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SLOW BURN

Some stories don't unfold the way you think they will

Five or so years ago, I was having a beer with Adventure Cyclist contributor (and former Adventure Cycling cartographer) Tom Robertson. He was pitching me a story about touring in Japan, roughly following the Bashō pilgrimage route. As regular readers know, Tom’s a heckuva photographer, and he was planning to ride with Ben Horan, with whom he’d recently done a trip riding and skiing volcanoes in the Pacific Northwest (“Oregon’s Volcanoes,” December 2015/January 2016). A beautifully shot ride following the footsteps of a haiku master? The technical magazine industry term for a story like this is “duh.”

Tom went off to grad school (congrats!). And Ben became the director of Missoula’s mountain bike organization (also congrats!). Years passed, and whenever we’d see each other we’d say “Japan? Japan!” Eventually, I even started thinking about the Tokyo Olympics and how timely this could all become.

Life got in the way and it just didn’t happen. So when Jack Donachy’s story on the Land of the Rising Sun (page 20) crossed our desks a year ago, well, think about those Tokyo Olympics and just how timely this could all become!

Needless to say, that didn’t quite work out.

The Olympics are postponed and readers of this magazine aren’t hopping on a trans-Pacific flight anytime soon. But that long-ago conversation has had me thinking about riding bicycles in Japan for half a decade, and in that time I’ve convinced myself it’s a trip I’d like to take myself.

I suspect there’s a conversation — maybe a story in this magazine even — that has done the same for you, bubbling for years to the point of boiling only for 2020 to arrive and defer that dream for a little while longer.

So yes, Japan (twice in fact, more on page 38). And the world’s oldest cycling club in England (page 10), and pausing a round-the-world trip in Chile (page 30), and a bike shop in California (page 40).

Some issues are five years in the making, and in a strange twist, this one arrives when we’re all in the exact same place — home! — thinking about the places we may yet go.

Alex Strickland
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Correction: The May issue featured a graphic that misspelled the country Jordan in Arabic. It should have read الأردن. Hat tip to Adventure Cycling Senior Tours Specialist Emma Wimmer for the catch!
THE PICKWICK BICYCLE CLUB TURNS 150 10
The oldest cycling club on Earth may have some catching up to do, but it’s far from done.
by David V. Herlihy

HEALING WATERS 38
A Portland bike traveler finds hope and hanami on a tour of Japan honoring her late mother.
by Ellee Thalheimer

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Buying a bike where the Doors jammed? Doesn’t get more classically California than that.
by Dan D’Ambrosio

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CATRIKE EOLA
RECUMBENT TRIKE
Going low (under $2,000).

THE SUMMER OF NO EXPECTATIONS
An epic first-time trek in a land of seascapes, sashimi, birds, and bears.
by Jack Donachy 20
HAPPILY EVER AFTER

HASE YEAH!
We are new members and are enjoying the magazine. In the March issue, you talk about different bikes you can use for different types of trips (“Touring Bike Buyers Guide”). In the curveball section, you include the HASE Pino, but you mention that you have questions. My wife and I have used one for nearly a decade and would love to give feedback. My wife has a degenerative disease that has moved her from assistance to a walker to a wheelchair. I have been a lifelong cyclist so this bike has been perfect for us. We have done everything from the 160-mile Pan Mass Challenge and the Florida Keys to riding downtown with the wheelchair strapped on the back. We even rode it out of the church when we got married!

Tyler and Alison Levine | Nantucket, Massachusetts

SWITCHING PLACES
I have been reading all cycling articles and books in the 40+ years I have been cycling, and “Switching Places” by Katie Newbury (April 2020) was one of the most honest articles about the fears of riding and life on a tandem! I cherished every word of her honest prose and personal insights into riding and the possible fears and trepidations while captaining their tandem. The picture of Katie and Sam pushing their tandem in the snow speaks millions about life on a tandem and its joys and combined personal commitment.
Robert Mandelson | Sacramento, California

My wife and I began tandeming in 2004 and have logged many a mile on what is definitely the best purchase I ever made in my life. We have shared so many adventures, countless hours together, as well as alone together on our trusted steed. Our tandem team is now 149 years old and, corona willing, we’ll be touring again this fall (although probably not in Europe).

The best advice I ever got about tandeming came from Angel Rodriguez. In the 90s, Angel was simultaneously on the boards of REI and Bikecentennial/Adventure Cycling, which is how I got to know him. Unlike Wally (Werner), he was outspoken, opinionated, crass, and lacked many social graces — but generally he was right. One of the brightest persons I’ve ever known. Angel wrote “the book” on tandeming in 1997 (still out there on Amazon), but the two tidbits he shared with me influenced our decision to purchase a tandem in the first place.

1. “The stoker is always right.” Your author talked about that somewhat, but I’ve learned to never question the stoker while riding, especially in traffic. Our team is such that

Matthew Cohn | Helena, Montana

I am the captain, but she is the “traffic coordinator.” Mary Ellen has the mirror (I never look back) and the authority to tell me what to do. Tens of thousands of miles later, this system has served us well.

2. When people ask us what it’s like to ride a tandem, I repeat the exact words spoken to me by Angel: “Wherever your relationship is going, it gets there faster on a tandem.” So true, so true.

Hope that when the dust settles from all this that new adventures await you. In the meantime, stay safe, stay sane.

Nicole Ellingson | Denver, Colorado

ELLEE AND ALY
Those articles (“Ellee and Aly’s High School Reunion,” April 2020) were terrific and had me laughing! Can’t wait for their next trip.

Dan Petkunas | Valencia, California

I have long searched for the words to describe the intimacy and trust of riding tandem that Katie so perfectly expressed in “Switching Places.” I truly admire her skill and confidence (and that of her partner!). In a journal of jokes and scenarios that made me fall deeper in love with my husband, I found an entry from a couple years ago: “Makes me captain the tandem, even when I’m scared.” Of about 12,000 miles on the tandem, three miles is my longest stint as captain. Switching places goes a long way toward being able to understand and appreciate both positions. This article framed it as an exciting personal challenge to think outside the box of my identity as just a stoker.

Susan Cohn | Helena, Montana

Your letters are welcome. We may edit letters for length and clarity. If you do not want your comments to be printed in Adventure Cyclist, please state so clearly. Include your name and address with your correspondence. Email your comments, questions, or letters to editor@adventurecycling.org or mail to Editor, Adventure Cyclist, P.O. Box 8308, Missoula, MT 59807.
As I ponder my own — and our collective — emergence from this pandemic, I do not want to go back to the way things were. We’ve got some learning to do: individually, as a society, and organizationally. For one thing, I’ve learned that this will be my first and last stint working from a basement.

With my fellow staff, remote meetings have dropped me into many of my coworker’s homes. I know who lives alone, who’s dealing with a sick dog, who’s got kids and no day care. Isolation brought unexpected connection to and empathy for my coworkers that I will maintain when we get back to the office.

Organizationally, I’ve had some good time to sit with the Adventure Cycling Strategic Plan that was adopted in 2018. One sentence has been sticking with me: “Adventure Cycling will transform from being a relatively concentrated group of bike travel experts to an expansive and collaborative community, in the process connecting millions of new people to bicycle travel.”

From 50,000 members to a community of millions? How are we going to get from here to there? There is no map, but the strategic plan has some meaty ideas. And the coronavirus, while unfortunately on my mind as much as the strategic plan, may have some interesting learning opportunities for us. It crosses the globe; it has a profound influence no matter your race, color, or creed; and it benefits from community spread. Okay, that’s not a flattering metaphor, but it does sound like bike travel.

The only way to connect with millions is through community spread. This will only happen through you, our members. We’ve got a staff of almost 50 — that’s powerful, but it’s exponentially less than the power of 50,000. It is a priority for me in my first year as Executive Director to develop the platform and open the opportunities for you to help build our community of millions.

We’re diving back into our strategic plan to identify and initiate...
If you aren’t sure of the nationality of 1930s distance cyclist Billie Samuel, the plush koala strapped to the front of her three-speed Malvern Star gives a pretty big hint.

As a 23-year-old Australian waitress with only a few months of cycling experience, "4'11" Samuel was an unlikely contender for setting a new ultradistance record.

But a debate among her coworkers sent her on a quest to beat the women’s fastest known time between Sydney and Melbourne, set by Elsa Barbour in 1932.

Samuel set out in May of 1934, riding from Melbourne in a reverse of Barbour’s route. Met with rain, headwinds, and two crashes, she failed to best Barbour’s time—but she did set a Melbourne to Sydney record.

"Overlanders" as they were called, brought logbooks into post offices to verify their route and times.

So in July of 1934, she tried again—starting from Sydney.

But this time Samuel succeeded—despite a stretch spent carrying her bike through thick mud—with a new record of 3 days, 1 hour, and 20 minutes.

So what happened to this promising young cyclist? All mentions of her drop from the press. It seems she never raced again, and the only clues as to where her life carried her is a small line in the Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate:

April 8, 1937

The petite record holder is now married.
Since the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, essential workers — nurses, doctors, grocery store clerks, firefighters, police officers, and others — have been, well, essential to getting us all through our daily lives, such as they are. With public transit not being the best option for maintaining proper physical distancing, bicycles have become essential to getting many of these workers to their jobs and home again safely and reliably, especially in big cities. Not all essential workers have access to bicycles, but some manufacturers and nonprofits are working to change that.

Specialized Bicycles started a program called Essential Rides for Essential Workers to donate 500 bikes to key workers. Using this program, anyone could refer a key worker to apply, or key workers could apply themselves. As of this writing, Specialized was collecting applications until April 22, and bicycles were being donated on a first-come, first-served basis.

On the other side of the pond, London-based Brompton, maker of the iconic folding bike, launched a crowdfunding campaign in order to provide 1,000 bikes to staff in the National Health Service. With an initial goal of £100,000, Brompton’s Wheels for Heroes campaign had raised just over £300,000 at the time of this writing, with two more days to reach their extended goal of £400,000.

In New York City, Specialized has partnered with Transportation Alternatives, the New York–based nonprofit, for the program Bike Match. Anyone, not just essential workers, who needs a bicycle for transportation in New York can be matched with a donor bike by filling out a questionnaire or emailing Transportation Alternatives. And anyone with a bike they’d like to donate can likewise fill out the form to participate. If you neither need a bike nor have one to donate, you can still help out by donating to Transportation Alternatives to keep Bike Match going.

Bike Match has been so successful that offshoots have popped up in other cities across the U.S. such as Washington, DC; Atlanta, Georgia; Cincinnati, Ohio; and San Francisco, California.

For the first time since its start in 1973, RAGBRAI, the Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, has been canceled. With all that’s going on because of the coronavirus pandemic — or not going on, as it were — we shouldn’t be too surprised by this. And yet, it’s still a shock.

The annual event, which draws as many as 10,000 cyclists every year, routes riders through small-town Iowa, from the Missouri River to the Mississippi. And that’s the problem, according to reporting from the Des Moines Register. When thousands of people swarm a small town for barbeque, apple pie, and cold beverages, physical distancing is nigh impossible.

