

The Thrills of Cycling Around Oxford

I've cycled around Oxford all my life. My family bike; my friends bike; everyone I know, with any sense, bikes. How else does one get around the place? Nothing beats weaving through the rush-hour traffic up Cornmarket or dodging the endless tourist busses full of yet more people to clog up an already saturated city. Cycling is the only way to free ourselves from the slow snake of traffic that slithers almost at a standstill along the blocked arteries of Oxford's road network. Driving is pointless. Biking is the only way you can get where you want to go, on time, fast.



We all know the advantages of cycling. It's free, it's environmentally friendly and it's great exercise. Why drive to work and then spend your lunch hour sweating away on an exercise bike in a sterile expensive gym? Cycling is also incredibly efficient and for a control freak like me this is perfect. I know exactly when I'll arrive at my destination. It takes me 20 minutes from my front door to my offices in central Oxford. I know exactly what time I have to get up in the morning; no second guessing the traffic conditions based on the day of the week, the weather or the time of year.

Not only that. I can stop en route. Pick up a baguette at my favourite sandwich bar, grab a coffee, drop the dry cleaning in, pick up a parcel. And I do these things on impulse. You can't do this from a car. By the time you've found a parking space and paid the exorbitant parking charges you can forget the chicken and avocado on multigrain baguette; a cuppa soup at my desk at work seems far more appealing.

Once you start cycling, the city of Oxford opens up for you. No longer are you fighting it, hot and frustrated. No longer are you at the mercy of bus drivers, and endless queues of traffic. The city of dreaming spires becomes just that, the city of your dreams. Believe me; once you've tasted this freedom, you're hooked.

More and more of us are taking up cycling and Oxford is designed for cyclists. Everyone cycles and there's safety in numbers. It is full of cycle lanes and where they don't exist, side streets are less polluted, and more interesting anyway. Nothing beats whizzing past the beautiful architecture of Oxford in the early morning sunshine, smug in the knowledge that you will arrive at work probably quicker, healthier and more relaxed than your fellow bus or car commuter.

If you love Oxford there's no better way to see it. On a bike, it's your city.