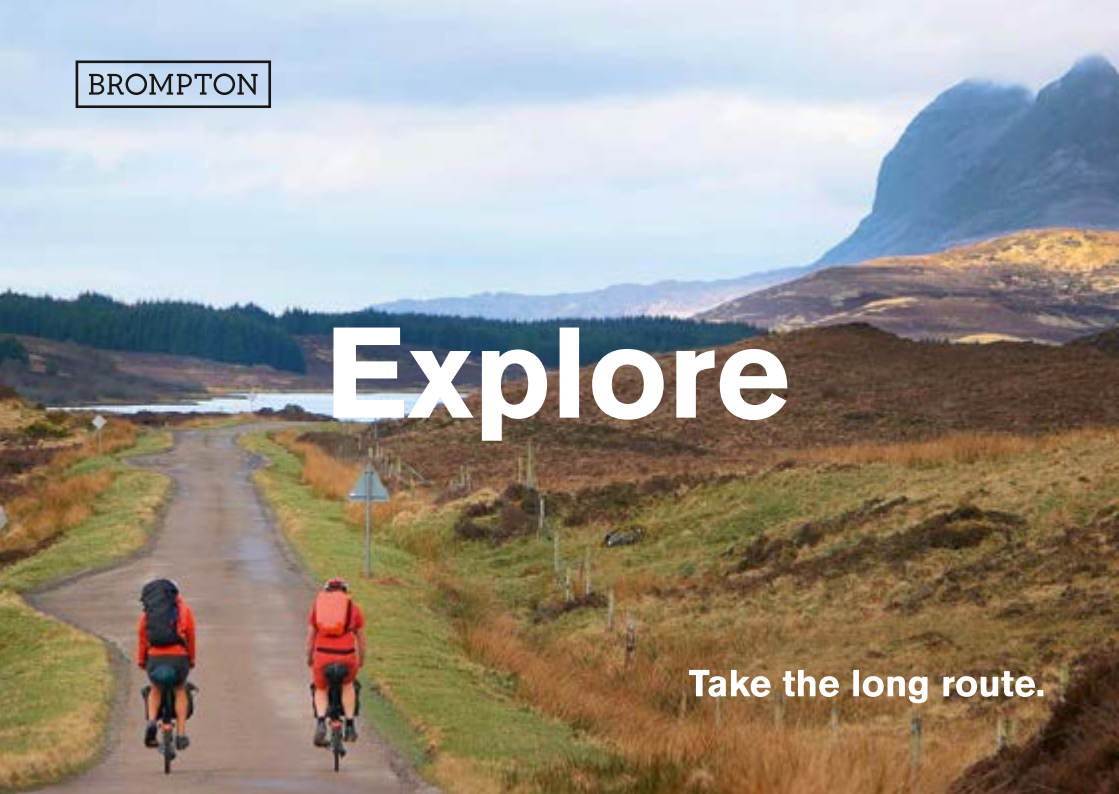

BROMPTON
Explore
Take the long route.

CONTENTS

Part 1
London to Suilven by Alastair Humphreys

Part 2
City Escape Guides: New York City & London

Part 3
Field repair top tips

Part 4
Log book

Words by Alastair Humphreys
Photos by Temujin Doran and Alastair Humphreys

This adventure began with a map. Or perhaps it began with a bike ride – I can't remember any more. It doesn't really matter, I suppose, but good ideas do tend to brew when either a map or a bicycle is involved.

A few years ago I spent a glorious week in Scotland, riding my bike and sleeping in remote mountain bothies. My only sadness was that I did not have more time for exploring. I remember slurping noodles one evening, looking up at the extraordinary shark fin skyline of Suilven and longing to camp up on the summit. The mountain rose out of the hummocks and heather and scattered lochans of Assynt into a breathtaking ridge like a magnificent grey castle, capturing both my eye and my imagination. But time was short and I had to leave the peak unclimbed.

Back home, I work in a small wooden shed. On my desk, amongst the clutter of To-Do lists and empty tea mugs, is a small, framed relief map of Suilven. I have looked at it fondly every day since that bothy ride.

