Brochure

“The Timbuktu Tour 2011”

--- new route ---
**Introduction**

The text and maps are not fully up-to-date any longer, because the route is changed considerably; mentioned dates and prices are correct.

Timbuktu. Everyone has heard about it. But where is it? Does Timbuktu exist or is it only a place in everyone’s imagination?

We can tell you: Timbuktu exists. The mysterious place of your dreams is located at the southern edge of the Sahara Desert in Mali. The settlement was founded in the 12th century by nomads and it became a major trading depot in the Sahara Desert.

But, how to get there?

In the course of centuries thousands of camel caravans passed Timbuktu with gold and ivory. Those times are all in the past. The time has come to reach Timbuktu with your own camel; this time made of steel, aluminium or carbon. Let the adventure begin...

You start your expedition near Dakar, the capital of Senegal. Baobab trees and little thatched huts dominate the landscape if you cycle deeper into Africa. The African rhythm takes possession of you. *Pole, pole*. No rush, no hurry. You will feel, smell, taste and experience Africa in all her aspects.

Whistling birds, local tribes with centuries old traditions, national parks with elephants, hippos and rhinos, mud brick mosques and amazing sunsets characterize your journey through West Africa. The green banks of the Senegal, Gambia and Niger River are alternated with the dry Sahel landscapes of Mali and Burkina Faso. An amazing variety of flora and fauna is coming back in the lush rainforest of Ghana, where you finish your fascinating bicycle expedition near the capital Accra at the shores of the Gulf of Guinea.

The first edition of the "The Timbuktu Tour" starts at **November 19th, 2011** near Dakar, the most western point of Africa. The finish is 68 days later and after 5.500 kilometres (2.800 miles) near Accra at **January 25th, 2012**.

You can expect all sorts of road conditions: gravel, smoothly paved roads, deep potholes, rocks, washboard and loose sand. Good or bad roads, one thing is clear: it’s mainly pancake flat. The road conditions may vary widely, the weather conditions are continuously the same: although we picked the cold season, it is always hot and dry. The only unpredictable factor that can change your cycling day from easy to difficult is the direction of the wind.

It’s definitely a tour for people who like off-road cycling and don’t mind every now and then some discomfort. It’s Africa. It’s discovering the deep heart of Africa.

"The Timbuktu Tour" is a cycling expedition to a mysterious place where you have never been before, over roads where you have never been before and in conditions where you have never been before. Your fellow-cyclists from all around the world and the warmth of the African people will make it an unforgettable journey. All ingredients for a great adventure. Who hasn’t day-dreamed about Timbuktu? Let your imagination become reality.

The credo of Bike-Dreams is:
"**Life is not the dreams you have, but the dreams you realize**."
The Route

The new route of 5.500 kilometres has been divided into 55 cycling stages and 13 rest days. The road conditions are a mix of paved roads, hard pistes, gravel and sandy tracks. About one-third of the total distance is unpaved. The cycling days have in general the same schedule: a start early in the morning to cycle the distance at your own speed to the next place. The stages have an average length of 100 kilometres, depending on the course, the road conditions and the locations of the next suitable accommodation. On the rest days you have the possibility to make interesting site trips to the highlights of West-Africa.

During “The Timbuktu Tour” you stay mostly at campsites or in temporary camps along the road. Now and then a comfortable hotel is waiting for you.
Dakar - Bamako

The first section of “The Timbuktu Tour” already shows you many different faces of West Africa. Out of the vibrant city of Dakar you cycle along the shores of Lac Rose into an endless African landscape where magnificent baobabs tower above the horizon. Tiny villages where women collect groundnuts and Peul shepherds watch over their livestock between the acacias are alternated with crowded cities with lively and colourful markets.

In Kaolack you can visit the biggest covered market of West Africa. Once back in the countryside you are everywhere welcomed enthusiastically by little kids running to the road if you cycle along.

The doubtful honour of being the hottest city of Africa is for Kayes. Fortunately you pass the place in the “cool” season and the breeze from the Senegal River makes the rest day bearable. The Gambia, Senegal and Niger River are extremely vital for the balance of the West African landscape and life. You cross them all at least once during this section between Dakar and Bamako. The riverbanks are widely used for small gardens full of fresh vegetables for the market. The contrast between the green riverbanks and the dryer Sahel landscape further away is obvious. Spectacular are the waterfalls of Gouina in the Senegal River, nicknamed the Niagara Falls of Mali.

Recent history is shown by the presence of colonial houses and buildings used for the trade of slaves. In Médine the colonial past is evidenced by a fortress and several cannons.

You cycle along the Wassu Stone Circles in the area around the Gambia River. It is believed that the 1,200 years old mystical megaliths were burial mounds of kings and chiefs in ancient times. Nowadays the Unesco called it an official World Heritage Site.

