



Candy on the road in Malaysia earlier this year

Fundraiser

CANDY WHITTOME

Cancer survivor **Candy Whittome** is raising money for Cycling UK while exploring the world by bike. *Tiia Jaakola spoke to her*

One of our 100 Women in Cycling 2020, Candy Whittome decided she'd travel the world by bike once she had recovered from cancer treatment. The pandemic delayed her but she's now back on the road. Instead of circumnavigating the globe, she has divided her adventure into four sections: east, west, north and south.

Her eastward leg took her across Continental Europe to Greece and back in 2021. In April 2022, she set off to ride westward for seven weeks through South-East Asia. Landing in Hanoi, she cycled to Ho Chi Minh City, up the Mekong through Cambodia (with a stop-off in Singapore), then along the coast to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Candy only took up cycling again in her 50s, initially for her own health and fitness, but quickly fell in love with riding. She believes it had a big impact on her recovery from cancer, and her doctors agree it helped her tolerate chemo. That's why she decided to fundraise for Cycling UK, wanting to help make the UK a better place for cycling.

Train services are one area where Candy thinks the UK can learn from South-East Asia. "All the trains have luggage carriages," she says, adding that staff are on hand to load passengers' bikes. "Once you know the system, the service is fantastic. But when they say there is no room, they really mean it." Bike spaces sometimes need booking weeks in advance.

Raising money for Cycling UK

Whether you have signed up to an event or are creating your own adventure like Candy, you can nominate Cycling UK as your chosen charity. There are multiple platforms that can assist you, from JustGiving to Facebook – visit cyclinguk.org/fundraise-for-us for more information. And if you don't have time to fundraise for us, don't forget that you can still donate to help with our charitable and campaigning projects.

Another difference is that cycling in South-East Asia is accepted as a normal form of transport for anyone. Locals weren't surprised to see her cycling but instead were "always unfailingly kind, helpful and interested." Women in particular were curious about what Candy was doing.

The weather took some acclimatising. Not only is it hot but incredibly humid too. "Getting up early is the key", Candy says. She rose at five and was on the road by six, because by 7.30 it was already hot. She says she treasured those early mornings, however: just her, the darkness, and the dawn chorus of birds and cicadas.

The abundant wildlife was another highlight. One morning on a quiet country road she encountered a wild boar walking across the road. "It took one look at me and thought, 'I don't wanna see you.'" Snakes slithered across the road and monkeys were swinging in the trees. "That was just amazing."

There was also a moment where Candy questioned whether she could finish this leg of her adventure. "I'd had something to eat that didn't agree with me and was feeling really quite sorry for myself," she says. Starting to brush her teeth with the water bought earlier, her face felt suddenly on fire.

It wasn't water but white spirits, which are sometimes sold in similar bottles. "That was a low point," Candy admits. But catching sight of her Cycling UK top soon after, she says knew she couldn't give up.

Candy's northward leg saw her cycle across the Baltic countries and Finland in summer 2022. For her final segment in 2023, she's planning to start in Ethiopia and see how far south she can get. ●

More info

Read more about Candy's travels online:

cyclinguk.org/article/travelling-all-senses-exploring-world-bike

