

BicycleTraveler

International Magazine on Bicycle Touring



BicycleTraveler

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EDITOR'S NOTE

"Even if you can't read English, then still take the time to view the 'Images from the road'. They are pure bicycle touring inspiration!"
~ Grace Johnson

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BY: RICK GALEZOWSKI
PHOTO: PETER GOSTELOW

When your camping context is everything

When you're camping, context is everything. Not just because you long to hear a loon call, or desire the company of a trickling brook, but because you're dirty and you smell bad, and you're scraping peanut butter from a jar with your fingers (all well and fine in the woods); and because when you find yourself settling into yet another gas station service pit for the night while strangers gather and stare, it's hard to feel convincing. Somewhere, you've crossed a line. You used to be camping. Now you're a homeless bum with a tent.

YOU PROBABLY didn't even take notice, it happened in such small, harmless degrees. But when you start to look back, you can see yourself faltering, out there on the long, slippery slope. There was the time you found, "*The perfect camping spot!*" - a tiny lot shared by two donkeys, who snorted and urinated in protest, next to your tent, all through the night, while you slept like a baby. There was the moment your dining habits turned decisively medieval, after struggling for a very long time (and failing) to find a dignified way to gorge from the same blackened, dented pot every meal of every day. There was the moment people first started looking

at you with wide-eyed surprise, your cycling tights having worn so droopy and thin that they now resembled a cross between dirty diapers and X-rated lingerie. There was the moment you abandoned discretion when relieving yourself roadside, not bothering to get off the road at all, nor feeling particularly bothered by the ensuing attention. It's the way so many aspects of your day-to-day living, without the company of civilization to hold you back, have devolved into savage theater. Could you have foreseen it yourself, as you packed your bags with enthusiasm nearly one year ago, you may have shrieked with horror, torched your camping gear, and canceled everything. But now you're completely at ease with all this, and that's the most unsettling thing about it. Suffice it to say that we do sometimes worry about returning home, and have been working hard to relearn a few social graces before the time comes. **BT**

Rick Galezowski and Maggie Bennedsen are Canadian architects who have toured extensively through Asia and the Americas. Their travel website www.backintheworld.com is full of inspiring photos and stories.

Photo: www.peter.gostelow.com



Text & Photos: BEN SADD

Black Mamba Safari

Ben Sadd cycles from Nairobi to Diani beach on his black mamba bicycle.

The Black mamba bicycle: named after Africa's fastest snake. Having just travelled the best part of 1000km on one, I think I finally see why it was so titled. It is ironic. This bike is slow, unstable, heavy and unreliable. For the first 400km out of Nairobi I had to have the bike fixed on a daily basis. Not little adjustments like tightening the brakes or patching a tire, but more heavy-duty work, including the welding together of part of the frame, and the replacing of every single bolt on the bike. Amazingly, though, I didn't have a single flat tire, which is lucky because I am not even sure the pump I had with me was the right size...

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, Africa is the place to have these sorts of problems – there is always someone there who is willing to make repairs for you. Regardless of skill or knowledge they will have

your wheel off and your bike in pieces before you have a chance to blink. Unfortunately, they don't necessarily know how to put it back together again. This skill is not restricted to bicycles – on the same trip I had already spent a night with our car's engine in pieces in its boot.

Before I left Nairobi I had only ridden the bike down to the local store, a distance of no more than a few hundred metres, unloaded. So, at five o'clock on the Monday morning when I clambered aboard and set off down the driveway bound for the coast, the first thing that struck me was how unstable it was; I felt like I was teetering around, my front wheel swerving dangerously of its own volition, the crate full of my kit, attached precariously with a piece of bike inner tubing wobbled about with a life of its own, threatening to throw me off with every push of the pedal. It was this tottering mess that made its way through the early morning traffic

on Waiyaki Way. Traffic was the reason I was leaving so early, past about 7 in the morning it is bumper to bumper for the rest of the day, until about 5 when it turns around and is bumper to bumper in the opposite direction. With a short detour through Dagoretti I finally made it out of town, thoroughly diesel-pumped and wishing I had stayed in bed.

IT WAS ONLY HOURS later, when I found myself on an empty road surrounded by acacia trees, that I finally remembered why I had decided on this somewhat misguided adventure: Kenya is stunning. This feeling of contentedness in the saddle lasted a few brief moments before it started to rain; not a steady British drizzle, but a tropical downpour that left me drenched in seconds.

The first day ended in a conveniently located campsite which, if you were willing to risk electrocution (via the electric shower head), even had a hot shower.

I pootled along over the next few days, each of which brought further modifications to the bike – simple things like bits of roll-mat on the handles, or swapping the inner tube holding my baggage crate for a sturdier car tire attachment (courtesy of Daddy Fake and Daddy Original). I finally rocked up at the gate to Amboseli National Park, where, having visited already (in the more conventional manner), I was aware that they wouldn't let me cycle. Luckily, there were all manner of people willing to help – for a fee I could be guided round the park, buy some garish beaded necklaces, go back to Nairobi... With the distinct possibility of getting lost on a bike that was barely hanging together, I opted for the sensible

choice – I strapped my bike to the back of a motorbike, jumped on the back of a second one, and headed off round the park in style.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, with three days'-worth of chafing and numb fingers, I was glad I had made the choice not to attempt the ride round the park. My pedal then finally gave up the ghost and parted company with its bearings, resulting in a lopsided and very odd cycling style which involved having to pull the pedal round with my toe. I ended up pushing the bike the last 10km to the border where, luckily, there was a handyman or two waiting to beat the bike into submission, adjust the brakes, replace a few more bolts, and set me back on the road.

