

Cairo to Cape Town

Jack White is just back from cycling 12,000km down Africa. We find out more

"I managed nearly five years in a relatively normal job before my dreams got the better of me," says 28-year-old Jack White. "Deciding it was now or never, I handed in my notice and got planning."

And so last April, Jack, who's from Barnard Castle in County Durham, set off from the pyramids outside Cairo with his bike, four panniers holding all his kit and a tent. Six months, 13 countries and 12,000km later, he arrived at Cape Town's Table Mountain.

"Physically it was far easier than you would expect," Jack explains. "Your body soon gets used to cycling day in day out, and when you need a rest day you just take one. All you need to do is get your bottom used to the saddle before you go."

Jack had a rough idea of the countries he wanted to see and a vague route planned, but he was always open to suggestions from locals and, with country maps, navigation was generally fairly easy. "Shouting a town name and waving my hand in a direction seemed to do the trick



Memorable moments: one of Jack's desert camping spots

◊ I was a bit nervous about Sudan and Burundi, but they were probably the highlights of the trip. As travelling always reminds me, 99.99% of people are kind hearted the world over ◊

– a nod or a shake of the head was generally given in response. That said I did have to turn around a few times."

Jack fell in love with Africa 10 years ago when he went to Botswana to do a voluntary teaching project after he finished school, and he's been back there many times since. But was he scared about any of the other countries he had to cycle through? "I was a bit nervous about Sudan and Burundi, but in fact they were probably the highlights of the trip. As travelling always reminds me, 99.99% of people are kind hearted the world over.

"The simple moments are probably what I'll look back on most fondly in years to come," Jack continues.



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Made it! Reaching Cape Town

As well as all the cycling, Jack found time to get off his bike, which was called *George*, and climb Kilimanjaro. But in such an epic trip there are going to be lows as well as highs. "The worst bit was having stones thrown at me by children in Ethiopia, not an enjoyable game if you're on the wrong side of it," he says. "Or a few bouts of dysentery, but that was probably worth it for the cheap food en-route."

So was the amazing adventure worth quitting his job as staging manager for the Open Championship at St Andrews Golf Club for? "Yes! As somebody once told me, the worst thing you can do in life is to look back on a dream that you were too afraid to follow and ask yourself 'What if?'"

Jack was raising money for Farm Africa, a UK charity working with families in rural Africa to help them produce food more effectively. See www.farmafrika.org, and read more about Jack's cycle at www.jackcyclesafrica.com. **AT**

Mission statement

The mission: Cycling down Africa, from Cairo to Cape Town.

The adventurer: Jack White, 28, from County Durham.

The time: Six months.

The charity: Farm Africa (www.farmafrika.org), a UK charity working with families in rural Africa to help them produce food more effectively. By providing training and support to help farmers improve the way they manage their crops, livestock, forests and access to water, it helps families build a future free from hunger.

Describe your adventure in three words? Wild yet possible.

Top tip for AT readers tempted by doing a similar trip? The hardest thing to do is making the decision to do it. Once the decision is made there is always a solution to any problem you might encounter.



Hanging out with the locals





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