

BerenbergKids C2C (sea to sea) Cycle Challenge

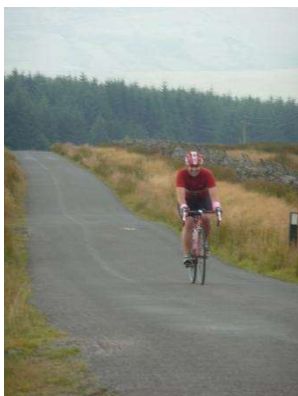


Friday 18th – Sunday 20th September 2009

On Thursday 17th September an excited group of cyclists gathered in Finsbury Square with copious amounts of cycle kit, all eager to set off on the long coach journey to Whitehaven to participate in the Sea to Sea (C2C) challenge. The C2C involves cycling 135miles from the Irish Sea on the west coast of Britain to the North Sea on the east coast – in our case in just over two days on a bike. Even though the route was normally completed in three or four days, we thought it surely wouldn't be too tough.



Friday marked the start of the challenge. After polishing off full English breakfasts all 51 participants made their way to Whitehaven Harbour to dip their back tyres in the Irish Sea, as is tradition. On the word “go” we sped off out the harbour to tackle day one – 55 miles from Whitehaven to Penrith in the Lake District. We soon



felt a million miles away from London in the beautiful countryside which was sadly not fully appreciated as we were too busy struggling against the huge inclines. We stopped in Keswick for lunch and then we were off for more hilly terrain in the afternoon. A small group even braved the Old Coach Road, which they quickly regretted and, as one cyclist described it, “it was not a road of any description and passing it was akin to cycling up an endless staircase covered in rocks and shingle”. As we arrived in Penrith, we were a group of saddle sore and tired cyclists, and the thought of Saturday's journey saw the majority of the group head to bed unusually early for a Friday night!

Day two was the day that everyone was dreading - the day of serious climbing. The route that lay ahead of us entailed 55 miles from Penrith to Consett crossing the Pennines as we went. It was full English breakfasts all round again on Saturday morning to set us up for the gruelling day ahead. After reaching the top of the first big climb, Hartside, everybody realised how difficult this day was going to be. With admirable enthusiasm everybody peddled on, determined to reach the end despite gradients in excess of 17%. The subsequent three climbs came as a bit of a shock, with the highest point being over 2,000 ft (610 m). Our fears of day two being the toughest day were soon confirmed. But for every awful climb, there was an exhilarating downhill with speeds close to 40 mph. Just when we thought the worst of the hills were behind us there was fourth and last nightmare ascent out of Stanhope village but it led us to the start of the Waskerley Way and our exit from "the roof of England". This old railway route led us from the Northern Pennines via a 20 mile gradual descent into Consett. It was a long and challenging day; it was fair to say that the group had never been so pleased to see a YMCA when we cruised into Consett.

Support teams were strategically placed along the route to provide us with moral support, encouragement and water! It was always reassuring to see a familiar face cheering you on when you had spent the last 2 hours cycling across moors with just the occasional sheep to break up the landscape. They also ensured that all our bags reached the next destination, meaning our cycling loads were considerably lighter!



The weather had been on our side for the majority of the weekend and, on Sunday morning, the sky was blue and the sun was shining as we completed the last 25 miles from Consett to Sunderland. We headed to Roker beach where we dipped our front tyres into the North Sea to signify the end of the C2C. Some of the group even had a dip in the sea!

The cycle computer showed that we had cycled a total of 142 miles, climbed 12,419ft and burned 10,000 calories – which is just as well as by Sunday we had probably each consumed our body weight in sweets, cakes and chocolates to keep our energy levels up!

The event ended with a buffet and small prize giving ceremony where everyone was in good spirits having enjoyed the weekend and feeling an enormous sense of achievement. Prizes donated included dinner for two at 2009 Michelin recommended restaurant Silk in the Courthouse Doubletree by Hilton and an overnight stay for two with breakfast at Pennyhill Park Hotel & Spa in Surrey.



Not content with the C2C challenge, a group of fitness enthusiasts amongst us completed the cycle in two days and made their way to Newcastle on Sunday morning to compete in the Great North Run – the world's most popular half marathon. The atmosphere was electric and the group all completed the run in excellent times, especially considering they had just cycled from one side of the country to the other.

We said our goodbyes to our colleagues from the Zurich and Hamburg offices, who had bravely joined us on the challenge across the English countryside, and the rest of us settled in for a LONG coach journey back to London...

BerenbergKids would like to thank everyone who took part in the challenge; for putting time and effort into the event and for raising money to benefit the Kids Company. Our sponsorship will be used to fund sports for the children of the Kids Company, giving them a place to go after school and a place where they can channel their energy. It is also will give them a chance to use facilities that they may not have otherwise had access to. We initially wanted to raise £10,000 for this purpose but we are pleased to announce that we have significantly surpassed this target. To date, we have raised over **£23,500** and the donations are still coming in. We would especially like to thank every sponsor for their kind donation which is going to a very worthwhile cause.