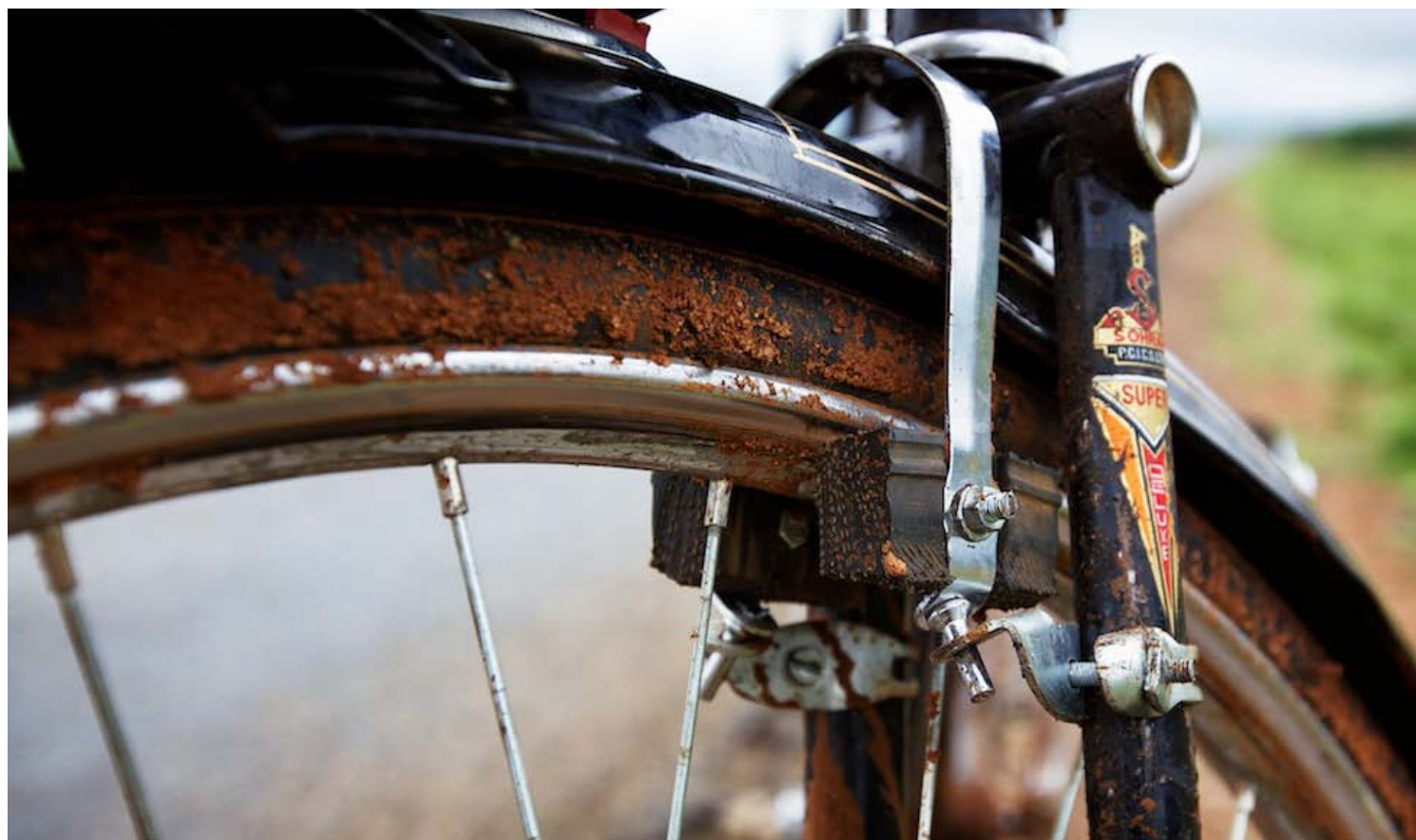
This latest repair saw me well across the border and into Tanzania. Children, with screams of *mzungu* (white man), greeted me in every town. On crossing the border I was immediately struck by the almost complete lack of English. I was a bit taken aback, but managed to get by with my rudimentary Swahili. The other thing that struck me was the number of drunken people – I later found out that there was some sort of festival, I think due to the monthly beer delivery. One particularly drunk and friendly man decided he wanted to have a chat with me, staggering across the road towards me, with arms flung wide as if to hug me. "Wazungu" (white men), he exclaimed!

LUCKILY FOR ME, and I think him, he chose the wrong man and missed me completely, continuing his drunken lurch across the road without collision.

Reaching Marangu, I decided to have

Previous pages: *Maxwell's son sits proudly atop my bike.*

Below: *New brake pads made from a car tire.*



a day off, and took the opportunity to visit a few waterfalls and wander around the local small farms. There was of course the obligatory bike-fixing session, the result being some new brake pads made of car tire crafted very skilfully with a machete, the replacement of a few more bolts with a nice solid twist in the brake rods. These repairs lasted till the following morning when I was obliged to purchase my first spare part. Amazingly this was the last repair I had to make – I think there was simply nothing left to break!

THE LONGEST DAY of the trip took me from Same to Krorogwe – about 140km. In general the roads were actually quite good. Where there were roads, that is – there were definitely long stretches that hadn't been finished yet. When I finally arrived in Korogwe I was, to say the least, exhausted. My right knee was also agony and, popping off the bike to enquire about a room for the night, it collapsed under me, and much to the shock of the proprietor, and myself, I was suddenly sitting on the floor; my bike luckily crashing the other way. I had to stay after that, really...

Anyone who has ridden a bike over any distance will know what I mean when I say that it can be a bit monotonous; 8 hours a day in the saddle definitely gives you time to think. Mainly, though, I was thinking about what was going to break next, how steep the hill was, going up wishing that I had some gears, going down how it was surely time for the front wheel to fall off, or wondering if, as on so many of the roads in East Africa, there were speed bumps at the bottom (which, in my experience, were never gentle but,

rather, small mountain ranges that had not only shaken me through but also resulted in the loss of a few lunches). Mainly, though, I just thought about how much I wanted to get to the coast.

IT FELT GREAT to arrive at the beach in Pangani, where after 42km of dirt track I uncovered the most incredible sock mark and felt as though I really deserved that first swim.

Continuing the trip up the coast I headed back into Kenya. Cycling along, knowing that the white sandy beach was a few hundred meters away made the will to keep going dwindle away. Luckily, the planned end of the trip was in easy sight, with only the head-on trade wind to contend with.

Leaving Tiwi Beach to try and sell my bike, I was warned that they had had some problems on the road behind the campsite. What happened next pretty much sums up a lot about my experiences in Kenya, and Africa come to that – for every bad thing that happens you will always be surprised by the kindness and generosity of the majority of the population.

THE SECURITY GUARD at the campsite cycled with me some of the way back to the tarmac, leaving me when he thought I would be safe. Assuming that nothing bad would ever happen to me, I continued along the sandy, rough road. Suddenly the man running on the other side of the road was right next to me with his fist raised:

"Let us negotiate!" he shouted.

"What? Um, no..."

I put on a burst of speed. Luckily, a few weeks on the road had given me some



Above: *Tiwi beach - a great place to chill out!*

added power and I outpaced him easily. The track that had taken me half an hour or so now only took ten minutes to retrace, made quicker by the unexpected surge of adrenaline... and the bus which was following me slowly along... Unsure of their intentions, I kept up the pace until I returned to the road, where the bus pulled up behind me and three men piled out.

"What was that man doing? Was he your friend?"

"No, he was trying to mug me."

"We followed you to make sure you were OK, you should be careful on this road."

"Wow, thanks!"

"Also, you dropped 100 shillings"

I was bowled over. In shock, I took my money back and watched them drive away.

I sold my bicycle the next day to

Maxwell, a lovely chap who was chuffed to bits with it and had plans to use it to expand his flower shop on the roadside in Diani beach. He had a super cute kid, too. I feel like I made a lifetime's-worth of repairs to the damn thing – I hope he doesn't have to make too many more! I would like to say I was sad to see it go, that it had become part of me, that I was seduced by its rustic charm... But the truth is that I wasn't, I was glad to see the back of the bloody thing.

