Nurse’s epic 800 mile bike journey in aid of London hospital

Monday 3 April, 2017

A London nurse will take on the biggest challenge of her life as she and a friend cycle 800 miles from Budapest to Basel in aid of the world renowned renal and transplant department where she works at Hammersmith Hospital.

Starting on 15 April, Claire Salter and her friend Lucy Plumridge will cycle more than 50 miles a day over 15 gruelling days in support of Imperial College Healthcare Charity, which raises money for Hammersmith Hospital and four others in London.

The duo will head west from Budapest in Hungary along the banks of the river Danube to Basel, passing through Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, Germany and Switzerland, carrying everything they need to eat and sleep with them.

Claire, a high dependency nurse in the hospital’s renal transplant unit, said: “This is definitely the biggest thing I’ve ever done. People think we’re mad for doing this. It’s going to be tonnes of fun, but really tough. The hardest aspect of the challenge will be the physical side above anything else, but to be honest, we’ll have little choice but to carry on going.”

The two have chosen to cycle an 800 mile stretch of the famous long-distance EuroVelo 6 cycle route from west to east, making it even harder as this involves a gradual ascent all the way to their finishing point.

27-year-old Claire said: “Most people tackle the whole of the EuroVelo 6 route over eight weeks, starting in France and heading east. The way we’re doing it is unconventional, and unlike most cyclists, we won’t have a support team around us to carry gear and food. We’ll be loading up our bikes with two panniers, sleeping bags and a tent for the two of us, aiming for each of us to carry no more than around 15 kilograms of gear. We’re only bringing two sets of cycling gear, one we’ll wear and the other will be drying on the bikes somewhere.

“Breakfast will be nice and early in the morning, after which we’ll start cycling, with dinner likely to be around about half past four every day (knowing us… we like our sleep!). We’ve scheduled in only one rest day over the course of the challenge, likely to be around day 7 or 8. It’s my birthday on the 17 April; I’ll be cycling that day so we’ll celebrate on the rest day with plenty of cake!”

Claire and Lucy have been friends for the last 12 years, and their self-named ‘Tour de Slum’ - a combination of their surnames – it’s the latest in a series of grand adventures over the last few years. “We were on our way back from the Annapurna Base Camp trek in the Himalayas last November when we realised we didn’t have any more adventures to look forward to, which is when Lucy suggested doing a cycle tour of Europe. I then suggested we ride to raise money and awareness of the charity and the renal unit’s work,” said Claire.

“I tend to get bored with typical holidays, I much prefer going on adventures. Even though I’m more into my running and Lucy is the cyclist between the two of us, we’re both really excited about taking on this challenge. We are expecting it to be very difficult though, we'll likely be cycling into the wind a lot of the way but hopefully the weather won’t be too cold!,” she continues.

Although the two have now raised more than £1100 of their £3000 target, training together has been difficult. Claire, who lives in Shepherd’s Bush, said: “So far we’ve only trained together once, but we have scheduled in a 100 mile cycle for the weekend before we start where we’ll fully load up our bikes to get a real feel for the weight of it all. It’s just been hard to sync our schedules together, Lucy works nine to five and I’m on night shifts most of the time until we fly to Hungary for the start.

“Sometimes I’ve cycled to Richmond Park, done a few laps and then cycled home which is about 30 miles. I’ve also dragged my poor dad along with me cycling on a few occasions. He recently told me he would never go cycling with me again!”

“I have also managed to source a sponsor, Calant Civils and Utilities, who have kindly offered to support

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and buy our cycling jerseys for the trip to advertise what we are doing," says Claire.

To sponsor Claire and Lucy, visit: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/tourdeslum

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