Join Now For These Great Membership Benefits:

* Adventure Cyclist magazine • Cyclists’ Travel Guide: Bikes, Resources, How-To • Discounts on our bicycle maps
* The best bike routes in North America • Members-only group cycling tours
* Outreach programs to make bicycling and bike travel more accessible and popular

To join go to adventurecycling.org/join

Adventure Cycling Association’s mission is to inspire and empower people to travel by bicycle. We do this by creating bike routes for the nation, getting Americans bicycling, and supporting bicycling communities. Adventure Cycling is a 501(c)3 nonprofit.
features

STRAIGHT ROADS AND WIND 08
⇒ Swept away by the beauty of Patagonia. by Tom Robertson

ONCE AROUND THE BIG ISLAND 16
⇒ Hawaii was never a sought-after destination for this world traveler. Now he can’t wait to return. by Willie Weir

EUROPE 1968 22
⇒ A three-month romp around the Old World searching for the soul of cycling. by Greg Siple

OLD MAN MOUNTAIN 38
⇒ One man’s mission to build racks for all. by Dan D’Ambrosio

BICYCLE TRAVEL PHOTO CONTEST 32

ROAD TEST: RIVENDELL JOE APPALOOSA
A future classic? $2,600

CURRENT ISSUE NOTES:
Thank you for requesting a free issue of Adventure Cyclist. We design this issue specifically for those of you who may not be familiar with this magazine but who are interested in bicycle travel. While this issue is not one of the standard issues Adventure Cycling Association members receive, it is an accurate reflection of the collective stories, articles, and columns that we publish throughout a typical nine-issue volume. The features offer a true glimpse into why many of us find joy in bicycle travel, the “Road Test” gives readers a taste of the bikes available for the task, and the “Final Mile” delivers the heart and soul of the matter. We hope you enjoy this issue and that it whets your appetite to receive future issues of Adventure Cyclist.

― Michael Deme
Executive Editor, Adventure Cyclist

OUR COVER:
There are no bad views in Patagonia and the roads near El Chaltén are no exception. Photo by Tom Robertson.
WHY JOIN?

The magic of membership in North America’s largest cycling group

As Director of Adventure Cycling Association, I definitely have an interest in encouraging you to join as a member. But to be honest, I have also witnessed the magic that can come with membership in our unique organization. I have met many individuals who have read this magazine, used our websites and social media, or spoken with our staff and volunteers and have taken that first big step toward traveling by bike — whether it’s a quick bike overnight trip or something more challenging, like a week, a month, or even a year(!) on the road.

I have met even more cyclists who already travel by bike, but want to keep the fire burning — by reading the stories of others, sharing journals through our web-based Ride Registry, buying maps to study (and dream about using) during those short, gray days of winter, learning about new products and travel techniques, or meeting fellow riders at one of our member gatherings, through our social media networks like Facebook, or on our guided tours.

And then I have met the remarkable people (we’re talking thousands) who travel by bicycle because it has fundamentally changed their lives by giving them a sense of freedom, introducing them to their future spouse or best friend, leading them down a new career path, or rejuvenating their faith in humanity.

Whatever their reasons for joining, more than 51,000 people have decided to make Adventure Cycling a part of their lives, and that number increases every year. When you join, you get nine issues of Adventure Cyclist (truly one of the best travel magazines around) and access to the digital archives of the magazine, plus great online resources like our forums and bikeovernights.org, discounted maps to adventures across North America, involvement in cool events like Bike Your Park Day and Bike Travel Weekend, and access to affordable and personally enriching tours. Perhaps best of all, you get to belong to a large, big-hearted community of people — not just cyclists, but people who are seeking fun, fitness, and self-discovery on one of the greatest, most endearing vehicles ever invented: the bicycle.

Please flip through these pages, check out our website, dip into our social media, and come explore the magic of bicycle travel. You never know what you’ll find — on the next page or just over that hill.

Jim Sayer
Executive Director
jsayer@adventurecycling.org
REVVED FOR RIVENDELL

Thanks so much for reviewing the Joe Appaloosa (“Road Test,” page 36) and giving it such high marks. It’s a versatile, sensible bike for the real world. I had to chuckle when Patrick O’Grady wrote that he’d never actually ridden a Rivendell before.

Many years ago, I was researching touring bikes when John Schubert reviewed Rivendell’s Atlantis (“Road Test,” August 2002). The kernel of the review was that if you were looking for a versatile, rugged touring bike suitable for any sort of adventure, the Atlantis was it. Based largely on John’s review and phone calls with Rivendell, I ordered one. A few weeks later a large box arrived on my front porch. As I opened the box and took out my new bike, it hit me that I had never actually even seen a Rivendell until that moment. Within the hour, I was pedaling away from home. Within a mile, I was astounded at how comfortable and how well the bike rode.

My Atlantis arrived in early 2003 and we’ve happily covered well over 60,000 miles together. It’s still the bike I ride 95 percent of the time. I’m sure the Joe Appaloosa will offer a similar experience.

Doug Peterson | Irvine, California

ENJOYING EBIKES

I was happy to see a lengthy article on pedal-assist eBikes in the April issue. The author downplayed the rear-hub-drive system where the motor is in the rear wheel and the torque sensor is mounted on the rear axle. The big advantage of this system is that it can be added to almost any existing bicycle, as was the case with my wife’s touring bike. All you have to do is change the rear wheel, mount the battery in place of a water bottle cage, and hook up the controls. Now we can ride side by side up all the hills, at my speed. The system is perfect for the experienced cyclist who, because of age or injury, can’t do the long distances or keep up with friends anymore. Think about it, your favorite touring bike with pedal assistance.

Scott & Elaine McElmury | Templeton, California

On a recent European tour, I ordered an electric bike for the 7000-foot ascents (and descents) and found that they help me as I push 90 years old. I am still physically capable of riding 50 to 60 miles a day on a road bike.

But as electric bikes become more popular (as they are in Europe), I would like to see your discourse on them — pros and cons — for those of us that feel challenged by the long climbs — as in Colorado, Croatia, and Corsica — and increasing age.

Ole Lorenzetti | Fort Worth, Texas

DREAM BIG

I have very much enjoyed your last few articles on Hemistour and the beginnings of Bikecentennial. I had the pleasure of meeting Greg Siple in the summer of 1978, as we were both returning from leading American Youth Hostel (AYH) tours in Europe.

I loved cycle touring, so was in awe of Greg’s accomplishments. As we drove from Washington, DC, to AYH headquarters in rural Virginia, we talked about our recent trips. On a lark, I put forth the idea of doing a cycling trip in Russia (then the USSR), since it had just opened its doors to foreign tourists, thinking to myself that going from St. Petersburg to Moscow — roughly 450 miles — would be quite an adventure. My wife looked at me like I was nuts. But I remember Greg’s response very clearly. “Yes,” he noted, “that might be a great final bike tour for my wife and I. Riding from the western border across Siberia to the Pacific Ocean.”

I slowly turned my head and stared at him for a few seconds. “Wow,” I replied. “You are definitely playing in a very different league than I am.” As I looked back on that singular experience over the years, it definitely taught me one thing. Think big.

Steve Lonergan | Victoria, BC, Canada
A WEEKEND OF ADVENTURE

► JOIN thousands of other cyclists throughout North America and the world by hooking up with friends and family to ride to a favorite campground, hotel, cabin, B&B, hostel or friend’s house on the first weekend in June—Bike Travel Weekend. Bike Travel Weekend connected over 11,900 people in its inaugural edition and for the weekends of June 2 – 4, 2017 and June 1 – 3, 2018, the adventure continues. Plan your own trip or join an existing one whether it includes roasting marshmallows and star-gazing at a campsite, rolling your bicycle into a hotel room and ordering room service, or pedaling to a friend’s house to enjoy a home-cooked breakfast in the morning. Glean inspiration from the interactive map of planned overnights, get location specific trip ideas by contacting a Bike Travel Weekend Advisor; and share the Bike Travel Weekend logo and images to motivate friends. Mark your calendars and be sure to register at BikeTravelWeekend.org.

BIKEOVERNIGHTS.ORG SHARES TALES OF SHORTER TRIPS

► GET INSPIRED TO RIDE at Adventure Cycling’s crowdsourced Bike Overnights website at bikeovernights.org, where you’ll find trip ideas and resources for short trips. An ever-growing number of one- and two-night adventures are chronicled on the site, contributed by all kinds of cyclists with a camera and a bike-travel tale. You can find a bike overnight for all 50 states and some faraway places like New Zealand and India.

The idea? Do it and share it! BikeOvernights.org serves the bike-travel community by sharing your short overnight bicycle adventures—your route, your photos, and other helpful ride details—and inspiring others to get out on their own weekend-oriented bicycle travels.

Click the links on the home page and read through the examples of bike overnights, click your state and find stories of bike travel in your area, read Adventure Cycling Executive Director Jim Sayer’s advice for a first bike overnight, and peruse the gear lists and other resources.

And very importantly, share your own short adventures by clicking “Submit A Trip,” and inspire others to throw a leg over the saddle and take off.

Load up your bikes, gather your friends and family members, and get ready to ride on Bike Your Park Day on the last Saturday in September. Thousands of people across the United States and the world will ride bicycles to or within parks and public lands, be they national or state parks, monuments, or historic sites; river, seashore, or recreation areas; preserves, forests, parkways, or wildlife refuges. National Public Lands Day is on the same day, providing the opportunity to bike to a public land to participate in a service project. Participants seeking bike-travel resources can connect with one of hundreds of experienced bike travelers throughout the U. S. for information about cycling in specific parks and public lands. Mark your calendar for September 30, 2017 and September 29, 2018. Register your ride, check out the interactive map, and utilize the sharing resources like the Bike Your Park Day logo and social media messages at BikeYourParkDay.org.
USBRS WEAVES NATIONAL NETWORK
Connecting people, communities, and the nation

Since Adventure Cycling created the TransAmerica Trail in 1976, the organization has established almost 47,000 miles of cycling routes, creating detailed maps to help cyclists navigate their adventures along scenic, low-traffic roads.

Now, while expanding its own route network, Adventure Cycling is working to connect America by bicycle through a developing national network of numbered and signed cycling routes — the U.S. Bicycle Route System (USBRS). U.S. Bicycle Routes utilize existing roads and trails suitable for bike travel, and often incorporate existing local, regional or national bicycle routes, like Adventure Cycling routes. The routes are publicly owned and officially recognized by state and local transportation agencies and road owners along the routes.

The U.S. Bicycle Route System will grow bicycle tourism and local economies with very little investment and will open up new opportunities for cross-country travel, regional bike touring, and local transportation.

Adventure Cycling provides coordination and support to states implementing U.S. Bicycle Routes. Local cyclists, volunteers, and agencies work together to plan the best routes in their area and the state department of transportation signs off on the application for route designation. The route is then submitted to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) for approval.

U.S. Bicycle Routes are a cost-effective means to bringing bike tourism economic, health, and other benefits to a region.

Momentum for the project has built quickly over the last decade, with over 11,000 miles of U.S. Bicycle Routes now established and more than 40 states in various stages of creating routes. Soon you may only have to venture out your front door to find yourself on a U.S. Bicycle Route!

Support for the USBRS comes from Adventure Cycling members, donors, foundations, and a group of business sponsors that participate in the annual Build it. Bike it. Be a Part of It. Fundraiser each May. Learn more and get involved at adventurecycling.org/usbrs.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Companies who support Adventure Cycling Association offer exclusive pricing on products and services for members to enhance their bicycle travel experience. Adventure Cycling members receive discounts on lodging, gear, and tours from corporate partners such as Burley, Club Ride Apparel, Velosurance, BikeTours.com, the International Mountain Bicycling Association, and Peru for Less.

“We hope the member discount encourages the Adventure Cycling community to experience bike travel in all its forms,” said Jim Johnson, president of BikeTours.com. “Adventure Cycling Association provides great resources to get us all out on stateside adventures, which we hope will whet your appetite for global adventures!”