My god, it was good to chill out on the beach; a fantastic way to end the trip, it felt like a proper holiday! **BT**

Photographer and filmmaker Benjamin Sadd started the Trail to Anywhere www.trailtoanywhere.com as a way to promote international conservation through film and photography.

Image from
the **Road:**
Slovenia

TYLER ROBERTSON

www.twowheeltravelblog.com



Image from
the Road:
Argentina
CASS GILBERT
www.whileoutriding.com



Image from
the **Road:**
Congo

ARCHIE LEEMING
www.archieleeming.com



Test Smartphone Mount

Alex Denham tests the Quad Lock Smartphone mounting system out on their trip to Australia.



Photo: COURTESY QUAD LOCK CASE

A couple of months ago our Garmin Edge 800 stopped being reliable. It turned itself off whenever it felt like it, most of the time when we were really relying on it. We had run out of open source maps, and were told that it would cost in excess of \$150 to have it looked at. We'd had enough.

As soon as we arrived in Korea we purchased a smartphone for navigational purposes. As it turns out this was the best gear swap-out we've made in a long while – smartphones make navigation a pleasure because they are so user friendly.

We immediately download detailed maps which are easy to move, zoom in and out of, and create points of interest.

Not only is the device more usable, but the GPS chip in our iPhone 5 is faster and more accurate than our Garmin.

But hold on a minute, it's hard to ride and navigate with only one hand. How would we make the smartphone easy to access while riding? How would we wrangle it so that the phone is easy to take on and off the bike?

QUAD LOCK IS THE ANSWER.

What is the Quad Lock System?

Quad Lock started out on Kickstarter and, like any good idea on crowdfunding websites, it made tonnes of money and went into production.

The Quad Lock system is comprised

of two parts: a mount (we use the bike mount) and an adapter (we use the iPhone case). There are a number of different ways you can use the Quad Lock product, but the most useful for us is to connect our iPhone directly to the bike.

To attach our iPhone, we angle it at 45 degrees and push down with one hand. The spring-loaded bike mount allows the phone to engage and when we twist the phone straight, it locks into place with a firm 'click'.

Once connected, the phone isn't going anywhere... unless of course you want to take it off. Disengaging it requires two hands, one to push the blue tube away from the phone and the other to slide the phone to 45 degrees again to take it off.

WHY IS IT AWESOME?

- It is secure. We have cycled some incredibly rough roads on our tandem bicycle (at speeds up to 100km/h) and have never felt like our smartphone was at risk.
- Its fast. Within a second our iPhone is on and off our bike.
- Its slim. Our smartphone case is only 4.5mm thicker than if we had a standard case. We've never felt like it is cumbersome in our pockets.
- Its universal. Bike mounts, car mounts, tripod adapters, belt clips, arm bands, heart rate monitors – the Quad Lock will fit on it all. If you need to mount a device onto something they don't make, try the adhesive mounts.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT RAINS?

We put a waterproof poncho onto our phone. Seriously.

Normally a smartphone becomes

nigh on impossible to use with water on the screen – this is incredibly frustrating sometimes! I'm not sure how, but the Quad Lock poncho makes rainy navigation possible.

We've found that unless you are getting absolutely dumped on by water, the waterproof poncho allows you to continue navigating with your smartphone.

WHAT CASES ARE AVAILABLE?

Currently, cases are available for the iPhone 4/4S/5/5S/5C and Samsung Galaxy S4. But, if you use a different phone/phablet/tablet/device, don't stress. Quad Lock have you covered with a universal adhesive mount.

WHERE CAN YOU BUY IT?

You can purchase it from their website. www.quadlockcase.com Expect to pay \$69.95 USD for a smartphone case and bike mount with free postage worldwide. If you don't need the case, the universal kit is just \$39.95 with free postage worldwide.

WOULD WE RECOMMEND IT?

YES! It is hard to give something a perfect score, but in the case of this product, perfection has been achieved. We cannot find any design flaws in the iPhone case and bike mount.

If you're using a smartphone for navigation, the Quad Lock mounting system is a must have accessory. **BT**

Alex and Kat's site www.cyclingabout.com is both a personal travel blog and an informative resource for people who prefer to travel with the freedom of their own two wheels.

TRIP GEAR

A look at equipment for bicycle travelers.

By: GRACE JOHNSON



Gravity Water Filter

The Katadyn Camp model has a siphon filter with silver impregnated ceramic and a 10 litre water bag. This system allows filtration without pumping.

Output: 1.4gal./h. (5L/h.)

Weight: 22oz. (620gr.)

Price: \$99.95 U.S.

www.katadyn.com

Dish Cleaner

This pan scrubber from MSR features an ergonomic rubber grip and a stiff-bristled brush for tougher cleaning jobs.

Price: \$4.95 U.S.

www.cascadedesigns.com



Salt & Pepper Shaker

GSI's ultralight salt & pepper shaker has waterproof screw caps to keep your spices dry and its dispensing screens and caps remove easily for cleaning and refilling.

Price: \$5.95 U.S.

www.gsioutdoors.com



Cushy Sleeping Pad

The Static V Luxe sleeping pad by Klymit is super wide and comfortable yet it also packs down quite small.

Inflated dimensions:

76" x 30" x 3" (193cm x 76.2cm x 7.6cm)

Packed Size:

4.5" x 8" (11.4cm x 20.3cm)

Weight: 26.35 oz. (747gr.)

Price: \$89.95 U.S.

www.klymit.com

Bird Water Bottle Cage

Replace your standard bottle cage with this fresh take on the H2O holder. The Bird Cage is made of lightweight 5052 alloy and comes with two stainless steel bolts.

Weight: 2oz. (57gr.)

Price: \$20. U.S.

www.ridepdw.com



Chamois Panties

Why not cycle in comfort and style?

Price: \$50 U.S.

www.urbanistcycling.com

An *Unexpected* Adventure

By: MAYA GOLDSTEIN

We were cycling up yet another long and sweaty hill. I could see the views of Lake Amatitlán way below us. My only comfort was that soon we'd descend to the lake, find a place to stay and be able to relax after another challenging day of cycling.

However, Villa Canales in Guatemala was not a relaxing lake town - it was busy, humid, dusty and like many other Central American cities, the only accommodation was two dingy sex hotels. After scratching our heads for a while we chose the less disgusting one and knew we were bound for another dreamy night. As usual, an old TV was hanging above the bed, and it was exactly 5pm - time to enjoy some "Big Bang Theory" and forget about life for a while.

BY THAT POINT, spending nights at sex hotels had already become a routine on our five month cycle tour from Panama to Belize. While most tourists hop between hot spots, we mainly found ourselves in the "in between places". Towns that foreigners don't bother visiting since there is simply nothing attractive about them. Sometimes, though, this was precisely their charm. We were seeing the real face of the country, not the places that have been changed by tourists and

are now full of hotels, tourist traps and Western food. No - during most of our trip we were the only foreigners in the town we spent the night in.

