

COAST TO COAST

A 27-year-old graphic designer from Oxfordshire in England completed a record-breaking journey across Australia yesterday. It was a 5,800 kilometre odyssey – and he travelled the whole distance on a skateboard. David Cornthwaite, who started skateboarding less than two years ago, decided on his epic journey after waking up one morning and realizing he hated his job. 'I thought, the only thing keeping me going is the skate to and from work. I was a bit disillusioned and I was looking for something new,' he said. 'I saw a Lonely Planet guide to Australia. There was a map on the back. Perth was on one side and Brisbane on the other and I thought, "that'll do".'

He decided to prepare by skateboarding from John O'Groats to Lands End: the two points furthest apart on the British mainland. That 1,442-kilometre trek, which he finished in June, took just over a month, during which an infected blister swelled to the 'size of a tennis ball'.

Crossing Australia on a skateboard brought unique challenges. The wind caused by huge road trains, the articulated lorries that thunder across the Outback, was so powerful that he was sometimes blown off his board.

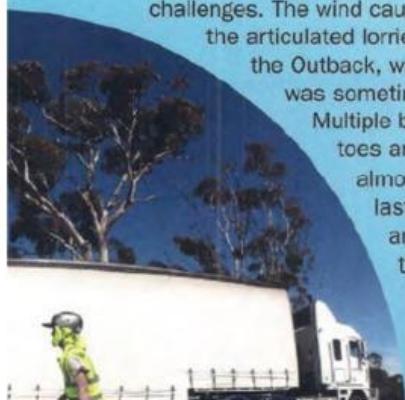
Multiple blisters and aching ankles, toes and feet have kept him in almost constant pain for the last six weeks. 'I feel like an old man. I'm not sure that anyone has ever had this many blisters,' he said. Temperatures of 40°C and above mean that he has used more

than a dozen tubes of factor 30 sunscreen. 'There have been moments where I thought "this is ridiculous, I have to rest", but I never contemplated giving up.' He has worn through 13 pair of shoes and has an over-developed right calf muscle which he compares to 'a giant chicken fillet'.

Skating an average of 50 kilometres a day and hitting speeds of up to 50kph on downhill runs, he left Perth, Western Australia, and skated across the fearsome Nullarbor Plain into South Australia. After reaching Adelaide he made his way to Melbourne and from there to Sydney. A support team of seven people trailed him all the way in a four-wheel drive vehicle, which included camping equipment for night stops. The journey has smashed the previous record for a long-distance skateboard, set by an American, Jack Smith, who covered 4,800 kilometres across the US in 2003.

David Cornthwaite was less than three kilometres from the end of his epic journey when he hit a hole and was thrown off his skateboard, suffering cuts and bruises to his shoulders, knees, hips and elbows. 'I was only going at 40kmh at the time, so although it wasn't pretty, it could have been a lot worse,' he said.

In the short term, he hopes to spend the next few days surfing on the Gold Coast, south of Brisbane, to build up some much-needed upper body strength. 'I've got huge legs but a skinny body – it's a bit ridiculous. I need to give my body a chance to warm down and surfing sounds ideal. For the time being I'm hanging up my skateboard.' In the longer term, he plans to give motivational speeches and write a book. Another long-distance journey is also on the cards. 'I'm certainly not going back to the day job,' he said.



3 Match adjectives a–e with nouns 1–5, then check your answers in the text, and explain what the phrases mean.

a	epic	1	lorry
b	articulated	2	vehicle
c	constant	3	journey
d	four-wheel drive	4	speech
e	motivational	5	pain

4 Read the text again carefully and choose the best answers for 1–6.

- 1 Why did David Cornthwaite decide to skateboard across Australia?
 - A He was an experienced skateboarder.
 - B He wanted to break a world record.
 - C He was bored with his life and wanted to try something different.
 - D Somebody gave him a guidebook about Australia.
- 2 What made David fall off his skateboard several times in Australia?
 - A thunderstorms in the Outback
 - B the trains that race across the Outback
 - C the injuries on his feet
 - D the wind created by huge lorries going past
- 3 At times, David felt as though he
 - A needed to stop for a while.
 - B wanted to give up completely.
 - C wanted to get out of the sun.
 - D needed a new pair of shoes.
- 4 During the journey, where did David sleep at night?
 - A in a four-wheel drive vehicle
 - B in a tent
 - C outdoors on the Nullarbor Plain
 - D in the homes of his supporters
- 5 Why does David think surfing is a good thing to do after his journey?
 - A He can stay close to Brisbane.
 - B He's always wanted to surf on the Gold Coast.
 - C He wants to strengthen the top half of his body.
 - D He needs to keep his legs strong.
- 6 What does David hope to do eventually?
 - A encourage other people to feel more positive about themselves
 - B put his skateboard away
 - C return to work as a designer
 - D persuade other people to make long-distance journeys