

## Ride Sahara 2016 –

“Only two things are infinite in life, the universe and human stupidity, and I’m not sure about the universe” - Albert Einstein

Let me introduce the stupid humans...Sanjay Kerai (Manukwa), Prakash Patel (Kera), Sailesh Patel (Kera) & two amazing friends, Vipul and Varune.

The challenge was two part i) cycle 600km to the Sahara over 5 days and ii) raise vital funds for Haven House Children’s Hospice.

A little bit about the charity. Haven House is a local charity based in Woodford Green. They help families with children who have life limiting conditions. It was a humbling experience when we visited as a group. We were in total admiration at the work they do, how they cater for each child individually to ensure the children and their families have the highest level of care in a relaxed and homely environment. We were truly amazed how generous all our friends and family have been and with all their warm donations we managed to raise a total of £15,000 for Haven House ([www.havenhouse.org.uk](http://www.havenhouse.org.uk)).

18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016 -We all arrived at Stanstead airport full of excitement but mixed with it a slight element of trepidation. The Ryan Air staff looking at us quite perplexed. One member of staff quizzed us and then proclaimed he had never seen 5 “brown types” embark on such a crazy adventure. We arrived in Morocco mid-morning to be collected by Alan (our lead cyclist, mechanic and medic all rolled into one). He arranged transport to our Riad where we all eagerly unpacked our bikes to assess condition of our machines. With God’s blessing all bikes arrived with no damage. Obstacle one cleared there was no backing out now.

19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2016 - When you think of Morocco you conjure images of the sun, desert, camels, and perhaps a donkey or two BUT snow? We looked up at the snow covered Atlas Mountains. This peak of 2060m was what we had to cycle cross today. The views were breathe taking and perhaps that explains our first accident. A rider goes into the deep side gutter followed closely by another rider who brakes hard to avoid but ends up going over his handlebars. Was this going to be the start and end of our ride? Again with some divine intervention we all came out of it unscathed and more so the bikes were still ride-able. We spent the whole day battling the severe conditions. Having covered 128km we finally arrived at our accommodation completely drained. This was only day 1 and we were all “finished”.

20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 6am start and that’s when Alan quoted us Einstein at breakfast. Battered physically and mentally here we were again ready to self-inflict further pain. The quote summed up this challenge completely. Day 2 was marginally better having cleared the mountains we got the odd glimpse of the sun. We completed 139kms with the final stage through the Dades Gorge. The views helped lift spirits such that riders began to muster a few smiles and selfie season started.

21<sup>st</sup> Feb – We all tried to lift each other as we took in the picturesque scenery of the gorge and listened to the birds singing their morning melodies but this was pretty difficult as our bodies were screaming painfully at us.....thank the man who invented Sudo Cream. Day 3 was another punishing 91km across undulating terrain. The roads appear to be endless, road to nowhere as one rider described it. Whole day was a battle of the minds. After several hours we complete the 91km and arrived at our lodgings. Without a word we all drop our bikes and immediately head for the ice cold

swimming pool. Each rider sitting in total silence on the edge of the pool soaking their tired limbs. Alan then springs the “good” news....**tomorrow will be 165km!!**

22<sup>nd</sup> Feb – This was by far the toughest day. With every rider carrying an injury of some form we were using a cocktail of painkillers to push on. Again another day of endless desert roads. Only the odd military vehicle or lorry trying to swipe us off the road wakes us from the monotony. Total sense of euphoria when we reached the hotel. We finally had hot water, duvets and decent beverages. I guess we could now see a glimpse of the finishing line, only one more day to go.

23<sup>rd</sup> Feb –All riders woke up on a high. The sun was beaming down and we “only” had 65km to cover. A quick service of the bikes and we saddled up for the final day of punishment. Having covered 45km we were taken off road and told to let air out of our tyres for the final push. Perhaps the finishing line wasn’t as close as we expected. The next 20kms was through sand and gravel. Riders taking several tumbles as the sand bring us to abrupt stops. We fought this for 3hours. The morning high had disappeared across the riders faces. After a gruelling ride we arrive at the Erg Chebbi Sand Dunes.

After a punishing 5 days we had reached our goal – SAHARA

Would we recommend it.... a resounding YES, Would we do it again???

I’d like to end with two quote from the team:

“Any Sports Challenge....Not for me was always my response until one day last June. Today is one of my proudest days after completing a gruelling 575km cycle ride. Now I know NOTHING is impossible, with mental strength and stamina and especially when for a good cause....”

“Nothing will ever beat me after this.....anything is possible”