. Weight is of particular significance on a folder, because if you can't lift it, you can't get it into a car or a train.

Experienced cyclists want the optimum compromise between the quality of the ride and the quality of the fold. For some owners it can be the only bike they possess. This is why many are prepared to pay a lot of money for the right bike, and why there is increasing investment in good design and quality.

It's the freedom to travel anywhere with your bike that gives folders a magic quality, opening up entirely new kinds of journeys. Choose the right folding bike and you'll wonder how you ever lived without one!

Top left: Brompton
Top right: Giant Halfway

EXTRA ENERGY MORE POWER TO YOU



Electric bike sales in Europe have sky-rocketed in recent years. The technology has finally caught up with the promise: electric bikes are here to stay.

The term 'pedelec' says it all: a pedal cycle which has electric power assistance. Sensors know how hard you are pedalling and add electric support when you need it. If you don't pedal, or don't pedal very hard, you get no help because you don't need it. The idea is not to make a faster, more powerful vehicle, but simply to help you flatten the hills and shorten the miles. The end product is essentially a fairly conventional bike, but one that lends a hand when required. Most pedalecs have multiple gears and all the other components you'd expect, but with the bonus of a motor, which is often so small, light and quiet you don't know it's there – unless you begin wondering why a cyclist is going so fast without pedalling. They are classed as a normal bicycle so there is no legal requirement for a helmet, or any kind of special licence. If the transmission ensures that the machine behaves like a normal bicycle (but one that makes the rider's legs get bigger on hills), then it will be seen as a bicycle by the authorities.

Whether it's because of a minor disability, poor fitness or just old age, not everyone can ride a bike, and in hilly or spread-out districts, only the fittest can rely on their own power. Power-assist makes riding uphill, cycling into a headwind or carrying heavy loads a lot easier. The motor and battery technology generally comes from electronics giants, and are now fully developed in terms of efficiency and reliability. A few hours charge can give you 40 kilometres of assisted riding, and the electricity costs precious little.

Pedalecs are a new form of transport, taking pedal-power further across the transport spectrum, but they remain bicycles. As a general guide, if you can lift it off the ground yourself, it's still a bike. If you can't it's a motorbike!

Swindon has a specialist dealer in electric bikes. E-motion stocks electric scooters as well as a range of power-assisted cycles (also known as electric bicycles, e-bikes or pedalecs), and can arrange test rides (and savings if your employer is part of the cycle to work scheme).

See <http://emotionvc.co.uk/store/> for details.



A Raleigh electric bike

CHILDREN'S BIKES

For children, cycling is freedom and adventure. They get to go fast under their own power. They feel good on their bikes, and are beginning to develop the skills needed to make safe decisions consistently when they are on the road.

Cycling is a life-long activity and children need to understand that their bicycle is not only a toy, but a means of transportation. Get involved, if you can, in your children's cycling. Teach them how to care for their bikes and they'll develop a knowledge of how things work.

Look for quality components and a design which allows the bike to 'grow' with your child through handlebar and saddle adjustability. Most bikes sold to children force them to reach too far forwards. You may come under pressure from your kids to buy a bike which looks cool, but it could be a pain to ride and maintain. A luggage rack and mudguards may be uncool for an older child but they can carry light loads in a back pack, and road-splash on clothing is not the end of the world – you might also compromise on semi-effective mountain-bike style mudguards. Don't make it a battle: it's better that they feel good when they ride, rather than not ride at all.

Make sure your child has a bike that fits correctly. A bike that is too big cannot be controlled properly. A child should have both feet flat on the ground when standing straddling the top tube, and should be able to touch the ground with the toes of one foot while sitting on the seat without leaning the bike.

A good child's bike can be as expensive to manufacture as an adult's. If security is a problem, consider buying your child two bikes: a cheap but sturdy second-hand machine for the street corner, and a better bike for family outings. Buy well, or you could put your children off cycling for life.



FAMILY OPTIONS



TANDEMS

On a tandem or trailer-bike children experience the exhilaration of speeding along under combined power. A shared machine also allows an adult to power a weary child home. Childback tandems are made with a much smaller rear frame size so as to suit a child. Tandems can also take a child-seat and tow trailers.

If all the family enjoys cycling, tandems are an excellent investment, and resale values remain high. If there are two of you transporting the children you can mix and match your cycles and trailers: two trailer bikes, tandem plus childseat plus trailer bike, etc. There are all kinds of tandems for all purposes.

CHILDSEATS

There are many front and rear-mounted childseats to choose from, all with their own fixing mechanism and they vary enormously in quality and age-suitability.

The seat back and sides must support the child's head as young children tend to sleep a lot. A decent five-point harness is also vital. Check all the comfort and safety features, and take the bike and child with you when you buy your childseat to make sure it's suitable. If you have two small children, consider having two childseats behind you on a small-wheeled tricycle.



CHILD TRAILERS

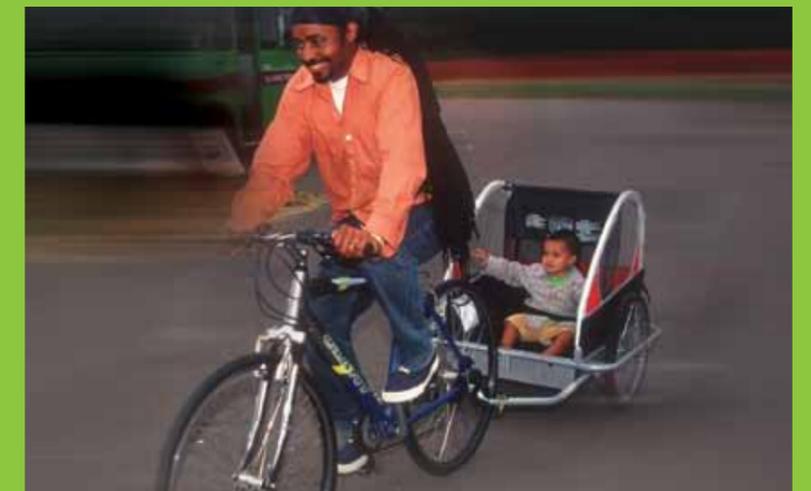
Quality varies. The worst ones do their jobs but have heavy steel frames and the fabric does not last long. The best ones have alloy frames, quality fabric, and lots of extras.

Normal advice is to use them only when your child can support his/her own head. With a little ingenuity however, the combination of a child trailer and a baby's car seat can have you all cycling long before then.

Most trailers will accommodate two children up to about six years of age (or a combined weight of around

40-45kg) and have space for luggage, nappy changing stuff, food, toys and all the paraphernalia that goes with children. Trailers are also ideal for cycling in the colder months. Most will quickly pack flat for storage and for getting through the front door.

Other than extra drag, trailers have negligible effect on the handling of the lead bike, and stay upright if your parked bike falls over. You will need good brakes and possibly lower gears. Bright colours, reflective strips, tall safety flags and loudly singing children will make sure your trailer gets noticed.



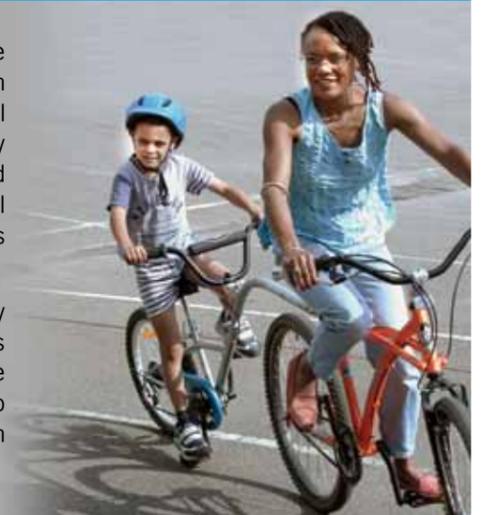
TRAILER-BIKES

From the age of about four children can start to pedal, but not very far. They can still fit in childseats or trailers, but are getting heavy enough to provide you with some good weight training. This is where trailer bikes come in. Your child pedals on a device attached to your bike, until he or she can go it alone.

Trailer bikes come in various designs. They either hitch to the seatpost or to a quick-release hitch on the rear rack. The rear rack style attachment enables the trailer to track well, following the turning radius of the lead bike closely.

