

Cycling WEEKLY

GET SET FOR 2011

Early season sportives
24 events listed

Get your new year off to the perfect start

Best cycling photography of the year

Interval training for max results

2011 mileage chart inside...

★ ★ Wiggo vs Hutch ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

10-mile TT showdown



£2.75



Carry on camping

NOW THE COLD WEATHER has started to bite and snow has rendered outdoor cycling virtually impossible, booking a week of warm weather training is starting to seem like an increasingly good idea

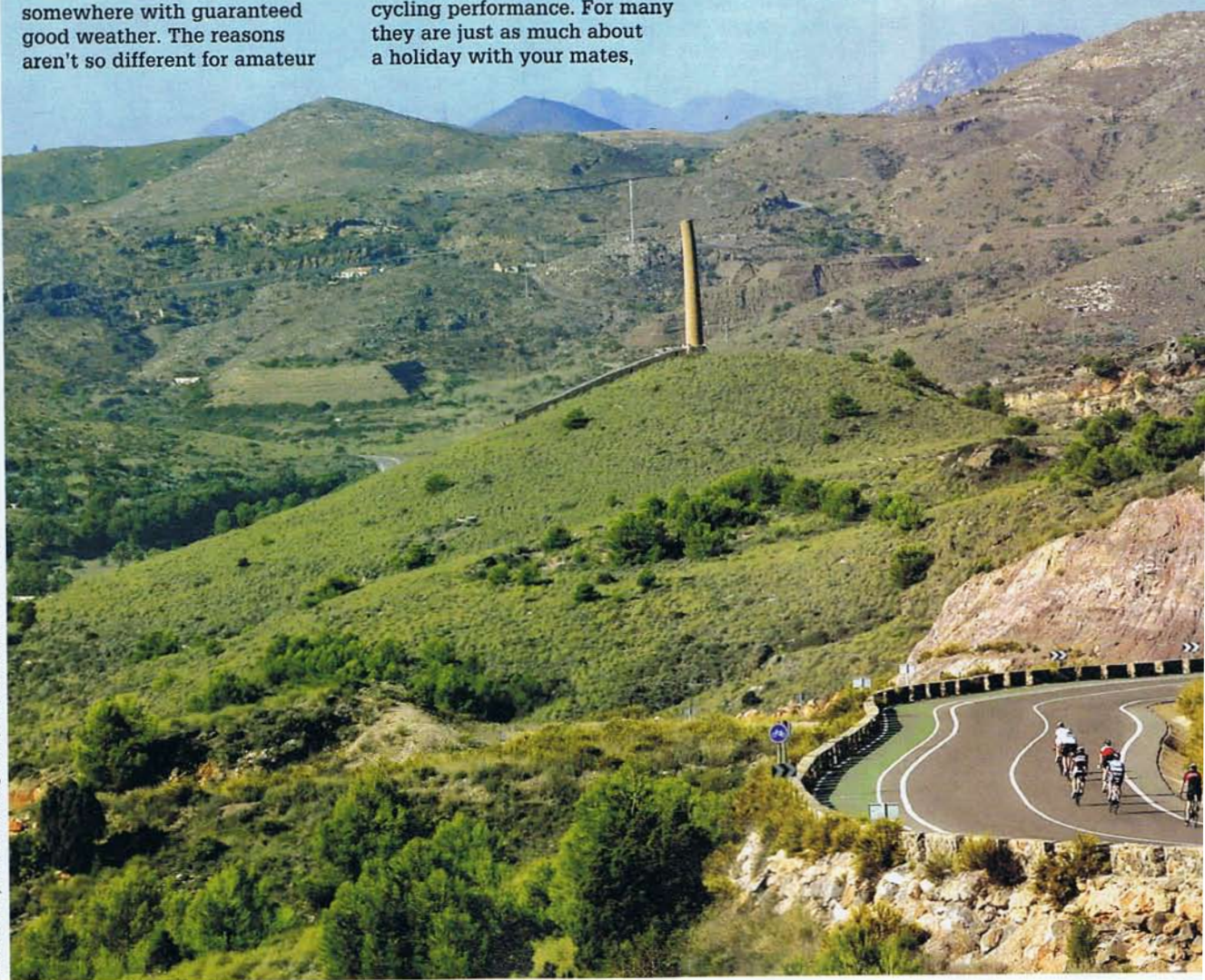
TRAINING camps originated with pro riders, the purpose being to get the whole team together for some team building and intensive training away from the distractions of home, and most importantly somewhere with guaranteed good weather. The reasons aren't so different for amateur

riders; a period of time when you can live the life of a full-time bike rider dedicating your days to training and afternoons to recovery. Of course, how serious and disciplined you are on your camp is determined by how goal-orientated you are and how seriously you take your cycling performance. For many they are just as much about a holiday with your mates,

unlimited riding time and some warm sun on your legs.

