

Home is Where the Yurt is

written by Marcus | 27 July, 2017



It's been over seven months since we returned from our jaunt around the world by tandem which is the longest amount of time we've spent in any one country in the last three years. Time is a funny old thing though and can be stretched or compressed depending on what you're up to. A day full of constant changes and new encounters seems to last a lot longer than a day with a routine in a familiar place. So if you want a week to feel like a month then go cycle touring. If you want a month to feel like a day then stay at home.

Since the bike got parked up life has taken enough twists and turns to keep us entertained. The sore knee that Kirsty was nursing for the last few weeks of the trip decided it hated stopping cycling even more than it hated cycling, swelling up and making for a painful Christmas on crutches. After some

head scratching the doctors decided she'd contracted septic arthritis and rushed her into Redditch hospital for an intensive course of IV antibiotics. From a daily routine of pedalling miles and miles to three weeks in a bed on the wards couldn't be more of a contrast. Eventually she was allowed to escape but it was clear that her knee would take a lot longer to return to its normal state as a pedalling powerhouse.



Kirsty with her drugs

The poorly tandem has also had some surgery to get the back wheel working properly again. On receipt of our damaged hub the folks at Phil Wood replied with an email that started with 'Just wow'. The only piece that could be salvaged from the old hub was a single nut but that didn't stop them honouring their warranty and sending back a shiny replacement all the way from California. The trusty machine has spent most of the year resting with just the occasional short outing but we feel that this is very well earned after lugging us around the world for so long.



The tandem gets to meet Chris Boardman's Olympic track bike. Other than this, the main challenge has been adjusting back to life in civilised society where sleeping in parks and washing in rivers is generally frowned upon. We opened up the container where all our possessions are being stored and after a quick glance shut the door again. Why do we own all that

stuff? Besides, making decisions like which t-shirt to wear have become almost impossibly daunting. Getting used to driving a car again has also been difficult and to begin with I had to open the sunroof and windows so I knew I was actually moving. Getting around by bike is still the preferred method of transport where practical. We're slowly expanding our diet beyond the limitations of two pans and a petrol stove and don't need to try and get the maximum number of calories to the dollar when shopping.



Stuff that has been in storage (and still is)



We've given a few talks about our travels since we got back. Soon we had to face the reality of being back in the UK though and the enormous and omnipresent 'What Next' question kept tapping us on the shoulder and asking, well, what happens next? The stock answer for a while was to grin and boldly reply "A second lap". The world is a huge place and there's a whole new hemisphere that we didn't even touch but that's an adventure for another day. So the alternative, in the meantime is to do what everyone else seems to do and that's to try and earn some money so we can afford to stay in this expensive country.

The short list of options looked something like this:

Deliveroo cycle courier

Pro: Get paid to cycle!

Con: Don't get paid enough to cover cost of maintaining bike let alone buying food as well

Uber driver

Pro: Get paid to drive!

Con: Driving is rubbish

Lidl checkout assistant

Pro: Get paid to go to Lidl every day!

Con: Have to spend all day in Lidl

International bike courier for high price, low environment impact and non-time dependable consignments.

Pro: Get to cycle to other countries to deliver parcels!

Con: Market research suggests that we would have exactly zero customers

Back to what we did before.

Pro: Good salary, job security, benefits package

Con: 9-5 in an office in front of a computer for 5 days a week

For a few dreadful moments both of us had our fingers hovering over the 'apply now' button on listings on some faceless recruitment website but there had to be another way.



Kirsty learning how to be a shepherdess



Marcus learning how to be a gardener

Nearly two and a half years of cycling should have given us plenty of time to come up with a few ideas to make use of our skills in an enterprising way but to be honest we were so caught up with the whole process of actually cycling that a Grand Plan never really took shape. But in the cold light of a UK winter we began to piece together some of the things that we'd learnt throughout our journey and to mould them into some sort of business proposition.



A winter morning in Worcestershire

The overwhelming feeling that we've taken from our journey is one of gratitude. The number of people who helped us get from place to place, day after day runs into the hundreds. Using the theory of Karma we're seriously in 'good deeds' debt. So lots more volunteering and charity work required for starters and perhaps some way to make other people happy.



Marcus and Barrington on a ride with the charity Lifecycle

People would sometimes ask if we ever got bored on our journey but the excitement of new experiences discovering different places never wears off. If we can offer something new and different to people then perhaps they too will experience that surge of excitement?

Being outdoors and getting to enjoy nature in all its beauty at close quarters is something that enriches the soul and shouldn't be underestimated. Not enough people take the time to do it and some people think they can't when really they should and they can.

There's a risk that smart phones and social media will soon replace conversations and physical communities. Ok, that's a sweeping statement but almost every city in every country (except Pyongyang) we visited was inhabited by screen watchers who didn't say a word to each other. It would be nice if there

was some way to switch off and look up more often.

Adventure takes many forms and means different things to different people but one thing that I think is clear is that life is pretty dull without it. I've mentioned Al Humphries and his concept of Microadventures before and it's still a fantastic idea. If we can help people squeeze a little bit of adventure into their daily routine then they'll feel better for it.



A micro adventure sleeping on Bredon Hill

Lastly we've seen a small sliver of how incredible our planet is but sadly we've also seen how easily it can be ruined. Minimising our impact on the environment is more important to us now than ever.

So how to wrap all this up into something that actually earns us enough to get by? After a couple of months living on my parents' farm in the Vale of Evesham an idea took hold. It's a

beautiful part of the world made all the more special having been deprived of it for so long, and more people should be encouraged to visit. So we thought 'let's get people to sleep in our orchard!' The idea needed some work but eventually The Orchard Getaway was born.

Borrowing from what we'd seen on our travels through Central Asia and after some fortunate browsing of eBay we became the proud owners of a yurt (actually a Mongolian Ger). We added some bell tents and dusted off some dormant carpentry skills to set about providing facilities for people to be able to enjoy a stay in the country in comfort. It doesn't sound much like the camping we were used to, but the point was that we wanted this to be accessible to anyone, particularly the 'I don't do camping' set. How can anyone go through life without at least one night under canvas?? We hope our site gives them a glimpse of what sleeping outside has to offer: The sound of the birds, the fresh air, breakfast with the sun streaming through the trees, all with a hot shower and proper mattresses nearby.



What this orchard needs is a yurt



Ready to assemble.



You can buy anything on eBay



All the fun of camping with a few home comforts included
So here we are today, running an off grid glamping site providing little camping adventures in Worcestershire. We had no idea what would happen when we got back from our travels but this seems like a good place to have ended up. Our summer is set to be a busy one as bookings are filling the calendar fast but so far the whole experience has been thoroughly enjoyable. New skills learnt, a few challenges overcome and we've met some lovely people along the way. Not actually that far from a day on the bike really. Feel free to drop by if you're in the area and if you arrive on a fully laden touring bike then you can stay for free.

Is it enough to satisfy our own hunger for adventure though? They say that when the travel bug bites it bites down hard so we still catch ourselves scanning the roadside for nice places to pitch a tent whenever we're out and about and browsing other cyclists' travel blogs for inspiration. It's also a

contagious little critter so as we try to settle down several friends are setting off on their own amazing journeys (including these two). But the great thing about our new business is that it's largely seasonal leaving at least a month or two over the winter available for going places. And a month on a bicycle is a huge amount of time.



A sunny evening in the Vale of Evesham