

The 15,000 mile hack from London to Tokyo with Becky and Bertie

[read her story here](#)

Week 1

Miles completed 27
Miles to go 14,973

April 1.
All Fools Day.
Becky and Bertie set out from Putney in London on their 15,000 mile hack to Tokyo.
Becky is happy. She has just been awarded a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship. Which should come in handy.
Bertie is happy. There's no end to the amount of grass he finds to eat.
They spend their first night under canvas.
Becky sits outside her tent eating steak and kidney pie and drinking red wine.
Bertie is munching grass.
They reach Devil's Dyke on the South Downs



Week 2

Miles completed 88
Miles to go 14,885

Only the second week and things have started to go wrong.
Becky's stove broke down.
The packing on Bertie's back kept slipping.
Bertie stood on her feet twice.
They got lost and ended up where they started from.
But by the end of the week everything turned out alright.
They ended up staying in what Becky describes as a "gorgeous house, which is rumoured to be in the Domesday Book and to have been given to a knight."

Week 3

Miles completed to date: 87
Miles to go : 14,798

The third week of the 15,000 mile hack and already they're a week late.
They should have crossed the Channel to France last Monday.
But, at least, Becky and her faithful, Bertie have now reached Camber Sands.
They made their way across Romney Marsh with a little help from another pony, Smokey.
Bertie was unsure of the windmills at first.
He even stood on Becky's foot.
But never one to hold a grudge, Becky washed and brushed his tail for him.
France, here they come.





Week 4

Miles completed 103
Miles to go 14,695

Finally they're off to France.
More than two weeks late
But, at least, they made it.
They got lost on the way to Dover.
Stumbled into a pub where Becky had been before on one of her earlier, much shorter endurance rides.
And everybody there remembered her.
Then on to Dover to pick up a trailer and start filling in all those documents.
But, at least, they've now only got 14 countries to go until they reach Tokyo.

Week 5

Oh, la, la! First day in France and Becky has a journalist for breakfast

They crossed the Channel . No problem.
First stop was a yard just outside Calais.
Bertie was let loose in a field of his own.
Becky was whisked off to a B+B where, she says, she woke the following morning to "fresh pastries, a cool shower and a journalist."

Two days they stayed there.
Then they set off for St Omer
They spent one night in a field with hedgehogs for company.
They got caught in an enormous hail storm.
And they got lost.
Becky says that in spite of all the riding she is already beginning to put on weight.
Obviously too many journalists for breakfast



Week 6



Miles completed 323 - Miles to go 14,677

Oops. A wrong turn. They ended up in Belgium

The week started in deep, deep mud. The weather turned bad. Then even worse.
Then there was the bamboo.
Becky says she had to hack her way through it Bruce Parry style.
"Who'd have thought we'd find this in France?" she says.
"I'd planned for this in China."
Then came the wrong turn.
"We ended up in Belgium," she says. "But don't get over-excited. Back in France now. Ho hum."
Keep going, Becky. Keep going.

Week 7

Miles completed 393 Miles to go 14,607

Becky and Bertie began the week by feeling nervous. Maybe, a little afraid. They kept getting lost. Becky tried navigating by map. But had no luck. By compass. No luck. Finally, she tried her fool-proof navigation technique: by tossing a coin in the air. Heads, one way. Tails, the other. It worked. Before long instead of despairing and wondering where they were going to spend the night they were rescued by Nicki, Olivia and Curly. They visited a chateau, went to BBQs and even hitch-hiked to Paris where things really went wrong. They were threatened at gun-point. Mon Dieu.



Becky & Nikki pulling out bamboo from its roots is a TOUGH job!



Week 8

Miles completed to date 407 Miles to go 14,593

After the gun scare in Paris, Becky decided to take a week off. Who can blame her? Apparently, she was walking down a street in Paris when a car full of boys drew up alongside her. One of them pushed the gun through the window and started waving it at her and shouting something about "bullets". The car then drove to the end of the street - and turned round and came back to her again. But that was all. Although Becky admits she was scared. But now she's back in the saddle again. She has been joined by a friend she met in China. Bertie has been staying at a pig farm. Some horses are terrified of pigs. Not Bertie. As soon as he saw the grass, he was in his element. Becky's next objective? A cool beer. The weather, she says, is getting hotter and hotter.

