

RAFIKI RELAY FOR EDUCATION 2021



THANK YOU FOR BEING #RAFIKIRELAY HEROES!
THIS IS OUR JOURNEY

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER #RAFIKIRELAY



THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF EDUCATION AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE!

One last time then fabulous #rafikirelay teams... What an amazing journey it has been and how truly staggering is the distance you covered in 6 weeks!

103,791 km

You trekked from 'Cairo to Cape Town' in 6 days, took on the full 'Coastline of Africa' in 13 days, completed 'Around the Equator' in 17 days, and returned to, and passed Cairo in 6 days! Nearly a third of the way to the moon!!

Along the way you explored 33 milestones – all of which are collated in this booklet for you!

More than anything though, you are #rafikirelay heroes for your generous donations and sponsorship drive, between you raising a whopping amount to empower young people in Kenya, Uganda and Lesotho through education!

£16,092

On behalf of the children whose lives will now be transformed, who will fulfil their potential, be able to pursue their dreams and lift themselves, their families, and their communities out of poverty...

THANK YOU!!!

With your support we will be able to pay for

10 children

in Kenya, Uganda and Lesotho to complete their entire 5-year secondary schooling, or enable

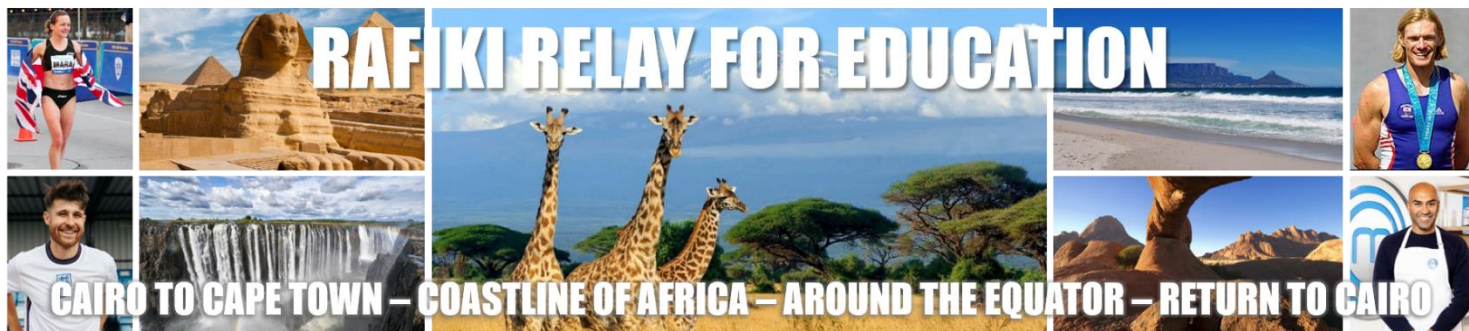
6 young people

in Kenya to study for 3 years and graduate from university with a Bachelor's Degree, or provide

70 children

who would otherwise go hungry, with a free meal at our link school in Uganda every day for 3 years

These lives will be transformed, thanks to YOU!



SUPPORTED BY A QUARTET OF INCREDIBLY INSPIRING, TALENTED AND ACCOMPLISHED BRITISH HEROES AND FABULOUS SPONSORS



QUITE



PERSISTENCE LONDON

Tropic Skincare Ambassador
Kate Palfreman
TROPIC



ONCE UPON A TIME...

There was a tiny charity called Rafiki Thabo Foundation
and 2000 pairs of brave feet

they walked, ran, cycled and swam
raising money to empower through education

With Cairo to Cape Town complete
a journey around the Coastline of Africa began

but would you believe, with no end to their determination
they took on the Equator for #rafikirelay phase three!

Unstoppable, they needed challenge number 4 and headed
for a Return to Cairo with less than one week to go...

As our #rafikirelay came to a midnight close the 2,000 pairs
of brave feet were sore

but with 103,791 km trekked, 33 milestones explored, and a
whopping £16,092 raised

we hope they look back on their challenge with pride,
satisfaction, fond memories and are tempted for more!

We are so grateful to our #rafikirelay teams, to our generous
sponsors and our inspirational supporters!

**TOGETHER WE ARE CHANGING LIVES, FULFILLING
DREAMS AND ENABLING BRIGHTER FUTURES!!**



PHASE ONE – CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN

Where it all began - 26th April!



rafiki-foundation.org.uk

CHARITABLE TRAVEL
for charity, not for profit

Setting off from Cairo on the 26th April, we had no idea how fast you would all be moving through the African continent! 13,222km was completed in only 6 days! I realised on day 2 what was in store, and got busy planning a phase 2, writing milestones at speed!

You will now revisit our Cairo to Cape Town milestones, followed by Around the Coastline of Africa, Around the Equator and Return to Cairo! I have copied these in as they were written, so that you can relive our journey, but that does mean that you might giggle at times as of course I wrote some milestones before the relay started and as such at the time of writing had no idea you would race through them in 6 days instead of 6 weeks! 😊

You will also find social media celebrations, fundraising and #rafikirelay updates, gratitude to our sponsors and inspirational supporters, and towards the end of the booklet a bit about Rafiki Thabo Foundation and how to stay in touch! There is also a list of all #rafikirelay teams and their distances!

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – THE PYRAMIDS OF CAIRO – ON YOUR MARKS, GET SET, GO! (26th April)

Welcome to Cairo!! We are so excited that you are joining us for Rafiki Relay for Education – Cairo to Cape Town! As we now virtually gather for ‘on your marks, get set’ and GO on the 26th of April, take a moment to read about the amazing Pyramids of Cairo!



Cairo, the capital of Egypt has stood for more than 1,000 years on the same site on the banks of the Nile, and is today one of the largest cities in Africa. At its heart is Tahrir Square and the vast Egyptian Museum, a trove of antiquities including royal mummies and gilded King Tutankhamun artifacts. However, for many of us it is the mystery and wonder of the incredible, vast pyramids that makes Cairo so exciting.

The most famous Egyptian pyramids are those found at Giza, a district on the outskirts of Cairo. Among them the only one of the Seven Wonders

of the Ancient World still in existence, the Pyramid of Khufu, also the largest Egyptian pyramid!

Giza is where the famous necropolis of the 4th dynasty can be visited. Among the many points of interest are the famous Sphinx and the pyramids of Cheops, Chephren and Mycerinos.

The Pyramid of King Cheops is one of the most famous structures in the world. Built by King Cheops (4th dynasty) in about 2,650 BC and originally standing at 481 feet tall. To the south of King Cheop's Pyramid, a large wooden boat in a very good condition has been revealed and is now to be seen in a museum south to pyramid of King Cheops.

The Pyramid of Chephren was built by Chephren (son of Cheops), south-west of his father's pyramid and is very similar to it. Although lower in height, it looks higher as it was built on a higher plateau. On the north side it possesses two entrances leading down into a passage and then across a corridor to the burial chamber, which still contains the large granite sarcophagus of Chephren.

The Pyramid of Mycerinos is the smallest of the three pyramids, barely 66 metres high, and was originally covered with red granite stones from Aswan. All three pyramids of Giza are surrounded by several small pyramids and hundreds of mastaba tombs belonging to the members of the royal family, nobles, and high-ranking employees.

On the way down to the Valley Temple of King Chephren, the famous large statue of the Sphinx is located. This colossal statue represents a body of a lion with a human head measuring 70 metres in length and 20 metres in height.

So much excitement and so much to explore, and we are only at the beginning of our journey – we have a whopping 13,222 km ahead of us, to collectively reach Cape Town on the 6th of June!

Want to explore the Pyramids of Cairo for yourself? Speak to Charitable Travel about your travel plans, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo when you book... at no additional cost! Find out more at

<https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS (27th April)

Our first leg completed! We have walked, run, swum, or cycled 627 km and arrived at The Valley of the Kings!



The astonishing landscape of the Valley of the Kings, with its sand dunes that stretch almost to the waters-edge of the Nile opposite Luxor to the high mountains, is matched only by the treasures the area has hidden for centuries and may still even hide.

The ancient Egyptians built massive public monuments to their pharaohs, but they also created hidden underground mausoleums. The Valley of the Kings is the most famed collection of such elaborate tombs. The tombs evidence elaborate preparations for the next world, in which humans were promised continuing life and pharaohs were expected to become one with the

gods. Mummification was used to preserve the body so that the deceased's eternal soul would be able to reanimate it in the afterlife. The tombs were well stocked with all the material goods a ruler might need in the next world, including amazing treasures as well as food and drink!

Many tombs have been discovered, such as those of Tutankhamun, Ramses I, Ramses II, Ramses III and Ramses VI, Amenhotep II, Seti I, Sipteh, Thutmose III and Horemheb, and their treasures are displayed in museums such as the Egyptian Museum in Cairo or in the Luxor Museum.

The tomb of Tutankhamun is one of the most famous archaeological finds of all time, largely due to how intact the tomb and its contents were when found. Watch this short film from National Geographic and learn about the treasures and the restoration of his famous golden coffin as the artifacts are being prepared to return home to Egypt after being shown across the world. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3U1lcB3ecU>

The Valley of the Kings dates back to around the 16th to the 11th centuries BC as a necropolis of the Pharaonic Egypt's New Kingdom dynasties. It is believed to have been used for around 500 years and is the resting place of the kings and other nobles of the 18th through to the 21st dynasties. In 1979 it was made a World Heritage Site and remains one of the most important and famous archaeological sites in the world.

The Curse of the Pharaohs, a phenomenon said to be bestowed on anyone who disturbs an ancient Egyptian mummy, originated after many of Howard Carter's archaeological team were said to have contracted lethal diseases and viruses when opening Tutankhamun's tomb.

At Rafiki Thabo we are not hunting for treasure, but we are hoping to realise dreams! These are the dreams of disadvantaged young children for whom an education would be life transforming. Don't forget to set up your Relay for Education fundraising page and get your family and friends to sponsor your challenge, so that you can help us pay for more children to go to school and university. We are very grateful to everyone for either fundraising or donating a minimum of £5, to help us cover the cost of your relay participation.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rafikirelay>

#RAFIKIRELAY UPDATE!

Wow we hit Valley of The Kings in one day!

Wow, when we were setting this challenge up and were deciding on the journey we would take on, I must admit we were nervous about whether or not we would be able to get to Cape Town in 6 weeks - with the whopping challenge of 13,222km! It is safe to say, we are no longer concerned! You guys are absolutely amazing! We have already visited The Valley of the Kings! Lots of teams are off the mark with many more to still kick into action - can't wait to see this unfold as we travel through Africa!

Want to explore the Valley of the Kings for yourself? Book your adventure to Egypt with Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo at no additional cost! Find out more at <https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>



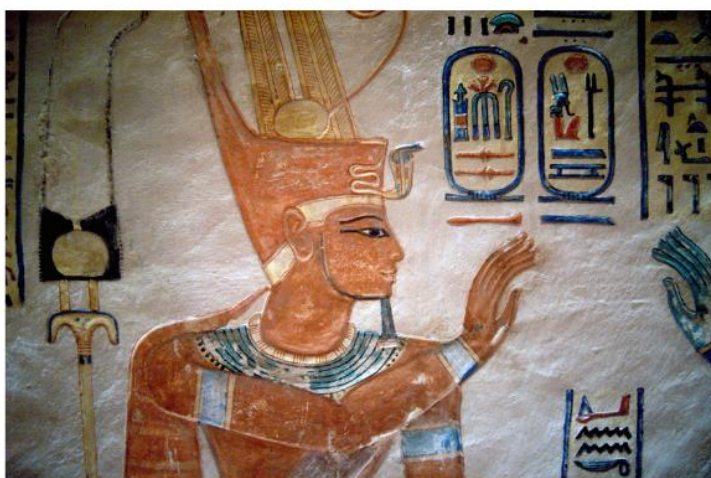
WOWSERS we have some enthusiastic Rafiki Relay Teams!! Most are now off the mark, we have left Cairo and have even visited The Valley of the Kings! These amazing, lovely, wonderful people have with the help of their sponsors already raised an incredible £2,231! Thank you to everyone who is taking part and everyone who is supporting their challenge!

Together, the [#rafikirelay](#) participants can proudly say that their walk, run, swim and cycle efforts will enable 7 children in Kenya to go to secondary school for a whole year! And it's only day 2!! Just wonderful!!

**#RafikiRelay only day 2 and we have visited
The Valley of the Kings!**

**RAFIKI RELAY TEAMS HAVE ALREADY RAISED £2,231!
THIS WILL PAY FOR SEVEN CHILDREN IN KENYA TO GO
TO SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR A WHOLE YEAR!**

AMAZING! THANK YOU!!!



CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – KHARTOUM AND THE PYRAMIDS OF MEROË

Wow, another 1,535 km effort! We have arrived in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. With a population of nearly 5.3 million, its metropolitan area is the largest in Sudan. Khartoum is located at the confluence of the White Nile, flowing north from Lake Victoria, and the Blue Nile, flowing west from Lake Tana in Ethiopia.



Situated approximately 250 kilometres northeast of Khartoum near the banks of the River Nile, the ancient city of Meroë is home to almost 200 pyramids, unknown to most visitors to North Africa despite having more pyramids than in the whole of Egypt! So, while Sudan's Meroë Pyramids are relatively unknown; they are less crowded, more numerous and steeped in fascinating history. This is

one of those places that once you've visited it, you feel compelled to tell your friends of their beauty but at the same time you 'selfishly' want them to remain a hidden mystery as they're incredibly special!

Thousands of years ago, Meroë served as the capital city of the Kingdom of Kush, the realm presided over by the Nubian dynasty. The pyramids here, which are almost 5,000 years old, are spread across three sites. They are constructed out of large blocks of sandstone in the Nubian style, and the pyramids look quite different to their Egyptian counterparts, with smaller bases and more steeply sloped sides. However, they were built for the same purpose - to serve as a burial site and statement of power. In this case for the kings and queens of the ancient Meroitic Kingdom, the Nubian kings, such as the El Kurru necropolis, which once housed the tomb of the famous King Tanutamun. Step inside today and you will notice the elaborate paintings that adorn the walls and showcase the highlights of the reign of this celebrated king. The Nubians took inspiration from their Egyptian neighbours as well as the ancient Greeks and Romans in order to create their own distinctive structures.

Given their age and isolated location, it is a wonder that these structures have survived so intact. However, sharp-eyed visitors to the pyramids in Sudan might note that several of the monuments are missing their top points, which is due to Giuseppe Ferlini, an Italian explorer who blew up several of the pyramids in his search for treasure in the 1880s. Ferlini plundered the tombs of the likes of Amanishkheto, a Nubian warrior queen, in order to sell the spoils to European museums.

Have a look at this short film with BBC Travel Show's Ben Zand as he makes a trek to the site and finds it unguarded and deserted of tourists <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-africa-38994176> Such a mesmerizing place and your mind can't help travelling back in time and imagining all the history of this place!

Inspired by Sudan? Speak to Charitable Travel about your Africa travel plans, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo when you make a booking at no additional cost! Find out more at <https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – THE BLUE NILE FALLS OF ETHIOPIA

We have followed the Blue Nile from Khartoum in Sudan into Ethiopia. Emanating from the nearby Lake Tana, the Blue Nile Falls at 400 metres wide cascades down a 42m-high drop to produce a dazzling spray of mist and rainbows. In the rainy season, when the falls are at their strongest, it's easy to see why the locals call it 'Tis Abay' meaning 'the Great Smoke' in Amharic.



The Blue Nile Falls are one of Ethiopia's best known tourist attractions. It is easy to see why, this waterfall is so stunning and powerful! The Blue Nile has in fact carved out the Blue Nile Canyon, which is almost as long as the Grand Canyon. Enjoy the glory of the Falls in this short film clip!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NugDdg9X68s>

The paths that lead to the falls wind through beautiful, verdant countryside and across a 17th century bridge (the first bridge to span the Blue Nile), the surrounding countryside is spectacular too. It is home to a wide range of wildlife, including monkeys and a mirage of

brightly coloured birds. There are several endemic species in the area, including the wattled ibis. We should also mention how the falls formed a barrier for fish, which allowed the upstream fish to develop into separate endemic species. Due to its remote location, the path to the falls passes by small villages and hamlets which offer an insight into Ethiopian culture and village life. There are also scenic views, as the falls are surrounded by stunning nature.

Bahir Dar is a picturesque town on the shores of Lake Tana, it is the capital city of the Amhara region in Northern Ethiopia. It provides a great base for exploring the Blue Nile Falls and Lake Tana with its hidden ancient island monasteries. Lake Tana is the largest lake in Ethiopia at 2,156 square km but with an average depth of only 14 metres due to high levels of sediment.

Ever wonder why the Blue Nile is called the Blue Nile? During the summer monsoons, fertile land is eroded from the Ethiopian highlands and carried along by the Blue Nile as silt. The resulting dark, almost black, appearance gives rise to the name, The Blue Nile, even though it is not blue but brown with sediments!

Did you know that 'rafiki' means 'friend' in Swahili? 'Thabo' means 'happiness' – why not spread a bit of 'friend happiness' by sharing your Rafiki Relay for Education journey on social media?! We would love to see your Relay photos and your help to raise awareness for our important work and the reason why we are all part of this amazing challenge. Please follow us on social media and tag @rafikithabofoundation on Instagram and @RafikiThabo on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn! #rafikirelay

Keen to witness the power of 'the Great Smoke' in person? Book your trip to Ethiopia with Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo at no additional cost! Find out more at <https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

#RAFIKIRELAY UPDATE!

What happens after Cape Town?! We take on the coastline of Africa!

Most of you are well and truly into the challenge, and it shows - we are a third of the way to Cape Town already and it is only Day 4!! To think we were nervous about the distance of 13,222km when we set up the challenge!

We are absolutely beside ourselves with excitement about your enthusiasm and effort and just wanted to tell you to keep it up! Just in case some of you were wondering, as clearly we will arrive in Cape Town much sooner than 6th June!

So... here's what we will do to continue to have fun fundraising, exercising and competing: We will take on the FULL COASTLINE OF AFRICA! That is 30,500km - up for it!? Of course you are! Bring on a 'Through and Around Africa' challenge of 43,722km!!

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – THE RIFT VALLEY AND NATIONAL PARKS KENYA

Welcome to Kenya! Together we have now exercised and explored our way through just short of 4,700 km and more than one-third of our challenge is completed!



Kenya is a great location to stop and learn about The Rift Valley, however it is actually a geographic stretch extending an incredible 6000km across the Middle East and Africa from Jordan to Mozambique! Originally named the 'Great Rift Valley' by British Explorer John Walter Gregory, the valley encapsulates tremendous changes in topographic diversity with its scarps and volcanoes, lakes, ancient granitic hills, flat desert landscapes and coral reefs and islets. It is a site of faults and earthquakes. Basically, the western part of Africa

is rifting away from the eastern part body. This causes all the geological activity at the Valley. Far in the future, a sea will run between these two parts of Africa. The Arabian peninsula is already almost separated. The whole process is part of plate tectonics. In eastern Africa, the valley divides into two, the Western Rift Valley and the Eastern Rift Valley. The African Great Lakes are a series of lakes formed by the action of the tectonic East African Rift on the continent of Africa. They include Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh water lake in the world in terms of surface area, and Lake Tanganyika, the world's second largest in volume as well as the second deepest.

The astounding view, as you approach from Nairobi in Kenya is quite unbelievable. Demonstrating how expansive the rift is, the ground unexpectedly disappears from under you, extending thousands of kilometres in either direction. Approaching from this direction is an excellent introduction to the Kenyan Rift Valley, as you journey further into the Valley, you will discover the amazing Lake System of the Rift.

The wild roars and nature come alive in Kenya! There is nothing quite so spectacular as experiencing the wild, untouched beauty of the African savannah and seeing its animals roam free across it! Kenya is absolutely on the list of top places to go for this. Spot the 'Big 5' at one of Kenya's many National Parks; Nairobi National Park, Samburu National Reserve, Hell's Gate National Park, the Masai Mara Game reserve and more! Kenya's protected areas are home to different variety of flora and fauna species. Each wilderness area is specially branded because it has something unique to offer. From the 'World's only Wildlife Capital' of Nairobi, 'Bird Watchers Paradise' of Lake Nakuru to the 'Kilimanjaro's Royal Court' of Amboseli, Kenya's wilderness areas are the face of the wild Africa. The perfect place to safari – which in Swahili of course means 'going on a journey'!

Can you name the Big 5? Lions, leopards, elephants, African buffalo, and rhinoceroses!

Interested in booking a Kenyan Safari? Plan and book your African animal encounter with Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo at no additional cost! Find out more at

<https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – MOUNT KILIMANJARO

No journey through Africa would be complete without admiring the impressive Mount Kilimanjaro! Its snowy peak rises above the gently rolling hills and plateaux of northern Tanzania and its slopes and glaciers shimmer above the rising clouds.



Kilimanjaro is the ‘rooftop’ of Africa – the highest point on the continent at 5,896 metres. The mountain’s ecosystems are as strikingly beautiful as they are varied and diverse. It is located near the town of Moshi and is a protected area, carefully regulated for climbers to enjoy without leaving a trace of their presence. This is important, as it is a hugely popular destination for hikers, climbing to its summit considered an adventure of a lifetime. This is a mountain which is not exclusive to the hardened climbers and explorers though, as, if paced well,

everyone from seasoned trekkers to first-time enthusiasts can scale the snowy peak!

Kilimanjaro is one of the world’s most accessible high summits, a beacon for visitors from around the world. There is so much more to Kilimanjaro than her summit however! Even before you cross the national park boundary, the cultivated foot slopes give way to lush montane forest, inhabited by elusive elephant, leopard, buffalo, the endangered Abbot’s duiker, and other small antelope and primates. Higher still lies the moorland zone, where a cover of giant heather is studded with otherworldly giant lobelias.

Above 4,000m, a surreal alpine desert supports little life other than a few hardy mosses and lichen. Then, finally, the last vestigial vegetation gives way to a winter wonderland of ice and snow – and the magnificent beauty of the roof of the continent.

From Marangu, located on the south side of Kilimanjaro, it is only 137 km across the Taveta border to our nearest link school ACK St. Bartholomew’s School, in Voi, Kenya! This is where our Founder Jon Uglow spent a gap year in his late teens, an experience which led to the early beginnings of Rafiki Thabo Foundation. While he was privileged to live in the local community, experiencing their life and be part of their community, he was ‘safe’ in the knowledge that he would soon return to the UK and head to university. Jon knew that this would not be the case for his new friends in Kenya. They did not have the money to pay for school fees, barely to eat. Jon knew he had to do something to change this, even if only for a few. Today we support 95 young people in Kenya, enabling them to attend secondary school and university by raising money for their school fees. This is made possible through the kindness of our supporters – people like you, who take part in our fundraising events! Read more about our work and our impact <https://rafiki-foundation.org.uk/>

Is climbing Mount Kilimanjaro on your to-do list? Speak to an expert travel advisor at Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo when you book your next adventure, at no additional cost! Find out more at <https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – NGORONGORO CRATER AND SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK

Wow nearly 5,900 km into our relay now! We have arrived at my personal favourite milestone, a place which I will never stop travelling back to in my mind and in my memories and one day hope to visit again! Tanzania is my heaven, and the Ngorongoro Crater a treasure trove of wildlife and wonder!



The Ngorongoro Crater is the world's largest intact volcanic caldera, formed around two and a half million years ago when the volcano erupted and collapsed on itself. Forming a spectacular bowl of about 265 square kilometres, measuring between 16 and 19 kilometres across and with sides up to 600 metres deep; it is home to approximately 30,000 animals at any one time!

It is so vast that it is difficult to get good photos showing its 'shape'

but when you stand on the rim of it, you feel like a tiny ladybird stood on the side of a huge round, empty, swimming pool!

The floor of the crater is 1,800 metres above sea level. The crater rim, a further 600 metres high from the crater floor, as such experiences its own climate. From this high vantage point, it is possible to make out the tiny shapes of animals making their way around the crater floor far below. Swathes of cloud hang around the rocky rim most days of the year and it is one of the few places in Tanzania where it can get chilly at night.

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area is one of the most important prehistoric sites in the world. The fossils discovered there are said to be the earliest known evidence of the human species.

Interesting to note, while we cannot know for sure, is that when Ngorongoro was a volcano it is thought to have been a similar size to Mount Kilimanjaro! Estimates of the Ngorongoro volcano's original height vary between 4,500 to 5,800 metres.

The Serengeti National Park in Tanzania was established in 1952. It is home to the greatest wildlife spectacle on earth - the great migration of wildebeest and zebra. The resident population of lion, cheetah, elephant, giraffe, and birds is also impressive. The park covers 14,763 sq. km, and when you think that at any time at most a couple hundred vehicles are driving around in the park you get a feel for how completely on your own with nature and the wildlife you will feel.

The Park can be divided into 3 sections. The popular, southern/central part (Seronera Valley) is what the Maasai call the "serengit", the land of endless plains. It is classic savannah, dotted with acacias and filled with wildlife. The western corridor is marked by the Grumeti River and has more forests and dense bush. The north, Lobo area, meets up with Kenya's Masai Mara Reserve, is the least visited section.

Want to witness the great migration first-hand? Book your Tanzania safari with Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo at no additional cost! Find out more at

<https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – MOUNTAIN GORILLAS AND LAKE BUNYONYI

We have arrived in Uganda! Welcome indeed specifically to the town of Kabale – the very location of our link school Kamuganguzi JL Secondary School and heart of our educational programme in Uganda. In total we are supporting 87 children in Uganda this year, many go to secondary schools in Kabale and others to university in Kampala.



Kabale is special for another reason... Without doubt one of the world's greatest wildlife experiences is the thrill of a close encounter with the reclusive mountain gorillas in their natural habitat. Uganda has the best chance of viewing these delightful apes with the fact that it boasts two parks where they have been habituated for human visits. These are Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, which between them harbour over half of the remaining

mountain gorillas in the world. Bwindi National Park is less than 30 kilometres from Kabale, in the southwestern part of Uganda on the rim of the East African Rift Valley!

These two parks provide home to twelve habituated gorilla groups. The Nyakagezi gorilla family in Mgahinga and the remaining groups are spread around Bwindi National Park in 4 different sectors. Gorilla tracking is a key source of local income, but it is carefully managed, with a specific number of tracking permits available only.

We found this amazing video report on YouTube from a Mountain gorilla tracking experience in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, a closeup meeting with a silverback, blackbacks, adult females and adorable babies. If short on time, skip to 3.10 for an up close with the cutest gorilla baby who takes a liking to the camera tripod!

<https://youtu.be/Ub68jOk6RzM>

Lake Bunyonyi in south-western Uganda is situated between the districts Kisoro and Kabale, and close to the border with Rwanda. Lake Bunyonyi is believed to be the second deepest lake in Africa with its deepest end approximately 900m! The lake is dotted with 29 islands, it is about 25 km long and 7 km wide covering an area of 61 square kilometres. The most prominent of these include the Akampene Island also known as the punishment island, Bushara, Kyahugye, Bwama and Njuyeera, and Bucuranuka. Lake Bunyonyi is home to otters and crayfish and several bird species, in fact it is known as The Lake of Small Birds.

We are now halfway to Cape Town! A good time for everyone to check in on how their fundraising is going. Please remember that you are welcome to share out our central fundraising page

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rafikirelay>

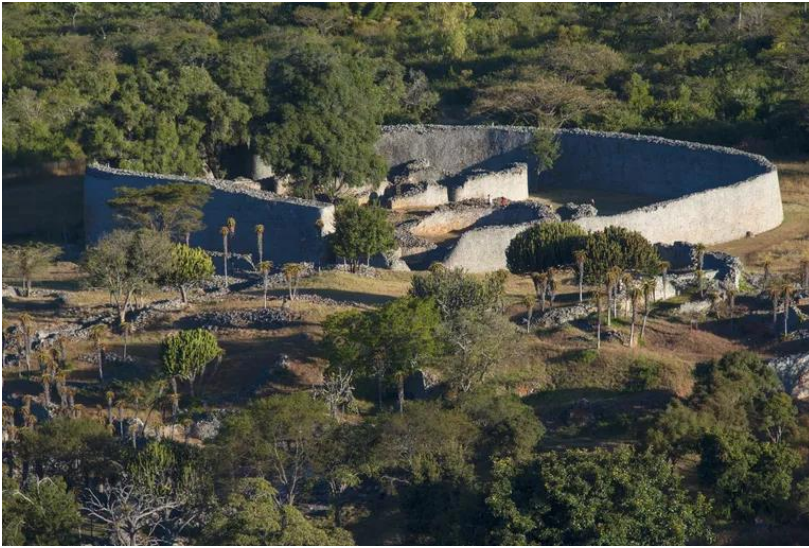
It costs only £350 to pay for a child in Uganda to go to secondary school for a whole year, yet 8 out of 10 children will never go to secondary school. Why? Because 63% of their population live on less than £1.50 per day (£550 per year). We hope you are having fun fundraising as part of our Relay for Education and that together we can help more young people transform their lives with education!