AS EXPECTED, the local accommodation was intended for locals, so we often found ourselves in places officially called "Auto Hotels" and un-officially "Sex Hotels". These are places where one can park in a garage attached to the room and enter with his/her companion without being seen. Most of the action happens during the day for an hourly rate, so for a full night we often got the special rate of seven dollars ("La Noche Completa"). These places weren't only intended for "dirty business" - regular couples used them as well. In Latin America, many people live in small houses and have big families, so having sex in their own home is complicated.

Sex hotels were most often sleazy, dirty and sometimes creepy. On the positive side they were often cheap,

convenient (almost every small town had at least one) and the rooms always came with a TV, which I guess most people used for porn because that was always the first channel to come up. In the first two months of our trip we simply ignored the TV in our rooms. That changed one afternoon in Estelí, Nicaragua, when we found ourselves in a tiny hotel room after looking for a place for almost two hours. Suddenly one of the boys from the front desk came with a remote control in his hand. He wanted to check if the remote was working properly (it wasn't) so he stood in our tiny room trying to switch channels. I tried to explain to him, with my broken Spanish, that it didn't matter

because we don't watch TV anyway, but then as he switched channels I heard familiar voices: "Friends" was on, and in English!

THIS IS HOW we discovered the Warner Brothers channel, probably one of the only TV channels in English throughout all of Central America. I knew that every day between 6 and 7pm two episodes of "Friends" would be screened. So if we reached a town and found a place to sleep before 6pm we could watch "Friends" while relaxing from the strenuous and sometimes stressful day. One day I switched on the TV a little bit earlier and got the tail end of an episode

Below: *The Hollywood Inn sex hotel in Usulután, El Salvador.*



of “The Big Bang Theory”, and from that moment on we couldn’t stop watching.

THEN WE STARTED making an effort to arrive to our destination for the day before 5pm. At first it was a silent effort, we didn’t really tell each other why we were making this extra effort to try and cycle just a little bit harder, a little bit faster and to end our cycling day just a little bit earlier. But it became clear when we started quoting the characters from the “Big Bang Theory”, for example adding the word “sarcasm” when one of us said something as a joke and the other one didn’t quite get it, or humming the theme song “...we built a wall, we built the pyramids...” during endless hours of riding. We had a severe case of addiction.

One evening in San Lorenzo, Honduras, in what was probably one of our worst accommodations ever, a cheap disgusting motel with cigarette butts in the sink and sheets with holes, a fan that was hardly spinning in 30 degrees celsius and traffic noise from the Pan American Highway, we made another discovery. It was Tuesday evening and out of desperation I turned on the TV and found our beloved show again. It turned out that on Tuesdays they were showing the new season. The traffic noise was forgotten, the horrible room where we were did not matter any more, we were laughing and having a good time.

WE MIGHT SOUND a bit desperate, but it actually makes sense. Cycle touring is fun but not always easy and bicycling in Central America was sometimes challenging. It was very hot so

we started riding at 6am and we often slogged up many long hills. Aside from the physical effort, it was also mentally challenging with people telling us how dangerous it was and how crazy we were (we didn’t encounter any problems, only warm hearted people). Also seeing poverty and huge social gaps all around and knowing there wasn’t much we could do to change the situation. And of course there was the accommodation issue. Wild camping wasn’t usually an option because most of the time what was beyond the road was fenced off. Every now and then we camped in locals’ backyards, by restaurants or in hotels on the lawn. A lovely Costa Rican couple even offered us a room in their home when we asked about camping in their yard.

BUT OFTEN WE found ourselves in those dingy sex hotels, and when feeling discomfort, human beings often try to escape and there is no greater escapism than the TV. So we escaped, and when possible, for an hour a day, we forgot where we were and were transported to a different universe. When the episode ended and we were thrown back to our reality, I looked at my bike standing in the corner of the room and smiled. Becoming addicted to a TV show was not something I expected would happen during this trip, but cycle touring has a tendency for unexpected adventures. **BT**

Maya Goldstein & Gili Rosenberg live in Vancouver, Canada and enjoy hiking, skiing and cycle touring. You can read more about their outdoor exploits at: <http://inmagicland.com>.

Welcome to IRAN

By: KIERAN ROWLEY

We stood at the top of Meghri pass feeling slightly disappointed for two reasons. Firstly; we had spent most of the last two days slowly climbing up the 2500m pass only to discover that the Armenian government did not deem this achievement worthy of celebration and had therefore neglected to place an elevation sign at the top.

Secondly; I had somehow convinced us both that we would be able to see Iran from the top. In my head the summit would afford us a dazzling view of Tehran and the Caspian Sea. In the far distance the Silk Route would wind through miles of bright desert to Shiraz, Esfahan and lonely oases, perhaps we'd even see a camel!

In reality we could barely see our hands in front of our faces. The sleet was falling horizontally, filling our eyes, and fresh snow still hid the steep slopes on either side of the road, regardless of the fact that it was now mid April.

A SOLITARY DOG emerged from the grey and approached us submissively and begged for food. We are always amazed at how many mountain passes have a resident dog, presumably they survive on donations from long distance cyclists, as nobody else would be mad enough to stop up here and get out of their warm vehicle, not to mention the fact that Armenians seem to regard "man's best friend" as a kind of giant rat which is occasionally useful for guarding sheep or property. He seemed quite pleased with the bread that we had left over from breakfast and once again

Natasha threatened to take him with us, however we were unsure how this would affect our chances of crossing the border below us and thought better of it. We bid our new friend "goodbye" and nudged our bikes forwards a few steps until they began to gather speed all on their own on the steep mountain road.

The road between two points on the map is rarely ever completely downhill, and we are always suspicious of anybody

who gleefully cries "Don't worry, it's all downhill from here!", especially if they are not actually in possession of a bike. However, I can confidently state that I did not need to rotate my pedals once during the 30km descent from the top of the pass until we crossed the Soviet built railway which snakes in and out of the borders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Iran and the autonomous regions of Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhichevan.

Photo: SEBASTIÀ GIRALT www.flickr.com/photos/sebastiagiralt



Unsurprisingly it is no longer in use and many of the railway tunnels now conceal armed border guards.

AT THE ARMENIAN border we were surprised to find that the entire place was run by Russian border guards. Russian border guards whom it seems have never actually seen a bicycle, a foreigner or even a passport before. We were made to carry our bikes up the steps into the empty pedestrian hall and then ordered to "wait", "hurry up", "stop", "go" and "comeback" by a number of very serious looking men in very ridiculous looking hats. At one point I misunderstood a command and tried to go through a door when really I should have handed over my passport (again) and the chief border guard screamed "MISTER ALEXANDER COME HERE!" Once again I considered informing a border official that my name is not Alexander and that he really should learn to decipher a passport in his line of work. But once again I thought better of it and instead chose to grin and bear it until my passport was back in my hand brandishing the necessary exit stamp.

