

Quad squad buoyant in quest to raise a million

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Ari Seirlis, centre, with his team which includes, clockwise, Mike and Lorraine Petterson, Graham McCullum, Charl Tostee, Patrick De-Robillard, JM Tostee and Marko Santos.
Picture: Sibonelo Ngcobo

Muddy and weary after travelling 1000km through some of South Africa's most rugged terrain, a contingent of 500 quad and two-wheeled motorcycle riders arrived in Ballito on Sunday, half their mission accomplished.

The ride to raise money for the QuadPara Association of South Africa (Qasa) also saw a dozen quadriplegic and paraplegic riders taking part in the challenging four-day adventure.

Among them was quadriplegic Ari Seirlis, the chief executive of Qasa, who took part for the eighth time on his adapted Polaris Side by Side quad bike.

Seirlis said this was an overwhelming experience and a massive challenge given his severe disability.

"We received an enormous amount of support that allowed us to overcome a lot of obstacles along the route," he said. "We had medical support breakdown facilities that made this much easier."

Seirlis said the most challenging part of his ride from Joburg was the heat and dusty terrain.

"We had some tough times but conquering them was important to us and we are glad to have made it here."

He was saddened to see the poverty in which people lived in some parts of South Africa.

“There are some hard times in Newcastle and Weenen, hey. People living in poor, poor conditions; it broke my heart to see that and it makes you think how fortunate you are.”

Seirlis lamented the stark class contrast evident in the country.

“Changes need to be done in South Africa and it needs to be done by South Africans.”

Phil Case, 37, has participated in Quads 4 Quads three times and said it was a hard ride, but he was proud that he was able to complete it without any breakdowns.

“I’ve (ridden) two times before this, and in both cases I rode both legs and I found the return to be tougher,” said Case, who became a quadriplegic as a result of an accident he had when he was 21.

“Coming down to KZN is wonderful because the scenery is beautiful.”

The first part of the journey began at Carnival City last week and ended yesterday in Ballito, from where the riders will head back to Carnival City on Thursday.

They hope to finish on October 6 when R1 million is expected to be collected and handed to Qasa.

Eight days of travelling and over 2000km will have been covered when it all ends.

The event has raised more than R5m over the past nine years, allowing the association to carry out projects that empower the lives of quadriplegics and paraplegics.

They include driver-training programmes, computer training for skills development, and handing out of wheelchairs.