

Change a life

CYCLE TO THE BEAT OF AFRICA 2010



2010 RECCE

Dear Change a Life Cyclist

Jonathan Scott (route master) and I recently made a flying trip to Malawi to recce next year's cycle route. Whew! I'd hoped for a junket but instead got a back-breaking four days careering around Malawi's long and winding roads. We travelled 2 500 km in four days (thankfully not by bike!) and whilst it was exhausting, it was worth it. As before we want to make sure we leave no stone unturned to bring you the best in cycling that Africa has to offer.

So we now have a route! It's 470 km long (not too far in total...), it's not too hilly (except for the last day...) and the individual days are not too long (well perhaps the second day...). As for the roads, they are in surprisingly great condition and usually carry very few cars - what a win! Add to this smiling and friendly local people and some stunning scenery. It's a sure recipe for success.

As it is not a mystery tour, I can reveal that we'll be spending three days cycling, starting off from the capital Lilongwe on Friday, 3 September 2010 and ending off atop spectacular Zomba Plateau on Monday, 6 September 2010. From Lilongwe we will head (via a pleasantly uncongested and scenic road) straight for Lake Malawi, which will be the focus of most of our cycle tour. We plan to spend Friday night on the Lake around Salima before setting off south-east along the shore on Saturday. This is real cycling country and you will find every other Malawian on a bike going about his or her daily business with the beautiful Lake of Stars as a backdrop!

Around the Lake it's wonderfully flat, but don't be too complacent - hotels are few and far between and you will have many miles to travel (186km to be exact) before you can rest your head on a pillow on Saturday night. Before you protest, we're easing the pain by giving you the day off on Sunday to explore Lake Malawi by kayak, sailing boat, underwater, or any other means you wish. You may even wish to cycle more and we have some fun challenges in store for those of you willing to get back onto the saddle.

Monday is the only hilly day and what a spectacular ride it will be. We head south from the Lake and travel for about 95 km on mainly flat roads, which are bustling with vibrant African life but thankfully few cars. After crossing the Shire River we'll head for Zomba and the road will get steeper...and steeper...and steeper. But don't worry too much, it'll be nothing like Lesotho's mountain passes! And the climb will be well worth it when you arrive at the beautiful summit of Zomba Plateau, which was shrouded in mist when we arrived. Breathtaking! We'll be having our Gala Dinner here on the summit and I'm sure we'll be feeling high in the clouds - literally and figuratively!

On Tuesday morning we'll transfer from Zomba to Blantyre for our return flight home. I felt utterly shattered after the recce so I guess I know how we'll all be feeling by then. Shattered yes, but mostly emotional, exhilarated and partied out!

Of course the 470 km you will cycle in Malawi is a mere snippet of our 2 500 km recce tour. We headed far north, exploring places like Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota and Mzuzu before returning south and settling on our final route. We're confident we've settled on the best cycle tour option in Malawi. I simply can't wait...

With warm wishes

Ursula du Plooy
Tour Director