

# Five ways to cut your travel costs

This month we look at car clubs, buying a bike more cheaply, getting your boss to help with transport costs, booking Christmas train travel and how to cut the cost of car insurance

Cycling to work is good for your health and your company could make it cheaper than you think. See tip number 5

**1** If you are interested in getting fit, this is a good time to buy a new bike. In September and October, many low- to mid-priced retailers cut the price of their old stock to make room for the new season's bicycles that are launched at this time of year.

We've found savings of up to 40 per cent off the price of a new bike and quite a few deals that offer 20 per cent off.



It is worth thinking about buying as many of the accessories you need at the same time, as you'll be in a good position to negotiate on price.

Among the most important accessories that you will need are a helmet, mud guards, cycle gloves, a primary and secondary lock plus a puncture kit and spare inner tube.

**2** If you need a car only occasionally, you might think about joining a car club. Car clubs give you access to a car without insurance, maintenance and tax costs. The idea is you book a vehicle for as little as half an hour and pick it up from a designated space. Car clubs include City Car Club, Streetcar and Whizzgo. The charity Carplus ([www.carplus.org.uk](http://www.carplus.org.uk)) has a map of clubs. Streetcar, for example, costs £4.95 an hour, including 30 miles' worth of petrol. Using a car for an hour twice a week (with mileage each time of less than 30 miles) costs £514.80 a year. See also 'Money makeover', p24.

**4** When you are buying your car insurance, remember that insurers tend to hike prices after the first year, so shop around. Online quotes are usually 10 per cent less than those over the phone. It's generally cheaper to pay in one go rather than in instalments and you might also want to consider opting for a larger excess, which reduces your premium.



**3** If you intend to visit friends or family over Christmas, it's worth planning your journey now. Under contract terms, Network Rail must set the timetable 12 weeks in advance and that's when cheap tickets are usually released. Sometimes engineering works delay the timetable being published and that can delay the release of cheap tickets.

For further information, visit [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com) or check with your local train firm.



**5** Many of us can get interest-free loans for train travel through work, but a scheme offering bikes at a reduced price is less well known. You can save 30 to 50 per cent of the price of a bike by persuading your employer to join a project called Cyclescheme.

The employer buys a bike that you choose from a local independent shop. Part of your gross salary pays for use of the bike. At the end of the hire, you pay a 'fair market value' (about 5 per cent) and it's yours. Savings come from reduced VAT, income tax and National Insurance – these vary according to your personal taxation rate and employer. See [www.cyclescheme.co.uk](http://www.cyclescheme.co.uk) for more.

