

Bog LEJOG

written by Marcus | 25 February, 2022



We're working on a new project that shockingly doesn't just involve cycling, there isn't even a tandem involved!

In April this year we'll be taking on the classic journey from Lands End to John O'Groats which is a rite of passage for any cyclist, but it's only Kirsty who will be riding it. I'll be tackling the route on foot and just for fun I'll also be dressed as a toilet to help raise funds for the charity WaterAid.

If you'd like to follow our progress then take a look at our website here: boglejog.uk. You can subscribe to the Bog Blog and also make a donation if you like. We're also keen to meet up with people along the way so if you'd like to trot with the bog for a few miles, feed us cake or even offer a warm shower and a bed then we'd be very grateful. You can see if we're coming past your doorstep here: boglejog.uk/route/.

It's a whole different kind of adventure to what we're used to which makes it all the more exciting but slightly terrifying

too. We hope to be flushed with success by the time we reach the end!



Pack it up, pack it in

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I thought unemployment would mean lots of lounging on the sofa in a blanket eating pot noodles while watching Jeremy Kyle but the last 3 weeks have left barely any time for sitting around at all.



Not a bad spot to watch the track cycling

The day after walking out of our respective offices we drove straight up to Glasgow so that I could start my first shift at the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome volunteering for the Commonwealth Games. It was a great experience being right in the middle of the action and seeing what's required for top level track cyclists to perform at their best. For the likes of England and Australia this meant a rack of shiny carbon fibre bikes in various shapes and sizes to suit different events, several coaches, a team manager, mechanics, soigneurs, PR specialists and physios all operating as a finely tuned machine to make sure that all the riders had to do was sit on the bike and win. For the likes of Bangladesh, for whom this was their first experience of a wooden track let alone a competition of that size, the whole operation was a bit more low key with one coach between them and the riders themselves helping each other out by carrying bikes and picking each other up off the boards when they fell over (which the entire team managed to do on the very first corner). However I should think these smaller nations got a lot more out of being part of The Games

than many of the track superstars despite not taking home any medals.



The 'K' Bot

In the 2nd week Kirsty was handing out timing chips to the distance runners at the Hampden Park and had front row seats for a lot of the racing. Mo Farah was unable to compete and she was asked to take his place but unfortunately had forgotten her running kit.

While up there we practiced a bit of wild camping and pitched the tent in one of the city parks causing a few confused looks from the local dog walkers and early morning joggers. We also stayed with some lovely Warm Showers Hosts , Martin and Lena who joined us for the Opening Ceremony rehearsal and invited us to their local ParkRun complete with celebrity guest in the form of Steve Way. There was wild swimming in Loch Lomond with our friends Katy and Ed and we finished the 2 weeks staying with fellow LVIS members Gav and Elise.

Glasgow put on a great show not only with the friendliness and hospitality of the locals but also by organising

surprisingly hot weather that left even the Aussies looking for shade.

After an overnight drive and quick stop off in Evesham to drop off some bikes we were back in Bristol and head long into the packing and cleaning marathon to get the house ready for our tenants/financial backers for the trip. It seemed to be never ending with boxes mounting up in the garage and me getting more and more nervous that it wouldn't all fit into our storage container.

A great parting gift from Hydro was a 15' insulated container with the plan being to collect it from Clevedon take it to Bristol where we would fill it with everything we own then send it up to Evesham where it could be stored on my parents' farm. There were plenty of potential pitfalls in this plan such as the truck could get stuck on the access track in Clevedon, we wouldn't fit everything in or the crane wouldn't be able to lift it once it was filled up. However the previous sleepless night was unnecessary as it all went amazingly well with the house left (mostly) empty and almost all of our worldly possessions being waved off on the back of the truck. All to be replaced by 4 small panniers full of essentials.



What we are leaving behind alongside what we are taking with us

Last weekend was the last chance for a family get together with a grand total of 9 nieces and nephews to entertain up at the farm. It was fantastic to see everyone and strange to think that the younger members of the family will have changed quite a bit by the time we see them again (the older ones may be a bit different too!).