Week 9

Miles completed to date 473 Miles to go 14,527

The week began with Becky longing for a cool beer. The weather started getting hotter and hotter. She started longing for a Fanta. What happened? She ended up staying a night with a family addicted to Fanta. Becky, next time try longing for a bottle of champagne. You never know what might happen. Having drunk all the Fanta they could drink, Becky and Bertie were soon visiting some of the British war cemeteries in France. Then it was Bertie's turn to enjoy himself. During the night he broke into a neighbouring field full of crops. Wonder what he was dreaming about during the day?





Week 10

Miles completed to date 501 Miles to go 14,449

Lazy week. Weather hot.

Becky and Bertie spent most of their time getting lost, enjoying the sunshine and making resolutions.

One morning, says Becky, they were up at 5am and set off at dawn with beautiful light casting shadows over the colourful fields. "Should get up early more often!" she said.

Week 11

Miles completed to date 610 Miles to go 14,390

Becky and Bertie started the week by making a big splash in more ways than one.

First, they made a big splash in two local French newspapers, which reported on their hack and their progress to date.

Second, they made a big splash during the heavy storms that hit France during the week. But eventually the sun shone on them both.

They spent one night at a livery yard run by a French trotting champion. The grass in the fields was so high that Bertie disappeared into it. Another night Becky was given the run of a whole farm house to herself. But there was no room for Bertie. He had to be tethered outside in the open so Becky decided to sleep in her tent outside to keep an eye on him. Even then he still managed to escape.



Finally, they were taken in by another French family and five-star treatment. Bertie was put in a field with four ponies and a huge Ardenne mare. Becky sampled all the local delicacies made by the farmer's wife.

Shock. Horror. She's just realised she's put on 5lbs since she's been in France.

Week 12

Miles completed to date 710 Miles to go 14,290

Another week. Another newspaper interview. This time the French journalist was English. From Ascot. No problems talking horseytalk then.

Becky and Bertie have now left Henne. The weather has been glorious. Temperatures around 20 - 25 degrees.

In spite of the heat, however, they covered almost another 100 miles.



Week 13

Miles completed to date 788 Miles to go 14,212

Dont laugh.

Becky is in France.

She and Bertie make their way to Reims, the centre of the Champagne region, where the Bubbly is flowing, the tables are groaning with fabulous food and there is a Music Festival taking place.

They get caught in , what she calls an "horrendous" thunderstorm. They are completely drenched. They are rescued by a farmer, who plies Becky with hot chocolate.

Where is she now? In hospital.

On a drip. Suffering from food poisoning.

Well, it was Week 13 of their Great Hack!



Week 14

Miles completed to date 851 Miles to go 14,129

The week began on a good note:

Becky left the French hospital where she was taken suffering from food poisoning. Bertie was pleased. He celebrated by destroying a whole fence, which took Becky over an hour to repair.

Swine flu. Iran. MPs expenses. Nobody back home bothered to tell her about them. But Michael Jackson. Her phone was buzzing non-stop. Even at 3 o'clock in the morning.

But her social life continues. One evening, she spent teaching English grammar. Another, at a Fete de Cerries - without seeing a single cherry. By the end of the week, it was time for Bertie to have a bath, especially as they were meeting yet another French journalist.

The temperature? A mere 37 degrees.

Week 15

Miles completed to date 953 Miles to go 14,047

Not a good week.

It started bad and just got worse and worse.

It rained and rained and rained.

Not ordinary rain.

French rain.

Then came the storms Seventeen cows were killed by lightning.

Becky and her faithful, Bertie, were forced to take refuge in a stable together.

Then it got colder and colder.

The temperature dropped as low as 21 degrees.

There was, however, some excitement. Beckie shared a salad with a sea slug specialist.

And she was also almost decapitated with a toilet seat. A French toilet seat.

Now they're heading south-east for the German border.





Week 16

Miles completed to date 1,010 Miles to go 13,990

Not a good week.

A Miserable time for Becky and Bertie.

Not because they were miserable but because they spent the week in and around Besancon, the home town of Victor Hugo, the great French novelist who wrote Les Miserable. The novel not the musical.

They had rain and more rain and, what Becky calls, "hammering rain". But that didn't stop her riding in the local forests with her newly-found French friends while Bertie did what he does best: eat and eat and eat

Tuesday was Bastille Day, one of the most important days in the French calendar, so they celebrated and celebrated and celebrated.