Choosing where to go is the first part of planning a successful camp. Warm, or at least dry weather is critical if you aren't going to find yourself moaning that if you wanted to ride in the rain you could have just stayed home. Good weather in January, February or early March is pretty much impossible to guarantee anywhere in Europe but some places stand a better chance than others. Majorca is one of the most popular spots for British and Germans, particularly as it was one of the first destinations for pro camps. Unfortunately, we know through bitter experience that February is just as likely to bring snow as 20°C+ heat. However, this doesn't stop

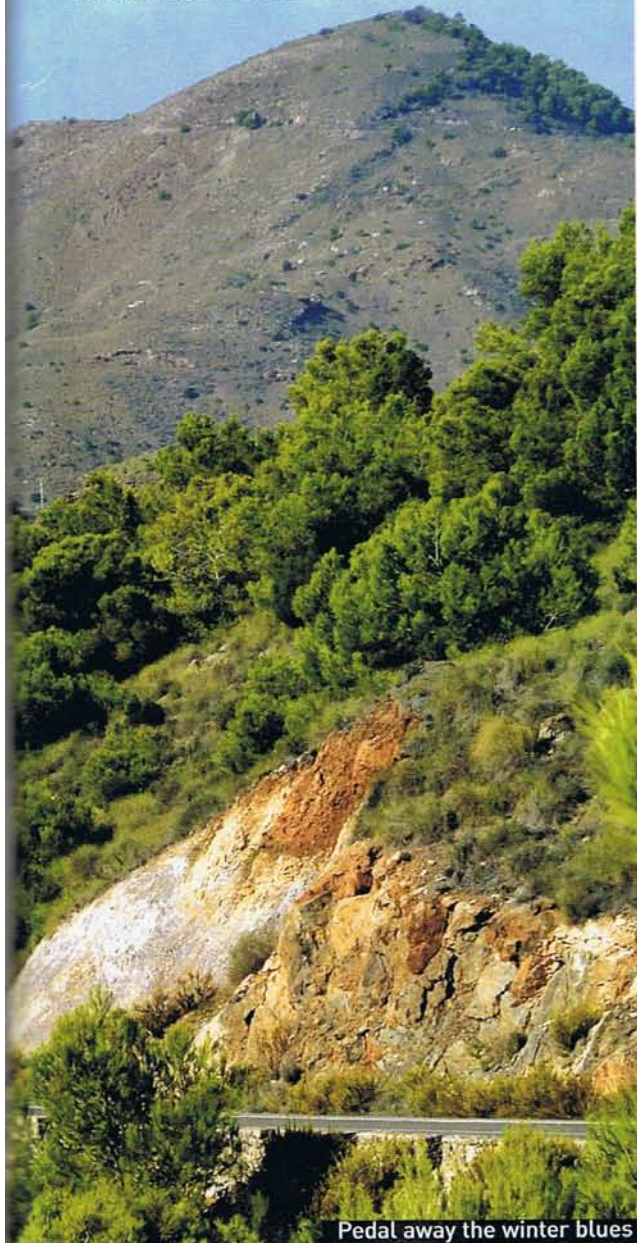
Photos: courtesy of Geoff Cox www.geoffcoxphotography.com, Hotel La Manga Club



thousands of cyclists flocking there each year willing to take the chance.

The further south you go, the better your chances of riding in the sun. Southern Spain is very popular, with many organised camps there. Ibiza, Lanzarote, Gran Canaria and Tenerife require a bit more travel time but the likelihood of warm, dry training increases dramatically.

As well as looking at destination, consider whether you want to join an organised camp or do your own thing. An organised camp will offer led rides, mechanics, massage and other like-minded people to ride with. They normally throw in a few former pros to ride with and include lectures in the evening on nutrition and training. These are great if you are >>



Pedal away the winter blues

ROAD AND MTB RACER

Hannah Bussey catches some sun in Majorca

Why do you go on training camps?

Officially to get some decent miles in before the season of racing, but it's also a holiday. It's a chance to do nothing else except ride bikes and talk about riding bikes. It's one week in the year when you don't have to think about anything else — it's amazing how much riding you can do when all you have to do when you get back is put your feet up and recover. Eighty miles in the sunshine is a lot easier than 50 miles in the cold and dark back home.

Where do you go?

I go to Majorca every year — the north-east coast.

Why did you choose that location?

