

Our Spring Newsletter – Happy Cycling

Fellow Velo 
Cycle... Friendly... France

Spring is in the air ... Newsletter Issue: Spring 2024



In our little part of the world, Spring is definitely in the air again and for us, that also means that bikes start to get a little more attention than they've had through the winter months. We'll soon be back in France for the start of the season and the Fellow Velo bikers sadly don't just look after themselves so, we're now into that busier bike maintenance mode – if your 'steed' has been resting for a while too then, perhaps this is sounding quite familiar.

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A Little Getaway ... close to home



One of us managed to fill the annual cycling target for last year ... sadly, as we often explain to our customers, running a small cycle touring company means that we don't get to cycle quite as much for ourselves as they may think and we might like to do! As a small reward, we managed to squeeze in a two day mini-tour from home (not even leaving the county of Warwickshire).

The weather wasn't spectacular but, was certainly kinder than of late here so, despite the night jacket, we remained dry throughout. Though most of the tracks and lanes were familiar, we managed to include some that were new – that's also one of the fun aspects of planning bespoke tours for our customers – blending something of a well-trodden wider network with hidden gems that can really add value to a cycling adventure.

It was around this time last year that we filled in a cycling trip to Portugal and, though nothing like the same scale, there was a subtle link to this trip with our overnight stay in Pinos hardwood. We had a superb meal at the Butcher's Arms in the village, where its long tradition of friendship with Portugal is being admirably maintained by Nishi and Alison.

We'll be very happy to get back to France for the start of the cycling season soon (with a little more certainty for good weather and spectacular scenery) but, our 'backyard' cycling landscape definitely keeps us engaged through the winter and the spring. It has also been a great location for the occasional weekend/raster tour that we have run for UK customers who aren't yet sure about committing to a fuller tour through France.

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Liberation 2024



New Season and New Customers



Every season we see new customers and have the opportunity to develop new bespoke tours for them. We have already had lots of customers over the winter but, and at our next season tours will see our first June-Autumn. There'll be an excellent route through Bordeaux with historic plenty of coastal riding and we think who's taking opportunities to make the most of it. There's also a good time to do it, both for us and for you, so we can report on some of those later in the season.

Cycling Prose or Poetry . . .

The feeling you have when you first get the hang of riding a bicycle never really goes. It doesn't matter how long you've been on the road, or by making your side to the other side of the road, or getting to work, sometimes when you can't see your feet.

There's something about the rhythm of bikes that your body recognises, whatever age you are. It recognises something that your mind may not. That bikes are really just about how things - simply by nature.

An attraction:
The *Église de la Vierge* by *St-Jean*

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Fellow Velo Valentine's Newsletter 2024



Fellow Velo
Cycle... Friendly... France

For the love of cycling... Newsletter Issue: Feb/Mar 2024



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We've had a few solo cycling adventures ourselves but, if we're honest about it, our best cycling memories have come from adventures together with bikes that we have also fallen in love with. The photos above and below are from the long tour that we took some years ago. It was out of their experience a little steeper to the end than the beginning that we decided to start Fellow Velo.



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Fellow Velo Support

As a small family cycling business, we are very fortunate to be able to offer a huge amount of flexibility to our customers in the way in which we might support their cycling adventures.



One example of that approach being a tour map we hope to be supporting in 2023, as a year with all sorts of the 10th Tour de France made - touring packages and funding for research into Multisport Motor University (MMU).



The Sign of the Wheelmen's Charity used to 1900

Would that we had such a donor to support what we are doing now - we'd have used it for the fact that Alan Church's The Dark Void can at least manage to carry more than two spars safely on its two supports.

Peddaling Poetry or Prose ...

From verse to prose

James Spence (1809-April 1832 - died June 1837) - Quaker, slave abolitionist, Bible scholar and father of the bicycle industry.

In 1809 Spence became interested in bicycle improvement. He first bought the Clayton and quickly followed by the Ash (1811), looking for a way of construction. Considered the first to have a frame by many historians, the first was the derivative product of the high wheel (which was the standard of bicycle design for the next decade).

Spence invented and manufactured the tangentially applied wheel, with the spokes connected to the hub at a tangent. His design was a great improvement (and actually worked which was a bit of a surprise).

Cycling holidays in France in 2024

If you are thinking about a cycling holiday in France this year, even if it isn't to be with Fellow Velo, please don't leave your plans too late. After the last few years (challenging years) we have across the country are now looking to see when you begin the fun of planning your adventure. The sooner you can be with your cycling kit is the best.