Is tracking Ugandan mountain Gorillas on your bucket-list? Make those dreams a reality and donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo when you book with Charitable Travel, at no additional cost! Find out more at

<https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – GREAT ZIMBABWE RUINS

Well done all, we have just completed the longest leg of our relay at 2,724 kilometres! It will be worth it though, as this is a very exciting milestone!



The ruins of Great Zimbabwe – the capital of the Queen of Sheba, according to an age-old legend – are a unique testimony to the Bantu civilization of the Shona between the 11th and 15th centuries. The ancient city which is divided into three groups: The Hill Ruins, the Great Enclosure and the Valley Ruins was an important trading centre and was renowned from the Middle Ages onwards.

You find the ruins of Great Zimbabwe in the south-eastern hills of Zimbabwe near Lake Mutirikwe and the town of Masvingo, close to the Chimanimani Mountains and the Chipinge District. It was the capital of the Kingdom of

Zimbabwe during the country's Late Iron Age. Construction on the monument by ancestors of the Shona people began in the 11th century and continued until the 14th century, spanning an area of 722 hectares (1,780 acres) which, at its peak, could have housed up to 18,000 people.

The Hill Ruins, forming a huge granite mass atop a spur has numerous layers of human settlements. Rough granite rubble-stone blocks form distinct enclosures, accessed by narrow, partly covered, passageways. This acropolis is generally considered a 'royal city'. The Great Enclosure, which has the form of an ellipsis was built of cut granite blocks, laid in regular courses, and contains a series of daga-hut living quarters, a community area, and a narrow passage leading to a high conical tower. The Valley Ruins are a series of living ensembles scattered throughout the valley.

Great Zimbabwe served as a royal palace for the Zimbabwean monarch and would have been used as the seat of political power. One of its most prominent features were the walls, some of which were over five metres high, and which were constructed without mortar. Eventually the city was abandoned and fell into ruin. It is recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The word "Great" distinguishes the site from the many hundreds of small ruins, now known as 'zimbabwes', spread across the Zimbabwe Highveld. There are 200 such sites in southern Africa, such as Bumbusi in Zimbabwe and Manyikeni in Mozambique, with monumental, mortarless walls; Great Zimbabwe is the largest.

We thought this was a good time to give a big shout out to Charitable Travel! They are not only our headline sponsor for Relay for Education, but also one of our ongoing partners.

Charitable Travel is a registered social enterprise and a financially protected travel agency. When you book a holiday or cruise with Charitable Travel, they sacrifice their travel agency commission so you can make a free five percent donation to your choice of registered charity through their dedicated JustGiving website. Every penny of profit earned by Charitable Travel, everything they do and everything they offer their customers, supports charity fundraising and good causes.

Want to discover the history of the Great Zimbabwe Ruins for yourself? Book your trip to Zimbabwe with Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo at no additional cost! Find out more at <https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE

An easy leg that last one, just a breeze for us by now seasoned relay participants, at a mere 700 kilometres! We are still in Zimbabwe and this time we find one of the greatest attractions in Africa and one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world, a UNESCO World Heritage Site! Victoria Falls is located on the Zambezi River, the fourth largest river in Africa, which is also defining the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Victoria Falls is the only waterfall in the world with a length of more than a kilometre and a height of more than hundred meters. It is also considered to be the largest fall in the world. The noise of Victoria Falls can be heard from a distance of 40 kilometres, while the spray and mist from the falling water is rising to a height of over 400 meters and can be seen from a distance of 50 kilometres. No photo can really do Victoria Falls justice – but this video can! Sit back and soak up the almost emotional grandeur of this truly impressive waterfall! <https://youtu.be/g1vFeo97y4c>

The falls were formed in a zone of crustal faults. On the crest of the fall numerous islands divide the main flow into several branches. During floods, the water flow

capacity reaches half a million litres of water per minute. Interestingly, during the dry season the water level in the Zambezi River drops sharply, and it becomes possible to walk through some parts of the waterfall. However, during the rest of the year Victoria Falls is a roaring machine that strikes anyone with its power.

Victoria Falls known as the “Smoke that thunders” in the local Tonga language, is the largest single curtain of falling water in the world and 70% of the exquisite views are seen from the Zimbabwe rain forest. The rain forest which has constant rain 24/7 from the never-ending spray of the Falls, has a unique ecosystem. It is a botanist’s dream and bird lovers’ paradise. There are species here that do not occur anywhere else, if you get the opportunity to visit it is definitely worth looking just a little beyond the pathway and the numerous viewpoints.

While both Zambia and Zimbabwe are successfully developing tourism on both sides of the river, one of the beauties is that the area has not become over commercialized. Once you are standing by the Falls your view will not be much different to that of famous Scottish explorer David Livingstone’s, who first saw the Falls in 1855. David Livingstone (1813-1873) was the first European to cross Africa from south to north discovered this awe-inspiring waterfall. He named it after Queen Victoria.

Dreaming of hearing the roar of Victoria Falls for yourself? Book your Zimbabwe escape with Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo at no additional cost! Find out more at

<https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>



*Education helps people **understand democracy**, promotes the tolerance and trust that underpin it, and motivates people to participate in politics. Across 18 sub-Saharan African countries, those of voting age with primary education are 1.5 times **more likely to express support for democracy** than those with no education, and the level doubles among those who have completed secondary education.* (UNESCO/EFA, 2014)



CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK AND THE SPITZKOPPE ROCK FORMATIONS, NAMIBIA

Namibia is a very diverse country with an array of habitats and vegetation. The country has a great mix of desert, semi- desert, and savannahs.



As you travel further north in Namibia towards Etosha National Park which covers 22,270 km² and is one of the most accessible game reserves in Namibia and Southern Africa, you will find a place of contrasting landscapes, wide-open grasslands, the massive Etosha pan, and large camel thorn trees mixed with Mopani trees. This diverse vegetation accounts for the abundance of wildlife that thrives in the park and can be seen congregating around the many waterholes.

The most distinctive feature of the Etosha National park is the natural mineral pan. The

Etosha pan is so vast at 4,731km² that it can be seen from space! It is believed that it was formed over 100 million years ago. About 16,000 years ago, the Kunene River in Angola would have flowed all the way to Etosha, forming, for some time, a huge and deep lake. But the river would later change its course due to tectonic plate movement and head for the Atlantic, causing the lake to slowly dry up and leaving the salt pan behind.

The abundance of game in Etosha National Park showcases some of the most common and rarest wildlife species. The areas with thicker vegetation are home to elephant, the endangered black rhino and even leopard. Lions are camouflaged in the pale-golden colour of the grasslands, while giraffes rise - high above most of the dry vegetation.

Birders will love the rainy season in Etosha. After good rains, the salt pan fills with water attracting a cloud of flamingos. More than 340 bird species have been counted in Etosha National Park. The game reserve is also home to the world's largest bird, the ostrich, and the heaviest flying bird, the kori bustard.

A good 400 kilometres from Etosha National Park you find one of Namibia's most recognisable landmarks, The Spitzkoppe Rock formations. This is a group of bald, granite peaks located in the Namib desert. The granite is more than 120 million year's old, and the highest outcrop rises mirage-like above the dusty plains of southern Damaraland at about 1,728 metres above sea level. The peaks stand out dramatically from the flat surrounding plains. The highest peak is about 670 m above the floor of the desert below. A minor peak – the Little Spitzkoppe – lies nearby at an elevation of 1,584 metres. Due to its distinctive form, which can be spotted from a great distance the Spitzkoppe is often called the "Matterhorn" of Namibia.

Many examples of Bushmen artwork can be seen painted on the rock in the Spitzkoppe area. You might be interested to know that The Spitzkoppe Mountains were the filming location for 2001: A Space Odyssey in the "Dawn of Man" sequences.

Ready for the last leg of our Relay for Education? In just over 1,900 kilometres we reach our final destination!

Interested in wildlife watching in Namibia? Speak to an expert travel advisor at Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo when you make a booking, at no additional cost! Find out more at <https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>

CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN – CAPE TOWN AND TABLE MOUNTAIN, SOUTH AFRICA (1st May)

We made it! 13,222 kilometres in 6 weeks – YEAH! Cape Town, South Africa's second-largest city, ranks among the most beautiful in the world. It is breath-taking, with its larger-than-life mountain overlooking the City Bowl, harbour, white beaches, and Robben Island beyond. Two World Heritage Sites, the sprawling Winelands, nature reserves, botanic gardens and a buzzing waterfront are just the start of it!



It is also the second most populous city in South Africa with an estimated population of 4.7 million (compared to only 618 thousand in 1950). It is a quintessential melting pot of creativity, cuisine, and colour. Its strategic geographic position at the tip of Africa has seen foreign visitors stopping off at the Cape since the 1400s, each contributing unique cultural influences that make up the fabric of modern-day Cape Town.

The truly iconic Table Mountain is around 600 million years old, and the Table Mountain National Park at 245 square kilometres is often referred to as one of the “New 7 Wonders of Nature”. Gazing

towards Antarctica as you stand on the high cliffs of Cape Point in Table Mountain National Park, buffeted by the cleanest air you have ever inhaled, it is easy to believe you are at the southernmost tip of Africa. It is an emotional and visual illusion – the southernmost tip of Africa lies a few hundred kilometres away to the south-east. You are simply standing on the long finger that is the Cape Peninsula.

While we cannot see it even from the top of Table Mountain, as it is more than 1,200 kilometres away, we are now at the nearest point in our relay to Lesotho and Fusi School. Rafiki Thabo fundraised for the development of Fusi School and have seen it grow from strength to strength. We are currently supporting 28 young people in Lesotho, all of whom are doing brilliantly!

So, we are at the end of our journey! Well done everyone and thank you so much for taking part in our Rafiki Relay for Education! Thank you for your incredible efforts helping to raise money for our programmes enabling access to education for disadvantaged young people in Kenya, Uganda, and Lesotho. Your efforts will help them transform their lives! We hope you have enjoyed it as much as we have – and might even consider joining us again next year for a new adventure??! We would love to hear your feedback, let us know anything we could have done better, more of, differently – and of course we would love to hear what we did well! Drop Janne a line janne@rafiki-foundation.org.uk.

For now, we wave goodbye to Rafiki Relay for Education 2021, and to Cape Town! Unless that is... why not check out what offers Charitable Travel have on and experience some of that amazing landscape, wildlife, and culture in person (once it is fully safe to do so of course!).

Did you know? Visit between June and November, you'll be perfectly placed to see southern right whales on their annual break from the icy Antarctic.

#RAFIKIRELAY UPDATE!

Wow!! Cape town in less than a week!! Bring on 'The Coastline of Africa!' keep it up!
Absolutely amazing!!!

You have exceeded all expectations and made it the 13,222 km from Cairo to Cape Town in less than one week!! Brilliant effort everyone! (as I am drafting this note it is actually 12,968km, but by the time I press 'send' you we likely there!)

No 'rest for the wicked' though, as your next milestone, our first in our 'Coastline of Africa' extension (!!!), is Namib Naukluft Park, Namibia. That is only 1,642 km 'up the road'! I will let you know when we arrive there and share some information about the Park. I will also tell you how far it is to the next milestone, and so, on we go!!

Want to see the whales swimming by first-hand? Book an extraordinary South African adventure with Charitable Travel, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo at no additional cost! Find out more at <https://charitable.travel/rafiki-thabo-foundation/>



PHASE TWO - COASTLINE OF AFRICA!



SOCIAL MEDIA CELEBRATION 2nd MAY

#RAFIKIRELAY TEAMS EXCEED ALL EXPECTATIONS!

We are beyond impressed with the amazing enthusiasm, stamina and speed of our #rafikirelay teams – they made it from Cairo to Cape Town in less than one week!! Completely brilliant! So now, we have been busy creating a challenge extension! We promised 6 weeks of fun while fundraising, and that is what they will get!

WE ARE TAKING ON 'THE COASTLINE OF AFRICA' That is a further 31,426km as we are visiting Zanzibar and Madagascar as well. Here's our route! Let's see how fast we can do it! I suspect I will need to come up with a plan C before we are done! That could be racing back to Cairo from Cape Town! Watch this space!

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – NAMIB NAUKLUFT PARK (4th May)

Welcome to Namibia and Namib Naukluft Park – the first stop on our extended Rafiki Relay! It is already 1,642 km since we hit our original destination of Cape Town, you are all quite simply amazing!



Namib Naukluft Park is a large protected area in the west of Namibia, an ecologically protected area and was proclaimed in August 1979. The Park has an area of 49,800 km² and at the time of proclamation it was the largest protected area in Namibia.

The Park is situated at the Atlantic coast and borders the Dorob Park to the north, the Restricted Diamond Area in to the south and it shares the border with the private NamibRand Nature Reserve to the east. In the north east the Naukluft Mountains form part of the Park as well.

The Park was formed from four regions namely Namib, Naukluft, Sesriem/Sossusvlei and Sandwich Harbour whereby some parts of the Restricted Diamond Area have been added. Should the diamond reserves in the still existing Restricted Diamond Area be depleted propositions have been made to extend the Park to the South African border.

The Namib Desert is the oldest desert in the world and extends far beyond the borders of the National Park and includes the whole of western Namibia. The part of the Namib within the Park is about 500 km long and between 100 to 180 km wide. Here the highest dunes worldwide are found, which reach a height of up to 300 metres.

The Naukluft Mountains, nearly 2000 metres high, form the eastern extension of the Park.

Sandwich Harbour is situated in the north of the Park, about 45 km south of Walvis Bay. It consists of a 10 km long bay or lagoon, surrounded by dunes and vegetated by reeds. This bay is home to more than 200,000 birds (flamingos, cormorants, pelicans and other sea birds) and can only be reached by 4x4 from Walvis Bay.

Sossusvlei and Sesriem are the main attractions of the Namib Naukluft Park. At Sesriem the Tsauchab River has dug an approximately 1 km long and 30 metre deep canyon into the ground. Sossusvlei is the name of a salt-clay pan surrounded by dunes and is approximately 60 km away from Sesriem.

Experience the vastness of this amazing landscape, get a feel for the desert in these aerial views

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SUILQvBrck> The skeletons of the trees in Deadvlei are believed to have died 600–700 years ago, the area is dream location for the photographers around the world. Part of the Namib-Naukluft National Park - Namib Sand Sea, has been declared UNESCO World Heritage Site.

You now have 2,090 km to trek before we arrive at our next milestone Luanda in Angola - see you there!

Janne 🚶🚲🚶🚶

“As well as helping lift households **out of poverty permanently**, education guards against them falling – or falling back – into poverty. (UNESCO/EFA, 2014)”

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – MILESTONE: LUANDA, ANGOLA (4th May)

Another 2,090 km covered! We now total 16,954 km since we left Cairo on the 26th April. Wow! This time we welcome you to Luanda in Angola. Sitting on the Western Coast of Africa, the port of Luanda is the capital and largest city in Angola. Founded by the Portuguese in 1575, the city has had a tumultuous history, finally achieving peace in 2002 after a long civil war. Now with a swelling population and surge of construction, the city is experiencing a rebirth.



Bordered by half a moon-shaped bay shaded by baobab trees, Luanda shines like a beacon. The city is a metropolis that connects the region's colonial past with its bright future, blending Portuguese-style colonial landmarks with traditional African housing styles and modern industrial complexes.

Angola takes in a broad variety of landscapes, including the semidesert Atlantic littoral bordering Namibia's "Skeleton Coast," the sparsely populated

rainforest interior, the rugged highlands of the south, the Cabinda exclave in the north, and the densely settled towns and cities of the northern coast and north-central river valleys. A large country, it is roughly square in shape, with a maximum width of about 800 miles (1,300 km).

Angola is known to have been inhabited by agricultural cultures from around 1000 to 500 BCE. It was once part of the central and west African Kingdom of Kongo. Founded in the 14th century the kingdom incorporated much of present-day northern Angola as well as parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo and southern Gabon. The name Angola derives from the word ngola which was the title given to Ndongo kings – the historical African kingdom of the Mbundu people founded around the late 15th or early 16th century.

Angola may not be the first destination you think of when planning to explore Africa, but Luanda has a lot to offer. Explore Baixa de Luanda (The Old City), where narrow streets lined with classic colonial buildings paint a picture of the Portuguese influence on the city. Then make your way to the Fortress of São Miguel, a UNESCO World Heritage site built in 1576, where embellished wall tiles and artifacts detail the history of the city. Not far from the Fortress, you find the Marginal Promenade, the perfect spot for a stroll along the Luanda Bay toward Ilha do Cabo with beautiful ocean views. If you want a break from the busy city, visit nearby Mussulo, a spit of land covered in coconut palms, bungalows and bars, and featuring wide sandy beaches and calm waters.

As we leave Angola behind, we next head a further 3,753 km up the coast – see you soon at our next milestone Lagos in Nigeria! Once there we will have covered a staggering 20,707 km!!

Janne 🧑🏿 🚲 🧑🏿 🧑🏿

“

Rafiki provides trustees and supporters with the platform to make a difference to specific people in specific communities. By allowing us to channel our energies and financial assistance directly to those who most need our support, Rafiki distinguishes itself from other charities and genuinely helps others to achieve their dreams

”

Ben Hitchens, Rafiki Trustee

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – LAGOS, NIGERIA (5th May)

A longer leg than the last one at 3,753 kilometres, but that still didn't take you long! I can't write the milestones fast enough! 😊 We now find ourselves in Lagos in Nigeria, very near the Equator a country that experiences a [tropical savanna climate](#). Not only is Lagos the most populous city on the African continent, it is one of the continent's cultural hubs. With its position as one of the fastest growing cities in the world, Lagos has rapidly developed into a major financial centre in Africa, boasting the highest GDP on the continent. There are plenty of regionally renowned beaches around Lagos. One such beach is Tarkwa Bay, an artificial sheltered beach which is only accessible by boat or water taxis. A great bay for surfing! [Tarkwa Bay surfing](#)



Let's start by heading back in time. Long before the European settlers came to Africa the [Nok culture](#) was established in Nigeria. The Nok population dates back to 500 BC - 200 AD. Various kingdoms and city states were established by local indigenous people such as the Igbo or the Hausa. Then in the 16th century Portuguese explorers set foot on the southern shores of the country and trade with Europeans was established. The Fulani Empire or Sokoto caliphate was dominant in the northern parts of the country and housed the largest slave population in the world in the 1890s, with about 2 million slaves. In fact, the region was one of the biggest slave trading centres of

the continent until the British ruled parts of Nigeria from the 18th century onwards. Nigeria gained independence from the UK in 1960.

Nigeria has 36 states and one of them is Lagos State. It was the capital from 1914 to 1991, when it was replaced by Abuja. Though it is the smallest state in the country Lagos is said to be the seventh-largest city in the world by city population! Some 22 million people live in and around Lagos. In 2050, Nigeria is expected to house almost 400 million people, and thus become the third most populated country after China and India. Nigeria is oil rich, but the local economy in Nigeria is driven also by the growing agriculture and services industry. The rich-poor divide is very stark. Almost half of the population live in the very poorest of conditions without any water or electricity, while Nigeria is also home to some of the world's richest people. Overpopulation and the rapid growth of the cities have led to many social, economic, and environmental problems. Living without clean water, electricity and sanitation is a reality for millions. Have a look at this encouraging short film, a result of the Paris Agreement, under which nine African megacities are to receive support to cut emissions and develop long-term climate action plans [Eco Toilets and Solar Lamps](#)

Outside of the megacity, Nigeria's geography is varied. The highest point in Nigeria is Chappal Waddi at the border to Cameroon, the mountain is 2,419 m high. The country's central region mostly lies on a high plateau with hills and mountains. The name Nigeria is derived from the river Niger, its longest river at 4,100 km long. Nigeria's climate varies from arid climate in the northern parts to tropical climate in the centre of the country and a coastal climate at the Atlantic Ocean coastal regions. The country is known for its large monoliths, which are huge granitic rocks - similar in form to the Uluru rock in Australia. [Zuma Rock](#) is known as one of Nigeria's landmarks, this massive monolith stands near Abuja, and its circumference rock is about 3.1 km.

Nigeria is home to many animals that are unique to the continent and country. There are forest elephants, buffalos, antelopes, leopards, gorillas, hippopotamus and monkeys. The endangered [white-throated monkeys](#) are indigenous only to Nigeria. Birdlife is abundant in Nigeria too! Fishing and herding of cattle are important activities in rural areas. There are more than 18 million herds of cattle in Nigeria - about double the amount of cattle in the UK!

Next up, Tai National Park, Ivory Coast – see you there in 1,509 km! Janne 🚲🚲🚲🚲

LET'S MAKE YOUR FUNDRAISING AS SUCCESSFUL AS YOUR INCREDIBLE MILEAGE! (5th May)

Good morning wonderful #RafikiRelay Teams!

Our Rafiki Relay is very much about offering you a fun, healthy opportunity to get together, enjoy the outdoors and have some friendly competition.

It is about raising awareness of the importance of education, those less privileged and how we can, together, help them fulfil their potential through secondary school and university education and enable them to transform their lives. Only a dream for so many young people in Kenya, Uganda and Lesotho.

You have already raised £3,985 enough to pay for the entire secondary schooling for 3 children in Kenya or for 2 students to complete their university degree in Uganda. Amazing!!

Finally, our Rafiki Relay is about education for relay participants as well. We often hear the sad stories from Africa, but Africa is so much more! A stunning continent with so much to explore! Do make sure you read the relay milestones as we pass through them.

Oh, and do follow us on social media, for updates about the Rafiki Relay but also to see updates about our impact – our latest post was about how we were able to extend the girls' dormitory at our link school in Uganda with donations from loyal supporters and One World Group Oxted. Providing a safe place to sleep and study for the girls! @rafikithabofoundation on Instagram, @RafikiThabo on FB, Twitter and Linked In.



We are so delighted that the extension of the girls' dormitory at our partner school in Uganda has been completed!

This means that an additional 150 girls have a safe place to sleep and study, rather than spending hours walking to and from school every day and being at risk of attack. We also supported the renovation of the original dorm in 2016, enabling 250 girls to stay safely at school. The extension therefore takes the total number of girls able to stay at the school to 400.

We are so grateful to the generous donors who provided funding towards the extension.

Jowan, the school's nominated speaker says: 'My appreciation goes to those who have funded the construction of the new dormitory at our school. For sure, I thank them so much because when we were having the other few dormitories we were congested but now we have enough space where we can place our jerrycans, buckets and cases so we thank them very much.'

With the extra space, not only can more girls' stay safely at school, but the dorm capacity is now spacious enough that it can accommodate their studying and sleeping space as well as storage. (Posted in social media 4th May 2021)

Thank you so much for all your support everyone!

Kind regards

Janne

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – TAI NATIONAL PARK, IVORY COAST (6th May)

Welcome to Ivory Coast, or Côte d'Ivoire, another 1,509 km well done! We are now on the coast of Western Africa in Côte d'Ivoire. A country with borders to no less than 6 countries! Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, the Gulf of Guinea, Liberia, and Guinea.



The ground rises constantly as it recedes from the coast, and the northern half of the country consists of high savanna lying mostly 300 metres above sea level. Most of the western border with Liberia and Guinea is shaped by mountain ranges, whose highest point, [Mount Nimba](#) (1,752 metres), is situated in the Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve. Here's a stunning little video capturing the allure of [Mount Nimba](#)

The country is made up of four natural regions, the coastal fringe consists of a strip of land, no more than 40 miles (64 km) wide, studded with lagoons on its

eastern half, behind which lies the equatorial forest zone. The cultivated forest zone which consists of forest land that has been partially cleared for plantations, and the fourth region, the northern [savanna](#), which consists of a sparsely populated plateau, offering open ground favourable for stock breeding.

Ivory Coast has been popular over the years with holidaymakers for its golden beaches, fading French colonial heritage and traditional Senufo cultural experiences, although this faded during times of instability. It certainly has a lot to offer, Mount Nimba rises above the surrounding savannah where Ivory Coast meets Guinea and Liberia. A Unesco World Heritage Site, the mountain is covered by dense forest harbouring a rich variety of flora and fauna, including chimpanzees. Ivory Coast boasts three more Unesco World Heritage Sites in the shape of the historic town of [Grand Bassam](#), once a colonial trading post, Comoe National Park, one of the largest protected areas in West Africa, and Tai National Park, home to 11 species of monkeys.

Other points of interest include that Ivory Coast boasts the largest church in the world, [The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace of Yamoussoukro](#) surpasses even St Peter's Basilica, with an exterior area of 30,000 square metres. Ivory Coast is also the world's largest cocoa producer, shifting 1.448million metric tonnes of cocoa beans in 2013 (31.6 per cent of the world's total).

It is [Tai National Park](#) we are stopping at. This park is one of the last major remnants of the primary tropical forest of West Africa. Its rich natural flora, and threatened mammal species such as the [pygmy hippopotamus](#) and 11 species of monkeys, are of great scientific interest. The fauna is fairly typical of West African forests but very diverse, nearly 1,000 vertebrate species being found. The park contains 140 species of mammal and 47 of the 54 species of large mammal known to occur in the Guinean rain forest, including twelve regional endemics and five threatened species. The region's isolation between two major rivers has added to its particular character. Watch this fabulous film about the world-famous nut-cracking chimpanzees from Tai National Park <https://youtu.be/dRpBiAt9jss>

Next, we are off to the Sahara Desert! See you in Dahkla, Western Sahara, in 3,299 km!

Janne 🚶🚲🚶🚶

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – DAKHLA, WESTERN SAHARA (7th May)

Welcome to Western Sahara, and specifically Dakhla! 3,299 km since our last stop and we have now trekked more than 25,000 km since we set off from Cairo! Wow!! You keep amazing me! If like me, you had never heard of Dakhla, the best words to describe this place is Africa, the Sahara Desert, wind, lagoon, waves, ancient culture, and remoteness. Dakhla was occupied by Spain from the late 19th century to 1975 and is now part of the very southern area of Morocco.



[Dakhla](#) is a city located on a rather unique 50km long narrow peninsula of the Atlantic Coast, where on the one side you can find a flat-water lagoon and on the other side some world-class waves. It's around 1,000 km south of Marrakesh (our next milestone) and is becoming one of the top water sports destinations. For stunning scenery and some crazy kitesurfing watch [this film](#). Its popularity as a centre for aquatic sports, such as [kitesurfing](#), [windsurfing](#) and surf casting is one reason why tourism, together with fishing, is Dakhla's main economic activity. [Oyster](#) farming by hand is a traditional practice in Dakhla.

Temperatures are similar to coastal areas of the Canary Islands, but the climate is sizeably drier, sounds like the perfect place for a holiday! There are plenty of other reasons to visit as well! The white dune seen in the photo above turns into an island at high tide, a phenomenon which remains a mystery. There is no reliable scientific data or theory to explain this. How about exploring the Imlili Desert, where for nearly 100 km, you will cross desert plains and abandoned villages, then leave the road to rush into the desert. You can even do this on electric mountain bikes, something for our many #rafikirelay cyclists! For animal lovers, this 'sea meets the desert' location presents fabulous views of flamingos on the edge of the lagoon and mammals and reptiles in the desert. For those who like some shopping, there is Dakhla Souk, with souvenirs that you will find difficult to find in other Moroccan cities, such as the Melhfa. This is the light fabric that women in the Sahara use to cover themselves. There are plentiful stunning beaches along the coast and even hot water springs 35km into the desert at Asmaa. One for our #rafikirelay walkers, as to get to this unique place, you must walk along a sandy track of about 25 km.

