

RIDER INTERVIEW KIRSTY GIBSON



Photo: Andrew McCandlish

What do you remember about your first sportive?

My first sportive was the Perthshire Challenge 50-mile route in 2011. I used it as a training ride for the longer Glasgow to Edinburgh 'Pedal for Scotland' 100-mile route a couple of months after that. It sounds really arrogant looking back, but in the build-up to the Perthshire Challenge I wasn't at all nervous; probably because it was half the distance of what I thought would be the 'big one'. Safe to say, I soon realised that the challenge would be no walk in the park.

What has been your best sportive experience?

Last year a friend and I drove up to the Cairn o'Mount sportive in Perthshire. Summer 2012 fell on that day in Scotland — it really was the only hot day of the year I can recall. There was little to no wind and the scenery was genuinely breathtaking. However, the ride up Cairn o' Mount almost killed me. I'm no great hill rider anyway but I'd been reading up on the best techniques to tackle tough climbs. I had ridden it well but just metres from the summit I could go no more and I had to get off. I managed to get one quick look at the stunning view before the most amazing downhill. This was by far my best and worst sportive experience.

What do you enjoy most about sportives?

The feeling of accomplishment. I'm never going to finish first and as a competitive person that's something I've had to learn to accept. But for me nothing can beat that sense of achievement when you cross the finish line.

Do you have any advice for new sportive riders?

Enjoy it for what it is. Training is important as you won't enjoy the ride without it, but for me it's more important to try to be realistic about your expectations on the day. There's no point flogging yourself for a time that you know deep down isn't possible, but at the same time don't go at things half-heartedly. Do your best but remember that sportives are supposed to be fun!