

at the Night Safari on July 30.

Cycling for charity

In September 2009 Liz Wilton, Web Designer and Chris Leakey, Outdoor Instructor and Care Worker left their home in Cumbria, UK and flew to New Zealand. Their plan: to cycle back to England over 15 months and raise £20,000 for the charity Child's Dream on the way. 10 months into their trip and still a long way from home they have decided to extend their trip, allowing them to continue to explore the cultures, towns and cities of each country they visit. They now plan to work a few days a month through their web design company to generate enough funds to get them home.

Their trip started in the North Island of New Zealand and continued down to Wanaka in the South Island, where Liz and Chris first met 5 years ago. From here they flew to Melbourne, Australia and cycled 3000km up the east coast to Brisbane. Next stop: the Indonesian Islands of Bali and Java. From Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, they then took a 28 hour ferry ride to Singapore where they filled their bellies with great local food before cycling north up the west coast of Malaysia to Penang. From this small island they took a sailing boat to Krabi in Thailand exploring small islands on the way. They left Krabi in June and arrived in Chiang Mai on June 29.



Here they met the founders of Child's Dream - the charity they hope to raise £20,000 for. This money will be enough to build a school in a rural area of the Sub Mekong Region for underprivileged children. The couple have arranged to volunteer for one month, teaching English, in one of the schools that Child's Dream have helped build. The school is in the Tomato village near Mae Hong Son, 2 kilometers from the Thai/Burmese border. It provides free, daily English classes to local children, many of whom are Burmese refugees.

Liz said, 'It's a great opportunity to get to know a small community, particularly the children and a privilege to connect with people from a different culture. By helping these kids at least with basic English skills they can find work more easily,' Liz said.

Once they have completed their volunteer placement, the couple will set off from Chiang Mai and cycle into Laos. After Laos, visa permitting they will cycle through central China then across the Gobi desert into Mongolia. They may be forced to take a short break while in China as crossing the Gobi desert in winter can be very chilly indeed with Chris reporting it can reach minus 40 Centigrade. From Ulaan Batar they plan head west into Kazakhstan, Russia and the Ukraine until they reach the Black Sea. Here they hope to follow the Danube River to Germany then cycle into France

and finally arrive in England, where their bicycle adventure will end.

The two did a practice run in the UK, going from top to bottom, with Liz adding that while it is difficult, she is really enjoying the travelling aspect of the trip. "For him its more of a cycling trip, for me, its travelling, seeing cultures and meeting people. Everyone has been so generous, we have had such good hospitality everywhere we go."

All the money raised goes to Child's Dream, the trip is self-funded with equipment support from Pedal Power +, Hilleberg, Buff, Icebreaker, Hahnel and Tilley.

To find out more about the trip called Bikeabout, visit the website www.bikeabout.co.uk where you can read their travel blog and find out more about cycle touring.

To learn more about Child's Dream or to make a donation please visit www.childsdream.org. Please mention bikeabout when asked how you found out about Child's Dream, so that your donation can be linked to their cycle ride. You can also email Liz and Chris hello@bikeabout.co.uk to leave a comment on their website's donation page.

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Chiangmai Mail Publishing Co. Ltd.

209/5 Moo 6, T.Faham,

A.Muang, Chiang Mai 50000

Tel. 053 221 402 Fax. 053 221 403

e-mail: cnxmail@chiangmai-mail.com

www.chiangmai-mail.com

Administration: md@chiangmai-mail.com

Advertising: advertising@chiangmai-mail.com

sales@chiangmai-mail.com

Subscription: subscription@chiangmai-mail.com

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