

# BicycleTraveler

International Magazine on Bicycle Touring







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## From the editor

If you love cycle touring photos, then this issue is for you! We've published an inspiring selection of pictures from the Bike Touring Survival Guide book cover photo contest and even more "Images from the road". We are also pleased to welcome graphic designer Michael Tran's comic strip to the magazine. His entertaining book "Ups and Downs" combines illustrations, photos and text to tell the visual story of his bike trip from Paris to Munich Germany.

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### EDITOR

Grace Johnson

### DISCLAIMER

The articles published reflect the opinions of their respective authors and are not necessarily those of the editor.

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On the trail of  
**Hannibal**  
with the BBC

BY: SAM WOOD







S

am, Danny and Ben Wood cycled nearly 4000 kilometres in Autumn 2010, following the trail that three ancient brothers Hannibal, Hasdrubal and Mago Barca had taken over 2000 years before. The Barcas were invading Italy with a huge army in an attempt to defeat Rome and the

Wood brothers were presenting a BBC TV documentary about this ancient conflict.

“E` vietato – no shorts allowed!” We were surrounded by a patrol of towering Italian Cuirassiers, the President of Italy’s personal bodyguard (they have a minimum height requirement of 190cm). Not only were we dwarfed, but we felt even more underdressed than usual in this the most fashionable of countries. We were grubby after six weeks of bike touring through Spain, France and Italy.

The Cuirassiers guard the Quirinale Palace, which contains the only existing bust of the Carthaginian General Hannibal. In 219BC he had led his huge army and 37 elephants from Cartagena in southern Spain all the way up and over the French Alps and into Italy in an attempt to defeat the powerful Roman Republic. We had followed his route so far on bikes and now, 2,500 long kilometres later, found ourselves clacking around the drafty side entrance of the Quirinale Palace in our riding shoes, being barred entrance to see the inspiration for all that hard work.

**OLARGUES, FRANCE** - *the bridge in the foreground (12th C.) was known as the place to go in medieval times if you wanted to make a deal with the devil!*





Following the 4,000km route that Hannibal marched was an idea born of my love of cycling and history. Always up for adventure, I proposed to my brothers that we take on this epic journey on bikes. And seeing as we had had great fun filming home movies as kids about Chuck Norris, zombies and King Arthur, why not film it as we go?

All being in Europe at the time, we sent in a proposal to the BBC, which was

so well received that they commissioned a documentary series based on the idea! We were utterly shocked and perhaps slightly apprehensive – we were complete novice documentary presenters. My eldest brother Danny had at least done TV news reporting but was no keen cyclist. Ben and I had done plenty of riding but had never stood in front of a camera hoping to talk semi-intelligently about anything. Following Hannibal's army's



Photo: SAM WOOD



# At the beginning of the trip - we joked about

epic journey on our bikes with a BBC film crew in tow was a dream come true.

So we trained hard and got our equipment together. We had some brilliant touring bikes for us which we fitted out with huge panniers to house all our gear. We would attempt to experience the trip as close as possible to how Hannibal's men may have done (which in all honesty, was not very close) but we travelled under our own steam, camped in tents, cooked meals and carried everything we needed. And once the BBC put Ben and I through a crash course in TV presenting we all of a sudden found ourselves arriving Murcia airport in southern Spain.

Our location manager Jason met us there – parking our support vehicle, which doubled as the crew's living quarters, illegally but conveniently right outside the front door of the airport. I initially thought perhaps this is what happens when you are on a film shoot – you do whatever you like and ignore all the rules for the sake of your bloated ego.

**THEN I NOTICED** Jason was busy fending off Spanish parking police. It turned out the camper van was just too big to get into the car park. We hastily packed up and headed off to Cartagena, lucky to escape without a ticket. On reaching our first campsite, we spent the first few sweaty hours on location getting our bikes back into one piece, all the while joking about how we were going on a paid holiday.

These jokes paled rapidly as we started to understand what it took to put to-

gether a TV documentary. The actual filming required patience, imagination and expertise – qualities the BBC crew had in abundance. Hours of wide shots, close shots, wide non-sync (no sound), GVs (general vision), PTCs (pieces to camera), POVs (point of view), pulling focus, tilt shots, tracking shots . . . What we imagined as a physically strenuous but mentally fun touring bike holiday quickly became an intense film shoot with a strenuous touring ride squeezed in around it.

**EARLY STARTS AND** late finishes designed to make the most of the good filming light meant riding in between, during the hottest hours of the day, and having much less time than we had anticipated to cycle the allotted distances, so night time catch-up riding was a regular necessity.

The first leg of the trip took us from Cartagena, at the bottom of Spain, up the coast to cross into France over the Pyrenees. In hindsight, this leg was easy – respectful drivers, mostly good roads, lovely scenery but often touristy towns, and no great hills to climb.

We stopped briefly in Alicante as La Vuelta (Spain's equivalent of the Tour de France) rolled into town. Matthew Lloyd (Silence-Lotto) very graciously got up extra early the next morning to chat to us before Stage 10 of the race. Able to lift his bike literally with one finger, I tried to convince him into a swap, but he was having none of it, and as he went off to breakfast with his teammates we lum-



## *how we were going on a paid holiday.*

bered off in the opposite direction thinking what a nice bloke he was and dreaming of light road bikes.

The Pyrenees passed by surprisingly quickly as we skirted the beautiful Mediterranean coast, but once over the mountains we had the mistral wind shrieking around our ears and seeming to push our laden bikes backwards, leaving us physically and mentally broken and with tens of kilometres to catch up on.

Over the whole trip, however, we were incredibly lucky with the weather; only three days of rain out of eleven weeks on the road, the heat of September in Spain nowhere near the highs of July and August, and winter hit the French Alps just as we were leaving them behind – a metre of snow filling the pass I had traversed just the week before.

**WE WERE ALSO** incredibly lucky mechanically – plenty of punctures and blown tyres, one wonky rear derailleur and a pedal fell off, but no significant breakdowns over the 4,000km.

The Alps were one of the highlights of the trip – definitely the hardest but also the most rewarding. With a sibling race up Mont Ventoux warming up our climbing legs, and being pretty fit by then, we were excited to be there, but after a week of long mountain hauls and huge amounts of filming, often arriving at 10 or 11pm exhausted and famished, we were on the brink of collapse.

