

Join chain gang to beat the thieves

top 10 tips to protect your bike

- 1 Use two types of lock. A chain and a D-lock require different tools to break open, so a thief has to be twice as toiled-up.
- 2 Don't park outside cinemas, football grounds or any other places that let people know you won't return for a few hours. Signify a shorter stay by locking up outside places like shops and cafes.
- 3 If you're really paranoid about the safety of your expensive steed, lock it up in different places every day to put a returning thief off the scent.
- 4 Athletic miscreants can lift a bike over the top of No Parking posts. You're safe with lampposts and Sheffield stands.
- 5 Never lock your bike on the street overnight - a thief has all the time he wants to smash open a lock.
- 6 Buy a decent lock. It sounds obvious but it'll put off thieves. You should be spending 15-20 per cent of the bike's value on locks.
- 7 Your bike isn't safe in a shed, even if it's padlocked. Invest in a bike anchor - a metal bike stand that can be bolted to a brick wall in your garden.
- 8 Make your bike the ugliest on the block. Cover flashy labels and respray the frame in matte black or army green. You could even put tears in your saddle, duct tape on your frame and spoke dokes in your wheels.
- 9 Fit a shopping basket, the Mary Poppins look is a kudos no-no down Brick Lane market.
- 10 Get insured. It won't deter thieves but it'll get you your money back. Either extend your home contents insurance (but make sure it covers theft outside the home too) or insure it separately if it's particularly pricey.

Last year 17,754 bikes were reported stolen in the capital, including those of high-profile figures such as David Cameron. **Peter Knight** tells you how to guard against becoming a victim

Bicycle thieves in London must feel like kids in a candy shop as more and more of us swap the Tube for two wheels.

The hot weather heralds an annual surge in pedal power, as commuters prefer the wind in their hair to sauna-like public transport. Perversely, the demand on the black market goes up too.

So, if you're thinking of dusting the cobwebs off your bike in the shed, take note: London is the cycle theft capital of Europe. It certainly has the quickest thieves in the country, according to a recent trial during which an unlocked bike was stolen in just 17 minutes outside London Bridge station.

Just ask Mike Cavenett, of the London Cycling Campaign, whose folding bike was also stolen within an hour from a back street near London Bridge last month.

"I should have known better, all that was left against the railing was my cut cable lock," he says.

"I'm disappointed with myself more than anything, so now I use a hefty chain and a fat cable."

But while many of us have been victims of bike theft or know someone who

has, the Met Police insists that crime is down. Last year, 17,754 bikes were reported stolen in London, down 17 per cent since 2005. This is remarkable, given the 46 per cent increase in the number of cyclists on our roads in the same period.

Unreported thefts, however, paint a different picture. The British Crime Survey 2008-09 polled 50,000 people nationwide and estimated a 31 per cent increase over five years in the number of people who have had their bikes nicked. It's generally accepted that for every four thefts, only one is reported.

Cavenett says: "It's dispiriting, knowing that police don't have the time to investigate a theft. The police officer I spoke to said he was 'overwhelmed' with cases at this time of year."

Adam Thorpe, of research group bikeoff.org, says: "One of the big problems is that when cyclists have their bikes stolen, it puts them off buying another or cycling so much."

A survey carried out

by the Transport Research Laboratory found that 66 per cent of people who'd had their bike pinched did less, while 24 per cent stopped cycling altogether.

There is a lack of heavy punishment despite a maximum sentence of seven years for bike theft. Crime statistics show that in 2007 just 93 people in the UK were given a prison sentence for stealing a bike (compared to more than 11,000 locked up for shoplifting). The harshest sentence dished out was for one person, for a year to 18 months.

Cycle crime is hardly at the top of police priorities and it is difficult to catch thieves and black market traders. It's not illegal to prowl around a rack of bikes. And if a bike isn't registered and reported as stolen, police can't prove its provenance.

"It's difficult to prove that a bike is stolen once someone's riding around on it," says Rosa Ades, head of Transport for London's Cycling Centre of Excellence.

PC John Quin is a member of the City of London Police's cycle patrol team. He says: "A lot of the people we search, hanging around locked up bikes, are found to have tools



ROBBED | David Cameron after having his bike stolen in Portobello Road

ive. Quin describes CCTV footage of one person climbing on another's back to feed a locked bike over a No Parking post.

And bikes aren't safe at home either. Increasingly thieves are raiding poorly secured garden sheds.

Camden, Islington and Lambeth have a high number of people who cycle to work, and so have a bigger theft problem.

Ades says: "Parts of London with a high concentration of bikes are vulnerable, like Bloomsbury which has a big student and commuter population." Space for bikes is at a premium, which forces many to leave them outside overnight, at the mercy of thieves.

"TfL has worked hard to reduce crime in stations like Paddington while the City of London Police has various initiatives to address the problem there," Ades adds.

TfL is investing £10m on parking spaces, including £3.5m this year, meaning that by 2012 there will be 136,000 parking spaces, nearly twice as many as today.

One way to help police reunite you with your faithful warhorse is to register your bike on the Immobilise database (www.immobilise.com).

EASY TARGET | Coil and cable locks are simple to cut through



thelondonpaper
GET LONDON CYCLING

HAVE YOU HAD YOUR BIKE STOLEN?
email us at talk@thelondonpaper.com

72
per cent of all bikes stolen in Camden in 2006 were not against a stand

best locks on the block

Cycling Plus magazine has used pliers, bolt croppers and axle grinders to test the best bike locks on the market. Editor Rob Spedding says: "We're always thorough and fair with our lock tests - lock companies tend not to like us because we get through so many of their products. The locks below achieved a five-star rating and took longer than five minutes to break, a time which would deter all but the most determined thieves." You can buy these in all good bike shops.