The Mumford/McGaul/Harder/Nayler clan
+ special guest

All of this has left us exhausted and ready for a nice relaxing holiday riding through some pleasant parts of Europe and beyond. Saturday is the Grand Depart day!

1 Month to Go

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e·ra /'ɪərə, 'erə/ [eer-uh, er-uh]

noun

1	a period of time considered as being of a distinctive character; epoch
2	an extended period of time the years of which are numbered from a fixed point or event: <i>the Christian era</i>
3	a point in time, esp one beginning a new or distinctive period: <i>the discovery of antibiotics marked an era in modern medicine</i>
4	<i>geology</i> a major division of geological time, divided into several periods: <i>the Mesozoic era</i>

12 years working for the same company can probably be considered to be period of time of a distinctive character, at least in the context of my own life history, and so now that I've said my goodbyes to everyone at Hydro International it seems appropriate to say it's the end of an era.

I guess this is how it must feel when you retire. After years of routine and walking around the same bit of carpet with a lot of the same people 5 days a week I suddenly won't be doing that any more. It's an odd feeling and something that probably won't sink in properly for a good few weeks yet. Kirsty had been working for Zuken for 14 years so is trying to break an even stronger sense of institutionalisation. 10 of those years were spent sitting opposite the same person so he may have just as big an adjustment to make when a new face turns up for him to look at.

Unlike retirement though we'll be starting another routine soon but this time without the weekly sales updates, monthly reports and annual general meetings. It'll be nice to be spending less time staring at Windows Vista and more time exploring the vista outside the window but I'm sure there will be days when the thought of sitting on a warm and comfortable office chair instead of a hard, leather saddle may actually be quite appealing.

But first we've got another job to go to as we'll be up in Glasgow volunteering at the Commonwealth Games for the next two weeks. Kirsty is on the timing team in the athletics stadium and I'll be helping out in the 'field of play' at the velodrome. It's a great way to be part of a huge sporting event and you can't get much closer to the action! Look out for us on TV, we'll be the ones in the red and grey uniforms.



Mille Cymru 2014

written by Marcus | 25 February, 2022



Any miles in the legs up until our departure date next month can only help so last weekend I took on the Mille Cymru Audax: a 1018km self-supported and self-guided ride around some of the most scenic and spectacular (i.e. hilly) roads that Wales

has to offer.

Kirsty is far too sensible to take on this sort of ridiculous challenge but she was able to watch my physical and mental degradation as she was volunteering at one of the control points where food and beds were provided. So the tandem was left at home in favour of a solo bike but I was joined by my loyal companion for these sort of adventures, Matt, along with 83 other foolhardy riders.

Here's my account of the journey:



Brevet card for collecting stamps at each control as proof of passage

Apprehension at the start, rain forecast, photos taken then we're off. 1018km ahead of us. 16,000m of hills, 75 hours to ride it in. How much would it hurt? Was it even possible?

Rolling Shropshire countryside, through Bishops Castle (last visited for the tandem triathlon), over the Long Mynd and first dose of glorious views. Showers then hot steaming roads.

Repeated climbing until first control and first sight of the delightful AUK Van of Delights. Matt and I regroup and continue after eating cake. Held up by a flock of sheep in the road. Into Hay and up the Gospel Pass. Always worth the effort. One of my favourite descents down to Llanthony Priory with risky speed into sketchy corners. Food. Onwards on familiar roads to Monmouth and Tintern. More food at a hidden brewery! Distraught rider with broken cable saved by Matt's magic Caradice.

Up and over to Raglan, Abergavenny with signs up for the National Road Race Champs. The polar opposite of our ride? Past Tallybont, Brecon until Mynydd Eppynt stands between us and sleep. Loose gravel on the descent scrubs off any ideas of a speedy drop to the main road. Nice spin into Llanwrtyd Wells, the smallest and best town in the UK, to be greeted by Kirsty with plenty of hot food. Day 1 done.