We did, however, enjoy some beautiful quiet night-time rides with huge shadows of anonymous mountains and the

eerie feeling of vast chasms at the edge of the road. These evenings you could easily imagine Hannibal and his men looking at the same night sky and thinking the exact same thing – what on earth am I doing here?

**AT THIS POINT** we split our trio as we each explored a possible route Hannibal may have taken over the final passes into Italy – the greatest mystery of his journey. We each found ourselves looking for clues as to Hannibal's passing, and being the youngest I got Col du Traversette, a walking trail which reaches 3,000 metres and has snow all year round. My bike survived the drag but it took me days to physically recover.

Back on our bikes and forty kilometres all downhill from the pass at Col Agnel meant that before we knew it we were in classic northern Italy. We headed south through rolling Piedmont away from the winter cold, through Emilia Romagna and into the beautiful countryside of Tuscany and Umbria. Hannibal spent five epic days traversing the Arnoswamps here – his men couldn't rest in the muddy marshes and Hannibal himself contracted an eye infection that led to the loss of one of them.

We then headed to Rome and to our confrontation with the Presidential bodyguard. To finally be in the presence of Hannibal after a few thousand kilometres of cycling in his honour was strangely moving. But there was no time to stop and relax -- we had to get on and film our PTCs, POVs and GVs!



After Rome we crossed to the east coast towards Taranto in the heel of Italy's boot. Italy seemed to be changing as we travelled further south. The sophisticated north was long gone and we rode through hundreds of kilometres of olive groves and vineyards often guarded by unchained dogs which would liven up a long stretch of road. It's surprising how fast you can go with a salivating dog on your wheel.

To finish the journey we first had to get to Hannibal's homeland, Tunisia, a ferry ride away. We wanted to get to Zama, a long day ride west of Tunis, and where the final battle between Hannibal and the Romans took place.

**HANNIBAL HAD** returned from Italy and lost a battle at Zama against an invading Roman force and retreated to the coast, much as we had done. For a time he was involved in Carthaginian politics, but after some political intrigue he was forced from the city and spent the rest of his years roaming the Eastern Mediterranean, looking for allies to continue his fight against Rome.

Eventually the Romans caught up with him and surrounded his house. He took poison, saying proudly, "Let us

put an end to the life that has given the Romans so much anxiety."

**WE DIDN'T TAKE** poison, although we sometimes wished we could have administered some to each another! After 11 weeks, nearly 4,000km and over 200 hours of footage we were finished, mentally and physically, but hugely satisfied with our accomplishment and relieved at just having survived it!

2 years on, the BBC has aired "On Hannibal's Trail" many times in the UK and National Geographic bought the show and have been showing it worldwide (besides USA unfortunately!) My legs have recovered and I spend much of my casual riding time thinking "what cycling adventure to do next?", or "Which other great commanders or epic journeys can we follow?" **BT**

*For more information on the documentary and journey please take a look at [www.woodbrothers.tv](http://www.woodbrothers.tv). In 2012 we took a group on the same epic ride but without the campsites and cameras! It was a spectacular and beautiful cycle combined with fantastic food, hotels and history. In September 2013 we will be doing it all again. If you fancy joining us then visit [www.rideandseek.com](http://www.rideandseek.com).*



Photo: ZISSI KAUCH



# TV Presentation

BY: SAM WOOD

**“SLOWER... LOUDER... More expression!”**

These were the words I heard most frequently while doing my pieces to camera (PTCs) during filming ‘On Hannibal’s Trail’. An honest appraisal of our performances would be, in my opinion, that in Episode 1, I was pretty bad, by the end of Episode 3 I had stopped being scared of the camera and by Episode 5 and 6 I could (hopefully) almost be mistaken for a TV presenter.

Neither Ben nor I had any previous TV presenting training, whereas Danny, having worked in Media for years, was completely comfortable. Luckily, on the other hand, Danny was very worried about the riding having rarely ridden farther than the corner shop!

Fortunately the BBC support crews were amazingly patient and supportive, and as well as a crash course in presenting, given to us by one of our directors on the lawn in front of BBC at Shepherd’s Bush, we did learn a few general tricks of the trade and a few bike specific ones too: Basic TV Presenting

- Speak as slowly as you can...nothing is worse than a presenter who speaks too quickly to be understood. One way to slow ourselves down was to pretend we were talking to a young child.
- Speak Loudly. This seems odd as we were wearing microphones but it is essential for clarity and speaking loudly generally adds expression and slows you down too.
- Express yourself. This is a hard one as for me I was always being told to use my hands and emphasise words more, however for someone like Danny who is fairly dramatic he was occasionally being told the opposite. The consensus of our film crews was that dramatic emphasis is essential and that physically hands should always be up if they are in the framed shot. Emphasis with hands or on words should only be done 2-3 times maximum per (30-45 sec long) PTC otherwise you appear like a bird flapping its wings.
- Always look at the camera, pretend it is a friend or your audience or whatever you like as long as it keeps you looking as this engages the audience.
- Smile...it may seem odd but it draws the audience in, so look happy otherwise your audience won’t either!
- If you can, walk and present or have the camera move. If everything is still, unless you are very dramatic and animated, it is hard to maintain the audience’s interest. If you are walking and talking, although it can be harder, it is a lot easier to watch.



- If you have one, listen to your Director . It is very hard to judge how you look while you are 'performing' and we quickly came to realise that the Director is the most important person on a film shoot and their word is final.
- If you are doing a PTC start and end looking at the camera and make sure you pause a little so the editor (possibly you) has a few frames to work with when cutting up your programme.
- Practise recording yourself and watch the play back. You only realise how silly you look and sound until you do this. And you only realise how much better you sound when made to speak slowly, loudly and with expression – you still look silly though!

**'BIKE CAMS'** are great but they take a bit of practice, here a few tips which may help you get the result you want:

- Choose quiet and smooth roads, playing with a camera while cycling along is dangerous enough without adding cars into the equation. Also traffic noise destroys any audio you might want to record and rough roads are uncomfortable for both you and your audience.
- Take shots from multiple spots on the bike. If your camera has a clamp use it on your handlebars, seat stem, front/back pannier rack – anywhere you can (these are called GVs – general views and you use them in all aspects of filming) especially if you plan to also do PTCs on the bike while cycling. This will allow you, when editing, to

cut shots of the moving road and bike to join shots, fix errors, cover up when a fly goes in your mouth, etc. You can always continue the audio over these GVs and cut to you talking while riding to give the sense of movement and travel.