Sahara is the largest hot desert behind the Arctic and [Antarctica](#), which are both cold deserts. During the summer months, temperatures in the Sahara average between a sizzling 38-46°C. The [Sahara Desert](#) spans some 8,600,000 sq km, nearly a third of the African continent. However, this changes over time as the actual area of the desert expands and contracts with the seasons. Scientists estimate that the Sahara's overall size has [grown to be 10% larger](#) than it was nearly a century ago. While this is partly due to natural climate cycles, human-driven climate change is also responsible. Sand dunes and sheets cover only around 25% of the Sahara's surface, it also has salt flats, gravel plains, plateaus and even mountains where snow has been recorded. While many of the Sahara's sand dunes reach over 180 metres in height, the highest point is an extinct volcano called [Mount Koussi](#) in Chad, which has an elevation of 3,415 metres. Did you know the Sahara was once green? Watch this very interesting [film](#) which tells you how we can know this (it will surprise you!), what it was like and what the future might hold – geological, archaeological and palaeoclimatological evidence explained in a way that little and long legged #rafikirelay participants will enjoy!

It may be one of the harshest environments on Earth, but the Sahara is home to a variety of wildlife that has adapted to a life of extremes. Alongside camels and goats, desert species include cheetah, gazelles, ostrich, [Fennec fox](#) and monitor lizards. More deadly critters include the [deathstalker scorpion](#) and the extremely venomous [sand viper](#). Around 2.5 million people also call the Sahara home, most of which have Berber or Arabic roots. They either live in permanent settlements near water sources or have a nomadic lifestyle, travelling from place to place with herds of sheep, goats, or camels. Explore the Sahara Desert in Morocco and meet the Berbers <https://youtu.be/mLRO-K2Wpb0>

Only 1,403 km until we break for another milestone, we couldn't travel up the western coastline of Africa without also visiting a more well-known pearl of Morocco, Marrakech! See you there, very shortly I expect!

Janne 🧑 🚲 🧑 🏠

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – MARRAKECH, MOROCCO (7th May)

Welcome to Marrakesh! A former imperial city in western Morocco, Marrakesh is a major economic centre and home to mosques, palaces and gardens. The medina is a densely packed, walled medieval city dating to the Berber Empire, with maze-like alleys where thriving souks (marketplaces) sell traditional textiles, pottery and jewellery. A symbol of the city, and visible for miles, is the Moorish minaret of 12th-century Koutoubia Mosque.



Marrakesh has the largest traditional Berber market in Morocco and the image of the city is closely associated with its souks. The souks are considered by many as the principal shopping attraction in the city, described as "a honeycomb of intricately connected alleyways, comprising a dizzying number of stalls." No wonder you get the feeling of an Aladdin's Cave when visiting! Watch [Travel with Nina](#) for a little flavour of what could await you!

[The ramparts of Marrakesh](#), which stretch for some 19 km around the medina of the city, were built by the Almoravids in the 12th century as protective fortifications. The walls are made of a distinct orange-red clay and chalk, giving the city its nickname as the "red city"; they stand up to 5.8 m high and have 20 gates and 200 towers along them. Bab Agnaou was built in the 12th century during the Almohad dynasty.

The historic wealth of the city is manifested in palaces, mansions and other lavish residences. The main palaces are [El Badi Palace](#), the Royal Palace and Bahia Palace. Riads (Moroccan mansions) are common in Marrakesh. Based on the design of the Roman villa, they are characterized by an open central garden courtyard surrounded by high walls. This construction provided the occupants with privacy and lowered the temperature within the building. There are also stunning gardens in Marrakesh, among which [The Agdal Gardens](#) date back to the 12th Century. Marrakesh also boasts several impressive mosques. Koutoubia Mosque is the largest mosque in the city, and was completed under the reign of the Almohad Caliph Yaqub al-Mansur (1184–1199).

The fascinating history of Marrakesh is also visible in its many tombs. [The Saadian Tombs](#) were built in the 16th century as a mausoleum to bury numerous Saadian sultans and The Medina holds the tombs of the seven patron saints of Morocco, which are visited every year by pilgrims during the week-long ziara pilgrimage.

Marrakesh is the fourth largest city in Morocco, a mountainous country in western North Africa, often referred to as 'the gateway to Africa' and a country of dizzying diversity. You will find epic mountain ranges, ancient cities and sweeping deserts. The mountain ranges of the [Rif](#) and Atlas provide stunning scenery, and are fabulous for trekking and exploring. A great destination for our #rafikirelay explorers, as is the pre-Sahara, with several oases providing a stunning contrast of palmeries and desert horizons.

Morocco is the only African country with coastal exposure to both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Morocco is slightly smaller than France and Spain, and slightly larger than California at 446,550 square km or 722,550 sq km if you include Western Sahara. It has a population of 37 million. Although the country is rapidly modernizing and enjoys a rising standard of living, it retains much of its ancient architecture and even more of its traditional customs. If you like your beaches, Morocco's coastline offers up the cities of Tangier, Asilah and Larache and great coastal spots in the south include Jadida, Essaouria and Sidi Ifni. Inland, you find the famous and somewhat still medieval cities of Fez, rich in monuments, and of course Marrakesh!

I promised that our headline sponsor would offer a fabulous Morocco Family Journey for our #rafikirelay participants, and here it is! <https://bit.ly/2POIkeP>

Well, since you are all ahead of me and already nearly in Constantine, I had better get my skates on and write another milestone! It is only 1,831 km 'up the road' and as I am writing this, you are only 449 km away from arrival! To follow shortly! Janne 🧑🏻 🚴🏻 🚲 🧑🏻

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – CONSTANTINE, ALGERIA (8th May)

We've arrived in Algeria, 15,527 km since we left Cape Town, in other words we have already trekked more than double our original Cairo to Cape Town route! Welcome to Constantine, the 'City of Bridges'!



They say, no other city in Algeria or even on the African continent is more associated with high bridges than Constantine. It is often referred to as the "City of Bridges" due to the numerous picturesque bridges connecting the various hills, valleys, and ravines that the city is built on and around. Some are for cars and vehicles and others are for pedestrians.

One of many high bridges that cross the Rhumel River gorge, the highest and most spectacular of

all, is the Sidi M'Cid suspension bridge that is opened in April 1912. It is also known as the Suspended Bridge with a length of 164m. It remained the highest bridge in the world until the Royal Gorge Bridge in Colorado opened in November 1929. It is Constantine's iconic monument and was designed by French engineer Ferdinand Arnodin. The bridge links the Casbah to the slopes of Sidi M'Cid hill. Views of town and the gorge, 175m below, are stunning.

Constantine is about more than its amazing bridges though! It is the capital of [Constantine Province](#) in northeastern [Algeria](#) and the third largest city in Algeria with a population of around 450,000. It is located somewhat inland at about 80 km from the [Mediterranean coast](#), on the banks of the Rhumel River. During [Roman times](#) it was called [Cirta](#) by the Numidian king Syphax who turned it into his capital, and was later it renamed "Constantina" in honor of the Emperor [Constantine the Great](#). The city was invaded and ruled by the [Phoenicians](#), the Romans, Ottomans, and French.

A natural fortress, the city occupies a rocky diamond-shaped plateau that is surrounded, except at the southwest, by a precipitous gorge through the eastern side of which flows the Rhumel River, right through the city centre. The plateau is at an elevation of 640 metres [above sea level](#). Being framed by a ravine gives Constantine a dramatic appearance and the many bridges make it very picturesque.

There are several museums and historical sites located around the city and Constantine was named the Arab Capital of Culture in 2015, and handed the baton to the [City of Sfax](#) at the end of its tenure as reported [in this news clip](#). It has long been a centre of religious and intellectual study.

The reference to education seems the perfect opportunity to **let you know that together you have already raised £5,619!!! This will have life changing impact for some of the young people we want to support.** It can pay for:

- The entire secondary education for 3 children in Uganda and provide 9 of the poorest children at our link school with a hot, nutritious meal every day for a whole year, or it could pay for
- Two young people in Kenya to study and complete their entire university degree

These are children like Charity, when she was a young girl. Her father died when she was only 10 years old, leaving her mother struggling to make ends meet. As a casual worker with no stable income, she could barely keep the household going. Charity found part time work to help raise money for her school fees, but more often than not, they had to put this money towards food and bills. Charity was therefore in and out of school, missing classes and suffering from gaps in her education. When Charity heard about Rafiki Thabo Foundation she applied, and we were able to offer her full scholarship for College. She completed a Diploma in Clinical Medicine at Kenya Medical Training College in 2015 and went on to work in refugee camps providing much needed healthcare to refugees. She was facing



danger every day, but she said she 'could not leave them there without hope. They have to know somebody is there for them and that their lives will get better'. When she felt the situation allowed her to, Charity left her work in the refugee camp and started working for Kemri, a government parastatal. She is working with the malnutrition department, doing research into best antibiotics for malnourished children so that they can prevent severe outcome or complications from malnutrition and sepsis. Charity is passionate about giving back to her community, and alongside her work for Kemri, Charity volunteers as a clinical officer. She is now saving up to apply for a scholarship at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where she wants to further her education in research and epidemiology and return to Kenya as a full-time researcher.

This is only one example the life-transforming impact your fabulous #rafikirelay fundraising and donations will have! Thank you so much for all your support!

Keep it up! We are off to Alexandria in Egypt next, a mere 2,774 km.

Janne 🚶🚶🚶🚶🚶❤️



WOW!! The [#rafikirelay](#) teams are absolutely amazing! We are now more than half way around the Coastline of Africa, a whopping 30,363km in only 13 days! We are busy planning the THIRD [#rafikirelay](#) route for the remaining 4 weeks of our challenge!

Our super teams and their sponsors have raised an incredible £5,836 already! Thank you all! This can pay for the entire secondary education for 3 children in Uganda PLUS pay for 17 of the poorest children at our link school to have a nutritious hot meal every day at school for a whole year, often their only daily meal.

Children like Pretty... Her father died when she was 3 months old, leaving her mother to bring up Pretty and her two sisters alone, without paid employment. Pretty's mother had to make ends meet through farming their small plot of land. She miraculously managed to pay for Pretty's school fees until her final year of secondary school. This was helped greatly by the fact that Pretty was receiving free school meals through our 'Eat Well to Learn programme' and was able to stay safely at school during the week in the dormitory we had funded the renovation for in 2016. Pretty's mum could not afford her final year exam fees however, leaving Pretty unable to complete her schooling. Our Uganda committee made us aware of Pretty's situation. A very bright girl, who had been able to work hard on her studies during her time living safely in the school dormitory, Pretty did so well in her exams, that she is now at university. Pretty is studying a BA in Education. Pretty says: "Rafiki has helped me and changed my life. Because I've been helped by Rafiki Thabo I've been inspired to help others."

To support Pretty through her university degree costs £720 per year.

#rafikirelay Coastline of Africa

30,363 KM IN 13 DAYS!

£5,836
RAISED ALREADY!

**...READ ABOUT THE
LIFE CHANGING IMPACT
THIS WILL HAVE!**

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT (9th May)

That's another 2,774km completed teams, amazing! We have now arrived back in Egypt, the country our Rafiki Relay for Education began in. This time we are visiting the historic [Alexandria](#). A port [city](#) founded in 331 BCE by [Alexander the Great](#).



Alexandria is most famous in antiquity as the site of the Pharos, the great lighthouse, considered one of [the seven wonders](#) of the ancient world, for the [Temple](#) of Serapis, the [Serapion](#), which was part of the legendary library at Alexandria, as a seat of learning and, once, the largest and most prosperous city in the world.

It also became infamous for the religious strife which resulted in the martyrdom of the philosopher [Hypatia of Alexandria](#) in 415 CE.

After conquering Syria in 332 BCE, Alexander the Great swept down into Egypt with his army. He founded Alexandria in the small port

town of Rhakotis by the sea and set about the task of turning it into a great capital. It is said that he designed the plan for the city. While he did not spend many years there, his body was returned after his death to be entombed.

The city grew from a small port town to become the largest in the known world at the time, attracting scholars, scientists, philosophers, mathematicians, artists, and historians. [Eratosthenes](#) (c.276-194 BCE) calculated the circumference of the earth to within 50 miles (80 km) at Alexandria! Alexandria was the intellectual and cultural centre of the ancient Mediterranean world for much of the [Hellenistic age](#) and [late antiquity](#). It was at one time the largest city in the ancient world before being eventually overtaken by Rome. If ancient history is your thing, I would definitely recommend reading more about the fascinating past of Alexandria!

Today, it is the third-largest city in [Egypt](#) after [Cairo](#) and [Giza](#), seventh-largest city in Africa, and a major economic centre. With a total population of 5,200,000. Alexandria is a popular tourist destination, and also an important industrial centre because of its natural gas and oil pipelines from Suez.

Sadly, due to the constant presence of war in Alexandria in ancient times, very little of the ancient city has survived into the present day. Much of the royal and civic quarters sank beneath the harbour and the rest has been built over in modern times, as such the great and growing modern city stands immediately over the ancient one.

"[Pompey's Pillar](#)", a [Roman triumphal column](#), is one of the best-known ancient monuments still standing in Alexandria today. It is located on Alexandria's ancient [acropolis](#)—a modest hill located adjacent to the city's Arab cemetery—and was originally part of a temple colonnade. Including its pedestal, it is 30 m high. Pompey's Pillar may have been erected using the same methods that were used to erect the ancient [obelisks](#).

[Alexandria's catacombs](#), known as Kom El Shoqafa, are a short distance southwest of the pillar. They consist of a multi-level labyrinth, reached via a large spiral staircase, and featuring dozens of chambers adorned with sculpted pillars, statues, and other [syncretic](#) Romano-Egyptian religious symbols, burial niches, and [sarcophagi](#). There is even a large Roman-style banquet room, where memorial meals were conducted by relatives of the deceased. The catacombs were long forgotten by the citizens until they were discovered by accident in 1900.

The most extensive ancient excavation currently being conducted in Alexandria is known as [Kom El Dekka](#). It has revealed the ancient city's well-preserved theater, and the remains of its [Roman-era baths](#). There is also the Temple of Taposiris Magna, built in the Ptolemy era and dedicated to Osiris, which finished the construction of Alexandria. It is located in Abusir, the western suburb of Alexandria. Only the outer wall and the pylons remain from the temple. There is evidence to prove that sacred animals were worshiped there.

Today the storied library from the Hellenistic period is reincarnated in the disc-shaped, ultramodern Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The city also has Greco-Roman landmarks, old-world cafes and sandy beaches. Its 15th-century seafront Qaitbay Citadel is now a museum. Check out this little film from Lonely Planet to get a feel for Alexandria, which is a city with a lot to offer [Lonely Planet City guide Alexandria](#).

We are not far from Cairo now, and of course have visited the amazing pyramids earlier in our relay. If you do want to explore Egypt for real, with its sand-covered tombs, imposing Pyramids, and towering temples, then check out this incredible 12-day tour which our headline sponsor and social enterprise travel agent Charitable Travel has on offer for our #rafikirelay teams! It explores the sights of Cairo and Alexandria, and includes a Nile River Cruise and an expert Egyptologist on hand to answer your every question about the ancient civilisation. The best part is that when you book this tour you can donate a whopping £230 to Rafiki Thabo at no extra cost to you! Find out more at <https://bit.ly/33uaqzj>.

A 3,263 km leg coming next, as we run, swim, cycle and walk our way to Aksum, in Ethiopia. This sees us heading south again, along the coast of Eastern Africa. As you will no doubt have realised, we will be back in Cape Town again before soon! So... what next??! We have done Cairo to Cape Town in record time, and will shortly complete the Coastline of Africa! When we reach Cape Town we will have collectively covered 44,648km!! Do you know what? I reckon we are going to need the same distance again! Watch this space 😊

Keep at it – you are all amazing!

Janne 🏃🏃🚲🏠❤️

PRIZE SPONSOR Thank you so much for your generous donation!

Tower Hill Holistic Therapies is based in Witney, a holistic journey started by Sarah Chapell when she qualified in ITEC Level 3 Massage and subsequently Reflexology in 2017. A local go to for the wonderful world of alternative therapies, Sarah offers reflexology, Japanese hot stone massage, Indian head massage, Holistic facial, On site seated massage, Swedish massage, Pregnancy massage, Deep tissue massage and Hopi ear candles.

In these Covid times, there is very little which cannot still be enjoyed, albeit virtually! You can even enjoy holistic therapies! Sarah has very generously donated a free 20-minute treatment of distance reiki, reflexology or mindfulness to one lucky winner see [Rafiki Relay PRIZES](#) for more details.



COASTLINE OF AFRICA – AKSUM, ETHIOPIA (10th May)

Teams, you are doing so well! We now find ourselves in a place of intense spiritual and historical significance. Aksum in Ethiopia! Aksum is a riddle waiting to be solved. Did the [Queen of Sheba](#) really call the town's dusty streets home? Does the Ark of the Covenant that holds Moses' 10 Commandments reside in a small Aksum chapel? Is one of the Three Wise Men [really buried here](#)? And what exactly do those famous stelae signify?



Clearly, I won't propose to answer these questions (!), as although once described as 'the last of the great civilisations of Antiquity to be revealed to modern knowledge', and being one of the most important ancient sites in sub-Saharan Africa, this [UNESCO](#) World Heritage site has yet only revealed a tiny fraction of its secrets. An exploration of its ruined tombs and palaces is sure to light a spark of excitement and you may or may not come across clues as to the answers to the above questions in the links to websites and videos below. One thing though is certain, what a treasure-trove of mystery! Here's a great little site [for children](#).

The ruins of the ancient city of Aksum are found close to Ethiopia's northern border. They mark the location of the heart of ancient Ethiopia when the Kingdom of Aksum was the most powerful state between the Eastern Roman Empire and Persia. The massive ruins, dating from between the 1st and the 13th century A.D., include monolithic obelisks, giant stelae, royal tombs, and the ruins of ancient castles. Long after its political decline in the 10th century, Ethiopian emperors continued to be crowned in Aksum.

The Aksumite Empire was an ancient kingdom that existed in Ethiopia from AD 100 to 940. Centred on the ancient city of Aksum, the nation grew from the proto-Aksumite Iron Age period around 400 BC to its height around the 1st century AD. At this time, the empire extended across most of present-day Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen and even Saudi Arabia. Aksum became a major commercial player in the trade routes between the Roman Empire (Later the Byzantine Empire), India and the Mediterranean – exporting ivory, tortoiseshell, gold, emeralds, and minerals. The Manichaean Prophet Mani (AD 216 – 274) even regarded Axum as one of the four great powers of his time, alongside Persia, Rome, and China.

The Empire practised a polytheistic and Judaic religion, possibly worshipping gods such as Astar, Beher, Meder/Medr, and Mahrem, but later adopted Christianity around AD 325 under the Emperor Ezana. Learn more about Aksum as an important Christian site and the possible host to [The Ark of the Covenant](#)!

Unlike their northern neighbours of Egypt, Aksum did not build pyramids. Instead, Aksum is famous for building tall towers called stelae. [The Stelae](#) served to mark graves, often decorated with false doors and windows to represent a magnificent multi-storied palace. The largest of these towers discovered would have measured 33 metres high and was held up by massive underground counterweights. The towers were elaborately carved with inscriptions, stone doors, and fake windows. The most famous of these towers is the Obelisk of Axum which was taken by Italian soldiers upon conquering Ethiopia in 1937. The tower was later returned in pieces and reconstructed in 2008. The wealth of Aksum was certainly represented in the architectural legacy of the Empire, from these giant Stelae obelisks to the ornate palaces left behind.

After a second golden age in the early 6th century, the empire began to decline, eventually ceasing its unique production of coins in the early 7th century. Around this same time, the Aksumite population was forced to go farther inland to the highlands for protection, abandoning Aksum as the capital. Eventually, the Islamic Empire took control of the Red Sea and most of the Nile, pushing Aksum into economic isolation. As international profits from the

exchange network it had developed over centuries declined, Aksum lost its ability to control its own raw material sources and that network collapsed. The pressure maintaining a large population meant a high level of regional food production had to be intensified. The result was a wave of soil erosion that began on a local scale c. 650 and attained catastrophic proportions after AD 700. There exist different hypotheses as to why the empire collapsed, but historians agree that climate changes must have greatly contributed to [the end of Aksum](#).

The end of the Aksumite Empire didn't mean the end of Aksumite culture and traditions. The Kingdom of Aksum is notable for a number of achievements, such as its own alphabet, the Ge'ez alphabet. Under Emperor Ezana, Aksum adopted Christianity, which gave rise to the present-day Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church. The city of Axum still exists in northern Ethiopia. One of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in Africa, it is a fairly small city with a population of just over 50,000 people. Market trading forms a key part of today's Aksum, an important local centre of trade and craft, and remains an economic centre just like historic Aksum. Visit [this film: 'Ethiopia's Heart and Soul'](#) to learn more about life in Aksum today and to get a glimpse into the early days of archaeological discovery in 1906, including the role of King Solomon and Queen of Sheba, as well as Aksum as a symbol of Ethiopia's religious and imperial past.

So many mysteries are yet to be discovered in Aksum... In 2015, Archaeologists uncovered the 2,000-year-old grave of an elegant '[Sleeping Beauty](#)'. The ancient grave was found in a six-week excavation of the city of Aksum alongside 'extraordinary' artefacts dating from the first and second centuries. These included ornate items such as a necklace made of thousands of coloured beads, Roman glass vessels and a glass perfume flask.

Keep it up – we are off to Zanzibar next, a further 4,800 km down the eastern coastline of Africa and a 'little swim' out from Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Maybe I will have a chance to get ahead on the milestone research with this leg, I seem to be playing catch up with you all every day! You are all fabulous!!

Janne 🧑🏻 🚲 🏠 ❤️

#RAFIKIRELAY UPDATE! Amazing fundraising already!

We are so grateful to everyone, you and your kind sponsors have already raised an incredible £7,319!!

Just look at what this can pay for:

- The entire secondary school education for 5 children in Uganda, or
- It can pay for more than a whole year of our Eat Well to Learn programme, where 70 of the poorest children at our link school in Uganda receive nutritious school meals every day, who would otherwise go hungry, or
- 2 to 3 students in Kenya to study their full degree at university (cost depend on university and course chosen), or
- A year at secondary school for 24 children in Lesotho

Thank you so much for your enthusiasm and support!
Keep it up – you are all amazing!

Janne 🧑🏻 🚲 🏠 ❤️

PRIZE SPONSOR Thank you so much for your generous donation!



Sasps Designs is the online portfolio and shop of Cotswold based artist, writer, and jewellery designer Sarah Jarman, motivated by her beautiful surroundings she finds inspiration in everyday life. Sarah has always had a passion to draw, write and create and Sasps Designs was born from this desire. Sarah is available to take on both writing and artistic commissions. We are so grateful to Sarah for her kind donation of four pairs of stunning Sasps Designs earrings! <http://www.saspsdesigns.com/>

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – ZANZIBAR (12th May)

Aww.... Zanzibar!! If we wanted to choose a milestone to stretch those legs out a bit on a sun lounge after all those miles, then what better place to come to! Zanzibar is magical: the spice-scented, quintessential Indian Ocean idyll. Tropical, turquoise waters lap miles of palm-fringed, sandy beaches. Zanzibar has a lot to offer. I have visited twice in my younger days and definitely feel it is high time to go back, this time bringing my family!



Unguja, as Zanzibar Island is called in Swahili, is a mere 35km off the coast of Tanzania, taking up only 1,554 square km in the [Indian Ocean](#), and home to an estimated population of 713,000 (from 2007). In the 19th century the indigenous [Hadimu](#) and Tumbatu, both Bantu-speaking people, were joined by later arrivals, [Arabs](#), providing the basis for the most wonderful cultural crossroads, where Africa meets Arabia meets the Indian Ocean! Step off the boat or plane onto the Zanzibar Archipelago and you're transported through time and place. The island's economy now depends on agriculture and fishing, as well as tourism of course.

In 1964 [Zanzibar](#), together with [Pemba Island](#) and some other smaller islands, joined with Tanganyika on the mainland to form the [United Republic of Tanzania](#). I am always fascinated by the movement of our Earth's surface, and here we have Zanzibar and Pemba, which are both believed to have once formed part of the African continent. The separation of Pemba having occurred during the [Miocene Epoch](#) (about 23 to 5.3 million years ago) and Zanzibar, 'more recently 😊' during the [Pliocene Epoch](#) (about 5.3 to 2.6 million years ago) or even later.

If you arrive from Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) by boat, Zanzibar appears ahead of you as this long, low island with small ridges along its central north–south axis, covered in [Coconut](#) palms and other vegetation. Small patches of [indigenous](#) forest and isolated large trees support the view that much of the island was originally covered by dense evergreen forest. Surrounded by white beaches, blue-green sea, and coral reefs. A true Indian Ocean gem awaits!

Make sure you enjoy a breath-taking safari on mainland Tanzania before you head out to Zanzibar however, as here you will find your 'Serengeti' underwater! This is where Zanzibar's wildlife is most rife, perfect for snorkelling or scuba diving. There are wild animals on land though, these include a variety of [leopard](#) peculiar to Zanzibar (there is uncertainty around whether the [Zanzibar leopard](#) is now extinct or not). There are two species of [monkey](#), one is the endangered Red Colobus Monkey indigenous to Zanzibar meet these unique, charcoal eating monkeys in [this video](#)! There are also [lemur](#), pigmy [antelope](#) including the [Zanzibar Suni](#), about 20 species of [bats](#) among them the amazing [Pemba Flying Fox](#). There are also 30 forms of [snakes](#)! Take a look at this [snakes in Tanzania and Zanzibar](#), an educational ppt for upper primary aged students, including information about the Black Mamba which you can also [watch a film of here](#) by National Geographic (please note, footage includes baby squirrel becoming a meal..). While Zanzibar really is a little piece of heaven on earth, you can expect pesky [Mosquitoes](#) to bother you during the rainy seasons, but that is by no means unique to Zanzibar and a small price to pay!

In Zanzibar Town, the narrow alleys of historic Stone Town meander between ancient buildings decorated with balconies and gigantic carved doors, mosques, and winding lanes. A visit to Stone Town is an absolute must, in fact I should say 'to get lost in Stone Town' is an absolute must! The ancient city—declared a UNESCO cultural heritage site in 2000—is charming, but it's basically a maze. The 1883 [House of Wonders](#) is a former sultan's palace with a clock tower. The Old Fort now houses a cultural centre and a stone amphitheatre. Underground aqueducts fed hot water to the late-19th-century Hamamni Persian Baths.

Meanwhile, on the coast, fishing boats set sail, and in the countryside, farmers tend fields of rice or the clove plantations that give Zanzibar its 'Spice Islands' moniker. Visiting a spice farm should definitely be on your to do list, following in Prince Charles' footsteps no less (and mine 😊!) [Visit Zanzibar Spices and Heritage Centre](#)

With its tropical tableau, idyllic beaches, and unique culture, plus an active beach-party scene for those that want it, the Zanzibar Archipelago offers a fascinating and highly enjoyable East African Indian Ocean experience. Who can resist the lure of palm-lined stretches of powder-white coral sands, warm waters and coral gardens teeming with marine life. From adrenalin sports to simple seaside fun; sipping sundowners to deep-sea diving; some of the islands' most magical moments definitely centre on the sea. Check out some fascinating travel facts about Zanzibar [here](#).

While I would very much like to stay on Zanzibar a little longer, I know you all have restless (and very fast!) feet, and we have another amazing milestone ahead of us – we are off to Madagascar next! See you there in only 1,584 km!

Janne     

MEDALS AND CERTIFICATES SPONSOR A big shout out to our fabulous sponsor for their support with this event!

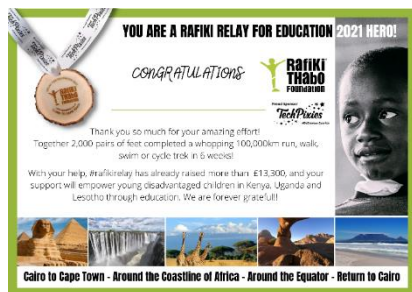


At TechPixies, we recognise that women require confidence to pursue a fulfilling career, whether that is returning to work, changing careers, or striking out on their own and starting a business. And we believe that one of the best ways to gain confidence and a future filled with opportunities is through education. It's simple: empowered women empower women.

Through our award-winning online training, TechPixies has helped thousands of women unlock hidden social media superpowers in our four-part Social Media Superhero Bootcamp, and we've witnessed the incredible transformations that occur when those Bootcamp participants go on to invest in our 90-Day Transformational Social Media Magic Programme. And that's because our training is about so much more than social media.

We know that transformational change begins on the inside. It's why we make life coaching and mindset work a fundamental part of our programme and why we provide a blanket of support from an uplifting community. Because with the right teaching, the right support, and the right mindset, you can do anything you set your heart and mind to.