Ask us with our 1915 Tour de France hat, don't think that it's too soon to be planning your further into 2023.

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Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas from
Fellow Velo
 Cycle... Friendly... France

Newsletter Issue: Christmas 2023

Merry Christmas to all our 2023 Fellow Velo Customers and to All



Our Christmas Newsletter is ready for your Christmas Card (anyone who has helped to make Fellow Velo the pleasure it is to talk our 2023 business).

Dear Christmas and New Year, we do hope to have a bit of fun from some of our cycling activities, this usually amounts to a 1000 personal cycling time (but for a change).

Christmas Day will be a double feature, a 'welcome' like around the way to find 'jogger' for a better lunch. We also hope for a cycling holiday in France at least. This beautiful part of France probably has the greatest concentration of the best that we believe 'tastes' a reasonably small part of France, it has a great variety of landscapes and some truly spectacular cycling.

The most of our customers, we hope to have time to explore some of the hidden corners of Christmas Year and with a smile, in the future, having some American cycling friends who have made it before their time.

We will of course still be working on our 2024 season (and so it goes, not 2023) and in relation with the facilities, some (as always) need to be made. If you are looking for a job, we will, we never really stop working and, for anyone thinking about cycling in France next year, it's never too early to start planning for the adventure!

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Our Fellow Velo Map of the World

James Spence (1809-April 1832 - died June 1837) - Quaker, slave abolitionist, Bible scholar and father of the bicycle industry.

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Peddaling Poetry or Prose ...

To the beginning (and indeed the bicycle) was a great good, then went for a new (and better) idea of the bike (and that was the day before, and they were good too, because they were new and the had the same keep their feet of them, but of course, that would be more and have the food reach all the good (and new) And God had his reward. Let us, thank God, because cycling is too much fun to keep to mind!

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From The Cyclist's Apocalypse

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Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and, hopes for great cycling adventures in 2024 :-)

Our 2023 End of Season Newsletter

End of Season Newsletter - November Issue - Nov 2023

It's time at the end of our 2023 season and so, from a little bit of 'end of year' feeling in truth, it probably means that we managed to slow down just a little bit before we start getting into gear for 2024. At the end of last year, we thought it might be our biggest year ever with all the Covid related events that we had on our books but, who ever knew for me, not to be even bigger!

That has meant some more nights away from home and some more nights under the stars but, you'll never know a complete year as it has also meant meeting from wonderful customers, both new and returning and ones that brought others back with them. This has resulted in fantastic returns from our favourite places and, through a few new ones onto the Fellow Velo list!

A little flavour of those travels are reflected in the collage above, including our season finale in Corsica - more on that later.

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Some 2023 Highlights

The 'Big Trip' - the ones that decided us all the long hours that first got us into cycling and, were the catalyst for Fellow Velo ever happening.

- A magnificent visit of Provence that early in the season that managed to peak in time of the area's Big Ride, Mont Ventoux, the Grande Vio de France and a visit of the Cote d'Azur.
- More than one tour through the Alps, with one of them being on the shores of the spectacular Roche des Grands Alpes.

Some particular 2023 thanks...

We of course want to thank all of our customers from this season, for all of the options that are out there but, each season also brings a few moments that add to our own story. As a very small cycling company, we cover almost all of the elements of a cycle tour 'to-here' but sometimes, other partnerships definitely add to the mix.

- We made a great first year with Hubert at Hubert Cycling. It turned out that we already had mutual friends but, when we needed to bring in some really high-end bikes, we'd definitely found 'Our Man in Provence'!
- Another like thanks goes to J. Williams near Angoume, who rescued one of our long distance tours following an unexpected saddle rail collapse.
- We're ever grateful for the links we make with superb accommodation providers all across France but, a special mention to a fabulous new one to us - La Duffinette in Moulins-Saint-Jean.
- And, last but not least, the lovely couple in the top-right corner who very kindly entertained one of our tour groups on route to Mont St Michel from Paris. They'd stopped at the end of the day thinking the house was their destination of choice for the night and, spent an hour together before really working out that they were just 50km too far along the way. :-)

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Corsica 2023 + 7

This year saw Fellow Velo on Corsica for the first time and, we really should be asking ourselves why it had taken so long!

The friends in our season were a superb trip exploring the island. It's not for the faint-hearted cyclist but the scenery is pretty spectacular around almost every corner.

A quick glance at the road map will tell you that it's not flat like a pancake but, that road now opens around the village above and you'll soon see that it definitely has plenty to offer. If your legs are in great shape or you want a goal to help you get them there or top on a 1000m (or thereabouts) a little then, Corsica is a cycling dream.