- Make sure your bike cam has a good clamp! A rattling picture is impossible to watch.
- When choosing a bike camera, if you can afford one with a separate screen to the camera body then this can be an excellent investment. There is nothing more frustrating than thinking you have filmed a great shot only to find that the camera was aiming the wrong way or the light was terrible.
- Lastly if you are filming from the bike take care and make sure you have a friend riding with you who can keep an eye on your line! The last thing you want to do or film is a crash!

If you have any questions, feel free to email me: [sam@rideandseek.com](mailto:sam@rideandseek.com). **BT**

*Cyclist, archaeologist, follower of historic trails by bike. Sam Wood is the co-founder of Ride and Seek Bike Tours who specialize in adventure cycling in the footsteps of historic legends like Hannibal and Caesar. [www.rideandseek.com](http://www.rideandseek.com).*

*For those who have already shot a bicycle touring video, why not add it to the World Cycle Videos group on Vimeo at: <http://vimeo.com/groups/wereldfietser>.*



# Test Hilleberg Nallo 3GT

By: FRIEDEL GRANT

**W**hen we're on a bike tour, there's no place that feels more like home than our trusty tent, the Hilleberg Nallo 3GT. It's not the cheapest tent on the market by a long shot (about \$1,100 U.S. for the current model) but price does buy quality and in our experience this tent is extremely durable and dependable, even in the worst of weather. Among other things, we've tested it in 15 straight hours of the hardest rain we've ever seen (we stayed perfectly dry), and in gale-force winds (the tent flexed gracefully with the gusts).



Photo: FRIEDEL GRANT



We love this tent so much that we've actually bought two of them. The first one was the tent that accompanied us for most of our 3-year world bicycle tour. When we decided to replace it, we'd used our first Nallo 3GT over 400 times. To put that in perspective, if you bought this tent today and used it as much as we did, you'd pay around \$2.50 U.S. for each night of worry-free camping. Bargain!

When we replaced it (30 months into our trip), the Nallo 3GT was still functioning perfectly but the outer shell had suffered some heavy UV damage and we weren't sure how much longer it would last. We were offered a newer model at a hefty discount so we jumped at the chance to renew our tent. Had we not been so impulsive, the old one probably would have lasted quite a bit longer. We could also have renewed our tent by simply buying a new outer tent from Hilleberg, although we didn't know that at the time.

Our second Nallo 3GT has been used about 100 times and we expect it to last for at least as long as the first one. With a little luck, it will last even longer because

we're now more vigilant about protecting our tent from UV damage by using a tarp and pitching in shady places.

You can set this tent up with the front fully open. This is great in light rain, and on hot days (it allows for a lot of air flow).

We can sum up the reasons why we really like this tent in a few short points:

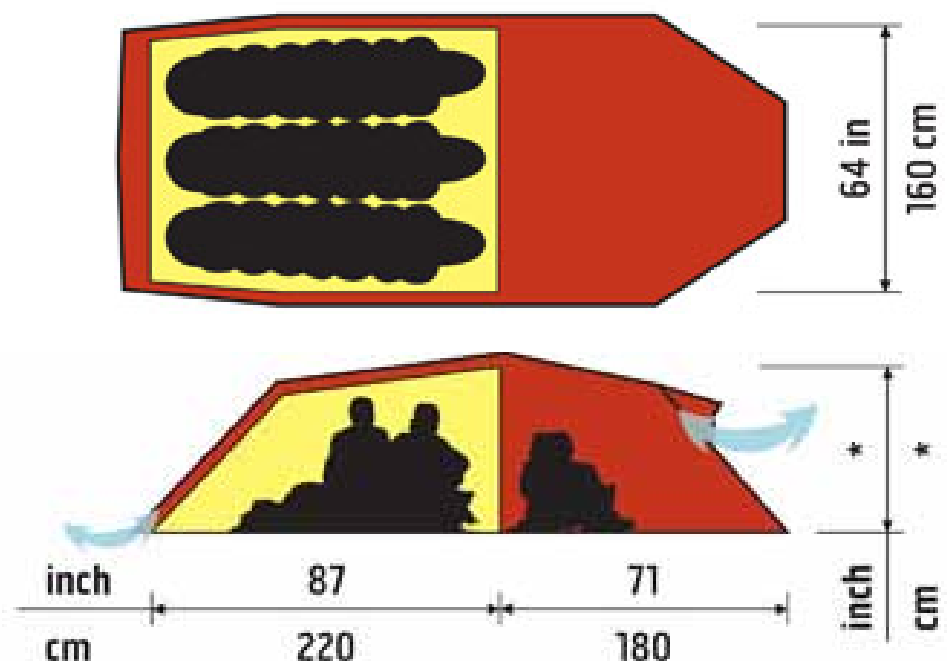
- **Quality.** The Nallo 3GT really does stand up to everything. We've tested it in heavy snow, pouring rain and fierce winds and it's never let us down.
- **Lots of space.** We have the 3-person model. It's perfect for 2 bike tourists plus all the associated gear. We can put all our bags in the porch, and still have room to sit and read. That means we don't feel claustrophobic, even on rainy days when we might be inside the tent for a few hours.
- **Light.** At 3 kg, this is one of the lighter 3-person and all-season tents on the market.
- **Easy to pitch.** There are only 3 poles and set-up is intuitive. Not long after we bought this tent, we had to

## NALLO 3GT

WEIGHT: 3 KG

FOR MORE INFO SEE:

[WWW.HILLEBERG.COM](http://WWW.HILLEBERG.COM)



set it up in the dark. We had no problems. Hilleberg say you can pitch the tent with as few as 4 pegs. On very rocky ground, we've pitched it without any pegs, simply by using rocks to secure the corners and tying the guy-lines to nearby trees, bushes or other fixed objects.

- **Great customer service.** Hilleberg have promptly answered any questions we had about the tent, and helped us to find a solution when the zippers wore out. This was easily fixed (<http://travellingtwo.com/resources/keep-your-tent-zipping-along>).
- **Multiple set-up options.** In addition to the standard set up, you can completely open the front of the tent. This is really nice in the summer, or any time you want a lot of air flowing through the tent.