ONCE OUTSIDE Natasha donned her headscarf and we cycled across "no-man's land" to Iran, again we had to enter the pedestrian hall which as per usual was located at the top of a large steep flight of steps... it seems that our bicycles are no longer considered vehicles and the days of pushing to the front of the immigration queue are well and truly behind us.

Inside a group of Iranians were attempting to enter the country in true Central Asian fashion, that is, without queuing. Instead everybody was attempting

to push their passports under the safety glass at the same time. I realised that at some point during this trip I would inevitably be required to join the mob, stick out my elbows and embrace the madness, however I figured I would wait until I was actually in Asia proper. Plus, despite the fact that only a few hours ago I was standing in the snow, it was already too hot, we decided to sit down and wait our turn.

FINALLY THE BORDER guard beckoned us over with a smile and said "Hello, what is your name". It was a simple question, one which we would hear hundreds, if not thousands of times during our stay in Iran, but this guy had the fortune to be the first, before the constant questioning would eventually grind us down, forcing us to ignore it or lie just to keep ourselves entertained.

"Kieran" I answered with a smile. Unfortunately that initial question was nearly all of the English that he knew and the rest of my interview was conducted in silence while he scoured my passport for some reason to forbid our entry. Eventually he piped up with a second question "Irelandia?".

A feeling of dread began to grow in the pit of my stomach, my smile momentarily faltered. At nearly every border post since Eastern Europe I have struggled to even explain that my name is not Alexander and now I was potentially being asked to explain why my passport says in big gold letters "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland".

I took a gamble and replied "Anglia", it was not Farsi, but it worked. "Roy Keane!" came the reply.

"Friends?" he asked, motioning

towards Natasha and rubbing his index fingers together.

"Yes" I replied, not knowing exactly what I was being asked.

We were then shunted towards another room labelled "Police". The border guard sat at a large noisy desktop PC and began to stare at our passports, occasionally prodding the keyboard with a single finger before rapidly tapping the delete key. Eventually he turned to me, pointed at the screen and asked me my name again.

"Kieran" I replied, "...K...I...".

After the second letter I realised the problem, he had to type the information in in Farsi, I presume that in order to do this you just take the individual sounds and make your best guess.

"KEY... ER... AAN" I pronounced elaborately.

The guard simply stared back at me in disbelief.

TWO MONTHS LATER I would discover that "Kieran" means "A large group of penises" in Farsi, or as one friend spluttered amongst giggles "Just too many penises". Apparently any name beginning with the sound "Kie" cannot even be printed in the newspaper due to the country's obscenity laws. In hindsight I was asking the poor guy in front of me to commit a crime while filling in paperwork for Interpol, which may be why he simply passed me the keyboard, changed the language to English and sat back while I filled in my own immigration details to the best of my ability.

Much hilarity ensued as Natasha and I tried to work out how to use the finger print scanner before teaching the guy in

front of us who I had once mistaken for a border guard. We laughed about my support of Aston Villa while he revealed to me that he supported two Iranian teams; Manchester United and Real Madrid.

However all the fun had to stop when our passports were transferred to a third office in which a real border guard scrutinised our passports once again.

"What is this?" he asked, pointing at the stupid bloody microchip that is embedded on the final page of a British passport.

"A microchip I think" I said.

"What is on it?"

I felt that it was more likely to be his job than mine to know the answer to that particular question. After getting a little fed up with the farce that I was witnessing I simply replied "I have no idea". He sneered once more at the chip and handed back the passport for its final inspection before a man standing next to an x-ray machine gave our bags a half hearted prod and waved us through.

Ever since we began planning this trip we had dreamt of visiting Iran to get a firsthand experience of its history, culture, architecture and people. As we bumped our bikes down the stairs of the passport control office it was hard to believe that we had actually made it all the way here, but as we pedalled away a lorry driver beeped loudly behind us, overtook us on the wrong side of the road and shouted "Welcome to Iran!", shortly followed by "What is your name?" **BT**

In May 2013 Kieran Rowley and Natasha von Memerty sold their belongings and began pedalling east. You can read about their adventure at: www.downhillfromhere.net.

Pamir Highway

The road is one of the world's most famous routes for bicycle travelers due to its stunning high altitude scenery.

Photos: PAUL JEURISSEN,
ALANA PESAVENTO &
MARCEL EGLI





Photos: PAUL JEURISSEN



- 1.** Looking out over the high desert.
- 2.** Fence made of car doors.
- 3.** Smiling Murgab girls.
- 4.** The lakeside town of Karakoal.
- 5.** Window shutters in Karakoal.
- 6.** Tajik boy with his Chinese bike.



Photo: PAUL JEURISSEN



Photos on pages 40 & 41: ALENA PESAVENTO & MARCEL EGLI



Previous pages: *Tajik and Afghan men at cross border market in Ishkashim.*
Above: *Cooking dinner before the storm hits.*
Left: *Heading down another high pass.*

Photographer Paul Jeurissen and his partner Grace Johnson are now 'Bicycling around the world in search of inspiring cycle images.'
www.bicyclingaroundtheworld.nl

In 2012 Alena Pesavento and Marcel Egli exchanged their office chairs for bike saddles and set off for Asia. They write, "We largely forgo comfort and thereby afford the greatest luxury of all: time. Time for us, time to discover the world." You can follow their adventures at: www.frischlufftour.ch

Photos: PAUL JEURISSEN

A LIFE IN A DAY

Southern Patagonia by Rob Halkett

RIDING ALONE IN the middle of Patagonia with no one to talk to other than the bike who I have recently started to call Mike, you might wonder what I'm thinking about and doing for hours on end. As there is a never changing landscape at the moment and very little to say about the last 10 days on the road, here are a day's thoughts, musings and actions on a dusty lonely road laid out for you, including some of the music. It's not all here because it would be impossibly long reading. This however will give you an idea of what goes on inside my mind while alone on the road. Please don't worry about my state of mind, remember I'm on my own for days at a time without a soul to communicate with other than Mike. My thoughts now that I'm with people and back in

the middle of civilization are much more constructive and normal (I think, I hope)

MIKE, I'M GOING to make a list of what I've missed most since I started the ride. After composing a long list I've managed to break it down to the ten most missed. Family, Friends, Music coming from a pair of Bose speakers rather than iPod headphones. A good curry. Cadburys fruit and nut chocolate. Gin and Tonics. Books. Waitrose. Hot water and normal clothes rather than technical cycling gear. This took ages because I realized that I miss very little.

MIKE, LET'S PUT the iPod on shuffle and see what she has in store for us today.

Smoke on the water, Deep Purple (oh god it's going to be one of those days)

My way, Frank Sinatra.

I wonder how long I can ride along with my eyes closed. After trying this for about 10 minutes and constantly opening my eyes to see where I'm going I soon realize that I can't ride like this for very long.

Mama Mia, Abba.

Masters and Puppets, Metallica.

I wonder how long can I ride along with one eye open? This one was easy. I can go on forever.

