

And For Our Next Trip.

We released our brakes and rolled down the hill. My riding buddies whooped as we accelerated and leant into the turns. There were a few nervous screams but on we raced past cottages and trees, with gravity on our side providing the free speed. The wind felt exhilarating on our faces, pulling at our hair and pressing our clothes tight to our chests. Tyres hummed on rough tarmac while we resisted the urge to squeeze the brakes.

Eventually the road leveled off and a couple of people punched the air, shouting "YES!". Someone asked "Can we do that again?", "that's better than a roller coaster!".

It was a hill I'd ridden many times before, about half a kilometer in length and no more than 5% at its steepest. I'd never given it much of a thought before, just a stretch of road on the route towards Worcester that is quite pretty but nothing to get excited about. Given the reaction from my riding buddies on that day, they clearly thought otherwise. To them this was the greatest stretch of road they'd ever ridden.

Admittedly I was riding with a group of 10 year olds during a Bikeability lesson but it got me thinking how easy it is to forget just how much fun cycling actually is. Bikes can be hard work, they can be scary, they can leave you cold, wet and hungry and sometimes they can be really, really annoying when something breaks leaving you stranded on a roadside miles from anywhere. But given half a chance, almost every time you swing your leg over one they will make you smile. Especially if you can engage your 10 year old appreciation for simple pleasures.



First day of school as a Bikeability Instructor

Last year I needed to be reminded how much we enjoy cycle touring too. The pandemic put a dampener on a lot of things and changed all of our routines to the point where it was hard to remember what we used to like to do. Our Bog LEJOG journey was the first long trip by bike (and boat) since we visited

Cuba in 2018 and it felt really good to be back on the road. That sense of elation from cresting a hill to be rewarded with a view that takes your breath away. Discovering new places and meeting new people. The freedom of knowing we have everything we need on our bikes to continue indefinitely. It stirred familiar feelings and felt exciting so since then we've been pondering what to do next.



Towards Loch Marie during Bog LEJOG



In Derbyshire with the legendary Tara (@followmargopolo)
The solution came via an email in February from a brilliant local charity that we support called Action on Poverty (APT). They provide training and resources to help vulnerable communities to develop sustainable livelihoods in several countries across Africa. The email was asking us to help them plan a fundraising bike ride in Uganda next year which of course we were happy to oblige. Now Africa is a continent that we've never turned our pedals on so the more we looked into the options for route the more it sounded like a great place to visit. This had to be our next adventure.

Fast forward to the end of June and we now have arms full of jabs, a Ugandan Visa and a map with a wiggly line on it. We also have two matching 1980s Peugeot mountain bikes. Mine cost £10 and I felt a bit ripped off whereas Kirsty's was free and seemed like a bargain. We'll be using them to ride 2000ish km around the country testing out the planned Action on Poverty route then adding a whole lot more on the fabled Trans Uganda trail. Basic bikes should be easier to find parts for if needs

be and we hope to show that you don't need the latest and greatest kit to enjoy a big adventure. We'll see if that holds true!



Trusty steed #1



Trusty Steed #2



Load test on the Devon coast to coast



As we get closer to departure there have been those jolts of adrenaline that come from knowing we're about to leave our comfort zone for the first time in years. A friend found it amusing that a seasoned cycle tourist who had ridden round the world would be nervous about a relatively short trip like this. But it's one thing riding out of your front door and

slowly heading to foreign countries and quite another to jump on a plane and get dumped in Entebbe hours later. How will we cope with the heat? How rough will the roads be? Will we get eaten by lions?

The only way to find out is to release the brakes and roll down the hill.



Downhill to Loch Hourne

We don't plan to write a blog while we're away but will be using Instagram for short updates so feel free to follow us on @shesnotpedallingontheback or on Facebook @shesnotpedallingontheback. We'll expand these into a proper blog post when we're back in August.

Although our ride is a recce of the APT route this isn't intended as a sponsored ride. But if you'd like to support them then they would very much appreciate a donation to help fund their fantastic work. Here's a link to a Just Giving page for that very purpose.

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/kirsty-marcus-uganda>



2 girls in Kampala who enrolled on a hairdressing apprenticeship thanks to help from APT