

# Best way of getting about town

## What's the fastest way of getting around Edinburgh during the festival?

Those of us with bikes, and a high tolerance for mayhem, will tell you it's cycling every time. This year's festival felt busier and more chaotic than ever. Many pavements in the city centre were too narrow for the crowds of people rushing to shows, sightseeing, shopping or just trying to get around for ordinary everyday trips. Folk spilled out onto the roads, stepped in front of buses, and wandered about in cycle lanes. Bus drivers sat patiently in long queues of traffic.

Taxi drivers, urged on by frantic passengers, did U-turns. Many drivers of private vehicles doing non-essential trips may have questioned their wisdom as they sat in polluted air in congested hot spots across the city. Those who had to drive no doubt cursed those who could have used an alternative.

For me, a Portobello resident, cycling was the obvious choice. It only takes 25 minutes to cycle to the city centre using the Innocent Path. I moved around the city at speed, under my own steam, burning off calories, and arriving on time for every festival event I attended.

At times it was fun. At times it was dangerous. Occasionally it was almost lethal.

Confident assertive cycling in Edinburgh is essential at the best of times – during the festival it can be life-saving. With the limited cycle infrastructure often full of

pedestrians, the most appropriate way to ride is to 'take the lane'. This means staying out of the door zone of parked cars, and not being forced into the gutter or railings by frustrated drivers.

Sadly, it sometimes results in getting shouted at by an aggressive driver who wants to get past, even when the traffic lights just ahead are red. Most people will not cycle in the city because of this. They are afraid of the heavy traffic, afraid of the abuse they might face, and anxious about cycling in such difficult conditions. I don't blame them.

The city must be designed and managed in a way that makes cycling a safe and convenient option for everyone, not just those that are confident enough to take the lane. Managing the city through the festival period is a tough job. It could, though, be a lot easier if we provided more space for people walking and wheeling and enabled a lot more people to cycle.

This would, of course, require major traffic reduction. Is The City of Edinburgh Council up to the task?



Kirsty Lewin. Photo: Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)