

What does cycling mean to me?

Riding a rare cadence

A couple of years ago I began giving serious attention to my mental wellbeing and started practising meditation. Through these experiences I came to realise that my ultimate aim, as much as possible, was to live in the moment. It's easy to dwell on the past or worry about the future, but the here and now is the only thing that matters and the only thing we can control.

It is very hard to truly live in the moment, I know because I have only ever experienced this feeling a handful of times.

They have all, bar one, been whilst cycling.

Moments of pure joy and elation which transcend everything else I have experienced. A limitless feeling of lightness, freedom, and possibility, one which, if you forgive the cliché, you wish you could bottle up and keep.

Those moments and the sensations they elicited are indelibly etched in my memory.

Speaking the language of a life on two wheels

Cycling, for me, represents liberation. It is meditative and the one time I can feel truly alive. It allows me to seek goals and challenges which give me focus and an overwhelming sense of fulfilment. Cycling has given me so many visceral experiences: moments which made me realise I am but one insignificant person, and there is a whole world out there to be enjoyed. And I have, across many countries and through moments of kindness, connection, and discovery.

When you literally view the world from a different angle, it makes you more observant. It has made me humble and wonderous of the world and made me realise the beautiful textures of life and the endless possibilities which exist, if one is only willing to go and seek them out.

Hors catégorie, Hors délai

I love cycling up mountains. I have to ride them wherever I go. Something about the metaphor of cycling up a big mountain resonates with me. I enjoy the physical sensation of cycling, knowing that the journey, the moments I am experiencing there and then are what will be remembered, and what give life its vitality, not just the 'glory' of the summit. It's not so much about suffering, more about doing something out of the ordinary, something that makes you appreciate you are living, and that life is finite. Feeling your lungs burst with air and your heart thump with blood, there's nothing quite like it. And all the while the road sweeps ever on.

The fact that you can choose to give up and go home or you can keep turning the pedals, keep seeing what's round that next bend is what drives me. There's always that moment when you realise you are going to be out an hour too long, or more. Before you know it, the moon is out, the road is just a ribbon of light and you are alone with the world and even though you are cold and tired and hungry, there's nowhere you would rather be.

One final story to indulge, if you will.

Adorning my Classic Softshell Jacket from 2008 is the tale of Charly Gaul—Angel of the Mountain—who lost 12 minutes in the heat of two blistering mountain stages and made back 15 on a gloriously stormy and sodden stage 21 to win The Tour of 1958.

Stories such as this are repeated across a sport that encompasses the whole spectrum of life—the magnificent, the muddy, and sometimes even the miserable. The exploits of the pro peloton may be immortalised on TV and in magazines, but they are repeated in our own small way every day by mere mortals such as you and I.

I hope to weave the next tale of panache into the fabric of Rapha, tucked away in the back pocket, ready to inspire and embolden the fellow rider, whenever the rain falls, the wind blows, or the mountains loom.