



No. **5155**



First Time for Everything

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAXTON CAPLANIDES STORY BY GAGE POORE

→ “WHEN I TOLD FRIENDS AND FAMILY THAT I WAS CHOOSING TO SPEND MY ENTIRE SUMMER CROSSING THE COUNTRY on a bike, they were understandably surprised. ‘Like, a motorbike?’ asked a friend. ‘I didn’t know you were a cyclist,’ commented a few others, which I was also still coming to grips with. But I was set on making the trip, motivated by the challenges that would contrast the complacency of more than a decade of desk jobs and a comfortable life in my mid-30s.” Charley Detwiler of Vermont wrote this looking back on his 2017 solo trip across the country traveling westbound on the TransAmerica Trail. The 36-year-old visited Adventure Cycling headquarters on August 15 on his first bike trip. “I soon learned that despite my lack of cycling history, skills like determination and persistence were infinitely more valuable in this kind of long haul across the country,” he wrote. “While you still had to know how to fix a flat, navigate your way across new territory, and pack efficiently, these can all be learned.”

“Once the trip started, I developed routines and started to realize what worked for me. I set a purpose for each day’s ride, whether that was to go to the Makers Mark factory tour, get to a campground early to swim, or even to photograph roadkill (this attempt at documentation didn’t last long).” In tougher times along the journey, Detwiler was able to push through, finding confidence in knowing he was adequately outfitted and that many others had done similar trips before him. “When you boil it down, a successful bike tourer relies on two conflicting traits: stubbornness and open-mindedness,” he wrote. “Be open-minded about the life choices that you normally closely control (where you travel, eat, and sleep), as that day’s agenda may be taking you somewhere that you would otherwise not experience, yet be stubborn enough to push yourself on through the pains and distractions, trying to remember the bigger goal.”

After finishing his cross-country journey in Florence, Oregon, Detwiler didn’t expect to have an epiphany or emotional conclusion, and didn’t need one to feel like the journey was a success. “I was glad to be done with the day-to-day riding, especially as the late summer Oregon forest fires diminished air quality, but I still knew that something special had come to an end. I’ll forever be grateful that I listened to that voice in me that told me to go.”

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