



# DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

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Cycling for... **559 days**

Pedalling over... **17,489km**

Through... **25 countries**

Currently... **in Vietnam!**

Raising so far... **£10,500 (TBC)**



**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our fabulous supporters....**

<https://chrisandgabsworldcyclingtour.com/2019/12/16/merry-christmas-from-vietnam/>

**2019 Year round up.....**

Looking back over the past twelve months we have had an amazing year of unforgettable experiences, covering many countries, making lots of new friends along the way and having the continued support from all our followers and fundraisers.

**In 2019** we have cycled across Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Taiwan and Vietnam. We have battled through the snow, blizzards and camped in freezing conditions and cycled over some of the highest mountain passes in the world over the most treacherous terrains and a lot of the time pushing our bicycles up and over the steep rocky mountains of the Pamir Highway. Looking back at our photographs we say how did we manage that? We must have been crazy and to have camped in some of the places we did, in the severe weather conditions. Could we do it again? I hope we don't have to. Hopefully our planned route for 2020 will keep us in the sunny warm weather but you cannot always avoid the mountains.

Here's to the next twelve months cycling South East Asia and continuing with our raising awareness and funding for **Prevent Breast Cancer**.

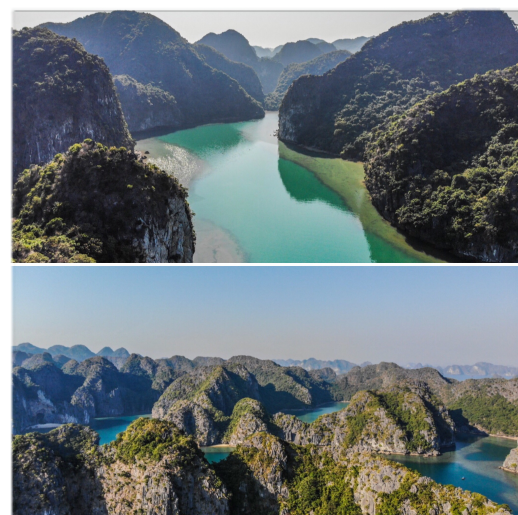
<https://chrisandgabsworldcyclingtour.com/2019/12/21/christmas-message-to-our-amazing-charity/>

**This month we've visited...**

In Vietnam we have cycled from Hanoi across to Ha Long where we took the ferry over to Ca Bah Island. We cycled the length of the Island before getting the ferry back to Hai Phong. From here we cycled the very polluted roads to Hue, Danang and then we followed the coast and spent Christmas and New Year in Hoi An.

**The most beautiful area has been...**

Rugged, craggy and jungle clad Ca Ba Island. Most of the coastline consists of rocky cliffs, but there are some sandy beaches and tiny fishing villages hidden away in small coves.



Lakes, waterfalls and grottoes dot the spectacular limestone hills, the highest rising 331m above sea level. There are many people living on the water villages and you see ladies on rowing boats going around selling goods to the locals living and working on the water. Amazing and spectacular to see.



Whilst at Cat Ba we took a kayak and paddled out to the caves and small sandy beach coves. Whilst we were there we were very lucky to come across and see the famous monkeys of the Island, the Cat Ba langur. There was a young family hanging out in the trees jumping from rock to rock which is a very rare sight to see.

The Cat Ba langur is on the brink of extinction, with only 60 individuals remaining on Cat Ba Island. The Cat Ba langur species is genetically related to the Chinese white-headed langur.

Poaching was the main reason for the drastic decline of the species. The langurs were hunted mostly for parts and bones used in traditional medicine to prepare a “monkey balm” for ageing men. They are now thankfully protected by the Cat Ba National Park.

<https://chrisandgabsworldcyclingtour.com/2020/01/12/white-headed-langur/>

### The most bizarre experiences this month....

In Vietnam when we cycled from the north we would often see signs outside restaurants advertising roast dog, but not restaurants as we know them back in the UK, you are basically sat on small plastic stools at small plastic tables outside someone’s home which is more like a small garage style building where the whole family sleep, eat and run their business from. Every family is selling something and making it outside their home, everything from, fruit juice, noodle soup, sandwiches, hats, shoes to furniture, coffins, someone somewhere is making and selling something. Often when we stop for food we wouldn’t know if we were actually sat in a place that sold food or we were just sat in someone’s kitchen. But where ever we are we always seem to get food and the Vietnamese are always friendly and wanting to help. A few times we came across dogs being roasted on a spit so we kept away from those places and also when we saw the sign “Thit Cho” which means roast dog.





### **The most challenging part has been...**

The most famous road in Vietnam is the Hai Van Pass, it is approximately a 21km long mountain pass, an incredible scenic route winding around a mountain above the East Sea on the central coast. Visibility on the pass is reduced by the eponymous mists that rise from the sea. There were great views of the coast along the way whilst being surrounded by the lush green trees which made it a pleasurable experience and took our minds off the steepness and our slow pace.



### **Another challenging part of Vietnam is the Karaoke.....**

Every one here loves to sing and when they sing they sing loud, you can hear them from miles away. Every household no matter where or how they live will have a large plasma screen outside, huge speakers and a karaoke machine.

