

The group pauses to take in the amazing scenery



It can be a bumpy ride!



Thankfully, we didn't have to cycle uphill too much!

Biker girls

Think mountain biking's just for blokes? Think again. This popular women-only holiday in the French Alps is for lovers of adrenaline, speed and mud

eyes from the trail, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky all day. I caught myself with a smile on my face several times – there's such a great sense of achievement when you get down a section that looks really hard.

The rest of the week, our group of 12 enthusiastic 'dirtgirls' (of ages 22 to 44, with up to four years' biking experience) learnt new skills, covered some very varied terrain and picked up plenty of scrapes, bruises and, of course, dirt. It was a very supportive atmosphere to learn in, and there was plenty of time for girly faffing and pee breaks! We also caused a bit of a stir among the hoardes of testosterone-fuelled men in the resort.

I awoke the next day to bright blue skies, a spectacular view of the mountains and the promise of a day of exercise and fresh air, and tried to calm my nerves as I donned my elbow- and knee-pads and jumped on my hire bike (FLOWMTB hires out excellent Santa Cruz bikes).

The first day was fantastic, though scary and very hot. Determined to keep up with the others, my bike and I made it down some pretty knarly-looking tracks, while I tried desperately to remember important words of wisdom from ace downhiller Emily Horridge, who gave excellent coaching all week, along with Burdon. I learnt 'speed is your friend' (strangely, you're often more stable the faster you go) and 'look way ahead down the trail, not immediately in front of you' (so you can anticipate obstacles and have time to avoid/deal with them). The scenery was incredible when I dared lift my



Dirt lovers united

My boyfriend's really into mountain biking. In fact, he doesn't think of a lot else, and I fast came to the conclusion that if I wanted to a) see him and b) have much to talk about with him, I needed to try this off-road cycling malarkey. I heard about FLOWMTB's Dirtgirls beginner's week in Morzine, France and signed up for some Alpine action.

I was met at Geneva airport by Guy, boyfriend of Sara Burdon who runs the girls-only week. The four other girls who were picked up with me all had their own bikes with them. 'How beginner are they?' I wondered, gulping. At the chalet, it soon became obvious I was the least experienced (having only mountain biked twice and being unable to join in the chat about favourite rides and worst injuries!), but was reassured there would be two groups to cater for different levels – phew!

WORDS: Emma Morris. PHOTOGRAPHY: Emma Morris; Ben Hopkins at www.shocycycles.com

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