CALEDONIA
SLEEPER

The third prod towards this adventure came when I was making a film with my friend Tem a couple of years ago. We endured (and enjoyed) perhaps the windiest wilderness camp of our lives, up on the ridge of Quinag in the Highlands. In the distance stood Suilven once again. Tem and I began chatting about the idea of one day catching the overnight sleeper train up from London, to climb the mountain and camp on top. I have sat with Tem and beer in all sorts of bars and talked about how good that would be. Oftentimes the trouble with modern life is not a lack of enthusiasm for challenges nor inspiration for exciting ideas. The problem is how busy we all are, the real difficulty comes in separating the urgent from the important and then making adventure happen. We need to do what we can, with what we have, and do it now.

When Brompton contacted me to help showcase the freedom that their folding bicycles give, I knew this was my opportunity to turn the dream into action at last. I have been using a Brompton bike to explore the wilder parts of Britain for almost a decade, so I knew that it would be ideal. Suilven, here we come! The northwest of Scotland is by far my favourite corner of Britain. Suilven has become a totem to me, a symbol of the wildness I can immerse myself in here in my own country without having to resort to an aeroplane escape.
We chose a long Bank Holiday weekend for the trip which granted us four days of adventure time. Our plan was to use a

combination of public transport, folding bike and folding packraft to get us from London to the foot of Suilven. Then we'd climb the peak and – hopefully – camp on the summit at long last.

Tem and I always behave like excited schoolboys when we bundle onto the sleeper train to Scotland. It is the city's greatest escape ticket to wilderness and adventure. I knew that in the early morning I would see the hills again, and that always makes me happy. I can't overstate how much I love the sleeper train, with its mysterious bangs and whistles through the night and the morning knock on the door delivering breakfast. I pulled up the window blind to watch hills and forests whizzing past as I enjoyed my cup of tea in bed.

To save time and to take advantage of our folding Bromptons we caught a local bus and train out of Inverness to spare us riding the tedious, smelly, scary A9. As is typical once you've left London behind, the elderly folk on the bus were eager to chat, intrigued by our bikes and cameras. A retired blacksmith and his wife were on their way to help a widowed friend with some chores on her rural croft. He had never been to London and had no intention of ever doing so. "Too much of that bustle and hustle," he explained to me. When the man heard that Tem and I were making a film he said, "Aye, well done. You lads have found something you enjoy. Your niche. I walked out of one job I hated, just turned around at the gate and left. It's not worth it. Life's too short. I went back to the smithy and just said,

"I'm back"."
The couple got off to change buses on their way to mow lawns and on climbed a couple of old ladies who bantered and joked with the bus driver before slowly lowering themselves onto the seat next to mine. One of the ladies, wearing a green cardigan and lipstick pointed at our bikes with a crutch and smiled ruefully. "That's one thing I really miss these days, my bike." She said. "I miss my bike."

Suddenly I realise that the noise and smell and subconscious stress of the city has melted away...

One of the many delights of travelling by train is the slow shift of the landscape and your mood. The change is gradual, so I often don't quite notice it until suddenly I realise that the noise and smell and subconscious stress of the city has melted away and left me standing on an empty platform at a tiny single-track railway station with sunshine on my face, the delicious smell of spring gorse flowers, and the sounds of birdsong. I did a little jig of joy and the first swallows of the season zoomed overhead.

Tem and I unfolded our bikes, sorted out our gear then pedalled out of the station onto a narrow road, heading west towards the mountains. Riding side by side our bikes took

up the whole road, but there was no traffic to worry about. We bubbled with enthusiasm about how good it felt to be finally on our way to Suilven.
Through the afternoon the road twisted through fields and forestry land, past farms and across rushing, peat-coloured streams. We zoomed though a lime-green birch wood that had recently burst into spring growth. A post box by the road, miles and miles from the nearest town, had been freshly painted a bright shining Crimson. Tem being Tem had a postcard and a stamp in his bag, so we paused while he scribbled a brief note to his Mum. The road eventually petered out into a gravel farm track and an evening of heavy skies and rain. We waded a river, pitched camp and crossed our fingers inside our sleeping bags that tomorrow would bring back the sunshine.

I emerged from our little red tent into a damp world of cloud and mist. A golden froglet as small as a fingernail hopped over the wet moss and across my sleeping bag. Fortunately, by the time we were back on the road the skies were clearing. And a few miles later, over there in the west, we saw Suilven at last! Its prominent, outrageous outline on the horizon beckoned us towards it.

