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Lifelong cycle
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dreaming of the
next trip

Great Rides

COASTING THROUGH SWEDEN

Kattegattleden is a 390km cycle path along the country's western coastline. Part-time resident **Paul Lloyd** sings its praises

Sweden's premier long-distance cycling route, Kattegattleden, runs right past the bottom of the garden of our house in Sweden. So in spring and summer, when we are there each day, we look out of our dining room window at a steady flow of cycle tourers and other cyclists going north or south.

Kattegattleden takes its name from the sea between Sweden and Denmark: Kattegatt. The route follows the coast from Helsingborg in the province of Skåne in the very south of Sweden, through the next province going north (Halland), and finishes in Gothenburg in the province of Bohuslän, closer to the border with Norway.

Cycle tracks comprise much of the route, with occasional sections on small lanes or dirt roads away from the regular flows of motor traffic. It was created on 6 June 2015 as the first national long-distance cycle route in the country. Before that it existed as just an assembly of regional and local routes – Ginstleden in the south and Sverigeleden in the north. One of main benefits of the transition to Kattegattleden has been a major improvement in signposting. This makes navigating the route very easy.

Back in 2011, when it was classed as Ginstleden, I cycled the southern section from the fishing village of Träslövsläge (where our home is) to Helsingborg. It was about 220km over three days. Ginstleden means 'the pathway through gorse bushes'. For me it was a lovely introduction to long-distance cycling in Sweden, having just brought over one of my touring bikes from England to begin a more

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serious spell of riding and exploring the Swedish countryside.

On a recent visit to Sweden I decided I would complete the remaining section of the full Kattegattleden route by riding the final two days of the northerly section from our base in the Träslövsläge. It seemed like good way to loosen up for a longer journey down the west coast of France that I was due to take on before the end of the month.

But the experience also served to remind me of the pleasures of cycle touring in Sweden, a country of just 10 million people and twice the land mass of the UK. Much of it is forested, especially in the north, and there are thousands of lakes and rivers. It must have the freshest and cleanest air in Europe.

TO CROSS THE SEA OR NOT TO CROSS THE SEA?

On the southerly sections of Kattegattleden the coastal landscape is different from what you encounter further north. The south is generally flatter and offers a less rocky and forested terrain, which is more characteristic of the landscape of Bohuslän. There are more long sandy beaches along this southern stretch of coast.

Until the 17th century the provinces of Skåne, Halland and Bohuslän were all part of Denmark. They were ceded to Sweden after a number of wars between these Scandinavian neighbours.

The buildings and especially the churches in southern Halland and Skåne have the appearance of those in Denmark, with