Member discounts are available to all Individual, Senior, Family, Patron, Supporting, and Benefactor members. Access your discounts by logging in to your My Adventure Cycling portal at adventurecycling.org/myadventurecycling.
STRAIGHT ROADS AND WIND

Swept away by the beauty of Patagonia
I
t was nearly noon, and the wind
was starting to pick up. But with the
temperature approaching 100°F,
we were most concerned about the
heat. Well, no. I guess it was actually
the lack of services that we were the
most concerned about in this windy,
scorchingly hot, middle-of-nowhere
place. The night before, we had
camped on the side of Argentina’s
iconic Ruta Nacional 40 — a stripped-
down, southern version of Route 66.
We were headed toward the small town
of Bajo Caracoles, the final outpost
with some basic but essential services
before we’d encounter long stretches
with no amenities and, at best, limited
water. The bone-dry wind was wicking
sweat off my neck as quickly as I could
produce it. This was starting to feel like
the Patagonia I had always imagined.

I’ve been a member of Adventure
Cycling now for over 25 years, the
first 14 of which I also worked at the
organization as a cartographer. Every
so often during my time on staff, co-founder Greg Siple would saunter
over to my desk and share a memory
of Hemistour, the epic ride that he, his
wife June, and Dan and Lys Burden
were on from 1972–75 when they
conceived the idea for Bikecentennial.

Hemistour was the first bicycle tour
to travel the length of the western
hemisphere from north to south,
starting in Anchorage, Alaska, and
ending 18,272 miles and almost three
years later in Ushuaia, Argentina.

Out of all of Greg’s stories from that
trip, what really captured my attention
was hearing about Patagonia, the
beautiful and remote region spanning
the southernmost reaches of South
America. Patagonia encompasses parts
of both Chile and Argentina, with the
rugged Andes Mountains knitting
the two countries together. With its
glaciated valleys, terraced steppes, and
towering summits, Patagonia seemed like a grand and imposing landscape. Now I was finally here to experience it for myself, along with intrepid traveling companions Sonja Schmidt and Jason Harding. Battered by wind on the side of the highway, we quietly snacked and drank overheated water from our bottles, trying to figure out the best course of action for getting through the barren stretch ahead. I thought about Greg and June and the enormous scope of their adventure, and I couldn’t help but wonder, “How the hell did they do this?”

As we neared Bajo Caracoles, I kept glancing at my map. For us to make it to El Chaltén, the part that I was most looking forward to, we would be putting in hard, long days with only a day to explore the area. So I planned to get on the internet at our next stop and come up with an alternate strategy. Pulling into the “town,” though, I became a bit dubious about my objective. Baja Caracoles consisted of a few gravel roads lined with a campground that was closed, a hostel that was closed, and a small convenience store with showers and some rooms for rent. Outside the store, we stopped a passerby and asked if there was wifi in town, which elicited a huge laugh. Dispirited, we resupplied with cold water and sandwiches and decided that we needed to get a ride. It’s great to be in sync with traveling companions. One of the greatest parts about bike travel is being able to share the ups and downs with your fellow travelers. In this case, I was on the road with two of the best. In addition to being great people, Sonja and Jason are also professional guides for Trek Travel, the touring arm of Trek Bicycles. For seven to eight months a year they work hard leading high-end bike tours in Europe, and then during the off-season they strike out on their own adventures. When I got wind that they were headed south for a cycling and fly-fishing tour, I subtly invited myself along. Over food and wine one evening in Missoula, we pored over maps and made a plan, and just like that I was going to join them for a few weeks of touring in Patagonia. They were headed south in December and would be on the road for a month before I joined.

Now here we were in a convenience store in the middle of Argentina, putting our heads together for some problem solving. Through a mix of gestures and broken Spanish, we learned that a bus would probably stop at the store sometime around 10:00 or 11:00 PM. If it did stop, it wasn’t a sure thing that all three of us could get on with our bikes. But perhaps with a bit of cash, we could make it happen. It was noon, and we had nothing left to do but hang out and wait.

We took up seats outside and, as a backup plan, kept an eye out for vehicles traveling south that could potentially accommodate the three of us along with our bikes. Despite the fact that Bajo Caracoles is the only food and gas hub for miles in either direction, it
took four hours to find our first lead. A tiny camper finally pulled up alongside the gas pump, and out climbed two clean-cut, bespectacled guys who looked as though they might speak English. Sonja and I elected Jason to go speak to them. He came back minutes later with a broad smile across his face. The men, both French, were up for it — if we could wrangle our bikes into their pint-sized camper. Luckily, Sonja and Jason are masters at packing bikes. Within minutes, everything was safely stowed, and the three of us were tucked into the backseat of the cab.

It was thrilling, rolling down the road at 60 mph, steadily clicking off the miles. The road was straight with no water and a lot of wind. It would have made for a tough and uninspiring ride. The more we drove, the happier we were in that backseat. Little did they know, but our new companions, Quentin and Julien, had just made a huge difference in the quality of our trip.

We found a riverside campsite in the next town and called it a night, and then we squeezed back into the rig the next morning. With these guys heading to El Chaltén, we figured we should just go the whole way. As we hit the road the next morning, what started as reasonably smooth pavement soon turned to gravel, which got progressively bumpier until the substrate became nothing more than an expanse of huge rocks. Eventually the roads improved before we turned west and headed toward El Chaltén.

From the road, it’s easy to spot the town’s location. El Chaltén sits at the base of Mount Fitz Roy, whose towering granite faces are visible from miles away. While many people might not recognize the mountain by name, millions have seen it — or at least a representation of it. Fitz Roy, and the peaks beside it, make up the logo for the Patagonia clothing company. While Cerro Chaltén, as the spire is also called, is a highly technical ascent attempted by only the most experienced climbers, the surrounding mountains are a huge draw for more casual adventurers. El Chaltén caters to these tourists and feels a bit like Jackson Hole, Wyoming, except with grittier accommodations and much slower internet.

After unloading our bikes in town, we said goodbye to our new French friends and thanked them profusely. Giddy from both our good fortune in catching a ride and the open invitation to visit our benefactors in Bordeaux, we wasted no time in exchanging some currency on the somewhat shady underground “blue dollar market,” and celebrating with food and drink.

Over a sizable pitcher of wine, we hatched a plan to find some fishable waters. There hadn’t been many opportunities to fish since I joined the trip, and Jason was itching to cast a line. Rumor had it that the glacier-fed Laguna del Desierto (Lake of the Desert) was a hidden gem just 50 kilometers up the road. The route was a straightforward out-and-back on a gravel road, with no way to get lost. How hard could it be? Answer: hard enough that we felt as though we were doing penance for having caught a ride the days before. With a combination of rocks, washboard, fully loaded bikes, and a fierce headwind, we might as well have been getting bucked around on a mechanical bull in some backwater Montana bar.

The winds of Patagonia are truly a force of nature. Air masses coming off the Pacific Ocean rise up over the Chilean side of the snow-covered Andes Mountains and cool before plunging back down the Argentinean slope. At ground level, the wind bursts can easily reach gale-force speeds. Much of the vegetation has adapted by hugging the ground — a smart move, considering how vulnerable we felt as we were exposed and pummeled by the relentless gusts.

About halfway to our destination, we came across two men pedaling back toward El Chaltén. They didn’t speak English, but from their gesturing and the few Spanish words we could decipher, we surmised that they’d been on the road for a while and had been traveling down on the Carretera Austral. The Carretera Austral is a remote dirt road on the Chilean side of the Andes, but I was confused about how they had landed on this dead-end stretch of road. I gathered from their pantomiming that our bikes wouldn’t have made it on the Carretera Austral, that mountain bikes were definitely required. That said, one of the men seemed to be admiring our bicycles.

The closer we got to our destination, the easier the riding conditions became. Our campground was a welcome sight. Situated at the base of a glacier and dotted with shade trees, it offered a spectacular view of towering peaks. The scenery had some competition for our attention, though. As the campground filled up with a motley assortment of travelers, the people-watching was first rate. And no one was more intriguing than the fellow who appeared — looking every bit like Fabio’s doppelgänger with his long, flowing hair — leading a horse with a petite woman astride it. He was followed by two other horses and riders, and once his gang had stabled their rides in the campground corral, they proceeded to set up camp. Were these people really doing a tour by horse?

As the night wore on, campers began to extinguish their campfires and retire for the evening. Eventually, ours was the only one still ablaze, prompting the horse guy and his lady friend to wander over and share the heat. As they warmed their hands, he also shared his
story. A few weeks earlier, he had met the Swiss couple (the other two riders in his party) and learned that they were about to start a cross-Patagonia tour on horseback. It sounded like such a great adventure that he invited himself along despite the fact that he’d never before ridden a horse — he figured he’d work that out along the way. Sure enough he’d already learned a lot about the ins and outs of horse travel, and admitted his good fortune in traveling with the Swiss riders, who had researched the route extensively prior to setting out.

That was all well and good, but it didn’t explain where the woman came from. When we asked, a smile spread across his face. It turned out that she had been hitchhiking on the very road we cycled out on. So he picked her up … on his horse. She didn’t speak or understand any English and just smiled throughout the whole story. We never learned where she was headed, but when they retired for the evening, they both crawled into his single-sized tent. Boy, just when you think you’re on a grand adventure, along comes someone who trumps you by picking up a cute hitchhiker on his spontaneous Patagonia horseback tour.

We spent the next day fishing, eating, and taking in the spectacular scenery around us. Well, Sonja and Jason were fishing, and I was chasing them around with a camera, trying not to fall in the chilly cerulean waters. I’m not a fly fisherman, but I’ve lived in Montana long enough to know that once the fishing bug bites you, there’s no turning back. Life is then consumed by trying to land the browns, bulls, ctthroats, and rainbows, and other concerns fall by the wayside. Here at Laguna del Desierto, Jason had a single-minded determination to land a big guy he’d spotted who just wasn’t falling for any of his tricks. While Sonja pulled in a succession of more diminutive fish farther down the bank, Jason kept working the same spot, muttering both to himself and the elusive prize. Well into the afternoon, I heard a blood-curdling scream and turned to see that Jason had finally hooked his target. After a short battle, he held the fish in his hands, grinned for a few photos, and then released the trout back into the stream to fight another day. Though we fished for a bit longer, the edge had been taken off. Jason was relaxed again, back to being a normal person. Victory was his.

As we strolled back to our camping spot, we noticed a couple walking their loaded touring bikes into the campground. Jeff and Roselind from Canada had been traveling for a number of months. Recently retired and their daughter just married, Roselind had gotten a tattoo and they hit the road. Sonja and Jason had run into them once or twice before, and the four of them spent some time catching up and swapping stories. It turned out that they too had come across the Carretera Austral route, and they told of dirt-road adventures, trying to catch ferries, and paying someone to have his horse shuttle their panniers through a particularly tricky singletrack section. We learned that after crossing through the mountains, the route more or less dumps out into the campground where we were staying, thus solving the mystery of where all these travelers had materialized from. (Jeff and Roselind kept a great blog over the course of their trip; check out “Shift Happens” at crazyguyonabike.com.)

The road back toward El Chaltén the next morning was just as bumpy as it had been on the way out, but this time the wind was at our backs and we seemed to float over the washboard as we headed south. Just knowing that we were cruising back to familiar ground and already had lodging booked made the trip more relaxed and enjoyable. The tailwind continued to blow the following day as we departed El Chaltén and pedaled down the road. Our campsite that night was behind the “famous” Hotel de Campo La Leona, its notoriety coming from the fact that it was once the temporary hideout of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

Pedaling around the corner into the hotel’s backyard campground, we found a tent already set up by a couple from California. Then we looked over and saw the Canadian couple staking out their tent. As we were pitching our own, up rolled the Argentinean men we had met on the dirt road. Everyone had run across each other at some point along the route, but this was the first time we were all in one place at the same time. It was a festive atmosphere, and the table was large enough that we were all able to dine together that evening. As almost everyone was approaching the end of their respective travels, there were many stories to share. We learned that they had all come down the Carretera Austral route; that really
seemed like the way to go. The woman from California spoke Spanish and was able to converse with the Argentinean men and translate for us. They turned out to be brothers. One eventually confessed to have a major case of bike envy over our rides.

