

Cycling in Winter

For some, the thought of cycling in winter is a daunting prospect, though to be honest, the same could be said of any outdoor activity in the cold.

However, as well as providing great exercise and a way to counteract those extra pounds that come along with Christmas, this year, you also have the chance to win some fabulous prizes. Check out our info on Winter Wheelers here: lovetoride.net/wokingham to learn more about this fantastic event which started on 1st December and ends on 25th December.

With this in mind, we have some advice for those cycling this winter.

Look after the extremities

There is nothing more miserable than feeling your fingers and toes splinter in discomfort as they get frosty before going totally numb. Thick socks are a must, even double socking will make a big difference. Make sure to wear with either waterproof shoes or get some handy overshoes.

The same advice applies for your hands. Ski gloves can be an excellent way to keep warm, though you must be careful to test before you leave that you can still pull the brake and change gears, as well as grip properly. You can also double glove too!

Wearing a hat or headband is also a good idea, a knitted beanie can easily slip underneath a helmet, and help keep some of the heat in.

You could also bring a hot drink in an insulated bottle with you.

Be Bright, be seen

This one is quite simple but always worth repeating. The closer we get to the 21st, the quicker the nights will pull in and it's very easy to get caught out in the dimming light. Make sure your bike has properly functioning lights before you leave and if it runs on batteries, bring along some spares just in case.

High-vis clothing is also essential. Most reflective jackets will fit loosely around the thickest of coats.

Wearing lots of thin layers

On that note though, as tempting as that thick coat is, if you are going to be cycling any distance above ten minutes, you will likely get hot and sweaty. Wearing lots of thin layers will keep you warm, plus also allows you to take some off to help you cool down.

Wearing waterproofs

If possible, try to wear waterproofs while cycling this winter. Leggings and lycra can keep you warm but once they get wet, you can start to feel a bit miserable, especially if you stop

for a while. The trousers can sometimes be a bit baggy but will generally keep you drier which is important in the cold.

A little love for your bike too

After a ride in winter, its hard sometime to do anything other than rush back inside. However even just a couple of minutes attention for your bike can make all the difference.

A quick spray with water should help clear out any salt or grit that can play havoc with your chain and gears, followed by a quick dry with a rag or towel, will work wonders and prevent everything being red and rusty when you take it from the shed again.

Additionally, it is a good idea to make sure that you have a good set of tyres on your bike. While this is always a good idea, it's especially so when road surfaces can be a bit more slippery and it will also lower the chance of having to fix a puncture in the rain. Inflating your tyres a little less than you do in the summer can also improve your grip with the road.

Take your time and be mindful of the conditions

With everything being a bit colder, it will take your body a little longer to warm up. You can either warm yourself a little before cycling with some brief jogging and stretching or be sure to start slowly and carefully, avoiding sprints until you are warmed up.

It is also a good idea to be more careful generally in winter as conditions may be snowy and icy. Be sure to ride in a safe position, which can mean the centre of your lane, away from the kerbs. Instinctively this may seem less safe, but ice puddles are more likely to form in the gutter as well as slippery deposits of leaves.

When riding in snow, your rims can get wet, which can make standard brakes take up to six times as long to stop you, so going a bit slower is helpful. As with driving in a car, if you encounter ice, steer straight, stop peddling and don't brake as this can cause a skid.

Most importantly though, if the conditions appear too treacherous, the best idea will be to keep safe and leave the bike indoors.

Happy Winter Cycling!