AM I GOING MAD Mike or is that a car I can see ahead of us, if it is it will be the first in what, two days. Yes, that's the dust cloud from a car coming towards us. Wow it looks like an old Ford Falcon, its seen better days and actually it was probably brand new when they left home this morning but the road has ruined it. Make yourself presentable lad and hopefully they will stop and say hello.

Me. Taking off headphones as the

car stops and the driver opens his window, "Buenos Dias."

Driver. "Buenos Dias, Americano."

Me thinking. It must be because I look like a cross between Denzel Washington and Brad Pitt that everyone thinks I'm an American.

Me. "No I'm British."

Driver in perfect English. "Ah my wife is British she's from Wales."

Me. "Ah Patagonia has that Welsh connection doesn't it?"

Driver. "Where are you going?"

Me. "North all the way to the States, when I get to Arizona I will make a decision whether to turn right for Boston and from there fly back to Britain which will be the easy option or to turn left and head up the Californian coast to Canada and Alaska."

Driver shaking his head. "Alaska, Boston, you must be crazy."

ME THINKING. Better not tell him what I've been doing for the last



“I wonder - *what I would I do if I won \$60.000.000 on the lottery.*”

two years before I got to Argentina otherwise he might just drive off.

Me. “Yes I suppose I am a bit mad.”

Driver. “Do you have everything you need?”

Me. “yes I’m fine, I’ve got food, although if you have a little water to spare I wouldn’t say no, I can pay you.”

Driver. “Yes I have water but it’s with gas, I can give you a bottle.”

Me. “With gas is fine, I will brush my teeth with it in the morning, my mouth froths up like crazy and it will give me and Mike something to laugh about for an hour or so, it helps to pass the time.”

Driver ignoring my comment about Mike. “There is a small village about 150Kms in front of you and they have a hostel and supermarket.”

Me. “Great I will push on and I should make it by tomorrow night, how long before the road becomes good again.”

Driver. “Oh not for at least another 200Kms, could be more.”

Me. “I will be o.k., not much else to do but go forward, at least the wind has dropped.”

Driver. “As your heading further north the wind is not so strong.”

Me. “Nice talking to you and thanks for the water.”

Driver. “No problem, have a good journey, bye.”

Me. “Bye, thanks.”

ME TO MIKE, nice guy that, pity the camera isn’t working he had one of those windswept Patagonian faces and would have made a great photo, as soon as we get to a big town with a

camera shop this thing is going if it can’t be fixed. You know maybe we should invest in one of those super duper Nikons with all the bells and whistles, they take great photos, we will see what they say about my camera. (Putting headphones back on) Now where were we before we were so rudely interrupted by the only other person on the planet.

Stair way to heaven, Led Zeppelin. (Ah there’s a bustling in the hedgerows and the drums have started, good that means its half way through the song, at this age and on this road I don’t think I have the stamina for the whole song.)

HORSES IN THAT field ahead of us Mike, we can use this as a lunch opportunity, feed me, feed the horses, then try to tame one and ride it. (Not possible after trying to tame one for an hour or more, they let me feed them with biscuits and get over the fence and run around with them but not one of them would let me climb up so that I could have a ride. (We might as well push on Mike.)

Caribbean Blue, Enya.

How loud can I sing, scream, and laugh along to this nonsense. Why is this song on the machine, it must have come already programmed into it.

Fifth symphony 3rd movement, Beethoven.

THIS AFTERNOON I will make up names for a rock band, in this band I will play lead guitar, sing, give a half hour drum solo and throw the odd plasma screen into the hotel swimming

pool. After an hour I have settled on the band’s name and album titles. They are to be called, The search engines. The first album will be called, *Google it*, we will then release, *It’s that blue screen again*, *Why is this connection so slow*, *Have nothing to do with Microsoft*, *What’s Face book*, and our final album which will be a live recording, *Yes we have WIFI*. The band will then fall apart in acrimony and a bitter court battle over money.

My Way, Sid Vicious.

Knocked up, The Kings of Leon.

Go, Moby.

Although we have done this a thousand times before Mike let’s change the names of famous pop stars again. After half an hour the winners are still Broccoli Spears, Mad Donna, Kylie Monotonous, Shirley Brassy, 50 Pence and Amy winerack

Close to the Edge, Yes.

Feel, Robbie Williams.

Four day creep, Humble Pie.

LET’S NAME all the bands I’ve seen. After thinking about this for about an hour it seems that I’ve seen loads of bands so instead I work out the most unusual band I’ve seen and eventually come up with Westlife. I then spend another half hour thinking why I would have seen them and I couldn’t for the life of me work it out. It must have been a bet or a dare.

Imagine, John Lennon.

Footballer’s wives, Amy McDonald.

Spanish Harlem, Aretha Franklin.

More than a feeling, Boston.

Let’s think about the best and worst concerts I’ve ever been to. After five minutes I’ve worked out that the worst was Westlife and the best was easily Bob Marley.

Hot, hot hot, The Cure.

Tainted love, Marylyn Manson.

Amor Amor, Gypsy Kings.

Everybody Hurts, REM.

Since you’ve been gone, Rainbow.

I’VE JUST THOUGHT of a new game Mike; let’s work out who we would and wouldn’t like to be if we weren’t us. Time passes before I decide on being Denzel Washington because he’s cool and he looks like me. Another half hour rolls by and I’ve worked out I wouldn’t want to be Jamie Olive Oil because everything he cooks has to have loads of olive oil added. Here we have an orange, let’s pour some olive oil over it and put it in the fridge for 20 minutes, I call this orange oil and it makes a great starter. Mike wants to be a Harley Davidson and he wouldn’t want to be one of those folding bikes that you carry round in a bag.

Get up stand up, Bob Marley.

No way back, Foo fighters.

The wind cries Mary, Jimi Hendrix.

Mike how about a game of I spy you go first. I spy with my little eye something beginning with P (Patagonia). Boring that was too easy.

La Del Russo, Gotan Project.

Welcome to the jungle, Guns & Roses.

High, James Blunt.

Creep, Radiohead.

O.k. I’m going to plan the best way to

rob a bank. After half an hour thinking about this the answer is 'don't'.

I walk the line, Jonny Cash.

Comfortably Numb, Pink Floyd.

I WONDER what I would I do if I won \$60.000.000 on the lottery. After spending the money on helicopters, islands and closing down my least favorite store (Argos) I've decided that I would buy a new set of tires for the bike and a new camera. (Another half hour or so gone)

What would I do if friends or family won \$60.000.000 on the lottery. After persuading them to close down Argos, I would ask them to buy me a new set of tires for the bike and a new camera. (Another half hour or so gone)

What would I do if my bank account was suddenly credited with \$60.000.000. I've decided that there would be no point in trying to steal the money, best just to come clean about it, so after buying a new set of tires and a camera I would call the bank and tell them that my account has mistakenly been credited with \$59.999.000. (Another half hour gone)

Cloud busting, Kate Bush.

Polly, Nirvana.

Wonder wall, Oasis.

