

FROM the day we are born, the instinct to one day leave the nest and venture out into the big, bad world is hardwired into our brains.

It is a trait we share with every single living organism on the planet, from the largest of whales down to the tiniest of amoebae.

In the case of the human race, however, there is a small percentage of us who aspire to explore even further afield — the final frontiers.

While the cold ocean depths and the vacuum of space may, at the moment, be restricted to the realm of billionaires and the world's superpowers, this small group of unique individuals have to make do with travelling as far as possible on a bicycle, postie's bike, jet ski or even a grader. Are these people dreamers, inspirational heroes, crazy, or all of the above?

Eight weeks ago Chris Roach had it all: a cushy job, a girlfriend, a home. Now it's nothing but the open road, as far as the eye can see — and then some.

Channelling Jules Verne's classic character Phileas Fogg, the 26-year-old Novocastrian has set aside eight years of his life to travel 75,000km around the world, touring through about 50 countries. On a bicycle.

That's right, Chris will be undertaking his trip, totally avoiding transportation of the aviation kind, in order to raise funds and awareness for Oxfam. Why? "That's the big question," Chris said. "To be perfectly honest, I don't really understand why I'm doing it, myself.

"It's more of a personal journey for myself more than anything. I guess it's about the people who I will meet along the way. I hope to be able to inspire other people to jump on their bike and get people thinking about sustainability."

Chris, who recently rode through Townsville, had cycled 2000km from Newcastle.

The former civil engineer was planning on chucking a mighty left turn at Innisfail, then cycling on to Darwin.

Once there, he will rely upon the kindness of strangers to help ferry him to South East Asia, and ultimately anywhere else a body of water prevents him from pushing forward.

"I'm not allowing myself to fly anywhere, so there's no planes, only sailing," Chris said.

"I'm planning on being in Darwin at the same time as a yacht race.

"Basically I'm going to be sticking my thumb out at the marina."

For many of these around-Australia travellers, whether they're on bikes, on motorised vehicles, or even on foot, the place to stop in North Queensland is always Frosty Mango, 70km north of Townsville.

Frosty Mango proprietor Alf Poehnger estimates in the 20 years the ice cream parlour has been open, dozens of around-the-world solo travellers have popped in for an icy treat en route. "Their flavour of choice? Mango, of course.

"I think they're crazy," Alf said.

"It's bad enough getting these people on bicycles going around Australia, but last year I had this guy come through on a penny farthing.

"He had no gears and he was riding straight into a head wind, wearing knicker bockers and a pink helmet.

"He reckoned he had done a fair distance, having landed in Cairns, and was making his way down south and then to New Zealand, across to Hawaii."

Lu Kealley from the Charters Towers Visitor Information Centre says it takes a certain eccentricity to jump on a small mode of transport and travel around the gigantic Australian continent, let alone the world.

Charters Towers is also a magnet for these types of people, who often prefer to eschew the busy national highway in favour of the quieter inland route.

In just 10 years, the Towers has witnessed a bizarre procession of cyclists, walkers, a grader driver named Possum, canal riders, gypsy wagons, and even poker-playing bikers flowing through the town.

"We had the Southern Cross Motorbike Club come through last year," Ms Kealley said.

"There were about 300 bikers on that, and they came and stayed in the showgrounds, and played poker every night, whenever they end up."

These types of unique travellers often stop by the centre to ask for directions to

Thirst for adventure

Dreamers, heroes or just plain crazy? DANIEL BATEMAN finds out what possesses someone to jump on a bicycle, penny farthing, postie's bike, jet ski or even a grader and set off around the world



Civil engineer Chris Roach is travelling 75,000km around the world on his bike



A grader was the mode of transport for who passed through Charters

a nearby caravan park, or to check out the town's local attractions.

In the case of the cyclists, the Towers is a great place to stop to simply catch their breath, before they tackle the rickety Gregory Development Road, going head to head with road trahs.

"They love the town," Ms Kealley said. "We always try and organise some kind of meet and greet for them.

"They are always rapt. Sometimes they leave (charity) T-shirts for people, and things like that."

If it takes equal parts eccentricity and

ambition to master the around-the-world challenge, then Voski is your man.

The 30-something Townsville resident is in the process of planning his own global circumnavigational adventure, which he hopes to perform on a jet ski.

When he launched his 41,500km voyage in March this year, Voski hosted a media launch, surrounding himself with bikini-clad girls.

He said there were now plans to promote his journey by doing a mini-leg of it, from Townsville to Cairns.

"At the moment we've done a promo

up in Cairns not too long ago," Voski said. "I'm getting a group together and doing some film in the water for YouTube and also planning a promo trip from Townsville to Cairns.

"We haven't set a date for that yet, but we want to do the You Tube first because there's some equipment involved in there."

The adventure will involve Voski astride a 1800cc jet ski which he will ride through Polynesia, across the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii, through the Panama Canal and across the Atlantic Ocean, through the Suez Canal, across the top

of the Indian Ocean and north Australia before returning to Townsville.

While the voyage will be a fun for yet-to-be-named charities, says it is more a case of making a dream a reality.

"I dreamt of this years ago. I get it out of my head for two to years. There are lot of people who would like to see it happen."

Continually stopping in port the way, Voski estimates the trip cost a little over \$2 million.