

Heart-to-Heart



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Tour Director Musings

My wish for the New Year is for you to have some great rides, to make time for joy, friendship and connection to the outdoors on a HeartCycle tour. Take an adventure, one that requires you to transport yourself under your own power. There is effort required. You will sweat, your legs will burn and you will most likely want to stop at some point. Enjoy the view while catching your breath. Visit with a fellow bikers. Be awe inspired by a beautiful landscapes. The end destination should not be your goal, experiencing the whole journey and the reward of arriving, that is worth the pain and will inspire a deep respect and awe for where you are.

Day by day, we're inching toward another awesome season on our bikes. Whether you're brand new or a veteran, we've got tours and leaders who can help make a memorable vacation or two! Come on a HeartCycle tour in 2024. Have fun, make new friends and enjoy great SAG stops.

Judy Siel, Tour Director

HeartCycle LEJOG Tour

By Greg Lestikow

17 days of riding. 1,000 miles. 68,000 feet of climbing. 19 pounds of sticky toffee pudding.

Those are the stats you'll see on my Strava from our journey across England and Scotland. Except the last one. You'd have to look at the cholesterol readings from my last annual physical for that.

Those are big numbers, at least for me and my dad. But we knew we were signing up for a burly ride when we registered for LEJOG, short for Land's End to John O'Groats, the storied south-north traverse of the UK mainland.

What I didn't predict was how much freedom the HeartCycle model of organized rides would give us to enjoy each other's company and make memories that we'll come back to for the rest of our lives. I'm not normally an "organized tour" guy, but I also recognize the energy and potential for conflict that comes with going it on your own. Would I cherish the chance to spend three weeks biking and drinking English ales and Scottish Scotch with my dad? Absolutely. Would I want to dedicate a significant chunk of that time to arguing about which of the six narrow sheep paths in rural Devon we should take to get to our destination? Absolutely not.

So when my dad asked if I wanted to join him on the 2022 HeartCycle LEJOG tour, which was all about the former and very light on the latter, I jumped at the opportunity. From the get-go, I was blown away by how well-organized the trip was: daily itineraries months in advance, Ride With GPS routes sent by email with idiot-proof (but not dad-proof) upload instructions, planning calls with agendas and everything!





Of course, for all of you old HeartCycle hands reading this, it's nothing new. But for a fresh-faced newbie like me (with two kids, two jobs between me and my wife, a dog, etc.), outsourcing the plan and the headache was worth every penny that I paid (or that my dad paid, to be fair). Ultimately, I realized, we were paying for the ability to maximize our time together. And maximize we did.

I became a Liverpool Football Club fan for life when, on our first of two rest days, we saw the Reds return to a hometown parade crowd of over 750,000 people. My dad and I still laugh about trying to figure out what one of the more enthusiastic (and bevvied) supporters was shouting at us as her eight-year-old son climbed a nearby lamppost.

We both considered what life as a temporary Brit would look like as we navigated the charming canals outside of Bath, and cruised underneath the imposing dolerite cliffs that form the foundation of Edinburgh Castle.

And, of course, we popped champagne bottles together with our fellow cyclists when we arrived at John O'Groats, a lonely set of buildings and a striped pole off the northern tip of the UK mainland, just a few miles and a lot of cold water from the Orkney Islands.

Those were the big experiences. But the smaller moments stuck with me, too. Like carrying my dad's luggage up and down the stairs in our first hotel in Wadebridge, a son starting to pay back a lifetime of care and support. Or walking together down a country road in the Yorkshire Dales, admiring the endless green hills and guessing as only two city folk can about what crops we were actually looking at. Or, my dad's favorite: soaking in the pea-soup silence at the top of the hills in Dartmoor, only to be shocked back to reality by an unseen farmer screaming "Get in the f-ing truck, you stupid f-ing cows!"

England's a magical place, you know?



That was LEJOG. Three weeks of stories for my dad and me, and a chance for me to get to know others who he's spent so much time with in the saddle over the past few decades. We could have done it without HeartCycle, but I'm so grateful to the organization for taking the two of us on this journey. I really hope others like me will consider something similar, whether it's with a parent, a grandparent, an aunt or uncle they really like! Because, as my dad wrote to me from his London-Denver flight, "What we saw and experienced together will remain in my memory forever."

The Rebuttal

By Mark Lestikow

I'm the GPS challenged dad Greg is referring to. As you can probably guess I shed a number of happy tears when I read his article about our LEJOG tour. My wife, Polly, and I have led and participated in tours with HeartCycle for over 30 years. For multiple reasons (primarily "why would I want to ride in the rain all the time!") she passed on riding LEJOG with me. It was high on my bucket list however, and I'm grateful for Ruthie, my daughter-in-law, who told Greg to "go for it" when I floated the idea of him spending three weeks away from his family!

I won't share more LEJOG stories...all I can say is the whole time being with my son was MAGICAL! Not only was I blessed with his company, but everyone else got to know him as well. We had such a great time together that we rode the 2023 Berkshires tour with HeartCycle in May.

During our trips other HeartCycle riders commented on how cool it was to see us having so much fun together, and many related an experience they had traveling with someone from the “next generation”. It got Greg and I thinking about how much fun it would be to organize a HeartCycle tour for some combination of generations – we’re thinking about calling it the “NextGen ride.” In many of your cases it might be a son, daughter, adult grandson/ granddaughter, niece/nephew, etc. Not only would we have a great time, but we’d be welcoming in the next generation of HeartCycle members! Like Greg told me, “HeartCycle has all the infrastructure and systems in place for leading memorable tours with great people, so let’s keep it going!”.

