

The Odyssey Continues : Around the World Orphanride



Intrepid brothers: Randell & Andrew Leese



Rise and shine in the English countryside...



...and in the Saharan desert.



Hard going in the Rockies, U.S.A.



St. James, Compostella, Spain.

THE ODYSSEY CONTINUES

The Leese brothers have now completed well over half their journey around the world by bicycle to raise funds for the Society of Servi Domini Orphanage. In April they celebrated being on the road for a year. By the 31st August, they had covered a total of 16,100 miles (25,000

km) and had sustained 83 punctures in 15 different countries.

From reading their blog on orphanride.org, it is clear that they have tremendous initiative, a good deal of help from Divine Providence and a palate upon which a round the world tour in slow motion is not wasted. They also have photographers' eyes. At the end of the tour they will have enough material for a large glossy book and a wealth of stories that will entertain (and then bore) their children's children even to the fourth generation!

Here are a few more recent snippets from their diary:

Syria, May 2010: From Aleppo we decided not ride East to the Euphrates, but West to the Dead Cities, the well-preserved ruins of some 700 ancient Byzantine churches, monasteries, towns, and villas. But the environs of Aleppo were a ghastly desolation of dust, stone, and the skeletons of unfinished apartment



Winter in Morocco.



Across the Pyrenees.



TLC stop at the motherhouse of the Consoling Sisters of the Sacred Heart, in Vigne, Italy.

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Parking in Portugal.

buildings, and we regretted our choice until we finally arrived within sight of Qal'at Samaan in the evening where St. Simeon Stylites once stood so elevated on his pillar. The base of the pillar is immense, measuring around 100 square feet, and used to support a pillar of over 50 feet. It sits in the center of the octagonal nave of the cathedral. It is a wonderful place. The cathedral is located on a green, forested hilltop overlooking the surrounding limestone-strewn hills and plains. Its roof has long vanished, and many of the stones that made up its walls, arches, and pillars, have since leapt from their glorious heights to lie half-buried with enormous pedestals in the tall grass. Many of the arches, however, still stand, and beautiful stone carvings still decorate some of the stones. We bribed the guards to camp in the ruins, staying for two nights, as Andrew was suffering from some disease, and unfit to ride.

Israel, June 2010: ...This particular winery is within gunshot of the Lebanese border, but the staff did not appear to be disquieted by the shadow of a Hezbollah crow's nest in clear view just beyond the Israeli fence...

...Andrew had made what appeared to be a direct route to Jericho and the King Hussein Bridge, but several of the roads had razor wire stretched across them. I had to improvise on my



A mountain pass from Turkey into Kurdistan.

GPS; batteries were nearly dead, and I felt faint from the heat. Several other roads I tried to take were blocked by checkpoints where I was turned back to seek another route. "Arabs only!" they said.

Turkey, July 2010: From Istanbul to the town of Sinop along the coast of the Black Sea the road is mostly a simple two lane country affair that meanders its way around the face of each hill and drops sharply as it swings inland to bridge a small stream or river, only to grind its way back up to 300 meters (900 feet) or so on the other side. It follows this pattern every few kilometers and so, because of the heat, I began to tackle most of my riding in the morning and spend the afternoons and evenings eating cheese, tomatoes, olives, cucumbers, bread and ice cream, and swimming at the quiet little beaches of the "Black" (blue) Sea. It was strenuous riding, but I was always able to find a delicious camping spot on the beach. Except in Zonguldak.....

Uzbekistan, August 2010: Lovely Uzbekistan. Beautiful people, bright raiment, and cheap, tasty vittles: dough—steamed, baked, boiled, or fried (all with mutton, of course); fresh, creamy milk in soda bottles from sinewy, toothless old women; vast, crackling bazaars, and finally, a yurtstay tonight here in Nukus.

...Here we are in Samarkand, home of the turquoise-domed Registan and the tombs of the Prophet Daniel and the ruthless Timur, one of the most visually-appealing cities on earth! Tonight we leave for Tashkent as the marathon ride through Uzbekistan continues...

Alas, only 26 more days with our visas before we move on to Kyrgyzstan and China! ...



A Greek Orthodox Monastery on the West Bank.



St. Sophia, the magnificent church built in the first half of the 6th century by the Emperor Justinian, is now a mosque.



How did the Black Sea ever get its name?



"As we cycled through the last checkpoint at the Turkey-Syria border, drivers greeted us with blaring horns and welcoming shouts; men crammed into the back of large, rusty jalopies grinned crazily and waved handkerchiefs with shouts of "Hello! Welcome to Syria!"