And, let us not forget the African wildlife. You can already spot giraffes, zebras, warthogs and much more in the game reserve of Bandia after finishing the first stage. When you are lucky, you can even catch a glimpse of a white rhino.

Later this section you might hit a family of hippos or a crocodile in the Gambia or Senegal River. You feel like Tarzan (or Jane) during the rest day in the jungle of Jangjangbureh when a group of funny monkeys visit the campsite in the dense forest.

But, be aware, the naughty animals are out for your breakfast...
Mali is known as the jewel in the crown of West Africa; it is culturally and historically rich, but economically poor. You are warmly welcomed, but do not be surprised by the “Third World” infrastructure and conditions in the smaller towns.

You follow from Mali’s capital Bamako the flow of the Niger River till Timbuktu.

The Niger River is one of the great rivers of the world. It marks an approximate boundary between the Sahara desert and the Sahel, and it provides a livelihood to thousands of fishermen. You pass the city of Segou and the project of Teriya Bugu, also known as the paradise of Mali.

A rest day is planned in Djenné with its mud-brick houses and narrow, winding streets. During its glory days it was the sister-city of Timbuktu, and remained largely unchanged ever since. Djenné is best-known for its weekly market and the Great Mosque which was originally built in 18th century. The mosque is the largest mud-brick building in the world, which makes it an Unesco’s World Heritage site.

You cycle through the Land of the Dogon’s, one of the most fascinating cultures in Africa. The Dogon people have retained much of their original culture and still practice their traditional beliefs. Funerary mask dances are still performed to encourage the spirit of a loved one to depart the village and join the ancestors. The rest day in Bandiagara gives you the opportunity to visit the Dogon villages which are spectacular stuck to the high cliffs.

After leaving the Dogon’s Country it is time to hit the road to Timbuktu. “Road” is probably a too generous word for an unpaved track full of washboard, loose sand and hardly any facilities. Like the myths tell you, it’s hard to get there. You must be definitely determined to get there. But what is a Timbuktu Tour without...

The city on the fringes of the Sahara Desert was once a world-renowned center of Islamic culture, as well as an important terminus of the trans-Saharan caravan trade. Salt from the north exchanged for gold and slaves from the south. Timbuktu is now virtually a time-forgotten relic of its ancient glory.

Anyway, Timbuktu still attracts people from all around the world. Only a few of them visit the mythical place by bicycle!
Leaving Timbuktu is definitely easier than getting there. A pinnace is waiting for you to bring you back to Mopti in three days. You camp two nights on the banks of the Niger River, where you visit villages which are only reachable by water. The Bozo are the predominant cultural group along the river and make their living with fishing. Even though Mali is a landlocked country, it is Africa’s third-ranking fish producer. While cruising in a traditional wooden pinnace over the Niger River, it’s not unlikely that you spot a family of hippos. “Mali” is, as you probably didn’t know, the local word for “hippo”.

The hectic city life is coming back in Mopti, which was and remains a commercial centre. It is the melting pot of Mali, where many ethnic groups come to trade: Bambara, Malinke, Fulani, Bobo, Bozo, Dogon, Songhay, Tuareg and Hausa cultures. The city is also called the Venice of Mali because it is completely surrounded by water during the wet season.

After a couple of days without bicycle, you hit the road again. You pass Bandiagara once more and cycle along the southern villages of the Dogon cliffs, which rise 200 meters above the sandy flats. Two relatively short stages bring you to the fourth country of your West African adventure: Burkina Faso.

Standing at the geographical heart of West Africa, Burkina Faso, formerly known as Upper Volta, is the sort of place that also captures the imagination. The country is famous because of its hospitality, legends and cultural richness. One of the most important cultural aspects are the traditional music, dancing and singing. The population includes about sixty ethnic groups who are living in perfect harmony through the centuries. The gloriously named capital Ouagadougou is generally known as the home to the Mossi, the largest ethnic group in the nation. Located in the centre of the country, the vibrant city has wide tree-lined boulevards and several interesting sights. Unlike many other Western African-Sahelian cities, Ouagadougou is not predominantly Muslim so it’s also got a lively nightclub scene. Burkina Faso is also home to Africa’s best known annual stage race, the “Tour de Faso”. You will get definitely some attention when you cycle along and the country will win your heart with its relaxed pace of life and friendly people.
Out of Ouagadougou you cross the national park of Tambi Kaboré. The biodiversity and specific nature of its ecosystem make it an important nature reserve in the heart of West Africa. Take care: elephants or a group of monkeys might cross the road just in front of you.

The last stage in Burkina Faso finishes in the village of Tiébélé, renowned for its unique architecture. The well-preserved Kassena houses in Tiébélé are variously circular, square or figure-eight-shaped depending on the status of the occupants.

