

Edinburgh U3A Safe Cycling Guidelines

Introduction

1. This guidance has been prepared for U3A members who have joined the Cycle Touring Group or are potentially interested in joining.
All applications to become a member should be directed to the group leader. (richardanthonygrant@gmail.com).
2. All U3A members who join the Cycle Touring Group are entirely responsible for their own safety while on cycle rides or cycling to and from the start or finish of the ride. Nothing in this guidance is intended to undermine this basic principle and members will be required to sign a disclaimer to this effect.
3. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that members of the Cycle Touring Group consider and take account of the guidance set out below notwithstanding that it cannot cover all circumstances. Any queries should be addressed to the group leader in the first instance.
4. The guidance covers 5 broad topics:
 - Good cycling practice
 - Clothing for safe cycling
 - Communication before and on cycle rides
 - Personal fitness for cycling
 - Making sure your bike is in good mechanical condition and has the right equipment.

Good Cycling Practice

5. U3A cycle ride routes are selected to make maximum use of designated cycle paths and quiet roads. Nevertheless, some cycling on main roads may be necessary and this may include busy roundabouts.
6. In all cases, cyclists should ensure that they maintain constant awareness of motor traffic, pedestrians and road conditions. It is important that they position themselves so that, as far as possible, they are clearly visible to other road users whilst allowing motor traffic to overtake.
7. Unlike some other cycling groups, the Cycle Touring Group does not cycle in tight formation “pelaton” style. Instead we cycle in single file or two abreast depending on road or path conditions with the group or ride leader at the front and back marker for larger groups. The aim should be to leave sufficient space between cyclists to allow a safe stopping distance and for motor traffic to overtake.
8. Virtually all cycle paths are joint use with pedestrians which can include dog walkers, joggers and groups of walkers. As cycles are relatively quiet,

it is important to use a bell to give prior warning of approach. It is best to ring the bell a little before your approach so that walkers taken by surprise do not move directly into your path. Where walkers move aside to let you pass, it is courteous to say thank you.

9. Special care is required on canal towpaths especially under the bridges where the towpath may be narrow, cobbled and offer limited vision. You should always use progress slowly, with care and ring your bell to warn others of your approach listening for other bells in the opposite direction. If in doubt, stop and give way.
10. On quiet roads, it is important to watch out for approaching motor traffic in front or behind and “single up” as necessary including at bends and blind corners.
11. Special care is required on main roads. Use marked cycle lanes and advance stopping areas for cyclists at traffic lights where these are available. Be particularly careful when “slipstreaming” queues of stationary traffic (i.e. overtaking on the inside). When turning right, take advantage of breaks in the traffic flow to position yourself in the centre of the lane a short distance in advance of the turn whilst making a clear hand signal to indicate your intention to turn.

Clothing for Safe Cycling

12. The U3A encourages all cyclists on to wear a cycling helmet. Some members may also choose to wear a high visibility/reflective jacket or vest.
13. Given the vagaries of Scottish weather members are also strongly advised to bring a waterproof jacket and, possibly, waterproof over trousers. If cycling in a tee shirt in warm weather, it is also advisable to bring a jersey or sweatshirt in case it gets cold. Cycling gloves or a spare pair of ordinary gloves can also be helpful. We always aim to cycle in daylight but you may want to bring a set of lights just in case, especially near the end of the season.

Communication Before and During Cycle Rides

14. In advance of the ride, the group or ride leader will provide information by email on the route, approximate length and any major climbs. Please contact him or her with any queries.
15. It is essential that members give the group leader a telephone numbers (preferably a mobile number) so that they can be contacted, if necessary, at short notice in advance of the ride, for example, if it is to be cancelled

- because of poor weather. Members should also have the telephone of the group leader (and ride leader if different) and notify him or her if there is a change in their plans.
16. The group/ ride leader will also brief members about the route, possible stops etc as the ride progresses and any changes necessary to the original plans.
 17. Some cycling groups ask a member or members to provide a running commentary on traffic as the ride progresses. This is not the practice for the Cycle Touring Group and each member should be alert to traffic conditions. However it can be helpful to give a warning shout to any cyclists two abreast on a narrow road if a car is approaching behind or in front. It is also good practice to give warning if you intend to stop or pull over.
 18. If any member has a puncture or other mechanical problem en route, they should alert the group/ride leader who will advise on appropriate action. Other members should stop and wait until the position is clarified. (See also section on making sure your bike is in good mechanical condition).
 19. If for any reason a member decides, during the ride, that they cannot continue, for example, as a result of a serious mechanical or health problem, they should alert the group/ride leader immediately and discuss the best course of action. This might include telephoning a relative or friend for assistance, locking up the bicycle and catching public transport home, telephoning for an ambulance etc, according to the circumstances.
 20. If any member plans to leave the group before the end of the ride for other reasons, they should also make sure they notify the group/ride leader.
 21. It is good practice to carry a fully charged mobile phone on rides for use in emergencies etc.

Personal Fitness for Cycling

22. Compared to many other cycling groups, most U3A rides are relatively short (30 to 40 miles in total) and average speeds are modest . We also stop for a coffee break and a picnic lunch where possible. **Nevertheless, if you have any doubts about your fitness for rides of this nature, please take advice from your GP before joining the group.**
23. Before applying to join the Cyclers Touring Group, you should make sure that are able to cycle competently and are used to cycling around Edinburgh. The U3A does not provide basic cycle skills training but there are organisations in Edinburgh that may offer this – contact the group leader for further information

24. The U3A recommends that members carry an In Case of Emergency (ICE) card with a contact name and telephone number and other relevant information. Suitable cards have been prepared by the U3A and will be handed out on rides by the group leader.

Making Sure your Bicycle is in Good Mechanical Condition

25. It is essential that you make sure that your bike is in good mechanical order before coming on a ride. If you have doubts about the roadworthiness of your bike, take in into your local bike shop for a service and any necessary repairs.

26. Punctures are the most common problem and can happen on any bike. The chances of a puncture, however, are reduced by making sure the tyres are not worn or bald or that the side of the tyres are not cracked. Tyres should be inflated to the recommended, manufacturer's tyre pressure (see side of tyre). All cyclists should carry a spare inner tube for the size of tyre on their bike, a tyre puncture repair kit together with tyre leavers and a pump.

27. The group/ride leader and, normally, some other members carry a few basic tools and will try to help with simple mechanical problems such as punctures and chain throws. But more complicated mechanical problems cannot be fixed by the side of the road and there is no back up repair van. This reinforces the need to ensure that the bike is in good condition before going on the ride.

Richard Grant, Group Leader

Cycle Touring Group – Edinburgh U3A

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