Nothing is perfect, of course, and there are a few downsides to this tent:

- **Too short for tall people.** If you're over 6 feet tall, you'll struggle to stretch out fully in this tent. Andrew is 5'11" and his feet nearly touch the end.
- **Expensive.** This is definitely not the cheapest tent on the market. It's going to last you a long time but if you're only planning a few shorter bike tours then you'll probably do just as well with a cheaper tent such as MSR's Hubba Hubba model (another favourite of ours). Alternatively, watch for sales. Sometimes you can get a deal on last year's model. You can also try to pick up a lightly used second-hand model.
- **Occasional condensation.** On very cold nights in damp climates, we try to keep all the heat in by fully

closing both the main entrance and the door that separates the porch and sleeping area. That does lead to some condensation. Most of the time, we're not camping in extreme cold and so we don't entirely seal the tent. You can leave the doors partially open (while still keeping the mosquito net panels closed) to improve airflow.

- **Sometimes too big.** This is a roomy tent and you need a relatively decent amount of space to put it up. This isn't often a problem but sometimes we have to hunt an extra few minutes for the perfect spot.
- **Groundsheet sold separately.** It's not all that unusual for tent groundsheets to be sold separately, and you can expect to fork out about \$100 U.S. for the official groundsheet for this tent. The footprint is almost essential, as it makes the porch usable in all weather (even when the ground is wet). Alternatively, you could just lay a small sheet of plastic down, but then that's one more (relatively heavy) thing to carry.

On the whole, we feel the advantages of this tent far outweigh the disadvantages and we'd heartily recommend it for anyone planning an extended bike tour. To paraphrase a famous commercial:

Cost of a Hilleberg tent? \$1,100 U.S.

Cost of the groundsheet? \$100 U.S.

Cost of knowing that you can sleep through the worst storms? Priceless! **BT**

*Friedel & Andrew Grant's extensive website [www.travellingtwo.com](http://www.travellingtwo.com) contains their trip reports, resources for bicycle travelers and the e-book "Bike Touring Survival Guide".*





Image from  
the **Road:**  
**Oman**

PAUL JEURISSEN  
[www.pauljeurissen.nl](http://www.pauljeurissen.nl)











Image from  
the Road:  
**India**

PAUL JEURISSEN

[www.pauljeurissen.nl](http://www.pauljeurissen.nl)





# TRIP GEAR

*A look at equipment for bicycle travelers.*

By: GRACE JOHNSON



## Titanium Non-Stick Pot

◀ This ultralight and ultrastrong 1.3L pot from Evernew has a silicone-ceramic non-stick coating which makes cleanups a breeze.

**Weight: 5.7oz. (162 gr.)**

**Price: \$ 77. U.S.**

**[www.evernewamerica.com](http://www.evernewamerica.com)**

## Compressible Pillow

Why not carry a bit of extra comfort? The Quechua compressible pillow has a soft front side, you can stuff extra clothes in the backside and measures 15x13 in. (38x32 cm.).

**Weight: 6.3 oz. (180 gr.)**

**Price: € 7.45 Euros**

**[www.decathlon.co.uk](http://www.decathlon.co.uk)**



## Pack-It Sack

◀ An ultra-light packing bag to help keep small accessories organized while traveling. It's made of silnylon rip-stop which allows you to see what's inside the sack.

**Weight: 0.6 oz (18 gr)**

**Price: \$ 15. U.S.**

**[www.eaglecreek.com](http://www.eaglecreek.com)**





## Suspension Seatpost

◀ The Thudbuster seatpost from Cane Creek absorbs the bumps of rough roads so that you ride more comfortably.

**Weight: 20.1 oz. (570 gr.)**

**Price: \$ 175. U.S.**

**[www.canecreek.com](http://www.canecreek.com)**

## Spoke Replacement

With the Fiber Fix emergency repair kit you can replace a broken spoke of any length without having to remove the freewheel cassette. ▶

**Price: \$ 11. U.S.**

**[www.fiberfixspoke.com](http://www.fiberfixspoke.com)**



## 2-Person Bike Tent

◀ The Eureka Veloci SUL tent offers a lot of storage space in the vestibule for your bike bags and even your bikes

**Weight: 8.4 lbs (3.8 kg.)**

**Price: € 549.95 Euros**

**[www.eurekaeurope.com](http://www.eurekaeurope.com)**



# A real man in Baluchistan

*While talking to an atypical Pakistani, Loretta decides she's glad that polygamy is expensive.*

Story & Photo: LORETTA HENDERSON

**A**s I sit and wait at sun rise in the no-man's land between Pakistan and Iran, I patiently wait for the Iranian border gate to open. I have learned that the Baluchi, Pakistan people are as jovial as it gets, with a laugh that jiggles their bellies, a laugh that Santa would be proud of. The Pakistani military police and I have become intimately acquainted lately when I was scooped up in Quetta in the Baluchistan province and prevented from cycling the majority of the way to the border by some surprisingly super fun police.

I cycled the remaining KM to the border at sunrise keeping a low profile. I park Pandemic the magic bicycle with the Pakistani border police, sit and wait for the Iranian gate to open. I get to chatting with one of the guards. He tells me, he is looking for a wife and the rest of Pakistan has gotten too liberal and it is not good. Funny enough, he is very handsome and has a likeable demeanor, which is, until he starts talking. He is what I would call an unique conservative man and not your average Pakistani. He tells me with a big friendly smile, that he is 25 years old, that he can't wait to become a man, he asks me how many women the boys at home have slept with at 25, and

says he has only slept with one, he tells that my downtown area has gotten too old for these sort of things because of the cycling. As the sun continues to rise, I am trying not to laugh and therefore encourage any conversation that may take us further downtown or encourage a debate about the present fitness status of my aging hoojaa.

I put on my best curious travelers smile and sit back and listen. He continues with his views about how women are to stay at home and only after having birthed two boy babies will his wife be allowed to leave the house wearing a burka with full face coverage to go to the market. She will not be allowed to have friends, an education after 10th grade, and marrying at 15 is good. He is considering having a couple of wives, he is

***"I wished him well finding his 4 wives"***

allowed 4. However, he is not sure he can afford it. You have got to love money for at least that, I think to myself. I ask him about some burn marks I have seen



*Loretta's bicycle is safely transported to the Iranian border.*

on some women's faces, he tells me she did something at home and it's ok that the man burns and/or beats her. As my teetering smile and eye balls pop out, I force myself to keep listening. I am genuinely fascinated and try to be respectful of differences; however, I think my tongue might be bleeding.

I asked the guard what he thinks about me. As a women bicycle travelling alone in Pakistan, I have often felt guilty about my tremendous freedom and significantly concerned about my sisters of the world.