As soon as you enter Ghana you will hear: Akwaaba! It means “Welcome”. Welcome to the Land of Sunshine. Ghana, the final country of our expedition and a country with more and other flora and fauna. A landscape with smooth rocky outcrops, magnificent baobab trees, and round-hutted compounds covered in childish stencil-like painted figures. A rest day is planned at the Mole National Park in the heart of the Guinea savannah woodland ecosystem. You can make a safari in the largest park of Ghana which is home to buffalos, roam antelopes, elephants, warthogs, hyenas and leopards. The campsite has been built on a cliff and overlooks an elephant bath. The giants might even cross the campsite during the night...

You cycle further south in Ghana to the ancient capital of the Ashanti kingdom, Kumasi. The city is still the heart of Ashanti country and the site of West Africa's largest cultural centre. It's surrounded by rolling green hills and has a vast central market as vibrant as any in Africa. The rest day gives you the opportunity to do a quick class in traditional dance or drumming. Three cycling days are left after Kumasi. The finish is waiting in Kokrobite, a small, exotic fishing village at the beach 25 kilometres west of Accra. It’s time to take a well deserved dip in the warm waters of the Gulf of Guinea. It will feel like heaven after cycling for more than two months through the most diverged circumstances in the Sahel and Savannah of West Africa.

““The Timbuktu Tour”. A cycling expedition to a mysterious place where you have never been before, over roads where you have never been before, and in conditions where you have never been before. An adventure you’ll never forget.
### The Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Briefing</td>
<td>Dakar</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Start</td>
<td>Dakar</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>Gambia</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Kayes</td>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Rest day 1</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Rest day 2</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Djenné</td>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Bandiagara</td>
<td>Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Rest day 1</td>
<td>Ouagadougou</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Rest day 2</td>
<td>Ouagadougou</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Tanguiéta</td>
<td>Benin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Abomey</td>
<td>Benin</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Atakpamé</td>
<td>Togo</td>
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<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Mole National Park</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
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<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Rest day</td>
<td>Kumasi</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Finish</td>
<td>Accra (Kokrobite)</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- The gray marked lines are the places where you can start or finish the sections of “The Timbuktu Tour”.
- The mentioned days are the rest days in the cities. You arrive in the city the day before as the stage finishes and we leave the day after.
- The dates of the rest days and finish can change slightly, due to unforeseen conditions. As according to our schedule we arrive in Accra on January 25th, 2012.
- When you intend to join us midway, we advise that you book your arrival date at least the day before the start date of the journey. You should also allow time (2-3 days) at the end of the bike journey for any unexpected delays.
- You can find detailed information about the transfers to the start- and finish places in the Information Kit.
- The two rest days in Bamako are used to organize the visa for Ghana.

### Race / Expedition

Each participant can cycle the stages at his/her own pace. You can choose to cover the distance in a more or less relaxing way with visits on villages or towns, photo stops at every chosen moment, or a well deserved break along the road. Alternatively, you can try to cover the distance as fast you can. We do timekeeping every day, to make up a ranking in Accra.
When the organisation has the opinion that some parts are irresponsible to race (e.g. traffic), we choose to cover the stretch all together or without timing. There are no prices to win, it’s only the honour to be the fastest person who crossed West-Africa on a bike. The achievements of the first persons will not be more or less than of the people who take it easy and enjoy all the beauties of the dark continent.

**Participants**

It is possible for people from all over the world to sign up for “The Timbuktu Tour”. However the number of participants is limited due to organisational reasons. The cyclists who are not able to ride, or cannot finish the stage, have always the possibility to take a seat on one of the support vehicles. We take care that everyone arrives at the finish location before the evening.

“The Timbuktu Tour” is open for men and women with an age between 16 and 67. Everyone with a good health and passion for cycling can finish the journey in a normal way. It’s also possible for a non-cyclist to participate. You can take part in the organisation around the cyclists and join the other staff with their daily activities like providing the meals, visit local markets, etcetera.

**Support**

The journey is supported by two vehicles which take every day the luggage to the next place. You don’t have to carry luggage on your bike, except from water, an energy bar and a spare tube.

We provide on cycling days an extensive breakfast (bread, cereals, fruit) and halfway the stage a tasty lunch is waiting for you. In addition, we take care that you can recover with an extra meal (soup, bread, fruit) after finishing the stage and that you always have sufficient water and sport drinks. In the evening prepares our cook a meal full of energy for you.

The kitchen of Bike-Dreams has to deal with the African circumstances. So, on the one hand we want to serve a wide variety of food, but on the other hand we have to deal with the African markets with sometimes limited choices and supplies. Bike-Dreams will do its ultimate best to serve good meals for you.

During the rest days and if we stay in a hotel you have the opportunity to explore and sample the local cuisine.

The journey is supported by a nurse and a mechanic for the physical inconveniences to yourself and your bike.

