

## The joys and lessons of commuting with a bike

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I've spent two weeks on holiday and two weeks on a course hence the lack of

posts on FB and the blog. The course required commuting. It was near enough to my mum to allow me to stay with her and far enough to be a hassle. I originally thought I would use her car and drive. Then I looked into the trains and thought about commuting with a bike. My mother's car is a diesel bought when they were thought to be more eco friendly. She doesn't use it much and is about to stop driving. In the end I decided to drive would probably take as long and would be just as stressful. (Notionally according to google and bing maps this is untrue). I also think you have to practice what you preach. So for two weeks I took two trains and cycled 3 miles in each direction. What have I learnt? **Information is contradictory.** The rail companies gave different information about whether I was allowed to travel with my bike in the rush hour. In fact I was. Ditto whether I could use my ticket on the inter city trains. Ditto I was. Although apparently not the 08:10 Virgin train from New St. **Cost.** £9 return; probably could have got this cheaper. Taking £0.45/mile as the true cost of running the car (depreciation/fuel etc) then the train would be cheaper. A surprise. I would paid my mum for the fuel. In actual fact I had to spend a load of money on my bike (tyres/wheel straightening) although this has needed doing for years (second bike) so now its good for some time. **Bikes on trains.** With Virgin you have to book in advance, which for practical reasons was not possible if you are commuting with a bike. Others you turn up, albeit for limited spaces. After a few days of struggling on and off trains in the rush hour I risked leaving my bike at the destination station. This worked very well. There were at least 100 other bikes there and I spoke to some police you were keeping an eye on them. My fellow commuters did not appreciate the bike, although the bond between cyclists is amazing. **Commuters.** The trains were rammed pretty much all the day. Those who oppose HS2 on capacity grounds are wrong (although I think there are better alternatives). Part of the problem is that people chose to live a long way from where they work. I experienced this where I used to work. The lab moved location. The old one was fairly near the station the new location wasn't. Many people commuted 30 miles and suddenly they had a huge problem. Last week I met people who commuted very long distances. Another problem is the companies run too shorter trains. Its all about money of course. I learnt which trains were quietest. **Its not just commuters.** There are a lot of homeless people who ride the trains now. One man tried to beg off us. Its obvious why especially in winter, but desperately sad. **Its not just the train stupid.** Commuting with a bike is also about cycling! I gradually improved my cycle route to make it safer. Most of it was on an off road cycle route (tarmacked). This was a national cycle route. I used the rest of it when I worked it out. There are no reliable on line maps of the cycle routes as I write this. Neil

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