



ACTIVE I
E-BIKING
 WORDS by Dan French

Exmoor and the Quantock Hills are known by mountain bike enthusiasts far and wide as areas of incredible scenery, with hundreds of miles of bridleways, varied terrain and awesome tea gardens!

Riders often comment on the peace and tranquility of the areas, with fairly low numbers of visitors on the trails, when compared with some of the other more congested National Parks.

We are lucky to live in an incredible environment, and mountain biking is a great way to immerse yourself in it!

When I started mountain biking in the mid-nineties it was hard to imagine a bike with decent brakes and comfortable suspension, let alone a bike with a 500w battery and motor attached to it!

Believe it or not, the first e-bike ever made put in an appearance over 120 years ago! Things have certainly come a long way over the years, with the past five years seeing technological advances with batteries and motors that have made e-bikes more efficient, affordable and aesthetically pleasing.

If you walk through town, or head out on the hills, you're highly likely to see someone effortlessly peddling up a steep hill with a big smile on their face. That person will either be extremely fit or an advocate of the e-bike, which has helped to bring cycling numbers in the UK to an all-time high, especially given the early events of 2020 which led to a huge boom in cycling participation with the Covid-19 lockdown. Incredible weather, combined with Government advice allowing daily cycling exercise for everyone stuck at home meant that bikes hidden in sheds and garages were dusted off, tyres pumped up, and cycle networks became busier than ever. Bicycle shops were run off their feet, with customers wanting to purchase road, mountain and e-bikes, and worldwide shortages of bicycles were seen as a result!

So what is the buzz about? E-bikes are essentially a standard mountain bike, or road bike, with an integrated motor and battery pack tucked inside the frame. Over the years, these additions have become lighter and sleeker, with some e-bikes being hardly distinguishable from a traditional bike.

The most common quote I hear from people is that using an e-bike is cheating. Yes, it makes the hills a lot easier, that's for sure, but the rider still has to pedal, and is still exercising. There are different modes to choose from so you can decide how much assistance you require from the motor. If you're cycling along a gentle incline, you may have the e-bike in 'eco mode', and if you're cycling straight up Porlock Hill, 'turbo mode' may be required. It feels like someone is pushing you along as you pedal! Battery life is good, and riders will usually get between 30-50km on a full charge, depending on the terrain, with some models capable of far greater distances.



E-bikes are great fun for most ages (14+, in line with UK law) and abilities. E-riders generally ride further, ride more often and smile more (according to studies), leading to improved fitness and mental health.

With e-bike sales equalling those of traditional bikes, who knows what things will look like in ten years' time. It's highly likely that we'll all be on some type of power-assisted bike.

THINKING OF TRYING OR BUYING AN E-BIKE?

Get down to your nearest friendly bike shop where you will be able to get advice and they may even have a demo bike that you can try out. Internet bike sales may be slightly cheaper, but you'll be better off buying from a bicycle shop in the long term, as you'll want your new bike built up by a qualified mechanic, set up for your rider dimensions and maintained with services and the occasional computer upgrade. We'd struggle without our local bike shops, so it's best to support them where we can.

Here at Exmoor Adventures, we've jumped on the bandwagon and have purchased a fleet of 'Specialized E-bikes', which are capable of tackling the rugged off-road trails. Situated at Porlock Weir, we're in a perfect position for riders to head straight onto the steep hills.

As we ease our way out of lockdown, opening our doors for the first time to our customers, the e-bike hire has proven popular among those seeking a socially distanced excursion. Our first customers were a group of four doctors (main image, facing page), enjoying their first day out since March, on a damp June day, and they took our e-bikes on a 35km route over Dunkery Beacon.

We offer e-bike hire, guided rides, weekly sessions and guided night rides during the winter! We will even offer a free 15-minute ride for anyone who wants to have a go on one – but beware, once you try one, you'll definitely want one!



FIVE GOLDEN RULES TO TAKE TO THE TRAILS

Respect other trail users (especially horses, which may be startled by a speedy rider).

Abide by the Countryside Code.

Be prepared (carry a multi tool, spare tube, pump, mobile phone, small first-aid kit, food and drink, and a warm layer).

Let someone know where you're planning on going, as well as a return time.

Make sure you've charged your bike!

COMPETITION

For your chance to win a guided e-ride for 2 participants, worth £100, simply answer this question.

What does the E in E-bike stand for?

Message us your answer through our website contact page for your chance to win! exmooradventures.co.uk/contact