Kryptonite New York Standard, £64.99

This is an ideal shackle lock: tough construction, protected lock mechanism, plenty of keys and a clever bracket.

Pragmasis Protector Chains, £79.99

The 16mm chain resists bolt croppers and substantially slows down a disc cutter. It's the best chain we've ever taken tools to.

Tusk Mammoth 300, £18.64

This is a very secure bike storage anchor that has an in-built security hoop, providing a means to lock the bike against a wall or as a stand.

Abus Granit X-Plus, £64.99

Has a clever double-bolt lock mechanism that eliminates any chance of twisting. Survived the bolt croppers and still worked perfectly after five minutes of hammering and attacks.

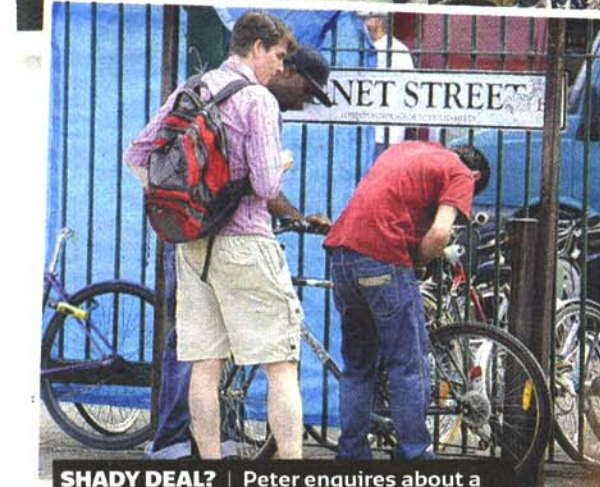
Abus Steelflex Granit 1000, £59.99

Anyone looking to make a cable lock that works should take a close look at this super-tough lock. The Steelflex passed our five-minute test with minimal cosmetic damage.



common theft techniques - and how to avoid them

<p>Levering</p> <p>Thieves can insert jacks or bars in a D-lock to lever the lock apart, sometimes rotating the bike frame against the stand.</p> <p>What to do: Lock your bike through the frame and wheels, never by the crossbar alone.</p>	<p>Cutting</p> <p>Tin snips, bolt croppers, hacksaws and angle grinders have been used to cut through locks and chains.</p> <p>What to do: Coil and cable locks are the weakest. For lock advice, go to www.soldsecure.com</p>	<p>Striking</p> <p>Thieves can use a hammer and chisel to split the chain apart if it's resting on the ground.</p> <p>What to do: Loop the chain around the saddle or handle bars, and make sure it's not in contact with the ground.</p>	<p>Unbolting</p> <p>Bolts and quick release mechanisms are easy to undo for thieves.</p> <p>What to do: Lock both wheels to the frame or stand, or invest in secure skewers (bolts that can be undone only by their compatible skewer).</p>	<p>Picking</p> <p>It takes only a bit of wire and a steady hand to pick some locks.</p> <p>What to do: Decent bike locks are designed to be hard to pick, but to be sure, face the lock into the bike. It will make it 10 times harder for a thief.</p>
--	--	---	---	---



SHADY DEAL? | Peter enquires about a bike from the hawkers near Brick Lane

Brick Lane's black market

Has your bike gone missing? It may well end up in the East End, says **Peter Knight**

If your bike has been stolen, chances are it'll end up being hawked at Brick Lane market on a Sunday morning.

The trade in knock-off cycles is such an issue that the council is taking legal advice on making Brick Lane a bicycle-free zone.

David Saunders, head of markets at Tower Hamlets Council, says: "If we make it illegal to enter the market on a bike, there can't be illegal trading. It's similar to a controlled drinking zone."

The advent of such a plan is in the far distance, if at all, but it would address the "huge" problem of stolen bikes. Saunders' undercover team have

been threatened and assaulted but so far this year have seized 229 bikes and initiated 157 prosecutions for illegal trading. They work closely with the Met Police who seized 60 stolen bikes and had 10 people arrested in a four-week crackdown earlier this year.

Despite the market's reputation, most bikes there are legal. The racks of rusting second-hand bikes sold under canopies are mostly bought at police auction. When the Met runs out of space for unclaimed bicycles, they're sold on.

So if you're not knowingly buying a stolen bike, it's likely that you are by proxy.

But what is illegal about Brick Lane market is the huddle of youths standing guard over one or two bikes, up against railings. Stand beside one for a few seconds and the seller will name his price.

In one morning, you could spot a dozen or so bikes, some of which will have been stolen the previous night. Recently plain-clothes police were called to the market by a cyclist who found his bike after it had been nicked from outside his girlfriend's house on Saturday night. The bike was recovered but the seller wasn't arrested having convinced police that he'd bought the bike legitimately, unaware that it was stolen.

Bikes are generally sold for £50-£100, from a gleaming Carrera Subway to a clapped out Barracuda. Ask a seller where it came from and the response is anything but plausible. When asked why a rusting bike came with a flat tyre and a chain that hadn't seen a lick of oil in its life, one seller claimed to have kept the bike unused. More likely, the bike was stolen from a poorly locked garden shed.

And it's not just whole bikes on sale. Crates of parts spill out of car boots. It's impossible to tell their provenance.

One person, who bought a stolen bike from Brick Lane,

regrets her decision.

"I spotted a new-looking Ridgeback Velocity I liked," says Gemma Hitchins, 35. "I haggled with several men standing around the bike, down to £90. I asked where it was from and the seller looked shifty and said it was his. I knew it was stolen but he didn't look like the kind of guy to argue with."

"Since then I have felt pretty bad about it, especially as my boyfriend had a gorgeous, custom-made, £500, fixed-wheel bike stolen from outside our house a couple of months later."

"I guess I got my karmic comeuppance."

**name changed*