The week, however, ended on a low-note. Becky went into a local supermarket and found the music they were playing was not from Les Miserables but English pop songs with English words she was grateful the French didn't understand.

Week 17

Miles completed to date 1,083 Miles to go 13,917

Becky continues to be a big hit with the French press.

This week a journalist turned up to interview her in her own marked car with her own personal photographer.

Becky posed for photographs with her own individual form of transport - Bertie.

Then it was a quick trot to a typical French family weekend complete with aunts, uncles, cousins and even a granny.

Bertie? All he was interested in was the grass.



Week 18

Miles completed to date 1,083 Miles to go 13,917

What's happened to Becky and, of course, Bertie?

No news from them all week!
Probably being entertained in a French chateau with lashings of champagne and fresh grass.

Fingers crossed. Let's hope we hear from them soon.

Week 20

Miles completed to date 953 Miles to go 14,047

She's safe.

After more than two-weeks of total silence when some people imagined the worst, Becky has just surfaced.

She's been staying near Besancon in North East France where temperatures have been soaring as high as 40 degrees.

What's more, she's had a change of plan. Instead of riding all the way to Tokyo she now plans to go part way by caravan. She's been busy converting a cart into a caravan.

Bertie has been taking driving lessons and can now respond to instructions in both English and French. His new name: Bi-lingual Bertie.

"The caravan will take us through Europe," says Becky. "Once we reach Turkey I intend to saddle up and ride again. The problem with riding at the moment is that we consistently find ourselves on roads, as the signage for Grand Randonnee's (bridlepaths) is appalling and nigh on impossible to follow. I have mapped out a quiet and picturesque route through the rest of Europe for us which will keep us off road but on vehicle-friendly tracks. The cart will also enable us to pick up the pace a bit, so we might actually get out of France before the end of the year!!"

As ever, best of luck Becky.



Before



Now (work in progress)



Week 22

Miles completed to date 1,259 Miles to go 13,741

They're off.

Bertie between the shafts of their new or, rather, newly-converted caravan. Becky in the driving seat.

In the best wagon-train tradition they had no sooner set off than they were being shot at.

But then that's the way the French always welcome the British.

They parked outside a supermarket. Then they got stung. No, not by the supermarket but by a sudden swarm of gigantic, mutant bees. Obviously French bees.

Both Becky and Bertie were badly stung and are now in agony. And still in France.

Week 23

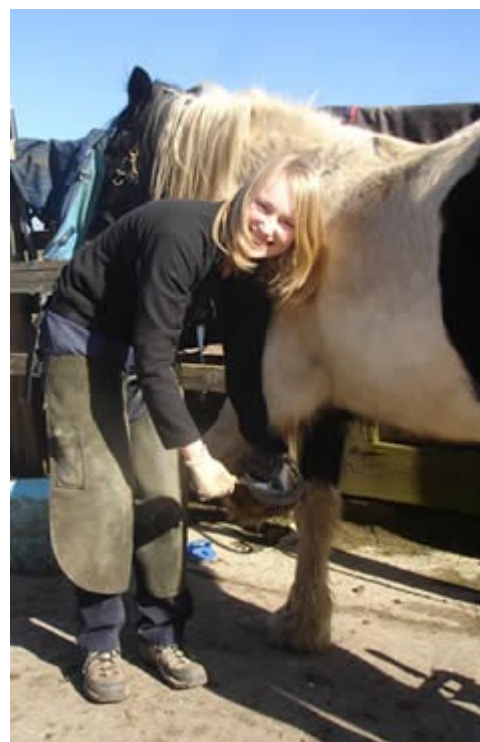
Miles completed to date 1,362 Miles to go 13,638

Bertie seems to be getting the hang of the cart or, rather, caravan..

In one day alone, he managed to cover just over 20 kilometres which means, if he keeps it up, they'll probably be in Tokyo for Christmas.

Not that there haven't been problems. They took what they thought was a short cut along a forest track only to discover that it was blocked. Bertie had to back up to where they started from. It was a problem. But they managed it.

They then met a friendly French cyclist who offered to put them up for the night. Trouble was as they turned into the driveway of her house, Bertie crashed the cart or, rather, caravan against the letter box and smashed it. Then, overnight, he escaped from his field. Maybe he doesn't like the cart or, rather caravan, after all.