The seatpost connection means the trailer tends to cut corners rather than follow the track of the lead bike. A well designed trailer bike should have plenty of adjustment both in saddle height and handlebar position to give you several years of use. Most are fitted with gears which are under the child's control.

With trailer bikes you get what you pay for. Cheaper ones are heavier, less reliable, and have more flop at the connection point. Also, if they have no gears, your child can be pedalling fresh air at times.



RIDE! RIDE! RIDE!



Bicycle-speed allows you to savour the experiences and share them with your friends and family. You can stop at any time to look at a fine view, visit an interesting building, smell roadside flowers or chat to people you meet. Even the most basic bike can make trips of ten miles or so in reasonably flat country.



You can usually find cycling guide books for your area, which combine with ordinance survey maps to help you enjoy Britain's delightful network of quiet country lanes and cyclepaths. Be realistic: you can always put in an extra loop if you're doing well. Take a small bag to hold some lightweight waterproofs and snacks. Water is better than energy drinks, and fruit and nut type bars are better than sugary snacks. Take a few basic tools and the means to repair a puncture. If your first big cycle outing is a charity ride, build up to it carefully, and have your bike serviced in good time. Your local cycle campaign or section of the Cyclists' Touring Club may offer suitable day rides in good company.

As you gain fitness and confidence, you can consider longer trips. This may be the time to become a two-

bike cyclist! One for round-town and commuting, and a lighter, faster machine for longer leisure rides.

An out-and-back ride with an overnight stop requires very little luggage. How about putting the bikes on a train and going to explore part of the National Cyclepath Network or a National Park? Check that the train does, in fact, take bikes. Or you can put a folding bike on the bus to get you out of town and on your way. Hotels and guesthouses are not your only option: youth hostels can be very friendly, comfortable, and welcoming to cyclists of any age. There is also now a wide choice of good-value cycling holidays in the UK. The publishers of this guide, Get Cycling, are a community interest company which organises cycling holidays suitable for beginners. See www.getcycling.org.uk.

THE WORLD IS YOURS

Bikes can take you anywhere. Globetrotting cyclist Josie Dew says: 'If you can cycle to the shops, you can cycle round the world.' Dervla Murphy did much the same in the early 60's when she cycled to India on the three-speed bike she had used for years to potter round her home town in Ireland. Properly prepared, longer distance touring is a joy as well as a challenge. You'll need more preparation and equipment, and a good bike can greatly increase your pleasure, but you can still head for the hills without a huge outlay.

A first cycle tour abroad might include the cyclepaths of Holland, or the sleepy country lanes of Normandy and Brittany. You can organise it all yourself, or simply go on a packaged cycling holiday, with or without bike supplied. Wherever you cycle-tour, you travel lightly over the earth, leaving communities and the local environment as you find them.

YOU'LL BE RIDING ON HUMAN KIND'S HAPPIEST AND MOST FRIENDLY INVENTION!



BIKES FOR WOMEN

Women tend to have longer legs and a shorter torso than a man of equal height. They also tend to have shorter arms than their male counterparts. This in turn tends to mean that for a given bike, the reach (distance between saddle and handlebars) is too great for a woman. As you can imagine, shorter arms and a shorter torso mean that a woman would have to stretch further to reach the handlebars of a given bike than a man would. Even 'ladies' bikes with dropped top-tubes can be wrongly designed.

If you want to get serious about cycling you should specifically ask your retailer for a women's geometry bike. The choice isn't huge yet, but it is growing, and there are bikes available at many different price points that will meet your needs. They may appear to be identical to the 'male' versions, but close inspection of the two bikes side by side will show up the differences.

Most of all shop around for a retailer who understands your needs as a woman cyclist, and knows that bikes designed for women actually exist. If possible, find a shop that employs a woman cyclist.

You can also improve the comfort and fit of your existing bike by making adjustments to saddle or handlebars, or replacing them altogether. Ladies' saddles are now available, some with a hole in the middle to reduce rubbing against sensitive areas and to keep you aerated and cooler.

Cycle clothing designed for women is now also widely available.



SOMETHING SPECIAL

THERE IS NO END TO THE WAYS IN WHICH PEDAL-POWER CAN BE USED, RESULTING IN A HUGE VARIETY OF BIKES FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES.



TOURING

These are bikes at their best: lightweight frame, drop bars, thin tyres. They are far more efficient and comfortable for longer distance road riding than bikes with mountain bike styling which are more fashionable - for some. They range from traditional tourers with mudguards and pannier racks (allowing them to also double as commuter bikes), to very lightweight machines with extra-thin tyres, no mudguards, clip-on pedal-systems, and very little luggage capacity.



SITTING BACK

Recumbents offer a very different kind of riding pleasure. They come in many shapes; from 'almost-upright' to low racing machines. Some have two wheels, others three. The main advantages are a more comfortable ride, better aerodynamics and a stronger push on the pedals. The disadvantages can be low visibility and manoeuvrability in traffic. You never know until you try, and many become lifelong converts after their first ride.



TWO-UP

Tandems are more than just sociable fun. They go faster than comparable solo bikes, having twice the power input, but less bike-weight per rider. Two tandem riders in line are also more aerodynamic than on solo bikes. There are many types: from small-wheeled round-town tandems, to fast touring machines. They are great for picking children up from school, or friends from the station. And nothing beats tandeming for a real feeling of togetherness on day-rides into the countryside.



SPECIAL NEEDS

Cycling can offer unique pleasure to people with disabilities. For some it's a means to independent mobility; for others it's just the joy of physical movement, with wind in the hair. There are cycles for every purpose: tricycles for all ages, hand-cranked cycles, rear-steering tandems, tandems with wheelchairs on the side or front, and side-by-side 'companion' cycles. The choice is growing all the time. A useful website on disability cycling is www.bikesnotbarriers.org.



TRICYCLES

These come in all shapes and sizes, from small-wheeled shopping trikes to fast large-wheeled touring and racing cycles. Low recumbent trikes are increasingly popular. All trikes give stability, good road presence and a better load-carrying capacity. You can also go as slow as you want without unbalancing – or on a serious hill just choose a very low gear and spin away at it until you reach the top. Trikes are particularly useful for carrying one or more children.

CARRIED AWAY

YOU CAN CARRY MORE ON A BIKE THAN YOU EVER IMAGINED POSSIBLE. LETTERS, GROCERIES, COMPUTER EQUIPMENT, SACKS OF CEMENT, SMALL TREES, HALF A TON OF IRON, CANOES, LADDERS, YOU NAME IT, A CYCLIST SOMEWHERE WILL HAVE SHIFTED IT. THERE ARE MANY TECHNIQUES.

1. BAGS

The choice is between loading your body or your bike. Cycle couriers use shoulder-bags or backpacks because they are convenient for frequent stops – no time is lost fiddling with panniers – and because they can adapt easily to different loads.

A simple courier bag is the cheapest practical load-carrying device. A sheet of bubble-wrap in a bag will stop sharp items digging in your back, but for longer journeys the stress of anything more than a couple of kilos on your back soon becomes irksome, and can cause long term back problems.

A handlebar bag is a useful option for touring. You can easily get access to it on the move for food or sun-block although it won't be stable enough for rough tracks where a small rucksack, bum-bag or pouch under the seat works better.

Your next option is a pair of panniers which can be mounted front or rear. Several companies (eg Carradice, Jack Wolfskin) make panniers for laptop computers. Ortlieb have a padded insert that will fit in another bag. A 'lower-tech' option is to put your laptop in a heavy-duty plastic bag, swathing this in bubble-wrap until it's big enough to fit snugly in a pannier. If you want to isolate it completely from road-shock use a bag on your back. Luggage hanging from a bike is dead-weight so for heavier riders it can lead to broken spokes or bent or breaking axles. The next option is to spread it over more wheels by getting a trailer.

2. TRAILERS



It's much simpler and quicker to chuck cargo into a trailer. A one-wheel trailer leans with the bike so will never roll over by itself. It's ideal for touring or long distance picnics. An empty or lightly loaded two-wheel trailer can flip over if corners are taken too fast or if one of the wheels hits a bump, but it can be used as a practical hand-cart for shopping, gardening or recycling. If you have a child-carrying trailer you can also fill it up with groceries, perhaps on the way back from the nursery run.

