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Pedal for the Planet is the first human-powered 'round-the-world expedition.

BY CLIFF GROMER



Lewis and Smith aboard the *Moksha* pedal from San Francisco to Hilo, Hawaii, Sept. 19 to Dec. 31.

People have crossed the ocean on just about everything short of an oversize milk carton or an inner tube. But even with a transoceanic crossing via sailboat—impressive as it is—the mariner still had to rely on old reliable wind power. Yup, Mother Nature did the hard part. But up until a few years ago, no one had made an ocean crossing using human power.

Enter Steve Smith and Jason Lewis. Smith is an environmental consultant and lecturer in London. Lewis is an ex-musician, also from London. Together, in 1992, they conceived of the first human-powered expedition not just crossing the ocean, but circumnavigating the globe. The proposed expedition, called Pedal for the Planet, takes on higher goals than simply achieving a milestone in human endurance. The expedition becomes the focal point of an entire program of school presentations, cultural exchange programs and curriculum development designed to empower children to follow their dreams—as Smith and Lewis are doing—and connect with the youth of the world.

To cover the 35,000-mile route Smith and Lewis rely on just arms and legs to supply the power for paddles, inline skates and the *Moksha*, a specially designed two-man pedal boat that takes two years to design and build. It is completed in 1994. In July of the same year, the pair of adventurers begin their journey on bicycles from Greenwich, England, located at 0° longitude. The following day they swap their bikes for the boat and pedal 33 miles across the English Channel. Then it's back in the saddle for a month's ride from Boulogne, France, to Lagos, Portugal, where it's back to the boat.

A short 24 days and 600 nautical miles later, the pair make port in Madeira. From there it's on to the Turks and Caicos Islands and they arrive on U.S. shores (Miami, Fla.) in February 1995. They have spent a total of 111 days at the pedals since leaving Lagos.

With San Francisco as the next destination, Smith and Lewis split up, as Smith takes a southerly route by bike and Lewis a midcountry route on inline skates. The trek is anything but routine. In September, Lewis is hit by a drunk driver in Pueblo, Colo. Both his legs are broken and it takes nine months for him to mend. In June '96, he skates from Pueblo to San Francisco.

In February 1997, Lewis sets off with four friends on bikes south through Baja, Mexico. They kayak across the Sea of Cortez then bike down the rest of Mexico. Lewis continues on his own to Honduras. El Niño is kicking things up around this time, so a Southeast Pacific crossing is impossible. Lewis returns to San Francisco where he's rejoined by Smith.



The *Moksha* en route from Kona, Hawaii, to Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands.

In October of that year, Lewis and Smith turn *Moksha*'s pedals over to John Walker of the U.K. and Casey Dunn of the United States, who sign on to pedal to Hawaii. Lewis and Smith develop educational programs and cultural links that are becoming more and more an integral part of Pedal for the Planet. Walker and Dunn set out the following month and pedal 140 miles out from Monterey before running into storms that force them to turn back. They are towed the last 20 miles by the Coast Guard. The *Moksha* is tied to a mooring buoy in San Simeon Cove, where it capsizes and sinks after a storm. Six days later, the team attempts to salvage the craft. They succeed in self-righting her after a 10-hour struggle.

Smith and Lewis attempt another crossing to Hawaii in September '98 and arrive in Hilo, on the island of Hawaii, 53 days later. It's the first-ever pedal-powered voyage from the U.S. mainland to Hawaii. Daily reports are sent by satellite to support an educational Web site. The pair, along with others, hike from Hilo to Kona in five days. Smith then drops out of the expedition.

On May 3, 1999, Lewis sets out from Hawaii alone in the *Moksha* to pedal 2200 miles to the Gilbert Islands. The voyage is not without perils. On his 46th day at sea, Lewis has a close encounter with a 12-ft. shark. The toothy eating machine flashes back and forth underneath the boat—apparently chasing a large school of fish that was using the *Moksha* as a shield. Earlier in the week, Lewis spotted an adult finback whale about 20 yards out. He became alarmed when the whale kept circling the *Moksha*, getting closer with each pass. Finally, after coming within 10 ft., the huge mammal dove and disappeared.



Lewis setting out for San Francisco from Florida via inline skates. Smith traveled a different route and chose a bicycle as his mode of transport.



It's solo going for Lewis aboard the *Moksha* for his 2200-mile voyage from Hawaii to the Gilbert Islands.

On this voyage Lewis also sees some of the roughest sea conditions of all his time crossing the Atlantic and a leg of the Pacific. Lewis encounters swells of between 15 and 20 ft. with an occasional 30-plus-ft. monster carrying a 5-ft. breaking peak that appears out of nowhere. The boat becomes inundated and everything is soaking wet for three days. Lewis even wakes up one morning to find three live flying fish swimming underneath the pedal seat in 6 in. of water. It was just one more challenge he has to deal with, along with the food poisoning, salt sores and the blistering sun that are part of the trip.

Lewis reaches the Gilberts in 73 days, conducting live media interviews via satellite phone along the way. He's covered more than half the world. The *Moksha* currently is in dry storage on the island of Tarawa, and the voyage will resume in April 2000 after the typhoon season in the South Pacific has passed. Then it will be pedaled 1200 miles from Tarawa to the Solomon Islands, then another 1200 miles to Cairns on the northeast Australian coast. It

will be the first crossing of the Pacific by pedal power and the second and last major ocean crossing of the Pedal for the Planet expedition.

The home stretch will see Lewis bicycle up the northeastern coast of Australia to Cape York Peninsula, use ocean kayaks to paddle to New Guinea and island-hop along the Indonesian chain of islands to Malaysia. Then it's bike time again, this leg up through Thailand, Laos, China, circling west up into Tibet, and then through Nepal and down into northern India, across into Pakistan, through Afghanistan, Iran, central Asia, east and west Europe and eventually back to the shores of the English Channel. Finally, it's back to where it all started by pedaling an airship (if possible) across the channel to England.

So what did you do on your summer vacation?

By the way, you'll be able to travel along (vicariously, of course) with Jason Lewis on his human-powered 'round-the-world trek with free voice updates by calling 800-943-0114 and visiting www.goals.com. The Web site also contains past reports that chronicle the entire journey in detail.