We used the trip as an exploring option for future tours as, it ticks the boxes for you then, those about making your next seasonal or 'road adventure' goal, we're still here for the rest of France too!

Cycling Prose or Poetry

We've not done this before with our little 'Prose or Poetry' cycle but, among our many seasonal customer reviews this year, the really manage to have been a charming couple who'd taken the plunge on their first ever cycling trip.

Thank you, Paul and Julia - 5 Star Customers.

"A 5 Star cycling tour from a 5 Star company. Fellow Velo provided us with one of the most enjoyable holidays we have had. Everything was organized to perfection. The itinerary was exactly the cycling experience and racing in equal measure, the accommodation and hosts were superb. We couldn't have asked for more. Highly recommended. Fellow Velo is anyone looking for cycling magic in France."

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Our Spring Newsletter

Fellow Velo

Cycle... Friendly... France

We fitted in a Fellow Velo holiday. Newsletter Issue: April/May 2023



Just before our main holiday season started, we managed to fit in a little holiday for ourselves, along with the irony about cycling kits when you run a small cycle company: your own holidays need to be built around those of others and 'fit in' where and when you can... but we didn't and definitely aren't grumbling! Not too long after our Valentine's cycle-camping trip along the Raine and Avon (in the last newsletter), we also had a trip to Porto and so, a little feature in this edition, particularly on planning and logistics.

We have quite a few customers who travel from all over the world with their cars overseas. It's great to have your cycling adventures on a bike that you know and trust but, that whole travel process is not without its planning issues and the little hassles that go along with bagging or boxing up your precious bike for its own adventure.

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We began from France and so, flew from Nice to Porto for about twelve days. For us, this was a trip away before the Fellow Velo season really started, a holiday with bikes along for the ride, rather than a cycling holiday but, it did require the same kind of planning – the sort of trip where packing for the bike turns out to need so much more time and care than all the other (more limited) luggage.



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The particular bikes we took on this trip weren't our most precious ones but, you still want a fully functioning bike when you get to your destination! Padded semi-rigid bike bags were used on the trip: we packed with wheels, handlebars, pedals and rear derailleur removed (the derailleur swapped up and loaded within the frame space) and, a little extra padding under the chainrings. We don't often make long trips with our own bikes on flights or trains but, it was good to remind ourselves of those logistical things that you need to have covered.

- The travel to and from the airport
- Being able to transport your bikes some distance inside and outside
- Whether or not you can access public transport with your bikes
- Getting to your accommodation at the other end
- Accommodation, not just with bike storage but also a place to rebuild them!

Of course we had that little sort of anxiety about the bikes' safety and security in transit but, it went well on this trip on the way out and back – it's a little less of both and, definitely not something to be afraid of. We only rode on a third of our days in and around Porto but, it did mean that we were able to explore the coast and the Douro Valley, somewhat more than we might have done on a standard city break. Perhaps predictably, the Port experience was as much a focus of our holiday as the cycling along the way. If you have ever thought of a cycling adventure with your own bike along for the ride, don't be scared to take that leap – and we're happy to help.

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Feb/Mar 2023 Newsletter

Newsletter Issue: Feb/Mar 2023

We're a little later than normal in sending out our Feb/March newsletter; normally it is done for Valentine's Day but this year we managed to fit in a nice UK tour for ourselves that covered the days around 14th February. We hope you enjoyed whatever celebrations you had planned and that your bike received a little extra love on the day.

For us it was a trip there and back along the Kent and Avon cycle route, a mix of quiet lanes with rural and canal-side paths. Loaded up a little more than most (but not all) of our customers travel with, we had 7 great cycling days, with just the smallest touch of drizzle at the end of two of them.

We made our accommodations between bed and breakfasts, generous friends en route and some cycle camping too (see later).

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Valentine's evening coincided with one of our camping nights so, with a pitch in the garden of a rural pub, cozy and simple beds by a log fire made do as our romantic setting. It turned out that one of us did better than the other at securing a little gift made the previous – some other future romance will doubtless be paid in recompense :-)

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Fellow Velo 2023 Travels

Most of our cyclists will end up being between 20 and 30 years old. In fact, our very first cyclist, Fellow Velo, we have achieved 100th that cover the whole of France.

Some of our wider travels this year will end up following tours that cover the country from north to south on a single tour from La Manche to the Alps, from the coast to the high Alps, including the Challenging Route des Grandes Alpes from Switzerland to the Mediterranean and then along major cycle routes such as the Volpican between Paris and Saint-Sauveur.