Trailers designed to carry less than 50kg may hitch close to the rear-axle. Heavier loading models usually attach around the seat-pin where anchorage is easier and the bike less delicate — although they do affect the bike's handling more than trailers attached near the middle of the back wheel. The further back the articulation point is, the more faithfully the trailer will follow the bike.

Manufacturers will specify a maximum load. Another limit is the power in your legs: your bike may have very low gears, but do be realistic about hills when full-loaded, and make sure you have good brakes!

3. CARRIER CYCLES

Pashley's Pronto is the 'civilian' version of the post office bike they also manufacture. You can also use the Yuba transporter bike, with its load carried behind the rider, and the Cargo Bike from Cambridge Cycles, which has a big box at the front. Tricycles provide a stable means of load carrying. The Christiania trike and the Nihola, both from Denmark, can carry children as well as loads.



HERE'S HOW TO GO GROCERY SHOPPING IN STYLE:

- Ride to the store towing trailer.
- Collect items for purchase in a shop trolley.
- Go outside and unlock your cycle-trailer.
- Bring it in and place it at the end of the checkout desk.
- As the groceries come across the bar-code reader put them straight in the cycle-trailer.
- Pay bill and tow trailer home.
- Wheel trailer into kitchen.
- Transfer groceries direct to fridge and cupboards.

BUYING A USED BIKE



Think about what you want from a used bike, and how much work you are prepared to put into it. You'll have all the hassle of tracking down bikes for sale, visiting the various sellers, then fixing any problems. The benefit of buying from a dealer is that you have bikes of a guaranteed quality, all in one place, with expert advice on hand. On the other hand it can be very satisfying to get a used bargain and work on it.

A dodgy used bike will cost a lot to put right. Shops often charge around £15 an hour labour. Tyres cost from £7 each, inner tubes £4. A mild wobble in a rim is possibly fixable, but a big bend can mean a new wheel – from £20 if new. So it pays to take care what bike you buy.



GENERAL CONDITION

Is the bike looked after or rusty? Are the tyres bald and cracked or in good condition? Is the paint scuffed and the frame dented, or are there just the one or two honourable scars of a hard worked but looked-after machine?

TYRES

Are they well inflated? Are they bald? Are the sidewalls cracked and perished? Do the valve types match? Does a pump come with the bike? Why not? All tyres should be inflated hard – they should barely give when you squeeze them.

WHEELS

Are the rims steel or alloy? Alloy is good. Are steel rims rusty? Do the wheels run true? Gripping the top of the wheel, can you wobble it from side to side – yes? – possible bearing damage. Are any of the spokes broken? Check at the hub end. If two or more have gone, then more may be on the way out. Are any spokes slack? – Bad! Check the wheel for trueness.

BRAKES

Are the pads worn? Do they rub the rim? Are they seized solid? Are they scuffing the tyre? Do the pads bite on the rim almost as soon as you move the lever on the bars? Are the cables rusty and frayed, or looked after, oiled, and finished with a ferrule?

CHAIN

Is it rusty? Taking the chain at the frontmost point of the chainring, (the cog by the pedals), can the chain be pulled nearly clear of the teeth? Yes? - worn chain. If the chain has rusted badly or has dry rust on it, it may have worn the sprockets down, too. Expensive to replace.

HEADSET

(Where the forks & bars swivel in the frame). Do the forks revolve smoothly? When the front brake is applied, can the bike be rocked forward and backward, because the fork is rocking within the frame?

CHAINWHEEL AND SPROCKETS

If teeth have a sharks-fin appearance, reject the bike, as the whole drivetrain will be much too worn. A worn chain on a hub geared bike can often be replaced on its own. Derailleur chain and sprockets wear together, and if left to wear for too long, you'll need to change the whole drivetrain – minimum £40.

BOTTOM BRACKET

(The bearing in the frame between the pedals). Grip the cranks and try to rock the axle up and down and side to side. Play and a clicking noise? – bearing needs adjustment or replacement. Check that the cranks rotate smoothly.

PEDALS

Do they spin smoothly? Are the ends battered? Do they rattle loose on their spindles? When you ride the bike you may feel a rolling sensation in the ankles caused by either bent pedal spindles or bent cranks. Pedal spindles can be replaced; steel cranks might be straightened at a bike shop, alloy cranks are probably ready for the skip and cost to replace. Riding with misaligned pedals can damage ankles and knees (which are really expensive to repair...)

cont...

FRAME AND FORKS

Look carefully at the tubes. Are there dents, creases or wrinkles in the paint which may indicate crash damage? Similarly inspect from the front, squatting to get down to the same level as the bike. Look to see if the frame twists between head tube and seat tube. Check that the forks are symmetrical, and not bent backward from a crash. Be very careful here, and if in doubt reject the bike.

TOOLKIT, AND BASIC MAINTENANCE

A basic toolkit should include: small or medium sized, good quality adjustable spanner, a set of Allen keys, small spanners – 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 13 and 14mm (assuming the bike has metric sizes), wire cutters, medium weight pliers and a chain tool. Get reasonable quality tools, so you'll not have to replace them. Keep them wrapped in a clean rag. After working on any bike, and after a purchase, always check that all fixings are secure before you ride.

HANDLEBARS

Are they bent? Rusty? Is everything attached to them firmly? Look at the stem – can you see the minimum insert mark? No? – Good. Stand in front of the bike with your feet gripping the wheel. Try to turn the bars. Do they move easily? – Bad. Lots of resistance? – Good. Seized? – bad, and possibly rusted solid.

RACKS, MUDGUARDS, ANCILLARIES

Check everything is bolted on firmly. Distorted or cracked plastic mudguards should be replaced for safety. Racks should be firmly attached and rigid. Racks attached at three points will carry only moderate weights – four-point fixing is far sturdier. If dynamo lights are fitted, check that they work.

SADDLE

Is it attached firmly? Grip it and try to rock it forward and back. Is it torn or worn? A squeaky saddle normally quiets down after the springs are oiled.

AFTER-CARE

Budget to spend a bit more once you've got the bike, replacing the safety-critical parts that are subject to wear. Change rusty, sticky or frayed brake cables. Basic replacement cables are fine – run a little oil over them before installing. Make sure you get the right cable type. Cable outers need replacing if they are kinked or excessively rusty. Fit new brake blocks if the old ones are worn. Change the chain if it needs it (a bike shop will advise if you're unsure), and then keep the new one oiled! Some modern 'dry' lubricants don't attract dirt, though they are more expensive and not as waterproof.

Free cycle maintenance courses are held at certain times of the year in Swindon. Look out for dates at www.cycleswindon.org.uk.

An easier way to plan your journey



www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk

An easier way to plan your journey



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CYCLING IN OLDER AGE



If you have not cycled since your younger days, you'll be surprised at just how light, efficient and comfortable modern bicycles can be. Compared to your heavy old all-steel roadster, today's lightweight bikes are easy to lift and agile in hilly terrain.

There is no age at which cycling stops being an option, and anyone cycling regularly into older age adds years to their life expectancy. Research shows that regular cyclists have, on average, the health of someone ten years younger.

Cycling four miles daily reduces the risk of coronary heart disease by 50 per cent. It's good aerobic exercise AND involves smooth, regular movement, putting no load-bearing strain on joints or muscles – good news if you are arthritic, overweight or generally unfit. Regular cycling improves lung function: useful if you suffer from bronchitis or asthma.

Manufacturers are now thinking beyond youth-culture cycle fashion, realising that in most industrialised countries there will soon be many more active 55 to 70 year olds than there are teenagers. And young people can be a difficult market, with fashion changing like the shifting sands. For older people image is important, but so is quality, and anyone getting into active cycling at the age of fifty-five may well cycle for twenty years or more yet.

Take up cycling now and you can enjoy expanding networks of cyclepaths and other facilities. But there is still much work to be done. Millions of cyclists with decades of experience to call on, and the leisure time to apply it, can put further pressure on the authorities for ever better facilities. Older people, with a lifetime of knowledge and experience can be a highly effective campaign group, mindful of the power of their vote and the authority of their voice.