I would walk 500 miles, Proclaimers.
(good song for this road)

MIKE I'M GOING to tell you what I would say to a group of people about Henry the Eight and the reasons for his break from Rome. It will be a good practice for my return to normal life. Remember I will have to go back to teaching or something else when this is all over. (An hour goes by.)

Alright now, Free.

My Sweet lord, George Harrison.

Fields of Gold, Eva Cassidy.

I'M GOING TO devise a board game. After half an hour or so of thinking about this I decide that the game will be called Monotony and is based on modern life. Each player is given a home, car, \$50,000 and a house full of junk. You play it like monopoly; each player throws the dice and works their way round the board. The first person to lose everything and end up with a county court judgment is the winner. (Tomorrow I will design the board)

How you remind me, Knickleback.

Please don't let me be misunderstood, Nina Simone.

Paint it black, The Rolling Stones.

We are an American Band, Grand Funk Railroad.

Ava Maria, Maria Callas.

WOW MIKE its that the time already, we had better start looking for a place to pitch the tent. I heard you stumbling about last night, probably going to the loo; tonight do you think you can put your lights on so you don't fall over the tent ropes again. How about crackers and tuna for tea tonight, it will make a change from last night's tuna and crackers. I dare myself to put up the tent in the middle of the road seeing as there is no traffic. (I didn't do it.) **BT**

For Rob Halkett there is no better way to see the world than from a bicycle saddle. You can read more stories from his world bike trip at: www.robsbikeride.com

Image from the Road: India

PAUL JEURISSEN
www.pauljeurissen.nl



Image from
the Road:
Phillipines

ERIC SCHAMBION
www.worldbiking.info



Image from
the Road:
Alaska

GLENN CHARLES
www.thetravelingvagabond.com



AMAYA WILLIAMS

Interview: GRACE JOHNSON Photo: ERIC SCHAMBION

Round the world cyclist Amaya Williams talks about how photo e-books are an easy way to spread your message.

Q: What prompted you to create a photo e-book instead of a bicycle touring memoir?

A: Well, to be honest, I really struggle with writing. It's a painful process for me resulting in much self doubt and insecurity.

Photography, on the other hand, is pure joy. I could easily spend the entire day shooting and editing and never tire of the process.

My main goal in creating a photo e-book was to show the diversity and beauty of the world of cycle touring.

By making it a free download, I hope to reach a wider audience.

Q: Did you take inspiration from any other e-books?

A: The free e-book *50 Favorite Travel Photos* by Gary Arndt was the real inspiration for my Celebrating Cycle Touring book. Each of Gary's photos tells a story and inspires me to keep exploring the world.

Since publishing my e-book, I'm thrilled to see that other cycle tourists are following suit. Helen Lloyd has come out with a free e-book highlighting her recent Asia



Eric & Amaya in Capetown, South Africa.

tour [Download Helen's e-book](#) and Tom Allen has created a free companion photo e-book to go along with his Janapar memoir and movie. [Download Tom's e-book](#)

Q: How long did it take to create your e-book?

A: I'd been toying with the idea of a photo book for several months before I finally hunkered down and did it.

Initially, I tried to create it using the powerful desktop publishing program InDesign. InDesign's steep learning curve frustrated me, and I quickly realized I didn't need all the bells and whistles of such a complex program.

A quick web search came up with the user-friendly e-book software Blurb. I then discovered Blurb is integrated

Image from
the **Road:
Bolivia**

PAUL JEURISSEN
www.pauljeurissen.nl

into the Adobe Lightroom software I use for photo editing.

The program and its templates are so easy to use, you can literally pop out a professional-looking book in just a few hours.

Working on and off, the entire book creation process took me about three days.

Q: Tell us more about the steps in creating your e-book.

A: First, I had the challenging job of sorting through thousands of photos.

I wanted to include a good mix of ride shots from all the continents as well as street scenes and portraits of locals. Selecting the photos was tedious at times, but it brought back a lot of good memories from the road.

After the photo selection, I started playing around with Lightroom's Book module. I kept things pretty simple with a basic layout and just a couple of different fonts. Being a little rushed for time, I decided not to include a lot of text and focus on the photography.

Both Helen and Tom included text in

[Download Celebrating cycle touring](#)



their e-books and I think this gives the reader a better feel for the tour. I'll follow suit in my next e-book.

Once I was satisfied with the layout and photo selection, I converted the file to a PDF and uploaded it to DropBox. The final step was to share the link with my blog readers so they can download the book.

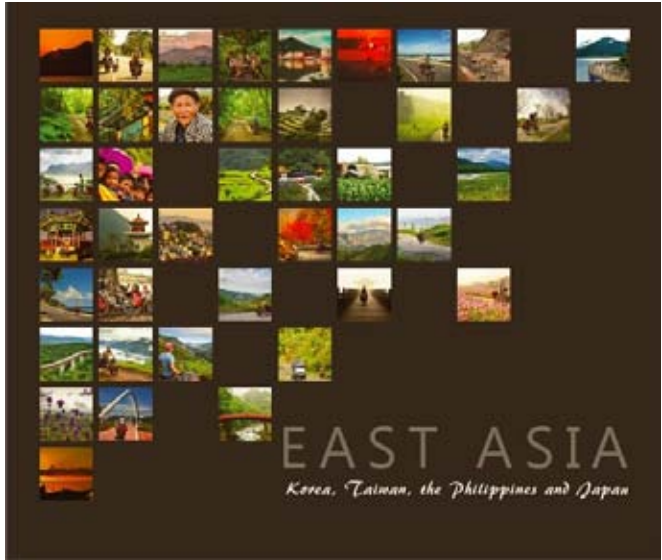
I've since converted my PDF to a mobi file using the free CALIBRE software, so Celebrating Cycle Touring can be read on tablets and e-readers.

Q: Any plans to create another photo e-book?

A: Absolutely. I received a lot of positive feedback following my Celebrating Cycle Touring e-book. Creating e-books is a fun, easy and effective way to inspire others to go bicycle touring. **BT**

In 2006 Amaya Williams and her partner Eric Schambion set off to cycle every country on the planet. You can follow their progress and download both of their free photo e-books at: www.worldbiking.info.

[Download her newest book; East Asia](#)



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Bicycling Around The World

e-book (PDF format), 228 pgs
by Paul Jeurissen
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Me, my bike and a compact camera. France

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Cycling the Rockies

By: JASON LEWIS

*Inspired by global circumnavigator Jason Lewis, April
Abril decides to accompany him through Colorado.*

S O HOW FAR have you ridden before, April?" I braced the handlebars while she tried jamming a second sleeping mat under a bungee cord already stretched to breaking point. A disorderly mound of tents, sleeping bags, water bottles, bike pumps, and other camping paraphernalia completely obscured the rear portion of her bike.

