

WE ALL NEED HEROES

HOWEVER YOUNG OR OLD WE ARE.

Heroes who inspire us, make us dream and dare us to try a little harder. Most of my heroes are adventurers. This book tells the stories of their daring feats and epic journeys.

When I was a child, I used to wish that I could head off like my heroes in search of new experiences and a life packed with excitement. To my surprise, I eventually did just that. Made bold by the likes of Dervla Murphy and Ibn Battuta, I left normal life behind and jumped onto my bike. I spent four years cycling round the world, having exactly the sort of adventures that my heroes wrote about. That journey changed my life.

I have met many people who have regretted *not* going on an adventure in their life, but I have *never* met someone who was sorry that they did.

Since cycling round the world I have been on many more exciting expeditions. Enchanted by Laurie Lee's



“Spending your life doing what you love is a magical privilege – another reason to follow the path of your heroes.”

writing, I followed his footsteps through Spain, playing music on the streets for spare change. I have trekked through the scorching silence of the Empty Quarter desert in Arabia, like Wilfred Thesiger, copied Thor Heyerdahl in crossing a huge ocean in a tiny boat, and even applied to be an astronaut like Michael Collins. I failed the very first intelligence tests, but I'm still glad I gave it a shot!

I don't pretend that my trips matched up to their famous tales, but the connections were still special for me. Over time, Ranulph Fiennes' and Benedict Allen's careers made me believe that I might also turn my passion into my job. And I have – I am an adventurer and a writer. Sometimes I feel lucky. At other times, I just feel I chose the right path.

In this book, I introduce the feats of my adventure heroes. They are some of the most impressive, eccentric, inspiring explorers who ever lived. So many adventurers have made an impact on my life that I am sorry not to be able to include them all. When a character in this book catches your imagination, I hope you will explore further and find out more about their experiences and personalities. The final selection of heroes spans 700 years. They range from teenagers to pensioners and famous to



“You do not need to be extraordinary or a genius to go on an adventure. You simply have to go.”

obscure, undertaking their journeys across continents (and oceans and space) by bike, boat and boot, as well as camel, ski, wheelchair and even high-tech machine.

I read a lot of books when I was young, spending long winter afternoons sitting with my back against the warm radiator in my bedroom, or sneaking a few extra pages with my torch under the blankets at night. I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed the stories of my childhood, that the adventurers become your heroes too, and that perhaps one day it sets in motion an adventure of your own.

Through chasing a life of adventure myself, I have learned an important lesson. I now understand my heroes are normal people like you and me. The heroes in this book are just ordinary men and women who decided not to live ordinary lives. I admire them even more for that.

I dearly hope that their stories will encourage you, whatever your age, to think more boldly, go a little further, and live more adventurously yourself.



Alastair Humphreys



AMELIA EARHART

The first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, Amelia's flight made her famous. She was given many awards, including the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Legion of Honour. However, on a later adventure, she disappeared over the Pacific Ocean and neither her body nor plane were ever found.



BERYL MARKHAM

A British-born Kenyan aviator, adventurer, racehorse trainer and author, Beryl was the first woman to successfully fly solo across the Atlantic from east to west. Several women had died trying. Strong headwinds made the westward trip more difficult than east-bound flights. Beryl was celebrated as an aviation pioneer.



“The stars seemed near enough to touch and never before have I seen so many. I had always believed the lure of flying is the lure of beauty, but I was sure of it that night.”

It was watching a stunt pilot at a local air show that made Amelia Earhart fall in love with flying. After her first trip in a plane, she knew she had to learn to fly. Searching for adventure, Amelia took off from Newfoundland towards Paris, France. But just three hours into the flight, a serious problem occurred. The altimeter failed, so she had no way of knowing how high she was flying. Shortly afterwards she flew through a dangerous thunderstorm.

After battling through many mechanical problems and icy conditions, she was forced to land, after 15 hours, in a field in Northern Ireland. But she had succeeded!

Amelia later attempted to become the first woman to fly round the world, but her plane went missing over the Pacific Ocean and she was never seen again.



Beryl Markham grew up in a wealthy family in Kenya. She loved hunting barefoot with the local African children, clutching spears and chasing animals through the bush. When she was older, Beryl flew solo across the Atlantic, west with the night, something that no woman had done before.

Taking off from England and heading to New York, Beryl flew a lonely 20-hour flight across the ocean against the wind. With no sleep and only coffee and chicken sandwiches to keep her going, her fuel tanks iced up and she crash-landed in a peat bog in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada. It wasn't quite the triumphant landing in New York she had hoped for, but a safe first crossing of the Atlantic Ocean nonetheless!





Why Amelia Earhart and Beryl Markham Inspired Me

Amelia Earhart's glamorous life and mysterious disappearance are fascinating. I love her bold advice of "Never interrupt someone doing something you said couldn't be done."

I first read Beryl Markham's book when I was cycling through Africa, where she lived, on my way round the world. I was so inspired that I even named my bicycle 'Beryl'!