He says he thinks it is fine and wonderful because I am not a Baluchi woman. I wished him well finding his 4 wives, apologized that I wasn't a polygamist and off I went pedaling into Iran on my aging hoojaa grateful for the education and that much more concerned about some of my sisters in Baluchistan. **BT**

*Loretta tries to be respectful of cultural differences as she pedals around the world. Follow her solo female cycling adventures at: [www.skalatititude.com](http://www.skalatititude.com)*



# The “WHY?”

*An answer to a film producer who wanted to  
know why I was going on a bicycle journey.*





Question





A funny one, this. The "WHY?" question is the one everybody asks - friends, relatives, journalists, and proposal-mauling folk such as your good self.... (I mean that in a positive sense.)

Sometimes I think it's "Why?" in the sense of "I seriously want to know what it is that gets into your head or your heart or your soul and makes you want to do a thing like this".

And sometimes I think it's "Why?" in the sense of "What story can you tell that justifies this expedition in terms of the prevailing social interpretation of worthiness?"

I'll give you my take on this —you may not like it, but here is what I think.

A lot of expeditions pick a story to hang their ride on, either because they think in advance -- probably rightly -- that it will play better in the mediasphere; or because, belatedly, some journo/producer/PR jock has told them to.

So you get all these "In the footsteps of...", "Retracing the ancient....", "Could Alexander the Great have come this way?", "The sweet and sour trail: eating Chinese from Shanghai to Shoreditch, BY BIKE" type of themed expeditions. (OK, actually I quite like that last idea.)

89.5 % (forgive my rough estimate) of these things are phony. The participants know it, the intermediaries (journalists/producers etc) know it, and I think the audience knows it too, most of the time. It's pretty obvious, most of the time, that these adventurers don't really give much of a damn about their meeeedjia-friendly theme: they are really doing what they are doing because they want do something out of their skins, to go hard and dirty, to hurt like hell and achieve whatever it may be, climbing Everest or pogo-sticking across Antarctica. If they have to tell everyone that they're pogo-sticking in Shackleton's footsteps in order to get financing or recognition, well, so be it.

**HOW OFTEN HAVE** you watched or listened to or read about this kind of journey, and you think to yourself: OK, I know the game here: it's a hell of an adventure, it's exciting, I'm hooked, good luck to these guys, bloody-hell-rather-them-







# Long lines on maps from A to B; - *these are th*

than-me (or: cor, I wish I was there), but, really, what has Marco Polo got to do with this? When he came through town I'll bet he didn't have to trot past 15 miles of white-tiled ribbon-development garages and cement factories, and no, I don't suppose he was choking on black smoke from the constant stream of Dong Feng trucks either. Marco Polo was then; now is now.

There are some honorable exceptions of course. Thor Heyerdal and Kon Tiki, that kind of made sense because he had to have some reason for making his rafts out of whatever it was he made them out of, stone-age Polynesian coconut matting or whatever. But even then, you pretty much knew that at bottom those guys were having an incredible adventure, the Polynesian migration (or whatever it was) theory was a pretty neat hook to hang it on, but let's be honest it doesn't really much matter whether the theory was right or wrong, it was a hell of a journey.

**FROM TIME TO TIME** you get a real expert on ancient Mongolian drainage ditches, and I mean a real expert, someone who lives and breathes ancient Mongolian drainage ditches, someone who knows ancient Mongolian drainage ditches better than the ancient Mongolians did. For him, the 3000 mile camel trek across the desert is almost incidental to the prize at the end of it, to explore a drainage ditch that no-one has ever

explored before. His passion for drainage ditches is obvious and he can talk authoritatively about the subject like no-one else can. He hasn't read the books because he wrote all the damn books, for heaven's sake.

But he is a rare bird.

Most "themed" expeditions that find their way into books/newspapers/films don't have this kind of expert. Maybe the leader has read a thin paperback on Afghan tribal dancing before he set off, but we all know why he is really homping over the Hindu Kush.

Because it's there.

**FOR ME, GEORGE** Mallory's "Because It's There" line is one of the most abused quotes in expedition history. Read it the wrong way, and it sounds like a casual, lazy-witty, now-leave-me-alone-you-pesky-little-base-camp-hugging-media-types sort of off-the-cuff remark from a tired guy whose mind was more focused on climbing mountains than on cooking up sound-bites for tiresome journalists. But I think it's not that at all.

To a mountaineer, a mountain is like a blazing beacon, a huge neon-lit challenge in the sky that screams (or whispers, menacingly, or seductively), "Come on, climb me, you bastard, if you're good enough." The mountain gets into the mountaineer's soul. It messes up the survival instinct that evolution has done its best to hone, and replaces it with a kind of obsessive-compulsive mania: I

# *e things that call out to me, saying, "Ride me!"*

must climb that bloody mountain, and honestly I don't really care three hoots if it's the 90th anniversary of Mallory and Irving or even that today is European Anti-Littering Day. I need to climb that thing because it's there, because it is commanding me to climb it, because my soul won't rest until I have climbed it, because that is who I am, that mountain has become me, and I have become it.

I'm being a little presumptuous to put all these word's into Mallory's mouth, I know, but I'd take a bet anyway that he wouldn't disagree. "Because it's there" is the real reason that drives most adventure-expeditioners, even if they feel they have to say something else to please the meedjia, sponsors, and maybe even their own (misguided) consciences.

A story well told is a story told with passion, and when you're only three-quarter-hearted about ceremonial megalithic urinals in Ghastlistan (are they of Etruscan origin?), it shows -- even if everybody (even the audience, because it helps them feel more high-brow and less voyeuristic) is trying to pretend that it doesn't.

**I COULD MAKE** up a good story as to why it is historically or culturally or educationally essential, or vital to the interests of world peace, that I ride a bicycle from Shanghai to Shoreditch (I might ditch Exeter because nothing in China alliterates with it; oh, now you've got me going, if you can't find a valid humanistic or intel-

lectual peg, try a verbal one, Shanghai to Shangri-La -- that would be nice, actually, the perfect contrast between a sea-level urban-industrial cosmopolitan-consumerist skyscraperland nightmare and an ascetic little dream-world of peace, karma and yak-dung high up in the mountains; and, as it happens, they've just officially re-named a little Yunnanese town in the Himalayas "Shangri-La" (I kid you not -- look it up: it was called Zhongdian until a couple of years ago)) -- anyway, I was going to say, I could make up a story about why I'm going, or I could tell you the truth: because it's there. I'm not a mountaineer, I'm a map-gazer: big blank empty spaces; jumbled piles of contours; roads in places where you ask yourself, not just how the hell did they build a road up there, but why the hell?; long lines from A to B; - these are the things that call out to me, saying, "Ride me!", just as Everest bellowed "Climb me!" into Mallory's lug-hole.

