

STAY SAFE IN THE SADDLE

Planning a long-distance ride? METRO trawled the Internet for the best advice on how to prepare and stay safe on the road.

Training

How you start training for a long-distance bike ride depends largely on your present fitness level, age and the amount of cycling you have done in the past, according to ndcschallenges.org, a British fund-raising organization.

There are various ways to train for your challenges that can be adapted to fit into your personal lifestyle, although any training should start at least four months before the start of your great adventure.

Diet

During a ride, your body requires fuel, so a good diet is essential, says the Tour of England training guide. It is common to lose 5,000 calories or more during a longer ride. In training, eat regularly and try to reduce your daily intake of saturated fats. This includes less fried foods and dairy products.

As your mileage increases, it is worth trying to ensure that at least one meal a day is high in carbohydrates, combined with a good mixture of vitamins and minerals. Increasing your intake of fluids is essential, as you will lose substantial amounts as you exercise.

On the road

Make sure your saddle is at the correct height, says ndcschallenges.org. When you are sitting on the saddle your toes should barely touch the ground. If your saddle is too low it will increase the work rate and can cause pain in your knees.

Also, make use of the gears. If you are in a low gear on the flat ground your pedaling rate will be too fast and you will expend unnecessary energy. When ascending hills, changing gear while pedaling on flatter terrain is still relatively easy. Remember to always take water, a small medical kit, a puncture repair kit and a helmet on every ride.

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LIU ZHE / FOR CHINA DAILY
From left: Hank Liu, Lu Cai, Steven Noordyke and Lee Mitchell stand by their bicycles in front of The Brick, a bar in Chaoyang district on March 27.



Riders relish risks of open road

By LAUREN JOHNSON
FOR CHINA DAILY

A 1,000-kilometer bike ride from the nation's capital to Nanjing, Jiangsu province, proved both torturous and life-affirming for five inexperienced cyclists last summer. Representing a spectrum of Beijing's expat community, the group of friends decided to undertake what they called the "No Quit Tour", without any planning and without any training. They set a goal of finishing the ride in 12 days.

But once on the road, they quickly realized that they were facing a battle between their inexperience and their desire to complete the mission.

"Our group dynamic was awesome, but we didn't know what we were doing," said Californian Hank Liu, 30. "But I'd do it again in a heartbeat. We all need something to keep us alive and keep us going."

Liu was joined by school owner Steven Noordyke, 32; Lee Mitchell, 29, owner of The Brick; actor and aspiring filmmaker Lu Cai, 29; and bartender Magnus Brinch, 40. Most of them had no real biking experience prior to their trip for Nanjing.

"We planned the trip poorly, overpacked and brought the wrong clothing," said Noordyke, founder of Go English Beijing. "I learned a lot about diet and how food affects the body. When we ate we had great days, when we ate poorly we didn't do so well."

But the group's inexperience was part of the appeal for Liu.

"You're talking to five guys who never ate breakfast before. Food is fuel — that was a revelation. We quit everything, but we didn't want to quit this," he said.

In addition to picking up some nutritional pointers, the gang also learned some harsh road safety lessons, having survived several close calls along the way.

Recalling one scare during a 20-km stretch, Lu described how he had been trying to grab the back of a slow-moving truck for assistance up a hill when Liu disappeared under the wheel.

"The next thing I see, Liu is sitting in the middle of the street. Just sitting there. Nobody wanted to tell him one of the lenses was out of his sunglasses. He didn't know. He was in shock," he said.

The truck had run over his bicycle, but luckily missed his head. "I didn't know what was going on," said Liu as he shook his head in disbelief. "Lee pulled me to the side. My bike was warped."

The duo chalked the encounter up to

their own inexperience on the road, and Liu joked that if he does another bike trip in the future he will avoid grabbing trucks.

But the crew's second near-death experience was slightly more surreal.

"A car skidded toward us sideways, down the center of the road," recalled Liu. "(The driver) almost hit us but as soon as he came to a stop he just restarted the car and kept going. He almost killed us."

Although they began the journey with little knowledge of the sport or the road conditions, less than two weeks later the team returned to Beijing triumphant.

Through all the high points and low points, the gang is now closer than ever.

"I think we all miss it (the excitement)," said Liu, who also revealed the group's next adventure. "I want to do Taiwan — 900 km. Who's in?" Liu asked the group.

Though his friends erupted in a chorus of laughs, there was a glint in their eyes. They said they will set off for their next adventure in a few weeks.