



Dimitri and Gulnara started cycling on August 12th from Bukhara to finish the last stretch through Uzbekistan into Turkmenistan.  
courtesy Dimitri Kieffer / Nexus Expedition, SOURCE

## Crossing Turkmenistan, A Rare Chance: Kieffer's World Circumnavigation

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Posted: Aug 25, 2015 02:57 am EDT

(Correne Coetzer) Turkmenistan is very closed to the outside world, but Dimitri Kieffer and his wife Gulnara managed to get permission to cover this country on Dimitri's route around the world.

News shot over from Dimitri yesterday, reporting their cycling in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is completed, with some "balmy cycling days in the desert, up to 47 degrees celsius."

They will be entering in Iran in 2 days.

For the time being, they left their bicycles near the Iranian border to tour a bit "this truly intriguing country of Turkmenistan while we are being given that rare chance."

The bikes are actually stored in a cold garage with 20 kegs of "Berk" Turkmen beers, explained Dimitri. "Last time our cycles will see beer for a while before entering Iran and further."

### No social networking in Turkmenistan

"Internet access is very tight in Turkmenistan. No social networking or anything of that nature. Much more than we have observed in China or elsewhere," wrote Dimitri.

"One of the hardest places to get postcards, so if you get one from us, you are a very lucky one. Otherwise, you will have to wait for an Iranian one."

"The capital Ashgabat, where we are currently staying has been described as a cross between Pyongyang and Las Vegas. Definitely interesting to see how the last two (and first two) Turkmen presidents have been spending some serious cash. Collecting arches and monuments left and right like rich little boys collect toys... Moving them from time to time. Yes, moving them. Finally guarding them preciously with soldiers preventing anyone from taking pictures."

"For example of an interesting toy, I enjoyed the "walk of health" yesterday:  
<http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/walk-of-health>"

### Collapse of the Soviet Empire

"Having spent time with Turkmen, we have also learned that this is much better than the mafia, crime, chaos and poverty they had to deal with when the Soviet Empire collapsed in 1991, when the Russians departed and they were left on their own, unprepared. Similar story to what I have heard elsewhere in other corners of the ex-Soviet Empire."

"All and all, good to see and try to understand all angles before judging any regime. Trying to understand as well the psyche of the Russians who chose to stay behind..."

### Planned route and alternative route

Check this blog post for a very detailed description of the couple's visa requirements and their cycling, with some rowing, route, as well as alternative route if the preferred route can't be done.

Follow Dimitri and Gulnara's progress tracker here:  
<http://my.yb.tl/NexusExpedition/2617/#>

*Nexus Expedition began in February of 2005 at Knik Lake in Alaska. Dimitri Kieffer competed in the Iditarod Invitational Race, traveling 1,100 miles in 37 days by foot and snowshoe from Knik Lake to Nome. From this beginning, Dimitri would embark on a human-powered journey to circumnavigate the world.*

*Up to August 12th 2015, over six winters and four summers, Dimitri has covered 17,812 kilometers (11,067 miles) from Anchorage Alaska to Bukhara, Uzbekistan: trekking, swimming, skiing, rowing and cycling across Alaska, the Bering Strait, Far Eastern Russia, Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.*

Latest distances:  
Uzbekistan: 105 km  
Turkmenistan: 455 km

According to the Rules of Adventure at AdventureStats:  
A true circumnavigation of the Earth (around the world) must:

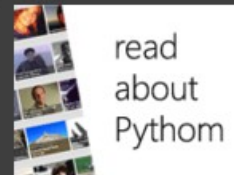
- Start and finish at the same point, traveling in one general direction
- Reach two antipodes  
(Antipodes = two diametrically opposite places on Earth)
- From the above follows that a true circumnavigation must:
- Cross the equator a minimum of two times
- Cross all longitudes
- Cover a minimum of 40,000km or 21,600NM (a great circle)  
(As done only by Jason Lewis and Erden Eruc)

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