NEED A BOOST?

Electric bikes and trikes are everyday cycles with an added battery powered electric motor. They usually work by sensing how much pressure you are supplying to the pedals and doubling it. No compulsory helmet use or insurance. No road tax or MOT requirement.

LOCAL BIKE SHOPS IN SWINDON

THE BIKE ROOMS

Cater mainly for road cycling, time trial, track and cyclo-x. Stockist of a large range of spares on the shelf and a selection of clothing for both sexes. Bikes stocked are Specialized, Trek and Pinarello.
Tel: 01793 644 185
1-2 Marlborough Road, Old Town, Swindon, SN3 1QY <http://www.thebikerrooms.com>
(The Bike Rooms features the Pinarello Factory Outlet Telephone: 020 8555 4045 www.pinarellofactoryoutlet.com)

SWINDON CYCLES SUPERSTORE

Excellent selection of Raleigh, Giant and Powabike cycles. Offers bike repairs and servicing.
Tel: 01793 700105
60a, Beechcroft Rd, Upper Stratton, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 7QD
www.swindoncycles.co.uk

MITCHELLS CYCLES

Family run business with over 230 bikes on display. Raleigh dealership, with bike repairs and servicing.
Tel: 01793 523306
27, Shrivensham Rd, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 2QA
www.mitchellcycles.co.uk

DAME CYCLING

A shop that specialises in women's cycling - bikes, clothing and accessories. Caters for Triathletes too.
Tel 01793 766 560
The Donkey House, Queens Road, Hannington, Swindon, SN6 7RW
www.damecycling.co.uk

HARGROVES CYCLES

Road bikes, mountain bikes and kid's bikes, plus a range of accessories and clothing. Bikes stocked include Specialized, Cube, Scott and Kona.
Tel: 01793 528 208
Unit 9, Penzance Drive, Churchward Park, SN5 7RX
www.hargrovescycles.co.uk

DAN'S CYCLES

Stockist of mountain bikes, road bikes and kid's bikes. Offers accessories, bike repairs and servicing.
Tel: 01793 423380
116, Manchester Rd, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 2AF
www.danscycleswindon.co.uk

EMOTION (Electric Bikes)

E-Motion EVC specialise in power-assisted cycles (also known as electric bicycles, e-bikes and pedelecs) and electric scooters: stockists of Go-cycle, Izip, Powabyke, Raleigh and Wisper, and a range of bike accessories including Thule bike carriers.
Tel: 01793 251200
373 Cricklade Road, Swindon SN2 1AQ
www.e-motionevc.co.uk

RECYCLES

A Salvation Army social enterprise that provides affordable recycled bikes, repairs and a central point for cycling news and meetings. The repair side of the business provides recognised training and work skills for homeless people as well as for other volunteers.
Tel: 01793 401830
Booth House, 1 Spring Close, Swindon, SN1 2BF

Details are correct at time of publication. The latest list of local bike shops can be found at www.swindontravelchoices.co.uk/cycle/cycle-shops.aspx

Bargain Bikes

Tel: 01793 849462
152c, High St, Wootton Bassett, Swindon, Wiltshire SN4 7AB

Bike Doctor

Phil Mitchell
Tel: 01793 874873
Mob: 07850 650956

Halfords

Tel: 01793 714760
Fleming Way, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 2NN

Mobile Cycle Medic

Lew Lawton
Tel: 01793 763162
Mob: 07962 118849

WORKPLACE CYCLING

Swindon's employers have also been investing in cycling to improve facilities for their workforce. At Triginos House on Windmill Hill Business Park, RWE-npower upgraded their changing rooms with brand new lockers. This was coupled with an expansion of the bike shed. Stagecoach Bus Company is also encouraging its bus drivers to cycle to work to offset the sedentary nature of their job, and is constructing a secure bike shed at Swindon bus station. At Kembrey Park, three new shower units have recently been installed for employees to use, whilst the Research Councils have upgraded their cycle shelters on the Polaris House Campus.



LOOKING AFTER THE ENGINE

(THAT'S YOU!)

You and a bicycle are the most energy-efficient of all moving vehicles, and clearly the most intelligent! Your body is an amazing constant-temperature fuel cell, perfectly designed to power a bicycle. Regular cycling will make you fitter, healthier, stronger, happier and more alert, but if you rush into cycling too quickly, you could be put off for life. A long charity ride or cycle tour can be something to aim for, but build up to it gradually, with a series of short rides. If you have a health problem, discuss your plans with your doctor (large numbers of doctors are cyclists themselves). Eat and drink regularly, but remember that alcohol causes dehydration.

Cycling can also help you control your weight: body fat falls by between two and three kilos after four to five months of regular cycling. A moderate half-hour each way commute will burn at least eight calories a minute, or the equivalent of eleven kilos of fat in a year. Cycling also helps protect against coronary heart disease, diabetes, strokes, osteoporosis and colon cancer, the third most common cause of cancer deaths.

Cycling around town helps others. It is quiet, sociable and safe for other road users and pedestrians. So for a healthier, richer, happier life, get on that bike!



FIND YOUR COMFORT ZONE

A low saddle will soon tire you out. Make sure you can just about extend your leg on the downstroke, and avoid rocking hips. Your saddle can be adjusted up and down, forwards and back, and you can tilt the nose up and down. A more upright position can ease back and neck strain. Handlebars should be easy to reach.

The handlebars can be moved up or down, and bars on many modern bikes allow you to adjust the handlebar position in thirty seconds. Padded cycling mitts, cycling gloves or foam bar-grips cushion vibration, and bars which curve towards you slightly position your wrists at a more natural angle.

Some women and smaller men benefit from frame geometries which take a smaller torso size into account (see page 11 on bikes for women).

Shoes with firm soles help. Toe clips fixed to the pedals stop your feet from slipping and increase pedalling efficiency. (You can leave the straps loose in traffic).



WHAT TO WEAR

You can cycle in almost anything, but cycle clothing is excellent these days, and is getting fashionable too. Layering is important. If the weather gets colder or wetter, don't choose a thicker material, but add more layers. This makes it easier to adjust to changing temperatures by adding or taking off just one layer.

A cotton T shirt absorbs sweat so can leave you with an unpleasant cold damp layer against the skin. Specialist synthetic fabrics leave the skin drier, by wicking sweat to the outside, where it can evaporate without cooling the body too much and without soaking the clothing.

Fit is an important consideration and a baggy jacket acts like a braking parachute and lets cold air get closer to the skin, which makes the wind feel colder as sweat evaporates directly on the skin.

It's worth spending good money on the right gear, though not necessarily going as far as the lycra look. Lycra is great for serious cyclists, with its skintight fit and multi-stretch properties. It's light, functional, and prevents chafing, but has minimal insulation qualities, and is suited only to warmer days.

A helmet must fit you snugly, and come down to cover as much of the temples

as possible. Those with an interior size adjustment allow you to wear a headband underneath in winter, and can be 'shrunk' again for summer. Keep your helmet in good condition, and replace it as soon as it becomes damaged.

Winter cycling can be great fun if you choose the right clothing. Luckily, pedalling helps keep you warm! Get a windproof pair of cycling gloves to improve your winter comfort, and if you're going a long way in the rain, waterproof overshoes and trousers will also help. Breathable waterproofs can help keep you comfortable, and can cut out wind chill.

Cycling shoes have stiff soles to transfer more of your effort to the pedals, and are often well ventilated to keep your feet cool. Serious cyclists often use 'click-systems' to fasten their soles to the pedals to stop slipping in wet weather and to make pedalling more efficient, since you add a little power to the up-stroke. You twist your foot sideways a little to release. You can still buy old-fashioned toe-clips to do much the same job. Waterproof socks or overshoes are great for wet and cold conditions.



DON'T LET WINTER PUT YOU OFF.

USE SEVERAL LAYERS OF SPECIALISED CYCLING CLOTHING, AND WINTER CYCLING GLOVES.





JARGON BUSTER

ALL BIKES ARE WONDERFUL, AND YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW WHAT THE BITS ARE CALLED - BUT THIS GUIDE MAY HELP IF YOU WANT TO TALK BIKE LINGO.

