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Should We Take Ben and Carlo?

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG SIPLE STORY BY MADELINE MCKIDDY

→ ON THEIR FIRST VISIT to the Adventure Cycling headquarters in 1988, Julie and Louis Melini were accompanied by their young sons Benjamin, age 4, and Carlo, age 2. They were doing day rides through Idaho and Montana with Lou pulling a trailer. Their goal was to become more comfortable touring with kids and, eventually, to take a long self-contained tour. “Lou made sure Ben had a Burley trailer before he was born,” Julie remembers.

The Melini family were among the first Adventure Cycling visitors traveling with kids, and they had several great pieces of advice for those planning to follow in their footsteps. “You’ll have to relearn how to tour and gage distances, your children’s tolerance for touring, and how to deal with your child outside the security of your home,” Louis said. “The kids like to reach out and try to grab the rear tire — I always use a screen. Don’t give your child anything sharp — my oldest put some keys through the screen!” After some trial-and-error, the family had found a trailer setup that worked for them, and had it nearly perfected by the time they reached Missoula.

Alas, their dreams of long self-contained tours with their children did not come to pass. They did a few more supported tours, and one 30-mile bike overnight, but then it was several years of limited cycling as soccer and the Boy Scouts took over. In 2013, Julie and Louis again visited Adventure Cycling — this time, sans kids. Said Julie, “I enjoyed traveling with the boys, sharing the wonders of nature, and spending uninterrupted time with them on the road. The pros now are that we are not limited to the boys’ attention span but rather to our energy level. We can choose destinations and routes around our goals. I have had Going-to-the-Sun Road on my bucket list for years, and I was able to accomplish that goal on our trip this summer.”

Where do they go from here? “Lou and I share the dream of many long tours after retirement. We also look forward to sharing our love of bicycling with our grandson, Lewie. We will check-in again in another 25 years and let you know how these dreams play out!”

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