Since launching TechPixies in 2015, Joy Foster, our founder and CEO, has nurtured a belief in the power of tech to do good and has made it her mission to ensure that our training is available to all. To this end, she has developed and promoted scholarships to encourage BAME, disabled, LGBTQ+ and 60+ women, and those experiencing lower socio-economic factors to join our training and upskill in technology.



Joy and the entire TechPixies team are delighted to support the Rafiki Thabo Foundation in its incredible work and invite you to get in touch if we can help you, or someone you know, find the confidence they need to get back to work, change careers or start a business.

TechPixies would love to invite you to join its Social Media Superhero Bootcamp starting on 5 July 2021. In this four-part training series, you'll discover six social media superpowers AND realise that it is never too late to return to work, change careers or start a business. Find out more at TechPixies.com/bootcamp.

Learn more at www.TechPixies.com and @TechPixies on social media

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – MADAGASCAR (13th May)

Welcome to Madagascar everyone! 41,170 km since we left Cairo and 3 times the distance we had originally planned, in less than half of our 6-week challenge – WOW! You are doing amazingly well, and don't worry, our #rafikirelay phase 3!! planning is coming together nicely 🤔! Now though, let's focus on the mystical island of Madagascar off the African east coast!



[Madagascar](#) is big! It's 587,712 square km to be precise, making it the fourth largest island on the planet. The UK is a rather puny 241,931 square km in comparison. With 5,000 km of coastline, the sea is never very far, turquoise, and idyllic in places, dangerous in others.

It was only colonised by human settlers relatively recently - perhaps as late as 500AD - some 300,000 years after the first appearance of Homo sapiens in Africa. Successive waves of migrants from various corners of the Indian Ocean makes it unlike anywhere else in Africa or Asia. There are now 26.2 million Malagasies, making it a more populous country than

Australia, Sri Lanka and Greece to name a few. As you would expect, the cuisine of Madagascar is truly a reflection of the African, Arab, and Indonesian peoples that have settled in the country. There are also certain French influences. Malagasy cuisine is known for being quite flavourful despite being prepared in a simple manner without much spice.

There are a number of national parks to explore, including [Parc National Isalo](#), which is like a museum dedicated to the art of the desert canyon. Gorges here are filled with yellow savannah grasses, sculpted buttes, vertical rock walls and, best of all, deep canyon floors shot through with streams, lush vegetation, and pools for swimming. There is also [Parc National Marojejy](#), one of Madagascar's flagship parks. Consisting of more than 550 sq km of pristine mountainous rainforest, it covers the Marojejy massif, an area of magnificent scenery. Attractions here are the highly endangered silky *sifaka* alongside 10 other lemur species and myriad plants, birds, and insects. It was designated a World Heritage Site in 2007. Another World Heritage Site is the Tsingy de Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve, where the serrated, surreal-looking peaks and boulders are a geological work of art, the result of millennia of water and wind erosion. Have a look at this fascinating landscape in this [little film](#).

According to Conservation International, just 17 countries are considered "[megadiverse](#)". Each possesses a vast number of different species – many found nowhere else. And Madagascar, thanks largely to being undisturbed by humans for so very long, is one, and it is unique, with 5% of all known animal and plant species being found here, and here alone. Among its resident animals are more than half the world's chameleons and dozens of species of lemur, Madagascar's signature animal. There are many more weird and wonderful creatures and plants: baobabs, insects, sharks, frogs, orchids, palms, birds, turtles, mongoose, etc. There's the giraffe-necked weevil, whose appendage helps it roll leaves into tubes for its eggs. Watch the moment when Sir David Attenborough and BBC filmmakers recorded [giraffe-necked weevils](#). There is also the aye-aye lemur, whose long middle finger helps it find grubs hiding inside trees; and the Malagasy giant rat, which can leap three feet into the air. Unlike the film *Madagascar*, however, you won't see any tigers, giraffes, or hippo!

Madagascar boasts more World Heritage Sites. They are the [Royal Hill of Ambohimanga](#), a 500-year-old burial site. It consists of a royal city and burial site, and an ensemble of sacred places. It is associated with strong feelings of national identity, and has maintained its spiritual and sacred character both in ritual practice and the popular imagination for the past 500 years. It remains a place of worship to which pilgrims come from Madagascar and elsewhere. Also noteworthy are the [rainforests of Atsinanana](#), which are home to many rare species of primate and lemur.

Madagascar also has a vast number of stunning beaches to offer. The number-one beach destination is the island of [Nosy Be](#) which has all the ingredients you'd expect: soft white sand, turquoise waters, and wonderful seafood. Another favourite is Île Sainte Marie, a very long (57km) four miles off the east coast. A thin, lush, and relatively flat tropical island surrounded by beaches and reef and spotted with thatched villages. To the south the small island of Île aux Nattes is a postcard tropical paradise where you can easily imagine pirates coming ashore with treasure chests in tow.

In fact, the island's secluded coves, and the absence for centuries of European powers, meant Madagascar was once a safe haven for hundreds of pirates. One, Captain James Misson, supposedly founded an anarchist colony, [Libertatia](#), there in the late 17th century, while Ile Sainte-Marie, was simply referred to as "the island of pirates" on maps from the time. Countless brigands, including [Captain Kidd](#), took shelter there when they weren't looting booty. Some are buried in the island's cemetery.

The wildlife, the people, the culture. Many would say there is no place like Madagascar, this big, mystical island off the African coast. Morten Rustad aims in this [short film](#) to give a vivid portrait of the soul of Madagascar, a place he says it is impossible not to fall in love with.

Fancy a real visit? Join our headline sponsor, Charitable Travel on a 14-day tour of Madagascar, including knowledgeable local guides, national park visits, wildlife treks, and beach visits. Book your post-pandemic trip with Charitable Travel, wherever it may be, and you can donate 5% of your holiday price to Rafiki Thabo! Find out more here: <https://bit.ly/33dNI3H>

I think I have just added yet another location to my bucket list for future holidays! Ok teams, we are off again! Now heading back to mainland Africa, with destination Maletsunyane Falls in Lesotho! Our last milestone before we are back in Cape Town! See you in 2,265 km, enjoy!

Janne 🧑🏻 🧑🏻 🚲 🏠 ❤️

PRIZE SPONSOR Thank you so much for your generous donation!



The Body Shop is well-known for ethically sourced and naturally based ingredients from around the world. Their products are never tested on animals and do not exploit anyone in making them. They work fairly with farmers and suppliers, and help communities thrive through their Community Fair Trade programme. Look up [their website](#) for more information, however it is Body Shop at Home Consultant Sarah Chapell who has kindly donated the prize.

COASTLINE OF AFRICA – MALETSUNYANE FALLS, LESOTHO (14th May)

Since our #rafikirelay phase 2 Coastline of Africa has opened up the opportunity, I thought we should visit Lesotho this time around. Not only because it is a very interesting country, but also because it is the third of the countries that Rafiki Thabo with your support enable education in. So, while our main stop here is to the amazing Maletsunyane Falls, I wanted to take the opportunity to share one of our scholar's story.



[Lesotho](#) is a country within a country, it is surrounded on all sides by South Africa, and is one of 16 completely land-locked countries in Africa. At 30,355 sq km it is just smaller than Belgium and has a population of 2.1 million.

A scenic land of narrow valleys and tall mountains, it is very mountainous. Interestingly it has the “highest lowest point” of any country. No other nation can claim a base altitude as lofty as Lesotho's (1,400m). It is the only independent state on the planet which exists entirely above 1,000m. Hence its apt nickname – “Kingdom of the Sky”. The lack of motorways and fences make this sky kingdom the perfect place to

explore. You can trek, horse-ride or mountain bike in whichever direction you like – just make you get the local chief's permission when you stop off in the villages.

In fact, you can even ski here! Lesotho is home to [Afriski](#), a wintersports enclave in the [Maloti Mountains](#), which hits a top altitude of 3,222m. Unsurprisingly, the downhill area is not vast, just a single kilometer-long piste, but it operates during the winter season (June-August).

While on the topic of interesting things to do, you can go on the trail of [dinosaur footprints](#) around Morija in Western Lesotho! Not far away you can also discover rock paintings in [Liphofung Cave](#). The Liphofung (“place of the [eland](#)”) Historical Site includes a cave which occupies an important place in [Lesotho](#) history. The cave is a large overhang in the Clarens sandstone, which is a typical feature of the Lesotho lowlands region. Originally used by the [San people](#) and other [Neolithic](#) people, the walls contain important [rock art](#) and a rich archaeological deposit of Stone Age implements lies beneath the floor. Later, [King Moshoeshoe](#) the Great used the cave as a stopover when visiting that part of the kingdom.

It may not have quite the height and power of Victoria Falls, but Lesotho's own grand cascade, [Maletsunyane Falls](#), is one of the world's highest waterfalls. It sees the river of the same name plunge 192m from a ledge of [Triassic-Jurassic](#) basalt, near the town of [Semonkong](#) (*Site of smoke*). The plunging water creates a reverberating echo when it makes contact with the basin of the falls, and local legend has it that the sound comes from the wailing of people who have drowned in the falls. Were it located in a better-known country, this site of splash and crash would be deemed a world wonder. By way of comparison, Niagara Falls – admittedly a harder, faster water feature – dips only 51m. Have a look and a listen in this [scenic film](#) where you also get to enjoy some of the surrounding landscapes.

You may (or not) recall from our Cape Town milestone, reading about our link school in Lesotho. Rafiki Thabo fundraised for the development of Fusi School and have seen it grow from strength to strength. We are currently supporting 28 young people in Lesotho, all of whom will have a brighter future! We are very proud of this as we are doing our little bit to change the fact that 65% of all children in Lesotho are multidimensionally poor. More than a quarter (27.3%) of the population live on less than £1.34 per day or £489 per year, yet, to send even one child to secondary school for a year costs on average £300. The more young people who receive an education and as a result secure paid employment, the more families can break themselves out of poverty and improve their health and living conditions. Young people like Kane...

Kane's family managed to pay for her early years at school, but with no one in her household having paid employment, they could not afford to send her to high school. Rafiki Thabo supported her in 2014 and 2015 to attend high school, and Kane became the first person in her household to complete secondary schooling. With this

education, she was able to progress on to a Government funded place at the Centre for Accounting Studies, where she is studying General Accounting. Kane has ambitions to do a Masters' Degree, first however she will look for an internship so she can get work experience to secure long-term employment.

Kane is helping others in her community as a result of being supported by Rafiki Thabo. She provides free tutoring classes to high level and secondary school learners and aims to support other pupils who are struggling to afford fees at her former school, Ha Fusi.

"I would really like to pass my gratitude to Rafiki Thabo Foundation as I have achieved my goal of being an accountant.... You have really changed my homestead way of living due to a little earning they have each month. Thank you very much Rafiki Thabo Foundation, my life has really changed."

To support Kane at high school cost Rafiki Thabo £154 per year. By taking part in #RafikiRelay for Education, you and your amazing sponsors have already raised £7,466! That could pay for 24 young people like Kane to get their 2-year high school education!

I hope this provides motivation to keep running, walking, cycling or swimming and continue your amazing fundraising! Together we will change lives!

Next up we return to Cape Town and you will find out what we are doing for our #rafikirelay stage 3! See you in 1,213 km!

Janne 🏃👧🚲🏠❤️



35p will pay for a nutritious school lunch for a child that would otherwise go hungry

£1.75 will feed that child for a whole week. Often the only meals they will eat that week

£80 is all it takes to ensure he or she doesn't go hungry for a whole school year

£150 provides half a year at secondary school for a child in Lesotho

£312 allows a child in Kenya to go to secondary school for a whole year

£720 pays for a year at university for a young person in Uganda

£1,500 pays for the whole secondary education for a child in Uganda

£2,865 allows a student in Kenya to study a 3 year Bachelors Degree

IT TAKES
SO LITTLE TO
TRANSFORM
A LIFE

AROUND THE EQUATOR – LET’S DO IT! (14th May)

Let's follow in Mike Horn's 'footsteps' - First you need to get to Libreville in Gabon!

You guys are just incredible! To think that in less than 3 weeks, we have gone from Cairo to Cape Town and then Around the Coastline of Africa, a staggering 44,648 km!! With more than 3 weeks to go, the only solution was to come up with a seriously long #rafikirelay phase 3 – let’s take on the Equator! Up for it?! Of course you are!



What first inspired me, was when I heard about Mike Horn’s Horizontal Solo Circumnavigation of the Globe at the Equator. I thought I would share his adventure below by means of additional inspiration to you, our lovely #rafikirelay teams. Before that however, just to let you know to keep trekking – your next milestone is Libreville in Gabon, from where we shall follow the Equator westbound!

Mike Horn is a South-African born Swiss explorer and adventurer who gained world fame in 2001 after completing a solo journey around the equator without motorized transport.

After [Ranulph Fiennes’ ‘vertical’ crossing of the world along longitude zero – aka the Greenwich Meridian – in his Transglobe expedition in 1982](#) Mike Horn accomplished the first ‘horizontal’ crossing of the world at Latitude zero – aka the Equator in 2001.

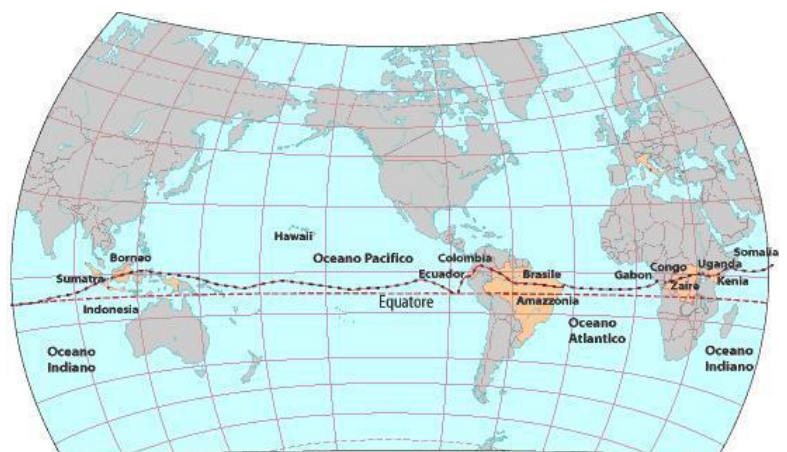
The 35-year-old South-African crossed the Atlantic Ocean, South America, the Pacific Ocean, the Indonesian islands, The Indian Ocean and Africa. All by himself, walking, rowing, sailing, biking, through jungles and tempests, through marshes and deserts. He left in June 1999 and came back to where he had started, one year and a half later. He had gone round the world following the equator.

On the 3rd of June 1999 at around 18h00, local time, Mike Horn left Gabon on the West African coast for the first step of expedition Latitude Zero, an attempt to go around the world at the equator unaided and with no engine-driven support.

The trip was divided into 6 stages, described here by Mike himself:

Stage 1

I crossed the Atlantic Ocean from Gabon to Brazil on a 28 foot trimaran – a sea distance of 4210 nautical miles which took me 19 days.





Stage 2

Once on the South American continent, I continued on foot from Brazil to Ecuador. On this stage, I also used an airboat and a bicycle, continuing through the Amazon Jungle, up the Rio Negro and over the Andes mountains in Colombia and Ecuador to the Pacific Ocean. A total distance of 3626 km – which I completed in 5 months and 4 days.

Stage 3

It was back onto my trimaran in the Pacific Ocean to cross from Ecuador to Borneo, sailing through the

Galapagos Islands, completing 8685 nautical miles in 2 months and 16 days.

Stage 4

Now in the Indonesian Islands, I traversed Borneo and Sumatera on foot and by sailboat, a distance of 2220 km, taking me 2 months and 7 days.

Stage 5

Next up was an Indian Ocean crossing from Sumatra to Somalia, through the Maldives doing 3927 nautical miles in 2 month and 4 days.



Stage 6

The final stage was on the African continent. I travelled from Somalia back to Gabon, on foot, by canoe, bicycle and airboat, taking me through Kenya, Uganda, Zaire, the DRC and back to Gabon – my starting point. A distance of 4173 km completed in 4 months.



When alone in the jungle, a snake's bite left him blind for four days; in Colombia, he was captured first by drug traffickers, then by the army... He had to hunt monkeys and caimans to eat, he had to climb volcanoes, he caught malaria... He almost drowned several times, for instance on Lake Victoria where an amazing tempest had broken... He went across countries at war, where all sides accused him of being a spy and where he had become a prey. In Africa, it almost ended badly, for some rebel soldiers had arrested him and sentenced him to death. At five o'clock in a morning, he was standing in front of a firing squad, and

barely just escaped it. Let's be reassured all, that our virtual Around the Equator will be much safer!

This remarkable feat made Mike a worldwide personality and won him the 2001 [Laureus World Alternative Sportsperson of the Year Award](#), "Adventurer of the Year" for Out There Magazine, and the "Toison d'Or" for the international adventure film festival in Dijon.

So, let's do it! I am busy measuring distances, deciding on milestones, researching and writing, but will be back with more about our Around the Equator adventure shortly.

For now, set your sights on Gabon, we are heading to Libreville, which is 5,160 km from Cape Town. As you have already passed Cape Town by nearly 1,000 km, that is not long at all! See you there shortly!

Janne 🧑🏿 🧑🏿 🚲 🏠 ❤️

PRIZE SPONSOR Thank you so much for your generous donation!

Ben Williams is a member of the world-famous Magic Circle, the world's most prestigious magic society. With over ten years' experience in the magic industry Ben has a wealth of knowledge about the magical arts. We had the absolute pleasure of being mesmerized by Ben's table magic at Rafiki Thabo's inaugural gala dinner in 2018, when our guest speaker ex-Formula 1 driver Mark Webber responded with a most baffled face and the words: *"Wow! I mean, I have no idea! That certainly is unbelievable!"*

Have a look at his website to learn more about Ben and see film footage of him in action! unbelievablemagic.com Ben has entertained countless A-List Celebs and has even advised top TV Magicians such as David Blaine and Dynamo. Check these out (more on his website)!



- *"That was one cool trick. Seriously!"* **Ollie Murs**
- *"Thank you, I have no idea what you have just done to me!"* **Warrick Davis**
- *"That's amazing, thank you so much. I really appreciate the thought that you put into your magic"* **David Blaine**
- *"I really like your ideas"* **Dynamo**
- *"I don't like magic, sorry... (2 mins later after seeing Ben) Wow! That was stunning, can you come and meet my backing singers and dancers? (10 minutes later) Can I have a business card?"* **Bryan Ferry**
- *"I am absolutely gob smacked! Simply unbelievable!"* **John Culshaw**

Thank you so much Ben for generously donating a most fabulous prize in aid of Rafiki Relay for Education, an evening of magic, especially for one of our lucky winners!

AROUND THE EQUATOR – LIBREVILLE, GABON (15th May)

Welcome to Libreville in Gabon! The start of #rafikirelay phase 3 'Around the Equator'!! Just to let you know, if we get all the way around Equator, which I have no doubt we will, together we will have run, walked, cycled, or swum nearly 92,000 km!! That's just nuts! 😄



Before we start our trek around latitude zero however, let's spend some time in Gabon! We're in Central Africa on the Atlantic coast and being located around the equator it has an equatorial hot and humid climate with alternating dry seasons and rainy seasons. A fascinating country with unique demographics, economy, and landscape, it has an area of nearly 270,000 square km and its population is estimated at 2.1 million people.

The capital, [Libreville](#), is home to over a third of Gabon's population and is one of the most expensive cities in Africa due to its oil reserves.

Gabon's early residents were the Pygmy people, followed by the Bantu people and later in the 15th century, the first Europeans came to the area. Starting from the 16th century, the coast was used for slave trade. Since its independence from France in 1960, the country has had three presidents.

There are three distinct regions: the coastal plains, the mountains (the Cristal Mountains to the northeast of Libreville, the Chaillu Massif range in the centre, reaching the highest point at 1575 m with Mont Iboundji), and the Savanna in the east.

Gabon is home to some of Africa's most biodiverse rainforests. With around 80 percent of the country forested, it has an estimated 8,000-10,000 species of plants (20 percent of which are endemic), over 670 species of birds, and nearly 200 mammals. Read about some of the vast variety of [wildlife found in Gabon](#). There are 13 National Parks altogether which cover a land area of 7,010,700 acres and a marine area of 319,520 acres. An impressive 11.25% of the country is proclaimed as national parkland. The national parks of Gabon play an important role in curbing the threats to this country's forests and animal species. The government believed by creating these parks the ecotourism industry could be boosted and reduce its reliance on the petroleum industry. Today, tourists can visit a few of the parks.

Loango National Park is recognised as one of the most important and spectacular tropical ecosystems remaining in the world. It offers the rare combination of rainforest and Atlantic beach, where hippos have been seen surfing, whales and dolphins surface offshore and the forests are home to gorillas. Like in Uganda, you can trek with the gorillas in Gabon, [check it out here](#). You will also find chimpanzees and forest elephants. Take a quick visit to this park which is also known as '[Africa's last Eden](#)'. The area has over 100 km of uninhabited coastline, one of the reasons why Gabon is the perfect place to enjoy humpback whale watching, especially during July and September. Have a look at this amazing, [beautiful footage of humpback whale](#) with her calf.

The largest river running through some of the parks is the Ogooué, spanning over 1,127 km. With its various falls and currents, it is the 4th largest river on the African continent, which winds through over 90% of the country and eventually empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The [Ogooue](#) has been a major transportation route for many years, way before the "Transgabonais" train line was established to link Libreville on the West Atlantic coast to Franceville inland, on the East.

The parks are also home to hundreds of naturally formed dolomite and limestone caves formed approximately 50 million years ago, in fact there are so many that people continue to stumble upon them. Thousands of years ago, local tribes used them to perform rituals. A caving expedition in 2008 discovered a community of dwarf crocodiles living in the Abanda Caves, the first dwarf crocodiles to be found with bright orange skin! [Find out why](#) they are orange!

Gabon is not only about outstanding natural beauty, the Gabonese people have a love of Sports and hold accolades to that effect. They are proud to say that their Under-23 football team qualified for the 2012 London Olympics and at the same time the country won an Olympic silver medal in taekwondo!

So, here we go, ready for this? We are heading west across the Atlantic Ocean! I will shortly share a map with the upcoming milestones, for now all you need to know is that you have a 6,733 km distance to cover, first stop Macapa, Brazil. That should give me time to complete our Around the Equator route!

Keep it up!

Janne 🚲 🧑 🏠 🧑 🍌



PHASE THREE - AROUND THE EQUATOR



Having raced north to south and then around the continent of Africa, it was time to explore the rest of the world! What better measure of your amazing determination than to challenge you to trek around the equator! With a little bit of self indulgence regarding a stop not strictly speaking on the equator, plus Ms Google's reluctance to give me the exact break downs of the route to add up to the known length of the equator, we set about our own Around the Equator of 44,345km!

Would we make it in time?? The race was on for sure! 🏃🌍🚶🚴🏊

AROUND THE EQUATOR – READY FOR THIS?! (17th May)

Rafiki Relay Phase 3 - WOW!

Here's our #rafikirelay phase 3 'Around the Equator'!! While all sources agree that the Equator is 40,075 km in total, it has been impossible to get the relay legs to add up to this, as Ms Google doesn't turn up the goods for many of them and for others there is a rather diverse range of distances! So, since I know you are so eager and super fast, I decided to go with the total I arrived at and our #rafikirelay Equator distance is 44,345! We are diverting briefly on one occasion, which adds to the overall distance, but I couldn't resist the opportunity to bring the Kon Tiki Expedition into our adventure!



You will find that the milestones are a bit more spread out this time, to allow for updates on the amazing fundraising you are doing and what impact we can have with the money you raise and donate. Plus, we have more amazing prizes for the Prize Draw to announce!

It would also be wonderful if some of our younger participants wanted to e-mail me their own 'mini-milestones'! These could be for anywhere along our Around the Equator route, on land, in the ocean, on the ocean, in the air,

facts, myths, funny stories or whatever you like, but it would be great if you wanted to do some research into something you found interesting. We would love to read it! You send it – I share it! 😊

Also, a big thank you to Kate Palframan from Team TechPixies, who is being an absolute superstar and helping me write the Around the Equator milestones! 🙌

I thought I would look up some facts and videos about Equator... What we all know is that it is an imaginary line on the Earth's surface that lies equidistant from the North Pole and the South Pole, but what else do we know about it? Here are some lesser-known facts - not to mention a few myths - about the equator, that I thought might be fun. Clearly this is from the internet, so call me out if I am sharing anything that is not factually sound! 😊

Centre of the Earth

- The equator is 40,075 km long. Because the Earth bulges at the centre the equator is the longest of our planet's five main circles of latitude, each one based on the relationship between the Earth's axis of rotation and the Earth's orbit around the sun.
- Astrologers have also identified an imaginary circle in the heavens, obtained when the Earth's equator is projected into the night sky. This is known as the celestial equator.

The Tropics

- By definition, the latitude of the Earth's equator is 0 degrees, while the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn each lie at 23.5 degrees latitude.

Night, Day, and Seasons

- The equator itself crosses the land or territorial waters of 14 countries. If you live on the equator, you will experience the quickest rates of sunrise and sunset in the world, taking a matter of minutes.

- These places also have a constant twelve hours of day and night throughout the year, while north or south of the equator day length increasingly varies with the seasons.
- In its seasonal movement through the sky, the Sun itself passes directly over the equator only twice each year, on the March and September equinoxes.
- It is mistakenly believed that the weather on the equator stays the same. While tropical areas along the equator can experience wet and dry seasons, other regions may well be wet for much of the year.
- While temperatures at the equator are very high, there is one single point on the equator where you'll find snow. The highest point on the equator is 4,690m, on the south slopes of Volcán Cayambe in Ecuador so in theory you could go skiing on the equator.

Biodiversity

- In what might seem to be a contradictory pair of facts, the parts of the Earth that lie on the equator mark both the area with the world's greatest concentration of natural biodiversity and also human poverty.
- It is also the case that almost half the world's rainforests are concentrated on the equator in just three countries; Brazil, Congo and Indonesia.

Population

- Only 20% of population live below the equator. There are more countries in northern hemisphere than southern hemisphere which gives the area north of the equator a head start in human count. But what really gives the north an edge over south are the highly populated countries like China, India, and USA which all lie in northern hemisphere. Only 2 out of top ten populated countries (Brazil and Indonesia) lie in south, and not the whole country is below the line

Myths

- It has been said that water spirals down plug holes in different directions depending on which hemisphere you are in. This is a myth, based on the effects of Coriolis, which refers to when the rotating earth causes the winds to deflect to the right in the northern hemisphere and to the left south of the equator. The effect Coriolis has on water going down sinks is minimal. The truth is that water tends to flow down the plughole in the direction it is introduced into a sink! I am devastated to hear this as I genuinely thought it to be true – and indeed thought I had it proved to me when I lived in Tanzania. Gullible springs to mind! 😊
- A common belief is that the moon always appears to flip upside down once you cross the equator. While this is not exactly a myth, it is not generally the case.
- If you want to see the moon turn upside down, you just have to watch long enough during a day, and you will generally see an exact upside down for a short while. Simply put, the moon can appear to flip upside down, but not very often and certainly not only at the equator.

Crossing the Line

- There exists a seafaring tradition that all sailors who cross the equator during a sea voyage must join rituals initiating them into what is known as "The Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep".
- Those who have never "crossed the line" are referred to as "pollywogs" and are required to undertake various initiation rituals performed by those members of the crew who have made the journey before in order to pay respect to King Neptune of the Deep. Upon completion of the initiation ceremony, the "pollywogs" are then known as "trustworthy Shellbacks".

Finally, for those of us who have indulged during the Lockdowns, head to the equator. Apparently, we weigh less there! The Earth bulges outward at the Equator because of the planet's rotation and its tendency to stay in a straight line while moving. This creates a gravitational field that is uneven, with more pull on the poles than in the middle. It is due to this bulge that a person standing at the Equator is further from the majority of Earth's mass than a person standing at either of the poles. But don't get your hopes up too much – the weight difference is only 0.5%! (less than a pound for anyone weighing less than 200 pounds)

Have a look at this short video of [5 fun facts about the equator](#). For the younger #rafikirelay participants this film about [why it is so hot on the equator](#) will be of both interest and educational. More Equator facts [for children here](#).

Right, you have already been given your 'next mission – should you choose to accept it' 😊, see you in Macapa, Brazil! Before that I will share a super encouraging fundraising update and call out some of the #rafikirelay fundraising heroes so far!