The next morning as we were packing up, our gang got a little bit larger when two brothers from France rolled up on bikes. They had recently started in the south and were headed all the way up to Alaska. They looked fresh and ready for adventure, which was a good thing as they were going to be on the road for a few years. I told them that if they were anywhere near Missoula, they had to stop by the Adventure Cycling office and say hello to Greg.

After breakfast, we all broke camp with groups heading out one by one for wherever the day would take them. One of the unique aspects of meeting up with other touring cyclists is that you might see them up the road in a matter of minutes — or you may never see them again. In this case, we never saw the Americans and the Canadians again, but we soon joined forces with the Argentinean brothers. We all lined up, the speed gradually increased, and in a few minutes we were sailing along at high speed in a legitimate pace line. Eventually we backed off, and the lack of traffic allowed us to ride side by side. The road was absolutely gorgeous with smooth pavement, incredible views, long sightlines, and no cars to worry about. In other words, the conditions were as ideal as you could hope for.

even though we didn’t speak the same language, one of the brothers started telling stories. He would do so with great gusto and enthusiastic hand gestures despite the fact that we had no idea what he was saying. When he finished a story, he’d laugh heartily and we would as well.

We rode together off and on throughout the day, and when it was time to find a camp spot, we banded together. Although it was not quite as idyllic as some of our other campsites,

The paved road out of El Chaltén is about as scenic as it gets on a bike tour.
a vacant, weedy lot on the bank of the Rio Santa Cruz provided ample space for our tents, and the crumbling buildings made a nice windbreak. We set up tents underneath a row of trees, using a limb to sweep away the debris and broken glass. There was even an old pallet nearby to serve as our dinner table. As we ate around the pallet, the gregarious brother broke out “Argentinean schnapps” and began telling more stories. It tasted like gasoline-laced moonshine, but I swear the schnapps helped my Spanish comprehension skills that night. Or at least I remember learning one thing that evening — that the other, quieter brother worked for Nabisco making Oreo cookies in Buenos Aires. Man, I love Oreos.

The next morning, we heard them rustling around outside while we were still in our tents. I got up to take a quick portrait of them while they finished packing their bikes. The chatty brother looked a little rough, like he had enjoyed the schnapps a little too much the night before. He cast one more longing glance at my bike as they walked up to the road. We watched them pedal for a few hundred meters before they had to get off and push their loads up the first small hill. Yep, most definitely too much drink.

Looking back on the tour from my end point in the town of El Calafate, it was easy to see where the make-it or break-it part of the trip had been: the day we caught the ride with the Frenchmen. As often happens, the kindness of strangers makes for the most memorable moments. So, in an effort to pass it on (and also because I couldn’t find a bike box anywhere in that town), I left a gift of my own. I locked my bike to a post at the town’s hostel, took a photo, and put it on social media with a clue as to the combination for the lock, along with instructions to anyone who got it to post photos of their adventures with #endlessbiketour. If anyone happens to run into the Argentinean brothers, tell them the combination is 1976.

Tom Robertson is a freelance photographer and a cycling and adventure enthusiast based in Missoula, Montana. He was a cartographer at Adventure Cycling for 14 years. See more of his work at tomrobertson.com.
In February 2016, Adventure Cycling conducted our ninth annual Member Survey. Over 23% of our members responded and contributed their thoughts on how we were doing and what we should be working on in the future. For more statistics and infographics from the survey, visit adventurecycling.org/annualsurvey.

**Member Survey**

In February 2016, Adventure Cycling conducted our ninth annual Member Survey. Over 23% of our members responded and contributed their thoughts on how we were doing and what we should be working on in the future. For more statistics and infographics from the survey, visit adventurecycling.org/annualsurvey.

**What type of surfaces do our members prefer?**

- Paved roads: 98%
- Paved bike paths: 84%
- Non-paved bike paths: 59%
- Dirt roads: 53%
- Singletrack: 34%

**What type of bikes do our members prefer?**

- Touring: 75%
- Road: 71%
- Mountain: 43%
- Hybrid: 19%
- Tandem: 14%
- Folding: 12%
- Recumbent: 10%
- Fat: 7%

**What type of surfaces do our members prefer?**

- 96% of members would recommend joining Adventure Cycling to a friend.
- 91% find our magazine, Adventure Cyclist, above average or excellent.
- 89% of members feel that membership is a good value, based on benefits.
- 81% rate their experience as a member as above average or excellent.
I’d never been to Hawaii.

Wait — that’s not completely true. I was once on the tarmac of the Honolulu airport on my way back from a bike trip in New Zealand. Without ever visiting, I had already deemed Hawaii too expensive and too touristy.

I’m also not a beach person. My wife, Kat, can vouch that I’m good for about three minutes of lying surfside. I’ve never been a good swimmer (I sink), my Irish/Scottish/German skin doesn’t tan (it reddens), and I don’t like tropical drinks (bourbon, please).

So why did we pack our bikes and gear for a month-long trip around the Big Island? To be honest, another bike trip had fallen through and we had just enough frequent flier miles to get to Hawaii.

I have to admit, the more I studied the map of the Big Island, the more intrigued I became. There were more cycling opportunities than I’d imagined, and there were campgrounds too. Campgrounds were important because we didn’t have enough money in our budget to stay in pricey hotels and B&Bs for a month.

Then the budget bomb hit in the form of news that a dengue fever outbreak had closed the first two campgrounds where we had planned to pitch our tent. How many more campgrounds would be closed by the time we arrived? Should we cancel our trip?

We put out the word via emails and social media, “Hey, friends. Do you have family, ex-lovers, or acquaintances on the Big Island who would be willing to allow a couple of frugal cyclists to pitch a tent?”

We got responses! Our dentist friend had family there. There were a few WarmShowers hosts sprinkled about. Another friend had a friend who could possibly put us in touch with her friends who had a beekeeping business on the island.

Our budgetary panic subsided.

Hawaii has a dry side (Kona) and a wet side (Hilo). We flew into Kona and pedaled counterclockwise around the island.

We stayed a couple of nights at Uncle Billy’s Hotel, which allowed us to assemble our bikes, pack up our gear, and ease into island life. Kailua-Kona is the tourist hub and the birthplace of Ironman. We saw a whole lot of spandex and aerobars. Racks and panniers? Not so much.

On the third morning, we pedaled out...
of town and avoided the busy highway by hugging the coast. There was a price to pay, however. The main highway gradually climbs 1,500 feet on its way to Captain Cook. We had to make up that elevation in just a couple of miles. The pitch of the streets heading up to the main highway reached crazy steep. They're the kind of hills you want to encounter after you've pedaled hundreds of miles — not 20.

We were within a quarter-mile of the main highway and running on empty. What had looked like a boat repair business became one of the best food stops on our journey. Sun Dried Specialties must rely on word of mouth because their nondescript building leads to a no-frills counter with several bowls of fresh poke. This classic Hawaiian raw fish salad comes mixed with green onions, sesame seeds, soy sauce, chili peppers, and sesame oil, all served on a bed of cabbage or rice.

Fortified, we climbed the last stretch to the highway and within minutes were coasting downhill with sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean while breathing in the fragrance of a sea of flowers. We camped on private property that had been graciously offered to us and spent the next day exploring Pu'uhonua O Hōnaunau National Park and the adjacent snorkeling paradise known as Two Step.

The route around the Big Island is a gentle roller coaster — up to a vantage point, down to a beach, up to the crest of a volcanic ridge, down to a small town near the sea.

Our request for places to camp led us to Biz and Phil's. Biz was born on Hawaii, the daughter of a sugar plantation manager. Phil was born on Long Island and fell in love with Hawaii when he was in the service. Their modest yet lovely home sits near the road down to South Point (the southernmost point on the island). Due to the lovely climate, the only shower is outside (Kat instantly fell in love with it). Biz has raised two daughters in this house, and only the month before we arrived, it had been connected to the electric grid.

We instantly bonded with these two delightful people. We chatted and laughed for hours. They felt like family (in a good way). We pitched our tent on a small patch of grass below the house. Lani, their large but extremely shy Rottweiler, watched us intently from a safe distance. We didn't attain our goal of petting her, but she did finally accept a biscuit.

The next morning, we were able to leave our gear and gently coast down 1,500 feet in elevation along 11 glorious miles to South Point, with panoramic views of pastureland, the looming wind turbines of the Pakini Nui wind farm, and the vast, deep blue Pacific Ocean. The crowd at South Point was a mixture of tourists there for a quick look and locals set up for a long day of fishing from the cliffs.

After an hour of gazing out at the ocean (including a sighting of spinner dolphins), we pedaled along the bumpy dirt tracks to Papakolea Green Sand Beach. We were the only ones on bikes. Everyone else walked or paid locals to shuttle them in Land Rovers to the beach. As we passed a group of hikers, one called out, “Now that's the way to go,” I replied, “It may be faster, but it isn't easier.” By whichever mode of transportation, the destination was worth the effort. How often do you get to hang out on a beach that used to be part of the cinder cone of a volcano formed 50,000 years ago?

We then made the long, slow climb back to Biz and Phil's. Thankfully, we didn't experience any wind. South Point is known as one of the windiest places on the island. We had barely a breeze.

We eventually bid farewell to Biz and Phil and continued around the island. From Punalu'u Beach Park with its black sand beach, where both tourists and sea turtles swim and lounge, the road climbs gradually 4,000 feet over 26 miles to Namakanipaio Campground in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. We'd heard that this campground was both beautiful and free (at least for tent sites). Unfortunately, it was also closed because some large eucalyptus trees had fallen.

Our only option — other than a crazy expensive room at an overbooked lodge — was to pedal 10 miles to Kulanaokuaiki Campground in the middle of the park. We were told that the campground had no water and a pit toilet. Great.

The asphalt road winding down to the campground was barely a lane wide. We descended through a tree canopy that suddenly opened up to the stark beauty of the volcanic rock landscape. At times, it looked like an enormous paving project that had gone horribly wrong. The massive volume of material that had burped up from the earth's core is hard to comprehend. Only the most resilient of shrubs, small trees, and ferns had managed to emerge in the aftermath.

But the contrast of the harsh landscape with the blue sky was amazing. The campground was bare bones as described. There were five or six vehicles parked for the walk-in campsites. We had wanted to get a good look at the Halema'u'uma'u Crater, but that was 10 miles back up the road.

So we asked our neighbors who immediately offered us a ride in their rental car. The couple and their young daughter were from Mexico City but now lived...
in northern Saskatchewan (talk about a contrast of climate and culture). We drove up to the visitor center, passed hundreds of steam vents, and were rewarded with a view of the spectacular caldera — a view we shared with over 300 tourists. We returned to our secluded campground. Bundled in sweaters and jackets, we shared laughs, food, and wine around the small camp stove.

This alternative campsite was one of the highlights of our trip. In fact we stayed an extra night, which gave us time to pedal farther down the road to an ocean lookout and to wander the stark paths. The view from the visitor center had been impressive, but alone at our primitive campsite, the sight of a million stars with the red-orange glow of the caldera as a ghostly backdrop was a vision we will never forget.

While you climb up and out of Volcanoes National Park, you transition quite drastically from the dry side of the island to the wet side. The contrast was immediately seen in the vegetation and felt in the humidity, but it was most drastically heard in the birdsong. The dry side was stone silent. The only birds we encountered in our campsite were a pair of endangered Hawaiian geese (nenes). As we crossed the rain shadow, within seconds there was a cacophony of birdcalls. I have never been anywhere on earth where the contrast in climatic zones can be experienced in such a dramatic way. By this time my “Hawaii is just beaches and tourists” impression had disappeared, never to return.