ALLOY WHEELS: All good bikes will have aluminium alloy wheel rims – they are lighter, don't rust, and the brakes work much more efficiently than with steel rims.

STAINLESS STEEL SPOKES: A mark of quality. Stainless steel spokes are not really any lighter than the cheaper galvanised ones, but they do look better and don't rust.

DOUBLE-BUTTED SPOKES: Like double-butted tubing, these are thinner in the middle where the extra metal is not needed. They are lighter, and funnily enough they are actually stronger than the normal ones (called 'straight gauge').

DERAILLEUR GEARS: Mountain bikes just keep accumulating more gears. Derailleur gears work by having several cogs at the front and back of different sizes, and use a cage mechanism (the derailleur) to 'derail' the chain from one cog to another. It sounds unsophisticated and it is, but it is light and works surprisingly well. Derailleur systems are exposed to the elements so need a reasonable amount of maintenance. They can have 15, 18, 21, 24 or 27 gears, although there is quite a bit of overlap in the ratios. The idea behind having all of these gears is to allow the rider to crank the pedals at a constant pace (cadence) no matter what kind of slope the bike is on.

HUB GEARS: These have a gearbox built into the rear hub, sealed away from the elements. Gears are engaged and disengaged by a pushrod from the end of the hub. Hub gears are heavier than derailleurs, but need a lot less maintenance, and are more forgiving of misuse. They can have between three and 14 ratios, with no overlap between them.

GEAR SHIFTERS: Gear shifters are the controls on the handlebars which you use to change gear. Nowadays, almost all of them are indexed – this means they click into gear and you don't have to guess how far to move them. They come in three basic types:

THUMBSHIFTERS – These are simple levers sitting on top of the handlebars - push them one way to go up a gear, push the other way to go down.

PUSHBUTTON SHIFTERS – These use two buttons or levers, usually one for your thumb and one for your index finger. Push with your thumb to go up a gear, push with your index finger to go down.

TWIST SHIFTERS – With these, you twist a section of the handlebar grip to change gear.

RIM-MOUNTED BRAKES: These squeeze the wheel rim. All rim brakes have the advantage of being light, but can have problems in poor conditions – because the rim gets very close to the road it can get clogged up with mud or water, making the brakes less powerful. There are two main types:

V-TYPE OR CANTILEVER – These have two arms fitted to the frame or fork, pulled together by a cable strung between them. V-types have long arms and one cable that pulls across the top of the tyre. Cantilevers have shorter arms and a Y-shaped cable which pulls upwards. Both types are very powerful, and are found on mountain bikes and many others.

CALLIPER – These are like pincers: pulling the cable makes them clamp onto the rim. They are not as powerful as V-type or Cantilever, but the recent 'Dual Pivot' ones come very close. Callipers are found mainly on racing bikes.

DISC BRAKES: These work at the hub, not the rim. The exposed steel disc at the hub is clamped by a small calliper. Discs can be very powerful, and are also pretty light. They are exposed to the elements, but because they are away from the rim they are less affected by mud and water. Discs are popular on mountain bikes because they are so powerful.

CYCLING TO SCHOOL...

Many parents are reluctant to allow their children to cycle to school, but 47% of children want to do so. To help build confidence and skills, there's a variety of training taking place around Swindon's schools. The Sustrans project "Bike It" runs in Swindon, which includes Bike it breakfasts for schools – 1 per month, that encourage children and parents to cycle to school and receive a bacon butty, Yummy! It's not just about kids cycling through cones in the playground. The varied programme includes treasure hunts, bike



picnics, exploring the local countryside from the saddle and over 1000 children have been taught to mend a puncture. Rosie, who's only six, cycles to school every day. "Bike It came to our school and we started doing lots of fun things," she says. "I won the prize for writing about bike safety. I'm very fit now. I will probably be an Olympic cyclist because I love it." The aim of the project is to help more families get out on their bikes together, which is starting to happen in Swindon, thanks to Bike It.

CYCLING TO WORK...

As petrol prices push the cost of motoring higher and higher, many people are realising that cycling to work is very cost effective. But saving money isn't the only benefit. John Jaggard was encouraged to buy a bike when his employer offered the "Cycle to Work Scheme" and has been pedalling to work ever since. His journey from Gorse Hill to the town centre is mainly on off road paths and John started to see immediately how cycling was helping him. "The main benefit for me is feeling fitter," he says. "I've lost an inch from around my waist in a few months and that's just from 10 minutes each way each day. I can feel how much fitter I've become, and it's a big help for my other hobbies of fell walking and climbing." John has also done more cycling at weekends since he started cycling to work. Along with his wife, there are cycle trips to town as well as exploring local villages in the borough. For Lizzie, it was the frustration of sitting in traffic congestion that convinced her to cycle to work. "I cycle around 6 miles from Chisledon to town," she explains. "Most mornings I come through Coate Country Park and the biggest dangers are deer and squirrels crossing your path. It can be beautiful on a nice day, and I find it relaxes me and shakes off all the day's stresses."



CYCLING FOR HEALTH...

If you thought cycling was only for young people then think again. Cathy Williams attended an over 50s training course, set up by the CTC and Swindon Borough Council, after going her whole life without learning to ride a bicycle. "I only wish I'd learned sooner, I am happy with the level I reached," she says. Cathy now cycles to the shops instead of driving and has befriended many neighbours by greeting them as she passes on the bike, something she would never have done in the car.

"I really enjoyed my time on the cycling course considering I was unable to cycle at the start", says Suz, another participant on the training course. "On our last day we cycled all the way to Nightingale Woods which to me was amazing, nearly 13 miles! The best bit for me was one Saturday I went on a bike ride with my children." Suz now attends a weekly cycling club where she enjoys leisurely cycling with friends and family.

CYCLING FOR FUN...

Thanks to the CTC cycling charity and the Big Lottery Fund, Swindon is lucky enough to have a whole fleet of adapted bikes. These include a Twister, which is a side-by-side tandem with two sets of handlebars and pedals, a hand bike for people with no lower body strength, a selection of trikes for people with balance difficulties, recumbent trikes, which

allow users to sit back and steer from the side or with a steering wheel, and a platform bike, which is suitable for wheelchairs. "It's wonderful because someone in a wheelchair can get that feeling of being on a bike" says Angie Smith, manager of Upham Road Day Centre, "and people who can ride bikes, but not independently, can take part in a

type of exercise they might not otherwise try." Some people use these bikes as a low-impact form of exercise to cycle back to health after surgery or a stroke. People who have been diagnosed obese tend to find the laid-back seats on recumbent bikes a more comfortable alternative, and enjoy being outside in the fresh air instead of the gym.



HOW SAFE IS IT?

Even though we don't have huge networks of segregated cyclepaths, as in Holland or Denmark, statistics for cycling safety are not what you might expect. In Britain there is a fatal cycling accident for every 31 million miles cycled. This equates to over 21,000 years for someone cycling an average of four miles each and every day of the week. Only around one in every 28 deaths on the road involves a cyclist, and for every cyclist who dies on the road, around 400 UK citizens die of illnesses related to lack of exercise.

It is much safer to cycle than not to cycle! Research is now showing that if you cycle regularly you can expect to be as fit as someone ten years younger, and that regular cycling adds an average of two and a half years to your life, a figure which takes into account the relatively small number of fatalities each year.

