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Kiwis set to embark on 25,000km ride for charity

in [News](#). 24 Nov 2009.

With limited motorcycle experience, five young Kiwi blokes will attempt to ride from Vladivostok, Russia to London, England



The crew of five - all in their mid-twenties - say they decided to tackle the 25,000 kilometre trip "because we were tired of only talking and dreaming about big ideas - we wanted to actually do something: we wanted to tackle the biggest project we could imagine".

Before deciding to take the trip last year, only one of the five crew members could ride a motorbike. "We had to learn the hard way, by figuring out how to ride our bikes as we drove them out of the Suzuki dealership for the first time," says Rob Gray, corporate lawyer, aged 24.

That was a year ago. Since then, the crew have invested time, effort and money into gaining the skills necessary to be self-sufficient on a trip across the world.

"We didn't just have to learn how to ride", Mike Jacobson, a business strategist, says, "we also had to learn how to fix our bikes - if anything goes wrong, we'll be on our own."

The crew have also dedicated time to learning to speak Russian, training in first aid and practising for life on the road by taking a number of trips around back-country New Zealand.

The guys' route stretches for 25,000 kilometres, spanning 18 countries and a variety of cultures, climates and regions.

"We have to be prepared to face everything", comments Misha Kravcenko, a PE teacher in South Auckland. "We will be crossing some of the world's worst roads, highest mountains, hottest deserts and most remote areas."

Completing the trip, dubbed *The 51st Traverse*, as the route loosely follows the 51st parallel, is not the only challenge. The crew have decided to try and raise \$25,000 for Living Hope, a New Zealand-registered charity based in Vladivostok that works with local street children.

"I spent some time with Russian street children a couple of years ago", says Rob, "just long enough to be shocked by the conditions they live in. In weather so cold most people don't venture outside (dropping as low as -40°C) these kids were forced to wander the streets, shunned by society, sleeping in sewers and basements."

For more information or to make a donation, visit www.51st.co.nz



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