

## Going Global

Several weeks ago, we brought you news of Mark Dembitz and Clarisse Von Wunschheim's carbon-neutral motorcycle adventure on two BMW F 650 GS bikes to generate awareness of climate change. As final preparations are underway for their departure from Beijing on 4 May, Mark and Clarisse speak to BMW Motorrad about their forthcoming journey across eight countries in 80 days, covering almost 17,000 kilometres.



*What made you select the route you have chosen?*

Having lived here for a considerable amount of time during such formative years of our adult lives, it just didn't seem satisfactory to hop on a plane and close the final chapter of our 20s with a 10-hour flight. With exoticism on our minds, an understanding of cultural divides and an ability to transcend these cultural differences thanks to our relatively global backgrounds [Mark is Swiss and British, born in France to Hungarian parents, grew up in Switzerland and spent significant time in the USA and China; Clarisse was born in Mexico, grew up in Germany and Switzerland, and has lived in the US, Spain and China] the mystique of travelling along the ancient Silk Road, described as the "first wave of globalization" by China's United Nations Resident Coordinator, while experiencing its confluence of cultures was a natural winner.

*Which countries will you be passing through?*

China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Turkey

*Why are you finishing your journey in Istanbul?*

By the time we arrive in Istanbul, we will have used up the free time we have before starting on our new academic challenges (MBA, PhD). On a deeper level though, Istanbul happens to sit on both the Asian and European continents. Caught between East and West, Istanbul somehow reflects how we both think of ourselves: we cannot

deny our European roots, but over time, we have been significantly influenced by Asia, leaving us belonging to both places. For both of these reasons, as well as our fascination with such a historically and culturally charged city, we thought that Istanbul might provide the perfect backdrop for our friends, families, sponsors and supporters to join us in celebrating our 30th birthdays upon our arrival.



*How exactly are you making the journey 'carbon neutral'?*

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

*As 'westerners' living in China, you must have an interesting view on different countries and their attitude and contribution towards climate change?*

Climate change we are experiencing is a result of the accumulation of greenhouse gasses released by today's developed countries ever since the industrial revolution. We therefore sympathize with the developing world and recently industrialized countries (including China and India) regarding their relatively small responsibility in global warming as we see it today, and their right to develop further. However, the world is at a climatic crossroads, and humankind can no longer afford to look backwards. Going forward, the biggest emitters of greenhouse gasses will increasingly be those countries that are industrializing, and hence they cannot sit idly by. Both the developed and developing worlds must share the burden: developing countries have a responsibility to act quickly by minimizing their environmental impact while first world countries have a duty to help those less fortunate to significantly lower the 'pollution curve' of development by providing funding, expertise and technology. Global Warming is a serious threat to all humans and countries. It is time to put behind us our differences and come together to create a truly global solution.

*To Mark: what exactly does your job entail?*

Carbon finance is a new field that applies finance and investing to environmental projects, with the goal of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gasses to fight global warming. In very simple terms, I am a manufacturer of carbon credits: I invest money and technology into polluting Chinese assets, helping them become cleaner. The reduction in greenhouse gasses can be claimed as carbon credits, which are sold to companies or countries of the developed world who have an obligation to reduce emissions as defined under the Kyoto Protocol.

*How will you use the ride to raise awareness of climate change?*

First and foremost we look to spread our message far and wide. The more people know about us and read about our adventures, the more likely they are to think about how they can do their little piece for the environment, thus helping us fight climate change. To reach out to as many people as possible, we rely on our [www.gglobal.org](http://www.gglobal.org) website and online social networking groups such as Facebook and Myspace, as well as a significant amount of media coverage in the countries we will be going through. Secondly, we 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 in their lives that will contribute towards a better and cleaner world for everyone.



*Why choose BMW F 650 GS bikes for this trip?*

It is a tried and tested model that has proven to be reliable in the most difficult conditions. Our research into other similar journeys that have been undertaken in the past few years indicated that the F 650 GS has been a bike of choice for such adventures. Also, we had to buy the bikes in China, where the choice of officially available large motorcycles is limited to BMW and Harley-Davidson. BMW was by default the manufacturer to go with and within the available Enduro range, we selected the F 650 GS above the R 1200 GS mainly for the relative engine simplicity, bike weight and price (imported bikes in China cost on average 2.5 times more than in Europe).

*Have you already completed 'big trips' of this nature before?*

We both have significant adventure travel experience in various regions of the world. However, none of these previous experiences have included motorcycles before!

*Are there any particular dangers you are aware of?*

We do not have any major safety concerns beyond the normal adventure travel issues, such as stomach flu, insect and animal bites, minor theft etc. We are avoiding the regions that we deemed to be too near to or directly involved in conflicts, namely Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran – although this decision was taken on a personal safety basis and is not a sign of racial, political or religious prejudice, of which we bear none. We believe that the countries we are crossing are peaceful and present no geopolitical problems that would jeopardize our safety. The dangers we are most conscious of are related to road safety, namely the presumably poor road conditions and erratic driving habits of locals and large freight vehicles. We aim to minimize this danger by avoiding highways and congested roads as much as possible.

*How can people get involved and sponsor you?*

Getting involved is easy! We hope at the very least that people will follow our adventure on our website ([www.gglobal.org](http://www.gglobal.org)) and leave thoughts and encouragements, as well as their opinions, concerns and proposed solutions to climate change etc., on our blog. Another way of getting involved is to provide us with contacts along the way. We are very grateful for any contacts with media and schools/universities that may be interested in covering Going Global, hosting an event or just meeting up with us. As we are raising money for a new charitable foundation aimed at combating climate change, any help towards reaching our target of US\$ 133,440 is greatly appreciated and both individual and corporate endorsements can be made via our website.

Lastly, perhaps the most crucial way of getting involved is to heed our message: first by recognizing that the choice of a comfortable lifestyle has an adverse impact on our natural environment; and then since it is not feasible to expect people to radically alter their lives, by making small changes and contributions – in our case, we are committed to purchasing carbon credits and riding in a fuel-efficient manner – which will add up. In short, though our individual actions may seem insignificant, they are most certainly not. Many small, even token gestures, add up to have a large effect.

**For more information on Mark and Clarisse's journey, or to contact them, please visit the [www.gglobal.org](http://www.gglobal.org) website, which will be frequently updated with live from-the-road stories, photos and a calendar of lectures and conferences.**