

Special Feature

My Egyptian Challenge

Browsing through “Share”, the national monthly newsletter of the Alzheimer’s Society, a heading caught my eye ‘400 km Nile Bike Ride 17th to 25th February 2007’. As I care for my mother, who has Alzheimer’s disease, I thought that this would be a very worthwhile challenge. The Alzheimer’s Society is the UK’s leading care and research charity for people with all forms of dementia, their families and carers. To cycle 400 km (more than 240 miles) over 5 days seemed rather daunting, but as Egypt has always fascinated me I decided to take up the challenge. I had to raise a minimum sponsorship of £1,500, and I opted to pay for the trip to Egypt myself so that all sponsor money raised would go to the Alzheimer’s Society. Most of my training was done on my own bicycle set up on a static trainer in our utility room.

Pyramids and Sphinx

On 17th February I joined 45 fellow cyclists at Heathrow, from where we flew to Cairo. We spent one day in Cairo, where we saw the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx, as well as visiting the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities and the Chan el Challil Street Market. We then flew to Luxor, and then transferred to a Nile cruiser, which was to be our base for the rest of the trip.

Over the next 3 days we cycled south on the west bank of the Nile to Aswan, Egypt’s southernmost city and famous



for its Low and High Dams. The route was one of contrasts: from flat to undulating and from fertile green vegetation to desert. We were greeted along the way as we cycled through remote parts of Egypt that looked very much as they would have done in biblical

times. We navigated donkey carts laden with sugar cane harvest and horse drawn carriages.

Hard Slog Home

The last 2 days of cycling were the hardest as we headed north back to Luxor against the prevailing wind, and with temperatures of up to 30^oC. On the final day we rode up to the Valley of the Kings, where we had the chance to see some of the tombs, before cycling back down to the Nile and the finishing line. We celebrated our achievement with Egyptian champagne in a plastic tumbler! The trip more than lived up to my expectations and I had the experience of a lifetime. I have many memories to treasure and have made some good friends. I am now looking forward to my next challenge, which I hope will be trekking The Great Wall of China in August 2008.

I would like to thank everybody who sponsored me so generously. I raised £4,135.50 and the Alzheimer’s Society is expecting to raise a total of £164,000, and that is something I will always be proud of.

Mary McMonnies