



On two wheels from Arctic to Med



Ready to ride: Nick Woodward is planning a long-distance journey by bike through Europe's varied terrain and, right, the route he will take from the Arctic to the Mediterranean

In his early 20s, **Nick Woodward** attempted to cycle from Norway to Spain with a friend but they had only reached Hamburg in Germany when a crash forced them to give up. Now 58, Nick feels he has unfinished business and is determined to complete the 6,500km route from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. Here he explains his motivation for taking on the challenge now.

Over the years in East Finchley, a group of us have gone on multi-day cycling trips. It started with London to Paris

in 2012, then we cycled the Canal du Midi in France and the route of Hadrian's Wall. I always tried to tempt friends with a trip from the Arctic to the Med, but no-one would take the bait.

At last, my friend Pete said he would join me for the Scandinavian leg, so a 40-year dream became a detailed route on a map. Also, the reality of life at 58 means if I'm not able to do it soon, the likelihood of me being in good enough shape to complete it in future years is getting slim.

What is the route?

To get the bikes to the top of Norway, we are flying to Tromsø, then taking an overnight ferry to a small town called Honningsvåg, from where we will cycle the final 40km to the top of Europe and the trip can begin.

From 22 June we will head down some eastern Norwegian fjords, then cross the Arctic Plateau into Finland. Over eight days, we will camp and head towards the Baltic Sea. We will only pass a handful of towns and shops, with most of the cycling



being on remote rough gravel roads. For the first week, the sun won't set at all.

I will then head south to Denmark, onward through western Germany, then the outskirts of Paris and on to Bordeaux. The final two weeks will take me around the western edge of the Pyrenees through Madrid and on down to Tarifa, the southernmost point in Europe overlooking Africa.

The total trip will be about 6,500km, with around 36,000m of cycling ascent. On average, I will cycle for about a week, then have a rest day, so I am hoping to finish around 24 August, after about 53 days cycling.

Pros and cons

I'm most looking forward to seeing the midnight sun, spending time in the wildest parts of Europe and looking across the sea from Spain to Africa knowing I have made it from

the Arctic Ocean to the Med under my own steam.

The vast empty distances in Finland are a bit of a concern food-wise. Wild river water will be fine to drink, but we are likely to have to carry a few days' worth of food, and wherever we see a shop, eat as much as we can to keep our bodies stocked up on energy.

Fundraising push

I will be using the trip to raise money for the Wheelchair Football Association, where I have been helping out for eight years. It is their 20th year, and to protect the sport into the future, they have launched a benevolent fund. The sport caters for some of the most physically challenged individuals and allows them to play a competitive team sport and find camaraderie and freedom in ways that are near impossible in other aspects of their lives. Find out more at thewfa.org.uk and please help my fundraising by donating using the QR code here. Thank you.



Donate here: Support Nick by following this QR code

A magical musical menagerie of creatures

Finchley Chamber Choir is performing a concert of music with an animal theme this month. You can expect the widest variety of styles and moods, from the tranquil beauty of John Tavener's *The Lamb* and Eric Whitacre's *Seal Lullaby*, to the humour of Frederick Bridge's

The Goslings and Philip Colls' *Animal Songs*.

The concert takes place on Saturday 10 May at Trinity Church, Nether Street, North Finchley, N12, at 7.30pm. Tickets priced £18, £15 concessions, £2 under 18s are available from www.fcchoir.co.uk

Food waste

Barnet Council is to reintroduce food waste collections to all households across the borough by the end of March 2026. The service is already being offered to schools and businesses. Households will be provided with appropriate containers ahead of the service roll-out next year and more details will follow nearer the time.



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