



A Cycling Holiday in Gran Canaria in 2017 - Chris Smith

Last year I wrote an article in [The Link](#) about a 2016 family holiday in [Gran Canaria](#) where I had done some cycling whilst family did the more usual sunny holiday things. I invited other [Ch&NW CTC](#) riders to join us in 2017. I was somewhat surprised at how many people showed an interest in this trip and eventually fifteen people booked a trip themselves over roughly the same dates as us. This included three who did not cycle but enjoyed the island in other ways.

The question in my mind was what ride to suggest on the first day that would show people what was possible, but not put them off venturing into the hills again. I had made it clear that this was just a group of people on holiday at the same time and I

was in no way the organiser, but this didn't stop them asking me where we were going!

The only reasonable circular route was the ride to [Soria](#) at 3000ft and then down to [Arguineguin](#) and back along the coast. This meant a long steady climb – when I say long, the road went up for 12.5 miles with the café at the top. The scenery was spectacular, the weather perfect,



and I had forgotten to mention the “technical” descent over the next two miles to the café, where we were rewarded with a huge jug of fresh mango and papaya juice with our lunch;



the surface good, the traffic light – but it was uphill! Well a few people turned back only $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from the summit - oh,



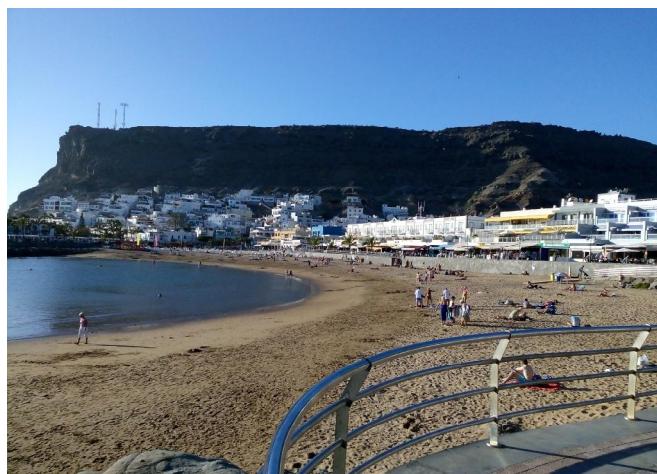
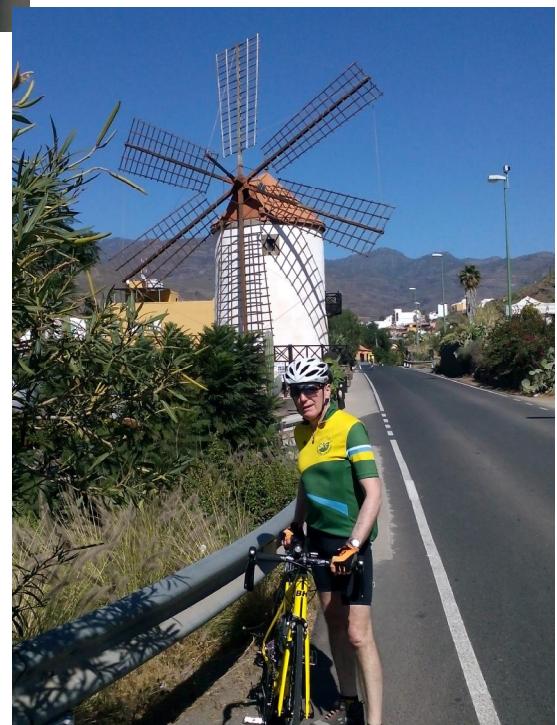


and then a long swooping descent over the next fifteen miles - taking care on the hairpin bends of course. The coast road is not so pleasant to ride being quite busy with traffic and lots of ups and downs. The total for the day was 42 miles and 4000ft of climbing, not so different to many a B ride, but much more memorable and so wonderful to be out in the warm sunny air after leaving rainy Manchester a few hours earlier.

The next day we decided this was a holiday so just a gentle ride to the **Restaurante Las Cañadas** at only 1500ft, and then back down, stopping to look at the **Windmill** along the route.

It may only have been 10 miles each way but we managed to include a café stop along the way at what became known as "**Harry's Bar**". It was a combined green grocers, general store and café. To get lunch you point out what you would like and they take it off the shelves to prepare it for you.

