

City rickshaws



Pedal-powered travel

Cycling around Bristol may be good for the environment, but it can be tough on the legs - and almost impossible for anyone travelling with heavy bags.

But that is no longer a problem, following the introduction of Bristol's first rickshaw company.

Pedal Walla provides someone else to do the cycling, while passengers sit in comfort in a modern-day rickshaw carriage.

The aim is to bring a completely new form of green pedal-powered transport to the UK's first cycling city and make travelling by bicycle rickshaw a part of Bristol's identity.

"Every rickshaw journey means one less polluting car on the streets of Bristol," says Dave Fellick, who set up Pedal Walla with three other co-owners, Tom Morgan, Dan Wedgewood and Jenny Hunter.

"It was a way of putting something back, as well as developing a new business."

Pedal Walla was officially launched this summer, following a successful pilot scheme last year.

The rickshaws are run on pedal power alone, which makes them environmentally friendly, but they also provide a quirky alternative to everyday travel.

"Our aim is to get people really enthusiastic about cycling," says Dave.

The rickshaws are used as a

You can travel around Bristol by car, bus, bike, train and even boat, and now there is a new transport in town. Rachel Avery finds out about the city's first cycle rickshaw company



JUST MARRIED: Newlyweds Joel and Lou head off on a Pedal Walla rickshaw. Picture: Larry Jarrett-Kerr

green alternative to taxis, taking people on journeys within a three-mile radius around the centre of Bristol.

However, that is not all they are used for. The bikes have also proved popular for events such as birthdays, hen parties

and weddings.

Dave says: "We've done one wedding every weekend throughout the summer."

Pedal Walla also offers sight-seeing tours around Bristol, taking in traditional landmarks such as Cabot Tower and Clifton Suspension Bridge.

They also offer less conventional tours, such as the "graffiti tour", which takes people around Bristol to admire the work of Banksy and other street artists.

The graffiti tour is carried out with a special spray-painted graffiti rickshaw.

Specialised "tour riders" have an in-depth knowledge of Bristol and are able to provide information about the city's history to passengers.

Dave adds: "We make our tours personal. It's all about chatting to the customers and making sure they have a really good time."

The company also offers a greener means of advertising, as the massive back panel can be used as a billboard.

There are currently eight Pedal Walla rickshaws operating in Bristol but Dave

hopes there will be 20 running in the near future.

He adds: "At the moment it has a novelty value, but it is a real alternative to a taxi."

Pedal Walla are also turning their hand to deliveries and hope to become an established courier service. Options range from taking a letter to a friend to delivering larger parcels.

The company was recently involved in Upfest, the annual Urban Paint festival held in Bedminster, and the rickshaws provided a perfect way to explore the festival in style without polluting the city.

Pedal Walla will be operating at the Harbour Festival this weekend, taking people in and around the festival, with special access to all the closed roads.

The three main pick-up points are Millennium Square, The Mud Dock, and by The Glass Boat on Welshback.

For further information on Pedal Walla call 0117 230 5080 or visit www.pedalwalla.com.

Urban Nature

Devil's darning needles



FLYING VISIT: Dragonflies, above, and damselflies, below, can be spotted across North Somerset

What do you call them? Devil's darning needles, ear cutter and adder's servant — or hawkers, chasers, skimmers and darters?

Dragonflies are one of the most interesting groups of insects to learn about.

Quick on the wing and masters of the air, a blur of bright blue or yellow is often all one sees of these fascinating creatures that have their origin in pre-history.

Their picturesque folk-names reflect the fascination they've had for many cultures — often associated with sinister forces, although they are extremely valuable predators, feasting on mosquitoes, midges and other small flies.

You don't have to go far from Bristol to be rewarded by some fantastic sightings — the Trust's nature reserves in North Somerset, such as Weston Moor and Portbury Wharf, are places where summertime brings the best displays, close to rivers and rhynes.

The latter is the local name for the wet ditches that criss-cross the flat landscape of the North Somerset Levels, and which were created when the marshland was drained as long ago as Roman times.

Spend a little time sitting still and let the dragonflies appear — probably the first ones you'll notice are damselflies, distinguished from the dragonflies by their wings lying along the length of their body

when at rest.

Their colours shimmer — blue-tailed, azure and large red are three of the commonest you'll encounter as they buzz around rushes and sedges hunting for small flies.

The larger dragonflies determinedly patrol territorial areas, the hawkers are recognisable by their large bodies, with long thin abdomens, continually flying along lengths of river or pools searching for mates.

The smaller chasers and skimmers will perch on pieces of vegetation, returning to the same post time after time, following quick excursions around their territories.

On the North Somerset Levels and Moors we have a couple of rare species, too, the hairy dragonfly, a small hawk with fine hairs across its body, and the variable damselfly, a dainty species with deep blue and black markings.

Wildlife filmmaker Steve Nicholls, who is one of our Trustees, travels all over the world making his award-winning films, but says: "I get just as big a kick out of seeing four spot chaser dragonflies on Weston Moor."

"After weeks of working with film crews on the glaciers of Patagonia or volcanoes in Hawaii, there's nothing like getting out on your own, stomping around Weston Moor, looking for fast-flying dragonflies!"

Pat Ellingham