2 hours sleep in a proper bed (thank you Kirsty) isn't enough to shake off much tiredness. Shouts from a stag party amused by the buff on my head, I had my stag in Llanwrtyd Wells too "And you came back?" they ask. Bowl of porridge, fruit juice, tea but no Matt. 2:55am and I'm ready to go back to bed when in he stumbles. Force feed him and out the door by 3:05. Both of us feeling groggy and lacking much power but the faint glow in the sky tells us morning is on its way. Something flaps around in front of me then flies into my chest. A bat! Familiar roads from the Brevet Cymru then the climb over Llanllwyni Mountain. Now plenty of daylight but plenty of mist and fog too making it quite eerie. A group of ponies peers at us from the mist at the top. Cilgerran control where we scoff sausage sandwiches and coffee. The 4 Germans that were ahead of us are now 3 and riding on no sleep.



St Davids, Pembrokeshire

A missed turn before Fishguard adds an extra climb and some bonus kms. Steep drop into Fishguard and steep out again sets the theme for most of the rest of the day. Along with scorching sunshine. Feeling a bit sick at St Davids and only manage half a baked potato but push on regardless. Road like a saw edge with sharp pointed climbs and descents in and out of sandy bays. Wonderful views. Interaction with a triathlon and shouting encouragement to the runners. We used to do that once upon a time. Wish I'd eaten more of that potato.

Big bridge over into Pembroke, Saundersfoot, Pendine Sands. A tunnel out of Tenby and being told not to cycle in it. A toasted Panini at The Smugglers Inn and Matt realises he's left his wallet in St Davids. I'm not going back to get it for him. The butcher where he bought our bananas would post it back to Bristol. Phew.

More Van of Delights with tea and stock up on cake. Then A40, more A40 and then a bit more A40. On paper an easy spin but in practice a head wind (of course) and tired legs left me tucked up behind Matt. Eventually Llandovery for a quick breather

before the final climb of the day back into to El Dub.



Matt on the mountain

No sign of Kirsty this time but plenty of hot food to fill up on. A tough day and my knees are telling me as such so a few pills and some freezing spray are swallowed and squirted. Still no Kirsty so looks like I'll have to brave the village hall. Staggering out onto the street and there she is, thank goodness! Tucked up in bed with a nice cup of tea and out like a light for 6 luxurious hours. Well 5 luxurious hours as the clock was an hour fast. 60 minutes snooze before breakfast at 2:30. Now Sunday morning. Matt not far behind this time and both of us ready to tackle the 3rd day. Even my knees feel ready. Outside there's rain and darkness and we begin to climb. And climb. And climb. Devils Staircase with 25% gradient up 15% gradient down. Easy on the brakes. Rail it round the corners on single track roads. A great way to start the day. We pass a group of three who issue a warning for the final drop into Tregaron. It is well advised. Long but steady alpine-like climb up to Devil's Bridge with acres of greenery all around. A buzzard chewing on some road kill misses our

approach. Startled, it takes off and flies alongside at arm's reach for a few metres. Whoop with amazement! Out of the village then sharp right into sharp descent to the next control. Andy's house is calm and serene in the valley. A fellow rower and marathon runner. Steve is there having breakfast, he braved the Tregaron road overnight. The Germans had overslept but still 2 hours ahead.



Matt on the Craig Goch Dam, Elan Valley

Only one way back out and with a bellyful it isn't easy climbing back to Devil's Bridge. But legs feel good for both of us, the first two days must have served as training to make us stronger? Up onto another mountain road with open countryside all around and not a single car. Right turn into The Elan Valley which I have wanted to ride for a while. It doesn't disappoint as we are treated to fine views over the lakes and dams all bathed in sunshine.