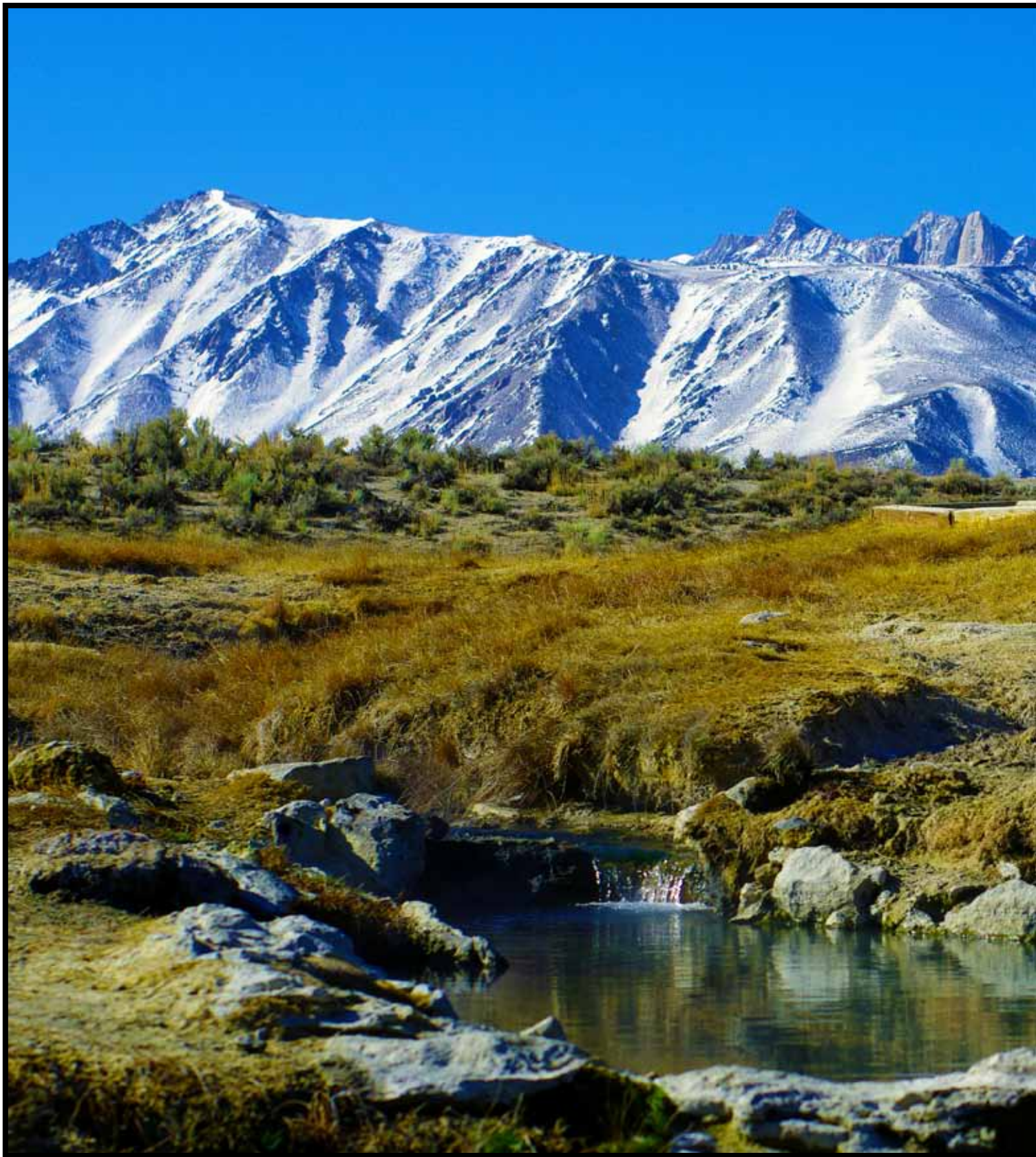
Enough. **BT**

*Edward Genochio rode from England to China and back again and is now writing a book titled "But Isn't There A Bus?" read more about his trip at:*  
<http://www.2wheels.org.uk>.

*Photographer Paul Jeurissen and his partner Grace Johnson are now "Bicycling around the world in search of inspiring cycle images."*  
[www.bicyclingaroundtheworld.com](http://www.bicyclingaroundtheworld.com)



# Photo Contest



The winning image

**California, U.S.A.**

Photo: SOLIDREAM [www.solidream.net](http://www.solidream.net)



In January 2012 [www.travellingtwo.com](http://www.travellingtwo.com) together with [www.bicycletraveler.nl](http://www.bicycletraveler.nl) held a photo contest to find a cover photo for the next edition of the Bike Touring Survival Guide. More than 700 pictures were entered and on the following pages you can view a selection of inspiring images that capture the feeling of traveling by bicycle.







◀ **Huascarán National Park, Peru**

Photo: MATT KELLY [www.pedalpanam.com](http://www.pedalpanam.com)

▼ **China**

Photo: RYAN DAVIES [www.ryandaviesphoto.com](http://www.ryandaviesphoto.com)







**Slovenia** ▲

Photo: CHRIS GRUAR [www.cycling4cancer.com](http://www.cycling4cancer.com)

**Sofala, Mozambique** ▼

Photo: ENRIQUE GABAS PERE [www.flickr.com/photos/29759203@N06](http://www.flickr.com/photos/29759203@N06)







▲ **Chengdu, China**  
Photo: ÁLVARO MARTÍN [www.rodadas.net](http://www.rodadas.net)

▼ **Little Petra, Jordan**  
Photo: ERIC REX [www.goingbybikes.com](http://www.goingbybikes.com)





# GIJS STEVERS

Interview: GRACE JOHNSON

*In 2012 Gijs rode from Norway to South Africa on an electric bike.*

**Q: So how did you come up with this idea?**

A: As a young boy I loved studying maps and in my mind I made imaginary journeys to discover new places. Years later after I finished my university study on environmental economics I realized that I had not installed a single solar-panel, smelled bio-diesel or even driven an electric car. So cycling from Cape to Cape on an electric bike would be a good way to explore the world and promote our renewable energy future.

