

Ride for the Rainforest Sri Lanka Cycle Challenge - Part 1

'Wolf Pack' sets off in style on Sri Lanka cycle adventure

When I think of Sri Lanka, I conjure up a rich tapestry of tastes, smells and vivid imagery that tantalise my senses. Tea, curry, spices, the warm friendly people, exotic birds and animals, Sri Lanka truly sings to me. So when the opportunity arose for me to go there and support Rainforest Rescue's Plant a Rainforest Project, naturally, I jumped at the chance. When I found out it would mean five days riding a bike, mostly up hill for 300km, naturally, I hesitated but went anyway.

There were nine of us in total, a motley crew of Aussies from different walks of life and fitness levels, all united in a cause: ADVENTURE... and the rainforest of course. Our team soon to be dubbed the 'Wolf Pack', consisted of married couple Colin and Neree Roden, newlyweds Clint and Negin Maddock, bicycle-mad fiancées Krista Bernard and Dan Coward, Ebony Lowe, who had chosen a cycle challenge across a recently civil-warring, third-world nation as her first overseas destination, Angela Standley, long time friend of the forest and me, a computer nerd somewhat unfamiliar to exercise.

As the sun rose over Kandy we gathered around our bikes. Decked out in lycra, fingerless gloves, streamlined helmets, padded butts, topped up camel packs, bikes shoes and cool shades, we lacked just one thing: an official sponsor. We inspected our bikes and let out a collective cry.



Guide Bandara and the 'Wolf Pack' prepare for first day of cycling

They were crap: flat tires, bound brakes, busted gears, stuck chains. Dan and the maintenance crew jumped into action, Frankenstein-ing the bikes to assemble nine semi-functional bikes and we were off. A flat-tyre, chain snap and brake pad explosion later, and we were off...again.

It wasn't long before we hit hills. They were followed by more hills and more after that. Our efforts were hampered by the fact our busted bikes refused to change to lower gears. Finally a down-hill patch of road opened up before us and we whizzed past spectacular valleys and rising hill country. Sore, tired, sunburnt and hungry, we packed in our first day of cycling high up at Nuwara Eliya, home to Ceylon's fine high grown tea.

Back on the saddle the following day, climbing up hills and gliding down, constant repetition of the mantra 'just keep pedalling'.

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We passed cows on the road, shear cliffs off the road, families of monkeys, rice paddies, plantations of tea, coconut and rubber, and even the occasional pair of dogs uncomfortably stuck together post-coitus.

A sea of friendly faces and warm smiles lit our path. We'd smile and wave and say "Morning morning" with a practised yet unmastered head waggle or greet them with an "Ayubowan". Our gesture would be returned with genuine delight. Old ladies would burst into giggles, school children would run to the fence to wave at us, anyone close to a horn would give it a good toot. It's like we were rock stars on a two wheel tour.

We reached Horton's Plains and met our first endemic

species: a Sri Lankan deer called a Sambhur and a Jungle Fowl, which are believed to be the ancestors of all chickens. Now only one thing separated us from Sinharaja Reserve, the second day's destination, and that was Satan's Steps. Nothing could have prepared us for the hardship we were about to face or the camaraderie we were about to share. The Wolf Pack was about to be born...

Find out what happens next week when the story continues in a double-page spread packed with photos and sponsorship opportunities. Call Obi on 66 19 17 19 or email obi@obi.ms to book an ad.

Story supplied by Obi McDonald-Saint. Photo courtesy Krista Bernard.

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All the staff at NORTEC wish to congratulate Obi on his successful journey in Sri Lanka and we wish him every success with his awareness campaign to protect the rainforest.



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Congratulations to the Ride for the Rainforest team on their adventure in Sri Lanka

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E-construct congratulates the Ride for the Rainforest Sri Lanka participants for their commitment to making a difference in the world.



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