

## How to do LEJoG independently – Hints & Tips

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OK so you want to do LEJoG independently and survive (surviving is the important bit). We'll assume you are starting at LE because the prevailing wind blows from the SW to the NE. Here's a few handy tips and hints:

1/ DO NOT try to leave Cornwall on the A30. In the eleven years I've been organising LEJoG rides there have probably been half a dozen cyclists killed on the A30. It's a high speed death trap. There are warning signs on it and the Police, if they notice you, will insist for your own safety that you leave it. It also has many enormous hills. **STAY OFF THE A30!** There are many pleasant little back roads that can be used instead. These rural lanes will have lots of small steep hills but they're much safer. Use Google Maps and the specialist LEJoG websites to work out your route, such as [www.cycle-endoend.org.uk](http://www.cycle-endoend.org.uk) or [www.cycleLEJoG.com](http://www.cycleLEJoG.com) well before you start your ride. There are lots of people on the Internet forums eager to give you good advice. I'll repeat: **STAY OFF MAIN ROADS OR FAST ROADS...**and get yourself a GPS, such as a Garmin. It will save you an hour a day of messing around with paper maps or route sheets

This leads into:

2/ Don't bite off more than you chew. The first couple of days in Cornwall and Devon are extremely hard work. It's fairly common for us to meet cyclists who've set themselves very optimistic daily mileage targets and are trying desperately to redesign their schedule as they go along. If you are a complete beginner consider doing a four or five day tour somewhere hilly, to find out what you are capable of, before attempting LEJoG. Paradoxically Scotland is much easier on the knees than the South West of England. The Scottish hills are generally long but gentle, though some Scottish road surfaces can have very coarse chippings, which impart a tedious vibration to your handlebars and you.

3/ Consider the time of year and the weather. The window of opportunity, most years, is from mid May to late September, the weather in the far North of Scotland often breaks down at the end of September, with storms, high winds and heavy rain coming in off the Atlantic. Mid-summer can be problematic, the hottest and wettest LEJoGs I've done, were both in July.

4/ Accommodation: Can be a headache. On the forums you will be told of wonderful B&Bs that charge a pittance and produce great meals. Well, they do exist but they're extremely rare and getting rarer by the year. More common is the B&B or small guest house that's gone up market, a word to watch out for is 'Boutique' and now has prices similar to, or higher than, a good hotel. Consider booking your accommodation a year in advance as there are 'pinch-points', where rooms are in short supply, on all the possible routes. Cheapest of all, is camping but, of course, you have to lug all that gear with you. It used to be possible to do the whole thing using Youth Hostels, these have now become rare as many have closed. In my opinion they're best left to the young people who are their intended customers...

5/ Bikes: It is possible to do LEJoG on a £25 clunker or cheap mountain bike that you bought second hand from a friend but doing it on a decent lightweight road bike or tourer, with LOW gears is a lot more pleasant. On a 1000 mile ride with many hills, it's sensible to have the lightest, most comfortable bike you can afford. Whatever bike you use, do a few hundred miles on it BEFORE attempting LEJoG. Brand new bikes often come with teething problems and can cause misery until they settle down and bed-in. Be wary of exotic designs that use parts that are unique and impossible to replace when you break down somewhere remote. Remember that on some parts of the route you may have to do a twenty mile diversion to find a bike shop.

6/ Support: Life becomes much easier with a bit of support. It's difficult to arrange if you are doing it solo but if there's three or four of you, a none cycling friend in a car or small van is often possible and becomes very useful in all sorts of ways. The ultimate support vehicle is probably the large mobile home but you are talking big money for that. Also do use local cafes and shops – They need your support and it can be a good way of interacting with the community wherever you are.

And Finally:

6/ Do use Vaseline and Sudocrem (zinc ointment) on your behind/front/delicate areas (We get people dropping out due to saddle sores, a mix of Vaseline and Sudocrem acts as a lubricant and is anti-bacterial. People also report sore hands and feet. Use well padded cycling gloves and good cycling shoes (and anti-inflammatories in moderation).

