

Three SA riders on epic trans-Africa bicycle adventure

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THREE South Africans will on Saturday begin the sixth Tour d'Afrique, an epic bicycle adventure which will take them from Cairo to Cape Town over the next four months.

The riders will cycle 96 out of 120 days, averaging 125km a day. They will journey through Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, and finish in Cape Town.

There were a record number of applicants this year, said Theresa Brown, a spokesperson for the tour.

"It's a life-changing experience, a wonderful opportunity to travel and see Africa." The tour is also unique in that the riders get to experience the



RIDER: Mel Miller with her bike outside her hotel in Cairo.

reality of Africa and interact closely with local people.

Mel Miller, 55, from Fish Hoek, Mark Hensel, 30, from Gauteng, and Erika de Jager,

31, from Pretoria will join 92 other men and women in the trek across the continent.

Miller is a therapist and artist. Hensel now lives in the UK and is a process engineer. De Jager, who also now lives in the UK, survived cancer when she was 24 and is raising money for three charities.

Of the 95 riders, 55 plan to do the full tour of 11 900km, while 40 of them will do a section or sections of the trip. All three of the South Africans will do the entire expedition.

"We have riders participating from 17 different countries, ranging in age from 23 to 67 and while the majority of them are doing it for the sheer joy and adventure of it, a handful are going to be giving it all they've got," said tour leader

Miles MacDonald.

The riders will finish the first section of the trip, named "Pharaoh's Delight," on February 2. They will cycle 1 996km, travelling along the Red Sea, crossing the mountains of central Egypt and taking a boat across Lake Nasser into Sudan, where they will follow the Nile to Khartoum. From there they have seven more sections to go.

The trip is not just about the exhilaration of crossing Africa by bicycle. About half the riders also raise money for charities of their choice, such as Miller who is raising money for The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

Over the last five years riders have raised about R3.43 million for charities.

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