Keep it up!

Janne 🤗🌍👤🚴🏃

HEADLINE SPONSOR A big shout out to our fabulous partner
Charitable Travel for their support with this event!



CHARITABLE TRAVEL

for charity, not for profit

Remember, Charitable Travel work with you to plan and book incredible holidays to anywhere you want to go in the world, so leaving Africa behind for a brief jolly around Equator doesn't change that! When you book your holiday with Charitable Travel you can donate 5% of your holiday cost to an amazing charity of your choice, such as the Rafiki Thabo Foundation, at no extra cost!

If you booked a holiday for £1,000, you'd be able to donate £50 to Rafiki Thabo Foundation – completely free! That £50 donation would pay for 143 school meals in Uganda. The possibilities of fundraising by simply enjoying amazing holidays are endless!

#TravelForGood with Charitable Travel and support Rafiki Thabo Foundation on your real-life worldwide adventures.

[Charitable Travel](#) is a registered social enterprise and a financially protected travel agency. Their purpose and mission are to help you with your holiday plans and at the same time support the great work that UK-based charities deliver around the world. When you book a holiday or cruise with Charitable Travel, they sacrifice their travel agency commission so you can **make a free five percent donation** to your choice of registered charity through their dedicated JustGiving website – and we would love for that to be [Rafiki Thabo Foundation](#)! Charitable Travel pride themselves in offering travel expertise, a wide choice of holiday options, quality, great value and a unique way of creating travel-for-good for their customers as a true not-for-private-profit social enterprise.

Every penny of profit earned by Charitable Travel, everything they do and everything they offer their customers, supports charity fundraising and good causes. Not only that, but their Charitable portfolio is expanding at an incredible speed under the energetic leadership of their founder Melissa Tilling. There is now [Charitable PR & Podcasts](#), [Charitable Radio](#) and [Charitable Shopping](#)! We are so proud to be one of Charitable Travel's partner charities and can't wait to see what is next in this exciting journey together!

FUNDRAISING UPDATE – WHO'S TOP OF THE LIST – THANK YOU MESSAGES FROM SCHOLARS! (17th May)

Wow teams, your hard work is truly starting to pay off! You and your kind sponsors have now raised an amazing £9,147! Together we WILL change lives indeed 💖

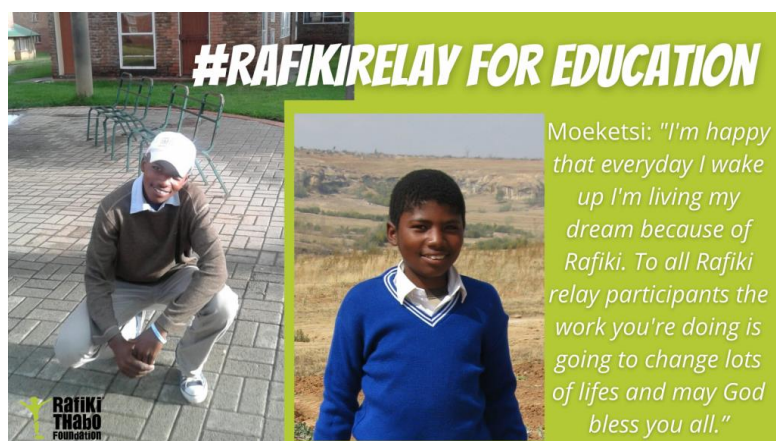
With this amount we are able to pay for

- the entire secondary schooling for 6 children in Uganda /or/
- provide a year at secondary school for 30 children in Lesotho /or/
- pay for three young Kenyans to complete their entire university degree!

These are young people who would otherwise not afford an education and would remain trapped in the poverty cycle. The impact you are having on these young lives is astronomical. They will study, graduate, get decent well-paid employment. They will marry for love, when they want to, rather than far too young to have one less mouth to feed. They will send their own children to school, they will help their community. True poverty is lack of hope and education. For these young lives, that you have helped change, there will be education and with it HOPE!

We are receiving a huge number of thank you notes from current scholars and graduates, who want to express their gratitude to you, our wonderful #rafikirelay teams. Not always because you are helping them personally, but because their own support through Rafiki Thabo transformed their futures and they thank you for enabling others to fulfil their dreams too.

Here is a message from Moeketsi in Lesotho:



"Hello this is Moeketsi ex-Fusi Secondary school student who was sponsored by Rafiki Thabo Foundation, it's good news to hear that there's Rafikirelay aiming fund young lives with education. It means a lot to me to see that not only myself will get the opportunity to get to my dream but also but also other young struggling kids will also get the opportunity. Before Rafiki I was hopeless and helpless and I'm 95% sure that I wouldn't have done it without their help, the foundation is really doing a good. I'm happy

that everyday I wake up I'm living my dream because of Rafiki. To all Rafiki relay participants the work you're doing is going to change lots of lives and may God bless you all."

And here is Hopolang from Uganda:

"Good evening all here, Glory be to God for yet another wonderful smile that is going to happen on my face tomorrow Friday 14th May 2021 at 12:00pm when I will be finishing to do the last exam and ending my course Bachelor's of Environmental Science and Disaster Management. Great thanks to Rafiki organisation, funders, coordinators and any other person contributing anything to this organisation, for you are the people that are polishing and shaping my life which the family am



Hopolang: "Great thanks to Rafiki organisation, funders, coordinators and any other person contributing anything to this organisation, for you are the people that are polishing and shaping my life which the family am born from could not manage."

born from could not manage. Thank you for your financial support to my education may God reward you abundantly. Rev. Byaruhanga Benon thank you for having mercy to my life and help me all this. At any moment of smiling I shall keep to remember you Sir."

Fundraising leaderboard – the ones to beat!

Thank you to everyone who has donated and fundraised so far! You are all amazing, YOU ARE ALL FUNDRAISING HEROES and we are so very grateful! I want to take the opportunity to call out those who have raised the most so far in their relay category! That way you all know who to beat! Some friendly competition never hurt anyone did it 😊

- **Solo – TEAM HANNAH, one of our amazing young #relay participants has raised a staggering £904!!**
- **Family & Friends - TEAM PODENGO, a family of four plus several 4-legged helpers have raised an incredible £574!!**
- **Works Team - The fabulous ladies at TEAM TECHPIXIES have raised a fabulous £708!!**
- **Schools - In the lead with £819 are the fantastic children and staff at DEDDINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL!!**

This is the current fundraising leader board - I would love to see some competition for the top spot in each category, and who is going to take away the ultimate top fundraiser crown!?!

If you haven't yet had the chance to make a #rafikirelay donation, just head to <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rafikirelay> or if you want to set up your own fundraising page, you will find everything you need on our relay website <https://events.rafiki-foundation.org.uk/relay> 3. Set up your sponsored challenge on JustGiving.Com

Thank you so much everyone! See you in a hop and a skip, when we arrive in Macapa, Brazil!

Keep it up!

Janne 🌍👤👤👤👤

PRIZE SPONSOR Thank you so much for your generous donation!

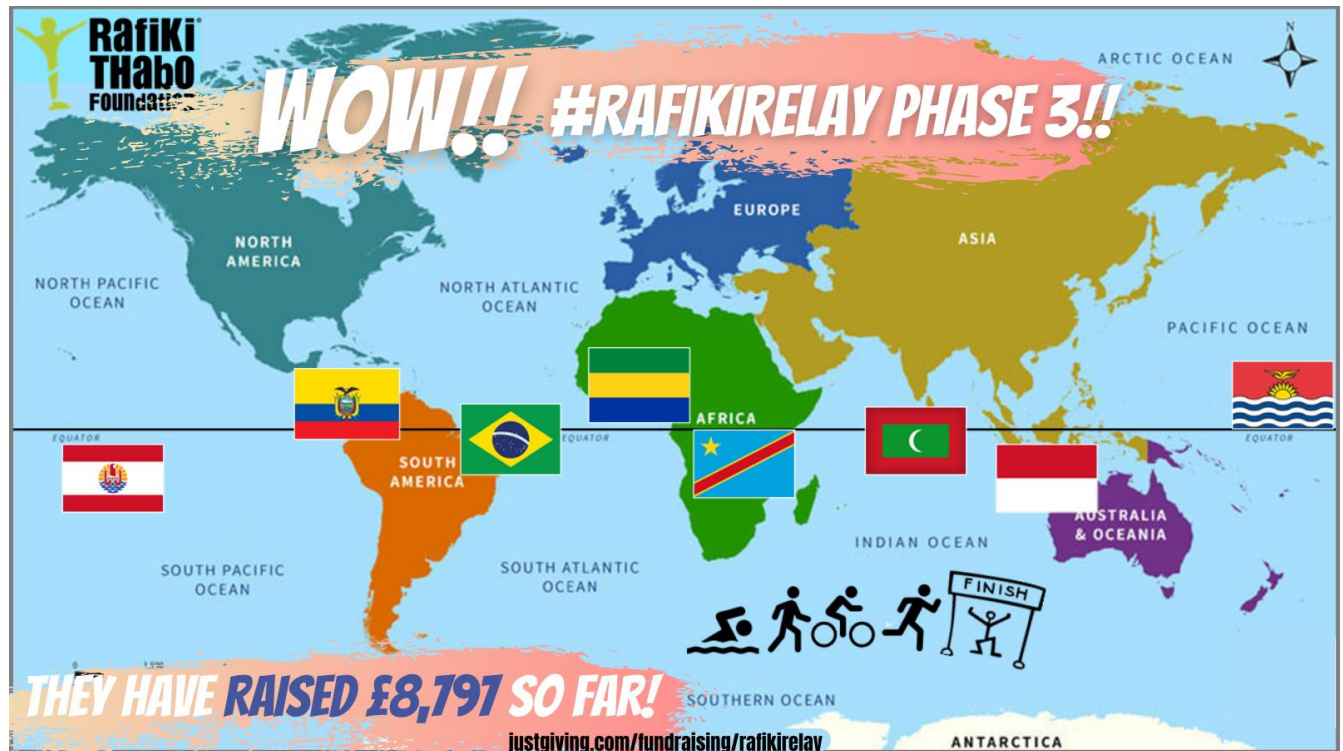
TROPIC

Tropic Skin Care is an award-winning, vegan skincare and makeup range that is cruelty-free and freshly made using sustainably sourced, natural ingredients from around the globe. Tropic's Infinite Purpose is "to help create a healthier, greener, more empowered world". The company also continues to help with education for those less fortunate.

You can see the beautiful story of the company, some great articles and the products on offer by reading the recent magazine here. The [company website](#) for further information is however it is Tropic Skin Care ambassador Kate Palframan who has very generously donated the voucher, look her up on Instagram handle @tropicskincare_katep

How amazing are our [#rafikirelay](#) teams!! They have trekked 52,000 km in 3 weeks!! We have started our THIRD phase, Around the Equator!

So far, the [#rafikirelay](#) teams have raised £8,797 – a truly life changing amount! With this we can pay for the entire secondary schooling for 6 children in Uganda /or/ provide a year at secondary school for 29 children in Lesotho /or/ pay for three young Kenyans to complete their entire university degree! These are young people who would otherwise not afford an education and would remain trapped in the poverty cycle.



“ My parents both died and there was no one else to pay my tuition fees. In 2014, my dream came true: Rafiki Thabo agreed to support me. Now I am sure that I’ll finally achieve my dream of becoming a capacity builder and change many people’s lives in my community. Thank you Rafiki Thabo Foundation: may you continue to change the lives of people like me ”

Dora graduated with a BA in Community Development from St. Paul’s University, Kenya

AROUND THE EQUATOR – MACAPA, BRAZIL (18th May)

We're in Brazil!! Welcome to Macapa – or 'The Capital of the Middle of the World' as it is also known for being the only Brazilian city crossed by the Equator line. Before we explore Macapa itself, a few facts about Brazil is in order – it is our first relay visit to South America after all and Brazil is rather important to the continent, occupying half of the South America's landmass!



[Brazil](#) is the fifth largest country in the world, exceeded in size only by Russia, Canada, China, and the United States. The country stretches roughly 4,350 km from north to south and from east to west to form a vast irregular triangle that encompasses a wide range of tropical and subtropical landscapes. It is immense and complex and includes interspersed rivers, wetlands, savannas, plateaus, and low mountains. Brazil contains most of the Amazon River basin, which has the world's largest river system and the world's most-extensive virgin [rainforest](#). The country contains no desert, high-mountain,

or arctic environments. It is the fifth most-populous country on Earth and accounts for one-third of [Latin America's](#) population.

The city of Macapá is the capital of [Amapá estado](#) (state) in northern Brazil. It lies on the northern channel (Canal do Norte) of the [Amazon River](#) delta, situated on a small plateau of firm ground 15 metres above [sea level](#). It is bordered on the southeast by the Amazon River. Macapá enjoys cooling river breezes (especially along Rua Beira Rio), a couple of nice sights and festivals celebrating Afro-Brazilian culture. There is also the San Antônio waterfall, and you can forge a path to the national parks, though tough! During the flood season, the Amazon river is great for doing water sports, and there are amazing Amazon river boat rides. By boat it is also possible to visit [Ilha do Marajo](#), [Belem](#) and [Santarem](#). Have a little [look at](#) life along the Amazon River at Macapa. Of course, being on the Equator line, you can watch the spring (March) and autumn (September) equinoxes here, when the days and nights have the same duration.

Macapa is a mix of cultures. The drum ruffling and the marabaixo dance, a kind of improvised choreography that goes on for several days and nights, echoes back to the suffering slaves that helped build the city. The quilombola community in Curiau, 12 km from Macapa, preserves their almost intact culture surrounded by the green forest.

Favoured by its strategic location, bathed by the Amazon river, Amapá's capital also hides a military architecture treasure from the 18th century: the [Fortress of Sao Jose de Macapa](#), built to defend the Brazilian territory during the Portuguese colonization of the Amazon.

Most of the Amapá state is [tropical rainforest](#), and there are patches of savanna along the coast, which has long remained scantily populated. In the early 21st century several conservation efforts were undertaken to protect Amapá's diverse fauna and flora. In 2002 [Tumucumaque National Park](#) - the world's largest tropical forest park, with an area of about 39,000 square km - was created. See some of its beauty in this short film [from WWF](#). The park is part of the Amapá Biodiversity Corridor, a protected area that was established in 2003. The corridor covers more than 70 percent of the state.

The gastronomy in Amapa is closely tied to the region's first native Brazilian inhabitants. The dishes made with Amazonian products and spices, like gurujiba - a fish amply found in the region -, steamed shrimp and vatapa, delight state residents and tourists alike.

The [Amazon basin](#) has the greatest variety of plant species on Earth and an abundance of animal life. The Amazonian region includes vast areas of rainforest, widely dispersed grasslands, and mangrove swamps in the tidal flats of the delta. A typical acre (0.4 hectare) of Amazonian forest may contain 250 or more tree species (in contrast, an acre of woods in the north-eastern United States might have only a dozen species). The crowns of giant Amazonian trees form a virtually closed canopy above several lower canopy layers, all of which combine to allow no more than 10 percent of the sun's rays to reach the ground below. As a result, more plant and animal life is found in the canopy layers than on the ground. The tallest trees may rise to 45–60 metres and are festooned with a wide variety of epiphytes, bromeliads, and lianas. Their branches teem with animal life, including insects, snakes, tree frogs, numerous types of monkeys, and a bewildering variety of birds. Several hundred bird species nest in the immediate vicinity of the main Amazon channel, and alligators, anacondas, boa constrictors, capybaras, and several smaller reptiles and mammals are found along the riverbanks. In the waters are manatees, freshwater dolphins, and some 1,500 identified species of fish, electric eels, and some 450 species of catfish. There are also many types of piranhas (not all of them flesh-eating!). Piranhas have rather a reputation and for this very reason are fascinating to most of us, here you can [read about the infamous Piranhas](#) some facts may surprise you!

The Amazon is also home to the world's largest freshwater turtle, the [Yellow-headed sideneck](#) (*Podocnemis*), which weighs an average of 70 kg and is extinct everywhere else except on the island of Madagascar (we've been there #rafikirelay teams!). The turtles, once a mainstay of local Indians' diets, are now endangered, but they continue to be hunted illegally for their meat.

Check out [this link](#) to a number of short films including one where you can glimpse Amazonian wildlife such as macaws, toucans, tyrant flycatchers, capybaras, sloths, and jaguars.

The [Amazon River](#) is the centrepiece of the most extensive river system in the world. It is the greatest river of South America and the largest drainage system in the world in terms of the volume of its flow and the area of its basin. The total length of the river is at least 6,400 km, which makes it slightly shorter than the [Nile River](#) but still the equivalent of the distance from New York City to Rome. Its westernmost source is high in the [Andes Mountains](#), within 160 km of the [Pacific Ocean](#), and its mouth is in the [Atlantic Ocean](#), on the north-eastern coast of Brazil. However, both the length of the Amazon and its ultimate source have been subjects of debate since the mid-20th century, and there are those who claim that the Amazon is actually longer than the Nile.

Did you know, it was the first European to explore the Amazon, in 1541, the Spanish soldier [Francisco de Orellana](#), who gave the river its name after reporting pitched battles with tribes of female warriors, whom he likened to the Amazons of [Greek mythology](#).

Let's set off again then teams, this time your destination is Quito in Ecuador – another 4,029 km west of here, along the Equator of course!

See you there!

Janne 🚲 🧑 🧑 🧑 🧑 🧑

PRIZE SPONSOR Thank you so much for your generous donation!

Persistence London clothing is worn all around the world, including by footballers such as Mason Mount, Mason Greenwood and Callum Hudson Odoi. All Persistence London designs are influenced by London with each style named after a famous London Street.

www.persistenceclondon.com

PERSISTENCE
LONDON

AROUND THE EQUATOR – QUITO, ECUADOR (18th May)

You guys mean business! 4,029km since this morning! With that we welcome you to Ecuador, a country straddling the equator on South America's west coast. Its diverse landscape encompasses Amazon jungle, Andean Highlands, and the wildlife rich Galápagos Islands. In the Andean foothills at an elevation of 2,850m you find the capital, Quito, or as the locals would say 'The centre of the world'. The second highest city in the world above sea level and only 30 minutes from the Equator.



Founded by the Spanish in 1534, on the ruins of an Inca city, Quito proudly possesses one of the most extensive and best-preserved historic centres of Spanish America. Featuring an artful blend of European and indigenous architectural styles, dozens of churches, museums, and colonial mansions line cobblestone streets.

The oldest of all South American capitals, Quito is notable for its well-preserved old town, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978 (the first city to receive it) highlighting its cultural value and

protecting its splendid colonial architecture. It is also the political and cultural centre of Ecuador.

[Independence Square](#) is the civic heart of Quito and began as a meeting place and water source for the fledgling town. It is now a great place to watch the world go by and a perfect base from which to visit all the historic sites of Quito Old Town, of which there are many! Such as the Metropolitan Cathedral of Quito, Carondelet Palace (the presidential palace), the Municipal Palace and the Archbishop's Palace. Close by you will also find the oldest and most significant religious site in Ecuador [The Church and Convent of San Francisco](#). The vast complex includes 13 cloisters, three churches, a plaza, more than 3,500 works of religious art, and a library holding thousands of books and historic documents. (Renaissance, Mannerist, Mudejar and Baroque architectural styles influenced its design).

Art has a heavy presence in Quito with many galleries showing the history of all the different influences including those of the architecture. Take a culture peak [here](#). One of the finest examples of Spanish Baroque architecture in South America is the [La Iglesia de la Compania de Jesus](#) regarded as the most beautiful church of Ecuador. The structure is best known for its highly decorated interiors using around half a ton of gold to ornament the walls, ceilings, and the church's 11 altars. The construction began in 1605 and was completed 160 years later. The main altarpiece alone took 20 years (the former president Gabriel García Moreno is buried here, Ecuador's patron Saint).

However, Ecuador's biggest claim to fame and one that attracts countless visitors each year is [La Mitad del Mundo](#) to any of us not fluent in Spanish! The equatorial monument marks the place where the equatorial line was first determined by a French Mission in 1736. However, new modern GPS measures proved that the actual equator is located 250 meters from the monument and is now determined by a sign. Here you can put one foot on the North Hemisphere and the other at the South's Hemisphere. The complex surrounding Mitad del Mundo is buzzing with tourists discovering the cultural, historical, and scientific facts of Ecuador.

This [little gem of a film](#) allows you to feel like you are nearly in Quito!

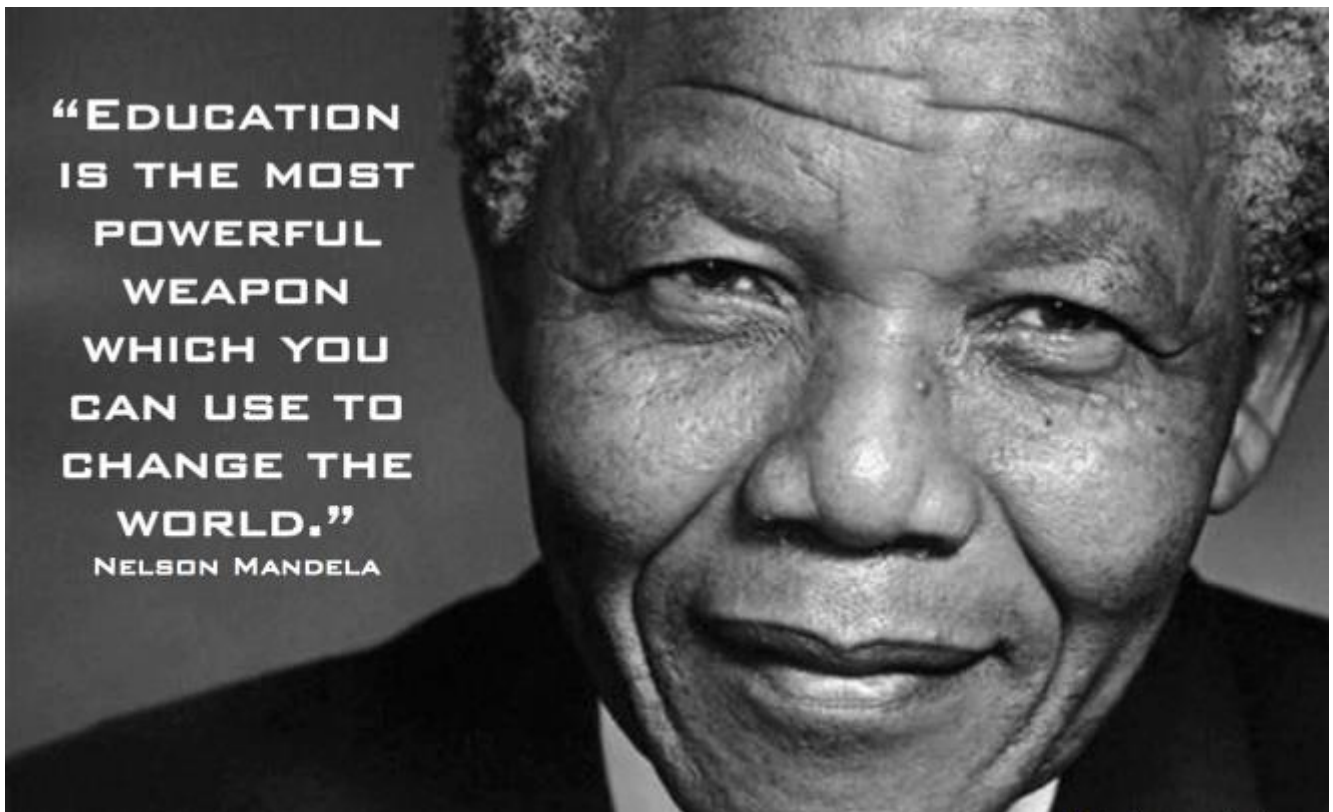
Quito is surrounded by the greatest densities of volcanoes in the world the closest one being the active volcano [Pichincha](#). Quito's hilly terrain offers scenic views from just about every vantage point and there are numerous sites to do this. The most popular is the view from a 200-metre-high hill of volcanic-origin, [El Panecillo](#) (named after a Spanish loaf!), where a large statue of the Virgin Mary with wings adorns the summit. This Virgin Mary is made from 7,000 pieces of aluminium! Or, if you would like to go higher for spectacular views over Quito's mountainous landscape, you can hop aboard Quito's sky tram (Teleferiqo). It is one of the world's highest aerial lifts and takes passengers on a 2.5km ride up the flanks of Volcano Pichincha to the top of Cruz Loma on the eastern side of the Guagua Pichincha Volcano. At the top, a mere 4,100m (!), you can hike to the summit of Rucu Pichincha (4,680m), a 4km round-trip.

There are plenty of modern attractions in Quito too, including night clubs, trendy restaurants, and boutique shops. Quito's many parks and plazas provide picturesque settings where you can relax while planning your next excursion. I think you will require more than a day trip at this fascinating place! Like we require more than just over a page to talk about Quito it seems, not even having started on Ecuador! Remember however, our amazing friends at social enterprise travel agent [Charitable Travel](#) will be more than happy to help you plan a spectacular holiday, why not add Ecuador to your bucket list and they will help you explore the whole, fascinating country! You would #TravelForGood and support Rafiki Thabo Foundation on your real-life worldwide adventures!

So, teams, that was 60,570 km, up for another leg... 7,222km to be exact (although as I mentioned before, I am not sure how accurate this is!). We are visiting the Raroia Atoll in the Polynesian Islands. More on that when we meet next!!

Keep at it!

Janne 🚲 🧑 🏠 🧑 🍌



FUNDRAISING UPDATE (19th May)

CURRENT FUNDRAISING TOTAL £9,542 – WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR EVERY PENNY. REMEMBER EVEN AS LITTLE AS 35P MATTERS GREATLY – it will provide a nutritious meal to a child who would otherwise go hungry! Giving them the energy to learn at school and walk their long way to and from school every day. If they have energy to focus on their schoolwork, they have the best chance at transforming their lives through education. In fact, for these children being given a free meal at school is often what will *keep* them in school – it is one mouth less to feed for the parents at home.

YOU WILL NOT DOUBT HAVE HEARD ABOUT PAUL TERGAT - OLYMPIC MEDAL WINNER AND WORLD RECORD HOLDER!

According to Paul, the free school meals he received as a child did more to help him achieve success than anything else! He attributes his success as a multiple Olympic medal winner and world record holder to the free school meals he received as a child through the World Food Programme. As one of 17 siblings, he often went for days without a proper meal, and says: “Without food, it was very difficult to walk to school, let alone concentrate on our studies.”

Before receiving free school meals, Tergat recalls going for days without a proper meal. This omnipresent hunger made the three-mile walk to school seem unbearable. That all changed in 1977 when the [@WorldFoodProgram](https://www.worldfoodprogramme.org/) introduced a school meal programme in his area that provided students with a free school lunch every day. These lunches gave him the energy to focus on his studies, and to not only walk, but run the three miles between school and home.



Paul Tergat

Olympian medal winner and world record holder

“Without food, it was very difficult to walk to school, let alone concentrate on our studies.”

Read more about our Eat Well to Learn programme on our website <https://rafiki-foundation.org.uk/eat-well-to-learn/>

We EMPOWER THROUGH EDUCATION by enabling those who cannot afford school fees to attend school with Rafiki Thabo scholarships, helping to fund a safe and equipped learning environment at school, AND by ensuring that the children are healthy and have the energy to learn through our Eat Well to Learn programme.

Thank you to all of you for supporting Rafiki Relay for Education!

Together we are changing lives!!



Like the life of Mkwaindi: *'Were it not for Rafiki Thabo I do not even want to imagine how my life would be...I even lack words to express my gratitude for the great great support towards my University education . Rafiki Thabo came to my rescue when I had lost hope, wiped my tears , restored hope in me and now I say a very big thanks to Rafiki Thabo and promise to give back to society and may God bless you more and more as you continue to change lives of many.'*

Mkwaindi completed her Bachelor of Education at Kenyatta University in April this year!

Keep at it!

Janne 🌍 🧑 🧑 🧑 🧑 🧑

PRIZE SPONSOR Thank you so much for your generous donation!