As well as the obvious natural attractions of adventure around through a great cycle-friendly country, the second half of our season also includes some of the 2023 Highlights.

Pedaling Party or Prose ...

When a village from Paris was demolished all its inhabitants in London in 18th century were united. The village was a town of 1000 people, 1000 and 1000, and it was a great village for cycling.

I will never forget our anniversary at the night of St. James' where we had a party, sitting on a bar above a pair of wheels in a flat that night, as we happily suggest, to tell them immediately named to Mr. Spencer and exclaimed, 'By Jane, Charles, there's a balance!'

An extract from Peter's 100 All about the Bike

Cycling holidays in France in 2023

If you are thinking about a cycling holiday in France this year, then it's worth to be with Fellow Velo. Please don't leave your plans too late. After the last few challenging years, agencies across the country are booking up so, for anyone who hasn't yet, planning your holiday, the sooner you can be sure of your cycling holiday in the sun.

We already have some exciting offers on hand for the year, and we have a lot of new customers, particularly in the first half of our riding season too. That does mean we have lots of new and exciting options to look forward to.

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Nov 22 Newsletter – Do you get weekends off?

Our April-May 2022 Newsletter

Fellow Velo
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Spring spring early for Fellow Velo Newsletter Issue: April/May 2022



It's not often that our French cycling season starts so early... our first customers of the new season were a lovely father and daughter who braved the Gorges du Verdon in March. Far from being our first such combination, they were though, a little more intrigued than some... the thermometer read 3°C as they started to ride from 1300 metres in a very light flurry of snow. We've been in this location so many times and, in temperatures much lower than that but, never with Fellow Velo customers on bikes. The Gorges du Verdon still never fails to reward though and, they had a fantastic ride all the way through to Moustiers-Sainte-Marie, one of France's Plus Beaux Villages... more of Moustiers to follow. Join like us and our current customers, Provence is definitely waking up for Spring.

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A little Spring collage from the Gorges du Verdon and Moustiers-Sainte-Marie, including an evening Venetian Procession at Easter.



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Moustiers-Sainte-Marie at Easter

Like so many of the France's villages throughout the year, small and charming festivals and fairs abound. Our current customers are on a 13 day tour that started in the Gorges du Verdon and they're already wanting their way through the Val de Provence along the Provence coast to Saint-Tropez and Santa Maxime. The timing of their tour meant an overnight stay in the beautiful village of Moustiers on Easter weekend. While they were there that meant an opportunity to take in a fine Venetian concert in the church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption on the Saturday evening, followed by a candle lit Venetian Procession through the narrow village streets. Music was played through the village as the procession travelled serenely on its way. Once it reached the little square by the church, the costumed members of the procession (both young and old) took the gathered congregation to dance until dark.



Well, noted that Saturday night, our customers were then up for an atmospheric Easter Sunday Mass before they were back in the saddle and gliding across the Valerade Plateau.

Peddalling Poetry or Prose ...

A Spider bought a Bicycle
And had it painted black
He started off along the road
With an eagle on his back
He saw the spider roost on leaf
He travelled all the day
Then he took the string off
And put the bike away

By: Phyllis Floerdel (1913-1984)

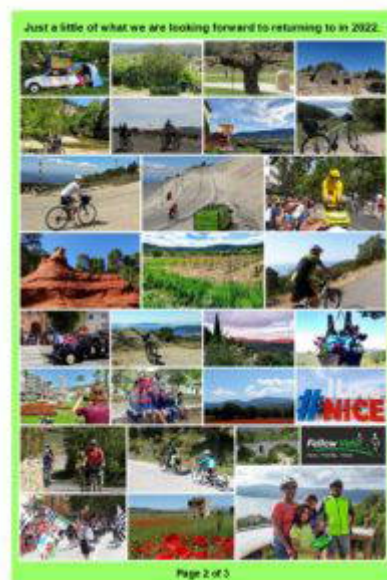


Our weather Defiance
Over 80% of our tours are bespoke to some degree and that can also mean that we will modify our bikes to suit each customer's needs. (Defiance, Japan's has recently become a kind of 'Outfit' style cross-country hybrid bike)

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Our Christmas Newsletter



Merry Christmas to All

Our November 2021 Newsletter

Plenty of photos in our latest newsletter – looking forward to our 2022 season.

