

A carbon-neutral motorcycle adventure

Two enterprising Swiss citizens are riding home along the Silk Route from Beijing to Istanbul, to generate awareness of climate change, promote sustainable motor travel and raise funds to benefit SCCF, a new international foundation focused on finding solutions to combat global warming.



Using BMW F 650 GS bikes, Mark Dembitz and Clarisse Von Wunschheim will journey across eight countries in 80 days, covering almost 17,000 kilometres. Their route will see them leave Beijing on 4 May and journey back to Europe via Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, before ending in Istanbul, Turkey on 25 July.

With a career in carbon finance and a keen interest in the environment, Mark is planning to make their 'Going Global' journey carbon-neutral, as well as use the opportunity to show others in cities and towns along the route how to help fight climate change.

"We will be keeping an accurate log of daily time and distance travelled as well as fuel usage, and the quantity and quality of petrol," he said. "Based on this data, we will be able to approximate the quantity of carbon dioxide we emit along the ride. We will then secure credits (1 credit is equivalent to 1 tonne of carbon dioxide) to offset our carbon emissions.

"We also plan on holding forums on climate change at schools and universities along the way, talking to children and students about global warming, motivating them to join us in being aware of their impact on the environment and in making small changes to their lives that will contribute towards a better and cleaner world for everyone."

After researching motorcycle options in some depth, Mark and Clarisse both decided that the BMW F 650 GS was the perfect bike for the trip. Also, because they had no option but to buy the bikes in China, where the choice of officially available large capacity motorcycles is quite limited, they opted for the 650 over the R 1200 GS, mainly for the relative engine simplicity, bike weight and price tag – imported bikes in China cost on average 2.5 times more than in Europe!



“The F 650 GS is a tried and tested model that has proven to be reliable in the most difficult of conditions,” said Clarisse. “This bike has been essentially unchanged for a significant amount of time, so most of the ‘bugs’ that newer models are known to encounter have been worked out, leading to a much lower risk of breaking down. That said, should we encounter any problems, the single-cylinder engine ensures the bike is relatively easy to repair – an essential given that we will not have a team of mechanics and other experts following us.”

Mark and Clarisse have spent a lot of time preparing for this journey. As well as completing a physical training programme, they are also following a basic motorcycle mechanics course at a BMW-accredited garage in Beijing. And because they are hoping to avoid the most extreme trails and tracks en route to Istanbul, they have left their bikes completely standard, apart from adding hand protection and higher windshields.

Due to prior commitments, the couple are allowing just 80 days to complete their carbon-neutral motorcycle adventure from China to Turkey. They have set a fundraising goal of \$133,440, or \$8 (US dollars) per kilometre ridden along the 16,680-kilometre route. Eight is a number considered to be lucky and auspicious in Chinese culture, and is incorporated into multiple aspects of the ride to bring good fortune.

In making this journey, Mark and Clarisse have been inspired to depart China in a way that expresses their passion for culture, travel and adventure, while benefiting the area of the world that they have called home for the past three years. Committed

to an environmentally sound future, they hope to educate and empower local communities to make positive changes for a healthier planet.

For more information, please visit the www.gglobal.org website, which will be frequently updated with live from-the-road stories, photos and a calendar of lectures and conferences. Watch this space for a full, in-depth interview with Mark and Clarisse prior to their departure.