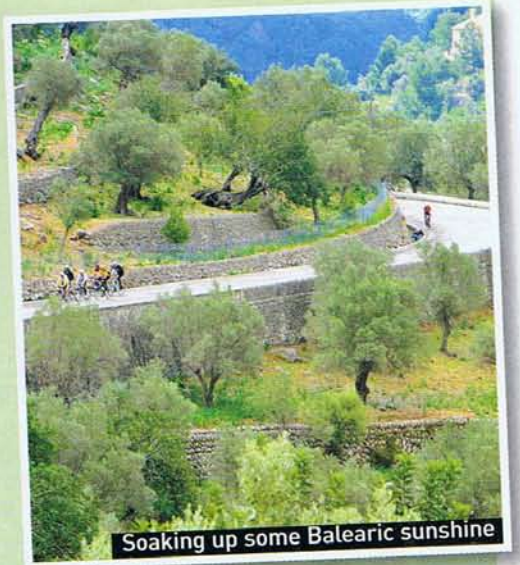
Majorca is good riding. I know it well enough to not really need a map now. It has lots of different terrain all within riding distance. So in just one week you can ride mountains, flat or rolling. It becomes a bit of a bike Mecca from January to May so all the hotels cater for bikes and riders, which makes it a lot easier.

What is good about it?

That you can just ride your bike. If you go with an organised group which provides a run leader, you don't even need a map! When you've had an epic 100 miles in the mountains in the sun and it's warm it's just the best feeling ever.

What is bad about it?

Training camp can become intense. People become obsessed with racking up the miles in one week. But you need to be strict with yourself and think why you're out there. If you're not going to be racing 150 miles, then why are you riding that kind of distance? Seven hundred miles in a week is great if you're going to be riding the Premier Calendar races, but for



Soaking up some Balearic sunshine

most UK races you only need 70-80 miles. You would be better off dedicating a couple of days to sprint training or time trialling while you're out there. Otherwise you can come back knackered.

Who do you travel with?

I do a week on Legro's Training Camp which is fab. It's all done for you so all you have to do is ride. It's a really structured week so you know what to expect. All the rides have run leaders and on long days there is a car with water provisions at meet points. There is a sports massage with the camp and other things like stretching classes.

I then do a week with the lads — this is meant to be a training camp; really it's a holiday. It's a week all about banter, sprinting for signs and too many beers in the evenings! But it can get a bit stressful when people want to do different rides, argue about directions and food for the evening, as there is no real plan for the week.

Would you go there again or try somewhere else?

Majorca is fab for winter or early spring — but would be far too touristy and hot later in the year. The French, Spanish, Italian or Swiss mountains are perfect for later in the year. I would like to investigate other places, but only as an organised trip, for reasons of simplicity.

CYCLING WEEKLY FITNESS WRITER

Rob Hicks lives the high life at La Manga Club

Why did you go on a training camp?

Riding in the UK during the latter months is horrid. It's too cold, too wet and too windy. And what with such bad weather, the roads aren't in great condition either.

I wanted to get away and not have to worry about anything apart from riding; concentrate on getting fitter and put in some hard miles before the real cold snap arrives back in Blighty.

Where did you go?

La Manga — I stayed in La Manga Club.

Why did you choose that location?

Well firstly, it's warm. And secondly, La Manga isn't really renowned for its cycling. Whenever I heard about La Manga in the past, it was to do with drunken footballers and sleazy shenanigans, so I decided to see what all the fuss was about. And also, if I'm honest, I like to be pampered, and I've heard that La Manga Club is a haven for those who like to be spoilt.

What was good about it?

The roads are brilliant to ride on. Smooth, fast tarmac. And there is something for everyone here. On day one, I wanted to push myself, and there were some really challenging climbs. The next day, I wanted to take it easier, and came across a route that was far gentler, which took me all along the coastal roads.

Drivers seem more patient with cyclists, too. In fact, when I wasn't so busy looking at the beautiful scenery, I was waving to passing car drivers.

What was bad about it?

La Manga Club itself! But I wouldn't say it was a bad thing as such, but it definitely deterred me from riding my bike as much. You see, it's just too nice a place.

When on training camps, you usually lock yourself away in a



Luxurious La Manga Club

cold cabin and focus solely on the riding. Here, however, feels like a luxurious spa getaway — state of the art gyms, swimming pools, hydrotherapy, saunas, great restaurants and 'eventful' night time entertainment — to say there are a few distractions is a bit of an understatement. However, I still can't make my mind up if this is a good or a bad thing. I suppose it all depends how strong you are at withstanding temptation.