Elan Valley

Stop in Rhayader for a banana then lumpy road to Llanidloes to join Steve again for 3rd breakfast. He is planning to ride home to Milton Keynes afterwards. Another level of bonkers. Ahead is a real highlight as we take on the mountain road to Machynlleth. A few ups and super-fast downs. Speed wobbles at 45mph on one drop raise the heart rate nicely! Then we hit the climb proper to the summit with views to the coast and the road snaking out below us. Quick photo stop then freewheeling fun all the way into Mach.



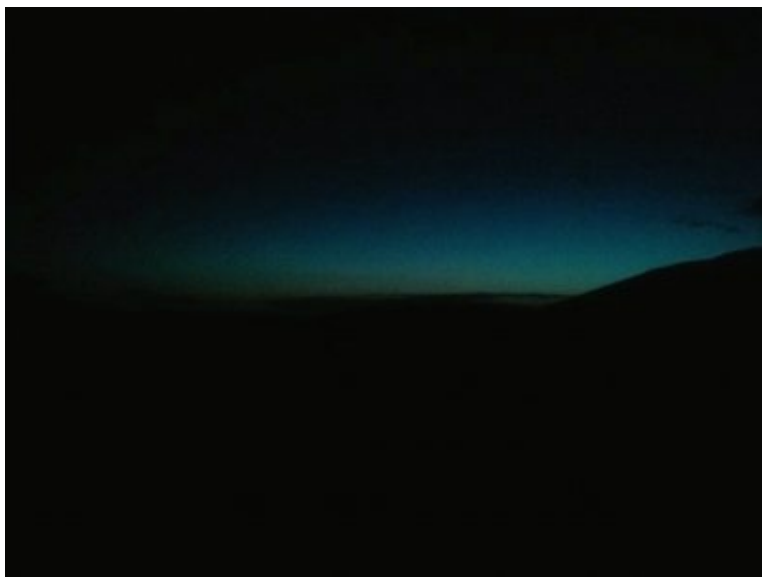
Downhill all the way to Machynlleth

Out of Mach and turning left instead of the more familiar right to head towards the coast. Past a finishing line for a charity ride from Wolverhampton to Aberdyfi. Resist the urge to cross it with raised arms. Lovely road winding round the shoreline and into Tywyn, last visited when Racing The Train. The estuary opens up in front of us and Barmouth Bridge comes into view. Too early for the Van of Delights this time. Bumpy crossing into Barmouth for fish and chips. Strange being amongst 'the general public' not helped by peculiar looks at my oily face (Matt hadn't told me). Quick visit to a cash point for a statement as proof of passage then onwards to Harlech. Huge sandy beaches below and Snowdonia dominating the horizon. Could the weather get any better?

Convoy escort for a long stretch of roadworks and big queue of impatient cars at the other end. We're not sorry. Right turn towards Rhydd. Steep and wooded. Worth the effort as we cruise alongside a tranquil lake. Climb again to Beddgelert then long steady climb out. It never seems that long the other way round. Warm summer evening in Snowdonia and we skirt round Wales' biggest mountain. Hunt for the info control then off to Llanberis. Stop for Lucozade to fuel us for Pen-y-Pass then up we go. Perfect evening for a beautiful ascent. Rescue-copter hovers off Crib Goch helping stranded climbers. Feeling smooth and strong then it kicks up a little more before the top. Admire the view, pull on a windproof and drop 10 miles down to Betys-y-coed for the end of the 3rd day.

The control helpers are caught by surprise but quickly rustle up broth and butties and hot drinks. Matt and I dazed and confused being so near and yet so far from the end. Rumours of no food at Lake Vyrnwy until later mean stocking up with flapjacks and bananas to make sure we make it all the way. More riders arrive but plug in the earplugs and pull down the