We could be cycling along a dusty small road in the middle of the shrimp farms and hear loud music and we would think there was a party or wedding going on somewhere ahead in the fields, but when we cycle past there would be a husband and wife lying in a hammock in their garden looking at the tv screen singing away, chilled, having a good time and oblivious to anything. We see and hear this on a daily basis, no matter what time of the day if they want to do karaoke they will. You also see guys on scooters in bigger towns with a tv screen, and a karaoke machine on the back, he goes to bars which are all outside and people will pay him to stop so they can have a song. Karaoke is massive here, we have never seen it like this in any other country. You could be sat anywhere and someone will have a microphone and start singing. But very very LOUD....

### **A special highlight this month has been....**

Running with Naomi. We first met Naomi Skinner from the UK in Danang, she is running solo the length of Vietnam from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City 2,200km. She set off on the 6th October 2019 and will complete her challenge March 2020 for a charity here in Vietnam. We ran with Naomi and a couple of her friends from Hoi An for 10km. We then met up with her again along the coast heading to Quy Nhon, we cycled along side her for awhile and then met up with her later in the evening at the end of her challenging day. The temperature in Vietnam is getting higher each day. She is running on average an impressive half marathon a day.

You can read her story at [namrunsnam.com](https://namrunsnam.com)

<https://chrisandgabsworldcyclingtour.com/2019/12/29/nam-runs-nam/>



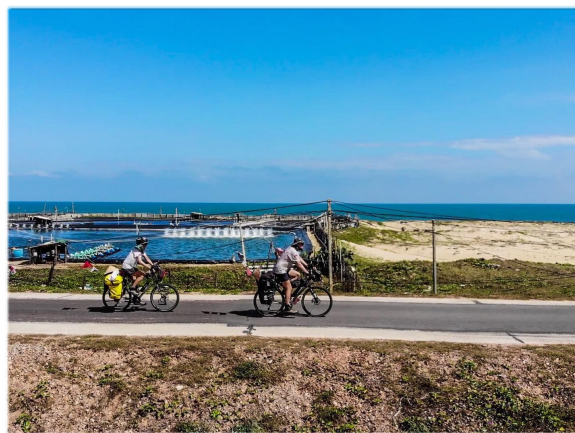
### Another highlight this month.....

Chris at the moment is nursing a crooked broken finger which he gained on our way into Hoi An. We had arranged to meet Naomi on the beach to cheer her in as she finished her run for the day. As we wheeled our bicycles to the beach a very small chunky guy came running at us, shouting us to leave our bicycles and demanding money to park them up with him, but we were not going to leave all our belongings with a stranger so we said "no thank you", ignored him shouting and continued to push our bicycles to the beach. The angry guy ran in front of me and started hitting my bicycle with two wooden poles, shouting, whilst trying to push me back with his poles. I was shouting back at him to stop hitting my bicycle whilst trying to push him away. "Nobody touches my bicycle" I said. Chris came to my rescue and snatched one of the poles out of his hand and threw it onto the beach, so then the guy went for Chris with a karate kid style kick but Chris was too quick and caught his leg before it could hit him, but unfortunately Chris got his finger caught in the guys flip flop which bent his finger right back. The guy then ran off with one shoe so we decided it was best to leave, but then he came running back at us with a rusty machete and started threatening Chris with it to his throat. Then some locals intervened and grabbed the guy and dragged him away and kept hold of him till he calmed down. We left the area sharpish. Chris then realised he had a very painful, crooked, black swollen finger which Chris just bent back into place, found a chop stick to use as a splint and taped his finger to it and we continued the few miles down the road into Hoi An's old town, a bit annoyed as this was our first encounter of an angry human being since we set off. Luckily we were not cycling for the next few days.

The same day I had a health scare whilst in Hoi An and had to go to the International Hospital back in Da Nang. Chris had to take me all the way back to Da Nang on a scooter which was extremely difficult and painful for him with his broken finger. I had to have a few routine scans and tests but thankfully everything was ok. The hospital was amazing and the standard of treatment was great, everything was in English and everyone working there spoke English.

### Next, we are heading to ....

We will still be in Vietnam next month. From Hoi An we will follow the coast crossing many fishing villages where shrimp farming is everywhere as it is one of their main sources of income. We will head to Nha Trang and stick to the coast as much as possible but will face many picturesque mountain passes to go over whilst heading to the Capital Ho Chi Minh City about 650km away, visiting Dalat along the way. We are looking forward to camping on the beaches and having our early morning swims.



### Thoughts and feelings.....

We look forward to the next six months and then we will have been on the road for two years. 2019 seemed to go far too quickly and can't believe we have cycled from Manchester to Vietnam in that time.

Here in Vietnam they celebrate Chinese New Year for a week from the 22nd January so we will be celebrating New Year again, apparently it is a very busy holiday time for the people of Asia so it will be very interesting to be apart of the celebrations.

### Below are links to more of our films

<https://chrisandgabsworldcyclingtour.com/2019/12/25/christmas-workout/>

<https://chrisandgabsworldcyclingtour.com/2019/12/18/spinning-goat/>

