

ITS A LONG WAY..



visiting German cyclists Julia and Stefan Meinhold..pack up before traveling to Auckland on Thursday.

NEW ZEALAND is a long way from Frankfurt for two German tourists who have committed up to five years to touring the world by tandem bicycle. Couple Julia and Stefan Meinhold are former Deutsche Bank workers who found they'd had enough of the office life and decided to begin their exploration of the world from New Zealand after a first visit two years ago.

The Meinholds have spent four months in New Zealand having entered through Auckland, travelled to Wellington, down the east coast to Christchurch, a side trip to Mt Cook, then to Dunedin and down to the South.

The couple overnighted in Hamilton last week before leaving for Auckland, their last set of hills and a flight out to Hawaii, to enjoy the beach and cycle around the island.

From there their route takes them to Alaska and down the Pan American highway to Argentina. New Zealand has provided plenty of testing times on the road, in topography and weather.

The joke on the road is always the person in the back is not pedalling. It can be heard every day, Stefan said.

In the scenic Catlins in eastern Southland they struggled against fierce southwesterly winds with rain and hail, in summer, and plenty of leg-busting hills.

Julia and Stefan's tandem bicycle is a specially built collapsible model weighing about 100kgs fully loaded.

The couple record their trip in an on-line diary, www.bankerbiker.de which has translations in German and English.