During the journey I gave workshops, visited renewable energy projects and wrote about them on my website [www.capetocape2012.com](http://www.capetocape2012.com).

**Q: Tell me about your electric bike.**

A: It was a Gazelle Fuente Plus Innergy e-bike. ([www.gazelle.nl](http://www.gazelle.nl)) The bicycle's two batteries gave me a reach of 100-150 km. in the highest level or 180-300 km. in normal. The electric motor is in the front wheel and I also had the bicycle customized with a stronger back wheel and front fork so that it could carry my 50 kg. of gear.

**Q: Where did you re-charge**

**your batteries?**

A: In Africa I usually recharged them at night in hotels and guesthouses. It's only when I cycled 100km or more that I needed to make a lunch stop to give me the extra range. A break of 1.5 hours recharging in a restaurant (with the help of my fast chargers) would give me a day-range of 150 km. using full electrical assistance all the way.

**Q: How did you go about asking cafe owners for permission to re-charge?**

A: I would just walk into a restaurant and check for a plug. When I found one I would ask; "Can I eat something here while charging my batteries?"

**Q: Did all of the restaurant 'shacks' have electricity? If they didn't, how did you go about re-charging them?**

A: There was always a solution to be found. My batteries have been recharged in kitchens, shops, churches, gas stations and even in private homes.

**Q: Could the charger be plugged into every electrical**

**plug that you came across? If not, what sort of problems did you have?**

A: Yes, it could be re-charged in any electrical plug. I carried an adaptor and an extension cord with 4 plugs so I could charge my phone, laptop and 2 batteries at the same time. In Sudan and Ethiopia I had problems finding 'quality' electricity. Either there was no electricity at that time of the day, or the current/voltage was too weak to charge the batteries. Luckily an electric bike functions just like a normal bicycle!

**Q: On the Gazelle website they write that the e-bikes are “splash-proof”. During your trip did you have any problems with the battery and motor in regards to heavy rainfall, dust and sand?**

A: This is the thing I was most surprised about. I thought the electrical system would be fragile but it wasn't. The batteries and motor survived temperatures ranging from -15C to +45C, sandstorms, rain, hail, snow storms, mud and bumpy roads. The only problem was that after heavy rainfall the display sometimes fogged up. Even then it still worked, but some of the numbers were no longer visible.

**Q: How did the e-bike perform with headwinds?**

A: The motor added some extra speed. I usually cycled 80km a day with headwinds.

**Q: Did it help while cycling up the steep hills of Ethiopia?**

A: Carrying the extra weight of the engine and batteries almost nullified the help of the engine when going up really steep hills with a grade of 10% or more.

**Q: What was it like cycling dirt roads?**

A: The motor added some extra speed and gave more grip, as you have two-wheel drive. This was especially noticeable on sandy roads.

**Q: And on smooth, paved roads?**

A: The electric bicycle added comfort and extra speed. Without electric help I would normally cycle 18km/h. With the motor on I averaged 25km/h on flat, windless, paved roads. On the highest level I would have a range of over 100km using the two batteries.

**Q: At which times during your trip did you choose to turn the electric motor on?**

A: I generally had the electric motor on at the highest level all the time. On days where I could not find electricity or wanted to cycle further than 100 km., I would switch back to “medium” (range 180 km.) or “eco” (range 300 km.)

**Q: What did you find was the biggest advantage of using an electric bike?**

A: The main advantage was that I



arrived at the end of a 100-150km cycling day and still had energy left over to socialize or work on the computer. After a day of cycling without the motor (for example in Ethiopia) all I could think about was going to sleep. Another advantage was that I was able to cycle this 20,000km journey in 10 months instead of the 15-20 months it would take on a normal bicycle.

One disadvantage was that I lost a bit of freedom. I quickly became addicted to main roads which have hotels and restaurants where the batteries could be charged, and thus avoided the long, off-the-beaten-track routes.

*An explanation on e-bikes from the editor of Electric bike magazine, Peter Eland.*

*Electric bikes are many things to many people. Some want to extend a trip or arrive less sweaty, and others need a helping hand on the hills, or to keep up with fitter riding companions. And many just love the fun-factor of riding with electric assist: it flattens the hills and takes the trudge out of headwinds.*

*In our reviews in Electric bike*

*magazine we're somewhat cautious and imprecise when it comes to giving figures for range. This is because any figure is heavily dependent on factors including rider weight, rider effort, hills, headwinds, tire inflation, power mode, air temperature and more. And these are not minor influences. A lightweight, fit and frugal user on the flat could get five times the range of a heavy, unfit rider in serious hills, for example. So in isolation, any one 'range' figure is relatively meaningless.*

*So how can you tell whether a bike will have enough range for you? The best way is to hire one and try it on your route, or take the advice of an experienced dealer. For what it's worth, most full-size machines seem to be designed around an 'average' of 20-30 mostly flat miles with 'gentle pedaling'. If your needs are likely to exceed those conditions, your options are to seek out an extended range model or just carry a spare battery!*

*Issues of Electric bike magazine can be downloaded for free at: [www.electricbikemag.co.uk](http://www.electricbikemag.co.uk) **BT***