Hilo is the largest city (or should I say town) on the Big Island, with a population of just over 40,000. It is the wettest town in the U.S. with an average 120 to 140 inches of rain each year. I could give you a rundown of some history and local sites, but, as a touring cyclist, I’m going to cut to the chase and tell you about one place you must visit — Big Island Candies. This local gem produces the most amazing confections: macadamia-nut shortbread dipped in chocolate, orange-cream chocolate brownies, and guava macadamia-nut cookies, to list just a few. And they have samples. Not the kind of samples where you have to wait in line for a white-gloved employee to dole out a pellet-sized nibble. We’re talking unguarded baskets of samples. Now please don’t give traveling cyclists a bad name by wandering through and trying to fill a pannier. Be polite, show discretion, and enjoy the best free sample selection I’ve ever seen on planet Earth.

Okay, there is one other place you should visit. Hawaii is a land of fire and water. It is some of the youngest land on earth, born of volcanoes. But it is also shaped, and occasionally ravaged, by water. The Pacific Tsunami Museum is dedicated to the history of the 1946 Pacific Tsunami and the 1960 Chilean Tsunami. Both hit the east coast of the Big Island and Hilo. A dear friend of ours was a young boy living in Hilo when the 1946 tsunami hit. Their home was torn off its foundation. His sister (Jeanne Branch Johnston) is the cofounder of the museum, along with Dr. Walter Dudley. This small museum in downtown Hilo is packed with information. But what sets it apart is the large collection of audio and video recordings that personalize the stories of survivors.

Stories bring history alive. The same is true for adventures.

We were pedaling along the Hamakua Coast and came upon a sign for the town...
of Paauhau. It rang a bell, so I got on my phone and called Itsu, a friend in his 80s in Seattle. I was pretty sure this was his hometown. When he answered the phone, I told him where we were.

“Spell it,” he said.

I did.

“Yeah,” he said. “That’s it.”

“Should we go down and see it?” I asked.

I had a reason to ask. The road down to Paauhau was the steepest we’d seen so far.

“No. There is nothing there,” he said. “My kid sister still lives there though. Four houses down from the wading pool.”

That was reason enough for us. We burned up some brake pads getting there, but we made it. Unbelievably, we had been able to book a room in Paauhau in an old, renovated house on our cell phone via AirBnB from up on the highway. The guy who took our reservation lived in Pakistan. It truly is a small world.

Paauhau is an old sugar town. The three small streets were lined with modest, old homes where immigrants lived while working in the fields and the mill. I asked around. There was no wading pool. Finally a young woman in a black SUV said, “See that guy over there? If he’ll talk with you, he’ll know. He’s been here all his life.”

I approached a thin man, well over 80, cutting down a small tree with a chain saw. I introduced myself and explained about my friend’s kid sister.

He took a drag from his cigarette. “Next street up. Find the pomelo tree.”

Those were easy directions to follow — pomelos are the size of basketballs. I went and got Kat. Our place was just down the street.

We walked up the stairs, lined with potted plants. The entire property was a garden of fruits, flowers, and ferns. A man answered the door, and his wife (Itsu’s kid sister) soon came out and joined him on the steps. They both had lived in this small company town all their lives. Hard working conditions on the edge of paradise. There is no longer a school here, nor a store. The mill closed in the 1980s. Expensive homes are sprouting up around them as investors seize the opportunity for vacation rentals.

It was a short visit — a chance to peek into a bygone era. We felt very welcomed. They gave us a box of cookies as we left.

In the morning, we had the hardest climb of our trip. It was less than a mile, straight up to the highway.

Any day on a bike tour is better than most, but every once in a while you experience travel magic. You wander into a festival or get invited as strangers to a wedding. On our Hawaiian journey, we found magic at a primitive campsite among thorny kiawe trees at Kapa’a Beach Park.

The weather was perfect, the strong surf crashing dramatically on the rocks below, and there were humpback whales spouting and breaching out in the vast blue sea with the island of Maui hazy in the distance. It easily entered into the annals of our travel lore. But it just so happened that we had arrived unknowingly on the night of a full moon. So after we watched a drop-dead gorgeous sunset, there followed a moonrise so bright that it woke me at 2:00 am. I thought someone was aiming a searchlight at our tent. I got out and wandered about sans flashlight.

We lingered over a camp breakfast of scrambled eggs heaped with enormous slices of local avocado, and we searched for more humpback whales as the full moon slowly disappeared into the Pacific.

But it didn’t end there because our WarmShowers hosts from the night before had pointed out an old railroad grade that we could ride instead of the highway, right along the edge of the coast to another beach park. It was bliss. No traffic. Not a single person in sight. Just the ocean air, the blue sky, the tall, brown grasses waving in the breeze, and...
the crashing waves pounding against cliffs. It was a day I wish I could relive a thousand times.

With its combination of beauty, natural diversity, and friendly people, we couldn't imagine why the Big Island isn't a more popular destination with bike travelers. In over three and a half weeks of travel, it wasn't until we came full circle that we met our first touring cyclists — three sisters, two from Alaska and one who had flown out from Philadelphia. They were stocking up for their tour at the big supermarket in Kailua-Kona. Their faces beamed with the smiles of giddy, first-day travelers. We shared road and campsite information and updated them on the dengue fever situation. As we said our goodbyes, I thought, “Have fun. You have it all to yourselves.”

Our final day was typical of many a trip — packing the bikes and gear in boxes, buying last-minute gifts, etc. We realized we had hit the jackpot, weather-wise. In 27 days, we had only two brief bouts of rain, and what's even more mind blowing, just four hours of headwinds.

Biz and Phil drove across the island, insisting that they'd take us out to dinner and then to the airport. As we said goodbye, Phil put a lei made from he'e berries around my neck while Biz adorned Kat with a sweet-scented lei of tuberose. I think everyone shed a tear.

I never thought I'd travel to Hawaii. Now I can't wait to get back.

Willie Weir rides, writes, and photographs for Adventure Cyclist. You can follow him on Instagram at @willie.weir and read his weekly blog posts at adventurecycling.org/blog.
NEW BACK-ROLLER PRO

MADE IN GERMANY.

ORTLIEB WATERPROOF:

5 YEAR WARRANTY
MADE IN GERMANY
WWW.ORTLIEBUS.COM
IT’S A GREAT PLEASURE to greet touring cyclists who drop by Adventure Cycling’s headquarters in Missoula every summer. Of special interest to me are older riders in their 60s and 70s. They reassure me that bicycle touring is indeed an activity that can be enjoyed over an entire lifetime. Most of these cyclists have been riding for decades and are seasoned travelers.

Just as interesting are the young cyclists who lock their bikes up in front of our building. In their early 20s, some still teenagers, they seem so young — probably because I’m over 70, three times their age. Often it is their first bicycle tour of any kind. I had forgotten how someone so young could plunge into a months-long bicycle ride across a continent with such confidence. But then I remind myself that I was young once and did the very same thing.

In 1968, I was a 22-year-old student at Ohio University. In the middle of an extra year of academic study, after four years and graduation from the Columbus College of Art and Design, I learned that a students’ charter flight to Europe was available and I decided that my Schwinn Paramount and I would be aboard.

Inspired by my father’s passion for cycling (see “Six Days,” June 2014), I began riding the streets of Columbus and the back roads of central Ohio in the early 1960s. Adult cycling had yet to enter mainstream American life — bikes were for children. My father looked to Europe for inspiration, equipment, and news of the sport. He subscribed to half a dozen European cycling magazines with an emphasis on competitive cycling. Cycling Weekly, the most notable, came by sea mail from London, taking as long as three weeks to arrive so we read about the opening stages of the Tour de France after the race had already ended. The French Miroir du Cyclisme, a large-format tabloid full of pictures of racing stars, featured the big events. I could identify a score of riders by studying the photos. My favorites were Jacques Anquetil, the first rider to win the Tour de France five times, plus his archrival Raymond Poulidor; and, of course, Eddy Merckx, who won the World Road title in 1967. Dad also ordered bikes and accessories from European catalogs.

I learned about the British time trial traditions, the grandeur of the Tour de France, and the punishing cobbles of Paris–Roubaix. Captivated by the challenges of long days, rough roads, and brutal weather, I did my first 100-mile day in 1961.
at age 15. I rode solo because I didn't know any other local riders yet. In Europe the bicycle was understood and revered, and I wanted to connect with bicycling in ways that I could not in Columbus, Ohio.

But my resources were slim, and I had never been outside the U.S., not even to Canada. My only foreign language was high-school Spanish. With only the vaguest idea of where I would ride in Europe, I studied a map, but the scale was about 100 miles to the inch. Most troubling of all was that the flight nearly wiped out my funds. It wasn't a short trip either, I would travel on my own in a strange land for three-and-a-half months. When the plane landed in London, I had about $60. Nonetheless, I felt that same youthful confidence that I see in the 20-year-olds who roll up to the front door of Adventure Cycling.

Though my small stack of paper dollars was essential, I had an equally important document to conserve those dollars: the International Youth Hostel Handbook, Volume 1, which listed all of the hostels in Europe. A couple of years earlier, I had become active with the Columbus Council of American Youth Hostels, drawn to the group because of the canoeing, spelunking, hiking, and, of course, cycling trips they sponsored. I overnighted in an Ohio hostel during one of those outings. As an American Youth Hostel member, I had access to them all.

Upon landing in London, I first assembled my bike, then opened my IYH handbook and rode straight into the center of London to one of several hostels listed for that great city. I chose one in an old building busy with mostly young people checking in to spend the night. After handing over my AYH membership card, it was placed in a rack behind the counter. I paid the overnight fee for a bunk in a dorm room and was given a small chore to perform.

The hostel system perfectly suited my needs as I wandered across central Europe. Hostels were everywhere, spaced an easy day's ride apart, usually in town centers, and a simple breakfast was often included with a stay. Some larger hostels offered evening meals, and the staff almost always spoke English. I was never turned away — on a few occasions, I saw mattresses being laid out in hallways to accommodate overflow. Hostels offered men's and women's dorms, but the common rooms where fellow hostelers were hanging out were the greatest feature. Every evening you could expect to sit around a table with travelers from a couple dozen countries and exchange stories and information. No matter what direction I was headed, there would be someone going the opposite way who could offer tips and wonderful travel anecdotes.

The fact that the basic hostel customs and routines remained consistent from hostel to hostel, and even country to country, reassured a new traveler like me. But the hostels themselves were unique and surprising. Rarely were they built as hostels and the buildings varied in age and size from new and very large (600 beds in Munich, Germany) to old and tiny (a 20-bed hostel in rural Belgium). They could be exotic (a castle in Werfen, Austria) or stately (former manor houses in England).

Drawbacks discouraged some travelers — at 10:00 PM the doors were locked and everyone had to be checked out by 9:00 AM. Closed during the day, open in late afternoon, hostels served the active traveler — no sitting around all day. A hostel chore might include helping with kitchen cleanup or 20 minutes of sweeping out dorms. But these chores were one reason overnight fees could be so low, never more than a couple of dollars.

Within walking distance of my London hostel was the office of Cycling Weekly, my main source of racing news. What a thrill to walk up the stairs to that small office on Fleet Street! All the more special when the editor came outside to see my bike! After all, an American touring Europe on an American-made machine was something special. After a few days in London to check out the typical tourist attractions, I set out for the ferry terminal at Dover to
cross over to Belgium. I intended to get a glimpse of big-time bike racing.

While riding from hostel to hostel, I enjoyed the casual miles in between and found that the rolling hills and villages of Belgium were more appealing than the Tower of London or Buckingham Palace. At the same time, I lost any ambition for big-mileage days.

