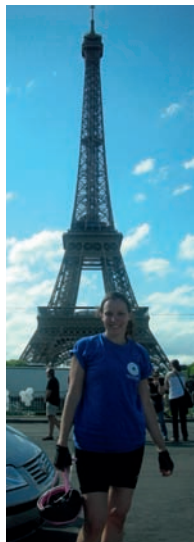


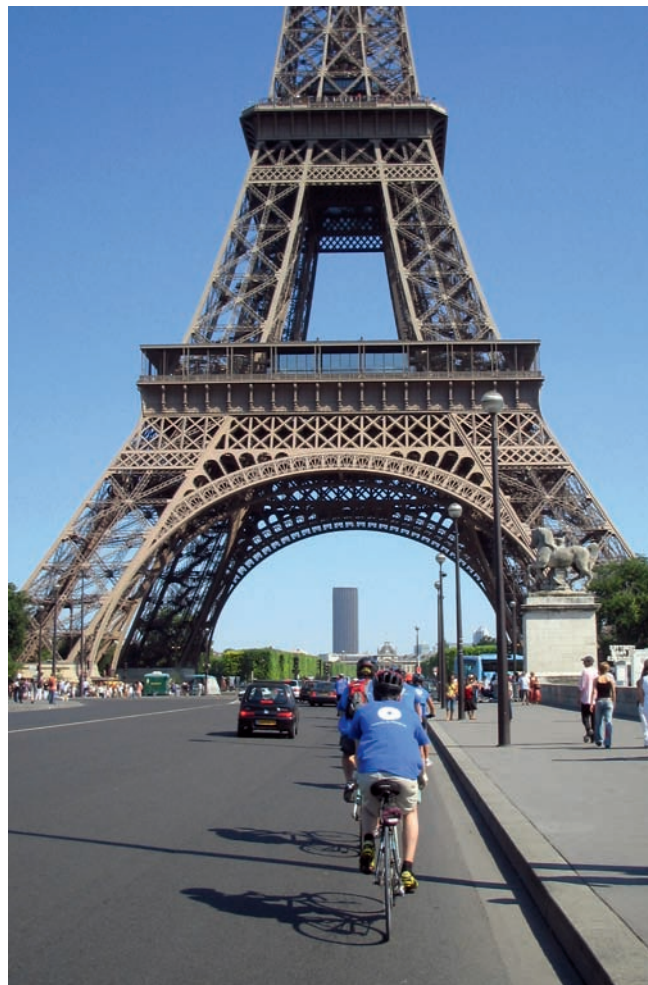
## LONDON TO PARIS BIKE RIDE

Bray. With rosy cheeks and weary legs I was delighted to see the hotel in the distance in the picturesque town of Gournay-en-Bray.

Heavy skies greeted us the next morning but that wasn't enough to dampen our spirits as an excited buzz filled the breakfast room. Any thoughts of fatigue from the previous day had long since vanished with our goal now in striking distance. Gideon was quick to remind us that we still had to cycle more than 100 kilometres to reach our target but that didn't alter the jubilant mood. We whizzed through dormant villages yet to wake and cycled along narrow lanes lined with hedgerows sprinkled with yellow primroses. By stage two the villages were coming to life with church bells chiming and locals waving us on. The landscape shifted from vast expanses of countryside to more urban settings as we edged into the suburbs of Paris. After lunch we entered a wooded area known as Le Parc aux Étoiles before beginning the steep descent towards the River Seine, crossing it near Poissy and then heading uphill en route to Saint-Germain-en-Laye. We crossed the Seine twice more and then had our last uphill slog that took us into Bois de Boulogne on the western edge of Paris where we regrouped for our final water stop. After a brief rain shower the grey skies lifted to expose warm sunshine as if to welcome us to Paris. Spurred on by the thought of *steak-frites* and a glass of red I pushed aside any aches and pains, particularly as sights of the City of Light that I know so well came into view. Dressed in our blue charity t-shirts we were like a sea of cyclists as we made our way down the cobbled Parisian streets straining for the first glimpse of the Eiffel Tower, everyone ringing their bells in excitement. We cycled past Trocadéro, with crowds of tourists cheering us on, and made our final crossing of the Seine on Pont d'Iena



**ABOVE: Anna celebrates reaching the finish line**  
**RIGHT: Cycling over the River Seine for the last time**



with Paris' most famous monument in full view and emotions running high. The realisation of the enormity of what we had just done hit home and as we arrived at our final destination at the Champs de Mars there were tears of joy from many riders – including me. I'm happy to say that after three days of cycling I'm a convert to the sport and now that I've got a bike and conquered my fear of the roads, I'll be back to discover many other areas of France on two wheels. 🚲

## FRANCOFILE

Be inspired to do your bit for charity. Here are a few ideas

### Cycle

The next London to Paris bike ride in aid of Médecins du Monde takes place 22-25 July 2010. This year's event coincides with the finale of the Tour de France on the Champs Élysées. Participants must pledge to raise at least £1,100 in sponsorship. Visit the website for more information and fundraising ideas.

Tel: 0207 515 7534 or visit [www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk](http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk)

### Swim

It can take years to train for a cross-Channel swim but past participants, including celebrity David Walliams who did it for Sport Relief in 2006, have battled through freezing temperatures to swim the 34-kilometre

route from Dover to Cap Griz Nez.

Tel: 01509 554 137 or visit [www.channelswimmingassociation.com](http://www.channelswimmingassociation.com)

### Run

There are all sorts of marathons that take place in France so whether you want to pound the streets of Paris or explore the vineyards of Médoc, there's something for all types of runners. For a detailed list of all the marathons in France this year visit [www.marathons.fr](http://www.marathons.fr) which even lists events in the *départements d'outre-mer* and *territoires d'outre-mer* (DOM-TOM) if you want to head further afield.

### Walk

If trekking is more your thing, Time Outdoors organises two charity walking challenges in

France. Choose from a five-day trek which follows the old trading routes along the highest part of the Pyrénées or on eight-day Mont Blanc trek which spans France, Switzerland and Italy.

Tel: 08456 585 600 or visit [www.timeoutdoors.com](http://www.timeoutdoors.com)

### MÉDECINS DU MONDE

Supporting doctors around the world  
Tel: 0207 515 7534  
[www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk](http://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk)

### CLASSIC TOURS

Organise challenge events, including bike rides, runs and walks, for a variety of charities.  
Tel: 0207 619 0066  
[www.classictours.co.uk](http://www.classictours.co.uk)