Week 24

Miles completed to date 1,473 Miles to go 13,527

They're in Switzerland. After the scorching heat of France, Becky kept noticing all week that it was getting colder and colder.

Then they were there.

Well, almost.

The Swiss authorities let Becky in.
No problems.

Bertie, they insisted, stayed behind for another day. Probably suspected him of being an equine terrorist!

As a result, he spent his last night in France in a field at the bottom of, what Becky described, as an enormous hill.

Probably Mont Blanc



Week 25

Miles completed to date 1,526 Miles to go 13,474

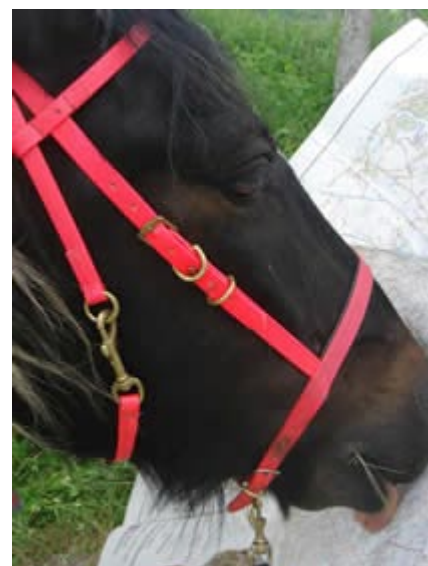
Since Becky and Bertie arrived in Switzerland, the weather has been bad.
Very bad.

A river they were following even rose two-feet in height in a matter of days.

Rather than press on, Becky decided to stay put and explore the local area instead.
Bertie didn't complain.
Gradually, things got better.
By the end of the week both Becky and Bertie were in heaven.

Becky had the run of a big house complete with sauna.
Bertie had the run of a field complete with apple trees.

Next week, it's back to work. Weather permitting, of course.





Week 26

Miles completed to date 1,579 Miles to go 13,421

It's been a great week for Bertie
But a bit of a flop for Becky.

For Bertie it's been a great week because he hasn't had much to do.
Most of the time they were staying in a log cabin come gypsy caravan in somebody's back garden.

They had built the log cabin while they were building their house. Now they are living in the house, they have let Becky have it for a few days.

The week was a flop for her because the people who own the house are potters and tried to teach her how to make a simple pot.
They couldn't.
The pot flopped all over the potters wheel.

Week 27

Miles completed to date 1,612 Miles to go 13,388

The week started out with nothing to do.
The weather was miserable.
Bertie needed a rest.

Becky spent her time playing cards and table-top football.
She was so bored she even went to a beer festival. For the over-60s.

Then after a couple of days they were back on the road again.
Bertie was full of energy.
They were travelling twice as fast as they planned.
By the end of the week Bertie was rewarded. He was staying in the stables of a grand Swiss castle.
Becky was staying at a house in the village where she was continually being bitten by the family dog.



At least, it made a change from having nothing to do.



Week 28

Miles completed to date 1,655 Miles to go 13,345

Accident !

But it could have been worse. Going through a town, suddenly one of the front tyres of the cart bursts sending Bertie and the cart and Becky careering across to the other side of the road.

Luckily, neither Bertie nor the cart nor Becky were hurt. A local couple rushed to their assistance and took them home with them.

Bertie is now mowing the couple's front lawn. Becky is chatting away to them in the garden
And a new tyre is on the way.

Although Becky says Bertie is quite happy to carry on munching the grass

Week 29

Miles completed to date 1,712 Miles to go 13,288

Vandalism, Twice. And in Switzerland of all places ..

Not a good week

One evening, says Becky, she saw a local kid "monkeying around on the cart"

The result: The following morning she discovered part of the steering mechanism had been broken and had to be repaired.

Luckily the family she was spending the night with knew all the right people and everything was sorted out and repaired.

But it took two days.

Back on the road again there was more excitement.

They spent the following night at a farm which breeds Rhodesian Ridgebacks

They had to make their way through a busy town centre which Bertie did without a care in the world.

Then - More Vandalism

This time the vandals almost completely damaged the whole steering system of the cart.

Now, Becky is wondering what to do ...

