

Mission Malawi: Your itinerary in detail 8 – 21 May 2010

Mission Malawi is a 500 km cycle challenge through Malawi and neighbouring Mozambique. The route follows a mixture of paved and dirt roads through a beautiful landscape which is both remote and rural. Vehicle support in the form of a minibus and/or truck will back up the cyclists at all times.

From the capital, Lilongwe, we drive to the shores of Lake Malawi, from where the cycling will begin. The first stage of the challenge involves cycling a distance of over 140 km over two days until we reach the Mozambique border. Once in Mozambique we head north into the Niassa Highlands, passing through sizeable villages and towns including Massangulo and Lichinga. This 150km section of the challenge promises to be one of the toughest as we will encounter considerable climbs, and the road surface is potentially the worst on the route. From Lichinga we then cover 160km over two days, descending from the highlands back down to lakeshore near Metangula. The route then loops inland for the final 100 km spread over two days before we ditch the bikes for the final 8km walk down to Cobué.

From Cobué, we take a short boat-ride to the historic Nkoma island where we spend our final night before travelling back to the southern lakeshore on board the ship MV Ilala which operates a scheduled service on the lake. The journey will be overnight and we will sleep on the uppermost deck, which is the first class area.

One of the highlights of the trip will be our ActionAid project visits. At the start and end of our travels we will have the opportunity to see ActionAid's work on HIV/AIDS projects to gain a deeper understanding of the issues faced by children, families and communities living in Malawi, and why our involvement in this project is so important.

Itinerary

Saturday 8 May Depart London

Depart from London Heathrow Airport for the flight to Lilongwe. Evening departure.

Sunday 9 May Arrive Lilongwe

Morning arrival into Lilongwe. Transfer to our hotel. Afternoon free for bike preparation. Lilongwe lies on the Central African Plateau at an altitude of about 1100m.

Monday 10 May Cape Maclear

This morning we visit an ActionAid project – Kaggwa. Here we will see at first-hand their home-based care activities for people living with and left orphaned by, HIV/AIDS. **We will also meet some of the women who have been given training support by Kaggwa, enabling them to learn new skills. Some of them have set up small businesses to generate an income for themselves & their families, and to help their local communities.** After lunch we travel by private bus to Cape Maclear, situated on the shores of Lake Malawi (3.5 hours).

Tuesday 11 May Bike day 1 – Cape Maclear to Palm Beach (73km)

We leave Cape Maclear on the dirt road, cycling 18km up one or two nasty hills to the main tar road at the Monkey Bay turn-off. The road from then is good quality, and mostly flat, so the 55km should pass without too much trouble. We camp that night at the Palm Beach resort on the lakeshore. Toilets and showers available.

<http://www.palmbeach-mw.com/camping.html>

Wednesday 12 May Bike day 2 – Palm Beach to Mandimba (70km)

We will start early in the morning and head south through the large town of Mangochi, situated between Lake Malawi and Lake Malombe. The route then heads east on a good flat road, passing through a rural land of subsistence agricultural communities. After about 18km, we reach a very steep climb to exit the Great Rift Valley. This climb takes us up 800m over about 12km, so we need to complete this section before it gets too hot.

Once the climb is over, we cycle another 20km of reasonable undulating countryside until we reach the border with Mozambique. The immigration formalities at the border can take some time, but once we're across the border, there's only another 20km or so left until we reach our campsite – Romao Paulo, which has showers and toilet facilities.

Thursday 13 May Bike day 3 - Mandimba to Massangulo (60km)

A harder day today, so we'll need to leave early again in order to head north into the Niassa upland area to Massangulo. As well as subsistence crops, the local farmers here grow tobacco for cash. The terrain is quite challenging, and includes about half the distance on dirt roads, and the remainder on tarmac. The small town of Massangulo is a missionary centre and has a famous cathedral, which is where we will camp for the night. Basic showers and toilets available.

Friday 14 May Bike day 4 - Massangulo to Lichinga (92km)

Another early start, as we continue the steady climb up into the Niassa Highlands to the Lichinga Plateau. We are on dirt roads all the way, with relatively gentle undulating terrain until a final big climb up 260m to Lichinga. Lichinga is the capital city of Niassa Province and sits at an altitude of 1500 metres, surrounded by pleasant forests. We will camp at a site in the forest, where toilets and washing facilities are available.