In terms of accommodation the “Timbuktu Tour” is a combination of campsites, a temporary camp along the road and occasionally a comfortable bed in a hotel is waiting.
Entry Fee

Firstly, the journey is intended to complete entirely from Dakar to Accra. We also offer you the possibility to cycle parts of it, for instance from Dakar to Bamako.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Entry Fee</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Tour</td>
<td>Dakar</td>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>19-11-2011</td>
<td>25-01-2012</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We offer a **discount of € 300,-** for participants who register and pay the down payment before **January 31st, 2011**. You pay an Entry Fee of € 4.995,- in stead of € 5.295,-.

Sections

We understand that not everybody has two months of holiday. So we also offer the possibility to participate in one or more sections of the tour. The selected start- and finish places are nearby international airports or domestic airports with flights to main airports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Entry Fee</th>
<th>Countries</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Dakar</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>19-11-2011</td>
<td>6-12-2011</td>
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<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Ouagadougou</td>
<td>7-12-2011</td>
<td>23-12-2011</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ouagadougou</td>
<td>Accra</td>
<td>24-12-2012</td>
<td>25-1-2012</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>€ 2.995,-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The price of your complete journey can be calculated by summarizing the prices of the individual sections.

What’s included?

The entry fee includes:
- Accommodation based on a combination of campsites, bush camps and hotels
- Pre- and post accommodation in Dakar (one night) and Accra (one night)
- Breakfast, lunch, extra meal after finishing the stage (during cycling days)
- Fruit, water, sport drinks and energy bars (during cycling days)
- Dinner (during cycling days if we are camping)
- Transportation of luggage
- Organisation of the journey
- Support by nurse and bike mechanic
- “The Timbuktu Tour” cycling jersey
- Daily detailed description of the route
• Tour guide with information about the route
• DVD with compilation of the best pictures
• Entrance fee of the Mole National Park in Ghana

The entry fee excludes:
• Transfer to the start and from the finish location of your journey
• Meals on rest days
• Dinner at the days with hotel accommodation
• Personal health- and travel-insurance
• Entry fees of tourist sites

Charity

Bike-Dreams feels very privileged to organise an event such as “The Timbuktu Tour”. We are in the fortunate position that our cradle, stood in the Western world and as a result, we grew up in freedom and luxury. Life is very different, for millions of children in some of the countries we cross during “The Timbuktu Tour”. They have limited choices, and their fate is often restricted by unforeseen circumstances.

For that reason, Bike-Dreams has decided to organise this unique trip, not only for its participants, but also for the children along the route who deserve better. Bike-Dreams has started a cooperation with SOS Children’s Villages. We support this organisation via a sponsorship:

• Companies can participate in the sponsorship. We like to offer the companies the possibility to place beach flags at the daily start- and finish locations (including Dakar and Accra).
• Cyclists have the possibility to be sponsored by relatives, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. Participation is of course on a voluntary base.
• Bike-Dreams donates €50,- per participant for the sponsorship.
• Sponsoring received from other sources.

For clarity: the donated amounts are not used for organising the Tour.
Charity in Australia & New Zealand

Bike Dreams has adopted the Oncology Children’s Foundation (OCF – www.ocf.com.au) as our charity of choice. OCF created the **200 TOMORROWS program** (www.200tomorrows.com.au) to inspire ordinary people to achieve extraordinary deeds and help make tomorrow a reality for kids with cancer. The program is made up of cycling challenges around world and one day Sportif style events in Australia. They combine a physical challenge with a voluntary commitment to fundraise for OCF.

OCF has added The Timbuktu Tour to their 2011 program alongside the other cycling challenges that Bike Dreams will be running during the year. They will be extensively promoting the program throughout Australia and New Zealand. It is therefore highly likely that you heard about this trip as a result of their promotional efforts.

Whilst a commitment to fundraising is voluntary, we recommend that you give serious consideration to supporting them. The reasons are compelling:

- OCF is dedicated to finding cures for specific childhood cancers.
- They raise money to fund research programs with the sole objective of finding cures for the childhood cancers with the highest mortality rates.
- The fight to find cures for childhood cancers is one of medicine’s great success stories. Fifty years ago only two percent of children with cancer survived. That figure has now risen to 80 percent.
- A sustained and growing investment in research is allowing earlier diagnosis, better treatments and fewer side effects.
- OCF is focused on finding cures for particular childhood cancers such as Brain Tumours and Neuroblastoma. Almost half of children with these types of cancers lose their battle. This is an outcome that OCF is determined to improve by funding some of Australia and New Zealand’s best childhood cancer researchers.

OCF is committed to giving children with cancer the opportunity to grow up and live their dreams – please support them by contacting Charles Dennis. His contact details are (phone) +61 (0)28394 7704 or charles@ocf.com.au.
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