Every morning, I bought a baguette and Laughing Cow cheese wedges, slicing the bread lengthwise and spreading the soft cheese and strawberry jam. Cut in half, I had both breakfast and lunch. I had to be frugal, but I had a loose arrangement for funds to be sent from home. I would run out of cash before that was going to happen, however, and I made the mistake of converting all my dollars to British pounds, which I then converted to Belgian currency, losing a little to fees with each transaction.

Onward to France and, partly to save money and because it would be classically cool, I decided to spend a night in a haystack. I spotted a farmer struggling with a push cart in his field near a plump haystack so I hopped off my bike and gave him a hand. Although he spoke no English and I no French, he understood my hand gestures and gave permission to sleep in his haystack. But my single water bottle was empty, and I was parched. He took me to a large pipe sticking waist-high out of the ground. On the top was a metal plate that if depressed allowed a copious amount of water to flow out. I had a big drink and thanked the farmer as he strode off across the field. A cow ambled up behind me, walked to the pipe, pushed its muzzle down on the pipe, and had a big drink of her own. All night the cut ends of the straws prodded through my sleeping bag.

As my handful of Francs dwindled, I found myself in a walled town and checked into the local hostel. The small building had the standard kitchen for travelers’ use but with no provided meals. My daily bread, cheese, and jam were gone. The grocery stores were closed and a restaurant meal was beyond my means. It was the first time in my life that I had nothing to eat — a small insight into what millions of people deal with every day.

At the same French hostel, I learned a lesson in the art of travel. A teenage couple from Britain were asking a question about water. Frustrated that the young hostel warden could not understand English, the boy blurted out in a loud voice, “YOU KNOW, WATER, THE WET STUFF!” I was embarrassed by his arrogance and lack of respect for the local people and vowed to never behave in that manner.

With my money nearly gone, I took a more serious view of what might happen once I spent my last coin. Money from home might be a long time coming, and it was hard to rendezvous with wired funds when my cross-ocean communication was via air mail. But I had a backup plan.

The previous summer, I had attended the AYH leadership course in Cassopolis, Michigan, directed by Bill Nelson, who had developed the techniques for successful group bicycle travel. (Adventure Cycling’s current leadership courses are based on Nelson’s blueprint.) Another leader trainee won an assignment to lead a European trip, and I had her itinerary. So I pushed south and caught up with her group in Basel, Switzerland, just in the nick of time — I was down to a few coins

How to get the Perfect Bike

Start by asking the right questions:

What are your cycling dreams?
From club rides to global treks.

What are your fit and feel parameters?
Factor-in rider’s proportions. Every cyclist is unique.

What are your material preferences?
Steel, stainless steel with finish and components of your choosing.

Where to get the Perfect Bike

engineer, fellow cyclist

Call me, we’ll talk about your bike.
859-351-8443
www.alexmeade.com
in the center of my palm. The leader, Susan Osborne, decided that I could tag along with the group until my money arrived. Beyond the financial salvation, I enjoyed traveling with the group — all teens with little cycling experience.

The Alps were the first big mountains I had ever seen, much less cycled through. The novelty of summer snow on high peaks endlessly fascinated me.

Later in Austria, I learned that my hostel was not far from the Grossglockner, Austria’s tallest peak, and a road with dozens of switchbacks twisted and turned up and over a pass. I left most of my gear in the hostel, began the long ascent, and climbed into the clouds. Instead of stunning views, I peered through thick layers of gray mist. At a small restaurant on the pass, I had sausage and mustard and prepared for the descent back to the hostel but discovered my brake cables had frayed. The brakes worked only at about 20 percent efficiency even with the levers all the way to the handlebars. No spare cables, no tools, no bike shop, no brakes. Would I have to walk all the way down?

I pulled the levers tight against the bars and slowly began the descent, dragging my right shoe against the pavement. By varying the pressure of my shoe, I was able to control my speed. But the wet conditions worked to my advantage. If the road had been dry, the sole of my cheap sneaker would have been shredded long before I reached the valley bottom. As it was, my descent was very slow — but safe.

I traveled with the AYH group as far as Lucerne in central Switzerland. On a fixed itinerary, they took the train south to Italy, but gave me a little cash. I took up residence at the Lucerne hostel — money from home would come soon.

Although the money had been wired, it went to the wrong location, which meant more delay. The warden of the hostel kindly allowed me to linger if I agreed to pay my fees when the money arrived.

Then an extraordinary thing happened. I was sitting quietly in the hostel common room one evening when Charlie Pace walked in the door. A good friend, I knew Charlie from the Columbus AYH. I knew he had planned to go to Europe on a rail tour but had no idea which of the hundreds of hostels he would visit. I practically vaulted over tables and chairs to greet him. He lent me $20, and a couple of days later the long-awaited funds arrived. Back on the bike, I headed east to Austria and spent part of a day riding across the tiny country of Liechtenstein.

Cycling from country to country, I was routinely waved through border crossings. To get a passport stamp, I had to request it. Once as I pulled up to a border crossing on a mountain pass, a stern-looking guard strolled over to me without speaking. He leaned down and squeezed my calf, smiled, and gestured for me to continue. In America I had always been the odd character choosing to ride a bicycle, but in Europe I became a noble adventurer conquering the Alps.

Although I almost always stayed in hostels, there were exceptions. A small sleeping bag I carried proved handy on the night in the haystack, and once in the Alps at the side of the road. But I missed the curfew at one hostel and spent the night outside on the concrete in the doorway, my sleeping bag locked inside. In Belgium, Holland, and England, families invited me to stay in their homes. Those invitations came from hostelers I met in the common rooms. They assured me their parents would welcome a guest.
Traveling north into Germany, I visited the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau. Most of the buildings that had housed prisoners were gone with only concrete foundations remaining. The building containing cremation ovens, however, still stood. Though World War II had ended just 23 years before, I saw little evidence of the wholesale destruction that had taken place. But at a large concrete bunker on a back road at the Austrian/Italian border, I foolishly entered the pitch-dark interior. I crept forward and then suddenly one foot was dangling into a void. When my eyes adjusted, I could see that I had nearly plunged into a hole in the floor. I quickly withdrew, not knowing how long a fall I had just avoided.

North of Munich I had my second extraordinary encounter. I was on a long, straight climb when a touring cyclist zoomed into view from the opposite direction. He was taking full advantage of the downhill and must have been traveling 30 mph or more. I knew him! He and I had corresponded about linking up that summer, though nothing had come of it. But of the thousands of miles of road in Europe, he and I randomly ended up on the same road at the same time. He recognized me, but did not stop, nor did I find that strange. We simply nodded to each other, acknowledging what had occurred.

For a while, I reconnected with Susan's AYH group. One group member had dropped out due to illness, and I took his place, benefiting from some of his prepaid fees including a train ride from Germany into Holland, where the group would fly home.

On August 20, Czechoslovakia was invaded by 200,000 Soviet and Eastern Bloc troops, and I watched coverage of the invasion on a store window television. A Russian tank — on which a brave Czech protestor had chalked a swastika — rumbled into view. Dramatic history was being made, and I wasn't an ocean away or reading about it in a book.

And what of my quest to connect with big-time bike racing? I had planned my summer without an itinerary, with one exception — I had to see the Tour de France. As the dazzling peloton rushed by, I might see the stars I knew from the cycling magazines. I chose Brussels, Belgium, to make my interception. Arriving a day in advance, I followed the route signs and found the ideal spot from which to watch — a rock garden wall at the top of a hill. The climb would slow the riders, giving me more time to look for my favorites, and I'd be high enough to see over the crowd.

The next morning, I took up my position well before the riders would appear and to enjoy the caravan of promotional vehicles that preceded the race. Finally, the pack arrived, still intact. There they were! I spotted at least a half-dozen riders I recognized. Then, whoosh, they were gone.

I knew I could get a second dose of racing thrill the next day when the Tour headed east out to Roubaix after a morning team time trial in Brussels. I rose early to pick another vantage point, this time in the countryside. The streets were quiet with only the occasional car. Then up ahead on the wide boulevard, I saw a splash of color in front of a small, gray hotel where a cluster of racing bikes leaned against the building. The bikes belonged to one of the Tour de France teams. Here was my chance to get up close to those wonderful machines. I dismounted and walked over to the bikes. On the deserted road, it was just me and a couple of disinterested mechanics who hardly looked up. What a treat!

Then the team emerged from the hotel — the French A team. Instantly I recognized Raymond Poulidor, Jean Stablinski, and Jean Jourden. They picked their bikes out of the stack and began their ride to the start of the team time trial. Seeing another opportunity, I quickly hopped on my Paramount and joined them. Riding between Poulidor and Stablinski, I tried to express my excitement — about how bike racing is not appreciated in America and what an honor it was to ride with them. They probably didn't understand a word of English; they simply ignored me and, after a mile or so, slowly pulled away.

It was as if a French boy obsessed with baseball had come to America in 1968 to see a game in Yankee Stadium and ended up sitting in the dugout next to Mickey Mantle. That's how I felt.

While the team time trial was underway, I rode out of Brussels to follow my original plan to watch the race in the countryside. I got to watch the whole show again in the afternoon. After the last following vehicle had passed, I bicycled the route. Down the road, a couple of old men were sitting in their lawn chairs and cheered me on as if I were part of the race. It was a great joke that all three of us enjoyed.

My quest was over and I could go
home fulfilled, but I would have one more unexpected connection with bicycle-racing greatness. I was in the city of Antwerp in the center of bicycle-racing-crazy Belgium, where I learned that the following day there was to be a criterium. The one-day race would be run on a big loop with riders streaming straight through the center of town every 10 minutes or so. With rounded paving stones and streetcar tracks running down its length, it was a course that required top bicycle-handling skills.

Some of the same stars I had seen in the Tour de France were there — 60 or more riders. After the starting gun sounded, the crowd that had assembled to watch quickly dispersed and the street returned to the normal activities of a weekday afternoon.

After 10 minutes, spectators began to appear again at first by the dozens, then by the hundreds. The pack swept down the street, and again the crowd disappeared. With every circuit, the crowd ebbed and flowed like the tide. Sometimes spectators stepped off the curb, allowing riders only a narrow channel to follow down the center of the cobbled street.

Unlike the Tour de France, the criterium gave me multiple opportunities to spot familiar riders. And though I had missed him in the Tour, I finally spotted Eddy Merckx in his distinctive white rainbow-striped world championship jersey. He earned the right to wear the jersey when he won the world road title the year before in Montréal.

Edward Sels won the criterium with most of the pack only seconds behind. There was lots of confusion and milling about as the riders dismounted and the crowd surged forward. I was standing shot before he disappeared.

As part of my obsession with bicycle racing, I had chosen to do my 10-week tour of Europe on tires designed for racing called sew-ups or tubulars. Lightweight, rock-hard when fully pressurized, and glued to the rim, they could be rolled into a bundle and strapped beneath the saddle. Fixing a flat was an arduous task, and it was wise to carry a spare ready to go so the punctured tire could be fixed in the evening. To fix a flat, you had to first find the puncture, which required some guesswork because the tube is entirely encased in the tire. You then cut the stitching (I carried a razor blade) to open the tire casing and pull out the tube to patch the puncture. Now the hard part — with a large needle and a heavy thread, the casing had to be sewn shut. Remounting the tire almost always meant fresh glue so the tire wouldn’t roll off the rim.
On the last day of my tour, I rode toward the Larcombe family home. I had met the teenaged Larcombe brothers in a hostel, and they encouraged me to visit. Their home was close to my departure airport in London so it was an attractive offer. Just two or three miles from the Larcomes, I was ignoring the light rain. But wet, gritty roads are hard on sew-ups.

A puncture! My spare was not patched, so I had to patch there at the edge of the road in the drizzle. I peeled the tire off the rim, and the awful glue covered my fingers. I did my best to determine the spot to cut the stitching—not too deep or there would be an unpatchable slit in the tube. I fumbled and sliced a finger. Now I had blood mixed with the glue on my rain-wet hands. Giving up, I put the unpatched tire back on the rim, wiped off my hands on the grass, and rode the last miles of my European tour on a flat tire. I never rode sew-ups again.