"Around seven miles," she replied nervously, pushing at the mat. A bead of sweat trickled out from under her grey baseball cap and disappeared behind a pair of aviator sunglasses. It was past noon and swelteringly hot. "And they've just been straight and level on the air-strip outside my house. Nothing with hills. Nothing with heat."

"Any concerns?"

LOOKING UP, she brushed a strand of damp hair from her face and wrinkled her nose. "Hmm, hills intimidate me pretty good." In light of the fact our route would take us over one of the world's great mountain ranges, the Rockies, this struck me as unfortunate. "But when the going gets tough," she continued, breaking into a grin, "I'll just have to cowboy up."

Since I was still recovering from a leg operation -- I knew that supporting a fully laden backpack while rollerblading would be pushing it. And so, a month before setting out, I'd asked April if she knew of a cyclist willing to schlep my gear the first 200 miles to Pagosa Springs, possibly further depending on how my legs fared. "I'll do it," she'd replied enthusiastically.

This threw me. April fit the role of seasoned adventurer about as convincingly

as Britney Spears playing Hamlet. Blonde, a little ditsy on occasion, she lived on a cattle ranch and taught in a small, well-heeled Christian community where lace curtains twitched at the mere suggestion of anyone singing from a different hymn sheet. *No*, I said to myself, *I need someone with experience. Someone who won't give up on the second day after the romantic appeal has worn off.*

THEN AGAIN, who was I to talk? Steve and I had human-powered our way nearly a third of the way around the planet with only the haziest notion of what we were doing. Why not April?

I steadied the bicycle long enough for my new travelling companion to step over the centre frame and push off. For the first thirty feet, April bunny-hopped on one foot while I skated behind, continuing to balance her woefully over laden rig. Reservations came flooding back. *Maybe I was wrong to assume we'd make it through the first day. At this rate we'll be lucky to make it through the first five minutes.*

Then the bike picked up speed, the handlebars stopped wobbling, and we were on our way.

As we turned south on Interstate 25 towards Walsenburg, the shoulder changed to gravel. And when it started to rain and April took her first spill, sending our sleeping bags bouncing under an eighteen-wheeler, I thought: *That's it. At least we tried.*

I LIFTED THE tangle of spokes and equipment off April's 100-pound frame, retrieved the video camera, and filled the viewfinder with her scarlet face.

"Okay, April. Ready to call it quits?" Trucks roared past unnervingly close, tyres hissing on the wet tarmac. Black clouds scudded overhead, sucking light from the sky and turning the scene even gloomier.

April, sodden hair plastered over her ears like seaweed, flashed a brilliant smile. "Oh no," she said brightly. "This is my greatest adventure!"

The woman's certifiable, I thought. *Any normal person would have called for a taxi.*

Cycling behind me, April's legs were spinning like eggbeaters. She was in the lowest gear, the granny ring reserved for the steepest inclines. Her face was steeled in grim determination.

The evening before, as we made camp in the rain under a stand of oak brush at the foot of Wolf Creek Pass, she'd voiced serious reservations about making it all the way to the top. She was tired, she said. She was sore. "And the grade is so steep!" More to the point, she's been harbouring a little secret since Pueblo. "I once had a -- how should I say it -- a medical situation at the top of Wolf Creek."

While she spoke I was trying to get a fire going using pages torn from Charles Bukowski's *Burning In Water, Drowning In Flame*. "Medical situation?" I repeated hunching over the crumpled poetry and striking a match. *A 340 Dollar Horse and a Hundred Dollar Whore* sprang to life, lighting up the surrounding greenery that glistened and flapped in the wetness.

April described how she's once required emergency oxygen going over the pass in a bus. She looked miserable

as she sat there, legs pulled up to her chest, chin on her knees. Earlier in the day, making our way the San Luis Valley from Alamosa, she'd complained of a crushing migraine. Once a month her head felt like it was being clove in two with a blunt axe, she said. To make matters worse, we'd forgotten to bring Vaseline to ease the inevitable saddle sores. The stopgap, a section of foam bedroll cut to the shape of her saddle, was little better than useless.

The woman's certifiable, I thought.
Any normal person would have called for a taxi.

"Didn't you tick the little box on the disclaimer," I teased, "stating no to a history of respiratory ailment?"

April's hangdog expression only deepened.

"Just giving you crap." I laughed. "We'll be going a lot slower than a bus, and we can take as many breaks as we like. You'll have plenty of time to acclimatize as we ascent."

"There is *one* other thing you should probably know."

I put down the piece of firewood I was holding. "Go on."

"I had pneumonia two years ago. My lungs filled with fluid. The doctor said they could still collapse if I overdo it."

This put a different spin on things. As the eleventh-hour confession sank in,

something twiggled: *That's why she's so intimidated by hills.*

Shortly after eight, sunshine splashed across our faces and the canyon walls bevelled out to sloping scree. Lodge pole pines bristled at the sky like cocktail sticks, making for breathtaking scenery.

We pulled over to take a break. "So, how're things, April?"

"Good, good," she giggled. "The dried prunes we had for breakfast certainly seem to be helping."

"Jet propulsion. Isn't that cheating?"

"Hey, it's human power."

Two miles from the summit, six hours into the climb, we stopped again to rest. The air at 10,000 feet was noticeably thinner. April slumped over her handlebars and let her head loll. She looked as beat as I felt.

"WHAT DO you reckon, Ms.A," I wheezed. "Time to call in the meat wagon?"

She just shook her head, chest rising and falling in quick, shallow bursts. *God, doesn't this woman EVER bitch and moan?* I thought. Ten minutes went by. "Okay," she whispered, taking a pull from her water bottle. "Let's go get this mountain."

Spurred on by the all-American sound bite, we picked up speed through an avalanche tunnel, ears reverberating with the roar of engines, before re-emerging into blinding sunlight. High mountain meadows teeming with white daisies and blue and mauve wild flowers crowded in on all sides. Another switchback. Another hundred-foot jump in elevation. Finally the top of the pass appeared, announced by a large, orange sign.

April brought her bike to a stop at the zenith, a wheel either side of the Great Divide, so-named for splitting North America down the middle – rain falling to the east drained into the Atlantic, to the west into the Pacific.

"I... did it," she beamed, raising her fists in triumph.

"You certainly did, April. Fantastic effort!"

"And you ... know what?" She panted between breaths. "I think this was ... harder than ... being in ... labour." **BT**

Jason Lewis circumnavigated the globe using only human power and he is now writing a trilogy of books about the journey. More information can be found at: www.jasonexplorer.com & [@explorerjason](https://twitter.com/explorerjason).



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UPS AND DOWNS

The dilemma

You can do it!



*C'mon, let's just take
the train to Munich
and drink lots
of 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.michaeltran.info

Parting shot



Photo: NEIL PIKE www.pikesonbikes.com

“We didn’t learn from our morning shortcut which cost us hours of pushing. A few hours after we made it back to the main road we saw what we thought was another great shortcut. This time we had to push for an hour and a half through this lovely sand. We didn’t make the mistake a third time...” ~ Neil Pike

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