The 48th edition of RAGBRAI will take place July 25–31, 2021. Anyone registered for this year’s event can move their registration to next year, request a refund, or donate their fee to the Iowa Bicycle Coalition.
Greg Siple Award for Young Adult Bicycle Travel

Adventure Cycling Association has chosen four young adults to receive the 2020 Greg Siple Award for Young Adult Bicycle Travel. James Keys, 21, of Newburgh, Indiana, and Emilytricia Lopez Marchena, 29, of Oakland, California, won the Intro to Bike Touring Award. Rachel Pauli, 30, of Missoula, Montana, and Corinna Wollmann, 25, of Washington, DC, were chosen as the Outdoor Leadership recipients.

The Greg Siple Award covers the cost of attending an Adventure Cycling educational course and provides the winners with bike touring gear. In return, each recipient will perform an outreach project to promote bicycle touring to underrepresented communities. Applicants proposed their projects in written applications, and 10 finalists in each award category were asked to make short videos about their projects.

Now in its seventh year, the Greg Siple Award was developed to introduce more young people to bicycle travel. The award is named in honor of Adventure Cycling’s cofounder and longtime art director Greg Siple, who discovered bike touring as a young adult and inspired generations of people to travel by bike. To learn more, go to adventurecycling.org/gregsipleaward.

Former Superintendent of Glacier National Park Dead at 96

Phillip Iverson, superintendent of Glacier National Park from 1974 to 1980, died April 7 at his home in Kalispell, Montana. He was 96.

Before Iverson’s tenure, bicycles were banned on one of the greatest roads in the U.S. — the famed Going-to-the-Sun Road — because of concerns about interactions with vehicles. But Iverson came up with a compromise: he allowed bicycles on the road during off-peak times, a policy that still stands today.

Iverson spent 30 years working for the National Park Service and published an autobiography in 2016, The Centennial of a Great Idea, about his career.
THE PICKWICK BICYCLE CLUB

TURNS 150

BY DAVID V. HERLIHY

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL MREGAN  ·  PHOTOS COURTESY PICKWICK BICYCLE CLUB
The story really begins in France in 1867, where velocipede mania originated. The first riders quickly discovered two persistent road hazards: mechanical mishaps and rude receptions. The former often incapacitated their bicycles, if not their bodies, leaving them stranded. The latter typically involved a barrage of stones and insults from irate carriage drivers or hostile boys. Velocipedists soon formed clubs to promote technical development, provide a ready pool of riding partners, and press authorities for better riding conditions.

By the summer of 1869, however, when “velocipede mania” had reached his homeland, Dickens had surely seen the newfangled vehicle. Although the ailing 57-year-old probably never rode one himself, he edited and ran two articles that October in his weekly All the Year Round, assessing the novelty. The first anonymous contributor gushed: “It is only a few months since I sat upon a bicycle for the first time and I already manage it with tolerable ease and quickness. I enjoy it keenly.” The other ridiculed a budding cyclist: “Lo! a bicycle; a tall-legged person is standing over it on tiptoe — misguided man. On he rolls and over he topples time after time.”

So what did Dickens himself think of the bicycle? He might well have looked upon the invention with favor. After all, he was a champion of the lower classes — ever since, as a 12-year-old, he had to toil for 10 hours a day at a London “shoe blackening” factory while his father languished in a debtor’s prison. And, according to its proponents, this audacious little vehicle was destined to become the “people’s nag.” Then again, Dickens could easily have dismissed such bold talk as “humbug.”

Whatever his personal views on the bicycle, Dickens went to his grave on June 9, 1870, without revealing them. Nevertheless, a small band of grieving admirers from North London — perhaps mistakenly believing that he had endorsed the bicycle — launched the Pickwick Bicycle Club (PBC), evoking Dickens’s first novel, The Pickwick Papers. As a result, Dickens has ever since been linked to the bicycle, whether he would have appreciated the homage or not.

This month, in fact, the PBC, which now has some 200 male members scattered across the UK and beyond, will celebrate its 150th anniversary with a black-tie dinner in London. How exactly did the world’s oldest continuously operating cycling club and first Dickensian society come together? And why has it flourished for so long?

January, staged a sensational 13-mile road race in April, won in 70 minutes. That May, another club debuted in the industrial city of Sheffield. A few months later, in the capital city, the German Gymnasium opened a velocipede rink and offered “short excursions in the suburbs of London in the company of congenial velocipedists.”
The founders, by adopting this curious scheme, were no doubt poking a bit of fun at themselves in anticipation of striking out on their own tangled adventures. Most important, they were also embracing the “Pickwickian” spirit of goodwill toward all and genuine fellowship among themselves.

By the onset of the 1870 season, however, the mania had passed and many British cycling clubs had already folded. Only a few true devotees vowed to sustain the bicycle’s momentum. Among these were the six young men who founded the PBC. Three of them, Kossuth “Koss” Yeoman, John “Jack” Bryant, and William E. Maverly, would keep ties with the club until their deaths some 40 years later. And both Koss’s older brother Lamartine and J. A. Johnson remained enrolled for about a decade. Only D. S. Medcalf made a relatively hasty exit after a few seasons.

Koss and Jack were the principal instigators, and all six were presumably from prosperous families, given the high cost of a velocipede. Although little is known about their backgrounds, the 1871 census reveals that the Yeoman brothers were still living with their parents in Hackney. Twenty-year-old Kossuth is listed as a clerk supporting estate auctions, and Lamartine a “manufacturer’s agent.”

On June 22, 1870, the six convened at the Downs Hotel in Hackney to establish a club. Deferring its naming for a separate meeting, the lads tackled other essential matters. They elected...
Koss as their captain and decreed that the club uniform would be simply a white straw hat (called a “boater”) with a black and amber ribbon representing the club colors. And they resolved that members would meet at the same venue every Wednesday and Saturday from April to October to make excursions on their bicycles.

Two weeks later, J. A. Johnson proposed the present name. After some debate, it was accepted. After all, it not only honored the late Dickens, it was also highly appropriate. The book *The Pickwick Papers*, originally published as a series of articles in 1836–37 and set a decade earlier, recounted the humorous adventures of a sporting club headed by the fictitious Samuel Pickwick, a kind and wealthy Londoner. The main difference between the two clubs, cracked one early PBC member, was that Samuel and his entourage, who traveled mainly by carriage, “sought after antiquities,” whereas the bicyclists “usually tried to find something younger.”

Another resolution stipulated that the PBC captain must be addressed as “Mr. Pickwick” at all club functions. All other members would likewise receive a unique sobriquet drawn from the book’s cast of colorful characters (effectively capping the future membership). The pairing process, though opaque, was not entirely random, given that “Fat Boy” was soon assigned to a thin newcomer.

The founders, by adopting this curious scheme, were no doubt poking a bit of fun at themselves in anticipation of striking out on their own tangled adventures. Most important, they were also embracing the “Pickwickian” spirit of goodwill toward all and genuine fellowship among themselves.

Initially, given the crude states of their bicycles and the local roads, the PBC riders usually kept within a 10-mile radius of the Downs Hotel. Even so, they had access to the Epping Forest as well as several picturesque towns with alluring watering holes. Indeed, from the start, fellowship trumped athleticism (Koss’s obituary would duly note his preference for the “touring, social, and pottering sides” of cycling). The riders often dawdled at pubs, where they imbibed, smoked, played billiards and musical instruments, recited poetry, and sang songs. Occasionally, noncycling friends would rendezvous by train to join in on the fun.

In October 1871, as its second season came to a close, the club held a sumptuous “Pickwickian Feed” at the King’s Head in Chigwell — one of Dickens’s favorite haunts. Every year since, the PBC has held a lavish close-of-the-season banquet for members and their male guests, dubbed a “garden party.”

Addressing the inaugural assembly, Lamartine marveled how the club had already fostered numerous new friendships.
But he also confessed that he himself had yet to learn how to ride a bicycle. He promised he would do so shortly, despite his “mature” age (he was 23 at the time). When the boisterous company finally dispersed, a journalist reported that “most returned to town by the usual rail; the remainder, true to their traditions, pursued their way on bicycles, whose lamps gleamed fitfully along the forest roads.”

In the spring of 1872, the PBC proposed monthly moonlight excursions. That June, The Field reported that the club had already had “three or four well-attended” day rides. In particular, some 20 members rode to Waltham Abbey and back, a total distance of about 30 miles. The riders attracted much attention when they glided along in single file, perched atop their majestic mounts.

The PBC rejected an offer to merge with the handful of clubs still functioning in the London area, for fear of losing its distinct identity. It did, however, occasionally coordinate rides and races with those clubs. Collectively, they lent vital support to the few makers who remained in the field. Although the public had largely given up on the “boneshaker,” and the press now paid it scant attention, these riders knew well that the bicycle was rapidly improving.

A crucial innovation — due in part to PBC member W. H. J. Grout — was the introduction of metal, as opposed to wooden, rims and spokes. Front wheels, typically 36 inches in diameter in 1869, gained a foot or more in height for improved gearing. The relatively light “high bicycle,” though daunting, delivered a much faster and more comfortable ride. Gradually, the ranks of the British cyclists swelled as more young men discovered the merits of the sport.

During the 1873 season, the PBC’s membership soared to 50. That September, two of the original members, Koss and Jack, rode their “tension”-spoked bicycles for five straight days from London to Land’s End, the southwest tip of England. The pair (passing as Mr. Pickwick and Tracy Tupman) affirmed that they had made the scenic journey “with every ease and pleasure.”

Even at races, PBC members used their aliases, prompting The Sporting News to condemn the “childlike absurdity of grown men being figured on the card as ‘Tracy Tupman,’ ‘The Fat Boy,’ or ‘The Reverend Mr. Stiggins.’” That critic suggested that they dress their parts and hold their own meets at circuses, adding, “As nicknames among the members of the Pickwick Bicycle Club, these may be very funny, but to the outside public they seem extremely ridiculous.”

In October 1874, a journalist described five PBC members passing through the northern English town of Kendal, on their way to Edinburgh via the Lake District. They had “beautifully easygoing machines, the driving wheels being each about 56 inches high,” and “all were dressed alike, and looked extremely well as they skimmed along the fine dry roads.”

In May 1877, the PBC joined about 2,000 riders from across the UK for a “monster meet” at Hampton Court, the magnificent palace of Henry VIII along the Thames River southwest of London. In deference to the PBC’s pioneer status, Koss was tapped to lead the huge procession through Bushy Park while hordes of spectators cheered the riders on. The bicycle had arrived at last.

Ironically, in the 1890s, just as the public was discovering for itself the joys of cycling thanks to the revolutionary Rover “safety” bicycle (the creator, J. K. Starley, would become a member), the sport’s grip on the PBC began to weaken. True, the club still held regular cycling events, and its ranks still included numerous cycling celebrities (such as the American illustrator Joseph Pennell — see “The Pennells: Cycle Touring’s First Couple” June 2016). But its aging veterans no longer raced, and much of the club’s original rationale — to gain safety in numbers and to promote the new sport — was increasingly irrelevant.
By 1902, the PBC faced mounting existential challenges. The bicycle boom was over, and recreational cycling was on the wane. The emerging automobile, loud and dangerous, threatened to dominate the road. The leadership, perhaps sensing its own mortality, if not that of the club itself, formed a subcommittee to prepare a book about the history of the organization.

