

For more information on Gary and Rachel's extraordinary journey, including daily logs, blogs and pics, visit www.ebikecyclotourists.com or the Facebook page 'The e-Bike Cycle Tourists', or email ebikecyclotourists@gmail.com.

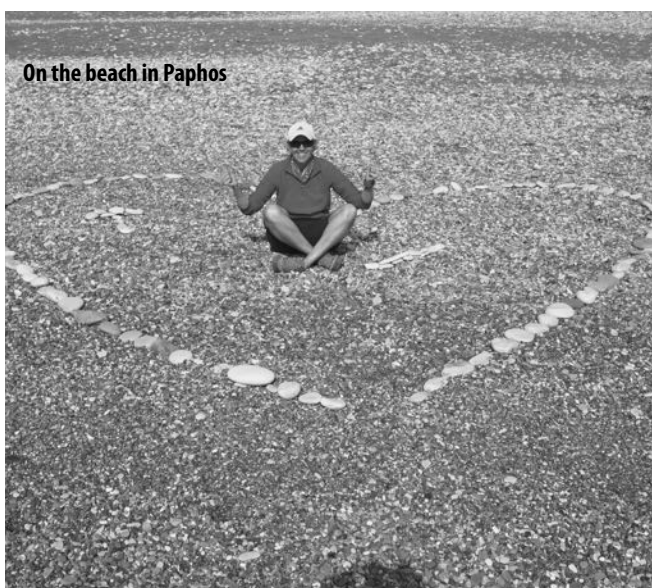
Living their lives lost

quainted with biking round Europe – it's a journey he made several times in his youth, albeit on a normal bicycle. However, deciding to take on an entire continent was, originally, a bit more of a challenge for fifty-something Rachel as she recovered from a bout of ill-health. But choosing to e-bike has enabled both to attack the task with vim.

"E-biking is definitely the transport of the future," says Rachel who now admits to "loving every bit of it, even the hills! You may be still pedalling, but you've got this extra assist." The duo's Haibike 700c xDuro trekking e-bikes - courtesy of main sponsors e-bikeshop.co.uk - have taken them over 17,000km so far, well beyond the world record. And though their achievement won't be recognised by Guinness – "their rules about independent verification are just not possible: how can you log the details of every time you stop for directions, or pop into a shop?" asks Gary - the couple have long left the official target behind. "The world e-bike record according to Guinness is 7,151km," explains Rachel. "So we always say there's a Guinness record, and then there's ours. So far, we've averaged about 75km per day – pretty amazing when you think of some of the hills in Devon. And especially Ireland!"

The mountainous terrain of the Emerald Isle's Atlantic coast didn't, however, put the couple off – in fact Gary professes it's been their favourite part of the journey. "We cycled the whole of the Atlantic Way. It's absolutely stunning coastline, the scenery is unbelievable, and the hospitality really blew us away. There was an owner of an e-bike shop in Dublin who did a Facebook shout-out about these two crazy Aussies, and the upshot was we had people all round Ireland rushing to help us with directions, ferries and accommodation." A great blessing, one imagines, especially when you're spending most nights in a tent...

"We're on the move every day, trying to keep the kilometre count up," says Rachel. "Mostly we're in campgrounds, putting up the tent and then off again by nine in the morning, though in some places we have had to just knock on doors." Needing



On the beach in Paphos

'If we can do 3,000km in Cyprus that will be good. We may have to go round and round a bit, but once you start heading off the main roads it's amazing'

electrical power each night to charge the bikes' batteries can be a bit of a challenge, and has landed these intrepid tourists in a more than a few "dodgy situations. But we tend to look at each other and say 'it is what it is' and just get on with it. And then, invariably, help appears out of the blue!"

"One bloke in the UK actually stopped on a busy roundabout and yelled directions across the traffic to help us out," laughs Gary, adding that the couple's most amusing incident saw them following an inebriated Frenchman on an ancient bicycle half way across Strasbourg only to discover their intended campsite had been closed for renovation. And in Belgium, at the end of 100km-day during which it poured non-stop, the exhausted couple were rescued by a friendly local who offered food and showers and a bed for the night. "They were such a lovely family; they still send us emails," says Gary. "The husband was a cycle tourist too."

Apparently, this network of enthusiasts extends all over the world: cycle tourists acting as "a community, offering their home. Generally," Gary adds, "we try to be self-sufficient, because any sort of pre-booking puts pressure on you to end up in a certain place at a certain time, and we do prefer to wing it. Each day we know we're going from A to B; we have no idea what could happen in between - flat tyres, difficult terrain. But we like it that way: setting out in the morning and not knowing what the day will bring. We live our life lost and we love it!"

Having followed the sun to a small island, however, the couple may find going astray more of a challenge, despite the fact they've had to leave their original e-bikes in Portugal. But with local sponsorship (and the loan of two new Guewer models from Cyprus e-bikes in Paphos) nothing's going to stop Gary and Rachel from seeing as much of the island as possible, while pushing up their kilometres: "If we can do 3,000km in Cyprus



that will be good. We may have to go round and round a bit, but once you start heading off the main roads it's amazing. There's so much hinterland in Cyprus," says Gary, "and we're really looking forward to exploring, especially round Limassol."

Currently based in an Airbnb in Paphos, the two have spent the last couple of days "following Aphrodite: we went to her Rock yesterday, and her museum, and today we cycled up to Adonis Baths. It's an amazing area for cycling, we've been blown away by the scenery and the coastline: the colours and the clarity of the water – it reminds me of the Barrier Reef. And you've got these beautiful orange and olive groves; the mountains are so close – it really is the whole package," Rachel enthuses.

With plans to spend a month in Limassol and another in Nicosia (accommodation allowing: "We've found it's quite expensive here, and we haven't been able to bring our camping gear with us," Gary explains), the Corbetts will be e-biking as much of the island as possible before they depart in early May. "It's back to Portugal for us to collect our gear, then the EuroVelo 1 up the Atlantic Coast,

along the Loire again and over to the Danube. We're hoping to take the EuroVelo 6 through Vienna and on to Budapest, and head back through Germany on a different route. And then, in August our visas expire, and it's off to Australia."

But that's not to say this audacious journey will be drawing to a close: "We're actually talking to an e-bike manufacturer about continuing the ride in Australia. We reckon we'll have done about 25,000km by that time, so we'll just head through to August and see what falls into place," says Gary with a chuckle that suggests, despite his years, he has no thought of giving up any time soon. And Rachel agrees: "Settling? We're quite unsettled about settling down again," she laughs. "I never thought I'd get this far: I suspected I'd be leaving Gary after six months and meeting him at the end. But now I love the freedom of this lifestyle. You get on that bike in the morning and you never know what's going to happen or who you're going to meet. When you're e-biking, the day is just one great unknown..." Here's hoping my editor doesn't up sticks and follow their lead!



Gary in Flowers Savonnières, France



Outside Wells Cathedral, England