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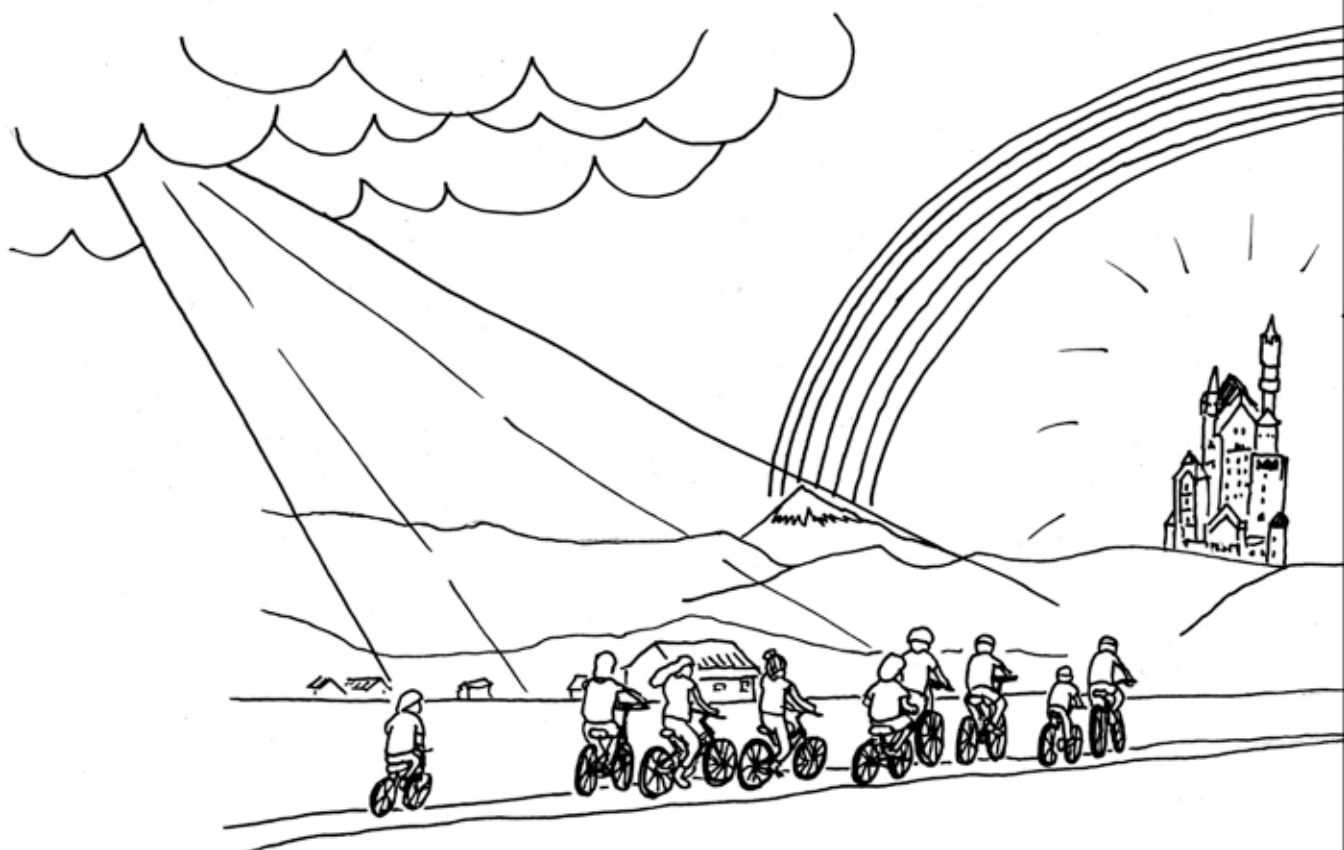
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# UPS AND DOWNS

## Bike paradise



5 x beers



*“Ups and Downs: A Cycling Journey across the Alps” by Michael Tran tells the story of his bicycle journey from Paris to Munich. This humorous and entertaining book combines two of the author’s greatest passions in life, bicycle touring and graphic design. For more information see: [www.facebook.com/BicycleTouringVisualStory](http://www.facebook.com/BicycleTouringVisualStory)*









Image from  
the Road:  
**Vietnam**  
KARLIJNE JUKES



Image from  
the **Road:**  
**Oman**

PAUL JEURISSEN

[www.pauljeurissen.nl](http://www.pauljeurissen.nl)









An aerial view of a person riding a motorcycle across a suspension bridge over a river in a rural Nepalese landscape. The bridge is made of metal grating and has stone pillars at each end. The surrounding area is filled with green rice fields and some small houses in the background.

# Image from the Road. **Nepal**

DIRK HUYGHE  
<http://bikeandtrek.com>

# WASHOUT

By: STEVE FABES

**“Washout.” Some days just are, nothing you can do or prepare for and no level of positive thinking will change that.**

**6.15 am** – Wake up in my tent. We (Steve and and my friend Nyomi) had camped with the police in the outskirts of a small town. I tell Nyomi I’m excited about the day ahead, my first day riding through Masai country (Kenya). I’m optimistic we’ll cover a good 140 km before sunset.

**7:00 am** – Tent down, bike packed, mango consumed, police thanked.

**7.01 am** – Attempt to pump up back tyre. Pump breaks and air escapes from tyre.

**8:00 am** – Multiple attempts to fix pump using gaffa tape, o-rings and my leatherman eventually fail

**8.01 am** – Punch air, throw pump around petulantly, curse everything

**8.10 am** – Wander into town. Can’t find any bike pumps for sale but manage to get tyre re-inflated

**9.15 am** – Set off

**9.25 am** – Puncture

**9.30 am** – I repair it, cycle some ten kilometres on Nyomi’s bike into town and back to get tyre re-inflated

**9.50 am** – Return with tyre

**9.51 am** – Realise I have another slow puncture. I repair another tube and this time Nyomi cycles back into town with the wheel to get tyre re-inflated

**10.15 am** - Nyomi returns with inflated tyre

**10.20 am** – Realise Nyomi has a puncture

**10.30 am** – Fix Nyomi’s puncture and inflate tyre with our other pump (the one that only works with the valves on Nyomi’s bike)

**10.45 am** – Nyomi’s pump breaks. Tyre not fully inflated but we cycle off anyway

**11.15 am** – Nyomi gets a puncture. We fix it and re-inflate the tyre by screwing together parts of the two broken pumps

**12:00 pm** – We lose a bolt in the sand and spend half an hour searching for it

**12.30 pm** – We sit down for lunch.

Nyomi sits on an ant’s nest, I sit on a thorn bush.

**13.30 pm** – We set off again

**15.30 pm** – Thunder, lightning and heavy downpour. We get a soaking.

**16.00 pm** – We agree to officially class the day as a washout and a write-off. We’ve covered 26 km all day.

**16.30 pm**– We find a cheap hostel and decide to focus on tomorrow. As I lift up my bicycle to get it over the steps the back wheel falls off. I’d forgotten to tighten it back on again after I fixed my last puncture. Crowd of onlookers laugh. So do I. **BT**

*Dr. Steve Fabes aims to cycle the length of the 6 continents while raising money for the U.K. health charity Merlin. You can follow him at: [www.cyclingthe6.blogspot.com](http://www.cyclingthe6.blogspot.com).*



# Parting shot



Photo: CHARLIE BAXTER <http://charliebaxter-cb.tumblr.com>

*"With a flat tire and no extra inner tubes my friend shows his true Boy Scout skills by shoving grass in the tire! Amazingly this held until the next town, admittedly going at a rather weedy speed." ~ Charlie Baxter*

## BicycleTraveler