



Winter Cycling Guide

» STAY SAFE IN THE SADDLE THIS WINTER «

One of the great things about cycling is that it can be enjoyed all year round. Yet when it comes to winter, our weather has a habit of throwing up extra challenges when getting out and about on two wheels. We've put together these simple tips to help you stay safe and comfortable in the saddle whatever the weather this winter.

KEEP WARM > Wrap up warm with layers of inner clothing and windproof, waterproof outer layers. Windproof is really important as it is windchill that will make you coldest when cycling. Remember gloves, headwear and warm socks and shoes. Unprotected fingers, toes, ears and heads very quickly feel the cold.

FROST AND ICE > In icy or frosty conditions you should reduce tyre pressure slightly to improve grip, avoid harsh braking or steering and use a lower gear to maintain a smooth riding technique. Keep both hands on the handlebars as often as you can and avoid free-wheeling.

Stick to main road where you can as ice and snow will clear more quickly here. If you do encounter ice – relax, ride straight and avoid the front brake and sharp turns. Remember you can stop and walk if necessary.

Watch out for ice in sheltered areas such as the shaded side of bridges, hedges or bends. Fresh, uncompacted snow can be ridden on with some grip, but thawed refrozen slush provides less grip and makes cycling dangerous.

Check conditions before setting out – do think twice about cycling in very icy weather, particularly if there is a risk of black ice.

TAME THE WET > If you're planning on cycling frequently during the winter months then it is worth investing in wet weather gear – jackets, over-trousers, over-shoes and gloves – and carry them with you in your panniers or bag. Use a helmet or a hat with a peak to keep rain out of your eyes.

Rain and damp reduces your bike's braking efficiency so always allow more time to stop and don't follow too closely behind vehicles as they may need to suddenly stop. Applying the brakes periodically whilst cycling is a great way of quickly and safely removing water from the wheel rim or brake disc.

Be aware of slippery road surfaces, particularly after a dry spell. Avoid manhole covers, drains, white painted lines and leaves as these can all become especially slippery when wet.

Spray from passing vehicles, particularly buses and lorries, can also restrict your vision and make it harder for other road users to see you. Use high visibility clothing and lights – even in daylight – to stand out in the gloom.

MAKE LIFE A BREEZE > Headwinds can make cycling extra difficult. Don't struggle against the wind. Relax and try using a lower gear to maintain smooth pedalling and aid bike control. Windy weather can deaden traffic noise and reduce your awareness of nearby vehicles so remember to keep looking around before making any manoeuvres.

Be mindful of side winds, which can come from open spaces or gaps between buildings, fences and advertising hoardings – these can cause you to swerve.

KEEP A CLEAR HEAD > Bright lights and high visibility clothing are a must for foggy, misty and dark conditions but remember your observation and awareness is the most valuable safety tool. Keep your ears open and listen for traffic sounds - you may well hear it before you can see it in thick fog or mist!

SHINE ON > Low winter sun can be temporarily blinding or hide you from approaching or following traffic. Be aware of the sun's position in the sky to ensure other road users can always see you.

Sunglasses or a peaked cycle cap under your helmet can reduce glare off wet, snowy or icy surfaces and minimising the distracting effects of cycling between sun and shade.

YOUR BIKE IS YOUR FRIEND > Look after it. Remember your chain will need more frequent oiling and you might want to consider adding mudguards and mudflaps. Check out our other "how to" guides on our website for "how to set up your bike" and basic bike maintenance checks.

» **Above all, if you're not happy riding because of the conditions, remember you can always get off and walk!**