



**SPORTIVE
PLANNER**
2017

AUTUMN EPIC

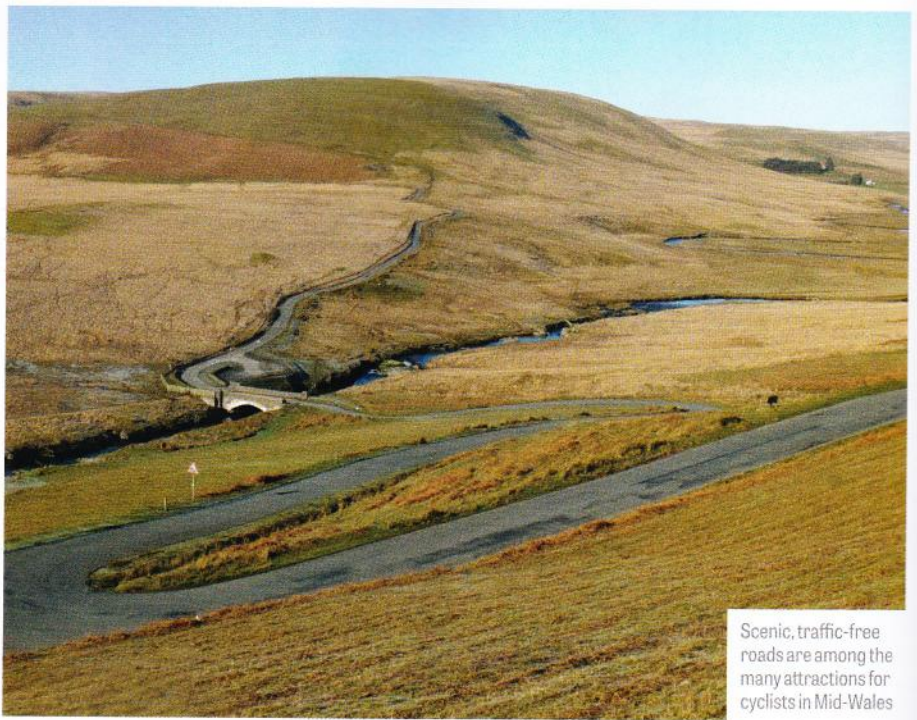
A Welsh classic brought back from the brink two years ago to reclaim its place as the must-do late season challenge

What's it all about?

As a regular fixture in the sportive calendar since 2005, the Autumn Epic has conquered the heights of the sportive rankings over the years – not to mention most of the hills in the area – to become one of the most popular late season rides on the calendar. It nearly all went to ruin a couple of years back, though, as the original organisers decided to call it a day. But a well-loved event won't die off so easily and Andy Dawson of Ride Ventures ran a free tribute ride the following year, then brought it back as a full event thereafter. What this basically means is that you can still try one of the prettiest, most demanding yet rewarding rides Mid-Wales has to offer.

What are the route options?

The ride which has been running since 2005 traditionally had one classic 150km route. This would take you from the small market town of Knighton in Powys in an anti-clockwise loop through some of the most spectacular areas of Mid-Wales, taking in a finger buffet of the most delectable climbs your lungs and legs can devour. If you didn't make the time cut at Rhayader, around 35 miles in by midday, you were sent on a shortcut which dropped the loop around the Elan Valley. This 130km route is now an option in itself, along with an even friendlier 80km ride that after 45km turns back in to the classic route. Heading back over the high moors, you'll still reach over 1,200m (4,000ft) of climbing, though, so it's no easy escape. The



Scenic, traffic-free roads are among the many attractions for cyclists in Mid-Wales



150km classic remains the flagship route though, and to miss out on any section of the scenic route would be a shame.

You said something about climbs?

Yes, there are plenty of them and they vary from easily manageable and hard but pretty, to really quite brutal. From the start, the road heads upward and you'll be gently climbing for most of the first 15 miles before heading down to start on the saw-tooth profile the rest of the ride provides. Highlights include the forested climb of Abbey-cwm-Hir – keep an eye out for the red kites circling in the sky close to Rhayader, as the renowned bird of prey feeding station is close by at Gigrin Farm – and following on to the stunning loop around the Elan Valley and the reservoirs, easily one of the most beautiful parts of the country.

From this point, you head east back towards Knighton, but don't let the turn fool

you as there are plenty more testing hills to tackle first, with the infamous Glaschw m – less than a mile in length but with ramps at a leg-wrecking 25%. By now, you'll have broken the back of the day's climbing, but there's a sting in the tail; with less than five miles to go, you'll push hard once more for a steady 5km climb up past the Spaceguard Centre over to your right, before a fast and furious descent back to the HQ in the town and nearly 2,500m (8,000ft) of elevation in your legs!

What does the entry fee include?

Following the standards set and improving on the excellent previous editions, the ride provides all you would expect – comprehensive and clearly way-marked route with detailed route cards to download as a backup (Classic 150km and Short Cut 130km only), plus electronic timing. (In fact – pub quiz fans – the Autumn Epic was reputedly the first ever cycling sportive to use electronic



WHEN:
1ST OCTOBER 2017

WHERE:
KNIGHTON, POWYS

DISTANCE:
150, 130 OR 80
KILOMETRES

COST:
£25 FOR THE CLASSIC
AND STANDARD,
£22 FOR THE SHORT

SIGN UP:
AUTUMNEPIC.COM

**THERE ARE
PLENTY OF
CLIMBS ON THE
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timing back in its original incarnation).

To keep you fuelled, there are two feeding stations on the route with enough food and drink to get you to the finish (one feed station on the 80km), and when you do finish, there'll be plenty of complimentary hot food. On the road, there are broom wagons, mechanics and First Aid support should things not go to plan for either you or your bike.

How do I get there?

Knighton is right on the English/Welsh border and is a little remote, however the road network around Shropshire and Mid-Wales is good and travel by car is the easiest option. Travel time by car from Birmingham or Cardiff is around an hour and 40 minutes, from Manchester two and a half hours and London three and a half hours. There is a train station in Knighton with services running from the nearest large towns of Shrewsbury, Wrexham or Hereford. 