QUITE
The Champion



Quite the Champion is a new luxury sporting brand offering high-end bags and accessories that are enduring, classic and timeless. Honey (11) and Coco (9) started their business during lockdown when they were given the home-schooling project of starting a brand – choosing a product and name, and then working out how best to market and sell it. Their love of ponies steered them towards equestrian accessories, and their love of competing helped influence their brand name. With great excitement the orders kept rolling in and thus Quite the Champion has become a bit more than a school project! Thank you so much girls for donating the fabulous Original Travel Bag from your range for our Prize Draw! Thank you so much to the very talented Honey and Coco! <https://www.quitethechampion.com/>

AMAZING NEWS - WE ARE BUILDING NEW TEACHERS' ACCOMMODATION IN RURAL UGANDA (21st May)

Thanks to a major donation a desperately needed building project will start next week!

We are beyond excited to have secured enough funding to build new teachers' accommodation at our partner school in rural Uganda!

When we visited the school in June 2019, we were devastated to see the state of the current teachers' accommodation. While you can see how bad it is in these photos from our visit, the reality was even worse! It is in such a poor state of repair that it would be dangerous for teachers to stay in it.

The majority of the teachers live over 20 kilometres away from the school in Kabale and their commute costs them 80% of their monthly salary, depriving hard working people and their families of vital income. These long and expensive commutes also cause unavoidable delays to lessons when teachers struggle to reach the school.

We are absolutely delighted to have received a major donation this week which will enable us to fund the project. We were overjoyed when we could inform the headmaster at the school, the chair of our local Uganda committee, that he could commission the work to be started.

Building will start next week!

We will share updates on the progress in our social media. Why not follow us? We post #rafikirelay news as well 🥰

Instagram @rafikithabofoundation

FB/Twitter/Linked In @RafikiThabo

Empowering through education! With the support of our amazing #rafikirelay teams, we can do even more!

Janne



ONCE UPON A TIME...

There was a small charity called Rafiki Thabo Foundation
and 2000 pairs of brave feet
they walked, ran, cycled and swam
raising money to empower through education
With Cairo to Cape Town complete
a journey Around the Coastline of Africa began
but would you believe, with no end to their determination
they set off Around the Equator for #rafikirelay phase three!
16 days and 29,000km to go!

We are so grateful to our #rafikirelay teams and their supporters
A whopping £10,000 raised so far....

TOGETHER WE ARE CHANGING LIVES, FULFILLING DREAMS AND ENABLING BRIGHTER FUTURES!!

Want to encourage our #rafikirelay teams in their amazing efforts and help us provide education to young people in Kenya, Uganda and Lesotho who can otherwise not afford to go to school? Please head to our Rafiki Relay for Education Just Giving page and donate what you can! 35p will feed a starving school child, enabling them to concentrate on their studies. £300 will pay for a year at secondary school a critical stepping stone to lift a young person and their family out of poverty.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rafikirelay>

BE PART OF IT - SHARE FAR AND WIDE - MAKE A DIFFERENCE - CHANGE LIVES!

#RAFIKIRELAY FOR EDUCATION - AROUND EQUATOR

65,000km - 25 days - £10,000!!!
and we're not done yet...

RAROIA ATOLL next

Icons for walking, cycling, running, and swimming.

Rafiki Thabo Foundation

KJLMSS 101

AROUND THE EQUATOR – RAROIA ATOLL, POLYNESIAN ISLANDS & THE ADVENTURES OF KON TIKI (21st May)

Welcome to a little piece of paradise! We've arrived on Raroia Atoll, in [French Polynesia](#). This is a place of incredible beauty, mesmerizing with its palms, corals, and turquoise lagoon. It has a land area of only 41 km² with a navigable waterway which leads to a central lagoon an area of 359 km². Since it is admittedly not quite on the Equator, we're a bit south of that, you may be wondering why we are visiting here! The truth is, I desperately wanted to tell you about the exciting story of Kon Tiki!



Returning to [Raroia, Tuamotu Archipelago](#) first! The archipelago consists of seventy-eight atolls, among which Raroia, despite being tiny, is medium-sized. It is a classic atoll, with only one pass and no airport, but a few boats still reach it.

Raroia really is a heaven on earth with breath-taking scenery! Discover through this small video the village, kitesurfing, canoes, pearl farm and dream of the peaceful lifestyle [on this most beautiful small island](#).

The population, the Paumotu people, as of the 2012 census was only 233 and the town of Garumaoa is the main settlement. Raroians live principally on fishing, [copra](#) cultivation, and [pearl farming](#). They are, like most Polynesians, known for their hospitality, and although there are no available accommodations to rent on the island, locals will often share their lodgings with travellers.

The languages spoken on Raroia are [Pa'umotu](#) and French. Pa'umotu is the local language, and French is taught in the elementary school in the island's village of Garumaoa. To attend secondary school the children go to the larger island [Makemo](#). To attend university they can go to [Tahiti](#), 748 km away.

Despite being only tiny, there are 30 species of plants and 19 species of birds indigenous to the atoll and numerous fish and shellfish in the lagoon and sea. The latter explains the Raroian diet, which consists mainly of local seafood, in addition to imported bread, rice and canned goods.

The first recorded Europeans to reach Raroia were those of the Spanish expedition led by the Portuguese explorer [Pedro Fernandes de Queirós](#) on 14 February 1606. We are heading to more recent times however, to 1947, to explore the fascinating story of the Kon Tiki and the man behind a quote that I love, Thor Heyerdahl:

“BORDERS? I HAVE NEVER SEEN ONE. BUT I HAVE HEARD THEY EXIST IN THE MINDS OF SOME PEOPLE.”
– THOR HEYERDAHL

The prevailing theories held at the time, was that Polynesia had been settled by peoples migrating from the west. A young experimental [ethnographer](#) and adventurer from Norway, Thor Heyerdahl, had different ideas, and set out to prove his theory that people from South America (to the east) settled the islands in [pre-Columbian](#) times.

The belief at the time was that the peoples of South America did not have seaworthy rafts or boats that could take them as far as the Polynesian islands. Heyerdahl set out to illustrate that despite most experts suggesting therefore that such a voyage across the vast ocean was unlikely to have ever been successful, there were no technological limitations that would have inhibited the ancient peoples from making the journey.

Noting similarities between statues found in South America and the Polynesian [moai](#), Heyerdahl's theory about the origin of the Polynesian people is bolstered by Polynesian folklore that tells of an ancient tribe called the [Hanau epe](#) that are said to have once inhabited [Easter Island](#).



Heyerdahl put his theory to the test and built a [balsawood](#) raft using the same techniques that would have been utilized 1,500 years ago by the indigenous peoples of the region. Heyerdahl could not actually himself swim or sail, in fact he had a fear of water!! Despite this, on the 28th April 1947, Thor and his crew of five left Callao in Peru for a treacherous 4,300 [nautical mile](#)–journey across the [Pacific](#) from Peru to Polynesia aboard the small balsawood raft, [Kon Tiki](#). Named after the Inca god of sun and storm. There was a 7th member of the crew, a [macaw](#) named Lorita! Their only modern equipment was a radio, and they had to navigate using the stars and ocean currents.

During the three months aboard the primitive vessel, the crew's scientific re-enactment of the legendary voyage from the coast of Peru to the Polynesian islands was met with setbacks in the form of storms, sharks, and other perils of the open sea. After 101 days in open waters however, the Kon Tiki crashed onto Raroia Atoll in Polynesia, and the men had firm land under their feet again, having proven to the sceptics that such a journey was indeed possible!

Fancy a trip to Norway? If you do, then you have an amazing opportunity to visit the Kon Tiki Museum in Oslo <https://www.kon-tiki.no/> Here you will see not only Kon Tiki, but also other vessels Heyerdahl used for similar extraordinary adventures, like his voyages onboard reed boats [Ra](#), Ra II and [Tigris](#) . The main exhibitions even have their own storylines for children! Children and adults alike will love experiencing models of sharks and fish in an underwater exhibition under the Kon-Tiki raft and wander a 30-metre-long replica of a cave on Easter Island!

Learn about Thor Heyerdahl's famous legacy, from heeding an insatiable curiosity and challenging established truths, to championing environmental issues and sustainability, striving for world peace, and promoting deep respect for the indigenous peoples of the world. In addition to his many expeditions, he was also responsible for important archaeological excavations on the Galapagos Islands, Easter Island and in Túcume.



The connection to our work? Thor Heyerdahl was a resolute and fascinating man who **fulfilled his dreams!** His were to explore the world and actually live the science, by taking part in #rafikirelay for education, you are helping us fulfil the dreams of young children to get an education and escape poverty!

If the above has inspired you to find out more about Thor Heyerdahl and the Kon Tiki expedition, I would highly recommend two films. One is a factual film with actual, [real footage about the expedition](#) , which won the Oscar for best documentary in 1952. It may be a documentary, but trust me, even the children will enjoy it!

The other is from 2012, and while it is a dramatization made for the big screen, it tells the story very well and is based on the true story. [Check out the trailer](#)

Mission 'share my passion for Kon Tiki and fellow countryman Thor Heyerdahl' accomplished, I think! Where do you fancy going next? How about a visit to Kiribati? This time we are very much sticking to the Equator! See you in 3,202km!

Happy trekking! Janne 🚴👤🏠👤🍌

AROUND THE EQUATOR – KIRIBATI (24th May)

‘Mauri!’ - Welcome to Kiribati (pronounced Kiri – bass). We have now together trekked a staggering 71,000km!! We may have left beautiful Raroia behind, by just over 3,000 km, however another piece of paradise awaits you all! The first islands in the world to welcome every new day!



[Kiribati](#) is an independent Micronesian island nation, and the islands straddle along and across the equator for 3000km. Lying halfway between Australia and Hawaii, they are at the true heart of the Pacific, where the equator meets the [International Date Line](#). Kiribati is the only country in the world situated on all four hemispheres of the globe. It has the biggest water to land ratio in the world and boasts endless white sand, coral, and crystal-clear waters. I’m in heaven already!

The state comprises of 32 atolls and one raised coral island (Banaba) of which 21 are inhabited. They are grouped into 3 island archipelagos: The Gilbert Islands in

the West; the Phoenix Islands Protected Area in the centre; and the Line Islands in the East. The permanent population is over 119,000 (2020) with over half of the population concentrated in the Gilbert Islands, where the Capital Tarawa is located. The only main road in the whole of Kiribati is in Tarawa.

The Gilbert Islands are a chain of sixteen atolls and coral islands about halfway between Papua New Guinea and Hawaii, which were granted self-rule by the UK in 1971 and completed independence in 1979 under the new name of [Kiribati](#).

The Phoenix Islands are a group of eight atolls, they are the most remote islands in Kiribati and the least accessible, they have the largest designated Marine Protected Area in the World. The Phoenix Island Protected Area (PIPA) is a 408,250 sq.km expanse of marine and terrestrial habitats in the Southern Pacific Ocean. PIPA conserves one of the world's largest intact oceanic coral archipelago ecosystems, together with 14 known underwater sea mounts (presumed to be extinct volcanoes) and other deep-sea habitats. The area contains approximately 800 known species of fauna, including about 200 coral species, 500 fish species, 18 marine mammals and 44 bird species. The structure and functioning of PIPA's ecosystems illustrate its pristine nature and importance as a migration route and reservoir. This is the first site in Kiribati to be inscribed on the World Heritage List [Unesco World Heritage List](#). How amazing is that!!

The Line Islands extend 2,600 km north westward from French Polynesia. They have a land area of 500 square km and are divided into Northern, Central, and Southern groups. All the islands are coral formations, but only six have lagoons, which makes them atolls (aha, I should have known that when writing about Raroia!). However, The Northern Line Islands politically are part of Kiribati since its independence (1979), and the other islands are all unincorporated territories of the United States.

For those among you with a greater interest in history, check out this [timeline of Kiribati](#).

The natural environment of the islands and surrounding waters present unrivalled experiences, with the marine world offering world class fishing and undiscovered diving, the best surfing conditions and while on land the bird life is incredible.

Talking about birds, the ‘Yellow Frigate Bird’ is visible on the [Kiribati flag](#). It symbolizes many important things in the traditional living context of the I-Kiribati. It provides navigation to fishermen while lost at sea, provides weather information for the people, and gives a sign of peace and harmony. Its movement is also imitated in the traditional dances of Kiribati which are a unique form of art and expression.

Families continue to live in extended groups; many build their own homes and canoes from natural materials; traditional crafts prevail, producing stunning handicrafts and Kiribati dance continues to be synonymous with Kiribati identity.

With such cultural and environmental attractions, [Kiribati](#) is attracting increasing numbers of travellers. There are plans to open the islands up for some tourism, however it is still in its infancy with visitor numbers remaining low and infrequent, and facilities and activities still in the early stages of development. This is, however, for many, the appeal of visiting Kiribati. I know I want to pack my backpack along with my flipflops right now!! That said, they have certainly got it right in this [tourism video](#) – watch, dream and get booking those flights!

Well, I can hardly believe it, but we have just over 23,000 km left until we are back in Libreville Gabon! It is becoming fairly clear that we are likely to need a #rafikirelay stage 4, unless the half term will slow our amazing schools down. We shall see! For now, a fairly long leg at 8,592 km. You can do it! See you in Indonesia in a hop and a skip!

Keep it up!

Janne 🚶🚴🛴🏠👨👩

#RAFIKIRELAY UPDATE!

Hello lovely #rafikirelay teams, I cannot believe it has been 4 weeks already since we set off from Cairo! Never in our wildest dreams did we think when planning the relay, that we would end up doing nearly 100,000km between us!

I hope I am not jinxing our progress by saying that! We have done 76,000km in 4 weeks so based on the average weekly trekking we could hit 100,000km! That said, the schools will be on half term next week, so let's see how we get on. If we manage another 18,000 km by 6th June we will have done the full loop around Equator – so that is our primary goal!

I do hope you are all enjoying it, feeling the benefits of lots of fresh air and exercise and also take a moment now and then to read our many milestones!



AROUND THE EQUATOR – INDONESIA (28th May)

Amazing #rafikirelay teams, we are now in Indonesia! This beguiling nation of some 17,500 islands (of which more than 7,000 uninhabited) is home to a huge diversity of adventures to choose from. The world's fourth most populous country is like 100 countries melded into one: a kaleidoscope of a nation that sprawls along one-eighth of the equator for 5,000km. The largest country in Southeast Asia, it is a land of so many cultures, peoples, animals, customs, plants, sights, art, and foods that it defies homogenization. I don't know where to start, and as you will see, not where to finish! 😊



The Indonesian archipelago represents one of the most unusual areas in the world: it encompasses a major juncture of Earth's tectonic plates, spans two faunal realms, and has for millennia served as a nexus of the peoples

and cultures of [Oceania](#) and mainland [Asia](#). These factors have created a highly diverse environment and society that sometimes seem united only by susceptibility to seismic and [volcanic activity](#), close proximity to the sea, and a moist, tropical climate. Nevertheless, a centralized government and a common language have provided Indonesia with some sense of unity.

The people of Indonesia are still as radically different from each other as the variety of landscapes available to explore. Over time, deep and rich cultures have evolved, from the spiritual Balinese to the animist belief system of the [Asmat people of Papua](#).

Venturing across [Indonesia](#) you'll see a wonderfully dramatic landscape as diverse as anywhere on the planet. Sulawesi's wildly multi-limbed coastline embraces white-sand beaches and diving haunts, while Sumatra is contoured by a legion of nearly 100 volcanoes marching off into the distance, several capable of erupting at any time. Bali's beaches are the stuff of legend, but you don't have to travel far to find even more beautiful and less touristed stretches of sand in Nusa Tenggara. The Banda islands in Maluku, Derawan in Kalimantan and Pulau Weh off Sumatra all offer superb beaches too.

Dramatic sights are the norm. There's the sublime: an orangutan lounging in a tree. The artful: a Balinese dancer executing precise moves that would make a robot seem ungainly. The idyllic: a deserted stretch of blinding white sand on Sumbawa. The astonishing: crowds in a glitzy Jakarta mall. The intriguing: tales of the beautiful Banda Islands' twisted history. The heart-stopping: the ominous menace of a Komodo dragon. The delicious: a south Bali restaurant. The solemn: Borobudur's serene magnificence.

Indonesia's islands can be grouped into the Greater [Sunda Islands](#) of [Sumatra](#), [Java](#), the southern extent of [Borneo](#) (the third largest island in the world), and [Celebes](#); the Lesser Sunda Islands of [Bali](#) and a chain of islands that runs eastward through [Timor](#); the [Moluccas](#) between Celebes and the island of [New Guinea](#); and the western extent of New Guinea (generally known as Papua). The capital, [Jakarta](#), is located near the northwestern coast of Java.

We can't really stop in Indonesia without taking a closer look at Bali, known for its [incredibly beautiful beaches](#). Bali also has a number of cultural landmarks and traditions though, so if the family is split in their holiday desires, it could still be a great choice! Despite the clamor and chaos of the main tourist areas, the island is rich in natural beauty. Surfers come for the legendary swells, hikers can trek up jungly volcanic peaks to misty waterfalls, and cyclists can

bike through lush landscapes bristling with rice terraces and traditional villages. The island has a **rich arts scene** fabulous shopping and affordable spa treatments! Spirituality adds yet another layer to Bali's allure, and seeing the magnificent temples and sacred Hindu ceremonies are top things to do in Bali.

Another 'must visit' is the ancient temple of [Borobudur](#), one of the most famous and culturally significant landmarks in Indonesia. Borobudur was built in the 8th century and constructed in the shape of a traditional Buddhist mandala. It is one of the top UNESCO World Heritage sites and is considered one of the greatest Buddhist sites in the world. The massive temple was forgotten for centuries, when it is believed that much of the population moved to eastern Java due to volcanic eruptions. But it was rediscovered in the 1800s and, today, is one of the main draws in Java.

There is also [Prambanan](#) (pictured), comprising the remains of some 244 temples, it is Indonesia's largest Hindu site and one of Southeast Asia's major attractions. Extended over two centuries, building at Prambanan commenced in the middle of the 9th century – around 50 years after Borobudur. Having been left deserted for years and years, and much of it damaged into ruins by earthquakes, most temples have now been restored to some extent, and, like Borobudur, Prambanan was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991.

In fact, there are so many 'must visits' that I will simply direct you to a couple of sites where you can read and dream! Here's [planetware](#) and good old [lonely planet](#)! That opens up for me to share a little bit about a distinctly common feature in Indonesia, volcanoes!

There are over 100 active volcanoes in Indonesia and hundreds more that are considered extinct. They run in a crescent-shaped line along the outer margin of the country, through [Sumatra](#) and Java as far as [Flores](#), then north through the Banda Sea to a junction with the volcanoes of northern Celebes. Volcanic eruptions are by no means uncommon. [Mount Merapi](#), which rises to 2,911 metres near [Yogyakarta](#) in central Java, erupts frequently—often causing extensive destruction to roads, fields, and villages but always greatly benefiting the soil. [Mount Kelud](#) (1,731 metres), near [Kediri](#) in eastern Java, can be particularly devastating, because the water in its large crater lake is thrown out during eruption, causing great mudflows that rush down into the plains and sweep away all that is before them.

As you would expect with such immense geographical variety and size, Indonesia offers an incredible [wildlife](#) with some unique animals native to the country. Who can fail to be fascinated with the [Komodo Dragon](#), the largest lizards in the world? They are seen mostly in the islands of [Komodo](#) and [Rinca](#). Head to the islands of Sumatra and Borneo to meet the Sumatran Orangutan, as these are possibly the only natural homes to the critically endangered species. [Tanjung Puting National Park](#) in Kalimantan, Borneo is a good place to start. How about a bird with the ability to fly right after hatching! The [Maleo birds](#) endemic to Sulawesi, do just that! Sulawesi is also home to Pygmy tarsiers, the smallest primates in the world at 10 cm tall! Furry, mouse sized, with large eyes and ears, they are nocturnal in nature. [See here how cute they are!](#) Head to Tangkoko National Park for your best chance of meeting them. You can also find the smallest among the Rhinos in Indonesia, the [Javan rhinoceros](#) is a critically endangered species. Let's not forget the [Sumatran tigers](#), the smallest surviving (and endangered) species to be found in the island of Sumatra, visit Kerinci Seblat National Park to catch a glimpse of this species. It seems in fact that Indonesia is the place to go if you want to see big (and small) animals that are the smallest of their species. The Borneo Elephant is the smallest Asian elephant subspecies to be found. They are also known as the pygmy elephants because of their short stature and oversized ears, [meet them here](#). Finally, let's include the Sulawesi Black Macaque, another critically endangered species to be found in the island of Indonesia. These monkeys are spotted in the Tangkoko reserve in Sulawesi and got the 'selfie' tag when one macaque clicked its own picture and later, this image became the subject of copyright issues! This video is from Chester Zoo, but it shows the cutest new-born [newborn](#) Black Macaque!

Ok, so this time I completely blew my intention of keeping the milestones to one-pagers (ok, one-and-a-half-pagers of late!). I really should have set the milestone a bit more specifically, than just 'Indonesia'!! If you have read this far, then huge well done 😊 and I hope Indonesia is now firmly on your bucket list for holidays, and that you are keen to learn more about this amazing place. Isn't Ms Google marvellous! Don't forget to reach out to #rafikirelay headline sponsor [Charitable Travel](#) who will work with you to plan and book incredible holidays to anywhere you want to go in the world. When you book your holiday with Charitable Travel you can donate 5% of your holiday cost to an amazing charity of your choice, such as the Rafiki Thabo Foundation, at no extra

cost! #TravelforGood with Charitable Travel and support Rafiki Thabo Foundation on your real-life worldwide adventures.

Next up, the Maldives!!! I think I heard a massive 'awwwwww' there – or maybe it was me – as we are heading to the location of our honeymoon nearly 20 years ago! My husband and I said at the time, that for sure we would return every ten years... top of our bucket list that goes then! Hmm no, was that Zanzibar... Tanzania? No, Valley of the Kings... Quito? Rarua? Victoria Falls...

See you in 4,543 km!

Keep it up!

Janne 🧑🏻 🧑🏻 🚲 🏠 🧑🏻 🧑🏻

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Thank you so much to the team at Experience Days for their kind donation of a £50 open voucher for our #rafikirelay prize draw, as part of their charity scheme through which they support a number of charities and charitable causes www.experiencedays.co.uk/charity-scheme

AROUND THE EQUATOR – MALDIVES (28th May)

Wow teams, that is 84,129km since we left Cairo and we have only 10,024km to go before we have completed #rafikirelay phase 3! Can we do it?? Yes, we can! Now though, welcome to the breath-taking Maldives! This is probably to many the absolute picture of the brilliant white sandy beaches. There is a good reason for this! The islands' amazing sand is so white, and extremely fine, as it is coralline in origin rather than made from quartz (most typical for beach sand). Representing less than five percent of the world's beaches, coralline ones are rare.



[The Maldives](#) is a nation of beautiful islands built up from the crowns of a submerged ancient volcanic mountain range in the Indian Ocean, that spans across the equator. The tropical paradise is comprised of around 1,192 islands stretched across an area of approximately 90,000 sq. km and only 298 sq. km of that is dry land. If you are that way inclined, you could try to memorise them, [here they all are!](#)

It is the lowest country in the world and 99% is water! The average elevation of the Maldives is just 1.5 meters above sea level. The highest point in the entire country is 2.4 meters in elevation.

The islands are grouped by a double chain of 26 atolls. Watch this fascinating little film

about '[the birth of an atoll](#)', and start to understand how these amazing islands came about. Only 200 of the islands are inhabited, and a select few on each of the atolls are resorts, with some of the islands used for industry and agriculture. The population recorded in 2021 was approximately 549,310.

Male is the capital city of the Maldives where a third of the population live. It is one of the most densely populated cities in the world, while it is also one of the smallest. The pint-sized Maldivian capital is the heart of the nation, a densely crowded and fascinating place, notable for its stark contrast to the laid-back pace of island life elsewhere in the country. It is the engine driving Maldives' economy and where the government is based.

The people and customs of the Maldives were greatly influenced by Indians, Sri Lankans, North Africans, Arabs, and Europeans traveling through the trade routes of the Indian Ocean. Maldivians developed their own language, [Dhivehi](#), an Indo-Aryan language with its origins in Sanskrit. The people of the Maldives converted to Islam in 1153 A.D. and today it is a strictly Muslim nation. Visitors must obey local laws and traditions: no alcohol is allowed (outside of the resorts). Local religious standards for beach wear and public dress should be followed. It is the smallest Muslim Country in the entire world.

The livelihood of Maldivians traditionally depended on the seas, fishery being the main source of sustenance. While fishery still contributes significantly to the economy in terms of employment and income, tourism is the main source of income for the Maldivian economy today. Other forms of livelihood come from shipping, boat building of the dhoni, coconut processing, woven mats, rope, handicrafts, coral and sand mining.

The beauty of the Maldives is not only above the water. The Maldives is home to about five percent of the planet's reefs that come with an explosion of colour contributed by soft and hard corals that form them. The reefs are home to a thousand species of fish, including manta rays and [whale sharks](#). As well as 21 species of whale and dolphins. It is also home to five of the world's seven species of marine turtles: the green turtle, [the hawksbill turtle](#), the olive ridley turtle, the loggerhead, and the leatherback turtle.

In 2011, UNESCO designated an area comprised of 75 islands as the [Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve](#). This reserve has coral reefs as its most important habitat type, in terms of sheer area as well as biodiversity of life. It supports approximately 250 species of coral and many other ocean life species. Several resorts also conduct their own programs. While some resorts focus on protection and rehabilitation of sea turtles, others are engaged in cutting edge research on regeneration of coral reefs. Several community education programs are also conducted by resorts for school children and the community at large. Non-governmental organizations also play an important role through their voluntary programs and conduct regular beach and reef clean-up programs.

The beautiful tourism resorts around the Maldives offer a variety of packages for all budgets. Some catering for families and groups and others that are adult only, with complete luxury and total relaxation. There are various types of accommodation on offer, from bungalows on stilts in the clear blue ocean to luxurious villas and beach bungalows. The transfer from Male airport is either by speedboat, seaplane or if flying to an island of complete seclusion an internal flight.

Relaxation is a large part of the Maldives experience, but you can also partake in snorkelling, deep sea diving and fishing. For those among you of an adventurous nature, activities such as flyboarding, free diving, jet skis, kayaking, kite surfing, parasailing, surfing, wakeboarding, water skiing, and underwater scooters can be had. Underwater scooters? I have been trying to avoid videos that advertise a certain company, but I just couldn't resist [this clip!](#) 😊

The Year-round temperature is a hot tropical climate. The average high temperature is 31.5 degree Celsius, and the average low temperature is 26.4 degree Celsius. The Southwest monsoon from May to October brings rain and the Northeast monsoon from November to April is generally sunny. So, choose your timing carefully if you want to stay [sheltered from the winds](#) and [dry](#)! In fact, when we visited, we spent the first 4 days getting drenched and was just about to capitulate and head somewhere else, when the blue skies returned, and we have glorious sunshine for the rest of our honeymoon!

I thought we would end our visit to the Maldives with a very positive fact: The Maldives boasts a 98-percent literacy rate among adults and 100 percent of children are enrolled in primary school, with a 99 percent graduation rate to grade five. How amazing is that! Oh, how I wish it could be the same for all children, all over the world. Thank you #rafikirelay teams for helping us make it so for at least a few more! What's more, with the aid of UNICEF, the Maldives created a [unified education program](#) (since 1978). They built Teacher Resource Centers that utilize the internet for long-distance teaching between islands and created an education program that advocates teaching not only children, but parents and caregivers, who are urged to take an active role in education. Just brilliant!

Ok then then troops, on we go! The next time 'we meet' we are back on the amazing African continent! We are heading 5,798km west, following our new friend the Equator, to Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo!

For anyone with children of a certain age... 'just keep swimming, just keep swimming!' (if you don't recognise this as being from a film you are clearly much younger than me! 😊)

Keep at it!

Janne 🧑🏻 🧑🏻 🚲 🏠 ❤️

AROUND THE EQUATOR – VIRUNGA NATIONAL PARK, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (28th May)

Another 5,798 km and we have arrived back on the African continent and find ourselves in Virunga National Park! We are nearly back in Libreville, Gabon where we started our #rafikirelay phase 3 Around the Equator! You are quite simply unstoppable!



Found along the equator on the western edge of Democratic Republic of the Congo, Virunga National Park is one of the world's most extraordinary natural places. It is Africa's oldest national park, and a [World Heritage Site](#).

