

Derek Queenan, July 2018

*Xduro Wales – 2 days Over 3000km and 5000m of ascent – It sounded ambitious when I first stumbled across the ride and it still felt pretty daunting when I set off from under the Menai Bridge on Saturday Morning.*

*I arrived 15min early and seemed to be the only one there. No worries I had the route on my GPS kit on my bike, accommodation and train from Cardiff arranged for Monday. Fortunately a few others began to arrive until there were 12 riders to start.*

*Advertised as race pace I was glad for a sociable start as riders took a little time to get to know each other. The route was amazing, picking its way through the best of Wales and linking B-roads and bridleways. Respect to those who planned and researched this adventure.*

*From the slate quarries in the Snowdonia to The Gap in the Breacons the ride presented continuous challenges for the fitness and skills on a cross bike loaded with the kit for the weekend. Inspiring, the best weekend I have had in a long time.*

*Riders met physical emotional and mechanical battles along the way - the tyre slashing slates, temperatures close to 40c and the brutal hike-a-bike at the start of day 2 with the equally brutal swarms of horse flies stood out for me. Every time I met a fellow rider they were happy to share a moment before continuing with their personal journey – this made a refreshing change from the race faces encountered at many sportives and gravel rides.*

*No number of superlatives could explain the joy I experienced as part of Xduro Wales. The route, fellow riders, organisation, the campsite, people met on route – all these factors added to the experience but the thing that made it for me was the vibe, the ethos, the way it all came together to use a cliché a certain je ne sais quoi. What is certain is that I will be riding across England, Scotland and the North York Moors with The Racing Collective.*