

The Great Ride for the Heart

2,200km: Cape Reinga to Bluff, February 1st – 14th, 2010



Ready to Ride!

My training's complete. *The Great Ride for the Heart* is about to begin. I'm excited!

We 25 cyclists begin our 2,200km journey at Cape Reinga early evening this Sunday. Local Maori will give us a traditional blessing to send us on our way.

Our goal: getting to Bluff in 13 days of riding to raise \$1m for the Heart Foundation (with a lot of help from day-riders along the way and matched funding from a generous donor).

I'm bowled over by the way people are giving so generously to *The Great Ride*. I know we have a very good story to tell about the new chair in heart health for which we're helping to raise money, and also about our ride. But still there are many other equally worthy causes out there; and some even more so.

For me it is a great privilege to tell our story to the many people I know across New Zealand. Thanks to their great generosity, I have exceeded my target of \$22,000...which means I'll achieve my 'cent-a-metre' goal for the 2,200km (2.2m metres) just from my donors.

When I first set the goal, I was sure I'd need the hugely generous matched funding we're all getting from a member of the Douglas family.

But I'm going to keep fund-raising on the ride...the new professor in heart health will need all the resources she or he can muster. So here's another opportunity for you to give:

For each person or organisation that's given me \$1,000 or more I've "named" a day of the ride. Of the 13 days, nine are spoke for.

Please consider topping up your donation...

...at www.heartracer.org.nz/RodOram

...so I can name one of the four days left for you

And my training's gone well. When I got serious about this in late July I knew it would be hard to stick to the plan, what with family, work and other commitments. But I managed it, in part thanks to my Bike Friday folding bike. I've taken it on almost all my work and pleasure trips, and had some great rides along the way.

In Sydney in November, for example, I found a local cycling website advertising a slow ride around old inner city suburbs for a couple of hours one evening. I turned up at the GPO on Martin Place at the appointed hour and found myself in the company of urban guerrilla commuters. I was the only one on a flash bike wearing cycling clothes. They were delightful, welcoming people...



A few stats from my training: in the past six months I've cycled 6,500 km, more than two-and-a half times my usual mileage. Of my 120 rides, 25 have been longer than 100 km, and three of those have been over 200 km in a day.

I estimate I've burnt more than 200,000 kcal. I replenished some of them on the road with an estimated 250 bottles of carbohydrate and electrolyte drinks, 150 bananas, 125 One Square Meal muesli bars and 50 peanut butter and marmalade sandwiches. Eating and drinking on my bike is one of my strengths. I actually gained 1kg during my longest week!

And yet, am I fit enough to do 1,000km a week for two weeks? It's a question we're all asking ourselves. Long days back-to-back will test our discipline about riding conservatively each day and test our bodies' recovery each night.

An historic perspective: 30 years ago my wife Lynn and I cycled from John O' Groats to Land's End, end-to-end of the British mainland. We covered 1,770 km averaging 80km a day.



We rode 22 consecutive days. It rained on 18. The most stormy, brutal day happened to be our fourth wedding anniversary. But we found a great pub to stay that night to repair body, soul, resolve and marital harmony.

We were on pretty good bikes but we rode in ordinary clothes and we each had a pair of heavy pannier bags. On the road, we drank water and ate in pubs and cafes. Most of our "training" was merely our cycle commuting around London.

I'm now twice as old. And I'm planning to ride twice as far every day.

Thankfully the technology helps. My Orbea Orca bike, built by the Basques, weighs 7kg...*less* than one of those full pannier bags I lugged the length of the UK. I wear brilliantly comfortable cycle shorts just launched by Untouched World, Peri Drysdale's Christchurch clothing company.



Italian powders (legal!) turn the water in my bottles into high tech sources of carbohydrate, vitamins, minerals, salts and electrolytes. I use a cycle computer to monitor my heart rate and cadence (rpm of the pedals) to help me keep them in their optimum range.

Thanks to all these advances – and, of course, my training -- I think I can get to Bluff. The ultimate test will be the last: riding up Bluff Hill. Even Floyd Landis, the American pro rider, had to walk up it in last year's Tour of Southland. (In fairness, Floyd had a nasty accident earlier in the race and was on a borrowed, ill-fitting bike!)

There are so many people to thank for getting me this far, above all Lynn and our daughter Celeste for being so supportive and putting up with me being away for hours on end as I clocked up the kilometres. It is family at home who worry much more about the safety of riders out on the road than the riders themselves.

Very big thank yous also to:

- Peter Atkinson, my great Queenstown friend who has been an invaluable knowledgeable, encouraging and wise coach

- Steve, Margaret and Craig at Wallis Cycles in Ellerslie for excellent servicing of my bike and advice on equipment

- All the people at the Heart Foundation and in the medical community who have worked so hard to make this event possible

- All our generous product and financial sponsors

- And absolutely all you donors who have give so generously to all of us riders

So, the only thing left to do is to ride. I'll let you know by email each evening how I'm getting on.

And you can follow our progress on www.heartracer.org.nz/rideforheart

Here you will find a full list of riders...why not have a quick scan to see if you know some of the other riders?

There's also a great interactive map of our route. And, thanks to GPS, you'll be able to track our progress live each day.

And Lynn? She still loves to ride. Here we are with our tandem at a pre-Copenhagen rally in Auckland, suitably dressed for global warming.



And, as she's got older, she's got smarter.

Lynn's dropping me off at Cape Reinga and driving 440 km home!

All the best,

Rod