Yet the club continued to thrive, thanks to a diverse program that still included some leisure cycling. As the Oxford Times explained in 1908: “The club does not encourage scorching, nor does it pin its faith to racing, but believes in the pleasant club run into the country, [and] touring [at] holiday times.” Equally important were “those social gatherings that do so much to keep a cycling club together in winter.” These included hikes, billiard matches, and, of course, the annual “garden party.”

At the 40th banquet in late 1910, the president declared, “No one who is not a member could know how good, how sound, how prosperous the club is.” Another officer stressed, “The social side is the most important feature of the club.” The PBC had already “made cycling history,” noted another, and now it must strive to “maintain the tradition of Mr. Pickwick — hospitality and the absence of formality.”

And no club event has exuded more hospitality over the years (albeit with formalities galore) than its quasi-obligatory “garden party.” Invariably, this extravaganza is held at a posh London establishment (in recent decades, the grand 200-year-old Connaught Rooms). And although the revelers are no longer allowed to smoke “shag” (loose tobacco) in clay pipes, it’s been pretty much “business as usual” for at least a century.

At the behest of military trumpeters, the banqueters take their assigned seats. After a few opening remarks from the dignitaries at the head table, grace is recited. An honoree posing as the “original member” wheels in a high wheeler as trumpets sound again. Scarlet-coated “Chelsea Pensioners” (retired soldiers) cart in an enormous silver bowl filled with punch.

The concoction, made from a secret recipe, is then ladled out for a toast to the club’s prosperity in the memory of Joseph Atto, who left the club 1,000 pounds in 1918 to “defray the cost” of this ritual. A handful of new members learn their sobriquets as relevant passages from The Pickwick Papers are read aloud. Alcohol flows freely, and the serving of multiple courses of fine food is punctuated by numerous toasts and “cross toasts,” as well as by spirited renditions of classics such as The Boys of the Old Brigade and Auld Lang Syne.
Club officers occasionally rise but are careful to keep their remarks light and brief. Greater latitude is granted to the guest speakers who range from cycling magnates to comedians. As one observer explained over a century ago: “The Pickwickians believe in sandwiching their clever speeches with entertainers.”

Despite the optimistic tone struck in 1910, the club desperately needed an infusion of new blood. The secretary issued an ardent appeal for “suitable applicants of mature years and experience, [with] some definite appreciation of cycling in general, and the Pickwick Papers in pious particular.” By way of enticement, he added “[The PBC] is the oldest [cycle] club in the world, yet its fortnightly runs show that there is still enthusiasm and activity.”

Unfortunately, even that lingering commitment to cycling would diminish as the “old-timers” gradually died off. In 1924, to placate the club’s growing number of noncyclists, “Golf Day” debuted (and is still held every June). By the time the club hosted its diamond jubilee banquet in 1930, only a handful of its remaining octogenarians made a point of arriving there by bicycle. Five years later, a paper in Birmingham flatly declared that PBC members “no longer ride.”

The club began to encourage members to nominate their sons, regardless of their interest in cycling. That strategy kept membership robust, but it also further weakened the club’s tenuous ties to cycling. By 1960, when the club celebrated its 90th anniversary, that historic link was almost nonexistent as this recap of that year’s banquet affirms:

“Samuel Pickwick would have been in his element at London’s Connaught Rooms yesterday. About 150 businessmen, lawyers, politicians, and War Office brass hats sat down with their guests for their annual garden party. The title Pickwick Bicycle Club has become a little misleading as only a handful of its members ride bikes, let alone own them. Even former world cycle champion Reg Harris arrived by car. ‘Bill Stumps’ (club president Tommy Turnell) chuckled. ‘We’re not too strict about the rules nowadays. We invite a man to join if we like him, not because he rides a bike.’”

In the past few decades, however, a few passionate PBC cyclists have reintroduced cycling events. Since 1986, Michael Radford, an antique bicycle collector, has engaged the PBC in a “vintage” bicycle rally in Benson, near Oxford, held in July. Over 20 years ago, John Morris,
a noted ex-racer and cycle team manager, and his wife Diana, initiated a ride on modern cycles dubbed “Mr. Pickwick goes to France.” Inspired by the PBC’s first visit to that country in 1888, participants spend a day at a restaurant enjoying the fare and a recurring view of a Tour de France time trial.

Since 2007, however, the club’s most important cycling event takes place every October at Hampton Court. The program, open to men and women, and any type of bicycle, includes a full day of cycling and dining. It is the brainchild of Aiden Hegarty, a retired police officer. After noting with some disgust that the club’s few remaining trophies were being handed out exclusively to golfers, he insisted that it was time to honor the club’s glorious past and put the “Bicycle” back into the “Pickwick Bicycle Club.”

Thanks to the club’s “back to cycling” movement, a growing number of its members are now “serious” riders. And there is also greater appreciation of the club’s cycling heritage. Steve Bullen, the club historian and an avid rider himself, has been tracking down scattered PBC cycling memorabilia (the club hasn’t had a physical headquarters since the 1930s) and has posted his findings on the PBC website.

The club’s biannual magazine also devotes ample space to historical topics. Indeed, the current editor and reigning doyen, Roger Warwick, has long been a driving force behind the club’s cycling revival. He was already a longtime member of the Cycle Tourist Club when he attended his first garden party in 1972. He chuckles to think how he was admitted then and there, whereas recent inductees typically had to wait for years for their spot to open. But at least they got a comprehensive “welcome kit,” he notes; he had to improvise his own accessories.

Stuart Mason-Elliot, the incoming president and a longtime “penny” rider, will no doubt further reconnect the club with its cycling heritage. Last November, he rode his “boneshaker” from Paris to Rouen in three days as part of the celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the first city-to-city road race.

Despite the rosy outlook, a major challenge looms ahead: reassessing the club’s “men-only” culture. Outside critics, such as former Olympian cyclist Chris Boardman, charge that the policy is out of touch, even if a “grandfather clause” exempts it from antidiscrimination laws.

Although the membership is still reluctant to admit women, it is increasingly open to having “lady guests” at special functions. This year, in fact, for the first time in 50 years, women will be invited to the president’s lunch (the club’s other major luncheon held every May).
Whatever changes may lie ahead, the club’s remarkable success to date is indisputable. Clearly the decision at the onset to double as a Dickensian society has helped it to weather some tough times (would we still have the Hackney Bicycle Club?). And the PBC has always taken that secondary role seriously, maintaining warm relations with Dickens descendants ever since Charles Jr. joined in 1887. It has celebrated various Dickensian milestones, such as the centennial of *The Pickwick Papers* in 1936 and the bicentennial of the author’s birth in 2012. More recently, it has collaborated with the Charles Dickens Museum in London, where a few PBC papers now reside.

Other keys to the club’s continued success are sound management, a loyal and influential membership, and a reverence and relish for time-honored traditions. Modest dues (at present about $50 a year) and a sparse but enticing calendar (six or seven events a year) have no doubt helped as well.

Above all, though, is the pervasive spirit of fellowship that has compelled many to remain members for life. Incredibly, three tenures are sufficient to form a direct link to the club’s glory days: Roger Warwick, Walter Hackett (1942–1972), and John Raybould (1882–1944), who lived for nearly a century and cycled until the end.

David V. Herlihy is the author of *The Lost Cyclist*, and *Bicycle: The History*. This is his ninth historical article for Adventure Cyclist.
Vestiges of the old fishing culture such as this communal lodge for fishermen can still be found on Hokkaido’s Herring Highway — a strip of coastline along the eastern shore where fortunes soared and crashed with the boom and bust of the herring fishery. With a history all its own, a variety of unique cultures, abundant wildlife, and a slower pace that seems to transport one back in time, Japan’s seldom visited northernmost island is a world apart from what most people imagine when they think of that country.
“Are you okay?” Barbra leaned her bike against the railing in front of the school and jogged over to where I lay sprawled in mud and gravel, my right leg pinned beneath a heavily loaded bike.

“I’m okay, I’m okay,” I grumped as I freed myself and got to my feet. I clenched my jaw and we stood quietly for a moment, surveying the only road running through the bush village in the remote corner of Alaska we call home. Traversing a grand total of three rolling miles from the dirt airstrip where small bush planes land (the only practical way in and out of the village) to the boat landing on the river, the road in springtime is nearly always somewhere between the consistency of soup and stew in this rain-soaked part of the world. During wintertime, it’s generally either a series of mud wallows or sheathed in ice that redefines the word slick. Summer through fall, it’s a thoroughfare for one of the world’s densest populations of bears — coastal browns routinely topping 1,000 pounds. The last dedicated jogger in the village was killed by a pack of wolves on this road.
Training with a combination of weights, a treadmill, and a spinning cycle in our living room, we'd managed to get into pretty good shape over the winter and early spring. We felt ready, but ...

“I don’t think we can do this,” I said.
“What? You mean not go to Japan?”
“No, no. We’ll go to Hokkaido. We already have the plane tickets. I just don’t think we can practice out here with our loaded bikes. When we get to the hotel in Chitose, I’m sure there’ll be a place where we can take a test spin. I guess we’ll find out then whether we can do this or whether we’ll need to pack up and get tickets home.”

Barbra took a moment to mull this over. “We should go with the philosophy I learned when I got into backpacking back in high school,” she suggested. “We shouldn’t have expectations. That was my teacher’s advice. Just give it a try and see where the journey takes you. It’s amazing what you can accomplish when you don’t have expectations.”

Although we come from very different backgrounds — Barbra is a California urbanite by way of Brooklyn, I’m from a small mountain town in Pennsylvania — we’d independently developed an overlapping list of dreams. Undertaking an extended bicycle tour was high on that list.

The main obstacle? Neither of us had ever ridden more than a few recreational miles on our townie bikes, and none of those excursions had included more than a water bottle, a couple of sandwiches, and maybe a jacket.

Fortunately, we knew where to begin in figuring out how to go about a self-guided trek. A visit to an Anchorage bike shop and discussions with the experts there made...
Throughout the summer, we were unable to find a bowl of ramen that was anything short of superb—not that we tried. The noodles are a Hokkaido specialty, and even this tiny, out-of-the-way train station/café served up a knock-your-socks-off bowl of bike fuel.

An exploration of a narrow, brick-paved alley sandwiched between buildings led to an inner courtyard surrounded by tiny restaurants. Barilotto Bistro had seating for only six to eight people, but the innovative chef set before us Italian-inspired Japanese dishes that constituted one of the best meals of the trip. White asparagus mousse? Who knew?

Hokkaido offers some very good fly fishing, best accessed with the assistance of local guides. But there are ample opportunities for an adventurous angler to prospect for trout, char, and other species on one’s own.

The coastal village of Rausu is probably the most famous kelp-harvesting center in Japan. The nutrient-rich seaweed is widely used in soups and other dishes, but it’s got a wide variety of other uses including as a thickener in ice cream and toothpaste.
the learning curve manageable. After that, an assortment of books, magazine articles, online resources, and further discussions with our new friends at the bike shop led to the purchase of a pair of rugged touring bikes, a two-wheel trailer, and the necessary panniers, tools, safety equipment, camping gear, and cool, purpose-designed attire.