I particularly enjoy microadventures when they involve travelling by different means. Each has its benefits, and when accumulated they allow you to experience a landscape more deeply through different perspectives. Bromptons and packrafts both appeal to

me for their versatility and the invitation to be curious and adventurous. We inflated our bright red packrafts on the bank of a sparkling burn and lashed the folded bikes on top. I listened to the cries of curlews and the rippling songs of skylarks as we paddled quietly down the winding stream, watched only by a few bemused cows. A small trout rose, rippling the reflections of the hills around us. I appreciated the smooth slowness of paddling after the wind-in-your-hair fun of the bicycle miles.

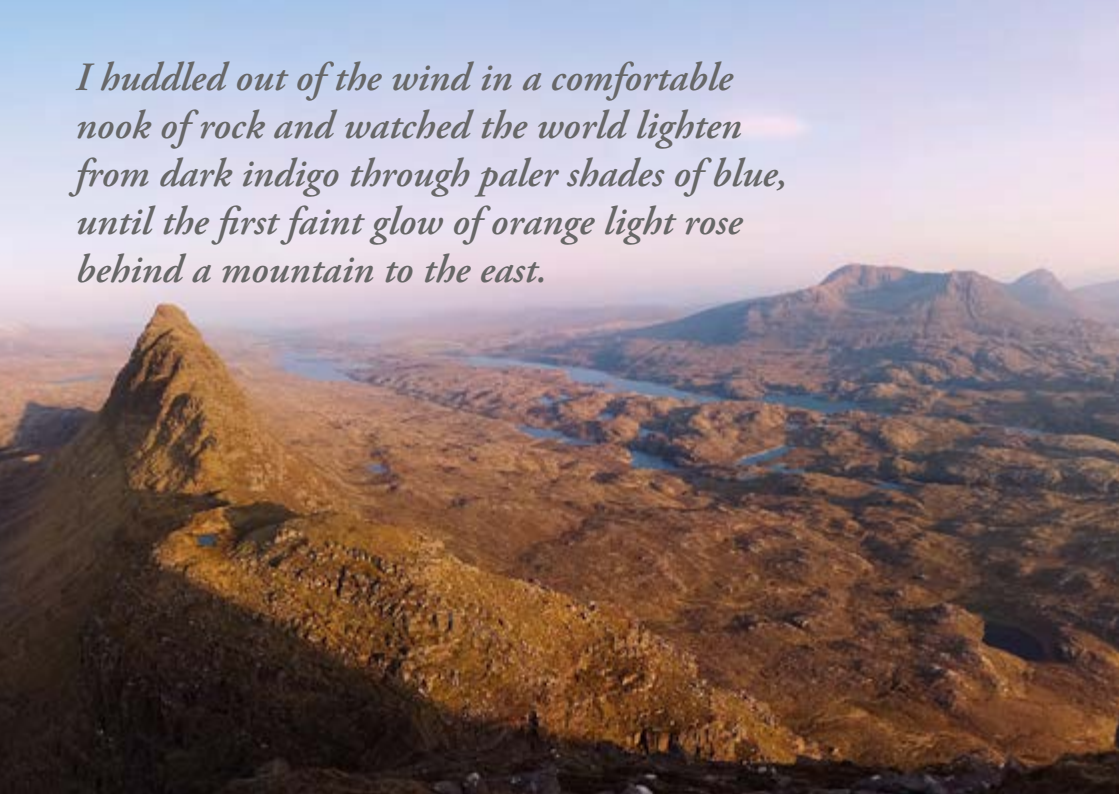
As I unzipped the tent's flysheet the next morning I gave heartfelt thanks to whichever mountain God occasionally bestows upon you a sky of flawless blue and a guaranteed day of glorious sunshine. I have spent enough time in Scotland to know how grateful you ought to be for such a rare and precious gift!