When I arrived at the Larcomes’ house, I was feeling pretty low. Riding with a flat tire in the rain was not the way I wanted to end my summer journey. But soon I forgot my travails. The Larcombes lived in a cottage attached to a magnificent house that was listed in the 1086 Domesday Book. The Larcombe brothers introduced me to their parents and younger siblings. I had arrived in time for dinner and enjoyed a wonderful meal, including Yorkshire pudding for dessert. A tour of the medieval house followed, and, in addition to the antiques that furnished the house, I was surprised to see a miniature carriage that had belonged to General Tom Thumb—made famous by P.T. Barnum. In the morning, after a good night’s sleep, Mrs. Larcombe drove me to the airport in the family van for the flight back to the U.S.

Ironically, although I had gone to Europe on a bike-racing quest, I came home a bicycle tourist. Slowly meandering across the European countryside had become more fulfilling than riding big miles or getting somewhere first. I had traded achievement for adventure. Instead of statistics, I brought home memories.

Greg Siple is the cofounder and longtime Art Director of Adventure Cycling Association. He has been a bicycle commuter since 1957. In 1986, he and his wife June produced The Mighty TOSRV, A 25-Year Illustrated History of the Tour of the Scioto River Valley.
GET LOST WHERE YOU WANT TO

GET FOUND WHEN YOU NEED TO

100% SATELLITE TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE

Using our award-winning, 100% satellite technology, you can always be prepared for the unexpected.

SPOT GEN3, global satellite GPS messenger, lets family and friends know you're OK or sends emergency responders your GPS location when you are off-the-grid, all at the push of a button. SPOT TRACE, the affordable theft-alert tracking and asset recovery device, is lightweight, discreet and a no-brainer to track your boat and other valuables from your smartphone via Google Maps™.

To learn more, visit FindMeSPOT.com/Cyclist
Snowdrifts and sandbags wrap prefab huts at the head of the pass. Two soldiers step out onto the pitted concrete to halt us, the light oil on their Kalashnikovs glinting in rare mountain sun. An oil drum set out of the wind emits a dull glow and occasional pop. The uniformed boys behind the sandbags keep looking to the fire, longing to return to warmth. A chipped thermos of black tea is visible through the rebar-clad window of the nearest hut. It sits on a turquoise table, steam wafting into union with the cold draft from the open door. We have never been here, but this pass, like those that came before and those that will follow, is familiar.

Our journey is a story of ascension along a thin line, bounding across the basins and mountain ranges of Central Asia. Extremes dominate: we lay down in green orchards near Tashkent, then crossed the snowline in the morning and the last turn for Angren in the afternoon. We have been climbing ever since — a run anchored on one end by this high point, and on its arc showcasing the ecosystems that shift with altitude.

Passes come in succession and mark our story’s chapters. Our travel, powered by noodles, apricots, and Snickers — and by human stubbornness — describes the true shape of the land. You feel each undulation of the plain and understand the shape of hills and the cruelty of stacked, barren ranges. Gaps appear, paths are run through, and trails are haphazardly upgraded from horse tracks to highway. These are the punctuation points of our story, sketched in the terrain.

This point is Kamchik Pass. Ten years ago, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan fighters descended from the adjacent peaks and closed the pass, cutting off all roads to the valley beyond. Kyrgyzstan is eight kilometers away, Tajikistan 20, and this narrow corridor, often closed from heavy snow, provides the only access to the eight million Uzbekistan citizens who live beyond. Embarrassed by the attack, the government has since fortified the road where it plunges into the mountain.

The soldiers are familiar. Up close, after making eye contact, you realize they are very young. They look nervous with a gun in their hands. They do not see cyclists coming this way very often, especially not in winter. But smiles come easily.

As they check our Final Mile View from the top
passports and rummage with interest in our panniers, we ask if they are Uzbek, a naïve question as we try to piece together the ethnic puzzle of Central Asia. “Nyet. Uzbekistani,” they answer. They are trans-ethnic, nationalist, not Uzbek or Tajik or Turkic, but simply citizen soldiers of Uzbekistan.

The pass is the cyclist’s summit, and it informs our journey. We are not seeking to stand atop peaks but are content to travel among the high places of the world. The cyclist follows the land’s contours. These moments stretch across a continent in the ranges radiating north from various collisions and mark our progress. Alps, Carpathian, Pontic, Caucasus, Tien Shan, Altai — the tentpoles of the world.

When the Bolsheviks reclaimed Turkestan after the revolution, they split the region into separate republics to dampen pan-Turkic sentiment. Each Soviet Socialist Republic was built around an ethnicity; Turcoman, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Tajik. Internal borders were fluid, and people paid little attention to the new administrative units or Soviet-prescribed identities. Stalin, when he was Commissar of Nationalities, dreamed up the idea of dividing conquered peoples to better integrate them into the whole. When the USSR was dissolved, the jigsaw borders closed and families were separated by the now-piercing imaginary lines, fortified in bureaucracy. Today, 2,267-meter Kamchik Pass is the only way to reach the Ferghana Valley from the capital without going through Tajikistan.

That morning, we wake on hard, dusty boards decorated with straw. A fire crackles in a scrap-welded stove, and the men file in for breakfast. Atash has been stepping over us since 4:00 AM, gathering vegetables and butter from the larder we slept in. This crew lives in a crumbling barracks below the pass and spends the day in orange vests shoveling gravel into yawning potholes. They sit in silence, cutting book-thick slices from a three-kilo block of butter and passing them into stubbled mouths with crusty bread and Nescafé. The night before, they had urged us to stay with them, saying the snow would only get worse as we moved higher and evening set in, yet somehow they continued shoveling into the swirling twilight. We sit on cots around a rippling hot woodstove looking at cell phone pictures of wives, children, and parents. I show them a photo of my partner, who they assure me must be Tajik, despite a last name like O’Neil.

They live on the pass for weeks at a time and feel its moods. We pass through, hurtling past with dreams of overheated Intourist hotels, concrete and grim, that meet immediate needs but fade quickly. The rarified air and cold sunshine of a pass in winter will remain when much else withdraws into the landscape.

On the far side of the tunnel, white mountains stack one upon the next to the horizon and we ride down the canyon to the fertile plains of the Ferghana Valley. To our right, a tiny sliver of Tajik territory comes into view, walled against the Uzbek land that completely surrounds it. The enclave of Sarvak holds only 150 people, and there are many like it. As chai, naan, and shashlyk populate bright geometric tables from Tashkent to Namangan, we are told again and again, “This is how it is.”

Out of the mountains, bazaars advertising Snickers bars begin to populate the crossroads, and heavy irrigation appears in the gorgeous ripple of moving water. Local legend places the first cultivation of apples, apricots, and almonds here in the valley, and it was the mythical stories of the horses of the Ferghana that first drew the Chinese empire out of its cradle. We feel as if we are entering another country, greener and nestled between the sharp ranges of the Tien Shan and Pamir-Alai. Behind us, far up among the peaks, we can see the high tide traces of the great Russian and Soviet empires, and our story...
ADVENTURE CYCLIST’S SEVENTH ANNUAL
BICYCLE TRAVEL PHOTO CONTEST

How far can you travel without leaving your desk? If you’re tasked with reviewing the 450-plus images in the Adventure Cyclist photo contest — as a lucky few staffers here are — you can go around the world from your office chair. Our top three are published here for your enjoyment, but this year’s entries were the strongest yet and the “best” photos go far beyond the podium shots. What we learned is that the great mountain ranges of Asia and South America provide both inspiration and an unmissable backdrop; the salt flats of Bolivia might be virtually uninhabited but are certainly popular with bicycle travelers; and that whether on a traditional bike, a tandem, a recumbent, or even a unicycle, there’s no better way to view this wide world than awheel. To submit your best shot in next year’s contest, visit adventurecycling.org/photocontest.

FIRST PLACE: SUNRISE IN CAPPADOCIA
(above) SUSANNE VAN AARDENNE & MARTIN LOHMANN MÖLLER – This was the most magical morning four months into our current 21-month journey. We were filled with surprise when we were awoken at 5:00 AM by the sound of hot air balloon burners. See more at TwistingSpokes.com.

SECOND PLACE: BOLIVIA UYUNI
(top right) PAOLA OJEDA – My husband Ed took this picture of me. We were so happy to have reached the Salar, it was very difficult to get to this place. That night, there was a huge storm, we didn’t know if we were going to be able to cross, but when we got there, we saw the most amazing natural phenomenon — the Salar was a perfect mirror, the sky was amazing, and the reflection out of this world ... like riding in the sky.

THIRD PLACE: BUSH CAMPING
(bottom right) NIKO KROEGER – Camping somewhere along the Oodnadatta Track in South Australia during an 18-month tandem ride through South America, China, Australia, and beyond.
Many people like the idea of traveling by bicycle but don’t know how to get started. While experienced riders know the simplicity of bike travel is one of its great joys, to a curious newcomer the questions and choices can be overwhelming. Below we answer some of the common questions that beginning bicycle travelers often ask and provide some tips to demystify cycling.

WHO TRAVELS BY BIKE?

Traveling by bike appeals to a broad spectrum of people, and there are many ways to do it. It can be done individually, with friends, or with a commercial tour operator. People of all ages, backgrounds, and regions of the world choose the bicycle as their favorite means of travel. Adults in their 70s and children in their teens (and younger!) have ridden all the way across America. Bicycle travel is attractive for many reasons: it’s an exciting challenge that allows us to explore new landscapes and cultures, build physical fitness, and experience the joy of breathing fresh air and meeting new people every day.

AM I IN GOOD ENOUGH SHAPE?

The good news is that you don’t need to be a super athlete to enjoy cycling. However, you’ll want to spend some time training on a bike before your trip. The best thing to do is to be realistic about what you can do and create achievable goals. Then, work your strength up to riding the same daily distances you plan to cover while carrying the same gear you plan to travel with. You’re physically ready if you can do back-to-back day rides that are as long or longer than you are planning for your tour and feel like you could ride again on the third day.

One of the pleasures of bike travel is that you’ll be riding into progressively better and better shape as you go. For more tips on physical preparation, see “Getting in Shape for Touring” in the online How To Department at adventurecycling.org/howto.

HOW FAR CAN I RIDE IN A DAY?

This varies depending on your overall fitness, your personal goals, the style of touring you choose, and the terrain. Here are some tips to plan by. With a bit of bicycle-specific training, an average physically fit adult carrying less than 20 pounds of additional gear on their bike can expect to travel at an average pace of 65 miles per day on paved roads and still have time to stop and smell plenty of roses. With a load of gear totaling 20 to 45 pounds, the average pace to plan for should be lowered to 55 miles per day. If the terrain is particularly flat or mountainous, the average will increase or decrease accordingly (for mountain bike travel, these distances can be cut in half, or more, depending on the terrain).

Experienced bicycle travelers can ride farther, but for most people, planning to exceed these averages has a tendency to increase the physical challenge and decrease the enjoyment. We recommend that you plan for at least one rest day out of 10 and carry no more than 45 pounds of gear — and a lot less if you can. Always plan time in your day and days off during your trip for unexpected challenges and good opportunities.

WHAT KIND OF BIKE SHOULD I USE?

Many types of bicycles can be used for bike travel. Although some bikes are specifically designed for touring, most quality bicycles can be customized for touring use, with the exception of road racing bikes, as they emphasize weight savings and quick handling over durability and comfort. (Folks do it, but we don’t recommend it for reliability reasons.) Important characteristics of an appropriate bike are durability, a comfortable riding position, and low gears for climbing hills. The ability to mount racks, fenders, and wide tires (32 millimeters or greater) is also a plus. Experienced bicycle travelers have their preferences, but there is no single style of bicycle that is an overwhelming favorite. Ultimately, your choice is based on personal preference and the type of touring you want to do (paved roads vs. dirt roads/trails, amount of gear to carry, etc.). To read more on how to select a proper bike for touring, visit adventurecycling.org/buyersguide.
HOW DO I DECIDE WHERE TO RIDE?
Besides the obvious — scenery, history, and any other personal interests you have — look for low-traffic routes and/or roads with good shoulders. Keep in mind that many of the places you'd like to see by bicycle, such as national parks, can be choked with traffic and undesirable for cycling. Mountain bikers usually look for routes with little or no motorized traffic and as little pavement as possible. The biggest question they need to answer is usually: can all of the route be ridden with a loaded bike or trailer? Many such routes — nearly 47,000 miles worth on both road and dirt — are mapped on the Adventure Cycling Route Network.