Fellow Velo

Cycle... Friendly... France

A Little Man Power Please... Newsletter Issue: Nov 2021



We managed a great half season this year so, a good bit more than in last year and looking it seems that we haven't forgotten how to do what we love doing. It also means that we have been left with real candidates for cycle touring holidays in 2022. A slightly longer newsletter but, all more stories than words. After each of our tours, Fellow Velo customers receive a collage (reminds of their holiday tour). Three of these from this year follow in the coming pages (one in their own words, the reviews from the people we met and shared some time with in Provence. Each of these tours had a 'first' for us - 'first' climbing with a tour for a disabled cyclist (the video below Martin and Inge), our first Swedish customer who we called 'Five Guys not Named Bo' (though one of them was) and, the charming Ritchie and Odile (they had a great trip and became many customers. They said they'd be back in they next - 25 days later they became our quickest turn-around repeat customers).

Martin and Inge's Fellow Velo Cottage



Five Guys Not Named Bo - Fellow Velo Cottage



Thank you from
Fellow Velo
Cycle... Friendly... France

Our Review from Martin and Inge

I was looking for a bike where - a kind of Tensing Hargay type to bring a handicapped guy in his wheelchair and his attached a handycycle (think about 2000 HULF without handle) and his summer ridge with hat a bike over some hills in the mountains of St Tropez. We were looking for one and we got two - Andy and Janet. After some emails about the how and when we met and had a wonderful day - everything fell just right - like we have done the several times before. Andy has a natural gift to give others a feeling of being secured and helped and Jane has the ability to just appear there where you might think to need a bottle of cool water or a charged battery or a supporting wheel. The second tour with them along the scenic coast road from St Maxime to Cannes was like the first one - everything just worked fine and we had a perfect day. Andy built a scooter platform with a ramp for the wheelchair so I could get into the van - what a thoughtful idea. I look forward to next year for five other tours with Andy and Jane in the hinterland of the Côte Azur.

Our Review from the 'Five Guys not Named Bo'

We have taken a bike tour every year for over 20 years, in Sweden and in a number of other European countries. We have bought packages as well as organized tours ourselves. Now it was time for Provence, the fourth time in France. We decided for FellowVelo and a bespoke tour to suit our preferences. It was an excellent tour, one of the best, with a good combination of climbing, flat cycling and downhill, carefully selected by Jane and Andy. The first day started in the dramatic Verdon Gorge and we spent 4 days cycling in the mountain area. After that we had a transfer by FellowVelo's minibus to the coastal area, where we cycled for 2 additional days. A very good combination of two different parts of Provence. All the hotels were very good, small and personalized, which we appreciate. We also appreciated all the restaurant recommendations and lounge we got. It was an excellent service by Jane and Andy to take care of us, beyond what you normally can expect. We happily recommend FellowVelo to other cyclists. Specifically for their excellent response time and for their outstanding service.

Our Review from Ritchie and Odile

We found FellowVelo as we searched for a self-guided bike tour in France, and boy are we glad we did. Andy and Jane were amazing and organized an unbelievable experience through Provence. The accommodations were great, the bikes were perfect and the support we received from FellowVelo made this trip unforgettable. The routes that they chose really highlighted the best of Provence, Vauze and of the French Riviera. The views were spectacular and the bike paths really compared. I don't know how we could have done this trip without them. We are intermediate bikers and managed to get to the places we wanted to see in this territory that can be intimidating. Our trip was so good we are already planning our return next year. Thanks Andy and Jane.

Ritchie and Odile - So Good, They Ride it Twice



Thank you from
Fellow Velo
Cycle... Friendly... France

Cycling Prose or Poetry

Who Was Major Taylor?
"Life is too short for a man to hold bitterness in his heart."
Marshall W. "Major" Taylor
American bicycle racer Marshall Walter "Major" Taylor (1876-1932) was the world's first black sports superstar. He was world cycling champion in 1899, American sprint champion in 1902, and set numerous track cycling records. Nicknamed "Major" in his youth in Indianapolis and later known as "The Hurricane" elsewhere, after his adopted hometown in Massachusetts, he was the second African-American world champion in any sport (after Canadian-born same-weight boxer George Dixon of Boston won his title in 1891) in the Jim Crow era of strict racial segregation. Taylor had to fight prejudice just to get on the starting line. He faced closed doors and open hostility with remarkable dignity in his retirement, he single his autobiography, "The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World."

Looking Forward to 2022
We are now looking forward to our 2022 cycling season in France and Italy, our calendar is already booking up. We have many loyal customers who we are looking forward to seeing when more and more people who have been waiting through 2020 and 2021 for the cycling holidays that they had to put on hold. At this stage, we do still have the capacity for new 2022 customers but if you have a cycling dream for next year, this is a great time to really start your planning. The dreaming and planning is a wonderful part of the holiday experience as well.

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