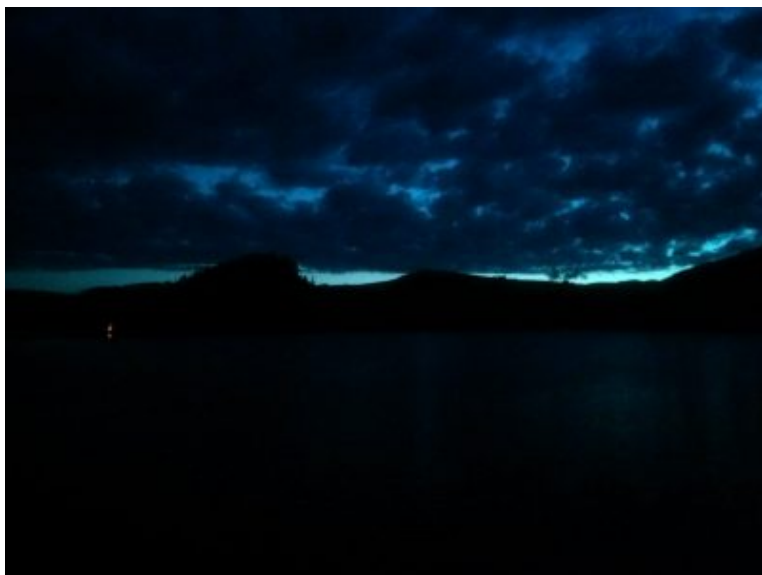
eye mask. Time for a short nap with an 11:30 wake up booked. By 11pm not much sleeping is happening so may as well carry on riding. This time alone as Matt is keen for more zeds. A decision confirmed by one of the volunteers who tells me "Audaxing is a cruel sport, do what you have to do". Rice pudding and coffee then out.



The final morning is on its way

Wearing all the clothes I have (not enough) out into the night again and refreshing cold air. Must not make a mistake as this is risky riding alone. Info control to name a church that I can't pronounce so take a photo instead. Climb, climb, climb Cym Hafodredwydd up through the woods out of the saddle for 3km. Feeling toasty at the top but straight away cold and getting colder as the road slopes down again. Then colder still with every dip that crosses a small stream. Icy cold. Must keep riding hard to generate heat. 27km to Bala where perhaps there would be a pub or petrol station for warmth? Wish I had some leg warmers but they were sent back to Bristol in Kirsty's car. Must not make a mistake, must not get a mechanical. Finally the bright lights of Bala. A change of gear and a twisted chain. Badly twisted. Not good. Off the bike, chain breaker and quick link in shaking hands. The link won't join until I stand hard on the pedals. A 10 minute stop and I am now shivering uncontrollably. Mild panic as I can't

ride in a straight line and no sign of anything open to find warmth and shelter. Ride round the high street for a few minutes, peering through locked hotel doors before feeling more composed and the decision is made to get on with the next climb.



Dawn over Lake Vyrnwy

Taking note of each house as I pass in case I get into trouble and have to come back down. Easing up Bwlch y Groes. Talking to the sheep and owls to keep myself awake. The last big climb of so many big climbs. The shadows of the hills all around start to become faintly visible with the hint of dawn breaking through. Then the top arrives with enough light to make out the outline of the valley ahead. Narrow, gravel strewn descent to Lake Vyrnwy and a memorable circuit around the lake shore with the dark waters appearing through the trees and vivid colours now in the sky. Across the dam and down to the most welcome control of the whole ride. I'd survived the freezing night and am rewarded with beans on toast. 952km ridden, just 66km to go and the flattest of all. After the 3km climb that is.

Once up and over this lump, the English border is fast approaching. Strong legs but sleepy head. Very sleepy. Too sleepy. A nice porch in a churchyard provides a bench to lay

my head. Woken 8 minutes later by an explosion or a gunshot. Nicely awake now. Flat fast lanes towards the finish with each route sheet direction a manageable 2-3km. Keep ticking them off. Approaching Shrewsbury and mingling with the commuters, oblivious to where I'd come from. Last few lines of a very long route sheet and a last gentle climb along a narrow lane and finally rolling back into Upton Magna where it all began, 68 hours ago.



And all for a medal
and a mug.