At this point, we were contemplating a trek of over two months’ duration, one in which we would cover more miles on bikes in a single summer than we’d covered in any previous 10 years combined. The big question was where?

Right off the bat, we eliminated destinations with consistently warm summertime temperatures. After living a few years in a place where the mid-40s seems balmy and where shorts and sandals come out once it hits the mid-50s, the kind of warm weather we used to bask in as Californians had become our kryptonite. We reasoned that we’d be facing plenty of challenges without adding climate acclimation to the list.

Several northern European countries, Mongolia (where we had previously lived for two years), and Alaska itself made our short list. But our research kept pushing the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido to the top. Factors included reports that we could expect Hokkaido to offer:

- A live-and-let-live attitude toward discrete wild camping.
- A World Heritage Site, six national parks, and additional quasi-national parks with excellent hiking and wildlife-viewing opportunities.
- A locavore’s paradise with markets and Michelin-noted restaurants, and a smorgasbord of world-class seafood.
- Bike shops: although we knew our bikes might confound Japanese mechanics, we reasoned that at least we wouldn’t end up boondocked in the middle of nowhere.
- Maybe even some decent fishing!

Another element pushing us toward Hokkaido was our fascination with northern cultures. From salmon-skin shoes to seal-oil lamps, there are innumerable parallels between traditional ways of life in Alaska and the ancient Ainu and Okhotsk cultures of Japan’s northernmost island. We wanted to learn more.

Of course, we reckoned a nearly summerlong tour of Hokkaido wouldn’t be all chrysanthemums and silk. It was hard to know how much to budget for food — and a little hard to believe that campsites would be as well appointed and cheap as we’d been reading. We had to brace ourselves for the Japanese idea of when the sun should rise (before 4:00 AM from May 29 through July 3) and what that would mean in terms of photography, wildlife viewing, and getting breakfast given the disconnect between first light falling on our tent in the wee hours and most restaurants and stores not opening until much later.

But the most daunting aspect of planning a trek in Hokkaido didn’t lie with any of those issues. Language was our number one concern. While we figured we could probably get
by with a combination of translation apps and the occasional English speaker we'd encounter, there's no substitute for having some of the local language under one's belt. Rosetta Stone to the rescue! Barbra's full-time teaching duties (she's the lone teacher for all of Chignik Lake's elementary-school students) prevented her from devoting much time to studying, but after months of diligent practice, I felt ready enough.

It was a short van ride from Chitose International Airport to the Crown Plaza Hotel, our pre-trek staging destination where we'd given ourselves three days to put our bikes back together, search for fuel canisters for our stove, readjust our internal clocks, and explore Chitose. Three days turned out to be perfect.

Because we were amateurs to bike travel, it took us longer than expected to restore our rides to working order. In fact, when a Google search failed to provide necessary answers, we had to call back to the Anchorage bike shop for a bit of long-distance coaching. No one at the hotel was 100 percent sure where we could find the fuel canisters we were seeking so a bit of

NUTS & BOLTS

hokkaido, japan

ARRIVAL
New Chitose Airport, south of Sapporo, is the main entry point. Plentiful hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, bike shops, and hardware stores make Chitose an ideal place to stage.

CLIMATE AND TOPOGRAPHY
Think coastal Oregon: cool temperatures even in mid-summer, some wind, some rain. Hokkaido's mountains are relatively easy to negotiate, but you'll encounter tunnels, some over a mile long. Be certain to have front and rear lights and reflectors.

CAMPING
Campgrounds are plentiful, clean, quiet, and usually inexpensive (sometimes free). Expect tidy restrooms, a place to wash dishes, and not much more. You'll be happy you toted along camping chairs. In towns, you'll find coin laundries and onsen (public bath houses).

RIDING CONDITIONS
Roadways are generally excellent. Many feature bike lanes. Courteous drivers, numerous restrooms, and English signage make for easy traveling.

FOOD
Stove fuel canisters are available at Homac hardware stores throughout the island. But don't hesitate to leave your cookware at home: convenience stores and supermarkets offer an array of reasonably priced, tasty, ready-to-eat foods from sandwiches to sushi. And be sure to try Hokkaido's sofuta kurimu soft-serve ice cream. It's amazing.

LANGUAGE
Try to learn some Japanese, but otherwise make patience, politeness, and appreciation your bywords. The Hokkaido culture is much more laid-back and less rule-bound than most of the rest of Japan. Ask gently. You may be permitted allowances and access not "in the book."

Not particularly eager to pull ourselves out of warm sleeping bags at 3:30 am to catch sunrise, a photographic challenge in Hokkaido was finding beautiful light. By 6:00 am, the sky was already mid-morning bright. Inland the sun could be glaring. Along the coast, flat, gray clouds and marine haze were often the norm. Sunsets, though, could be stunning.
trial-and-error exploring was required before we discovered a Hokkaido-wide chain that proved to be a reliable source. The three-day cushion gave us time for our first gourmet dining experience: sumptuous bowls of curry ramen at a place within an easy walk of the hotel. We even had time to visit a local winery, enjoy a stroll and a picnic along the sun-dappled Chitose River, dig into our first sushi of the trip, and visit the Chitose Salmon Museum.

Meanwhile, without us even asking, the Crown Plaza staff immediately upgraded us to a larger room at no charge, provided us with locked indoor storage for our bicycles, and then agreed to store our huge bicycle boxes intact and stuffed with packaging foam until we returned in August, at no charge. Welcome to Japan!

Rested, ready, but not yet tanned, on the morning of June 1, we took the hotel elevator to the lobby, thanked the staff, and wheeled our bikes out to the parking lot.

“Well, we’re about to find out if this is doable!” I said to Barbra with equal measures of optimism and trepidation.

For the first time in our lives, we mounted up on fully loaded touring bikes (mine pulling a packed trailer) and pushed the pedals. To my great relief, not only did my bicycle move forward, it did so easily. We had already resigned ourselves to the prospect of pushing up hills, but on level surfaces pedaling through Japan wasn’t going to be a problem. After a lap around the parking lot, we pulled up parallel for a parley.

Back home in Chignik Lake, we’d created a huge map of Hokkaido on butcher paper, hung it on the wall next to our treadmill, and appointed it with photos and blurbs identifying things we wanted to experience. Pictures of rhinoceros auklets (Hokkaido boasts the world’s largest breeding colony of these unique sea birds), Blakiston’s fish owls, fields of flowers, festivals celebrating everything from sea urchins to fireflies, various bowls and plates of deliciousness Hokkaido is renowned for, museums, cityscapes, national parks, wineries, and even a picture of a frosty pint of blue beer adorned the map. We had also put together a loose itinerary. From January through May, as our research expanded, we added to the map and to the list, always with a counterclockwise route in mind. In fact, on May 31, the night before our departure from the Crown Plaza, we double-checked maps and confirmed our plans to begin the trip by heading east toward the vast wetlands of Kushiro-Shitsugen National Park. The idea was to get there early while the rare tancho, Japanese red-crowned cranes, would still be with their chicks.

To this day, neither of us knows why we changed the plan the next morning. Sitting astride our bikes in the hotel parking lot, one of us said, “Let’s go this way instead,” and the other said, “I was thinking the same thing!” Perhaps the decision harkened back to Mongolia where a vague memory tells us that we’d been instructed that the best way to outwit the vagaries of fate is to plan a trip in one direction but at the last minute head the opposite way.

A quiet, tree-shaded bike path followed the Chitose River 17 miles to its headwaters at Lake Shikotsu in Shikotsu-Toya National Park. Brightly plumaged Oriental greenfinches in viridescent shades of olive and splashed with bright yellow greeted the morning with high-pitched warbles from riverside willows. Fishermen — both in the form of elegant, long-legged gray herons and those wearing waders and wielding fly rods — stalked the water in search of trout and other fish. Butterflies floated across the path ahead of us, and flowers, both wild and in meticulously tended gardens, bloomed everywhere. As the morning sun climbed higher into the sky, the electric buzz of cicada song began to fill the air. It’s an iconic music of Japanese summers, and we almost felt as though we had pedaled into a setting from the movie My Neighbor Totoro. This was the Japan we had dreamed of touring, and we were here!
There’s a slower pace in Hokkaido that appealed to us. Somewhere along a stretch of the Herring Highway, we came across a woman who had been out with her husband and young daughter harvesting wild mountain wasabi.

When the herring fishery collapsed, fishermen needed something that would fill the void. Salmon ranching and shellfish farms have become hugely important to Hokkaido’s economy. So has gathering sea cucumbers. The soft-bodied echinoderms (they’re related to sea stars and urchins) are dried and exported to China at prices per gram many times higher than gold.
Save for a couple of brief stretches, the gently sloping series of bike paths and quiet roads to Lake Shikotsu was easily managed. Placing ourselves in a proper Zen frame of mind, the relatively infrequent pushing we had to do was pleasant. In fact, later in the trek the slower pace paid off with an adrenaline-inducing bear sighting we would surely otherwise have missed when a sow and her two cubs cautiously emerged from a thick stand of roadside bamboo.

Late that afternoon, we settled into our first campsite at Morappu campground along the pebbled shore of Lake Shikotsu. After a dinner featuring steaming hot bowls of udon with miso broth and tinned sanna (a mackerel-like fish Hokkaido is known for), we sat back in our camping chairs and took in the view. Before us, Lake Shikotsu was beginning to glass off, gathering and reflecting the sky and shoreline forest as the sun sank in the distance. Far out on the lake, the last diehard fishermen began pointing their boats back to shore. Behind us, a woodpecker softly drummed a hollow snag, and frogs began an evening chorus. The day had been warm, but as a twilight glow descended across the water, we were grateful for our warm hats, fleece, gloves, and jackets. The old itinerary was history. The summer lay before us as wide open as Hokkaido itself. We looked forward to our new plan: to follow our noses and allow the summer to unfold with no expectations. Because, as someone once said, “It’s amazing what you can accomplish when you don’t have expectations.”

Jack Donachy is a writer, photographer, and all-around outdoor enthusiast living in the remote bush village of Chignik Lake, Alaska (population 50). He and his wife Barb are planning a follow-up bike trek to Japan. See more of his work at cutterlight.com.
2020 ANNUAL MEMBER SURVEY

In February 2020, Adventure Cycling conducted our 13th annual member survey. Over 9,400 members contributed their input and thoughts about Adventure Cycling. Here’s what they had to say:

96% would recommend joining Adventure Cycling to a friend
94% find our magazine, Adventure Cyclist, above average or excellent

TOP 3 REASONS our members belong to Adventure Cycling

1. Mission
Belief in the organization’s mission to inspire, empower, and connect people to travel by bicycle

2. Magazine
To receive Adventure Cyclist magazine

3. Advocacy
To support our efforts in improving bike travel conditions, including safer routes, better services, and accessibility

What bikes do you ride?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bike Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touring</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gravel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Fat Bike</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recumbent</td>
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What types of riding do you do?