One of the multitude of reasons that Suilven has such a fond spot in my heart is because the mountain is a pain in the arse to reach. You have to earn your reward. This has the added bonus of keeping away the crowds. Tem and I stashed our rafts and bikes, for they had done their job now. We wanted to be as light as possible for the long hike and climb ahead of us. There was no footpath so we followed our nose towards Suilven. Grouse burst from their hideouts in a whirr of astonishment as we yomped through boggy heather. Deer watched us carefully, and a polished zigzag of snake startled us in the grass by our feet. I had never seen an adder before so was

thrilled to stumble upon such a beautiful creature, such a WILD creature, basking in the warm sunshine.

That same warm sunshine soon prompted me to brave the waters of the loch we filled our bottles from. I sprinted down the sandy beach to force me into courage then plunged howling into the cold water. Then in the afternoon I swam again, in a stream at the base of the mountain. I wanted one more refreshing plunge before the hot climb began. The water was about a metre deep, beautifully still and clear with a whisky tinge of peat. Suilven looked beautiful in its reflection.

The ascent of Suilven was steep, rocky and sweaty, but crammed into a mercifully brief struggle. Cresting the ridge of the mountain we were blasted by strong winds but also gifted a huge new view, northwards across miles and miles of emptiness towards Quinag and the blue hills beyond it. We followed the narrow ridge in single file up towards the summit, so close now, after so long anticipating it. Tem and I were eager to drop our packs and revel in being up here at last. The flanks of Suilven are so sheer that the view is like looking down from an aeroplane, yet with the bonus of it being a view that we had earned. Beneath a bald blue sky we gazed upon miles of shining lochs, folded ridges of silhouetted mountains, and out over the sea towards the setting sun.



I huddled out of the wind in a comfortable nook of rock and watched the world lighten from dark indigo through paler shades of blue, until the first faint glow of orange light rose behind a mountain to the east.

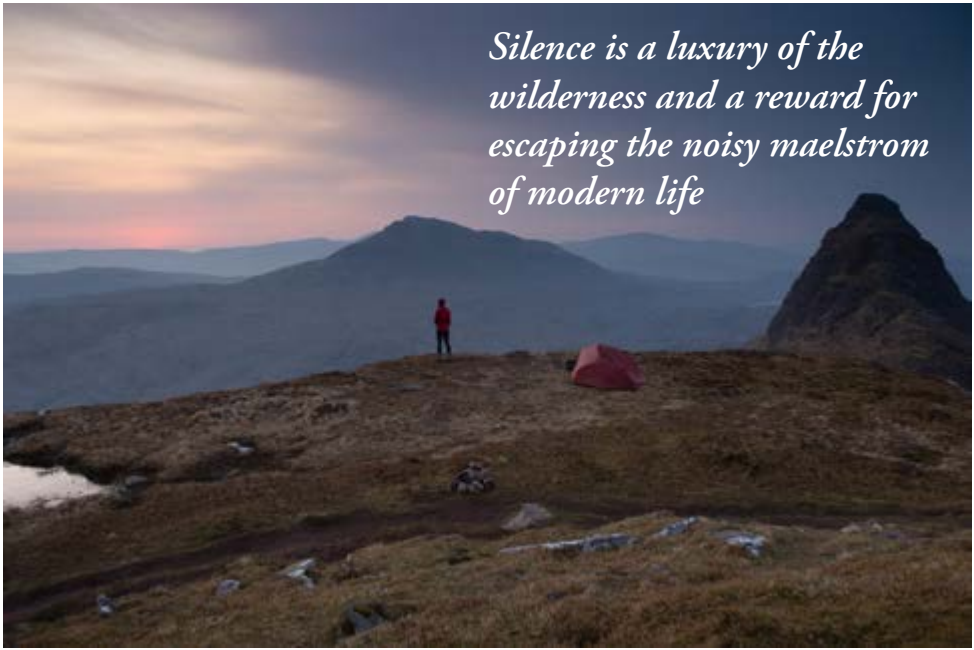
My greedy nature was slightly disappointed that a tent was already pitched on the grassy flat summit of Suilven. In my dreams I had hoarded this mountain and this moment all to myself. But in truth there was beauty enough for all of us up there, and it reminded me to be grateful for our extraordinary good fortune that this long-dreamed-of adventure had culminated in a precious day of flawless sunshine and beauty.