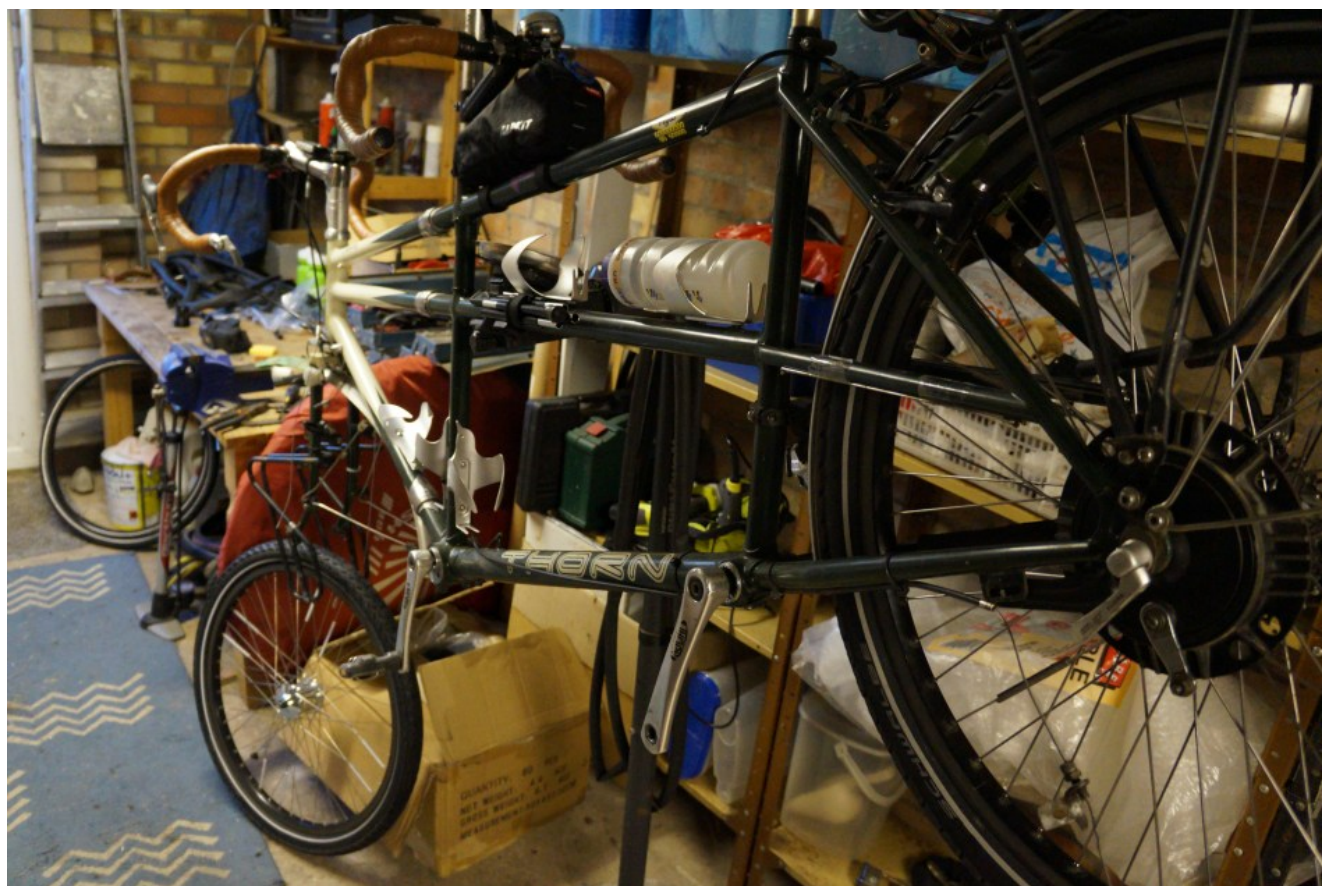
Welcomed by John and Linda, brevet card stamped, mug and medal awarded. Eat and rest, rest and eat. Call to Kirsty to tell her I'm alive and well. Hauling the tent out of the car, quick pitch then climb in for glorious sleep. 2 hours later wake up cooked and dehydrated and clambering to open the door for air. More sleep with a cooling breeze this time. Matt arrives and sleeps in the sunshine. Both of us exhausted, broken but happy we'd made it.