Formerly **Albert National Park**, it was created in 1925 and has an area of some 7,900 square km. It comprises an outstanding diversity of habitats, ranging from swamps and steppes to the snowfields of Rwenzori at an altitude of over 5,000m, and from lava plains to the savannahs on the slopes of volcanoes. According to [UNESCO](#), Virunga National Park is "unique with its

active chain of volcanoes and rich diversity of habitats that surpass those of any other African park". It boasts the spectacular massifs of Ruwenzori and Virunga Mountains, containing the two most active volcanoes of Africa [Nyamulagira](#) and [Nyiragongo](#). The latter is 3,470m high, with a main crater 2km wide and 250m deep containing a liquid [lava](#) pool. Some older craters on the mountain are noted for their plant life... Nyiragongo is known for its devastating eruptions!

The park's southern tip rests on the northern shore of [Lake Kivu](#), a short distance from the town of Goma to the east. This is where you will find the impressive [Virunga Mountains](#), between Lakes Kivu and [Edward](#) and extending into [Rwanda](#) and [Uganda](#). Farther north are the Rutshuru Falls and the Mai ya Moto sulfur springs. Much of the park's central region is occupied by [Lake Edward](#). To the northeast the [Ruwenzori Range](#) soars to more than 4,880m.

The wide diversity of habitats produces exceptional biodiversity, notably endemic species, and rare and globally threatened species such as the mountain gorilla. Watch this lovely [short film](#) including a baby gorilla doing tumble turns. There are also some 20,000 hippopotamuses living in the rivers and birds from Siberia spend the winter there. The abundant wildlife also includes [elephants](#), whose numbers sadly began decreasing in the late 20th century, and [lions](#), which also face various threats. [Okapis](#), [antelope](#), [warthogs](#), and [pelicans](#) all live in Virunga as well. Did you know that the beautiful and unusual okapi with its white-and-black striped hindquarters and front legs, which makes it look like it must be related to zebras is actually the only living relative of the giraffe! Take a look at an [okapi's head](#) and you'll notice the resemblance!

The human population there, which was negligible when the park was established, increased considerably during the late 20th century. UNESCO designated the park a [World Heritage site](#) in 1979, and it was placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1994, because of the growth of permanent settlements within the park and the influx of a great number of refugees fleeing war in neighbouring Rwanda. The increased human population contributed to deforestation and poaching, and some natural animal migration patterns have been seriously disrupted.

Sadly, this is not the only unrest in recent years which means that we may need to admire this unique park virtually only for a little longer, as security issues and unrest continues impact the area. It does not detract from the beauty of the country and the unique nature of this park. I'm adding Virunga National Park to my bucket list for when the time will come, hopefully soon, when we can explore it for real. To see why, here are some amazing photos of the park on the [UNESCO webpage](#).

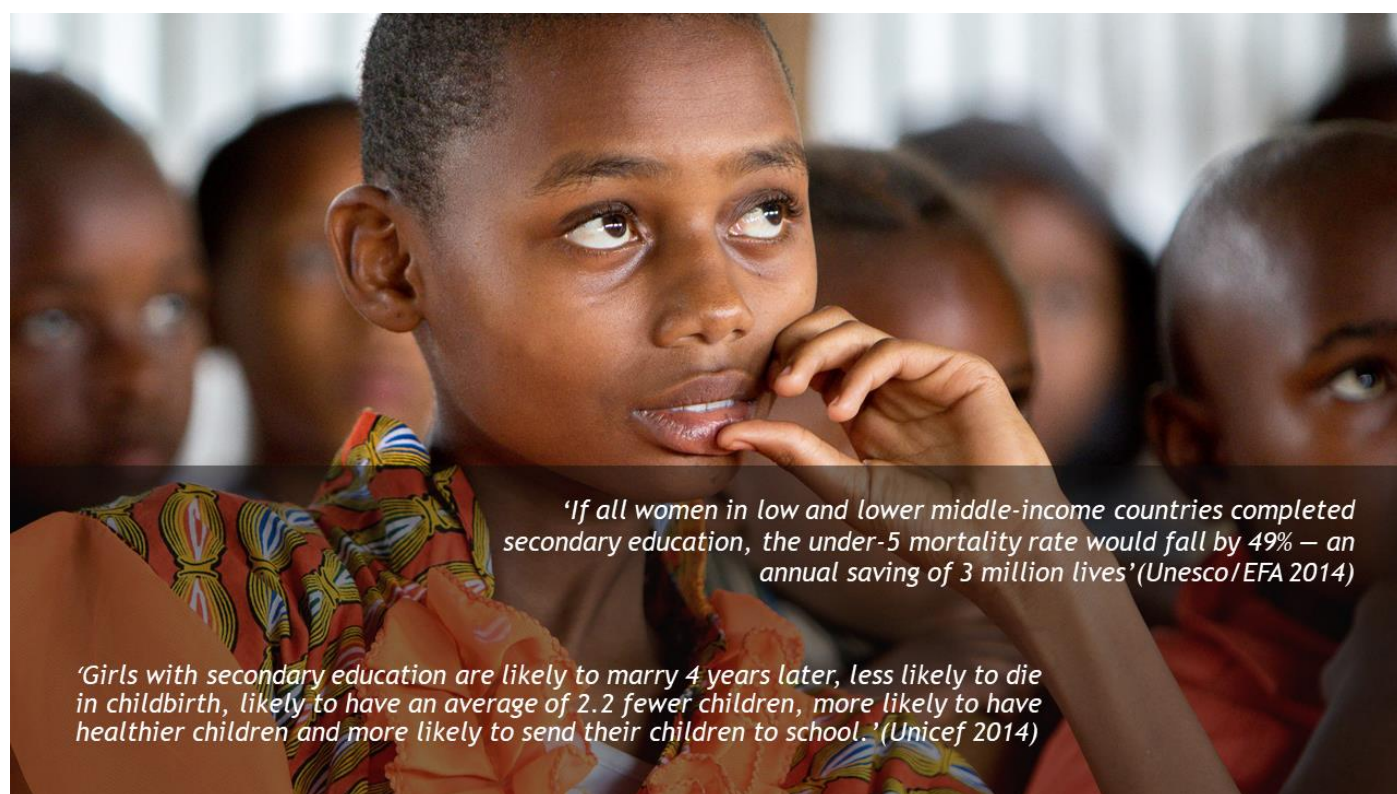
In fact, there is cause for celebration, towards the end of 2020, Virunga National Park experienced an unexpectedly rapid transformation thanks to an aggregated herd of about 580 African elephants that had crossed into the park from bordering Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park—and stuck around! Together with the 120 or so elephants already in Virunga, this new group of elephants makes up at least 700 individuals. The park's recent and critical conservation efforts in its central savanna is getting help from the elephants! As the elephants tear through the trees and pummel invasive bushes, they are also transforming the landscape back to a true grassland savanna, allowing the return of grazers and other wildlife species that have been absent from the park for the last two decades. [Read here](#) about how the park is also getting support from Leonardo DiCaprio, Global Wildlife Conservation, Emerson Collective, and the European Union and watch a short film about the [Virunga Fund](#) helping to restore to area for animals and people.

"There has been no greater expression of Virunga coming back to life," says park director Emmanuel de Merode of the elephants' arrival. "I arrived to the Congo 30 years ago, and I've never seen anything like this." [From National Geographic](#).

Let's hope we can visit for real very soon! Now though, we shall set our course towards Libreville Gabon – making it full cycle Around the Equator! Make it there and we shall celebrate more than 94,000 kilometres of #rafikirelay!

Keep going, you amazing lot!

Janne 🚶🚴🏠❤️



PHASE FOUR – RETURN TO CAIRO



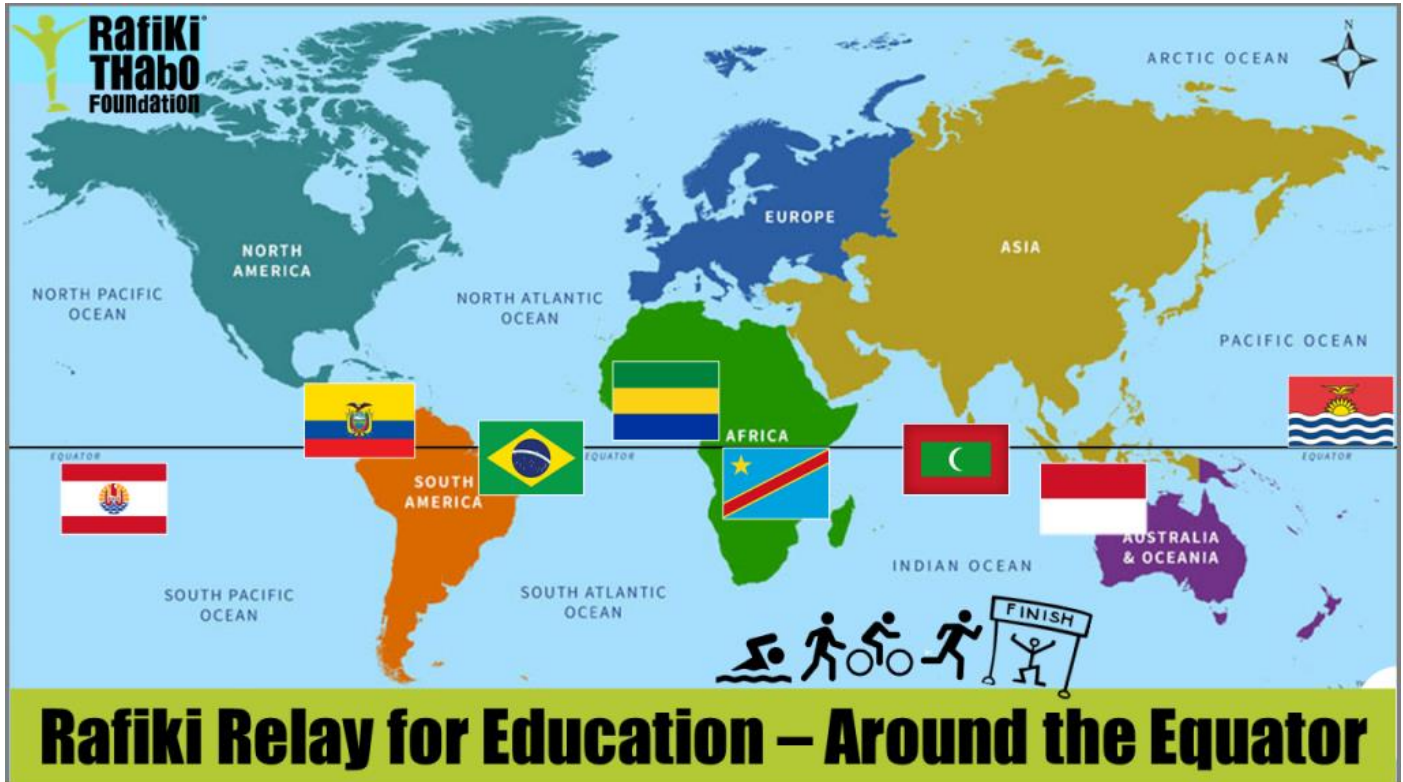
To think we needed a Phase 4!! With our schools teams going on half term, our pairs of feet would be significantly reduced for these last 5 and a bit days. What was going to be an achievable yet stretching target for our fabulous #rafikirelay teams? Could we possibly make it back to Cairo, where we started nearly 6 weeks ago? 6,600 km via Chad, making the total #rafikirelay challenge a whopping 100,753km!!

Yes, we could!! More than that, we returned to and even passed Cairo!

AROUND THE EQUATOR – WE DID IT! – PHASE 4 WILL NEED AN EXTRA PUSH!! (1st June)

#RAFIKIRELAY PHASE 3 COMPLETED! RETURNING TO CAIRO NEXT - SCHOOLS ARE OUT SO WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO STEP IT UP!

I am quite simply in awe of you all – we have just completed #rafikirelay Phase 3 – Around the Equator! Returning to Libreville in Gabon, we have trekked (our slightly extended) equator at 44,345km in 17 days! We have done 94,153km in 5 weeks!!



We have been through 32 milestones visiting Cape Town and Libreville twice as we completed Cairo to Cape Town, Around the Coastline of Africa and now, Around the Equator!

Together you have run, swam, cycled, or walked an average 2,690km per day, that's 18,830km per week! Just mind-blowing!

With 5 and a bit days to go, we commence Phase 4 of our adventures. Schools are on half term this week, so I think we need to set ourselves a realistic target... The average distance per week, based on the combined efforts of our solo, family & friends and works teams is 4,200km. I am thinking you are up for a bit of a challenge in this last push!!?

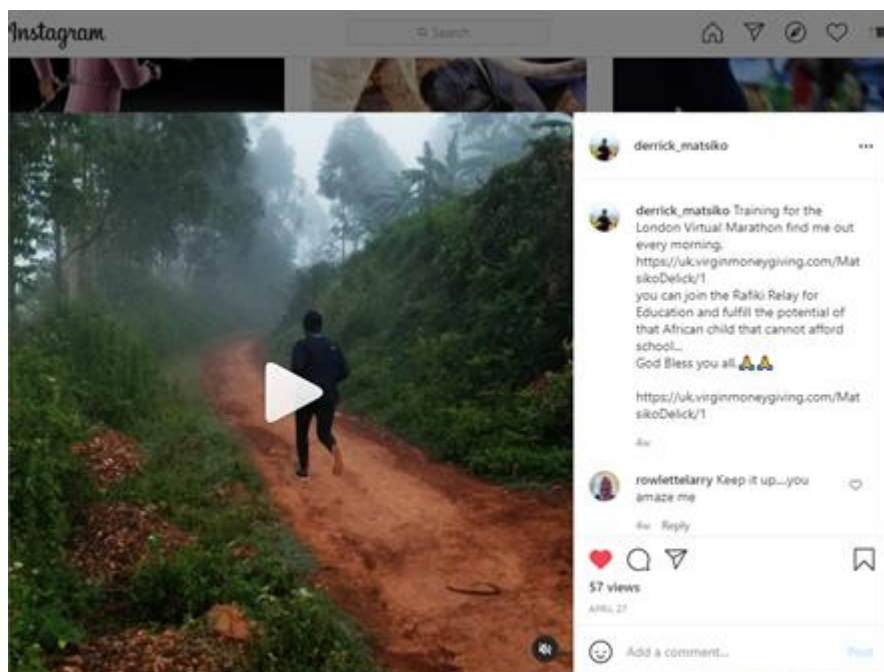
So today, fabulous #rafikirelay teams, we set our course for the 'Return to Cairo'. Via Cameroon, Chad, Sudan and then Egypt, that is 6,600km. Can we do it? I reckon we can, but it will require an extra push from everyone!! Wouldn't it be amazing to complete Phase 4 as well! Along the way we will explore Chad. It seems the Northern area of Chad where we find among other interesting sites, The Lakes of Ounianga, is unknown to Ms Google Maps so I am taking some 'artistic liberties' and calling in halfway in Phase 4 at 3,300km!

#rafikirelay teams, if we make it back to Cairo – where we started our Rafiki Relay for Education on the 26th of April – we will have collectively trekked a whopping 100,753km!

FEELING THE SOON-TO-END RELAY 'BLUES'??

For any of you who are starting to feel a certain 'blues' that our #rafikirelay adventure is soon over, despair not – we have a couple of Virtual London Marathon places up for grabs! All you have to do is run 26.2 miles on 3rd October this year, wherever you choose, and all we are asking in return for a place is that you commit to raising at least £200.

We are so excited that one of our Uganda graduates, Delick, is running the virtual marathon for us in Uganda. He is out training every day and has already raised 100,000 Ugx for Rafiki Thabo Foundation! We are so proud of him ❤️



Why not join Delick and run for Rafiki? Just drop our director Janet a line and she will help you from there! janet@rafiki-foundation.org.uk

Right then, onwards it is – I very much hope to see you in Chad in 3,300km – can we make it all the way to Cairo? 6,600km?

Great if you upload frequently this week so that we can keep tabs on our progress to the final finishing line!

Keep it up, let's see how far we can get! You have until midnight on Sunday 6th June!

Janne 🏃🏃🏃🏠❤️

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Look up [their website](#) for more information, however it is NYR Organic Independent Consultant Sarah Chapell who has kindly donated the prize.

QUITE SIMPLY – AMAZING!!!

[#rafikirelay](#) teams set out on the 26th April to trek Cairo to Cape Town – we thought it a huge challenge at 13,222km! They did it in 6 days! Unstoppable, our teams then set about the full Coastline of Africa! Surely that would take them to the end of the challenge?! Nope! Between them they swam, cycled, ran or walked around this beautiful continent in a mere 13 days and already raised a fabulous £5,836! Determined, enthusiastic and eager, the teams then took on [#rafikirelay](#) phase 3, the full length Around the Equator – and only 17 days later they have completed that as well! A total of 94,153km in 5 weeks!!

With just over 5 days left of Rafiki Relay for Education, and the school teams on half term, the challenge of phase 4 is to Return to Cairo! Can they trek 6,600km by Sunday night? Want to encourage them and help [#rafikirelay](#) raise even more money to empower children with education? Head to our JG page and donate what you can! <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rafikirelay>

Between them our wonderful [#rafikirelay](#) teams and their sponsors have raised an incredible £13,000 so far!!! A life changing amount for 6 young people in Uganda who can now all go to university for their entire Bachelors' Degree /or/ for 41 young Kenyan children who can now go to secondary school for a whole year /or/ for 161 of the poorest children at our link school in Uganda who will eat a nutritious meal at school every day for a whole year and who otherwise would have gone hungry. On behalf of them all, we are so very grateful!

Rafiki Thabo Foundation

#RAFIKIRELAY PHASE 3

'AROUND THE EQUATOR' COMPLETED!

The race is on to RETURN TO CAIRO! Will we get there by 6th June?!

£13,000

RAISED ALREADY!

THAT WILL PAY FOR 41 YOUNG KENYANS TO GO TO SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR A WHOLE YEAR!

Icons: Bicycle, Swimmer, Walker, Runner

UPDATE! HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE WILL YOUR #RAFIKIRELAY FUNDRAISING EMPOWER THROUGH EDUCATION? (2nd June)

Time for a fundraising update I reckon – we are so incredibly grateful to everyone for your generous donations and fabulous fundraising!

I love checking in on your Just Giving pages and reading your updates. It is also so very heart-warming to read the lovely comments from your sponsors, spurring you on with encouragement and expressing such wonderful thoughts about Rafiki Thabo's work. It means the absolute world to us that so many people have had the opportunity to learn about what we do, the impact you all help us have, and the power of education for the disadvantaged young people we support in Kenya, Uganda, and Lesotho.

This time I want to invite you to watch an amazing, short film! Here you will meet several of our scholars and learn more about our work and our impact. The chair of our Kenya committee, Liverson, talks passionately about how you, our supporters, help us transform lives. We could not do what we do without you! The film is a couple of years old, and we are delighted to have increased the number of scholars we now support to an amazing 218 this year, thanks to the generosity of people like you! Sit back with a cuppa and spend the next 4 minutes with our scholars <https://vimeo.com/300572055> 

You have now raised an amazing £13,003!!! That is enough to pay for 6 young people in Uganda to go to university and complete their entire Bachelors' Degree /or/ pay for 42 young Kenyan children to go to secondary school for a whole year /or/ provide a nutritious meal at school every day for a whole year for 163 of the poorest children at our link school in Uganda.

One young person who has been empowered to change his life with education, is Junior in Uganda. On Friday last week, Junior graduated with BSc in Business Administration!




As Junior now embarks on his bright future, he says:

"...my sincere gratitude and great appreciations goes directly to the Rafiki group which has done a tremendous work towards my education success and also great thanks to everyone who expeditiously tried to see that I reach on this day with joy and happiness! Thanks for everything, my mentor, my role model Rev Byaruhanga Benon [chair of Uganda committee] and big thanks to Rafiki, for helping me academically, in financial problems of schools and tuition at campus, may the Almighty God bless your hands and your families abundantly"

It would be amazing to see a final push on fundraising for the next two weeks, before we draw a virtual line on the 14th June and tally up medals and prize draw entries. Remind your friends, family, colleagues and neighbours about your fabulous Just Giving pages, share out our central page <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rafikirelay>, and if you haven't yet done so you are very welcome to make a donation for your participation in our fantastic Rafiki Relay for Education!

Remember, everyone who raises or donates £10 or more will get one of our amazing medals! These are now in production - take a look at this!! [Rafiki Relay medals in production \(video\)](#)!

Don't forget, one entry per twenty! Our fabulous prizes await! Check them out here [Rafiki Relay PRIZES](#) 
Keep it up troops! You are all amazing!!

Janne     

RETURN TO CAIRO - OUNIANGA LAKES, CHAD (4th June)

Rafiki Relay Phase 4 – really!!!!?? You are certainly keeping me out of trouble 😊 That was another 3,300km fabulous #rafikirelay teams! We have now trekked a staggering 97,453km! Can we make it all the way back to Cairo by Sunday night? It would be amazing wouldn't it! Make sure you upload every day so we can keep tabs and give it our all in this final push!

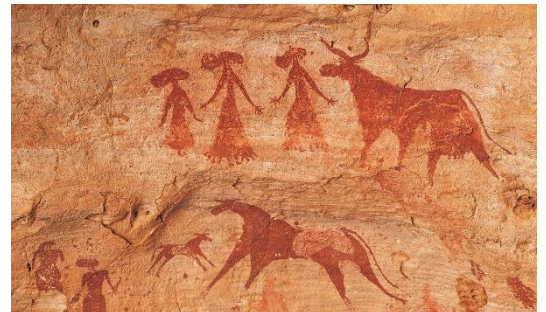


So...welcome to Chad! I must admit I knew pretty much nothing about this country until I researched it for our milestone, but it has so much excitement to offer! It is a completely land-locked state in north-central Africa. The country's terrain is that of a shallow basin that rises gradually from the [Lake Chad](#) area in the west and is rimmed by mountains to the north, east, and south. The capital, [N'Djamena](#), is almost 1,600 km by road from the western African coastal ports.

At 1.28 million sq km it is the fifth largest country on the continent, but as most of its northern part lies in the [Sahara](#) its population density is only about 8 persons per square km, totalling 11.8 million people. Most of the population lives by agriculture; cotton is

grown in the south, and cattle are raised in the central region. Chad joined the ranks of oil-producing countries in 2003, raising hopes that the revenues generated would improve the country's economic situation. The population of Chad presents a tapestry composed of different languages, peoples, and religions that is remarkable even amid the variety of Africa. More than 100 different languages and dialects are spoken in the country.

With its rich variety of peoples and languages, Chad possesses a valuable cultural heritage. The country is famed for the rock paintings of its ancient inhabitants, which can be found in abundance in the caves and rock overhangs of the [Tibesti Mountains](#). Especially well-preserved sites are located at Gonoa and Zouar. Terra-cotta heads and figures found at Gaou, near Lake Chad, are believed to be relics of the early [Sao civilization](#). Pictured here is prehistoric cave art from the Ennedi Plateau.



The country's capital, [N'Djamena](#), has a cosmopolitan air, with lively sidewalk cafés, small bars, and discotheques. These venues are sometimes used for a modern homegrown custom called *pari-match*, in which a private party is staged in a rented bar or public place, with the proceeds from alcohol sales going to the host to help pay for school tuition, home repairs, and other household expenses. The city is also known for its bazaars, which sell locally produced traditional goods and crafts such as textiles, camel-hair carpets and jackets, brass ornaments, and pottery. Also located in the capital is the [National Museum](#), which houses prehistoric and traditional artifacts. Chad also has a small but well-regarded music industry and the local people of Chad have long enjoyed traditional contests of strength and skill. In the south footraces have often figured in the coming-of-age rites of several groups, with courses extending to a hundred miles and more. Such races have also popularly accompanied cattle-driving festivals and other celebrations. In the hotter, drier north, camel races, archery competitions, and wrestling matches mark traditional wintertime festivals, which are still observed alongside Muslim holidays.

We are heading to the [Lakes of Ounianga](#), located in North-Eastern Chad in the Ennedi region of the Sahara Desert. The Lakes of Ounianga consists of 18 lakes in total which are supplied by so-called underground fossil water. The rain fell many thousands of years ago when the climate was much wetter than it is today. In fact, the lakes now only receive 2mm of rainfall each year. Some of the lakes are salty whereas others are fresh and support life. The lakes, covering an area of 62,808 ha, are Chad's sole [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#). It constitutes an exceptional natural

landscape of great beauty with striking colours and shapes. The lakes are found in two groups 40 km apart. Ounianga Kebir comprises four lakes, the largest of which, Yoan (pictured), covers an area of 358 ha and is 27 m deep. The second group, Ounianga Serir, comprises fourteen lakes separated by sand dunes. Floating reeds cover almost half the surface of these lakes reducing evaporation. The climatic history of the region is speculated to have a connection to human migrations at the end of the last ice age [about 11,000 years ago](#). If you fancy a little road trip from Ndjamena to the Lakes of Ounianga and back, exploring people, culture and the fascinating landscapes of Chad, [watch this film](#).



The home of [Ennedi desert](#) in the northeast region of Chad is a flat landscape occupied by nothing more than beetles and scorpions, but it is home to the most beautiful naturally sculpted rocks on the earth. Jut up stone arches and uneven rocks in the region are amazing natural work of art. It is one of the most dramatic landscapes in the world.

The Ennedi Plateau is considered a part of the group of mountains known as the [Ennedi Massif](#) found in Chad, which is one of the nine countries that make up the Sahelian belt that spans the Atlantic Ocean to Sudan. The Ennedi is a sandstone bulwark in the middle of the Sahara, which was formed by erosion from wind and temperature. Many people occupied

this area, such as hunters and gatherers and pastoralists. The Ennedi area is also known for its large collection of rock art depicting mainly cattle, as these animals served as the main source of financial, environmental, and cultural impact. This art dates back to nearly 7,000 years ago.

Another fabulous site is [Emi Koussi](#), a high pyroclastic shield volcano that lies at the southeast end of the Tibesti Mountains in the central Sahara, in the northern Borkou Region of northern Chad. The highest mountain of the Sahara, the volcano is [one of several in the Tibesti range](#), and reaches an elevation of 3,415 metres, rising 3km above the surrounding sandstone plains. The volcano is 60–70 kilometres wide and has a volume of 2,500 cubic kilometres. Two nested calderas cap the volcano, the outer one being about 15 by 11 kilometres in size. Within it on the southeast side is a smaller caldera known as Era Kohor, about 2 kilometres wide and 350 metres deep. Numerous lava domes, cinder cones, maars, and lava flows are found within the calderas and along the outer flanks of the shield. Era Kohor contains trona deposits, and Emi Koussi has been studied as an analogue of the Martian volcano Elysium Mons. Emi Koussi was active more than one million years ago, but some eruptions may be more recent, and there is ongoing fumarolic and hot spring activity.



I read that a visit to Chad is not for the fainthearted, saying that the country has been described as extreme in a continent that is full of destinations that will leave you out of your comfort zone. They list [14 of the best places to visit](#) though, so I reckon they still think it is worth the trip!

Final push now troops! Let's see how far we can get! Will it be Cairo by midnight 6th June?!

Janne 🏃‍♂️ 🚶‍♂️ 🚲 🏠 ❤️

WOW WE DID IT - WE'RE IN CAIRO! HOW FAR WILL WE GET BY MIDNIGHT TONIGHT? (6th June)

Simply amazing! 840km past Cairo already - keep logging your trekking today, let's see how far we can get by midnight!

HUGE CONGRATULATIONS amazing, unstoppable #rafikirelay teams! You did it, phase 4 completed as well! I took my eyes off the Big Team Challenge platform for one evening and you have already past Cairo and gone a further 840km!! WOWSERS!!!

Let's see how far we can get 🚶🚴🏠😓 - keep uploading your trekking today and I will come back to you all in the morning with our staggering final total distance!

Our #rafikirelay trekking may come to an end at midnight, but we have wonderful things yet to happen! I will continue to use this platform to communicate to you for the next couple of weeks as we tally up our fundraising, award medals, prize draw prizes and Celebration of Achievement! I thought you might also all like to receive a collated milestones booklet so that you can look back at all the wonderful places we have 'visited'! I will share a timeline for everything this coming week as well as our feedback survey which we would be incredibly grateful for your help with.

As mentioned, we will allow a further week, until Monday the 14th June, for everyone to do a last big push on fundraising and donations. To help with this I will also share a summary of our amazing achievement, some messages from scholars and a case study, to help you explain to your sponsors the immense impact every donation they make will have on young lives in Kenya, Uganda and Lesotho.

