



Alice: Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English: we'll be talking about a story in the news and learning some vocabulary along the way. I'm Alice and joining me today is Rob. Hi Rob.

Rob: Hi there Alice.

Alice: Now, Rob are you a cyclist?

Rob: Yes I ride a bicycle.

Alice: Even on the mean streets of London?

Rob: I do indeed – London streets are very dangerous for cyclists. Over 110 cyclists have been killed on the UK's roads in 2012, 13 of them in London.

Alice: That's quite a lot for one city. Although there are many cycle paths painted onto roads in London, bikes are rarely separated from the traffic. And many roads are very narrow. But some people think it's the cyclists themselves who are to blame for accidents. A documentary called 'The War on Britain's Roads' has been investigating the issue. Before we find out more, a question for you Rob. The website Bicycling.com has made a list of what it thinks are the best cities for cycling in in the world. Only one in the top five isn't in Europe. Can you guess where it is. Is it:

- a. Beijing, China
- b. Tokyo, Japan
- c. Bogota, Colombia

Rob: I haven't a clue really. But at a guess I'd probably say Tokyo.

Alice: As usual we won't hear the answer till the end of the programme. Now more about this 'battle' between cyclists and motorists on Britain's roads.

Rob: Now come on Alice, is it really a 'battle'?

Alice: Well some people think so. Here's Jan Etherington a journalist and comedy writer who thinks cyclists in London behave like **gladiators** in lycra – that's the stretchy material a lot of cyclists wear:

Journalist Jan Etherington:

It's not the mode of transport, it's the people. I think there are motorists and there are cyclists, who wake up in the morning not thinking if I can help somebody as I go along my way, but finding their inner gladiator. They immediately, in the cyclists case, put on the helmet and lycra and go out to war. And it's a minority, but it's the noticeable aggressive minority that I think the cycling community should recognise and address.

- Alice:** Journalist Jan Etherington who thinks that cyclists are to blame for dangerous cycling. She thinks that some cyclists put on their helmet and lycra and go out to war.
- Rob:** Ah – but she did say that it's a minority – so not all cyclists.
- Alice:** Yes she said it's the **aggressive minority** – the small number of cyclists who cycle in an aggressive manner.
- Rob:** Aggressive; so that's in a dangerous and challenging way.
- Alice:** Yes. Jan Etherington wants the cycling community to do something about aggressive cycling – she wants them **to address the problem**.
- Rob:** So how do cyclists defend themselves? Aren't cyclists just protecting themselves from dangerous motorists?
- Alice:** Well cycling writer and former British racing cyclist Michael Hutchinson thinks so. He says only idiots would go to war on a bicycle.

Cyclist Michael Hutchinson:

You do feel quite vulnerable as a cyclist. Somebody drives past inches away, the first thing it is, is frightening. I certainly don't go to war, because frankly I'm not going to win. I'm wearing maybe lycra or maybe on my to work in t-shirt and a pair of jeans, I'm not going to win a battle with a forty ton truck. So only an idiot's going to go to war with a bicycle.

- Alice:** Cyclist Michael Hutchinson says cyclists feel **vulnerable**; in danger. It can be frightening when a big truck drives very close to you.
- Rob:** I agree. A forty ton truck driving very close to you, while you're trying to cycle on a narrow street, can be very frightening.
- Alice:** Jan Etherington though, still says that cyclists need to change their behaviour. She thinks that since the London Olympics, the problem has got worse where she lives, because more and more people are cycling on the roads. And she uses more battle language. **Battalions**; we usually hear this word when we're talking about soldiers. And cyclists taking up the road, two or three abreast, **in droves**, like soldiers marching.

Journalist Jan Etherington:

I live in the middle of the Olympic cycling route, now from dawn to dusk at the weekend the cyclists come not as single spokes but in batallions. There are two or three abreast of them, and they come in droves. They're not stopping for anyone. A cyclist on a bike at 30mph is a dangerous machine.

- Alice:** Journalist Jan Etherington who says cyclists on London's roads are not stopping for anyone.
- Alice:** So Rob – whose side are you on?
- Rob:** Well I'm a cyclist and a motorist – and a pedestrian – so I can see the problem from all sides.

- Alice:** And have you had a chance to think about the question I asked at the beginning of the programme. Bicycling.com made a list of the cities it thinks are best for cycling in. Only one in the top five wasn't in Europe.
- Rob:** I guessed Tokyo, Japan. Come on I've got to be right?
- Alice:** Well, actually it's Bogota, Colombia. The top five cycle cities according to that website are: Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Copenhagen, Denmark, Bogota in Colombia, Barcelona, Spain and Berlin, Germany. Have you cycled in any of those cities Rob?
- Rob:** No, I haven't. But I'd love to.
- Alice:** I love to cycle in any city that's quite flat. Beijing or Berlin would be my favourites. Well, thanks so much, Rob. And before we go, would you read us some of today's words and phrases:
- Rob:** Of course. We heard:
- gladiators**
aggressive minority
to address the problem
vulnerable
battalions
in droves
- Alice:** Thanks Rob. And please join us again soon for more 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.com.
- Bye for now.
- Rob:** Bye.

Vocabulary and definitions

gladiators	professional fighters in ancient Rome
aggressive minority	small number of people who behave in a dangerous and challenging way
to address the problem	to do something about solving a problem
vulnerable	in danger
battalions	a military unit
in droves	in large numbers

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