



SWISS FAMILY ON THE MOVE

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They make Penang 'home' as they leave it all behind to live the life of nomads

Being in the cycling industry is an eye opener. Although stories about cutting edge bicycle technology have wowed and impressed us, you find that it's the people on the bikes who have really made us gasp over the years. We have met many weird and wonderful cyclists in our time but recently we met one family that has a story which is just truly mesmerising.

Xavier Pasche, a Swiss architect, is currently in Malaysia taking a break from his cycling world tour which started in 2010. The reason why he's taking a break in Malaysia is because he and his wife, Celine have chosen Penang to be the place to give birth to their second child. Four years ago, Xavier and Celine also did the same thing with their first born Nayla.

The reason why they chose Penang to be their 'birth ground' is because they like Dr Narinder Singh from Island Hospital. Dr Narinder's approach to delivering a newborn is to provide them and their parents with the most natural childbirth available. This is in line with the couple's beliefs, which is to try living the Nomadic lifestyle.

Which of course bring us to why a world tour? Although the lifestyle was not the main reason, it did have some influence on the decision. In case you weren't listening in history class, the nomadic lifestyle is a way of life which requires you to move where you can find your food and

shelter. This way of doing things predates homosapiens and thus our advancement in technology of growing crops and building permanent structures. It was a precursor to what we today call immigration.

Although some tribes like the Bedouins in Arabia and the Mongols on the great steppes keep this way of life, humanity has moved on, by and large. Yet Xavier and Celine have managed to live life just like the nomads. They call this adventure of theirs as 'Nomads in Perpetual movement'.

We caught up with Xavier and Celine recently:

CP: How did all of this begin for you?

Xavier: We actually wanted to discover the world. We chose to do it via the bicycle because with these two-wheels we would be free and can stop anywhere and at any time. All that was against the bicycle was time, but luckily we have time.

CP: What is your profession?

Xavier: I'm an architect and my wife is a mountain guide.

CP: Was it easy to just leave your career and life behind to do this?

Xavier: We were actually excited to quit everything because we wanted to try and do this once in a lifetime adventure. The original plan was to cycle from Switzerland to New Zealand over three years, but it turned into a lifestyle and it has now expanded to seven years.

CP: Is it not scary to do this with kids?

Xavier: In the beginning it was quite difficult. We needed to adjust and find a good balance. To be parents and new parents on the road was a whole new adventure. It was scary, but we have found a good balance where everyone was happy.

CP: Why choose Penang as your birth ground?

Xavier: When we were on the road, we searched high and low for a place where we could have a natural childbirth. After searching on the web, we found Island Hospital and Dr Narinder. The rest as they say is history and we were very happy with the outcome for our first child. Now we are back and want our second child to go through the same thing. Not only are we in love with Island Hospital, we also love Penang. The atmosphere here is great, the people here are friendly and the food completely mouth-watering.

CP: Some would say that bringing your kids on this type of journey is dangerous, what's your take on that?

Xavier: Actually the experience has been amazing. For our daughter Nayla, this is the biggest school that she can attend. She has met different people, different cultures and learned a lot of different languages. Instead of attending geography class, she is living it. It's quite interesting for her, so no I don't think it's dangerous.

Words & photos: Shon Voon



CP: What is your next destination?

Xavier: Our second daughter was born three days ago; we will stay in Penang until she is five months old. If we feel like she is ready we will then start to cycle in what we call the northern chapter. What this means is that we will try to cycle the northern countries, like Russia, Siberia, Mongolia, Hokkaido, Canada and northern Europe.

CP: How do you prepare for your tour?

Xavier: It's quite easy actually. We have everything on our bikes. We have a tent, trailing carriage for the kids and all the things like spare parts for the bikes all attached to the bike.

CP: Why Rikulau bikes?

Xavier: After so many years of touring and 60,000km on the road we came to a point where we had to change the bikes due to wear and tear. Luckily for us, we had a friend in Taiwan who introduced us to Rikulau. When we arrived at their headquarters they decided to support us, and gave us new bikes which we are happy about. Although they are a small company, they have great bikes and we are very, very happy with the bikes.



1 Xavier and Nayla at Penang's Youth Park, while Celine is in hospital recovering after just giving birth to their second child. **2** Xavier, Celine and Nayla having afternoon tea at their base camp in Hokkaido, Japan. **3** When Nayla feels tired, they let her rest in the Thule Chariot, seen here attached to Xavier's bike. **4** Celine (left) and Nayla riding together. **5** Their setup is pretty simple and the tent can be erected anywhere.

CP: You have cycled so many countries, which one has been the best place?

Xavier: Penang of course! (laughs)

CP: What has been your biggest obstacle?

Xavier: Extreme weather has been our biggest enemy. In Mongolia it was freezing cold; in Australia, it was burning hot. We needed to bring all the right gear to help us get through the weather. In India and Bangladesh it was also tough. It was not the weather, but the population. There are so many people there...

CP: What will you do after the touring ends?

Xavier: I'm not sure if we will go back to normal life. We like what we are doing now and living this nomadic life is great. The day that one of us becomes unhappy, I will consider putting a stop to it. But we are doing this to trust life. We have never locked our bicycle and trust that life will always bring us happiness. Even when we go food shopping where we have had to leave the bikes, we have never taken our luggage and gear with us.

CP: How is everything funded?

Xavier: We write articles for a Swiss newspaper and are also supported by magazines that have supported us. Just like the nomad, moving place to place have sometimes brought us new opportunities.

