



*The team (from left): Rob Bates, Richard Harpham and Olly Jay at the finish in Marrakesh*

**FIVE and a half weeks after setting off from London, the Big 5 Kayak Challenge Team cycled into Marrakesh in Morocco after completing a 2,363-mile trip which pushed their tests of endurance to the limit.**

Having left Tower Bridge on September 28, the team finally cycled into Marrakesh at 6.15 pm on November 6. Expedition Leader Richard Harpham completed the whole gruelling test of kayaking and cycling, and was joined by a support cast, and different team members at various points along the way.

The London to Marrakesh Express had provided the sternest of kayaking challenges including sea kayaking the English Channel and crossing the Gibraltar Straits, two of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

It was also by far the toughest challenge of the Big 5 team since they started their fund-raising kayaking challenges two years ago.

As well as kayaking 153 miles, Richard and his supporters cycled over 2,210 miles on all sorts of roads – from the traffic chaos of London to dirt tracks of Africa.

Having paddled and pedalled almost 2,000 miles the party of three made it to the five-star comfort of Gibraltar's Ocean Village Marina late on October 26.

Keen to offer support to this inspirational fundraising mission, Ocean Village happily passed the Challenge team keys to luxury apartment accommodation in its waterfront Grand Ocean Plaza residential tower for two nights of thoroughly deserved rest.

Meanwhile Ocean Village's Pier Office offered insider knowledge on tides and winds for the crossing of the Gibraltar Strait whilst Rock resident Mick Hudson and his motor-yacht generously offered to act as 'support boat' throughout the crossing.

36 hours of temporary revival later, the adrenalin-hungry adventurers set off by kayak to cross the Strait to Africa and be-

# High five for the Big 5!

## ENDURANCE TEAM CONQUERS MOST GRUELLING CHALLENGE YET

gan the final leg of their epic challenge.

There are plenty of adventures and stories to highlight the nature of the journey, as almost every day it seems there had been something to colour the expedition.

Richard rescued two sailors off L'Ampollo in Spain who had flooded the hull of their dinghy. Whilst completing the Gibraltar Strait crossing, team member David Gordon had to be rescued in one of the big tide races having capsized and unfortunately he had to finish the journey on the support boat.

Speaking from the final destination of Marrakesh, Richard said: "It was certainly a relief to be able to rest up a while in Ocean Village after such a tough ordeal through Europe and prepare for the final push to Africa. A challenge cannot be named as such if it's easy, and we've certainly faced some tests along the way.

"Incredibly the expedition was completed only two days behind schedule and I live to tell the tale – albeit a very colourful one. Crossing the Strait to Morocco was very special, wild dolphins quite literally showed us the way and boosted morale for the final cycle stint. We're feeling a huge amount of satisfaction for both the awareness and money we've helped raise for charity."

Keen environmentalist Richard took time throughout the journey to document the levels of rubbish and pollution on the beaches along the way, even taking time to measure the volume of material that would not be

broken down by the elements. Richard says, "Our future generation is going to inherit a poor legacy unless we do something now to reduce the plastic in the environment. It is an issue that needs immediate attention highlighting and is an aspect that this team are committed to do in the future."

To follow news of all Big 5 Kayak Challenge events, including clips of TV coverage from BBC Sports Presenter Mike Bushell, visit [www.big5kayakchallenge.com](http://www.big5kayakchallenge.com). So far many thousands of pounds have been raised for their chosen charities, the Muscle Help Foundation, the Rivers Access Campaign and the Marine Conservation Society. To offer your support please visit <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/big5kayakchallenge>. All funds raised go direct to charity as the team covers all costs associated with the various challenges.



*Richard heading out through the Atlantic surf south of Casablanca*

# Phoen home!

## CREW COMPLETES HISTORIC RECREATION OF 600BC PHOENICIAN SHIP'S 20,000-MILE JOURNEY

**A MAMMOTH 20,000-mile journey and two long years at sea came to a triumphant end when a replica Phoenician cargo ship returned to Syria last month.**

The Phoenicia, a traditionally-built reproduction of a ship dating back to 600BC, received a spectacular 'welcome back' to the Syrian island of Arwad. The 21 metre vessel had just recreated the epic first circumnavigation of Africa achieved some 2,600 years ago.

Phoenicia's crew blog described the scenes in Syria. "Once in the harbour we made our way to the landing jetty and the chaos began. Spontaneous cheering and chanting greeted us and hundreds of Arwadians, the press and invited guests did their best to jostle for space on the small quay to meet Captain Philip and the crew. In short we were truly mobbed.

Marine flares and orange smoke canisters were let off, which made the event even more colourful and noisy. Various speeches

and presentations were made to welcome Phoenicia and her crew back to her home in Arwad.

It was undoubtedly the most emotional and heartfelt event in Phoenicia's life to date."

Later that evening, Phoenicia sailed the short 1.9 mile distance to Tartous on Syrian mainland where a gala dinner for the captain, crew and friends was hosted at the Shahin Tower Hotel - generously sponsored by Osman Shipping LLC. Proceedings included live television coverage of Syria's main evening news where Phoenicia's home coming was the lead news story.

Phoenicia was crafted by local shipbuilders in Arwad using techniques and materials true to those identified in a 6th Century Mediterranean shipwreck.

She was launched by Syria's First Lady HE Mrs Asma Assad in August 2008 and then sailed through the Suez Canal before reaching the Republic of Yemen at the

foot of the Red Sea in January 2009. Phase two began in August 2009 when Phoenicia was launched once more to continue around the Horn of Africa, down the east coast, passing through the challenging Cape of Good Hope and back up the west coast en route to the Straits of



*The Phoenicia sails into port to complete its mammoth journey*

Gibraltar at the end of August 2010.

The Rock's own Ocean Village Marina provided safe waters and some 21st century R'n'R for Phoenicia's crew for several days. Whilst in Gibraltar, British explorer and Phoenicia's Captain, Philip Beale, alongside two other crew members took time out to see the 8th to 3rd century BC exhibits in the Gibraltar Museum.

The Museum houses a wealth of material from the Phoenicians with excavations at Gorham's Cave revealing that they used the cave as a shrine – believed to be the Temple of Melkart. Much of the information uncovered will prove to be very useful for Captain Beale's book on the voyage.

Throughout her circumnavigation Phoenicia had up to 16 crew members at any one time and welcomed sailors from all corners of the globe. The ship encountered plenty of inclement weather and equally disturbing threats of piracy. The successful completion of the voyage is of enormous significance to historians and archaeologists as it proves that the Phoenician vessels were capable of sailing around the African continent - something that has been the cause of much speculation over centuries.

Although the celebrations in Syria marked the end of the circumnavigation,

the project is by no means over as plans are underway to establish a 'PHOENICIA FOUNDATION'. This will help to ensure that the legacy of Phoenician culture and the amazing achievements of the voyage around Africa are promoted to Syrian school children and members of society generally - both internally and internationally.

Phoenicia has also been filmed by the BBC for their series Ancient Worlds broadcast on BBC2 in November and worldwide from next year.

For more information on this fascinating expedition and for opportunities to get involved in the development of the project please visit [www.phoenicia.org.uk](http://www.phoenicia.org.uk)



*Traditional Syrian folk dancing was part of homecoming ceremony*



*Capt Philip Beale at the homecoming ceremony on Arwad*