The longest of long rides (so far) and the hilliest of hilly rides but a journey to remember for a lifetime. Thank you

John, Linda and all the volunteers for making the extraordinary possible.

2 Months to go

written by Marcus | 25 February, 2022



It doesn't seem like long ago that we were sat in Yo Sushi! watching coloured dishes going round and round. We pondered whether this was what Japanese restaurants were really like and the idea began to form of cycling there to find out.

Five and half months later and that spark of an idea has expanded into a full blown plan, of sorts, and we're now just 9 weeks away from saddling up and heading across the world on a tandem.

It all seems to have happened very quickly but it's amazing how once you start to think about something, and then start talking about it and then get down to working out everything

that needs to be put in place a plan can gather momentum and carry you along. In fact talking about it with lots of different people has been the key to making it all happen as it makes it all seem much more real and adds a certain amount of commitment (no one wants to lose face by saying they are going to do something and then backing down).



The bike is starting to come together with most bits that move being replaced.

The question we keep getting asked is "How's the planning coming along?" and in terms of the fine details of the trip itself the answer is "We haven't done much". Most of the exact route, stopping points etc. will be worked out as we go so we just need to look at the logistics of which countries need visas and how to apply for them, which ones will be cold/hot/wet and make sure we're in roughly the right place at roughly the right time. How we get there will sort itself out en route.

The big planning tasks that are occupying our time are to do with what we're leaving behind in the UK so arranging for the house to be let, where to store all our belongings, sorting out insurance, bank accounts, selling cars. Not as exciting as drawing on maps and buying kit but all very necessary to make the trip happen. Piles of stuff are forming around the house and being allocated as 'Keep', 'eBay', 'Freecycle' or 'charity shop'. How do we accumulate so much clutter?

Perhaps the most important job is handing over the reins of the Las Vegas Institute of Sport Audax. Not an easy thing to do having looked after it for the last 5 years but the

responsibility for organising *probably the finest cycling event in the country* (not our words) should be in capable hands with a willing band of volunteers stepping forward. Writing out the 'organisers instructions' has taken a fair bit of time which has made us realise just how much we have put into the event over the years.

As well as making sure we actually go, talking about the trip has also yielded all sorts of other benefits. Lots of people have told us about friends and family along our route who can help us out which will be really useful either to gain some local info and as possible places to stay. Through a friend of my brother we've been asked if we want to write articles for Outdoor Adventure Guide magazine which in turn has meant various companies have offered to support us in return for gear reviews and mentions (thank you Ellis Brigham, Icebreaker, Paligap and especially Roll for the Soul). On the most part everyone has been very supportive and enthusiastic for us but occasionally we get asked "Why would you want to do that?". It's a hard one to respond to as if they need to ask the question then I'm not sure they'll understand the answer so we have to talk in broad terms about the trip just being a big holiday to some interesting places (which is essentially all it is) and skip over the details of months spent in a tent without a shower and having to cycle thousands of kilometres.



Enjoying the last few weeks of riding down the Severn Estuary in the morning.

For now we are making the most of the things we'll miss by spending time with friends and family, having nieces and nephews to stay, dancing at music gigs and enjoying good food and feather duvets.

