

No. **4443**

Because we're crazy...

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG SIPLE STORY GAGE POORE

→ WHEN JONATHAN DUMAS AND MAELLE BOLAND stopped by Adventure Cycling on June 9 this year, the couple had been together for nine years and were in the ninth month of their U.S. cycling tour. The two Belgians — both with unrelated (and somewhat confusing) tales of Belgian/U.S. dual citizenship — fell in love during a senior trip to Burkina Faso, Africa, after attending the same high school in Belgium for years. After touring Belgium together, they decided to see more of America than their previous family-filled visits had allowed for by riding from Boston to Miami, west to San Diego, and north through Utah's national parks to Missoula. From here they continued north into Canada on their way to Seattle. "We had been to the U.S. before," Jonathan wrote, "but mostly to see my family (each time going to the same beach, same ice cream parlor, etc.) We wanted to go on an adventure throughout the U.S. in order to meet its people and discover a country that's part of who we are."

They spent nights with hunters, an art teacher, a truck driver, a prison guard, a war veteran and "the inventor of a Mars robot." Maelle wrote, "Meeting someone in the street and getting a high five is such a treasure we'll definitely take back to Belgium!" While talking to them about their overwhelmingly positive experiences, Jonathan said, "If you lose faith in humanity, go for a bike ride." Maelle recounted "Only one bad encounter so far: a seagull stole my very last bit of Belgian chocolate (that I had been carrying from the Keys to San Diego). It had melted a few times, but I sure wasn't ready to share it! Well, I hope he enjoyed it."

The two remarked on how the trip had brought them closer, spending all day, every day together, sharing hunger and pain. When Maelle got sick, it showed Jonathan how strong she could be, and when they had a particularly hard day, the two would just start singing. On one taxing day of headwinds in Texas, Maelle asked Jonathan "Why are we doing this thing again?" He responded, "Because we're crazy, and I love you."

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