

## **Rob bounces back from prostate cancer with 3,622-mile unsupported bike ride across 10 states of the USA**



Avid cyclist Rob Brinkman was planning a 4,000-mile unsupported race across 10 states of the USA when doctors diagnosed prostate cancer.

But 18 months later, Rob, aged 59, has bounced back from having his prostate removed to overcome unforgiving terrain and temperatures, countless punctures, navigation equipment failure, and even snakes, to finish the challenging event – raising almost £4,000 (and counting) for Prostate Cancer UK, which champions radical improvements in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of the illness and support for people with it.

Rob completed 3,622 miles across 10 states in 28 days, averaging 131 miles a day, sometimes through mountainous terrain for days on end, mostly using Google maps after the route files he downloaded in preparation for the race failed to load despite three attempts.

He was competing in the trans-American non-stop race from Astoria, Oregon, on the west coast and finishing in Washington DC in the east, finding places to stay on an ad-hoc basis, sometimes camping, and buying equipment and provisions along the way.

Rob, a spin class instructor at Bradley Stoke and Thornbury Active Lifestyle centres, where colleagues and members have been following his exploits, explains: “I was originally going to finish in Yorktown, Virginia, but once I had the technical problems, I thought, let's just change the route and go as far and as straight as I can, to DC.

“Everyone rides their own race, and they've all got their own little individual route, because you didn't have to stick to a route if you could see a way of making it a little bit faster, or coming off a busy road, then you could do that. There were some out-of-bound roads because they were too busy and while the organiser wants the race to be as challenging as possible, they want it to be as safe as possible.

“Since I got back, the realisation of what I’ve achieved has begun to sink in. Some of the older members have been saying well done, while some of the younger ones have been telling me I’m mad!”

## Staying positive and bouncing back after Prostate cancer

Rob, who hails from Bristol, first came across the trans-American non-stop race in a TV documentary and knew straight away it was something he wanted to do, having completed a leisure ride from St Augustine, Florida, to Santa Monica, California, in 2014.

The Covid-19 pandemic then meant the race was cancelled, then open only to Americans, before all restrictions were lifted.

By that time, however, Rob was in the midst of several medical tests after asking his GP for a PSA test, spurred on by the loss of a friend to prostate cancer and a radio discussion about the illness.

He says: “I’d first planned to do the race in 2024 but then I had the prostate operation between Christmas and new year in 2023, so then I was determined to remain positive and bounce back as quickly as possible.

“And that’s when I said, ‘Right, June 25 I am going to be doing that race’. That’s how I got there and why I chose Prostate Cancer UK, because it was very personal to me.”

## Camaraderie eclipses challenges

Rob says he would do the race again ‘without a shadow of a doubt’, citing the camaraderie among those taking part as the standout experience, which easily eclipses the challenges of the terrain and the weather.

“You could be cycling with somebody for five minutes and you’re finding out their life story. They want to talk because, like you, they might not have seen anybody else for days on end,” says father-of-two Rob.

“One time, I stopped for the night at some motel rooms and all the people there were cyclists on the race. It was brilliant.

“But no matter which route you take, it’s challenging - psychologically and physically - because of the nature of the terrain, the weather systems and the vast expanse of nothing. You could go for 150 miles and see nothing, not even a cow.”

“The first day was relatively easy, even though it was 160 miles, it was nice and flat and there’s a couple of hills, but nothing to worry about. Then it starts getting challenging, because you’re starting to go up into the Rockies. Some hills took four or five hours and you’re still climbing, and it’s like, what’s going on?

“Then there’s the rolling hills of Nebraska, just four or five days of rolling hills with a prairie headwind. A Prairie wind is like an industrial hair dryer. No gusts, it’s just constant wind in your face.

“It’s desert heat too, you’re drinking your water, and because it’s such a dry heat, your throat is constantly dry, even after knocking back a litre bottle of water, which is getting hot because of the ambient temperature.”

## Saved from despair by two pints of tea

One of the most memorable stretches – for good and bad reasons - was the 300 miles of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath and the Great Allegheny Passage trail from Pittsburgh to Washington DC, says Rob.

It was there he had to camp in mosquito-riddled woods and encountered snakes, one of them slithering alongside his sleeping bag.

“It was muddy on some stretches and then poorly maintained in some parts, which was puncturing my tyres,” explains Rob.

“The heat was humid, and it was murder in the mud and then trying to change punctures while getting bitten by mosquitos.

“But about four hours later, I’d stopped for a burrito, and I saw a box of tea bags. I hadn’t had a cup of tea for about five or six days, because they don’t drink tea over there much.

“So, I sat there with two pints of tea and the world suddenly felt all right again. This is good, I thought, this is challenging but I turned that negative into a positive with two pints of tea. It was brilliant!”

## National rowing champions

Rob’s now in training to replace the stone in weight he lost while crossing the USA to compete in another sport he loves – indoor rowing – at the British indoor rowing championships up at the NEC in Birmingham, where he’ll be in the 2000-metre race.

If you would like to sponsor Rob in aid of Prostate Cancer UK, visit his JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/bb-tabr25>

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### Notes to Editors

For further press release enquiries/interview/filming requests, please contact Nigel Wareing, Cornerstone DM: 07834 835 922.

### About Circadian Trust

Circadian Trust is an innovative, social enterprise operating as an independent charity, which successfully manages five Active Lifestyle Centres across South Gloucestershire.

These are located in Bradley Stoke, Kingswood, Longwell Green, Thornbury and Yate.

The Trust works in close partnership with South Gloucestershire Council helping to deliver an overall shared philosophy to contribute to the improved health, cultural and social wellbeing, and quality of life the local community.

Any profit made by the Trust is reinvested back into the business to improve facilities, equipment, and services for its customers and the local community.

For more information, visit: [www.activecentres.org/about-us](http://www.activecentres.org/about-us)