



Running, Pedaling, and Pushing Across Australia



→ In November last year, Katie Visco arrived in Adelaide, on the southern coast of Australia, after leaving the northernmost city of Darwin four months earlier. But she didn't cross Australia — a distance of 2,200 miles — on a bicycle. She ran it.

Visco, who lives in Adventure Cycling's hometown of Missoula, Montana, didn't run through the Outback alone, thank goodness. Her husband, Henley Phillips, followed her on his touring bike. Talk about a supportive spouse!

Phillips pedaled a Surly Troll loaded for bear with racks and panniers, more bags strapped to the racks and handlebar, and a giant framebag. He carried everything they could possibly need for the trip, including clothes, a tent, sleeping gear, food, and even a poop bag, leaving Visco free to run unencumbered. Phillips also towed a Surly Ted trailer loaded with more than 100 liters of water, a shade tarp, spare tire, and other supplies. All in, Phillips estimated that his whole setup weighed about 300 pounds, and sometimes closer to 350.

Of their cross-country route, Phillips noted that they chose lightly trafficked dirt roads over the more direct route down the Stuart Highway. "Leaving Darwin felt almost tropical, but within just a few weeks we were traveling through the Tanami Desert where the landscape is stark and barren, void of trees or shade cover and infested with flies," said Phillips. "We encountered kangaroos in the thousands, wild boar, wild buffalo, emus, dingos, and even a few wild camels leftover from the Afghan cameleers.

"We started out at 23 miles a day, then bumped to 25 per day, 28 per day, and so on until Katie hit her groove about a month in. From then on she averaged 30 miles a day with a rest day or two planned every five to six days."



Visco and Phillips wild camped for the entire trip, and for supplies they relied on packages they'd mailed to themselves. "Our diet was heavily skewed to oats, pasta, and tuna packets," said Phillips. "Fresh food was a rarity. Our water came primarily from bores or wells in towns and random cattle tanks strung out in the cattle country of the Outback. We only came across fresh groundwater once the entire trip, and though it was a bit discolored and had maybe been visited by one too many cows, we both bathed and drank from it — heaven!"

After enduring temperatures over 100°F (with little to no shade), pushing the bike for days through deep sand, and fighting off hordes of flies, Phillips said he wouldn't have done anything differently. "Given the fact that this was a 100 percent human-powered effort supporting another human-powered effort, things went remarkably well.

"It was a full-on experience from day one, and as hard as it was, we both miss it deeply."

Follow them on Instagram @katievisco and @henley.phillips.

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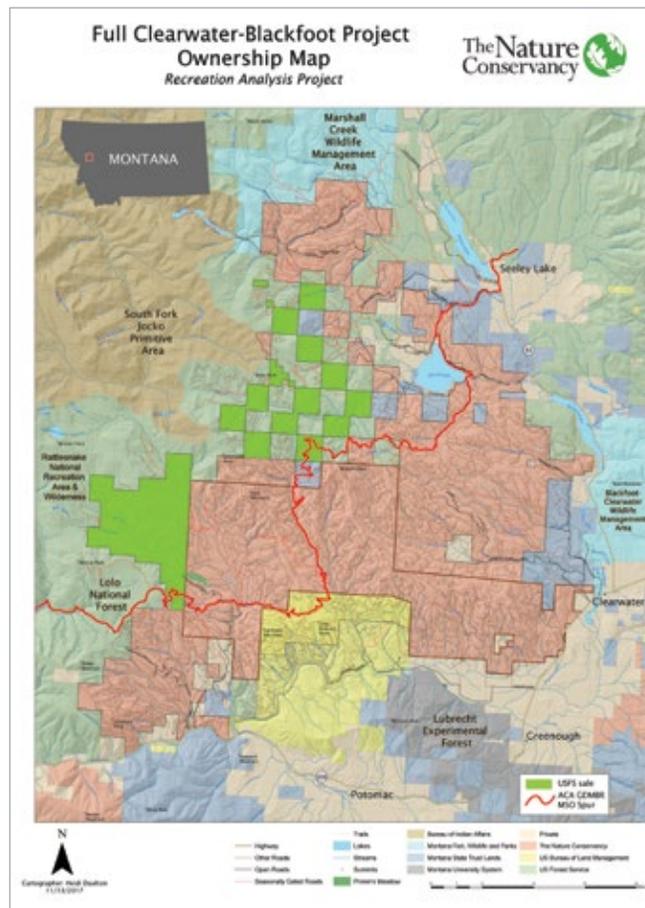
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THEY'RE NOT MAKING IT ANYMORE, BUT THEY ARE SELLING IT

→ In January, the Nature Conservancy (TNC), an environmental nonprofit organization, finalized the sale of 16,400 acres of former timber land in Montana to the Forest Service. Located west of Seeley Lake and north of Missoula, Montana, the land includes a portion of the 117,000 acres that TNC acquired from Plum Creek Timber Company in 2015. The sale will help ease the burden of local land managers by getting rid of the checkerboard pattern of public-private land ownership, as well as increase public access to areas like the Rattlesnake Wilderness and the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area.

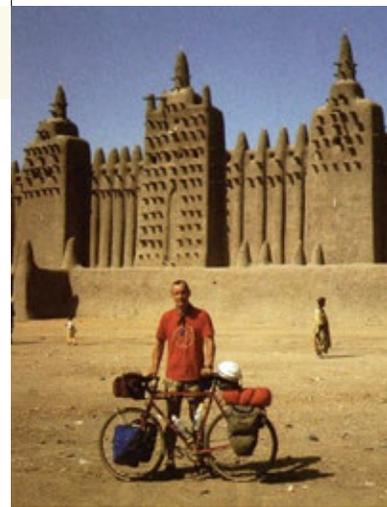
Why would this be of interest to you, the bicycle traveler? Because the Missoula Spur of the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route just happens to be located in the same area as the land transfer.

“While this recent land transfer from TNC to the Forest Service will only affect a few route miles, this is a great first step in building public investment in restoring a long-forgotten corner of western Montana,” said Nathan Taylor, Senior GIS Specialist/Cartographer at Adventure Cycling. “The lonesome ridges and creeks of the Upper Blackfoot-Clearwater might best represent some of those supreme virtues of a bikepacking adventure: challenging terrain, tricky navigation, hundred-mile views, and unfettered solitude. Here’s hoping for more momentum in stewarding



these lands to the best possible outcome for ecological health and bike travel alike.”

The Forest Service purchased the land using the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which directs royalties from offshore oil and gas projects to fund conservation and recreation efforts and which congress permanently reauthorized last year.



RUSH DRUMMER NEIL PEART DEAD

→ On January 7, 2020, Neil Peart, drummer and lyricist for the band Rush, died from brain cancer at the age of 67. Known for his virtuosic percussion, Peart was also a bookworm and a cyclist. He kept a bike with him while on tour and would ride centuries between gigs (he later switched to a motorcycle). Peart even did a tour of Cameroon in 1988, and wrote the book *The Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa* about the journey.

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