

PLAY! POOL

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perfectionistic preparation, Jens just does his thing in stride.

Jens -- co-author of "Cycling Philippines" -- embarks on another bike trip in August/September, this time across the breadth of lonely planet Mongolia. Bike for a cause it is once more. He's selling the kilometres he cycles (at P60 or 1 euro) for the benefit of Bike4U, a foundation based in the Philippines, which hopes to provide bikes to poor kids for leisure and mobility. That's hitting two birds with one stone in this time of global warming due to fossil fuel emissions and lack of moderately long distance mobility due to poverty.

Learn more about this teacher who learns from life's everyday lessons.

#### What brought you to the country?

I work for the German government. I'm teaching in the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise in Talamban. They have something like the dual system of training in Germany where students spend one-and-a-half years in school and one-and-a-half years assigned to a company. The school wanted to establish IT and they didn't have enough knowledge on that so they asked the German government to send somebody over.

#### How do you find teaching here?

I'm teaching teachers, not students. I basically help the school regarding IT, bringing up the curriculum. The school and the staff made it easy for me to feel accepted. I like it from the beginning. Actually, I am not a teacher by profession. I studied computer science in Germany, then worked for seven years as head of international IT projects. But here I got more and more into the direction of teaching, and I like it so far.

#### When did you start being into biking?

I've been into it my whole life. Back in Germany, at 16, I biked from Germany to England and back with a friend. I was always into biking, but then I played a lot of soccer, too. When I came to the Philippines I met a Dutch friend who introduced me to mountain biking, and that's when it really started again.

#### Did you grow up in a sporty environment?

Yeah. I think it's a normal thing. Here, it's basketball. In Germany, it's soccer. As soon as you're old enough, you join a team. I also play squash. I would say I'm sporty, yeah, definitely.

#### Any memorable bike trips in the Philippines?

I don't know where to start and where to end! (Laughs) I've been in all islands of the Visayas. I have been in Mindanao, and to Luzon. Maybe most memorable would be two. One was in Panay. I was cycling around Panay, arrived at a place at 7pm and there was no place to stay because I was told the resort was shut down. So I was just in a *sari-sari* store having my softdrink and the lady there said to me, "Just relax, I already informed the barangay captain. He will take care of you." Five minutes later the barangay captain arrives and offered me to stay in the barangay hall. He informed the tanod. When I got there, the whole barangay was waiting. They offered me food, drinks and whatever. I was just sitting there and I could not understand it. The hospitality... it's just amazing. I was chatting with the people from the barangay maybe for two hours and then they said they had to leave. I said "Why?" and they answered "Because our kids are waiting outside. They also want to talk to you." And so the kids came (laughs) and it was another two hours talking. The other trip happened last year as we were crossing Luzon, on its widest part.

We did that for the Dumagat tribe.

It was my first time to meet tribal people really in their normal environment, not like in a tour. The feeling is indescribable,



sitting at the bonfire, just hearing them talk since I couldn't understand a word they were saying, but just being there was good.

#### Tell us about the Bike4U foundation, of which you are founder and president.

It happened after I (co-)wrote a book ("Cycling Philippines") then I went to Leyte for the Big Bike Festival since I wanted to join the race to help me sell the books. So I brought students from my school who were into biking, I took care of the fare and they just hung out there for three days and sold my book in the store. On the way back, I asked if they like biking and they said they don't have the money to buy a bike. I thought, there must be a way to buy bikes for those kids. So when I was in Germany I asked around, trying to get people interested and then everybody said "You know, I have a bike I'm not using anymore, I