I also have some amazing news - we have a new sponsor! The wonderful TechPixies, who have been enthusiastically taking part in the #rafikirelay, have offered to sponsor Certificates for all participants as well as our stunning #rafikirelay medals, which will be awarded to everyone who raises or donates £10 or more!



The fit is perfect, as both organisations have education and empowerment at their heart. Rafiki Thabo empowers young girls and boys to fulfil their potential through education. TechPixies is an award-winning social enterprise that has empowered thousands of women to learn how to leverage social media in order to return to work, change careers or start a business through online learning. Check out their website for more information <https://techpixies.com/>

Thank you so much TechPixies!!

So... one last trekking-call-to-action then troops, keep those feet pedalling, swimming, walking or running! We have currently achieved 101,592.4km together - what will the final total be??!!

Have a fabulous Sunday - and do look out for my messages over the next couple of weeks. You don't want to miss out on your rewards! A certificate for everyone, medal for everyone raising or donating £10 or more, one prize draw entry for every £20 (how many will your team get!?), plus a collated milestones booklet for you to enjoy as you plan your next holiday!

Janne 🚶🚴🏠😓🏆🌍👏❤️

CONGRATULATIONS!! A WHOPPING 103,791KM IN 6 WEEKS! WHAT'S NEXT? (7th June)

It has been such a joy - don't miss out on the following updates!

What a journey!! Who would have thought that when we left Cairo on the 26th April, our Rafiki Relay for Education journey would take on FOUR whopping phases and turn into a massive 103,791km trek!

You have all been absolutely amazing and it has been such a pleasure to experience this virtual world adventure with you all! We do hope you have enjoyed it as well. That you have benefitted from lots of fresh air and exercise, have reached your personal goals, and take joy in a rewarding feeling of having pulled together for a great cause!

I will be sharing more updates over the coming couple of weeks so that you can feel proud knowing the exact impact your incredible effort will have on young, disadvantaged lives in Kenya, Uganda and Lesotho, whose lives are going to be transformed thanks to you!

There are more fabulous things coming your way though, as while the physical trekking is now over, my job is not quite done! Here is what to look out for:

- **This afternoon - Feedback survey will be issued!**
 - We would be so very grateful if you would kindly take a few minutes to give us some feedback on your experience taking part in #rafikirelay 2021. This was our first ever challenge event, and we would love your help to make sure the next one is even better!
- **Tomorrow - Fundraising final push!**
 - We have one more week to make sure #rafikirelay raises as much as possible to empower through education.
 - It would be amazing to have your help with a last push! Have you reached your Just Giving target? Do you have sponsorship promises to collect on? Maybe you wanted to wait until you had achieved your #rafikirelay goal before asking people to sponsor your effort? You might want to make your participation donation if you haven't yet done so? <https://www.justgiving.com/fun...>
 - I will provide a fundraising status and let you know the impact this will have. I will share some personal messages from our scholars and provide a case study, as well as a summary of our #rafikirelay achievement. Perhaps you want to share some of this with your friends and family, so that they know how important their donation would be.
 - **You have until Monday the 14th June** on this final fundraising push! After that I will tally it all up! I will allocate #rafikirelay medals to each participant who has raised (or donated) £10 or more. I will confirm how many Prize Draw entries each team will get - remember it's one entry for every £20 raised! We will also find out who gets to meet Tim Foster MBE in our Celebration of Achievement!
 - **Please note - anonymous donations - can't allocate!**
 - There were some anonymous donations early in the relay, if you think one of these may be from you, please e-mail me (janne@rafiki-foundation.org.uk) with the amount and the date you made the donation, so that I can allocate and make sure you get your medal!
 - Also, we had an anonymous donation this week for 'Maddy, John and Hannah' but without team name. Please reach out to me if this is you!
- **Week commencing 14th June**
 - Final total fundraising amount will be announced!

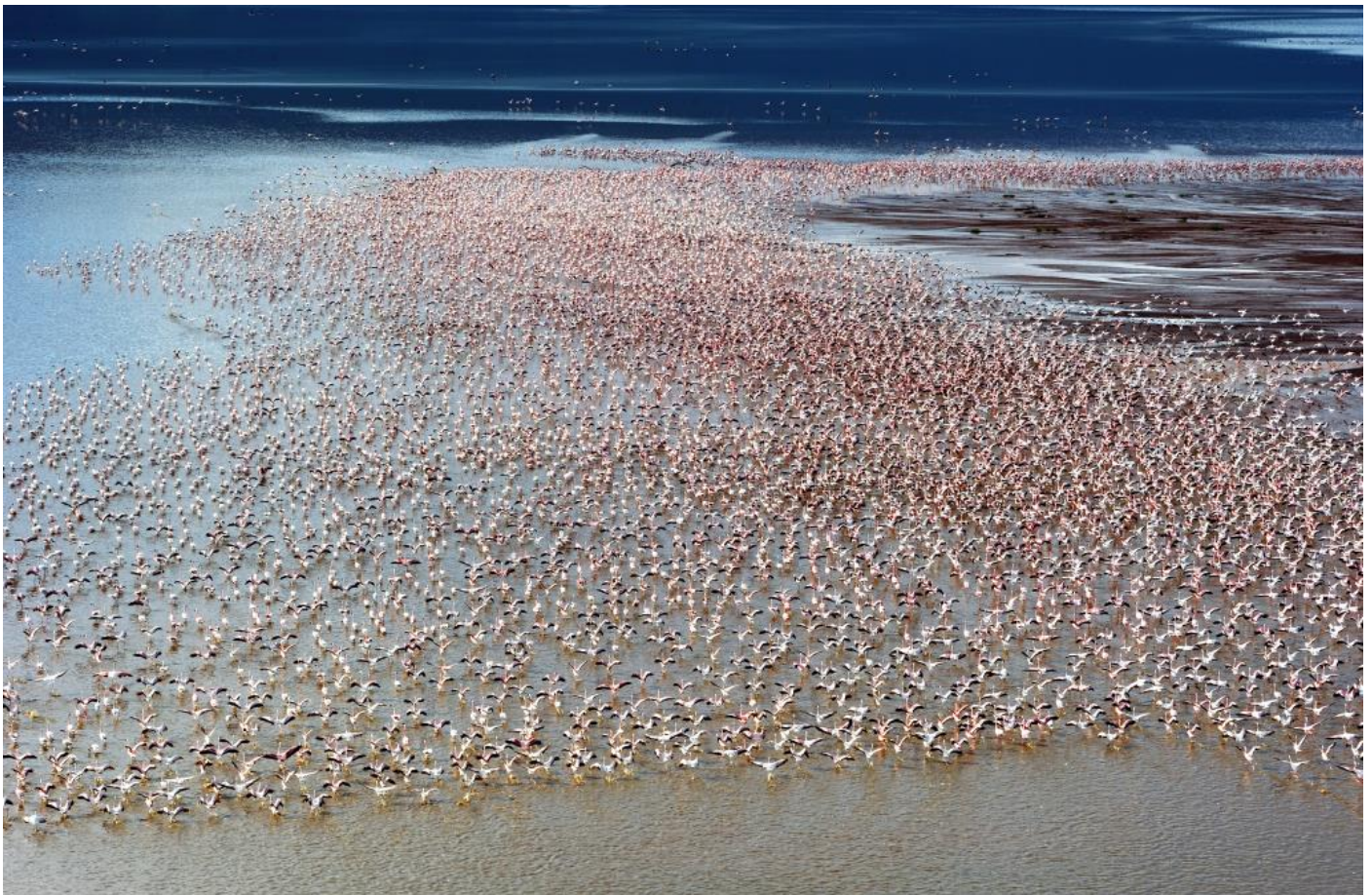
- School teams will have until Wednesday the 16th June to tell me how many medals have been achieved.
 - After that I will be able to order our amazing #rafikirelay medals. Assuming Zero Waste Medals can then confirm required production time, I will let you know when you will receive your medals!
 - As we are cost conscious, we will post out certificates, medals and prizes at the same time, once medals are finished. This does mean that there will be a little delay, but we hope you understand!
- **Week commencing 21st June**
 - You will all receive your 'Rafiki Relay for Education 2021 - Milestones and Achievements' booklet! This will come from my Rafiki e-mail (as I can't attach documents here on BTC) or, if the file is too large, I will share a link for you to download from Google Drive.
 - We will announce Prize Draw winners and Celebration of Achievement winners!

I think that will do for now!

While we hope you will all continue to enjoy the outdoors, your cycling, walking, running or swimming, you definitely deserve a good rest now!

Look out for the Feedback survey this afternoon!

Janne 🧑 🚲 🏃 🏠 🏆 😊 🌍 🧑 🧡



#RAFIKIRELAY - 4 INCREDIBLE PHASES – 2000 PAIRS OF FEET – 102,693 KM – WOW!!!!

Never in our wildest dreams did we imagine that we could make it this far in 6 weeks! At midnight the last step was counted and our amazing **#rafikirelay** teams had walked, cycled, swum or ran more than ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND kilometres! They had taken on....

- 🌍 CAIRO TO CAPE TOWN... in 6 days!
- 🌍 AROUND THE COASTLINE OF AFRICA... that wasn't far enough either!
- 🌍 AROUND THE EQUATOR... finished with 5 days to go!
- 🌍 RETURN TO CAIRO... yup – by Saturday evening!

And then some!!

This has been so much fun, and as the adrenaline settles down I reckon I for one will start to feel a little blue!

The **#rafikirelay** dust hasn't quite settled yet though! We have until Monday the 14th June to make sure **#rafikirelay** 2021 raise as much as we possibly can to empower young people through education!

So far the amazing **#rafikirelay** teams have raised a whopping £13,819! This can pay for 9 children in Uganda to complete their entire secondary schooling, empowering them to transform their lives! 8 out of 10 children in Uganda never go to secondary school, 63% of the population live on less than £1.50 per day – and a year at secondary school costs an average £350....



(Further mileage was provided by some teams after the close of the Big Team Challenge platform, the above social media post did not include that, and as such says 102,693km instead of 103,791)

FUNDRAISING UPDATE – IMPACT AND SCHOLAR MESSAGES ❤️ (8th June)

Amazing, you have raised an incredible £14,032 now! Thank you so much to everyone for your incredible efforts!

You are all #rafikirelay fundraising heroes, and some of you truly are going that extra mile! 🙏 It would be fantastic to drive the total up even further by Monday, and to help you with that, I wanted to share some more insights into the impact you will have on the young people that you help us empower through education. Read some amazing stories below, of lives transformed with education!

Why not share with your friends and family your personal achievement as part of the #rafikirelay challenge, how many kilometres did you personally run, walk, swim or cycle? Tell them how you contributed to our amazing £102,693km trek, from Cairo to Cape Town – Around the Coastline of Africa – Around the Equator – Return to Cairo – and then some!! They can't fail to be impressed with your amazing effort!

Let them know that no donation is too small, it takes so little to help someone transform their lives:

- 35p will pay for a nutritious school lunch for a child that would otherwise go hungry and not have the energy to concentrate at school
- £1.75 will feed that child for a whole week. Often the only meals he or she will eat that week
- £80 is all it takes to ensure he or she doesn't go hungry for a whole school year
- £150 provides half a year at secondary school for a child in Lesotho
- £312 allows a child in Kenya to go to secondary school for a whole year
- £720 pays for a year at university for a young person in Uganda
- £1,500 pays for the whole secondary education for a child in Uganda
- £2,865 allows a student in Kenya to study a 3 year Bachelors Degree

Now imagine the impact you will have with the £14,032 you have raised so far! Here's that link again! <https://www.justgiving.com/fun...>

Motsamai lost his father when he was 6 years old. His mother had to take work in South Africa as a domestic help, in order to provide food on the table for Motsamai and his siblings. Motsamai went to our partner school in Lesotho, Ha Fusi, but his mother could not afford for him to go to high school. Rafiki Thabo was able to support him, after which he was able to progress on to university without our support as the government provides free places for young people to study at the national university.

"I'm so touched by what Rafiki Thabo Foundation do for young ambitious Basotho like me. To be honest it's so difficult to get quality education but Rafiki Thabo Foundation make it happen for us, inspired by this great work done by Rafiki Thabo Foundation, I so wish to help many young talents in any way possible."

Motsamai recently passed his Marketing Management degree with Distinction!!



'In Lesotho, 65% of all children are multidimensionally poor, that is they are simultaneously deprived of education, health, protection, water, housing, and information.' (Child Poverty in Lesotho Report – UNICEF 2018)
'More than a quarter of the population (27.3%) live on less than £1.34 per day' (World Bank, 2017), yet the average cost to attend secondary school is £300

The impact of education is well documented:

'In Uganda, owners of household enterprises who have completed lower secondary education earned 56% more than those with no education. As well as helping lift households out of poverty permanently, education guards against them falling – or falling back – into poverty.' (UNESCO/EFA, 2014)

'I will be the first person in my family to graduate, it's so exciting for me. It means I will be setting an example to my young ones.'

Constance, BA Education
 (Economics), Kabale University,
 Uganda



"Education has empowered me to make choices and know my rights as a young woman. Rafiki Thabo's support has saved me from early marriage and Female Genital Mutilation which is practiced by my community. Without education, by now I would have maybe five children. Education has changed the way I perceive life"

Caroline, BA in Development Studies, Mount Kenya University, 2018

'Girls with secondary education are likely to marry 4 years later, less likely to die in childbirth, likely to have an average of 2.2 fewer children, more likely to have healthier children and more likely to send their children to school.'(Unicef 2014)

'If all women in low and lower middle-income countries completed secondary education, the under-5 mortality rate would fall by 49% — an annual saving of 3 million lives'(Unesco/EFA 2014)

Janne 🏆👤❤️🏆👤🌍



SOCIAL MEDIA CELEBRATION 22nd JUNE

WE ARE THRILLED to announce that our amazing #rafikirelay teams and their sponsors raised a whopping £16,092 between them!!! This is a staggering amount and together the teams are truly helping young people transform their lives with education! These are young lives for whom paying for education would otherwise have been impossible, young lives who would have remained in poverty, never fulfilled their potential or realised their dreams. Instead, with #rafikirelay teams' support....

👤 10 children in Kenya, Uganda or Lesotho can now complete their entire 5-year secondary schooling, or

👤 6 young people in Kenya can study for 3 years and graduate from university with a Bachelor's Degree, or

🍲 70 children who would otherwise go hungry, can receive free school meals at our link school in Uganda every day for 3 years!

All of them empowered through education to embrace bright futures!

THANK YOU! You are all #rafikirelay for education heroes!

We are forever grateful also to our amazing and generous sponsors, who enabled every single penny raised to go directly to our programmes. Fabulous social enterprise travel agent [@charitabletraveller](#) our headline sponsor! Medals and certificates sponsor [@techpixies](#) offering phenomenal social media magic and life coaching for women! Terrific prize sponsors [@experience_days](#) [@tropicskincare](#) [katep](#) [@spiritualbeautywith](#) [@unbelievablemagic](#) [@quite.the.champion](#) [@saspsdesings](#) [@persistencelondon](#) Inspirational supporter [@harryjohnbaker](#) [@mara_yamauchi](#) [Tim Foster MBE](#) and [@theamarlatif](#)



Our final #rafikirelay celebration post!!

#rafikirelay Certificates and Medals will be posted out shortly, Prize Draw takes place this week – watch out for winners' announcement! With this we conclude the Rafiki Relay for Education Adventure for 2021 – we hope many of you will join us again for future events!

Read on for Rafiki Thabo info and how to stay in touch, our inspirational #rafikirelay supporters and a list of all the #rafikirelay 2021 teams and their final total distances trekked!

THANK YOU EVERYONE – YOU ARE AMAZING –TOGETHER WE ARE TRANSFORMING LIVES

Rafiki Thabo Foundation believe that a lack of hope and education is true poverty, and our vision is that young people, including those living with disabilities, will be empowered through education to fulfil their potential and initiate positive change in their communities. We are an Oxfordshire based charity which aims to enable children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Kenya, Uganda, and Lesotho to reach their full potential by removing the barriers to them attending secondary school and higher education.



Young people like Praise, a remarkable and incredibly brave young woman, whose dream is to become a lawyer so that she can fight corruption and fight for justice in Uganda. She was born with normal sight but lost her vision completely as a young child. Her father abandoned the family due to her disability and left her mother as the sole breadwinner for four children – she could not afford to pay for their education, just food. Relatives were able to help Praise through her early years, but without Rafiki Thabo's support, Praise would not have been able to start secondary school. We are delighted to say she is doing extremely well at school – and have all faith in her realising her dream of becoming a lawyer! It costs only £325 per year to help this courageous young woman transform her life. Yet, 8 in 10 children in Uganda never go to secondary school, as 63% of the population live on less than £1.50 per day.

Praise is one of 218 young people we are currently supporting through our scholarship programme, 40 of whom are living with disabilities. We provide bursaries to these bright young people who have gained a place at school/university but for whom paying school fees are insurmountable, often orphans or living in single parent households where even putting food on the table is a daily challenge. Without support, these children would remain at home working manual labour to help feed their family or be married off at a tender age. With an education, they are empowered to believe in their futures and pursue their dreams; they can marry for love, they will secure paid, meaningful employment, send their own children to school and can lift themselves and their families out of poverty. They will give back to their communities and contribute to the wider economic development of their countries.

In addition to our scholarship programme, our 'Eat Well to Learn' programme provides nutritious school meals to the very poorest students at our link school in Uganda, for many the only meal they will eat each day. Without it they would walk for hours to and from school in hazardous terrain and be expected to concentrate and learn while at school, on an empty stomach. We also enable education through infrastructure and facilities' support at our link schools in Kenya, Lesotho, and Uganda. This includes revenue generating projects such as piggeries and chicken coops, electricity supply and refurbishing dormitories to allow the children to stay overnight at school, be safe and better able to learn.

The drive behind Rafiki Thabo is clear: Positive and sustainable change in local economy, politics and health can and will happen. Gender equality and an end to poverty is possible. Underpinning it all is education!

Thank you for your support, enabling us to continue our work!



@rafikithabofoundation



@RafikiThabo

<https://rafiki-foundation.org.uk/>

#RAFIKIRELAY TEAMS – TOTAL DISTANCE BY CATEGORY – WELL DONE ALL, AMAZING!!!

SOLO	KMs
Juliet Hodson	1,201
Arani and Andy	693
Ross	608
Amber	529
Daddy Pilbeam	457
DebbieM	379
shannons	330
Baker's Barmy Army	329
Faith	284
Sophia's Team	209
josepeco	195
Team Yash	166
Black Panther	128
Marcie & I	56
Team Hannah	52
Team VB	50
Team Sam	31
the "winner"	3
	5,700

FAMILY & FRIENDS	KMs
Team Shaw	2,260
The Mighty Hayeses	1,693
BnGCC	1,615
Team Heyford	1,275
Team Jarman	1,176
The Dreams Team	1,155
Team Hicks	923
JAMS	890
Team Podengo	854
Nikhil and Ashray's Crew	795
The Young & the Breathless!	702
Wrangles Family	648
Rainbow Dragon	645
OneForTheRoad	637
The Blonde Vikings	631
Team Whitbread	548
With a huff and a puff!	530
Are we there yet?	405
Little Wren	338
JaNiES	195
The Marretts	166
The Bobblers	98
Team Carras	52
Goodbees	3
	18,234

SCHOOLS	KMs
Deddington	4,218
Team Sibford Junior School	3,719
Dr Radcliffe's Primary School	1,581
Lifton Primary School	1,052
Clanfield School	538
	11,108

SCHOOL CLASSES	KMs
JMS 7GRG	5,045
JMS 12CP	4,815
JMS10ROR	4,600
JMS 10APD	4,403
JMS - 12ADM/RWM	4,303
JMS 9AJW	4,036
JMS 8AME	3,765
JMS 8ELM	3,607
JMS 10SJD	3,485
JMS 10GAF	3,313
JMS 10 SJP	3,258
JMS 9LRG	2,821
JMS 8LJB	2,467
JMS 7AKT	2,392
JMS 7SGB	2,254
JMS 7MBM	2,054
JMS 9SJM	1,868
JMS 12CLW	1,483
JMS 11AMC	1,194
JMS 10TH	1,132
JMS 8SMA	404
JMS 11AJT	351
JMS 9JEG	338
JMS 12KCF	227
JMS 9AJS	201
JMS 9ERB	183
JMS 11JD	176
JMS 12AMT	60
	64,235

WORKS TEAMS	KMs
Team TechPixies	4,514

TOTAL #RAFIKIRELAY TEAMS
103,791

WE WOULD LOVE TO STAY IN TOUCH!

It has been so special to take on this Rafiki Relay for Education challenge with you all. Reading such wonderful comments and hearing such lovely and encouraging support and feedback from so many of you.

If you would like to stay in touch with us, whether simply to hear about our work, see the impact of your hard #rafikirelay efforts, or maybe to take part in future challenges, fundraise for us, volunteer with us, etc, there are many ways in which you can opt to do so. We would also love to hear from any companies or business owners who would like an exploratory chat about how we can build a mutually beneficial charity partnership.

👤 Want to receive our newsletter, average 3 x per year, to hear updates from our programmes and heads up about upcoming events? Sign up on our website <https://rafiki-foundation.org.uk/category/newsletter/>

👤 Follow us on social media!



👤 Want to have a chat about something? Contact Janne Pilbeam our Events and Partnership Manager on 07967 717306 or drop me a line on janne@rafiki-foundation.org.uk or our Director Janet Hayes on janet@rafiki-foundation.org.uk

👤 Want to help us improve our events? Complete our #rafikirelay feedback survey, it will only take a minute or two and would make the world of difference to us! <https://docs.google.com/forms/...>

What's next for Rafiki Thabo Foundation?

Our next event is for our corporate and business friends! A fabulous day of competition, socialising and networking at Middle Aston House – get in touch if this is of interest! More information will follow in social media shortly – date for your diary is Saturday 18th September! **The Rafiki Thabo Challenge 2021** sees teams of 6 compete against each other in a series of practical problem-solving activities set in the grounds of Middle Aston House in rural Oxfordshire.

Listen out for us on BBC 4 towards Christmas time! We are so excited to have been awarded one of their coveted Charity Appeals! We shall be sure to tell you more about this over the coming months as well!



WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO... OUR AMAZING SUPPORTERS!

When we started discussing who would be, not only our dream supporters for **Rafiki Relay for Education**, but also who would feel right... have a genuine affinity with our cause... inspire our scholars, as well as our participants – not to forget someone we would be proud to be associated with – we could not have visualised any that we would be more excited about and more honoured to announce as Rafiki Relay for Education Supporters than these amazing individuals.

Their talent, tenacity and accomplishment despite their individual circumstances and personal challenges is awe-inspiring!

HARRY BAKER

We are so proud to have the support of **Cerebral Palsy England International Footballer HARRY BAKER!** Harry is incredibly inspirational and a real role model for our scholars and graduates with his success in the face of adversity. We hope they will take courage and motivation from Harry's ability to fulfil his dreams despite the bleak outlook he was given.



photos by SportsDirectFootball

“To hear the stories about young people who have benefitted from Rafiki’s programmes, like Wycliffe who was born with a disfigured foot and could not go to school but who thanks to Rafiki was able to go to school and university and better his life, make you realise that some of us are so privileged and we just need to take time and look after other people” **Harry Baker 12th March 2021**

Harry was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy at birth and his parents were told he wouldn't walk, he would never achieve anything. With the support of his family together with sheer determination and perseverance, Harry proved the doctors wrong (to their delight). He trained himself to walk, and that was only the start. Despite being bullied at school for walking funnily, he had the support and resilience to push through these challenges and secure his education while also becoming a standout footballer – so much so that he was scouted, and now plays for England!! Harry has played more than 30 matches for his country, travelled the world representing his country and played in two World Cups and won a European Golden Boot!

Harry is passionate about boosting the awareness of people with disabilities and disability sport, and is actively reaching out to the younger generation to help them understand and be sympathetic to different abilities and also to encourage them to never give up on their dreams regardless of how insurmountable their challenge may be.

Jack FM recently interviewed Harry and he talked passionately about supporting Rafiki Thabo and our Relay. Amazing! Harry will be taking part in the relay himself and is planning to add up the kilometres by running while training with his England squad! Watch Harry's personal video message about his own inspirational path to becoming an International footballer, his encouragement to our scholars and to young people everywhere to work hard on their education and reach for their goals, as well as his passionate and enthusiastic call to action: ***"Please sign up and join in, because it is a great way to raise money and awareness for a brilliant charity, who do brilliant work for young people to get an education!"*** [watch video](#) We are so grateful for all your support Harry!

TIM FOSTER MBE

TIM FOSTER MBE is regarded as one of Britain's most successful rowers of all time due to his incredible career in which he won numerous gold medals, including his gold medal as part of the coxless four at the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000!

His success truly demonstrates what can be achieved with drive, resilience and determination, it also showcases the importance of interrelationships and empowering each other in a team.

Tim is "passionate about being the best and about empowering people for success and personal vitality."

We are so very grateful to Tim for supporting our Relay, helping us put the spotlight on the importance of empowering young people through education, for his generous donation of a motivational talk to our Prize draw and for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for some of our participants to join Tim in our "Celebration of Achievement!"

Visit his website for more about Tim – Olympic Gold Medallist, Speaker, Executive Coach, Business Consultant and Strategist [Read more about Tim](#)

Thank you Tim for all your support!

"I am passionate about being the best and about empowering people for success and personal vitality. For the young people in Kenya, Uganda, and Lesotho that Rafiki Thabo support, this empowerment comes through education. Without support, these children would not be able to afford school fees, and their aspirations and dreams of an education, escaping poverty, and fulfilling their potential would be unobtainable. Join me in supporting Rafiki Thabo's amazing and life transforming work, by taking part in Rafiki Relay for Education – raising money to help support more children through school while we collectively take on the 13,222 km journey through Africa from Cairo to Cape Town! A huge challenge, which can only be achieved with teamwork!" **Tim Foster MBE, 25/03/2021**



MARA YAMAUCHI

MARA YAMAUCHI is a two-time Olympian, the 2nd fastest GB marathon runner ever! Mara developed her lifetime passion for running, growing up in Kenya and decided at only 11 years old that she wanted to become an Olympian having been inspired by the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

It took 24 years and a huge amount of motivation, perseverance and overcoming setbacks before she realised her dream at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and then again at the historic London Olympics in 2012! A true inspiration and demonstration how we should never give up on our dreams.

Mara retired from elite competition in 2013 and holds a British Athletics 'Athletics Coach' licence. She offers coaching to all levels of distance runners, covering topics including training, race preparation, nutrition, hydration, injury-prevention, strength & conditioning, and mental training. She coaches in person or remotely, and offers coaching individually or in small groups. She also does running workshops



and talks (theory and/or practical) for clubs, companies and other organisations. Please visit her website to [learn more about Mara - Olympian – Coach – Speaker](#)

We are so grateful to Mara for being such an inspiration, for her generous donation of a 1-2-1 running coaching session for our Prize Draw and for her support!

AMAR LATIF

We are so very excited to announce that **AMAR LATIF, the Blind Adventurer**, is supporting our Relay! Amar says of Rafiki Thabo that we are 'a really wonderful charity'! Amar is so incredibly inspirational, and such a role model to everyone who has experienced challenges that seem impossible to overcome, and especially for our scholars who are living with disabilities. If you have not yet seen it, [watch him on Ted Talk!](#)

His determination not to let his perceived disability stand in the way of success resulted in fulfilling his dreams, first becoming an accountant and eventually Head of Commercial Finance for British Telecom, despite being told 'a blind person could not be an accountant', and then in his travels.

Amar is a passionate traveller and adventurer. He first caught the travel bug in his third year of university, when he spent a year abroad studying in Canada. The experience showed Amar that being blind didn't



have to mean never seeing the world, but when he sought to take his adventures further afield he found himself facing rejection after rejection. Conventional travel companies refused to take him as an independent blind traveller, and so Amar set out to establish a company that would. Determined to travel the world, and to empower thousands of other blind travellers to do the same, Amar founded [Traveleyes](#). Now a world-unique, award-winning tour operator, Traveleyes offers over 70 destinations a year, and provides an innovative

way for blind and sighted travellers to explore the world together.

Visit his [travel company website](#) and let Amar show you the world! [Read more about Amar](#)

Thank you Amar, for being such an inspiration to us all! We are so grateful for your support, endorsing our cause and our relay!