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<th>Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road biking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day rides</td>
<td>59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-day tours (3 nights to 2 weeks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commuting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gravel/unpaved road riding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bike Overnights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountain biking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long tours (2 weeks to 2 months)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bikepacking</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epic tours (longer than 2 months)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

TOP 3 ADVOCACY ISSUES our members feel we should address

1. ROUTE CONDITIONS including lack of shoulder, pavement conditions, speed limits, etc.
2. EDUCATION collaboration with law enforcement for equitable support of cyclists’ right to the road
3. DISTRACTED DRIVING texting and use of electronic devices while driving

To learn more, visit adventurecycling.org/annualsurvey
My brain felt like cold molasses after pedaling in pouring rain for eight hours. My soul was still wet when I asked my husband, who was joining me for a short two weeks, about this “virus thing.” He said it looked like a dangerous flu that mostly affected the elderly. I was in southern Chile, 14 months into a planned three-year around-the-world solo cycling trip. I had pedaled from my doorstep in California to this point, nearing Coyhaique and ever closer to Ushuaia, the southern terminus for many cyclists and where the road ends. Afterward I would continue to Africa. This trip was my life dream. For years I had carefully planned, prepared, and executed the steps to make it happen.

We fortuitously stepped into a café after a few days with no cell service and heard the news of the arrival of a global pandemic. There is a 250-person “South America cycling” WhatsApp group chat that was sharing information as things changed rapidly. I mentioned to the group that I might hole up for two weeks, hoping it would blow over. They told me I was delusional. They used that word specifically.

I still hesitated on what to do — dreams are hard to let go. If I waited for two weeks, I could be stranded in Patagonia for the winter, blowing through my savings. I continued reading the messages reeling in, tales of canceled flights, unexpected trip endings, canceled ferries, misinformation, towns with limited resupply, travel restrictions, and in some places police questioning and almost arresting people for being foreigners. Flights were canceled, then back on, then canceled again.

Soon the weight of the situation settled into my life like a fog cloud in a river valley. It slowly and silently covered everything with the damp sadness of a dream sitting idle and unused. I realized with each pedal stroke — round and round — that I could not continue. My route, like many others, crossed back and forth between Chile and Argentina, but these land borders were now closed. I had expected to be in Ushuaia in April, then Buenos Aires, then Capetown. My husband had applied for a leave of absence to join me on the African continent. The momentum was headed in one direction and had been halted abruptly by an invisible and unwelcome force.
Nothing says “get ready for an inability to travel” like major airlines laying off 90 percent of their employees. Suddenly the previously murky path was clear to me: it was time to go. The world was changing and might not be the same after this. It was Tuesday, and I booked a plane ticket for that Saturday. My final clicks of purchasing my flight were accompanied by tears streaming down my face. I was embarrassed, but I couldn't stop the flow. There are different types and levels of sadness, and this wasn't death or war, but it was still real and raw. My life dream was ending, and I felt the bottom fall out. I dug into my reserves and said out loud, to no one in particular, “I’m coming right back to this spot to continue my trip. I’m going to make this time count for something. I’ll save money, write articles, and the world will get back on its proper axis. This is just a big dramatic pause.” I knew this hiatus was nothing compared to what others around the world were facing, and I didn’t waste any more time wallowing in self-pity, though it was tempting.

When I took my husband to his flight on Wednesday, the one-gate Balmaceda airport was overwhelmed with two flights of exodus. There was a cacophony of accents from all over the world and a lot of North Face-brand bags. I had tried but failed to get on his flight. So many cyclists were leaving that there were no more bike boxes, so ours were swaddled in copious cardboard and tape. He left and I stayed, a guarantee that there were no more bike boxes, so ours were swaddled in copious cardboard and tape. He left and I stayed, a guarantee of depression. With a quick hug and the least-tearful goodbye copious cardboard and tape. He left and I stayed, a guarantee of depression. With a quick hug and the least-tearful goodbye I gloomily loaded my awkward package back into the van and returned to the hotel.

As more airports closed, what had seemed incredibly hurried couldn’t happen quickly enough. The three and a half days of waiting for my flight would be ulcer-inducing and incredibly long. I was at peace with going home, and now I needed to go immediately. I rebooked my flight for the next day, and my long and unenviable itinerary included Balmaceda–Santiago–New York City–Los Angeles–Arcata, California.

The energy at the airports was eerie, and there was a sense of distrust between people paired with a desire to help each other, which made the seesaw of feelings teeter awkwardly. I figured we were all in this deluge together and most people were returning home unexpectedly. Trips were cut short in one way or another, and helping each other with bags or overhead compartments was the least we could do. People in face masks and gloves roamed past the closed Starbucks and empty trinket shops. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a Starbucks closed in the daytime. Some people even wore shoe covers. The atmosphere in the completely empty terminal in Santiago International Airport was surreal. As I looked at huge red blocks of canceled flights on the screens, I didn’t mind the 38 hours of travel. I just wanted to get home. I wanted to sleep, Sleep, what a velvety, distant luxury. For four nights I had no rest — one camping near the highway, two of anxious sheet wrestling with open eyes searching the darkness for the right questions and paired answers, then a red-eye flight.

After the all-night flight, the stocky, baby-faced customs agent asked me questions in a thick New York accent that I was struggling to answer, drunk with drowsiness. “How many countries have you been to?” I didn’t know. “Eight? No, 13?” I tried to explain my trip and he looked at me as if he had never heard of travel by bike. Maybe he hadn’t. “Where did you sleep at night?” “I camped,” I answered. “So you stayed in hotels?” “No, I camped, mostly.” “In hotels?” “Yeah, sure.” He asked if I had my bike in my carry-on, a single rear pannier, and suddenly my eyelids were a stressed dam of tears. To be in the U.S. so unexpectedly after being gone for so long, and under these circumstances, was like showing up at a party when you weren’t invited. It just felt wrong. I missed Spanish. I missed empanadas. I missed the morning greetings of “buenos días” to every single person. I missed the sour smell of mezcal, the tiny Peruvian women with their toothless smiles, and the Chilean cattle ranchers with their berets and tidy farmhouses. How could I explain where I had been and what I had been doing? It was impossible, and when he saw my tears, he just let me go.

In New York, I watched the news in another empty terminal. Governor Andrew Cuomo was pleading for ventilators from dentist offices or clinics that may be closed. This was really happening. My flight to Los Angeles had only 15 passengers and two dogs rattling around the 747. I feel guilty saying it was pleasant, but it was. With one more unheated, freezing two-hour flight north, I finally landed at our small, perpetually foggy airport in Arcata, California. I unsteadily descended the stairs to the tarmac utterly depleted, wearing the same off-the-bike outfit I had worn for over a year — leggings and a dress. This wasn’t what I had imagined for my post-trip homecoming. The chilly, humid darkness and salty ocean air was comforting, but I could barely see the familiar hills of home. I hadn’t been here since the sunny, frosty day I pedaled south, February 5, 2019. At that time I thought, “Oh, happy day! Here we go! I’m doing it!”

Being home would be a shock to the system. Hot water came out of the taps. You can drink it, too. Not seeing friends and family for weeks would be painful. I know there are harder things in this world. I know I will pick up my trip where I left off someday, somehow. For now though, here we go. The next adventure will come, or maybe it’s already here. Here we go. 😊

Hollie Ernest is a forester, botanist, and lover of sleeping outside, currently on hiatus from a round-the-world cycling trip. She loves all forms of cycling, especially remote rides to hidden pockets of any country. If you want to follow along or get in touch, her Instagram is @hollie_holly.
CATRIKE EOLA

BY BRIAN ZUPKE

A version of this review originally appeared in the Summer 2019 issue of Recumbent & Tandem Rider magazine.

Released in 2018, the Eola is the newest tadpole recumbent from Catrike. What’s perhaps most notable about the Eola is its price: under two grand, and it’s still made alongside every other Catrike model in Orlando, Florida. For $1,995, the Eola is affordable without sacrificing performance.

To achieve that price point — the most affordable in Catrike’s lineup — the Eola forgoes a number of creature comforts found on other, more expensive, models. The Eola doesn’t fold, its seat position and angle are fixed, it doesn’t have suspension, and its drivetrain is of the 1x variety. But fewer features doesn’t mean it’s a lesser trike. The Eola still has Catrike’s famed aluminum spaceframe, the same Catrike quality, and the same Catrike handling characteristics. It’s just opening up the world of tadpole trikes to more riders.

With 20in. wheels in the front and rear, the Eola is a good climber, and it has the added benefit of needing only one size of spare tube. The popular Schwalbe Marathon Racer tires provide excellent traction and help to dampen bumps in the road. The Eola also comes with a fender over the rear wheel, which helps keep you dry during puddle season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIFICATIONS (AS TESTED)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frame: Catrike aluminum spaceframe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brake calipers: Avid BB7 mechanical disc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brake levers: Catrike locking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift lever: SRAM NX grip shifter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear derailier: SRAM NX 11spd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crankset: FSA Omega, 165mm, 42T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassette: SRAM 11–42T, 11spd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bottom bracket: FSA MegaExo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddle: Catrike padded mesh seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headsets: FSA Zero Stack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tires: Schwalbe Marathon Racer, 20 x 1.5in.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catrike Eola</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price: $1,995</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sizes available: One</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weight: 33 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seat height: 241mm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bottom bracket height: 368mm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheelbase: 991mm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seat angle: 41°</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ground clearance: 114mm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turning radius: 2.5m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rider weight limit: 250lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rider X-seam range: 92-117cm</td>
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<tr>
<th>CATRIKE EOLA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Price: $1,995</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sizes available: One</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weight: 33 lbs.</td>
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The Eola has mechanical disc brakes on the front wheels — the familiar Avid BB7 — that provide excellent stopping power. Each brake lever controls a caliper on one wheel, meaning you need to apply both brakes evenly to avoid drifting, or that you need to compensate by steering in the opposite direction of the drift. When I braked with just one hand, the required steering compensation was a bit higher. It was very easy to apply the brakes with only my pinkies. Under very hard braking, it was possible to cause the rear wheel to lift off the ground, but this was easily avoided.

The bottom bracket height is about level with the seat bottom and places the pedals in a very comfortable position. The only time the height became an issue was when I entered steep driveways at speed while pedaling, which resulted in my lower foot touching the ground. I quickly learned to compensate by positioning my feet level with the bottom bracket.

The power side of the chain is routed under the seat and guided alongside the frame by a single idler pulley. It’s protected by tubing that goes halfway to the front chainring. The return side of the chain is secured by a section of tubing that also keeps chain bounce to a minimum but only extends to about three to four inches in front of the crossbeam for the wheels. Despite the Eola having exposed chain, it would be difficult to come into contact with it while riding.

The Eola is only offered with a single 42T chainring in the front. While there is a front derailleur post, it’s intended to be used to mount a light or other accessory. (A computer could be mounted there, but it would be difficult to read the display and would require the rider to lean forward.

### GEARING RANGE

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<td>22.2</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>19.0</td>
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Contact: Catrike, 2016 Stanhome Way, Orlando FL 32804, 407.999.0200, info@catrike.com
to push any buttons.) The chain turns an 11–42T 11-speed cassette, offering a wide range of gearing that, with the 42T chainring, favors climbing instead of speed. It was geared plenty low enough for the steep hills in my neighborhood. For pedaling at higher speeds, you would want a larger front chainring, but for me and my local terrain, the stock gearing was perfect.