RICK HANSEN

Rick Hansen was just 15 when a car crash on the way home from a fishing trip changed his life forever. He became paralysed from the waist down and would spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. Before his injury, Rick had daydreamed about cycling round the world, but now he dreamed up an even harder adventure.



Rick is the only adventurer in this book to have a number-one song written about him – *St. Elmo's Fire (Man in Motion)*. That's pretty cool!



Determined not to let his accident stop him, Rick went on to become a successful wheelchair athlete. From completing wheelchair marathons to winning world titles, he even competed at two Paralympics, winning six medals.

Rick began thinking about attempting a huge journey that would help raise money to search for a cure for spinal injury. Well, you can't get any bigger than going round the world on a 40,000-km journey to 34 different countries!

POWERFUL MESSAGE

As well as being a huge adventure, Rick's journey also showed the world that people of all abilities could live adventurously and were important members of their community. It certainly worked – 800,000 people welcomed his arrival in Beijing, China. Rick went on to meet the Pope, and the Prime Minister of Canada dropped a cheque for \$1 million into the charity bucket!

A HELPING HAND

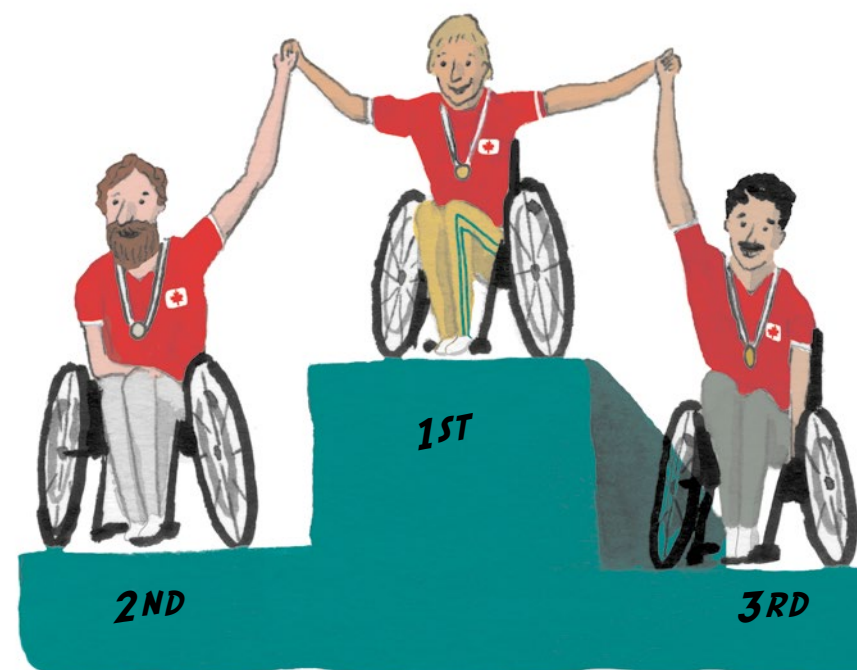
Even small tasks like putting up a tent become more difficult in a wheelchair, so Rick picked a team to help him complete his journey. They travelled behind his wheelchair in a motorhome. One of the tour team, Amanda, later became Rick's wife. A fairy-tale ending!

HERO'S WELCOME

During the adventure, Rick had to battle challenges such as scorching deserts, freezing snowstorms and massive mountains. He averaged an exhausting 30,000 wheelchair strokes a day. On top of all that, Rick also had to cope with people who didn't understand what he was doing and did not always treat disabled people kindly.

Despite the hardships, Rick's adventure raised many millions for charity. He returned to Canada to a hero's welcome of huge crowds and a sea of yellow ribbons and balloons.

“There is nothing you can't do if you set your mind to it. Anything is possible.”



Rick is a three-time Paralympic gold medalist.

Why Rick Hansen Inspired Me

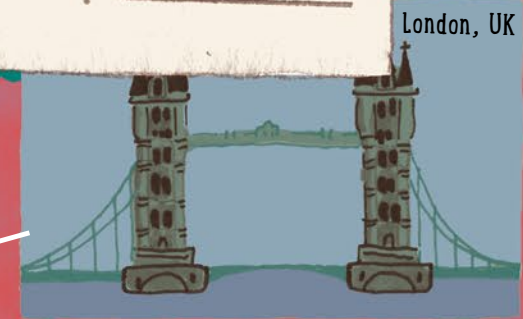
I learned about Rick when I cycled through his hometown whilst on my own journey round the world. I was pretty proud of myself for cycling so far until I learned that a paralysed man had done it in a wheelchair! In response to Rick's journey, the people of Canada lined the roads to watch him cycle past and donated huge amounts of money to his charity. It united the nation and showed everyone the potential of people with disabilities.

RICK HANSEN MAN IN MOTION WORLD TOUR

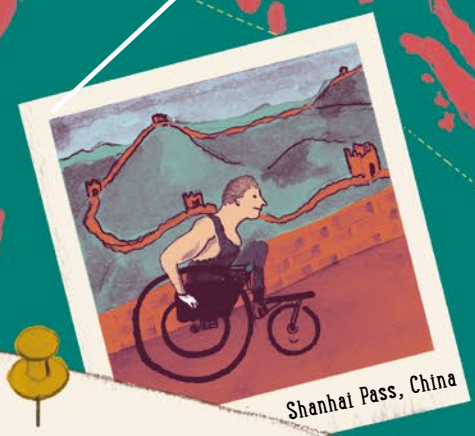
START/END >



Wow!
Today I was taken
by the Queen's own
motorcycle escorts
across Tower Bridge.
That's a royal welcome!