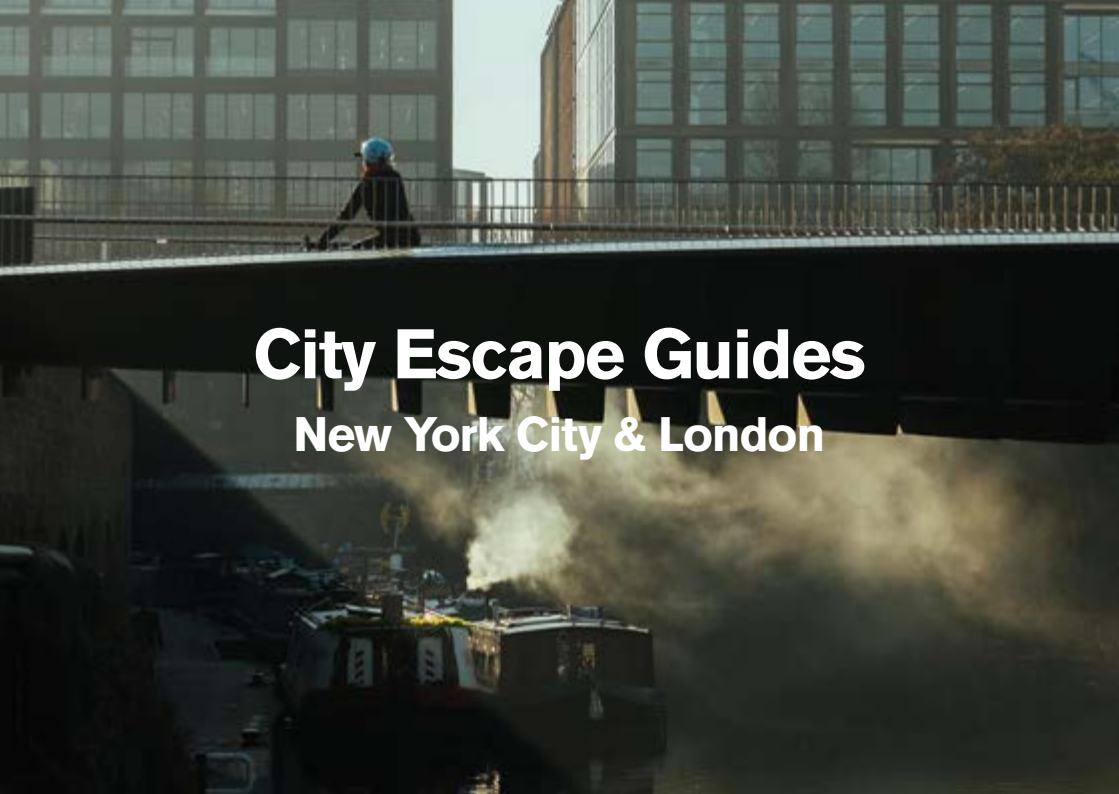
The wind rose, and our little canvas cocoon – so many miles from the nearest road – was battered and buffeted throughout the night. I set my alarm for first light, almost an hour before sunrise, for I wanted to savour the beginning of a new day up on Suilven. I huddled out of the wind in a comfortable nook of rock

and watched the world lighten from dark indigo through paler shades of blue, until the first faint glow of orange light rose behind a mountain to the east. I was filled with a sense of happiness and privilege to be here. I smiled, fired up the stove, and began to make coffee.

Experiencing silence is a luxury of the wilderness and a reward for escaping the noisy maelstrom of modern life. But even sweeter than silence is the sudden roar of a camping stove bursting into life. Because of the wind and the uneven ground I had to hug the stove between my knees, and the venture of making two cups of coffee was far more precarious and convoluted than back home in my kitchen. But this protracted process – shielding the wind, making the drink, carrying the second mug carefully over to the wind-thrashed tent – was all part of what made that morning coffee taste even better than usual. I hunkered back down out of the wind, sipped my hot drink, and watched the red sun slide smoothly up over the horizon. A new day on Suilven had begun.

It had taken me years to get there, but that moment was worth the wait. And it means that from now on, every time I sip coffee in my shed and look at the little map of Suilven on my desk – like I am doing right now – I can appreciate having turned that map into all these memories. And all this simply because I finally grabbed a chance to make adventure happen.