We’re happy to put a “NextGen” tour together in 2025 if there is enough interest from our current members. **Below is a link to a very brief questionnaire.** If this idea resonates with you, please take a couple minutes to answer our questions to help us shape the NextGen ride idea.

Survey for NextGen Tour:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WT8XXM9>



2024 Tours with Available Space for You!!

HeartCycle 2024 tours are open and just a few have filled: so it's not too late to get your plans set for next year and biking touring with your favorite friends.

Spring Training in Texas Hill County: our most requested tour is back in Fredericksburg, TX March 15-22. Capture the spring wildflowers as you pedal through hilly terrains, meandering county lanes and picturesque ranch road. A fixed based adventure with a fun team leading the way. Fredericksburg is a charming old German town with art galleries, boutiques, fascinating museums, lively music venues and renowned restaurants.

Underground Railroad Year #1: a two week tour starts next April with your start of a three year adventure series. Year one starts in the deep south at Mobile, Alabama and heads north to Nashville, Tennessee. Imbed yourself into the history of the Civil War and spirit of what this country is all about. Bike through pine forests, past old plantation, along the Mississippi Blue Trail, follow rivers, Civil war battlefields, Natchez Trace Parkway and time to be a tourist with several rest days. (Years #2 & #3 will continue northward till finishing at the Canadian border.) Don't miss year #1!

Springtime in the South Bay Area, CA: May brings this six-day tour that will travel over the Coast Range to Half Moon Bay, down the CA coast to Santa Cruz and then back over those coastal mountains. Wildflower and green hill slopes make this area a beautiful place to ride in May. Challenge your legs with iconic climbs to the top of Mount Hamilton and Morgan Hill.

Basalt And Aspen: Come ride the Roaring Fork Valley in July on lightly travelled roads and bike paths with grand vistas and some gravel connecting roads. Another fixed base tour in a historic CO mountain town with nearby fishing or relaxing along the banks of the Frying Pan River. *Hotel rooms are filled, but if you have a second home in the valley we have space for you at a reduced price.*

Over Hill & Dale NW Vermont: Come August we would love to have you join HeartCycle in Vermont for a weeklong tour, biking past Lake Champlain to the peaks of the Green Mountains. Vermont is home to many 19th century covered wooden bridges, maple syrup, historic general stores, waterfalls and wonderful New England Inns.

West Virginia: A new tour for HeartCycle in a state we have not biked till 2024. The Appalachians are green and hilly. We will visit a new national park-New River Gorge National Park. Bike along small creeks, up & down knobs, through small hamlets, thick forests and see the largest arched bridge in the western hemisphere.

These tours have a few limited spaces available.

Balkan Quartet: Space for a male to share a room.

Bike & Barge Belgium: Space for a male to share a room and space for a female to share a room. *No not together!*

Tuscany: Space for a female to share a room.

Black Hills of South Dakota: Space for a female to share a room.

Full tour descriptions and contact information is on the website: heartcycle.org

Colorado HeartCycle 2024 Tours

Spring Training in Texas Hill Country

Fredericksburg, Texas

March 15 - 22 Status: Open
 6 days, Int./Adv. \$1,900.00
 Jim Schroeder, jimmyschweb@gmail.com
 Tina Vessels, tina.vessels@gmail.com

Springtime in the South Bay Area

Campbell, California

May 19 - 25 Status: Open
 6 days, Advanced \$1,900.00
 Carol Fredrickson, swmcarol@yahoo.com
 Janet Slate, jslate@ultrasys.net

Portugal: West Coast & Algarve

Lisbon, Portugal

April 7 - 17, 2024 Status: Waitlist
 11 days, Intermediate \$4,900.00
 Judy Siel, judy.siel@gmail.com

Explore the Door in '24

De Pere, Wisconsin

June 2 - June 9 Status: Full
 8 days, Intermediate \$2,000.00
 Jim Bethell, bethell.jim@verizon.net
 Cindy Dore, cdorecycle@gmail.com

Paso Robles Wine Country

Paso Robles, California

April 13 - 20 Status: Waitlist
 6 days, Int./Adv. \$2,000.00
 Cindy Alvarez, sindelou@cox.net
 Helayn Storch, helaynstorch@hotmail.com

Bike & Barge Beautiful Belgium

Bruges, Belgium

July 20 - 27, 2024 Status: Open
 7 days, Easy/Int. \$2,150.00
 Rita Kurelja, ritakurelja@hotmail.com

Underground Railroad Year 1

Mobile, Alabama

April 27 - May 12 Status: Open
 14 days, Int./Adv. \$2,840.00
 Jim Schroeder, jimmyschweb@gmail.com
 Ron Finch, blouie-rfinch@comcast.net

Basalt & Aspen - Road & Gravel Tour

Basalt, Colorado

July 24 - 28 Status: Open
 4 days, Int./Adv. \$1,100.00
 Ron Finch, blouie-rfinch@comcast.net
 Robin Heil, heikrobin1@gmail.com

Balkan Quartet

Tirana, Albania

May 17 - 31, 2024 Status: Open
 14 days, Int./Adv. \$2,600.00
 Lisa Evans, lceski@comcast.net

Puget Sound Island Hopping

La Conner, Washington

August 3 - 11 Status: Waitlist
 7 days, Int./Adv. \$2,560.00
 Cindy Alvarez, sindelou@cox.net
 Helayn Storch, helaynstorch@hotmail.com