I'm here in Beijing!
Being greeted by
800,000 people in
Tiananmen Square
was surreal!



It has been tough
riding in 40°C heat
but I can proudly say
that I've wheeled the
Great Wall of China
and climbed 103 steps!



An incredible moment
— today I met the
Pope in Rome. It was
an honour and a
privilege. Onwards
I go...



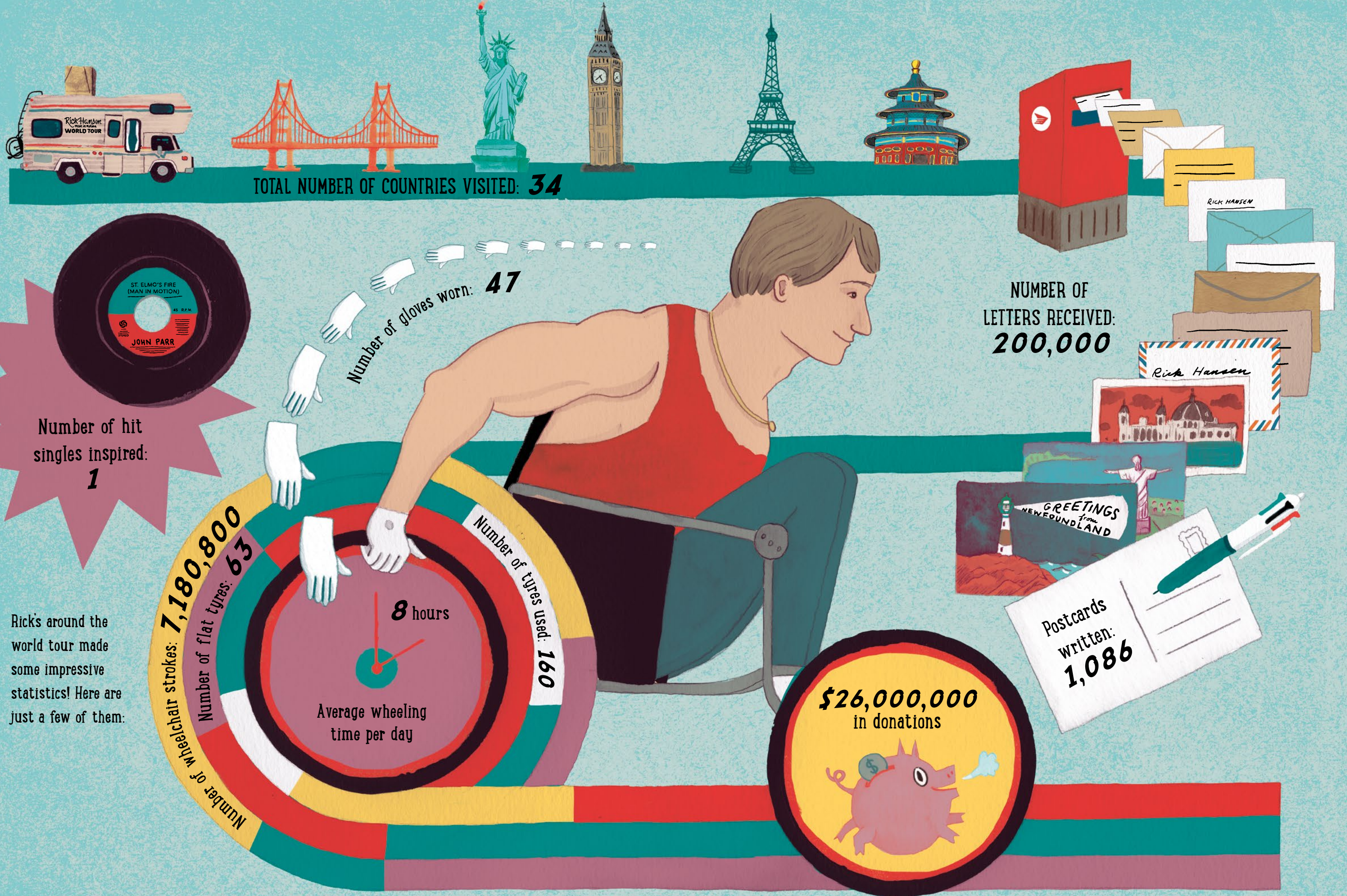
I have crossed San
Francisco's Golden
Gate Bridge. What
a beautiful sight.



Today I reached Ottawa
and visited the Terry
Fox Monument. He is an
inspiration that will
motivate me to get to
the end.



I can't believe
I'm half way!
Today I reached
Melbourne. I'm
tired, but elated!



Rick's around the world tour made some impressive statistics! Here are just a few of them: