

Press release

August 2017

78-year-old British cyclist's 1,500km adventure across Australian outback to help people affected by leprosy

Retired biomedical scientist and seasoned traveller Mike Patmore, 78, is currently making an ambitious solo bike ride from Alice Springs to Darwin – 1,500 km across Australia's Northern Territory.

Carrying his tent, sleeping bag, a six-litre water supply and 1kg of high protein food, Mike, who hails from Streatham, South London, will embark on the challenge at the end of the Australian winter in August to make the most of the cooler weather. His son lives in Perth, Australia, and he will stay in daily contact with him throughout the ride.

Mike is no stranger to adventure having cycled along the South coast of Australia as well as completing the Tour de France route in the Pyrenees.

"I can't run the four-minute mile anymore but I'm be cycling 50km a day for a month which is well within my capabilities," said Mike.

"I get a little stir crazy at home in London and as I've never been to central or Northern Australia before I wanted to do another longish ride while I still have it in my legs.

"The route is due north along the Stuart Highway from Alice Springs passing through Tennants Creek after 500km and then Katherine another 800km further and then Darwin. In between these towns are roadhouses every 100 to 200km with more rest places and water points in between.

"So there's plenty of opportunity to stop and recharge but on occasion I wild camp in the bush. To wake up alone in the vast outback and be greeted by a flaming red sunrise is something worth experiencing I think."

The desperate needs of people affected by leprosy first came to Mike Patmore's notice during his time working for Medicins Sans Frontieres in Myanmar (formerly Burma) 10 years ago.

He said: "People affected by leprosy are in a desperately poor state. Aside from the physical symptoms, stigma surrounding leprosy means they are often ostracised from their community when what they really need is support. The Leprosy Mission

works in Myanmar and my cycle ride is raising money to support their amazing and life-changing work.”

If you would like to support people affected by leprosy in Myanmar go to:
<https://www.leprosymission.org.au/myanmar>

For more information about leprosy go to www.leprosymission.org.au

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About The Leprosy Mission

The Leprosy Mission is an international Christian development organisation striving to defeat leprosy and transform lives. It serves people affected by leprosy, other neglected tropical diseases and disability.

About leprosy

- **Someone is diagnosed with leprosy every 2 minutes.**
- Leprosy is a mildly-infectious disease caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium leprae* (a relative of the tuberculosis bacterium or ‘TB’ germ). It can stay in the body for up to 20 years without showing symptoms.
- Leprosy causes nerve damage and, if left untreated, can lead to a loss of sensation in the hands and feet. This can lead to disability and the amputation of limbs. Leprosy also damages nerves in the face causing problems with blinking, eventually leading to blindness.
- It is not hereditary and it cannot be caught by touch.
- It is most common in places of poverty where overcrowding and poor nutrition and housing allow people to become more susceptible to leprosy infection.

- The last case of indigenous leprosy in the UK was diagnosed in 1798 and although it is no longer contracted in this country, around 12 new cases are diagnosed in the UK each year.
- Leprosy is curable with multidrug therapy (MDT), which was developed in the 1980s. Within one day of starting MDT there is no risk of the disease spreading to anyone else. Lack of education, however, means that many people affected by leprosy are still stigmatised, even after they have been cured, especially if the disease has caused disability.