Silence is a luxury of the wilderness and a reward for escaping the noisy maelstrom of modern life



City Escape Guides

New York City & London

Escape NYC

Curated by our US Junction team in New York, these two rides offer everything from great food stops and inner-city greenery to the lush upstate countryside around the city's fresh water source.

1. Afternoon escape: Prospect Park

Loops around Prospect Park followed by NYC's best shrimp tacos and margaritas at Alta Calidad

Distance: At least 4 miles but do as many laps as you like!

Difficulty: Easy

What to look out for: Prospect park is a wonderful little blob of greenery set right in Brooklyn and riding around it is far from dull. It contains a zoo, a botanic garden and a great museum, plus lots of other things to discover. Finish just a few blocks away for the best shrimp taco's you'll probably ever have.

2. Weekend escape: Gravel & Beers

Start point: MetroNorth train from Grand Central to Croton-Harmon Station

Distance: 17.8 miles

Difficulty: Medium

What to look out for: Refresh yourself with this route in and around NYC's fresh water source. A mix of gravel/paved road around Croton Reservoir, including a crossing of the Croton Dam (which is very cool). The Croton Aqueduct feeds fresh water from the Croton-Harmon Reservoir to New York City. There's a gravel cycling/walking trail along the top of the underground aqueduct that runs almost all the way to NYC. This route follows the first bit of it to the Croton Dam and then circles the lower part of the reservoir before proceeding into Peekskill to end at a Brewery within a 2 minute ride from the train back to NYC.

Full refreshments: burger and beer at Peekskill Brewery

Escape London

Limehouse to the River Lea and beyond.

Selected by our Graphic Designer, Dimitri, this is a great way to quickly get into greenery and waterways and make the capital feel a bigger distance away than it actually is.

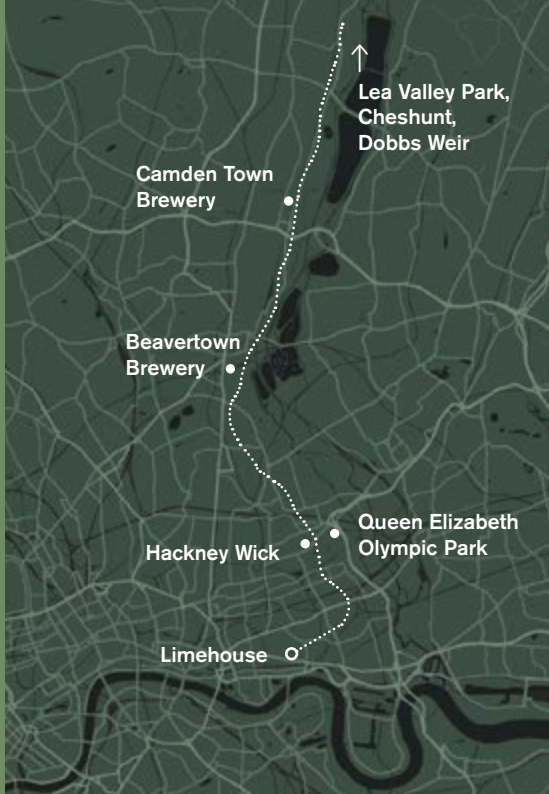
Distance: 6 miles (short) or 17 miles (long)

Difficulty: Easy to medium

What to look out for: This route starts in a really urban setting and takes you past some interesting spots like the Olympic Park and Hackney Wick but quickly opens-up into idyllic countryside and if you have time, stop for a tour at Beavertown Brewery and Camden Town Brewery, both of which are right next to the Lea.

Coffee stop: Giant Steps in Hackney Wick

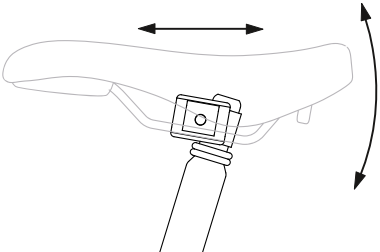
Full refreshments: The Fish & Eels in Dobbs Wier



The Explorer's Load-out

Jack Shuttleworth *(right)*, an engineer here at Brompton who recently rode the 2,500km Tranatlantic Way with fellow colleague Mark Donnelley-Orr *(left)* explains the ideal load-out for an epic ride.

