

CIRCUMNAVIGATION

# Around the world on two wheels

Firefighter and cancer survivor cycles east from Vancouver across 12 countries

**RUDY POSPISIL**  
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

I am a firefighter and cancer survivor currently cycling around the globe for cancer research funding. I started in Vancouver and have now cycled just over half way around the globe, across 12 countries. I hope to still cross Southeast Asia, India and Australia.

I am following rules for global circumnavigation set out by Guinness. The rules state: "The journey should be continuous and in one direction (east to west or west to east), that the minimum distance ridden should be 18,000 miles, and that the total distance travelled by the bicycle (using the same bicycle throughout) and rider should exceed an Equator's length, i.e. 24,900 miles. The ride must start and finish in the same place and must pass at least two antipodal points (these are two points that line up through the earth's centre)."



Rudy Pospisil is cycling around the world to raise money for cancer research.

My routes around the world are posing some additional challenges. Water is extremely important, and getting clean water and carrying enough

between hydration spots takes careful planning. Cycling closer to the equator is, of course, getting into hotter climates and posing hydration challenges

but there are a significant number of diseases to be aware of when travelling through these countries. It is important for all travellers to be aware of the pre-trip precautions to take before travelling into foreign countries.

I have been supported by the Travel Medicine Vaccination Clinic in Burnaby and saw a registered nurse at the clinic who is a travel specialist. She went over exactly what precautions to take and what vaccinations one should consider.

I found the most common illnesses among travellers are generally caused by eating food or drinking beverages contaminated by bacteria, parasites or viruses. Always take precautions with food and water to avoid getting sick. Examples of diseases transmitted by food and water are hepatitis A, typhoid fever and cholera. Fortunately, vaccines are available for these illnesses. I took no chances and got all the vaccines.

Travellers' diarrhea is the most common illness in people travelling to developing countries, and is caused by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Dukoral is an effective treatment to prevent one of the specific bacteria that cause traveller's diarrhea and cholera.

Unclean water can also make you sick if you swallow or inhale it while bathing, showering or swimming. Try not to get any water in your nose or mouth. In some areas, tap water may not even be safe for brushing your teeth, and you should use bottled water.

Mosquito-borne diseases kill one million people per year. Malaria, the most widespread mosquito-borne disease, affects



Rudy Pospisil's cycling trip across the globe has taken him to some famous landmarks, such as the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, above, and the Colosseum in Rome, below.



350 million to 500 million people each year. There is no vaccine for malaria, but there are malaria pills that can be taken while in exposed areas.

Another risk is rabies — especially when on a bike. I have been chased and nearly bitten by so many dogs I have lost count. I even carried emergency meat to throw to dogs in Hungary, they were so bad in the small villages. I have also encountered bats at night that are also a known carrier of rabies. Rabies causes about 26,000 to 55,000 deaths worldwide per year, and if neurological symptoms develop it is nearly always fatal.

In my consultation at the travel clinic, the nurse told me she has had many phone calls from desperate travellers who have been bitten by wild animals. Monkeys that are used to being fed can become aggressive if they don't get a hand out, or even while eating. You

can get the rabies shot after an exposure, but the problem is you also need immunoglobulin, which in many countries may not be available. This was enough evidence for me to get the rabies shot.

Travellers should visit their doctor or a travel clinic at least two months before departure. This will provide time for the vaccines to take effect. All travel clinics have up-to-date information on which shots are required and recommended for various destinations as well as information on the medications used to prevent malaria.

Make sure to tell your healthcare professional about any pre-existing medical conditions or the possibility of pregnancy at the time of the visit or during travel.

My global ride site that maps me on Google Maps is [firefightercycle.com](#)  
Read my blogs or sign up on twitter @capsfire.

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