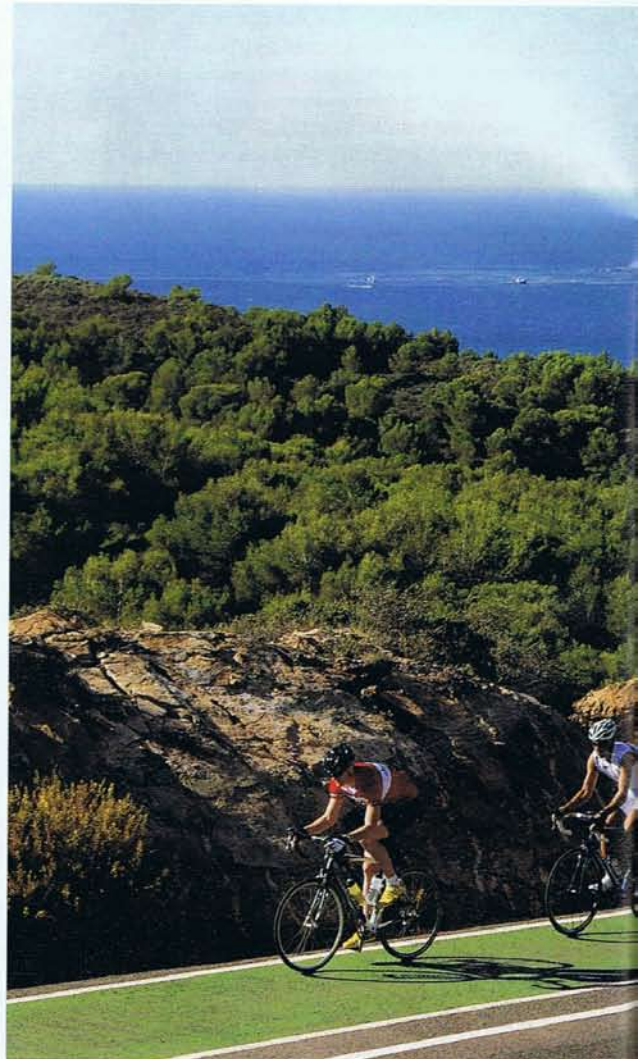
Who did you travel with?

Fitness 12 Retreats are partnered with La Manga Club, and they really do take the hassle out of your weekend, leaving you to concentrate on the riding. They evaluate you as a rider, and design routes based on what you want to achieve from your training camp. You can ride with a guide, or if you wish, be given a map and ride alone.

They also have top health advisers on hand to help with your diet, plus post-ride recovery sessions and access to the spa. Go to www.fitness12retreats.com/cycle_retreats/html

Would you go there again or try somewhere else?

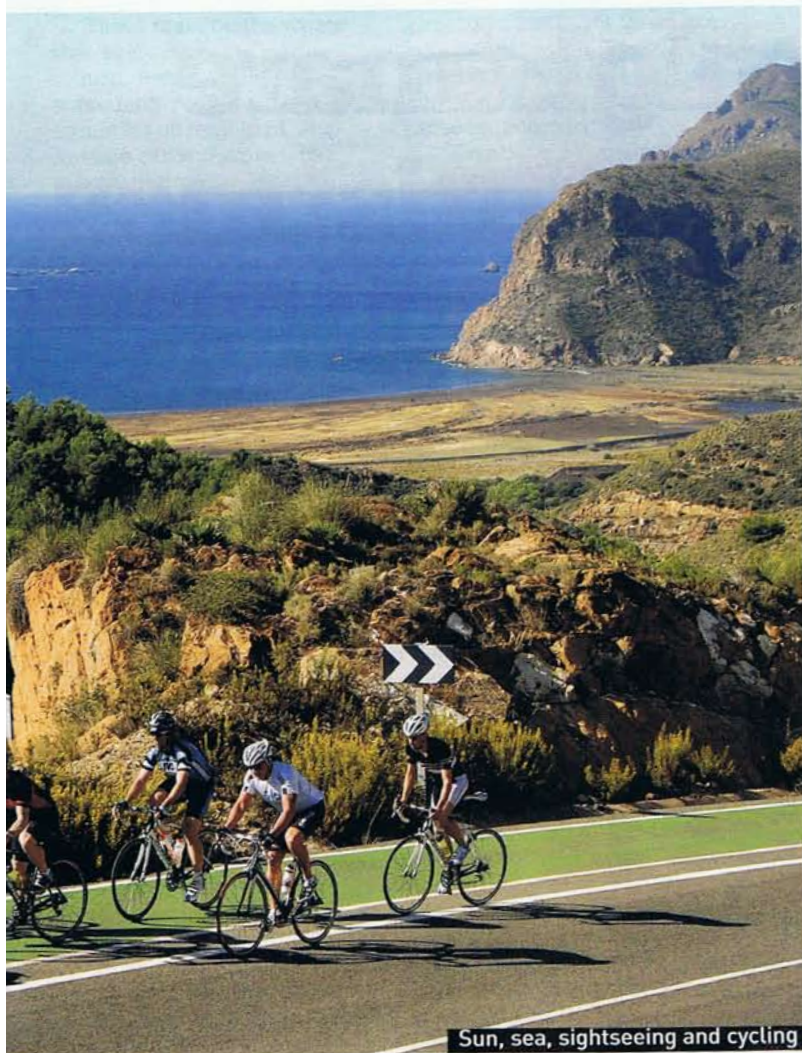
I would definitely go back again. It's a great place to ride a bike, people are more than friendly, and the facilities are wonderful. However, I'll put my hands up and admit I didn't do as much training as I would like. I guess the lure of lovely meals, fine wines and being pampered all day somewhat outweighed the idea of punishing myself up mountain peaks all day. I know, I'm weak!