Bristol to New Zealand by Tandem

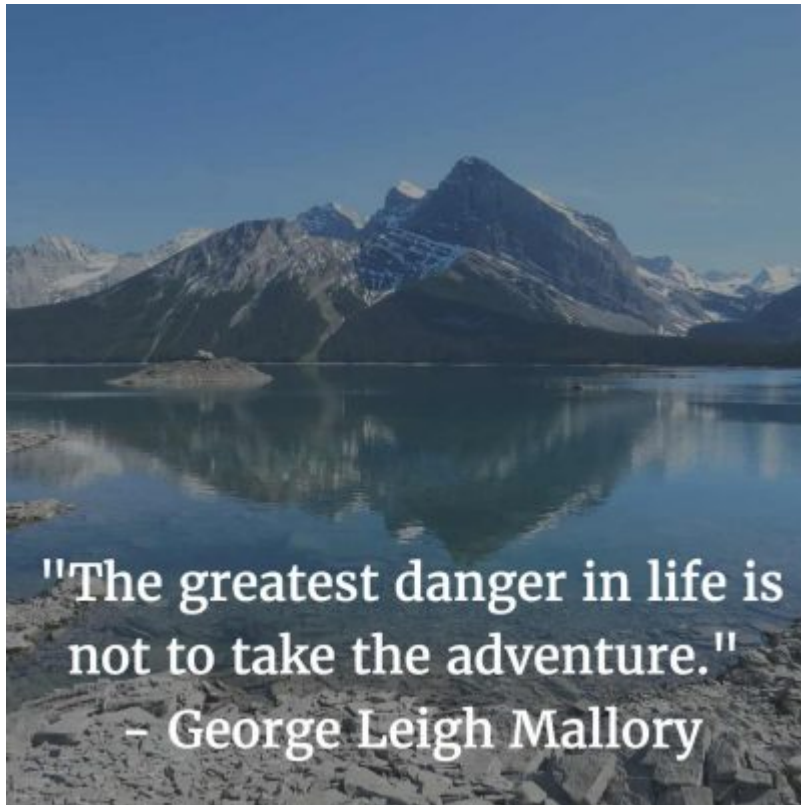
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Not everyone likes travelling, not everyone likes cycling. We love both.

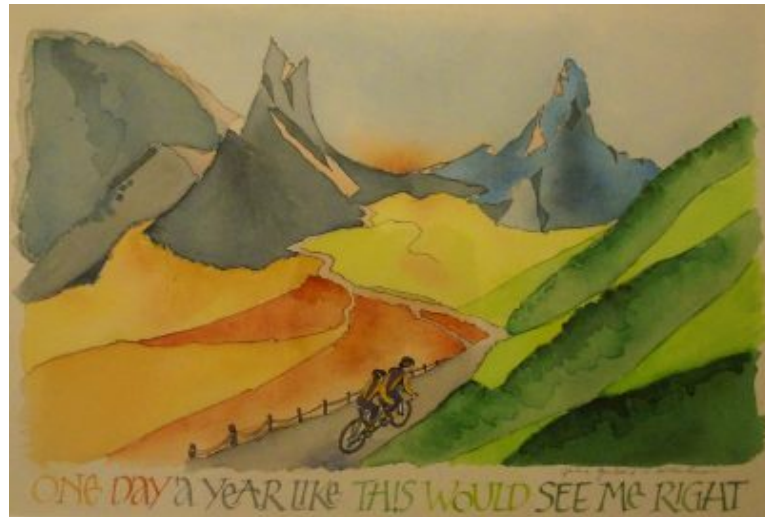
After several years of cycle touring during the few weeks annual leave that we are given by our employers each year we are now looking to take our passion for travelling on two

wheels a bit further, in every sense.



It's a daunting prospect to leave the familiarity of our home, families, friends and jobs, but at the same time it's too exciting a prospect not to go. We are very fortunate to be able to do this and the time is right so we're going to grab the opportunity and set off to explore new countries and experience new cultures.

The plan is rough and flexible but should see us riding our tandem through Scandinavia, the Baltic States, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran, the Stans, India, Nepal, South East Asia, China, South Korea, Japan, Australia and finally ending up in New Zealand. Over the course of a journey of that length plenty of things can and will happen that will influence where we go, so we'll have to wait and see how the final route looks.



A picture painted for us by Rick and Julie Paulus who we met while travelling along Cape Cod in 2013