HERE'S HOW TO CUT THE CHANCES OF AN ACCIDENT EVEN FURTHER:

- KEEP YOUR BIKE IN GOOD ORDER. MANY CYCLE ACCIDENTS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH OTHER TRAFFIC.
- KNOW YOUR BIKE WELL, SO THAT YOU RIDE INTUITIVELY.
- KNOW YOUR HIGHWAY CODE. IT APPLIES TO CYCLISTS
- BE AWARE AND THINK AHEAD IN TRAFFIC.
- IF POSSIBLE, POSITION YOURSELF TO BE VISIBLE TO OTHER ROAD-USERS, ESPECIALLY AT JUNCTIONS AND ROUNDABOUTS.
- WEAR BRIGHT CLOTHING INCORPORATING REFLECTIVE MATERIAL.
- MOVE SMOOTHLY AND PREDICTABLY. SPEED AND ACCELERATION CAN GIVE EXTRA SAFETY; SO A GOOD QUALITY BIKE HELPS.
- KEEP YOUR BRAKES WELL ADJUSTED; YOU NEED THEM A LOT IN TRAFFIC.
- SHOUT 'ROOM!' IF A DRIVER COMES TOO CLOSE. IT'S FAST AND EFFECTIVE.
- DON'T COWER IN THE GUTTER. KEEP A METRE'S SPACE FREE TO YOUR LEFT IN CASE YOU NEED TO MOVE INTO IT, OR IF A CAR-DOOR OPENS SUDDENLY.
- AT ADVANCED STOP LINES WAIT IN A CENTRAL POSITION, EVEN IF TURNING LEFT.
- HOLD YOUR LANE FOR PERIODS IF IT'S SAFER FOR YOU, BUT DON'T CAUSE FRUSTRATION BEHIND YOU.
- USE YOUR EYES AND EARS TO BE AWARE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING.
- LEARN TO LOOK BEHIND WITH CONFIDENCE, OR USE A MIRROR. SIGNAL AND MOVE OUT SMOOTHLY TO PASS PARKED CARS AND BUSES.
- WATCH OUT FOR PEDESTRIANS STEPPING OUT: THEY CAN'T HEAR YOUR ENGINE!
- WEAR A HELMET FOR PROTECTION AGAINST LOW-IMPACT COLLISIONS AND DON'T EXPECT IT TO DO MUCH MORE THAN THAT.
- BE ASSERTIVE, AND PROUD TO BE PEDALLING, BUT ALSO POLITE.

GIVE YOUR BIKE A HEALTH CHECK



Nuts and bolts can work loose, especially on new bikes.

As the wheels pass through the forks front and back do they run closer to one side, or even touch the fork? If so, loosen the wheel in the frame and re-adjust.

Check there's plenty of rubber on the brake blocks and that they are lined up with the rim.

Check for loose or missing spokes

If the gears don't change smoothly it could be a bike shop job.

Twist a chain link from side to side. If there's lots of movement it needs replacing.

Oiling your chain is one of the kindest things you can do to your bike.

If you can pull a few links up off the chainwheel while its neighbours still sit on the teeth, the chain needs replacing.

Nuts and bolts can work loose, especially on new bikes.

If you can pull the brake levers all the way to the handlebars your brakes need adjusting.

Pull the brake lever a little and check the cable hidden underneath. Cables commonly fray at this point. Squirt some oil down the cable.

Stand at right angles to the front forks and check they have not been bent back in an accident. If in doubt, visit a bike shop.

If the wheel wobbles from side to side as it passes through the brake blocks it needs truing.

Check tyres are good order and well inflated. Knobbly tyres may be fashionable, but they soak up your energy on roads. Slick road tyres go faster. Consult your bike shop.

Grab both pedals and rock at right angles to the bike. If there's a lot of movement your bottom bracket is too loose.

Grab the pedals and push one in the opposite direction to the other, to check that the cranks are firmly bolted onto the ends of the bottom bracket axle.

BEATING FLATS

Some basic tips to beat the puncture problem. For full 'how-to' advice buy a cycle repair manual.

Fit good tyres, possibly with anti-puncture reinforcement. Some have Kevlar in the carcass. You can also fit anti-puncture tape between tyre and inner tube, but it needs to sit just right. Fit the best inner tubes. Good ones are more resistant.

Anti-puncture sealant, squirted into the inner tube through the valve, seals small holes from the inside.

Keep your tyres well pumped up, so that less tread surface touches the road, and to avoid 'pinch-punctures' if the rim bottoms out on a bump. Replace tyres with worn tread: less tread means less protection.

Check that the tyre sits evenly on the rim, with no bulges or side-wall damage. Your brake blocks should

grab the rim-wall and not the tyre-wall.

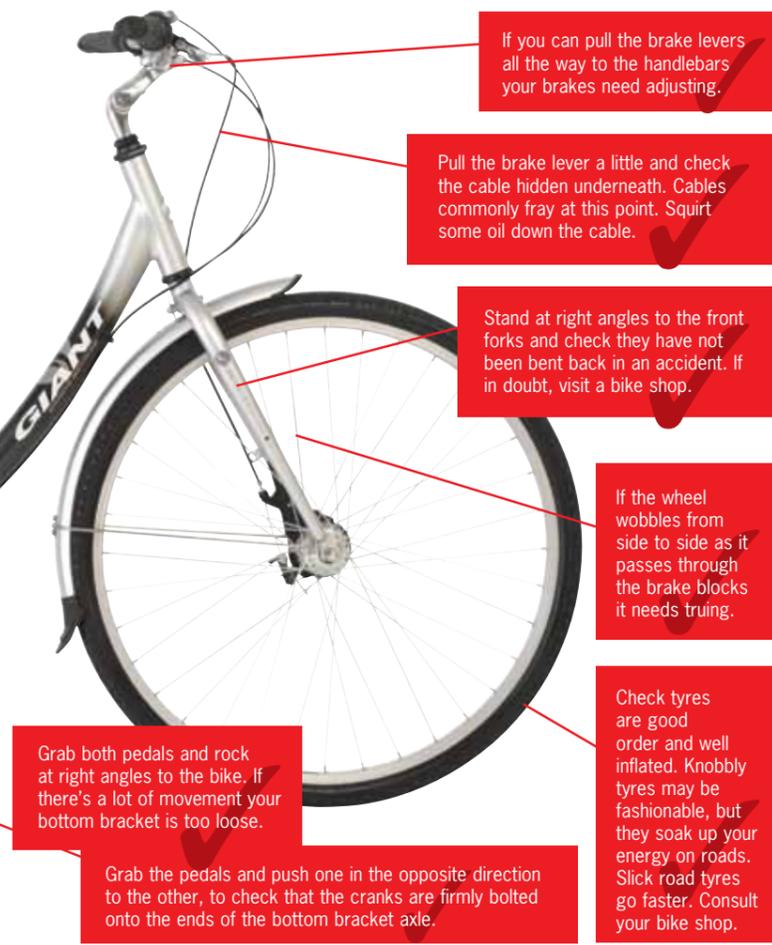
Check tyres for shards of glass, stones or thorns which could eventually work their way further in. If the puncture has already happened check the inside of the tyre - the offending item may still be sticking through, and give you another puncture.

Take a spare inner tube. You can fix the punctured tube at leisure later.

Use a modern repair kit. Most inner tubes these days are butyl and require vulcanising solution and patches.



REGULAR CHECKING IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR RIDING COMFORT AS WELL AS YOUR SAFETY. LUCKILY, ALMOST EVERYTHING ON A BIKE IS TOTALLY VISIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE. IF IN DOUBT, TAKE IT TO A BIKE SHOP.



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SITTING COMFY

There are no set rules about what kind of bike is kindest to your body; it's down to what suits you best as an individual. But a good, efficient riding position, involving your three points of contact, makes a huge difference. So experiment till it feels natural.

There are saddle solutions for everyone. If your riding position is upright, your hands and wrists will be sharing little of the burden, so you'll need a well-padded and well-sprung saddle. Experiment with different saddle heights and tilts: you can also move it nearer and further way from the handlebars, and how you position the handlebars themselves will affect your saddle (and wrist) comfort.

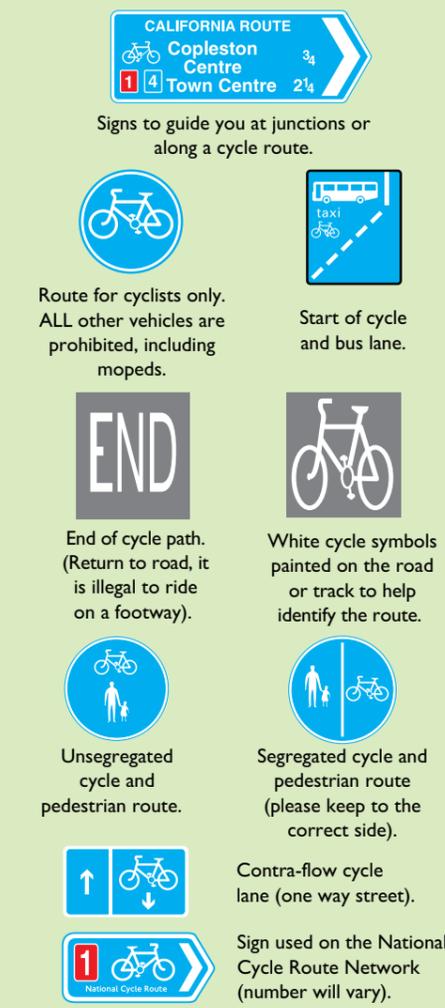
Some saddles have gel 'padding', others have a hole in the middle to lessen genital contact. Some saddles are made especially for women.