My max speed was 47 mph, at which the Eola was extremely stable — it really wanted to go straight. The Eola has direct steering, with the handlebars connected directly to the king axle for the front wheels. The predominant motion for steering initially appeared to be side to side, but the handlebar position is angled somewhat so the rider can affect the steering with a push/pull force. Since the steering is fairly stiff, it takes more force to turn at slow speeds, which could be a challenge for anyone with low upper body strength or someone with disabilities. The stiff steering is perfect for higher speeds and makes it harder to oversteer the trike. Despite the stiffness, the steering is very responsive and doesn’t take much effort to adjust when cruising down the road. As a bonus, the Eola’s turning radius is very small.

The handlebars’ angle is fixed — the only adjustment that can be made is how close the handlebars are to the rider. I found the fixed angle to be very comfortable. The horizontal portion of the handlebars provides plenty of room to attach accessories or risers for accessories.

The Eola’s recumbent seat is padded mesh and extremely cushy. It’s built into the frame, so the seat angle is not adjustable. I had thought I wouldn’t like this as I generally prefer a more upright position, but I found the angle to be quite comfortable. However, the seat is reclined enough that I noticed some neck muscle fatigue after long rides because I had to keep holding my head tilted forward. A neck/head rest would be a valuable addition.

With a fixed seat, the Eola adjusts for different sizes by way of a telescoping front boom secured by two quick-release levers. The boom has numbered markings, making it easy to restore the boom to a desired position. The boom has a fair amount of travel, but for large adjustments you may need to lengthen or shorten the chain.
Suspension has always been an absolute requirement for me to enjoy riding a trike. I had anticipated that the Eola would shake me silly when I hit a rough patch or plowed over the steep curbs on the entrances to my local trail, but I was pleasantly surprised at how comfortable it was in those conditions. I even deliberately hit those entrances at a higher speed than I normally would on any recumbent, and I still did not get bounced around. On the road at high speeds, the trike seemed to just glide over bumps. I was quite impressed by the Eola and would definitely make an exception to my “must have suspension” rule.

I added a rear rack (designed for a 26in. wheel) so I could carry my trunk, and if I had been touring, I could have added panniers. The rack did extend above the seatback. The test trike came with a tube-shaped storage bag that attached behind the top of the seat. The bag had plenty of room for just about anything you would want to carry; however, once I added the rack, the bag was not easily accessible.

TerraCycle, the recumbent parts manufacturer, offers several different storage compartments specifically for Catrike trikes, such as the SeatSide Mount system. A distinct advantage such a compartment has over a rear rack (or the provided storage bag) is that it’s accessible while riding and also provides room for additional bottle cages.

The Eola doesn’t fold, but at 33 pounds it’s light enough to lift into a vehicle or onto a rack. Walking the trike is easily done by lifting the rear wheel and pushing or pulling the trike in the desired direction.

It was with great reluctance that I let the Eola return from whence it came. It’s a great climber, it’s comfortable, and it can carry a lot of gear. The steering is responsive but not squirrely, making it a stable, nimble trike. Because it’s lightweight and pushable, it’s easy to transport and store. All in all, the Eola is one fine trike. #3

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Brian Zupke reviews recumbents for Recumbent & Tandem Rider magazine.
Ergon ST Core Prime, $150

If $150 for a saddle not made from the outside of a cow makes you blanch, consider that the ST Core Prime from Ergon is kind of two saddles in one. Ergon uses two shells—one attached to the rails, and another sitting atop a bed of foam the brand says isolates movement to offer an extremely high level of comfort. How much, you ask? “As if you were floating on clouds,” Ergon says. I haven’t put a ton of miles on the ST Core Prime yet, but clouds is a little optimistic. Still, this is a very comfortable saddle. I’m testing the men’s version, but there’s a women’s as well, with cutouts for each based on anatomical requirements. Both come in small/medium or medium/large widths too, in order to accommodate various sit bone widths.

I’ll be curious how the exposed foam wears with a full season of banging against bike racks and other careless contact, and it must be said that the uncovered white foam makes the saddle look considerably less premium than its price. But if long-term testing proves as comfortable as first impressions, a premium is a small price to pay. –AS

Cannondale Wheel Sensor, $50

When I ride, I like to unplug, to lose myself in the experience of pedaling and being in nature. I don’t always want to be staring at a bar-mounted computer, but I do like to know my stats at the end. Cannondale’s Wheel Sensor, which it developed with Garmin, lets me have the best of both worlds. The sensor, which pairs with Cannondale’s app, automatically logs and later downloads rides whether or not you have your phone with you or a bike computer on your bars. It’s one of the most affordable cycling fitness trackers you can buy. And it turns on automatically when your bike wheel starts spinning — no need to press a start button. The sensor, which mounts on a spoke, tracks speed, distance, ride time, and calories burned. A ride summary shows you miles and calories for days or weeks. The app lets you set mileage goals and lets you know when you achieve them, and it provides feel-good stats like how much fuel you saved and how much CO2 you’ve kept out of the environment. The app’s “garage” tab stores serial numbers and saddle and/or suspension settings for multiple bikes. There’s also a spot for service records. If you don’t ride a Cannondale, you’ll have to enter those manually. If you do, your Cannondale dealer will upload the info, along with future service reminders. And you can use the sensor whether or not you bring your phone along. It saves up to 30 rides. When you sync it with Cannondale’s app, they download and clear space for the next 30. –BB
SealLine Blocker Zip Sack, $22–$32
When I’m bike touring, my gear is inevitably crammed into some space that’s too small to hold it comfortably, whether I’m carrying gear in bikepacking bags, panniers, a backpack, or some combination. For me, the best way to stay organized is using SealLine’s Blocker Zip Sacks. They’re small and light, they take up less room than a full drybag, and, unlike most other organizer sacks, they give me a second line of defense against the weather. I use one for tools, another to carry a first aid kit, one for snacks, and one for socks. The 70D polyurethane-coated nylon cases are slippery on the outside, which makes them easy to squeeze into a bag that already seems overstuffed. Splashproof zippers run tip to tail on these block-shaped bags. While I rarely leave a Blocker outside my bike bags, it has happened on occasion, and the contents stayed dry. Bonus: because they’re blocks not tubes, they’re space efficient. Available in three sizes, S, M, and L, and range from 1.2 to 5.8 liters capacity. –BB

Bontrager Adventure Wool Blend Henley, $90
On tour — heck, on any bike ride — I wear exclusively merino shirts. Comfortable, good at managing sweat, and, most importantly, odor-resistant, merino tees live in my panniers no matter the expected duration. Bontrager’s Henley offering is a blend combining merino, tencel, nylon, and a little stretch, and while blends aren’t quite as miraculous on the smell front, they’re a lot easier to live with. The Adventure Henley is extremely soft against the skin (something 100 percent wool can’t always achieve) and the fabric is a little heavier than pure merino, which gives it a nice drape without being hot. And odor-wise, this thing is still darn impressive, requiring some thought about when it should be washed vs. when it needs to be. Merino isn’t cheap, but a blend like this should wear well for years, and this one is going right to the top of my favorite cycling shirts. Available in men’s and women’s. –AS
In February 2009, Momoko Saunders carried a pail of water and walked with her sister Sakura past the gray memorials in Heiwa Park Cemetery in Akita, Japan. They had flown in from the U.S. for haka-mairi, the tradition of visiting the graves of loved ones. Seven years earlier, their Japanese mother, Masako Susukida, had died of a quickly progressing cancer, leaving Saunders without a mother at 20.

The sisters traipsed across the steep, snowy hillside. Lining the frozen ground were simple, polished concrete tombstones etched with family seals. Fog socked in the graveyard, blocking the view of the surrounding mountains. Momoko put the pail down, prayed, expressed her gratitude, and asked for guidance. Then, as tradition dictates, they poured the water little by little onto the tombstone to carefully wash it. They placed flowers at the site and left.

For Momoko, her feelings of grief for her beloved mother were complicated by memories of rejection, a subsequent eating disorder when she was a teenager, and depression. The best way to work through all that turned out to be churning the pedals of her Surly Cross-Check.

“I visited Japan to honor my mother,” said Momoko, an avid bike traveler from Portland, Oregon. “But I also really wanted to explore Japan on a bike. I didn’t realize at the time that I’d end up processing my mother’s death.”

After her sister Sakura flew home, Momoko spent the next month cycling 1,200 miles around Kitakyushu and the southern region of Honshu, the main Japanese island, an experience that was at times euphoric and unsettling but ultimately transformative.

Forged by volcanoes, this mountainous region is veined with rivers, surrounded by islands, and edged with spectacular coastline. On her first day, she pushed off from Tokyo. It took her an entire 70-mile day just to leave the lights, traffic, and chaos of the city.

She cycled the Shimanami Kaido, a 70-kilometer dedicated bike route from Onomichi City that hops six islands to Imabari City on Shikoku, the smallest of Japan’s main islands. Momoko glided over the glorious, bicycle- and pedestrian-dedicated suspension bridges spanning the indigo and turquoise waters of the Seto Inland Sea.
On her bike tour, Momoko felt the weight of the gaze of Japanese society, just as she had the gaze of her mother. Then, one day, the gods of bike travel threw her a bone.

Another day, she sprinted on her bike and barely made a ferry to the tiny island of Shodoshima. Once on the mountainous isle, she still had a monstrous ride to her campground. She arrived and, to her surprise, the campground had its own onsen — a Japanese bathhouse situated around a hot spring. So she spent the evening soaking in steaming water and looking over an exquisite bay from the onsen balcony.

Despite the good moments, something was disquieting about the trip. People around her were always polite, but Momoko noticed they would stare at her, then look away quickly, avoiding eye contact. It was a bag-clutching vibe. She felt ignored, unseen, excluded.

“Everyone thinks a Japanese girl should be beautiful, made up, and wearing the latest trends,” said Momoko, who spoke passable Japanese and wore bike shorts, knee-high wool socks, and combat boots while riding. “There was a lot of bad weather, and I looked like a wet rat a lot of the time. I didn’t smell great, and my clothes were getting holes from being worn over and over again.”

The feeling of rejection made her think about her relationship with her mother, which had been loving but not perfect. Momoko remembered visiting Japan with her mother and wearing a tank top that let her bra strap peek out. Everywhere they went, her mother apologized for her, saying it was an American style.

“She never accepted me,” said Momoko, who had sometimes tried to act and dress the way her mother wanted. “She wanted me to be neat and fastidious, and thinner. Japanese mothers are hard on their kids. It’s how they show they care.”

On her bike tour, Momoko felt the weight of the gaze of Japanese society, just as she had the gaze of her mother. Then, one day, the gods of bike travel threw her a bone.

Outside of Onomichi City, Momoko rode through the pouring rain on a terrifying sliver of a shoulder on a busy road. Trucks showered her with gutter water. She stopped for shelter at a mall. In the bathroom, she wrung out her clothes in the sink. People disapproved. She sloshed through the mall, found a laundromat, and stripped down straight into the dryer, her hair

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

The author during her tour of Japan.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BIKE TOURING AND MENTAL HEALTH

“Living with anxiety and depression is like living in a world filled with tall weeds that you can’t see over,” said Megan Moseley, physical therapist, Trauma Response Exercises (TRE) practitioner, and owner of Bodywise Physical Therapy in Portland, Oregon. “Activities like bike touring (extended physical exercise in nature) fills your world with flowers, reducing the amount of space the weeds take up.”