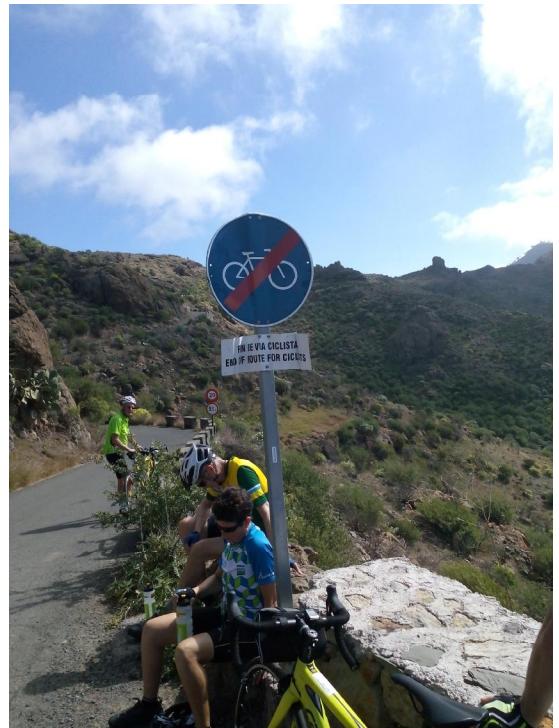
The following day we decided to split into two groups. One going into the hills again, the other going along the coast. **Janet, John F** and I set off up into the hills reaching an isolated juice bar on a summit at 2000ft, with stupendous views over the Island. On the other side was a drop down to the north-west corner of the Island. This looked interesting except that there was no other way home than back over this summit. Janet and I decided to continue the ride to reach the small town of **Aldea**. This was the first town we met which was almost completely untouched by tourism. The only café in town provided lunch and we chatted to the only other customers - an elderly **English** couple who told us they were there on a walking holiday, although neither looked as if they could walk more than 100yds.



Feeling refreshed we set off back up the mountain and another stop at the juice bar, then back to **Puerto de Mogan** to hear the tales of ice-cream, beers, coffees, and beaches from the group who had gone to **Maspalomas**. For us today it was 40 miles and 5,000ft of climbing although the seaside group claimed to have done more than that (technical **Strava GPS** issue too complicated to go into here).

John meanwhile, had met a cyclist who had told him of a ride which he called the “**Balcony Ride**” – a circular ride high up in the mountains. **John** came up with the idea that we could get a taxi to a point on this ride, and so do the circuit and then the descent. Cheating you may say but this was a holiday after all! Two taxis were organised and after an hour of climbing we arrived at our start point, the tiny village (and café) at **Ayacata** at 4500ft. This only cost us 10€ each. We left the café and after the first corner the road turned upwards and there was more climbing to 5500ft. Some balcony we thought! Some went back to **Ayacata** and then down the mountain - a 20-mile descent. The rest of us pressed on and enjoyed a really spectacular ride around the so called balcony - the views more than making up for the pain. This was another 40 mile day – this time with 3000ft of climbing even though our finish point was 4500ft below our start.

New people were arriving to join us and others were starting to leave, so we then repeated the **Soria loop** (everyone finishing this time), followed by rest day to **Restaurante Las Cañadas**.



We had noticed from our apartments a very smooth tarmacked road high up on the opposite side of the valley and off into the distance. The road was firmly closed to traffic by security gates but each day the fence was broken down and people walked along the road.

Some of us walked to the top but our curiosity was raised even more when we saw that the road disappeared into the distance. Various unlikely explanations were offered to us about this road. Next day we decided we would ride it. It was 6 miles of perfectly formed tarmac road 30ft wide. Rain the previous night had dislodged some stone onto the road in a few places but this was easily avoided. The road lead us to the top of a cliff overlooking an unspoilt beach. We later found via **Google** that this road was built by developers planning a new resort, but after a public outcry a preservation order was issued preventing any development



We cycled back and became separated into smaller groups. I passed a young lad riding a very heavy looking touring bike, going in the opposite direction and noticed his helmet hanging from his bars – good idea I thought in this heat and with no cars. Further on he came to some downhill with some rock on the road in the dip before it went up again. He crossed to the other side of the road to avoid it and unfortunately at that moment met one of our group coming the other way, also at speed due to it being in a dip. The two cyclists only saw a glimpse of each other before they crashed head on. The young lad sustained a head injury, bleeding badly. The rider from our group received some cuts and bruising, but the carbon fork on the rented bike disintegrated. We then called an ambulance and the lad went to hospital, and we made our way home chastened by the experience.



The next day we repeated the taxi ride but this time went to an even higher point starting our ride at almost 6000ft. This time we were all able to complete this magical ride and drink in the wonderful views. While the others made their way back to [Puerto de Mogan](#), I took a different road heading down through [San Bartolome](#) to [Maspalomas](#) where I had persuaded my wife and daughter to collect me by car.

Although the end of my ride was 44 miles from my start, and 6000ft below my start, I still managed to climb 2800ft that day. Wonderful roads, wonderful views, a truly unforgettable day. The next day was my last and just time for one more climb to [Restaurante Las Cañadas](#).

On reflection, it was a great week and I was really pleased with how it had gone. A great bunch of people to spend the week with, some wonderful rides, relaxing times, a break from English (or Welsh) weather; what could be better in cold wet dark [February](#)? It was interesting to me how different people took on different roles, some dealing with restaurant choice, taxi arrangements, route planning, ride leading, it all happened spontaneously without prior arrangement – wonderful! Are we going again in 2018 – well some of us are, why not join us? We will probably make more use of the taxi arrangement in order to extend our rides to new areas. [Puerto de Mogan](#) is not the best situated of the resorts for cycling routes, but it is much quieter and smaller than the others, whilst still offering a good range of eating and drinking places and we will choose to go there again for that reason.

