

Tour d'Afrique riders roll into town

NATHALIE ROSA BUCHER

FORTY intrepid cyclists from 12 different countries arrived in Cape Town yesterday after cycling all the way from Cairo in the Tour d'Afrique 2007.

The cyclists, both professionals and amateurs, spent nearly every day of the four-month tour in the saddle. They crossed 10 countries, often through very rough terrain and heavy weather conditions. The tour ended at Quay Six at the V&A Waterfront.

Alan Lunt, at 71 the oldest entrant, described why he had taken on the challenge. "I'm getting older. I thought that if I don't do it now, I won't ever do it."

To prepare himself and test his knees, Lunt who suffers from arthritis, did the Orient Express Tour from Paris to Istanbul last year.

"My knees liked it and so I decided to give it a go. I'm now thinking of doing the Silk Route Tour, and hope they'll establish a route across Latin America next."

There were low points in the d'Afrique, like when Lunt set a record for cycling 50km in just under seven hours, in mud and heavy rain.

But all the participants said there were many highlights.

For Lunt, it was passing through Tanzania, swimming in Lake Malawi and the desert scenery of Namibia.

Canadian Andrew Cameron, 27, felt the trip was



MICHAEL PINYANA

■ Andrie Frijters, 39, of the Netherlands, won the Cairo to Cape Town Tour d'Afrique.

like skimming through a *Lonely Planet* guide of Africa. "It was like a crazy reccie. I would love to go back to Sudan and Namibia. The people were so friendly," he said.

Cape Town mayor and DA leader Helen Zille - wearing tracksuit pants, a cycle top and a boeremeisie hat under her helmet - was in the peloton that rode from the CBD to the finish line at the Waterfront.

She shared a tandem with Andrew Wheeldon, managing director of the Bicycling Empowerment Network.

"I didn't even work up a sweat, Andrew," she said. "We need to go back to Cairo!"

She said she had joined the tour on its final stage because although Cape Town was a

world-class cycling destination, it was still a "cycling unfriendly" city.

"We want to promote cycling and non-motorised transport in general.

"This city is not transport friendly. Last year, we had 150 days when the air pollution levels were higher than international standards prescribe."

The Tour d'Afrique organisers, who started the tour in 2003, established a foundation which has provided 600 bicycles to health workers who struggle to reach HIV/Aids patients in remote areas across Africa, and raised \$400 000 for charities.

Shaun Moore, 35, from East London, decided to leave London where he had lived

and worked for nine years and come home by bike.

"Seeing elephants on the side of the road in Botswana was amazing. And the people in Sudan were extremely friendly," he said. Crossing the border from Namibia into South Africa had felt great.

Asked if he would do it again, winner Andrie Frijters, 39, from Wageningen in the Netherlands, said it was a once-in-a-life-time experience.

For cyclists interested in signing up for the Tour d'Afrique 2008, the organisers are hosting an information and fund-raising evening at Forty Ate on Tuesday. Go to www.tourdafrique.com or contact Theresa Brown on 084 353 1975.