If nothing seems to work, try fitting a suspension seatpost under the saddle, or even ride a recumbent, which has a seat, not a saddle.

New cyclists can suffer from soreness due to friction from saddle and clothing rather than just from saddle pressure. So go easy at first, and take cream to sooth soreness.



TRAFFIC SIGNS & MARKINGS



CALIFORNIA ROUTE
Copleston Centre 3/4
Town Centre 2 1/4

Signs to guide you at junctions or along a cycle route.

Route for cyclists only. ALL other vehicles are prohibited, including mopeds.

Start of cycle and bus lane.

END

End of cycle path. (Return to road, it is illegal to ride on a footway).

White cycle symbols painted on the road or track to help identify the route.

Unsegregated cycle and pedestrian route.

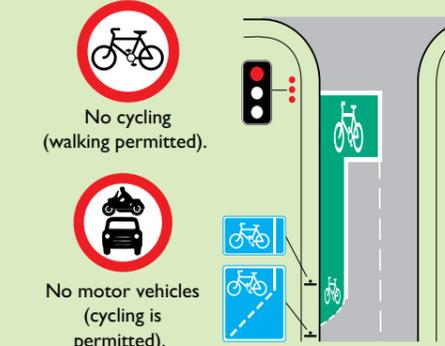
Segregated cycle and pedestrian route (please keep to the correct side).

Contra-flow cycle lane (one way street).

Sign used on the National Cycle Route Network (number will vary).

No cycling (walking permitted).

No motor vehicles (cycling is permitted).



Advanced stop lines are designed to improve safety and convenience for cyclists. At the front of the queue cyclists can be seen, reducing the chance of a conflict as vehicles turn. Cyclists must stay behind the front stop line and must proceed when the lights are green. Motorists must stay behind the first stop line and not obstruct the forward area.

Our thanks to Suffolk County Council.



BIKE EXTRAS

Some carefully chosen accessories can transform any bike from a leisure accessory into useful year-round transport. Here are a few things to consider:

LIGHTS

A must for any bike. Battery lights can unclip for security. Dynamo lights are bolted on, and have no batteries to run down – some newer versions will stay on when the bike stops. Carry a spare LED rear light.



TOOLS

Multi-tools are handy, but are best for emergency use. A small adjustable spanner, a reversible screwdriver and a set of Allen keys are a good start. It pays to buy the best you can afford.



HELMETS

A helmet must fit you snugly, and come down to cover as much of the temples as possible. Those with an interior size adjustment allow you to wear a headband underneath in winter, and can be 'shrunk' again for summer. Get a helmet with good ventilation, keep it in good condition, and replace it as soon as it becomes damaged or worn.

COMPUTER

Not an essential, but very popular. From budget versions which give you speed and mileage to complicated models with a wealth of functions. Ask your bike shop for advice.



PUMP

Well inflated tyres are key to easy and enjoyable cycling. Emergency pumps can be small enough to keep in a pocket. Stirrup ('track') pumps make inflation a breeze. Pumps should be of good quality, with replacement parts available. Whatever you go for, always have the means to fix a puncture with you.



RACK

A good rack will have four-point fixing, and will not flex under the load of a full set of panniers. Some have struts to keep panniers away from the spokes. A lightweight or clip-on rack can make a sports bike more useful for short tours or day rides.



LUGGAGE

Bags come in all shapes and sizes! Many are fully waterproof, and some are designed to carry documents and laptops safely. Get a set that clip firmly to the rack and cannot be shaken off. Handlebar bags, and 'courier' bags worn over the shoulder, are both handy.



BUYING FROM A BIKE SHOP

Think carefully and realistically about what you want from the bike you are about to buy. No one bike can do everything well. You may even need two very different bikes! Go to a good, well-established cycle dealer for expert advice, a well set-up bike, and some free after-sales

service. Their bikes may cost more, but it's worth it. Ask to try the bike out, offering a deposit if needed. Bikes have never been better value. Go for the best you can afford. Don't risk the inconvenience and cost of repair bills on second rate machines. Aluminium alloy (as opposed to steel) components are lighter and are generally a sign of a better bike. Steel wheels make a bike very heavy, and brake blocks take a long time to 'bite' on them in the wet. Look for a bike already fitted with the equipment you want. If you need extra accessories have them fitted by the shop as part of the purchase. Avoid buying one of those cheap new

bikes that pop up in garages, car parts stores and catalogues. They will come with a poor guarantee, little or no after sales service, and their poor quality will soon start to show. You deserve better than that. Specialised bikes can cost a lot more, but their rarity means that they fetch a good price when you come to sell them.

BUYING FROM A BIKE SHOP

Swindon has a range of bike shops to cater for all needs and budgets. For a list see page 17

SECURE STORAGE



THERE ARE SIMPLE WAYS OF MINIMISING THE RISK OF THEFT. IT COMES DOWN TO HAVING A GOOD LOCK, USING IT EFFECTIVELY, AND CHOOSING THE RIGHT LOCATION.

CYCLE SECURITY

LOCKS

Choose a lock that matches the quality of your bike. A bike you love, with a high value requires a top range, hardened D-lock or high quality padlock and chain. There is a huge difference between cheap and expensive D locks, even though they look similar. A £30 banger should be reasonably safe with a cheaper cable lock.

Look for the 'Sold Secure' mark. 'Sold Secure' products are categorised into Bronze, Silver and Gold ratings and offer at least 1, 3 and 5 minutes of resistance to thieves. Further details can be found at <http://www.soldsecure.com>. 'Sold Secure' is endorsed by the Home Office, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Master Locksmith's Association.

Around half of all reported bike thefts are of unlocked bikes and many more are secured with only a combination lock or a flimsy padlock and chain. D-locks costing less than £20 are little more effective but



a quality D lock has a good deterrent value, especially in busy cycle parking areas. It can be cracked, but it takes more time and special equipment. Look out for quality products that have passed recognised security standard tests. Crime Prevention Officers report that if every cyclist used a high quality D-Lock, cycle theft could be reduced by between 50 and 90 per cent.

LOCKING WELL

Always lock your bike to an immovable, unbreakable object. Do not lock just the front wheel to anything: the rest of your bike will go. Many cyclists carry a light additional lock to secure the front wheel to the frame, if the frame is locked to something else. There are also long cable locks which will go round frame, wheels, and immovable object.

Some cyclists lock their bikes, then remove their quick-release saddle and seat pin for safe keeping, and even their front wheel.

LOCKATION!

Where you lock your bike is critical. Best of all are Sheffield cycle stands, now often seen in urban areas, placed in small groups. Otherwise lock your bike to secure railings or a post. Avoid drainpipes, which are easily shattered.

Never try to hide your bike away down a dark alley. This gives the thief an ideal opportunity to work unnoticed. In fact, thieves go around looking for hidden bikes in back alleys. Parking your bike in a well-lit, open space means thieves are more likely to see it in the first place, but they are also far more conspicuous if they try to steal it.

The garden shed is no longer a serious option for storing good bikes but you can fit purpose-made anchor points in your shed, or by your front door for short term parking. Alternatively use ring-ended Rawlbolts available from your local hardware store. These are not hardened but can be very difficult for thieves to get

at because the ring bolts are almost flush to the wall and are then obstructed by the lock used to secure the bicycle.

Secure storage is fundamental for encouraging cycle use. So lockers are seen more and more on railway stations, at council offices and at hospitals. If you cycle to work, ask your employer about a secure cycle shed or store, to which only registered cyclists can gain access, perhaps by a swipe card or combination lock. Modern sheds are often fitted with secure, well-designed cycle racks and closed circuit TV.

Owning more than one bike gives you flexibility. You can use your 'hack' bike for round town, and your expensive bike for rides into the countryside, where theft is not such a danger.

PLANNING FOR THE WORST

The police detection rate is only about 5%. But it gets easier for them if you have taken a note of your bike's make, colour, main accessories and frame number, probably found under the bottom bracket. Make yourself a specification sheet detailing all the parts on your bike. Take photos of your bike and record the key number of your lock. Keep these in a safe place for future reference. Remember:

LOCK IT OR LOSE IT!



The Western Flyer is a branded two mile cycle and pedestrian route linking West Swindon and the town centre. Many sections have been resurfaced, with improved lighting and new signs that feature a route logo created by a local graphic designer.

The 'green brand' theme offers a distinctive identity as the Western Flyer passes through a mix of rural and urban surroundings as it runs across the River Ray, through Barnfield and into town via North Star.

Future plans around Swindon include improvements to cycle and pedestrian routes from the south and east of Swindon, including the removal of barriers which can make cycling across the town difficult.



REPAIRING BIKES, MENDING LIVES

The Salvation Army in Swindon has launched its second social enterprise scheme, based on providing training and work experience for residents of its social services centres in repairing bicycles and selling them on.

'Recycles' is a meeting place and resource centre for people that share an enthusiasm for all things related to cycling. The modern premises adjacent to Booth House Lifehouse in Spring Close offer information, help and advice ranging from local cycle routes, clubs and the benefits of cycling to organised events. 'Recycles' can professionally repair or service bikes at a competitive price or sell a quality refurbished model ready to go.

The mechanics are professionally trained and all bikes are safety checked to recognised standards. A free service is provided within three weeks of purchase for every bicycle sold. The new project is built on the success of 'The Sandwich People' catering business, the first social enterprise venture by the residents of the 50-bed Lifehouse which provides accommodation and support for men and women who have been homeless.

Liz Osborne, business projects coordinator for Booth House Lifehouse, said, "'Recycles' is about more than repairing bicycles; we are mending broken lives. We provide opportunities for development and training in a supportive but authentic working environment. We help people to develop a new social network based on respect, understanding and a shared hope for the future.'

Mr Brian Gibbs, centre manager of Booth House Lifehouse, added, 'We started 'Recycles' to help people rebuild their lives whilst providing a service and resource to the community. We show people a way back into work and let them realise their full potential. By giving them self confidence and a belief in their future we see individuals grow, develop, feel valued and contribute to their local community again.'

Residents were involved in the development of the project from the outset and have been at the heart of the initiative, choosing the name and planning for the opening of the shop which will involve many of the trainees and team workers.



Details of the project can be found on Facebook at 'Recycles, Booth House'

ROUND AND ROUND

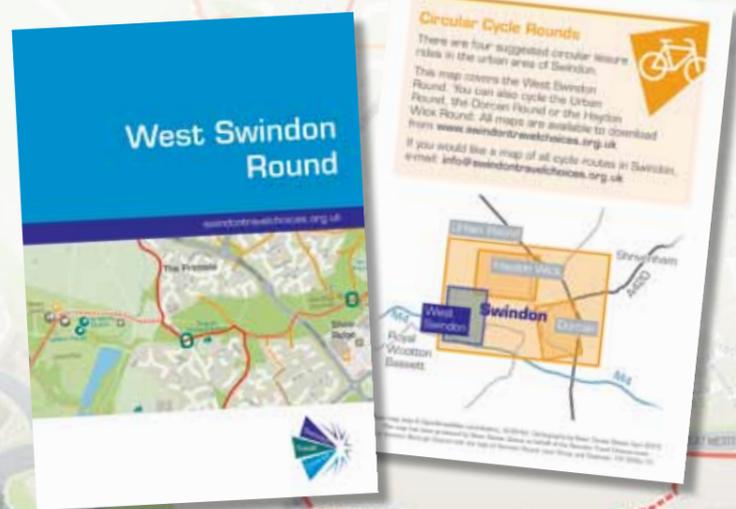
The Swindon Rounds is a series of four leisure maps showing circular routes for walking and cycling around Swindon's network of paths.

The routes first appeared on the 2009 Swindon Cycle map and are now available as separate maps to download and print at home.

There are three circular seven mile routes: Haydon Wick, West Swindon

and Dorcan, plus a 17 mile Urban Round, which circles the whole town. The paths are mainly off road and safe to walk or cycle.

Download the maps at home from www.swindontravelchoices.org.uk or email: info@swindontravelchoices.org.uk if it's easier for us to send you a copy



SWINDON BICYCLE USERS GROUP

Over the past few years, the Swindon BUG has been working hard to increase the number of cyclists in the borough and getting more people active.

The group meets several times a year to discuss various cycling initiatives and to bring together public, private and voluntary sector organisations. The BUG have also set up annual orienteering events, and its volunteers help out with initiatives such as Bike Week and social bike rides, and feed into policies and consultations.

As a voice for the cyclists of Swindon, the group seeks representation at a strategic level within the Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Primary Care Trust. There is now a website that represents "all things cycling" that has been built and is managed by BUG members. The group also apply for funds to create opportunities to develop. Everyone's welcome to join in the group. For more details, see www.cycleswindon.org.uk



TAKING IT FURTHER

We hope we have inspired you to take up cycling, and that this guide will help you keep cycling. Buy a bike and at a stroke you will have a cheap, flexible and independent form of transport which will make an immediate difference to your daily life. The bicycle is part of a sustainable future for you and your children, so make friends with a good bike shop tomorrow and set off on that great planet-friendly adventure!

This guide has been compiled by Get Cycling, a Community Interest Company, in conjunction with Swindon Borough Council.

Of course, we're not the only people, and certainly not the first, to help you to get the best out of cycling:

Sustrans is a charity which has built 10,000 miles of the National Cycle Network. You can look at any part of this Network on www.nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk.

They also publish an excellent range of guides and maps, and organise ranger-led pedalling picnics. Phone 0117 926 8893. Email sustrans@sustrans.org.uk.

The CTC (Cyclists' Touring Club) is a national campaigning organisation with membership benefits, including a magazine. It attracts mostly recreational and commuter cyclists.

www.ctc.org.uk/swindon
Phone 0870 873 0060.
Email cycling@ctc.org.uk.

You can help make things better for all local cyclists by joining your local Bicycle User Group, which run a series of social bike rides and events in Swindon. Visit their website at www.cycleswindon.org.uk.

QUIZ KNOW YOUR TOWN

SEE IF YOU IDENTIFY THESE 15 LOCATIONS IN AND AROUND SWINDON. (ANSWERS ARE ON THE BACK PAGE)



1. Where would you find this Airman?
.....
2. In which car park are these cycle stands?
.....
3. Where is this mountain bike trail?
.....
4. Which road does this bridge span?
.....
5. Where would you find this fella?
.....
6. Where are these cycle stands?
.....
7. Which retail park does this cycle track go past?
.....
8. Which road crosses this subway?
.....
9. Which lake do these geese call home?
.....
10. Which café is the cyclist refuelling at?
.....
11. Where is this statue?
.....
12. Which bike shop window is this?
.....
13. How many fields does this cycle path run through?
.....
14. Where is this sign?
.....
15. Where are these cycle stands?
.....

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Local

Let's Ride

Enjoy free guided rides in Swindon. For all abilities, from easy to challenging. Sign up at goskyride.com

BRITISH CYCLING | sky



PLEASURE COMES WITH PEDALS ON. BECOME A BEAUTIFUL MOVER TODAY!

QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1 On the cycle track at South Marston
- 2 Brunel West car park
- 3 Croft woods
- 4 The M4 motorway
- 5 Queens Park
- 6 Great Western Hospital
- 7 Mannington retail park
- 8 Mead Way
- 9 Mouldon Hill lake
- 10 The Octagon cafe
- 11 Queen's park
- 12 Recycles (on Princes Street)
- 13 Seven
- 14 Stanton Park
- 15 The Orbital shopping park