HOW DO I CARRY MY STUFF?
The most common methods of carrying gear are panniers and trailers, though “bikepacking”-style frame bags are also becoming popular. Panniers are luggage that attach to your bicycle on racks that sit over or next to the wheels. Ortlieb and Arkel are two top-quality brands. Quality racks are available to fit nearly every bicycle. Trailers come in many varieties, usually with one or two wheels. Most are easy to attach and fit on almost any bicycle. The BOB Yak/Ibex and Burley Nomad are both excellent choices. Bikepacking bags are soft-sided luggage that straps into the triangle of your frame, onto handlebars or attached to other tubes. Revelate Designs is a leading manufacturer.

Panniers excel on paved road riding and single-wheel trailers are at their best on rough, unpaved terrain, but both can work well for nearly all types of touring. Soft bags can be used alone or integrated into hybrid systems.

WHERE DO I STAY AT NIGHT?
First decide if you want to camp (inexpensive, independent, closer to nature) or stay indoors (comfortable, less gear to carry). Tourism agencies, chambers of commerce, convention and visitors’ associations, and many internet resources list information about motels, campgrounds, B&Bs, and other lodging. Many maps and guides, including Adventure Cycling maps, list local options.

IS IT SAFE TO TRAVEL ALONE?
Yes. Bicycle riders are typically perceived to be very non-threatening and are often treated warmly by strangers, especially during emergencies. The chances of something bad happening to you during a bicycle tour are no different than they are in your everyday life.

HOW MUCH DOES BIKE TOURING COST?
The cheapest way to go is to camp and cook your own meals. Assuming you have all the necessary gear before you leave, and you are touring in America, a budget of $35 a day should be enough to pay for camping fees and groceries and still stash a bit away for unforeseen expenses like repairs or gear replacement. Going commando-style, it’s possible to travel on $10 a day or less. For those with luxury in mind, well, the sky (and your bank account) is the limit. The beauty of traveling by bike is that it can be as comfortable or as adventurous as you want it to be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT LIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modify the following list depending on your personal needs and past experiences. Keep in mind that you generally won’t need any more gear for a 90-day tour than for a seven-day tour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ON-THE-BIKE CLOTHING
- Cycling helmet
- Touring shoes — good for walking as well as riding, i.e. some flex in the sole
- Cycling gloves
- Cycling shorts
- Socks — wool or synthetic (1 to 3 pairs)
- Leg warmers or tights for riding (rain pants can substitute)
- Short-sleeved shirts (1 or 2)
- Light, long-sleeved shirt for layering and sun protection
- Rain gear, jacket, and pants (or poncho)

### OFF-THE-BIKE CLOTHING
- Comfortable shorts
- Comfortable pants (zip-off legs or rain pants could substitute)
- Underwear (1 to 2 pairs)
- Sandals, flip-flops, or lightweight shoes
- Wool or fleece hat
- Wool or fleece gloves
- Lightweight down jacket (or wool/fleece sweater)

### MISCELLANEOUS
- Toiletries
- Pocket knife or Leatherman (pliers and other tools are handy)
- Water-carrying bladders or containers — at least 1 U.S. gallon capacity
- Basic first-aid kit with emergency numbers
- Sunglasses
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Sunblock

### TOOLS & SPARE PARTS
- Tire levers/patch kit
- Spare tube (and tire, depending on the trip)
- Mini-pump
- Electrical tape
- Spoke wrench
- Spare spokes sized for your bike’s wheels or Fiberfix spoke
- Allen wrenches
- Screwdriver
- Chain tool (or substitute a good multi-tool for this, allen wrenches, and screwdrivers)

### CAMPING
- Sleeping bag (down bags are warmer, weigh less, and pack smaller, but are useless if wet. Synthetic bags are heavier and bulkier, but are less expensive for comparable warmth and will keep you warm when wet)
- Sleeping pad (closed-cell foam pads work well and are light, but self-inflating pads are more comfortable and packable)
- Tent (lightweight, with rain fly and vestibules)
- Ground cloth (this will extend the life of your tent)
- Personal eating utensils (fork, spoon, cup, bowl)
- Stove (a small backpacking stove with fuel)
- Cooking equipment (small pots and/or pans — backpacking equipment works best)

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Visit adventurecycling.org/packing

BRENDAN LEONARD
35
WELCOME TO RIVENDELL. Please set your watch back to ... oh, heck, just throw that tiresome old ticker away and let’s ride bikes!

Time seems to stand still at Rivendell Bicycle Works. Want the latest and greatest? Carbon framesets, disc brakes, electronic shifting? You are cordially invited to shop elsewhere.

But if you seek comfortable, durable steel with sensible, reliable components, why, you’ve come to the right shop. Grant Peterson and his woolly elves will see you now.

A quick disclosure: I’ve done a little business with Rivendell over the years. Odd bits of this, that, and the other; hard-to-find widgets, doodads, and dinguses to keep my aging fleet in fighting trim. But I’d never actual ridden a Rivendell bike.

Right from the get-go, ours was a formal introduction. Most media/product managers simply ask, “What size ya ride?” and send that size bike along, or the closest thing to it. But Grant asked for my height, weight, saddle height, and pubic-bone height, and he will ask you for these things too.

Crunching the numbers spat out a 58cm Joe, two centimeters larger than my usual size. I feared the bike would be too tall — maybe it was that double top tube (not pictured, only included on 58cm and larger models) — and when I actually saw it at The Bike Coop in Albuquerque I was certain it was.

But whaddaya know? It wasn’t. And
Bottom bracket: Shimano UN-55 sealed, 110mm
Cassette: Shimano 9-speed, 12–36T
Brake levers: Tektro ML520RS
Shift levers: SunRace non-indexed thumb shifters
Front derailleur: Shimano Claris
Rear derailleur: Shimano Deore
Brakes: Tektro V-brakes
Stem: Ritchey WCS C220
Handlebar/Quill Stem: Rivendell’s Nitto Choco-Moose, 54.5cm at the grips (center to center), effective extension 12cm
Seatpost: Kalloy SP248, 26.8mm
Grips: Widek
Saddle: Anonymous Taiwanese model, adjustable to accommodate changes in tire size
Pedals: VP-539 flat

while I wouldn’t care to perform an abrupt straddle-the-top-tube(s) dismount on a technical stretch of singletrack, let us remember: the Joe is not a mountain bike.

What it is, is comfortable. Versatile. Resilient. Elegant. Attach a medium Nitto Campee rear rack to the hourglass-shaped mounts just up the seatstays from the dropout(s) and you can carry 44 pounds of must-haves on your ride while leaving the dropout eyelets free for the fenders of your choice, even while running tires as broad as 50mm. I stuck to loads of 25 pounds or less and did without the fenders, which can be a nuisance off road.

The bolts atop the ornate fork crown will accept a Tubus rear rack and some Nitto racks. Rivendell recommends its Nitto Mark’s M1 rack, which lets you carry an additional 4.4 pounds up front.

Also up front: Rivendell’s Choco-Moose, a swoopy stem-handlebar hybrid that’s sort of the love child of Rivendell’s Bullmoose and Albatross bars. The combination of two top tubes and these butched-up Pee-Wee Herman bars, which fairly beg for streamers, may have you wondering why Rivendell didn’t go full ballooner, maybe throw in a Schwinn Slimline tank and a deck of playing cards for the spokes.

But as it turns out, the twin top tubes stiffen the lugged frame and the Choco-Moose straightens your spine, and before long you’re wondering why you ever accepted any other kind of bar into your life. Grip ’em at the grips or at the bends it’s all good. I spent a lot of time on the bends, especially at cruising speed.

The 700c x 45mm Kenda Kwick Bitumen tires weren’t quite up to our sandy singletrack — Rivendell’s Will Keating says he likes the Schwalbe Smart Sam for riding off road — but the rest of the Joe did just fine. The Tektro V-brakes smoothly slowed and stopped me without incident as conditions dictated, and despite the long wheelbase and broad bar I even cleaned a cramped S-shaped gate while exiting the trailhead.

And I looked good doing it, too, because the Joe Appaloosa is very much a horse of a different color on the trails in these parts.

Frankly, I had been reluctant to take such a handsome bike off pavement — Rivendell pays at least as much attention to form as it does to function — but the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42
RACKS FOR ALL

Old Man Mountain takes on the confusion surrounding racks in the bike industry and makes it possible for anyone to take their favorite bike on the next great adventure.

More from Old Man Mountain
Photographer Jeff Clark spent an afternoon in Old Man Mountain’s unique shop space. See more of his images at adventurecycling.org/oldmanmountaingallery.
Channing Hammond of Old Man Mountain racks grew up working in his parents’ metal fabrication shop in Santa Barbara, where they catered to the advanced engineering companies surrounding the aerospace industry in Southern California. “They made a lot of different stuff,” Hammond recalled. “There are interesting industries here in Santa Barbara, such as radar development. They worked for a bunch of companies over the years. It’s an R&D area.”

As a boy, Hammond did his own R&D in the shop. “I love aluminum and I’ve loved working with my hands since I was young, going with my father down to the shop, seeing how things were built, learning how to weld when I wanted a mini-bike,” he said.

Hammond’s other love as a young man — he’s over 40 now — was riding bikes in the mountains surrounding Santa Barbara. “I’ve been a mountain biker since I was a young kid,” he said. “We’ve got a great backcountry area behind Santa Barbara I was fortunate to be introduced to. One of the employees who worked in the metal shop took me mountain-bike camping. He was an early mountain biker.”

Hammond decided then and there he wanted to be involved in the bike business. He worked in a bike shop in Goleta, about five miles north of Santa Barbara, moving on to Jandd Mountaineering, then based in Santa Barbara, making packs and panniers (Jandd has since moved to San Diego).

Jandd owner Dave Sisson wanted to have a rack to sell with his panniers. Hammond took his idea to Sisson, but Sisson balked. “He was worried about liability with the quick-release skewers, so I decided to go on my own,” Hammond said.

To set up his factory, Hammond found a space in an industrial park in Santa Barbara and brought in 40-foot shipping containers he turned into a long, but narrow shop — perfect for making racks, but not much else. Hammond’s space is only 7.5 feet wide.

“Such’s worked very well for producing a small product,” he said. “Early on, I tried to be a job shop as well, welding projects to supplement the rack business. I quickly found out that whatever I was doing was too big for the shop. The shop has been good to keep me focused on making racks.”

His unique shop space also kept Hammond out of the bike trailer business. “Years ago, I thought maybe I should make a trailer like the BOB, which seems to be my biggest competitor,” Hammond said. “But if we tried to make hundreds of trailers out of our little shop space it would not be easy, relative to making racks. We can put 50 racks in a bin and easily powder coat them. Trailer parts would have been a problem.”

Thank you, Adventure Cycling

Hammond credits the Adventure Cycling Association for giving Old Man Mountain an early, much-needed boost. “If it wasn’t for Adventure Cycling, I wouldn’t still be here,” he said.

Hammond met Adventure Cycling Sales and Marketing Director Teri Maloughney at the Interbike trade show in Anaheim in 1996. “We had been in business for six weeks,” Hammond remembered. “We basically were at Interbike with prototypes. We had no idea what we were doing but we got a booth and we went there to see what kind of business we could drum up.”