>> travelling alone as you will meet plenty of other people with similar goals both to ride with and socialise with after training. If you are travelling with friends of mixed ability it also means people can ride with the group best suited to their ability but still hang out together in the evening. Going to an organised camp is a very useful way to pick up lots of tips and advice both on and off the bike. You should come back not just a fitter bike rider but a better and more knowledgeable one as well.

Do it yourself

DIY camps can be just as good but require a bit more planning and research. Choosing your group of riders is make or break; you need to have similar goals and fitness levels to be able to make it work. Without a ride leader dictating the route you'll need to do your own planning and agree on distances and length of ride before you set out. Post-riding, you won't have someone there to rub your legs or



Sun, sea, sightseeing and cycling

TRAINING KNOW-HOW

Camp tips

BE PREPARED

Take plenty of spares to avoid losing a day's riding in search of a bike shop.

Tubes, spare chain, spare mech hanger in case yours is damaged in transit, spare tyre, a gear and brake cable are the basic essentials.

PLAN

Have a clear aim for the week and plan your rides so they meet your fitness targets. Designate a rest or easy day as well as determining the length and intensity of each ride.

RIDE ETIQUETTE

Make sure everyone on the ride agrees the route, the speed and the distance. Have an agreement to wait at tops of hills or simply agree that it's every man for himself.

KIT LIST

The weather in late winter/early spring will be changeable wherever you go. Pack a wide variety of clothing to cope with anything. You might not need them but a warm jacket and winter tights are worth taking.

GO FRESH

Unless you are following a carefully controlled plan it is worth taking it easy the week before your camp so you are fresh when you get there and able to make the most of it.

GERM AVOIDANCE

The final golden rule of camp — never ride too hard on the last day. After a tough ride your immune system is weakened for several hours and planes are a hotbed of bugs and illnesses.

“You should come back not just a fitter bike rider but a better and more knowledgeable one too”

fix your bike. But what you lose in luxury you probably gain in money saved.

To get the most from your training camp you need to have a plan and some structure. On an organised camp this will mainly be dictated by coaches or ride leaders, so choose your camp carefully to fit your goals. On a DIY camp it's even more important to have a clear plan. The biggest mistake is to do too much. With nothing to do but cycle the temptation is to simply go out for long, epic rides every day. If you just want to enjoy a riding holiday this is fine, but be careful to at least schedule a rest day or alternate with slightly

easier days. If you are using the camp as a specific part of your season's preparation, plan your rides and make sure that each of them is helping you towards your goals and isn't just riding for the sake of it. The classic error is to go out and rip each other's legs off on the first day and then become increasingly tired as the week goes on. Keep an eye on your own efforts and fitness, as it can be easy to get sucked into riding harder or easier than you

need to simply because you are in a group. An easy day at the mid-point means that you will be able to get as much benefit from the latter part of the week as the first part. Nearly every year someone in Majorca does the 'Lighthouse route' — a two-hour out-and-back from Puerto Pollensa — as their easy day, forgetting that it is actually a fairly tough climb and might constitute something closer to hard if it was done at home.

Eat right

As well as planning your riding plan your nutrition, both on and off the bike, so that you have enough energy to support your training and recover properly between sessions. Many people think that training camps will help them shed some weight; this probably isn't the best goal to go with. Aim to do quality training and eat to support it. If you are worried about weight the biggest thing to avoid is the buffet table found in most cycling hotels — and the post-ride beers!



Choose your group carefully for camp