Moseley, who is an avid cyclist and a physical therapist annually on Cycle Oregon, works with clients dealing with panic, anxiety, depression, trauma, and pain. She thinks bike touring can be a powerful element in healing.

“The repetitive movement of pedaling and constant state of motion keep you connected to your body and not spinning your thoughts,” said Moseley. “Powering the machine of your bicycle forward provides a sense of accomplishment. A sense of beauty and connection to the outdoors restores you.”

In more scientific terms, exercise stimulates your brain’s reward center — the system of dopamine pathways that initiate feelings like hope, pleasure, and motivation — which can relieve depression. The scientific journal Neuropsychopharmacology published a study in 2015 that found eight weeks of exercise increased dopamine receptor availability in recovering drug addicts, reversing the damage to the reward center.

Some of the latest research, also published in Neuropsychopharmacology (2019), suggests that lactate, a metabolic byproduct of exercise, lowers anxiety and increases resilience to depression. And the Lancet (2018) published a study that found that people who cycled had 21.6 percent fewer poor mental health days than people who did not exercise.

To increase the therapeutic aspect of your bike tour, Moseley suggested not just having the experience but also “planting the experience.” So when you pass under a massive redwood tree, notice how it makes you feel awe. When you make it to the top of a pass, notice your gratitude and elation. Being mindful about what feels good is how you plant experiences (and dopamine receptors) like flowers.
The nearly five-minute video begins with the sound of wind in the trees and a shot of tree branches overhead. Smoke filters out of a weathered chimney stack. A dog wanders into the rustic cabin housing the shop, where a tea kettle is about to boil on a gas stove. The narration by Kelly begins.

“You take a logging trail and you go into the forest and you’re deep into nowhere,” he intones. “You escape everything, turn your phone off, or your phone doesn’t have reception. Camping in the middle of the forest. To get away, go explore. Like some magical scenic overview with no one around. Get away from your troubles, your worries. Who couldn’t use a little of that in their life?”

Who indeed?

“Originally I had a bike shop on Hollywood Boulevard,” Kelly continues, as the tea kettle begins to scream and the scene abruptly shifts to the chaotic traffic and honking horns on the famous Los Angeles street.

“It was one of the most hectic, overwhelming locations to have a shop, maybe in America,” Kelly says during sped-up, frenetic scenes of bumper-to-bumper traffic.

Cut to a slow-motion, bird’s-eye view of the tree-covered mountains on the doorstep of Kelly’s Topanga Creek Outpost shop.

“I needed a change,” Kelly says. “I wanted to move somewhere where there were trees and grass and I could ride my bike right out the front door into the forest. And that’s exactly what I did.”

We watch Kelly and two companions, plus his dog, riding a trail in the mountains as we hear this last bit of narration, inspiring and mysterious instrumental music in the background. And we’re only about halfway through this remarkable video. It’s truly an inspiration, covering themes that will be familiar to the members of Adventure Cycling Association but that also have the potential to inspire those who never thought of following two wheels to the adventures of their lives.
Kelly, 53, moved to California from the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York 25 years ago, living in San Francisco and San Diego before taking some acting classes and moving to Los Angeles.

Kelly had some success with his acting career. He landed a role in the film *Fight Club*, in one of the scenes in the basement. He appeared in line for the Soup Nazi in an episode of *Seinfeld*. He played Zim Brott, the dead blue alien, in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, uncredited.

“I show up dead,” Kelly said with a hint of irony in his voice.

In 1999, Kelly opened a small bike shop on Hollywood Boulevard, the only shop around.

“We thought we were capturing the tourists,” he said. “What turned out to be the case is there was no bicycle shop in Hollywood.”

People forget, Kelly said, that there are a quarter million people who live within a square mile of Hollywood Boulevard and its cheesy T-shirt shops and ultra-expensive luxury boutiques. And some of those people need a good bike shop. They just never had one before.

Kelly explained that when you have a store on Hollywood Boulevard, you have to be really aware of the fact that what you’re selling must have inherent value because so much of what’s sold there does not.

“In other words, if you’re selling a lock, it’s got to work and work well,” he said. “If you’re selling a bike, it has to be a good bike. People are skeptical in general, and they double down in Hollywood because you’re next door to tattoo parlors and stores with fake Ray Bans.”

The first rack Kelly sold was a Tubus, generally considered the best there is.

“We chose products that weren’t debatable,” Kelly said. “The locks were Kryptonite. We didn’t get cheap anything.”

Kelly’s Hollywood bike shop was working as a business but not as a lifestyle.

“Hollywood started to get to my soul,” Kelly said.

The final straw came when he was told at a city-owned parking lot that if he wanted a shot at parking his car, he had to show up at five in the morning, stand in line, and hope there would be an open space.

“You know, I’m not going to do that,” Kelly told the parking-lot attendant.

“The guys and I were super busy all the time,” Kelly said. “Things were flying off the shelf.”

Kelly had an idea, inspired by his dad. He told his three employees they were shutting down in July and heading to the Tour de France — on him.

The trip was spectacular. Kelly was selling BMC bikes at the time so the company, which sponsors a Tour de France team, gave him and his employees the royal treatment in France, taking them to dinner and giving them a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the biggest bike race in the world.

“We rented a BMW and went all over,” Kelly said.

They went to the Gurtenfestival in Switzerland, an annual outdoor concert where another of their friends got them backstage. They drove through the little mountain village of Grindelwald, where they hiked in the mountains. They watched the riders climb the infamous Alpe d’Huez. They talked about moving the bike shop away from Hollywood Boulevard.

A few months after they returned to California, the recession kicked in. It was in full swing when Kelly did a ride through Topanga one day on what he called an “absurd” commute to work because it was so circuitous, starting in Marina del Rey and riding up the coast before crossing over Topanga to Hollywood.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 49
SEVERAL YEARS AGO, MICHELLE BULL WAS DELIGHTED to meet someone as excited for outdoor adventure as she was. She suggested that her new boyfriend, Allen Drummond, take some time off work for an unforgettable summer trip with her.

Six months into their relationship, the two set off to ride one of the higher-elevation stretches of the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route over a two-week stretch in 2014. They started their trip in Rawlins, Wyoming, headed toward Dillon, Colorado. They optimistically planned to achieve 55 miles each day through the Colorado Rockies.

Within a couple of days, they learned they had bitten off more than they could chew — they were exhausted and spent once reaching their intended campsites.

Michelle laughed. “So then we had rules like, first rule, we should always be done by 5:00 pm,” she said. The couple reduced their daily goal to a more reasonable 35 miles a day and ultimately loved the experience so much that they’ve kept going back each summer to take on a different section.

“Within a couple of days, they learned they had bitten off more than they could chew — they were exhausted and spent once reaching their intended campsites. Michelle laughed. “So then we had rules like, first rule, we should always be done by 5:00 pm,” she said. The couple reduced their daily goal to a more reasonable 35 miles a day and ultimately loved the experience so much that they’ve kept going back each summer to take on a different section.

“We were camping and getting hot and tired together, and if you can get through that you can get through anything,” she said.

For Michelle, who’s in her 60s, heading out on the Great Divide has been the culmination of a childhood dream. She credits her dad, Rex.

“He taught me how to change a bike tire, and he encouraged me by having these conversations about riding across the country,” she said. “He encouraged me to think big about bike trips.”

It’s one of her greatest regrets that she never got to ride across the country with her dad, who died shortly after she started dating Allen.

“I definitely got a seize-the-day lesson from him dying,” Michelle said. “We’d never done that big trip together, he and I.”

For Allen’s part, reflecting on his and Michelle’s first bike tours is also bittersweet. His dad rode SAG on that 2014 Great Divide trip, driving a truck to their campsites each evening and welcoming them after a long, hard day of riding. As this issue went to print, Allen was losing his father, 82, to a slow decline from cancer.

“He was an important part of our first couple trips. Michelle got to know my dad in the first part of our relationship,” Allen said. “He’s had a long, good life.”

Michelle and Allen are looking forward to more bike trips, this time with their sights set on Europe when travel is safely opened up again. Michelle said the Adventure Cycling maps, mission, and magazine motivated them to sign on as Life Members.
Michelle had a word of encouragement for people who might still be dreaming about taking an epic tour: “Start small. If you’re waiting for the month and a half it’s going to take to ride across the country, you’re not gonna do it. But if you say, ‘I’m just going to do a one-week ride, or a weekend ride, or a bike overnight,’ it’s very doable, really whets your appetite, and can lead to bigger and better things.”

Kate Whittle is Adventure Cycling’s Cultivation Coordinator. She wouldn’t dream of riding 55 miles a day on the Great Divide.

Funds from the Life Membership program are put into a special account to provide long-term support for Adventure Cycling Association. In the past, these funds have helped us purchase and update our headquarters building, saving us thousands of dollars in interest payments.

If bicycle travel is an important part of your life, please consider making a lifetime commitment by joining as an Adventure Cycling Life Member. To find out more, visit adventurecycling.org/membership or give Membership Manager Julie Huck a call at 800.755.2453 x214.

Thanks to these new Life Members who joined recently with their support:

- Wade Rich, San Diego, CA
- Buck Benson, Grand Marais, MN
- Gina Buscarello & Dena Hughes, Seattle, WA
- Jim Elsea, Seattle, WA
- Rich & Sara Cardwell, Fruita, CO
- Jim Musante, New Smyrna, FL
- Benjamin Fichialos, Pleasant Grove, UT
- Benjamin & Elaine LaPrade, Elizabethtown, KY
- Robert Hess, Union City, PA
- Douglas Nicholson, Coeur D’Alene, ID
- Ed & Brenda Petkus, Mukilteo, WA
- Linda M. Peterson, Winters, CA
- Marianne Borowski, Glen, NH
- Gary Berg, Silver City, NM
- Marshall, Hixson, TN
- Mark Newruck, Wellsboro, PA
- Michael Adamczak, Duluth, MN
- Nancy Beaulieu & James Szepesy, Encinitas, CA
- Richard Schramm, Campbell, CA
- John Juras, Great Falls, MT
- Susie Armstrong Family, Encinitas, CA

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matted and dirt on her face.

“ITHought, ‘%#$ it,’” said Momoko. “I was so cold and wet, even scared from the ride.”

There, wet and wearing a skirt and tank top in the mall laundromat, she let go of caring what Japan thought. She let go of caring about being accepted. In that moment, she felt a rush of freedom. For a long time, Momoko had tried to be perfect for her mother. But she never had been, and she never would be. She began letting go of a deeply buried need for her mother’s approval.

In the laundromat, a woman approached Momoko. She expected a disapproving lecture, but instead the woman befriended her and ended up hosting her for the night. Looking back on the whole thing, Momoko wondered if she had been anticipating people’s criticism out of habit and expectation — and if that had affected her experience.

The trip continued. Momoko visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. She walked her bike along the ocean floor in the Kanmon Pedestrian Tunnel, a 780-meter-long underwater pedestrian passageway connecting Honshu with Kyushu. In Okayama, she snoozed at the base of the statue of Momotaro, the famous Japanese folklore hero and her namesake, who was said to be born from a peach. Dirty and cold, she pedaled up to the renowned Dōgo Onsen in Matsuyama. She soaked in its hot spring waters where people in Japan (including the imperial family) have bathed for over 1,000 years.