The most important thing when going adventuring is to make sure you're comfortable on the bike. The pentaclip (part that attaches the saddle to the seatpost) allows a lot of adjustment and getting the saddle height, fore/aft, and angle correct can make for a considerably more comfortable experience!



CYCLE KIT

- **Jersey** (merino ideally)
- **Bibs** – Practice on long 1 day rides to check they're comfortable for many hours first!
- **Legwarmers or leggings**
- **Arm warmers**
- **Socks**
- **Overshoes & gloves**
- **Waterproof or Windproof jacket**
- **Buff x2** – the most versatile piece of kit there is: ear warmers/sweat band/ sun bandanna/snood
- **Sunglasses** – removable clear/dark lenses are good to keep the rain out

OTHER CLOTHES

- **Flip flops or trainers** – The cheapest trainers in the shop tend to be the most malleable to pack, and the lightest to carry! (Only needed if you're wearing cycling shoes.)
- **Down gilet or jumper**
- **2x Underwear, shorts and a tshirt** – Wash one, wear one & get out of stinky kit at the end of the day
- **Swim wear** (can remove the need for underwear), also great for wild swimming, although you might want to just wear the cycling kit to give it a rinse!

SPARES

- **Brompton Toolkit** – fits inside front frame, ideal!
- **Brompton Pump** – fits on rear frame
- **Straps or bungee**
- **Tape & cable ties** – super useful for on the fly bodge repairs
- **Inner tubes** – shove them inside the mainframe for a neat storage solution

OTHER BITS

- **Card & cash**
- **Vaseline or chamois cream**
- **Power** – charger cables, battery pack, dynamo charging light, or solar panel if you're feeling optimistic
- **Lights**
- **Garmin or navigation device**
- **Headphones** – In case your riding partner is boring/irritating
- **GoPro or Easy access camera phone** – capture memories, have it easy to reach so you don't miss good snaps just because you can't be bothered to hunt for the camera
- **Hand sanitiser**
- **Head torch**
- **Toothbrush**
- **Emergency blanket**

CAMPING GEAR

- **Tent or bivvy bag**
- **Sleeping bag**
- **Blow up roll mat**
- **Cooking equipment** (optional)
- **Eye mask & ear plugs** (optional)

Field repair top tips

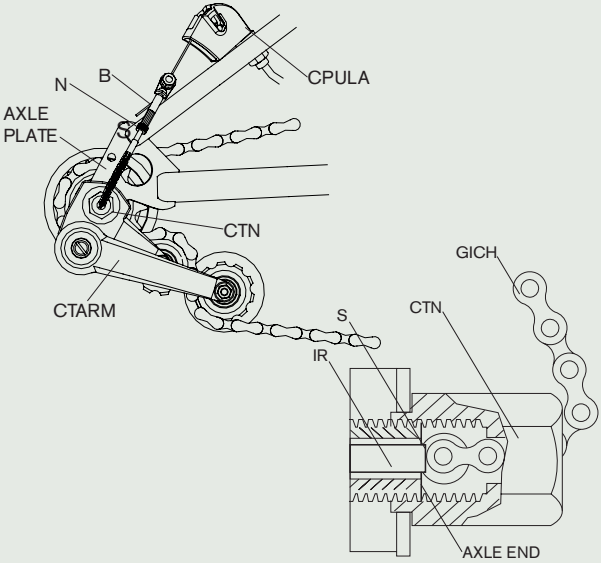
Hub Gear adjustment

Time: 3-5 mins

Difficulty: easy

Slacken the lock nut N, turning the barrel B to obtain correct setting, and relocking the nut N. Ensure the indicator rod is the correct length for the hub-type.

The indicator chain is correctly adjusted when the shoulder S on the indicator rod IR is proud of the axle end by no more than 1mm (this can be seen by looking through the hole in the chain tensioner nut CTN) when in the middle position on the shifter is selected.



Rear Wheel – Removal and Refitting

Time: 3-5 mins **Difficulty:** easy

When removing the rear wheel it is easiest to do with the bike in the parked position, with the tyre deflated.

Removing The Chain Tensioner
Shift into top gear and pedal a little to engage. On a bike with a Sturmey Archer hub (3 or 6 speed gearing), slacken off the knurled locknut N and unscrew the barrel B.
The indicator chain GICH should be unscrewed and removed. Move the arm, CTARM, anti-clockwise and lift the chain off; allow the CTARM to move clockwise until it comes to a stop. Undo the securing nut CTN and remove it & its washer. The chain tensioner assembly may now be removed.