In a stroke of good fortune, or perhaps fate, Adventure Cycling had just finished mapping the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route from Canada to Mexico that year, an off-road odyssey that cried out for a suspended mountain bike equipped with racks. Hammond, of course, had just the thing for the job. “It was a perfect synergy,” Hammond said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 41
Fran Stagg

BY APRIL CYPHER

Lifelong cyclist finds happiness on the road

Inspired by an article in BikeReport (the precursor to Adventure Cyclist), Fran Stagg embarked on her first long-distance bike ride — Wisconsin’s Elroy-Sparta Trail — but a few miles in she found herself in the dark at the mouth of a tunnel, the sound of running water all around her. “I hadn’t remembered reading anything about bringing lights,” Fran said. Determined to continue, she inched her way along. “That first tunnel was nearly a mile long. I kept thinking ‘I’m going to take another step and drown.’” When she rounded the tunnel’s final corner, she was greeted not by the sun but by the bright flashlight beams of a Boy Scout troop.

Fran learned early on how to deal with less-than–ideal cycling conditions while growing up in rural Price, Utah. Without a bike of her own, she resorted to borrowing her older brother’s. “I’m really short,” she said. “I used a sawhorse to get on the bike.” Once on the bike, she could reach the pedals, but getting off proved more problematic. “I’d get both feet on one side, jump off, and let the bike go crashing.” The following Christmas, a shiny new girl’s Schwinn was under the tree. “My brother had some influence in my getting a bike. I was trashing his.”

Fran served 24 years in the Navy, a career she described by saying, “My first 10 years I was told what to do; for the next 14 I did the telling.” Afterward, she started a civilian career as an accountant and began bike touring around the same time. For her first tour, Fran cycled for a week around Washington’s San Juan Islands. She joined Salt Lake City’s Bonneville Cycling Club and served as treasurer until the time commitment began cutting into her riding. At 63, she was the oldest woman in a group of 30 who rode from Los Angeles to Boston. “Cycling has made me more confident. Before that cross-country tour, I was positive I couldn’t climb mountains, but I did. You do things you didn’t think you could do.”

When two riders voiced apprehension about the next day’s mileage during a recent Adventure Cycling Great Lakes tour, Fran coached them through it. For her the best part of bike touring is “meeting new people and proving what you can do if you put your mind to it.” In 2013, Fran decided to become a Life Member and thus solved the hassle of renewing her membership every year. She recently decided to further support to the organization’s mission by putting Adventure Cycling in her will. “I wanted to leave my money to those who make me the happiest. That’s Adventure Cycling.”

Legacy Society Profile

A lifetime of benefits and long-term support for bicycle travel.

Adventure Cycling’s Legacy Society is a group of bike-travel enthusiasts who have committed to ensuring a rich and lasting future for bike travel.

If you would like to become a part of the legacy of inspiring and empowering people to travel by bicycle, consider making Adventure Cycling a beneficiary in your will or estate plans. Your gift will help build a permanent source of support that will keep Adventure Cycling’s mission alive and strong into the future.

If you have already included Adventure Cycling in your will or other estate plans, please let us know so that we can thank you. If you would like more information, please contact Annette Stahelin at astahelin@adventurecycling.org or call at 406.532.2775.
said. “Adventure Cycling was able to offer an off-road rack. It was a great meeting, and very fortunate for me to meet Teri and have that exposure so early on with Adventure Cycling.”

New axles, no standardization

Today, faced with a fast-changing bike business, Hammond has all-new challenges to solve. Now, in addition to suspension, there are disc brakes — eliminating the cantilever bosses that Hammond originally used to mount his suspension-bike racks — and the oversized thru-axles without quick-release skewers, his other original mounting point.

Other, bigger players in the bike industry followed Hammond’s lead making skewer-mounted racks, but those may now become obsolete, given recent developments.

“Bikes keep changing,” Hammond said. “I’ve always felt the only way for me to exist is to continue to evolve with bikes. We’re really at the forefront of getting racks onto all these new bikes with varying front and rear axles.”

The oversized thru-axles, built for strength, are perhaps the most difficult challenge Hammond has faced in his nearly 20 years of business, because — not surprising for the bike industry — standardization is not high on anyone’s list.

“It’s very challenging for us,” Hammond said. “We used to be able to have a rack and say, ‘Hey, this rack will work if you have quick-release skewers and cantilever bosses, or clamps for the upper stays if you don’t.’ But nowadays, the suspensions are changing so fast and the axles are so diverse we’re working really hard to keep up.”

What Hammond has come up with is an approach similar to what Yakima and others do for roof racks mounted to cars and trucks by using a universal rack frame that takes different “fit kits” that bolt to the bottom of his racks to allow you to mount it on whatever axle design and brake setup you happen to have. It’s his way to adapt to the myriad of different mounting situations.

“It’s not a one-piece rack,” Hammond said. “It’s really a system where we mix and match parts in order to get the best fit we can for the bicycle. I’m really focused on fit. I think it’s really important.”

Eyelets, anyone?

Hammond believes the bike industry has done itself a disservice by assuming people don’t want to take anything with them on their high-end bikes.

“Often times these bicycles people want to tour on are nice, expensive bikes, and manufacturers didn’t put any eyelets or options for racks, kind of like myself when I got my first suspension bike,” Hammond said.

In fact, says Hammond, people who own really nice bikes do want to take tours, or at least weekend excursions, and that’s where Old Man Mountain comes in. John Schubert, former technical editor for Adventure Cyclist, recognized that years ago when he wrote about Old Man Mountain, according to Hammond.

“John gave us a great compliment,” he said. “He said, ‘a company like Old Man Mountain shouldn’t have to exist, but we’re lucky it does.’ It’s true. We’re solving a problem for people that love their bikes and want to tour and want to camp. There really is no other good option.”

Despite the fact that its shortsightedness benefits him directly, Hammond wishes the bike industry would get its act together.

“I want to see the bicycle and its use grow in our country more and get away from the car,” Hammond said. “I love commuting to work on my bike. I think as an industry we’re not doing ourselves any favors. If the manufacturers made it easy to put racks on every bike, I would be happy to do something else for a living.”

In the meantime, Hammond is updating his website to reflect his new “fit kit” approach to Old Man Mountain racks.

“It’s challenging to disseminate all the information about how to fit racks on different bikes,” he said. “If we can get a handle on having lists of different bikes and diagrams that help people understand it’s now a rack system, we’re going to have a great future.”

Hammond may be frustrated by the bike industry’s discombobulated approach to rack-mounting, but he never forgets what his efforts mean out on the open road, which is what really counts, after all.

“I don’t think I realized when I started, how fulfilling it would be to hear about great adventures I was able to make possible because people got to take the bikes they wanted and go on these great trips,” Hammond said. “It makes me feel great. I’m always getting emails and pictures from people in amazing places, who say, ‘Thank you so much for helping make this a reality. That’s hugely satisfying to me.’”

Dan D’Ambrosio is a contributing writer for Adventure Cyclist.
handout that comes with the Joe advises owners to “think of each [paint] chip as your bike writing its own history. Your bike, like Levon, wears its war wounds like a crown!”

Other mental adjustments were required as well. The drivetrain is mostly familiar — Shimano Deore rear derailleur, Shimano Claris front derailleur, Shimano cassette, KMC chain — but as you move forward you’ll notice some interesting departures from the norm.

First, there’s the 173mm Silver triple crankset, with 43/35/24 rings. Some of those numbers may throw you, but it was rock solid and a fine match with the nine-speed, 12–36T cassette; if you can’t climb in a 19-inch low gear, it’s time to pull on your walking shoes.

Second, there are the SunRace thumb shifters. Rivendell likes thumb shifters, and so do I, but these non-indexed thumbies took a little getting used to. While they click, a click does not a gear change make. I botched a few shifts while settling in, and finding oneself clattering around between cogs is more noticeable when riding flat pedals in street shoes.

Flat pedals? Street shoes? Yep. Did I mention that Joe is a Rivendell? No need to squeeze into your Special Suit for a ride (though of course I did, eventually, being a creature of habit).

Indeed, the fourth recommendation in Rivendell’s “Tips for Happy Riding” reads: “At least one ride in 10, go without your sunglasses and gloves. Sometime next month, put some double-sided cheap-style pedals on a good bike and ride in non-cycling garb. It works shockingly well, and sends a good message to would-be bicycle riders.”

Rivendell’s been sending good messages like that since 1994, and the Joe Appaloosa is just their latest friendly tug on your jersey sleeve. If the hand lingers a bit, no sweat, it’s just gauging the quality of your wool.

You are wearing wool, aren’t you? 😊

Patrick O’Grady has written and cartooned about cycling since 1989 for VeloNews, Bicycle Retailer & Industry News, and a variety of other publications. To read more from Patrick, visit maddogmedia.com.
Travels with Trickey, Stink & Beef

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG SIPLE STORY BY GAGE POORE

Lizzy Trickey and Haley Sue “Stink” Winkelman, are “just a couple of gals who pretty much just love riding bicycles,” as they put it. When they visited Adventure Cycling headquarters in May 2015, they were on the beginning of a 9,500-mile trip on a route that included all lower 48 states. Their central goal was to raise awareness and money for Watsi.org — a website where 100 percent of donations go to people in need of medical services. Beyond that, they made the journey to see the country and its inhabitants.

“We looked like a traveling circus,” Stink wrote. “We had opportunity after opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with the curious and the concerned. People love to talk about their land and the struggles they face because of it.” In western New York, they stumbled upon a Civil War reenactment. They were invited to camp with the Colbert Arms Drum and Fife Corps. “It was literally like we rode through a time warp into 1862. They even had a sentinel watch throughout the night, so I didn’t even lock my bike.”

Joining them on the journey was Lizzy’s pet rat whom she adopted, fully grown, from a rat rescue in Washington. “His name is Denali,” she wrote. “but he goes by Beef.” Beef spent most of each day inside an old mailbox Lizzy had converted into a home, complete with bedding, carpet she would change regularly, and large screen windows that could be shut during inclement weather. Other times he would ride on her shoulder or in her sweatshirt hood. “In a safe enough place,” she wrote. “I’d put him on the ground and he’d bound around and dig and generally be a friendly fellow. He made lots of friends this way. He was a little rat ambassador, as he was sometimes the first pet-rat experience people had. He saw and smelled and felt so much. He was loved by people throughout the U.S.” Unfortunately, Beef was of advanced years and his health started deteriorating in Oklahoma. After vet visits, a number of treatments, and an increasingly poor appetite, Lizzy had to make the hard decision to let her friend go. Beef is buried in the desert outside of a small New Mexico town. For more on their trip, and an especially heart-warming obituary Lizzy wrote for Beef, visit withinbikingdistance.com.

See more portraits at adventurecycling.org/gspg

From Adventure Cycling’s National Bicycle Touring Portrait Collection. © 2016 Adventure Cycling Association.

ADVENTURECYCLING.ORG
Become an Adventure Cycling Member and you will receive:

- Nine yearly issues of *Adventure Cyclist*, including the Cyclists’ Travel Guide: Bikes, Resources & How-to.
- Access to more than 100 members-only group tours and training classes.
- Discounts on our almost 47,000 miles of bicycle route maps.

Join online at: adventurecycling.org/membership
You can also call us at 800.755.2453 or mail in the form below.

**Adventure Cycling Membership Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Category</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>2 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$45</td>
<td>$85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>$55</td>
<td>$105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior* or Student</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td>$73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patron</td>
<td>$65</td>
<td>$125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefactor</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>$1500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (60 years or older)

Name: ____________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________

City, State, Zip: __________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________

[ ] Check   [ ] Visa   [ ] Mastercard   [ ] Amex   [ ] Discover

Credit Card #: ___________________________

Exp. Date: ______/____   Daytime Phone: _______________________

---

Adventure Cycling is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, member-supported organization. The tax-deductible portion of your membership is any amount over $14 per year.

For office use  EXP  TYP  YRS  SRC  SL  DON  CR  M  SH