

Death Valley charity cycle for Edinburgh College man



Father and Son to cycle 500 miles through Death Valley for charity

An Edinburgh college employee and his 72-year-old father plan to cycle from Las Vegas to Los Angeles via the Death Valley national park to raise money for Barnardo's.

George Stewart junior, 38, and his father, George Stewart senior, are keen cyclists and have decided to take on the scorching challenge next March to raise funds for Barnardo's. Their target is to raise £6000.

Death Valley is the lowest, hottest and driest area in North America. On their journey, George and his father will face various challenges such as: temperatures as high as 39 degrees celsius, a climb to 5,550 feet above sea level followed by a drop to 136 feet below sea level, and cycling on roads dominated by traffic on the busy streets of Los Angeles. The journey is planned to take six days.

Additionally, George senior is undertaking the challenge after surviving five strokes and undergoing a triple heart bypass. Over a long period of recovery, George senior had to learn to speak, write and type again. His ordeal did not dampen his passion for cycling and he has undertaken many tours with his son, whom he is responsible for getting in to cycling and cycle racing. They recently completed a tour from Scotland to France together.

George junior, who works as a facilities assistant at Edinburgh College's Granton Campus, said: "Though the main aim of completing this challenge is to raise as much money as possible for Barnardo's, we also aim to show that if a 72-year-old man who has had five strokes and a triple heart bypass can cycle 500 miles through some of the harshest land in the planet, then anything is possible."

George senior will be cycling attached to a small portable heart monitor to ensure his wellbeing throughout the challenge. The rest of the Stewart family are very supportive, despite calling the pair "crazy".

George junior said: -"My fiancé is very worried about the reputation of the route we've chosen as it's not just a national park we're going to; it is called the Death Valley after all. She is very supportive though; she kicks me out on my bike every weekend and tells me to get going."

The Georges have been training relentlessly, averaging 120 miles every weekend from Edinburgh to Loch Lomond and back. George senior does find it difficult to maintain speed when

riding uphill but has an excellent recovery time. The pair have always been very close as George junior lost his mother a number of years ago to motor neurone disease. George junior says: "I think we'll have a cracking laugh together when we're doing the challenge. We spend a lot of time together in training and doing other cycle tours and we've always had a great relationship."

They plan to post video blogs whilst on their journey through Death Valley relying on the various remote hotels they are staying in to have internet connection. The blogs will include the number of miles covered, how much water they have gone through, any problems they have encountered and how their bodies are dealing with the physical aspect of the challenge. Any current developments and their training regime can be tracked on their [Facebook page](#).

The father and son duo are also running a couple of other events prior to the cycle challenge to promote their participation and attract more donations.

They are holding a charity dinner with guest comedian Chris Purchase on 14 November at 6:15pm at Edinburgh College's Granton Campus.

Tickets are just £15 and can be bought via email at George.stewart@edinburghcollege.ac.uk or on the phone 07718 229530.

There will also be a silent auction on 27 February at the Apex City Hotel in the Grassmarket. Tickets will be £10 and include a glass of wine and canapés. For tickets and more information on this event please e-mail George junior on the above

address.

The Stewarts' Death Valley Cycle Challenge is due to take place in March 2014. To donate go to their [Virgin Money Giving page](#).