Removing The Wheel
Slacken the wheel nuts, to allow the tab-washer to disengage from the axle plate, push the rim from side to side to disengage the tab-washers. The wheel can now be removed from the bike.

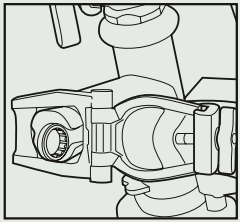
Fitting The Wheel
Make sure the chain passes round the rear sprocket. Drop the axle into the slots, with the tab washers the correct way round. Make sure that on each side the axle is seated and tighten the wheel nuts to18Nm.

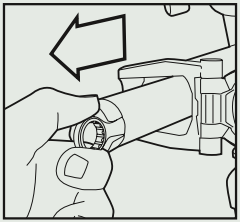
Fitting The Chain Tensioner
Arrange the chain so that it is running over both chainring and rear sprocket (on a derailleur, providing high gear is selected, this should be the smaller sprocket). Address the chain tensioner to the axle plate and press home. Make sure that the idler sprocket lies above the chain & between the “uprights” of the chain-pusher-plate. Refit the nut CTN/washer and tighten to 5Nm. Refit the indicator chain and adjust as shown opposite.

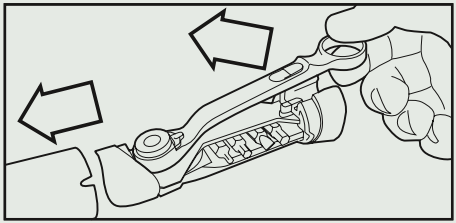
Using the toolkit to fix a puncture

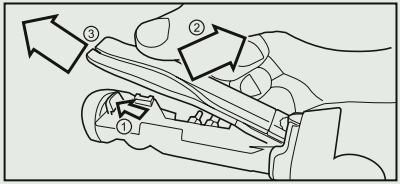
Time: 10-30 mins **Difficulty:** easy

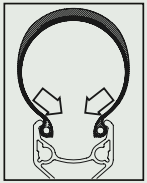
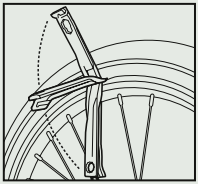
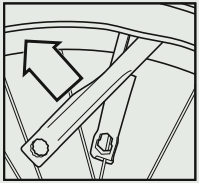
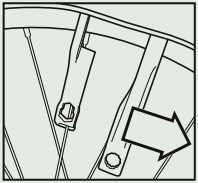
- Take the toolkit out of the front frame, remove the outer sleeve
- Take the wrench from the toolkit and use the 15mm spanner to undo and remove the rear wheel
- Remove the tyre levers, gently press the plastic tab and lift the levers away from the plastic core
- To make the tyre easier to remove, push the bead into the centre of the rim
- Insert the tyre levers into the rim and push down to lever a section of the tyre bead above the rim
- Use the hook on the end of one of the levers to hook around a spoke, to keep the lever in place
- With the other lever, work your way around the rim to release the bead
- Push the valve of the inner tube, up into the tyre and remove the inner tube from the tyre
- Check the inside and outside of the tyre, for sharp objects that may have peiced the tube
- Inflate the tube to find the puncture, you will be able to hear/feel the air escaping from the hole
- Use the abrasive paper in the toolkit, roughen the surface of the tube around the hole

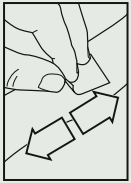
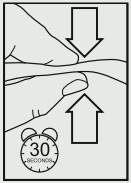








- Remove the backing from the adhesive patch and apply to the tube, over the hole
- Apply pressure to the patch for 30 seconds to fix it in place
- Inflate the tube a little, until it holds its shape, this will make it easier to refit
- Align the valve ont he inner tube with the corresponding hole in the wheel rim
- Insert the tube into the tyre and feed the valve through the valve hole
- Use the tyre levers to re-seat the tyre bead into the rim, be careful not to pinch the tube
- Refit the wheel into the bike
- Inflate the tyre

Plan your own adventure