Saturday 15 May Bike day 5 - Lichinga to Chuanga Beach, Metangula (115km)

We leave the campsite bright and early, as this is the longest distance of the expedition. From Lichinga the route remains on the plateau, heading north, with some great tar roads and plenty of enjoyable terrain. There are some steep ups and downs, but towards the end of the day we commence the long descent down the escarpment back to the lake. This whole day is worth that first view of the lake and shore, which is absolutely breathtaking. The final 5km is on dirt roads, along the coast, through the major town of Metangula until we reach our campsite for the night, at Chuanga Beach. Basic toilet available....jump in the lake for a wash!

Sunday 16 May Bike day 6 – Chuanga Beach to Manda wilderness bush camp (70km)

Leave Chuanga Beach after a short lie-in and head on the dirt roads towards the Niassa forest. This route will take us through some very friendly villages, with nice undulating terrain and a few steep climbs & descents, into the Manda wilderness area, where we will camp for the night in the bush. As you would expect of an ad hoc bush camp, there are no facilities except the river...and a spade!

Monday 17 May Bike day 7 – Bush camp to Likoma Island (35km)

Once we've struck the bush camp early morning, we cycle along 22km of dirt roads until we reach the steep, uneven descent to the town of Cobue. The final 8km stretch to Cobue must be done on foot, but this will give us a chance to enjoy the beautiful scenery, and to stretch our bottoms after 7 days in the saddle! At Cobue, we exit Mozambique, and take our daypacks with 2 days of necessities, allowing our bikes and luggage to return to Cape Maclear by vehicle. Then, it's a 5km transfer by boat to Likoma Island, where we will camp for the night at Mango Drift.

<http://mangodrift.weebly.com/general-info-and-getting-here.html>

Likoma is in Mozambique waters, but is actually part of Malawi, and is most famous for its amazing 106-year old cathedral.

Tuesday 18 May Ferry transfer to Chipoka/Monkey Bay

After spending the night on Likoma, we catch the historic Ilala ferry, which travels overnight towards Chipoka and Monkey Bay. We sleep on the upper deck of the boat, in the open air, and can take advantage of the bar facilities to celebrate the end of our cycling!

Wednesday 19 May Return to Lilongwe

The Ilala is scheduled to arrive in Chipoka mid-morning, so those not staying for the Mumbo extension will leave the group and travel by private bus to Lilongwe (2 hours). In the afternoon there will be a chance to visit another ActionAid project – the Chisomo Child Care Centre. **Here you will meet with children who have been rescued from the streets, and provided with counselling, education and a place to play together in safety. Chisomo's main aim is to guide young people away from street-crime and begging, and where possible, to reunite them with their family.** In the evening we will eat out at a city centre restaurant to celebrate our successful trip. Overnight in Lilongwe.

Thursday 20 May Depart Lilongwe

Our flight from Lilongwe departs mid-morning or lunch time. We fly to Nairobi where we have several hours to wait for our onward flight to London. Group members may wish to obtain a transit visa on arrival and go into Nairobi for a meal. Alternatively there are bar and restaurant facilities at the airport.

Friday 21 May

Our flight arrives into London early in the morning.

Mumbo Island Extension

Wednesday 19 May Ferry to Chipoka - continue by ferry to Monkey Bay

The main group will depart at Chipoka. Those heading for Mumbo island will remain on the ferry and continue to Monkey Bay. Upon arrival we will transfer by road to our accommodation at Cape Maclear, by the shores of Lake Malawi.

Thursday 20 & Friday 21 May Mumbo Island

In the morning we will transfer by launch to Mumbo Island for two relaxing days, staying in comfortable beach chalets. We will be able to enjoy the private beach, go snorkelling, kayaking and just relax on this private island.

Saturday 22 May Return to Lilongwe

After breakfast we travel by launch back to Cape Maclear and continue by road (4 hours) to Lilongwe and our hotel.

Sunday 23 May Depart Lilongwe

Our flight from Lilongwe departs mid-morning or lunch time.

Monday 24 May

Arrive London

Our flight arrives into London early in the morning.

The extension costs £482 per person, based on twin share arrangements and includes all meals at Cape Maclear and on Mumbo Island. Single occupancy may be possible, subject to availability and the demand for places, as accommodation on Mumbo is very limited. To book your extension place, please contact Great Walks directly on the contact phone number or email given below. In order for the extension to be available a minimum of 4 people are required to take part.

This challenge is organised by Great Walks of the World. The itinerary is complex and subject to change. If you have any questions about the itinerary or the extension, please contact Andy Broom at Great Walks on 01935 810820 or email Andy@greatwalks.net