

Circumnavigation

# Rules row eclipses fear of pirates and sharks for British adventurer

**Pedalling homewards**  
Jason Lewis aboard Moksha, his boat. He is currently in a part of the Arabian Sea which is notorious for pirates. He began his odyssey from Greenwich in 1994 Photograph: Kenny Brown/Expedition360



As Jason Lewis in his pedalo battles for a record a rival claims to have got there first

Steven Morris

So far he has cycled, kayaked, roller-bladed, swum and walked around three-quarters of the globe and, right now, is crammed into a souped-up pedalo in the Arabian Sea being carried by an unfriendly current towards a notorious pirate hotspot.

But it is not the pirates, the sharks or even his aching limbs that are most troubling British adventurer Jason Lewis. He is more worried about what is turning out to be a rather loaded question: when is a circumnavigation not a circumnavigation?

Lewis, from Dorset, has spent more than a decade making his way under his own steam – no engines, no sails – around the world and to date has travelled more than 30,000 blister-packed miles.

But as he pedals from India towards Africa on the latest leg of his attempt to become the first person to get around the world under his own power a

Canadian rival, Colin Angus, is claiming to have beaten him, completing the trip in a mere two years.

Angus's 26,000 mile journey around the world has earned book and film deals, an award from National Geographic and a lot of kudos. But his claim that he should be considered the first to have completed a human-powered circumnavigation is causing a bitter row within the close-knit club of round-the-world adventurers.

Some, including Lewis, accuse Angus of cutting corners. Though he travelled



**Canadian Colin Angus claims to be the first person to circumnavigate the world entirely under his own power**

far enough to circle the globe, he did not cross the equator and reach two antipodal points (opposite points on the globe), which Guinness World Records says needs to be done to count as a circumnavigation.

Angus has accused Guinness of setting the rules on what constitutes a human-powered circumnavigation to suit a Briton – Lewis.

Speaking to the Guardian from his pedal-propelled vessel, Moshka, Lewis said the argument was dominating his thoughts – even ahead of the prospect of being swept into the lair of cut-throats on the island of Suqatra.

“If you’ve spent 13 years of your life trying to do something the right way and then someone comes along and says they’ve done it but not done it the right way, then it is extremely irritating.

“Angus has cheapened the concept. He has not acted in a gentlemanly way. He kept quiet about what he was doing, then suddenly claimed to have completed a circumnavigation.”

When he’s not pedalling Lewis is coordinating a campaign against Angus’s claims, appealing to supporters to write to National Geographic’s Adventure magazine about the issue.

For his part, Angus told the Guardian he was “disheartened” by the dispute. He said when he originally contacted Guinness they had “shown no interest” in defining a human-powered circumnavigation.

So instead he says he used guidelines from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI), which sets rules for plane and balloon records. The FAI does not stipulate the need to cross the equator and reach antipodal points in

## Record holders

### Walking

The first person reputed to have walked round the world is George Matthew Schilling (US) from 1897 to 1904. The first verified achievement was by David Kunst (US). He set off with his brother John in 1970. His brother was murdered by bandits in Afghanistan in October 1972. David Kunst finished his journey in October 1974, having walked 14,450 miles through four continents.



### Sailing

Fastest circumnavigation of the world carried out by a crew of 14, captained by Bruno Peyron of France. They sailed around the world in 50 days, 16 hours, 20 minutes and four seconds in the maxi catamaran Orange II (above) from January 24 to March 16 2005. The journey started and finished off Ushant in France.

### Flying

The fastest aerial circumnavigation of the Earth via both the geographical poles is 54 hours 7 minutes 12 seconds (including refuelling stops) by a Boeing 747 SP piloted by Captain Walter H Mullikin of the United States between October 28 and 31 1977. The journey started and finished in San Francisco, US, and stopped in Cape Town, South Africa, and Auckland, New Zealand.

a circumnavigation. He wondered why “British-based Guinness” remained so uninterested in the Canadian circumnavigation attempt only to set guidelines after he had finished his trip. Could it be, he asked, it was because Britain would be able to claim the record?

Angus insisted Lewis would be the second person to complete a human-powered circumnavigation and called on Guinness to have its rules examined by a team of “unbiased geographers”.

Others are unimpressed. Tim Harvey set off to circle the world with the Canadian but he says they parted ways after he discovered his companion was “planning to deceive the world by calling the endeavour a circumnavigation”.

Referring to the air rules that Angus relies on, Harvey said: “Colin is full of hot air, but that doesn’t qualify him as a balloon.”

Yet another adventurer, Erden Eruç, who is setting off on his own human-powered circumnavigation in June, said the FAI rules could cover a “human powered flight” around the world – not an earthbound one – and nobody is yet planning to flap around the world.

Jason Lewis hopes to end his odyssey in September but for the moment bobs about in the Arabian sea. The latest leg of the journey – a 1,800 mile hop from Mumbai to Djibouti on the Horn of Africa – has been as action-packed as the rest. His £26,000 boat, made in Exeter, hit a sunken wreck as it left Mumbai and had to limp back for a new rudder. The boat’s water-maker then failed and Mr Lewis’ father, Lieutenant Colonel Sebert Lewis, had to enlist the help of coastguards in Cornwall to coordinate help. A cargo ship dropped off eight barrels of water to Lewis.

Now even if he and his companion on this leg, Sher Dhillon, miss Suqatra, they fear they might hit the Somali coast. “We have an image of us ending up on al-Jazeera with a bag over our head. We do have other priorities apart from the circumnavigation row. I know people will think we are crazy for worrying about it but I can’t pretend it isn’t affecting our morale.”

## Rings around the world The three routes