In the hip town of Fukuoka, Momoko rode to a park during hanami — the Japanese tradition of enjoying the transient beauty of flowers. The soft pinks and magentas of cherry blossoms cut against the brilliant blue sky. Saunders dawdled around clusters of picnickers. Music filled the air as did the smell of local food. Eventually a number of people asked her to join them on their tarps.

“The full sensory experience from the saddle — the smells, sense of space, sounds, and connecting with the culture — triggered memories of my mother,” said Momoko, reflecting on how her trip began a healing process for her. “I was alone, and the riding put me into a meditative state with the hours of repetitive movement. For long periods of time, my mind was blank. So unconscious stuff bubbled up.”

Bike touring has always had healing powers for Momoko. Her first trip was a solo two-week trip in Europe on a 10-speed Schwinn with homemade panniers in 2007. Along a local bike path in Holland, she cycled past backyards and smelled the vegetable gardens. She strolled around a market on the outskirts of Paris, far from tourists. As she rode through Nimes in southern France, she navigated the electric commotion around a bullfight. Just because she could, she rode through the night from The Hague to Amsterdam.

“It was weird that I liked touring,” said Momoko. “I poured sweat. I was so exhausted. I thought, ‘Why am I doing this?’ Simultaneously, I was smiling and having a blast.”

Momoko also didn’t expect that on the road she would find a different version of herself. Her body was no longer something to punish or ignore, but a means of bringing her to new places.

“I remember eating a chocolate bar at the end of my longest day, 80 miles,” said Momoko. “It was so good, and I felt good eating it. That was a completely new experience. Though I didn’t look any different, I felt achieved, and balanced, like cycling had changed the chemical balance in my brain. “Bike touring is my Prozac.”

In January 2020, Momoko quit her job as the general manager at Biketown, Portland’s top-notch bike-share program that organizes and maintains over 1,000 bikes around the city. Her departure was the capstone to five career-driven years.

“I’ve always struggled with depression, even now when I have a great career and an awesome husband,” she said. “The last five years, I’ve been very driven, which hasn’t helped, mentally or physically. Bike touring pushes away the fog of what everyone else wants me to be and reminds me of who I am. So I’m going to ride solo from New Orleans to Miami. To mend myself.”

Her plan after her trip to New Orleans? Possibly to start a family. Possibly to be a chief operating officer. That’s something she’ll try to sort out on tour.

“Thinking about my mom,” said Momoko, “I think she’d be embarrassed about me sleeping in parks and whatnot. But part of her would think, ‘My daughter is pretty cool.’ The mountains I’ve climbed, the people I’ve met, the things I’ve seen.”

Ellee Thalheimer is a contributing writer for Adventure Cyclist.

GREAT ADVENTURE CYCLIST JUNE 2020
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41
D’AMBROSIO: TOPANGA CREEK

“I remember getting near the state park and thinking to myself, ‘Oh my God, this is where we move the shop, this is it,’” Kelly said.

The real estate agent who showed Kelly the little cabin he had spotted on that ride thought he was crazy when he said he would take it after walking barely five feet into the building.

“We’re surrounded by a conservancy and the state park,” Kelly said. “It’s phenomenal.”

Despite the fact that he can count on one hand the number of people who have walked by the shop in 12 years, Kelly is making a go of it. He’s continuing his focus on carrying only quality goods. Surly is his main bicycle brand. He prefers to see people by appointment only, which is particularly well suited to these strange times of the coronavirus pandemic. But Kelly does it for other reasons.

“Anybody who wants to get a bike from us, we want to dedicate time and plan it with them uninterrupted,” Kelly said. “It’s for everybody’s benefit. We’re not a tire kicker kind of place.”

Kelly’s esoteric approach to selling has attracted some unusual customers, in line with the celebrity vibe California is famous for. Singer Ben Harper and actor Jason Momoa are customers, as is Grateful Dead drummer Bill Kreutzmann. Kelly set Kreutzmann and his wife up with a couple of Surlys.

“I sat in the cabin listening to the Dead with the Dead,” Kelly said. “It’s only because we’re a real down-to-earth bike shop. We’re in no way fancy.”

Kreutzmann told Kelly his shop was his kind of business. Kelly’s customers have also been doing their part to keep him going through one of the most difficult economic periods in the nation’s history. One customer told him to do $1,000 worth of work on his bike. He didn’t care what he did.

Momoa, star of the movie Aquaman, said he needed a pump and that he’d throw some cash in Kelly’s mailbox to pay for it.

“Kreutzmann said it was only because we’re a real down-to-earth bike shop. We’re in no way fancy.”

Dan D’Ambrosio is a contributing writer for Adventure Cyclist.
CENTURIES ACROSS U.S. Looking to ride across the U.S. starting in Astoria, Oregon, and ending in Virginia Beach, but flexible on starting and ending location and specific route. Looking to ride 100 miles per day, staying in motels/hotels. Eating out (no camping or cooking) — just looking to have fun. I have ridden across the U.S. before (3,457 miles in 30 days — looking to go a little slower the next time), and am willing to do this ride if you are on an eBike too.

a122lic@gmail.com

RELAXED GREAT DIVIDE I’m looking for riding companions to do the GDMBR (N to S). Start date is flexible. Planning on camping with occasional hotel/motel/lodge stays. Relaxed pace expecting 60–70 days to complete. I am a 69-year-old married male. This trip is self-supported. Possibility of a visit from my wife and children along the way.

art_duguay@hotmail.com

NORTHERN TIER 2021 Planning for a mostly Northern Tier ride beginning in spring 2021. I’m a 60-year-old experienced long-distance tourer. Would prefer to go east to west; I want to save the big mountains for the final part and like the sun on my back in the morning. Typically do around 60+ miles per day, depending on terrain and weather, and usually do a mix of camping, cheap motels, and Warmshowers. I’m also open to folks who want to do part of the ride rather than the whole thing. Get in touch and we can talk it over and begin making plans. Remember — if not now, when?

heathmacalpine@hotmail.com

ADIRONDACK LOOP I’m an educator and looking to depart for the Loop toward the end of June. Starting in Albany and anticipating taking a week or so. I’ll be camping most of the time but not against staying in B&Bs or other lodging. I’m an avid bicyclist but never race — I enjoy the adventure.

coachp2@hotmail.com

SEEKING CHALLENGE AND FUN I’m a 51-year-old female in Escondido, California. Seeking companions for adventure rides both local and distant, any skill level acceptable. My only requirements are a positive attitude, sense of humor, respect for the trails and nature, and a will to push through adversity. Always up for night riding. Have an idea for a ride?

respectourplanet77@gmail.com

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805cycle@gmail.com

IRELAND Returning to Ireland in 2021 to enjoy the best cycle touring in Europe along the western coastlines, outlying islands, and Northern Ireland. Looking to share the adventure with one sociable M/F over 40. Fly to Shannon, three to four weeks staying in B&Bs, riding 40–60 miles per day. Light, daily rain, cool temps. Little sun. An extensive network of quiet backroads, rolling hills, stunning mountain passes, and the world’s friendliest people.

ljubljana2014-a@yahoo.com

NATCHES TRACE I’m a retired 62-year-old male who is looking for companions for touring the Natchez Trace, starting Nashville in late July/early August, probably ending in Jackson, Mississippi. 50–60 miles per riding day, with a rest day about midway down. Stay at Warmshowers hosts to the extent possible. Otherwise a combination of camping and motel/hotels/B&Bs.

johnwider@aol.com

FAIRBANKS TO ANTELOPE WELLS I’m planning to start in Fairbanks in early/mid-July 2020 and ride the 2,000 miles to Banff. Plan to do 90 to 120 miles per day during that part of the ride — not super fast, but just 10 or 12 hours of riding per day. Will do a shorter day if needed or a longer one if conditions are right. Then do the GDMBR from Banff to Antelope Wells. Plan is to do that in around 30 days. All self-supported. Camping and motels.

hyndmans@gmail.com

WILD WEST ROUTE Looking for 2 or 3 riders starting anytime between mid-July to mid-August. A great follow-up for any GDMBR veterans looking for another adventure. I am 68, male, and have done the Northern Tier, GDMBR, and Idaho Hot Springs. Planning to take 60 days to do the 2,700-mile route. This is an exciting off-road route for bikepackers. Most of the logistics have been worked out.

kimh51@hotmail.com

BROOKLYN TO USHUAIA I’m a retired high school art teacher/muralist/artist setting up a ride I’ve been dreaming about for some time. The plan is to ride west from Brooklyn, New York, at the beginning of August 2020 and head generally west, ride the GDMBR south and cross into Mexico at the California border. Then it’s a meander through Mexico, Central and South America, ending in Ushuaia February 2021. I plan on camping when appropriate, Warmshowers when available, and hotels when prudent. Companions welcome for all or part of this trip.

joematuinis@yahoo.com

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Freeman’s Best Friend

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAXTON CAPLANIDES  STORY BY GAGE POORE

➔ JOHN FREEMAN AND HIS TRAVELING BUDDY MIRA stopped by Adventure Cycling headquarters on November 1, 2019 — relatively late in our season for touring cyclists in Montana. John, a 49-year-old human, and Mira, a two-year-old border collie/heeler mix, began their cycling tour of the world from their home in Canmore, Alberta, near the start of the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route.

At the time of this writing, they are currently riding south through Mexico on the Trans-Mexico Norte and Sur bikepacking routes. “We had a great trip through the U.S. even though the weather wasn’t the best,” Freeman wrote. “I found that the GDMBR went into large towns more often than I like so we switched to the Wild West Route through Idaho, Wyoming, and later Utah. By the time we got close to Bryce Canyon, I’d had enough of the snow.” From St. George, Utah, the travelers made their way to Las Vegas, Nevada, then on through the Mojave Desert into California where they began riding south on the Baja Divide Route. They rested for a week or so after completing the Baja Divide and made their way to the mainland of Mexico. “We should arrive in Guatemala City by May,” John wrote.

The next big portion of their world tour would have taken them through Central and South America, but the border to Guatemala is now closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “We’ve only just started this trip, and in that time the world has changed,” John wrote. “Just how much has yet to be seen.” The Mexican government has not yet imposed travel restrictions so the two continued their travels there. “Travelling backroads on the Trans-Mexico is like a bit of time travel. Small farms, ranches, and pueblos abound. More people travel on horseback and foot. Still one of the threads knitting this trip together is the warmth and kindness shown by all the people we encounter. I’m hopeful that when this current crisis passes, we will continue to see the same quality in the people we encounter, dogpacking around the world.”

For some wonderful pictures and videos of their journey so far, follow Mira’s Instagram @mira_la_perra.

From Adventure Cycling’s National Bicycle Touring Portrait Collection. © 2020 Adventure Cycling Association.
No hidden messages, just some old-fashioned fun. Words can be formed in all directions.

TOURING CYCLIST'S WORD SEARCH

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- TOUR
- WHEEL
- SCENERY
- MISSOULA
- GRAVEL
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- FRAMEBAG
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