



From Bikecamping to Bikeglamping

by TANEIKA DUHANEY



I have an overachieving complex that is not easily remedied. In my early 20s, I leaped from running a few treadmill miles

a week to a marathon in less than eight weeks. In my 30s, I leapfrogged from 45-minute Peloton classes to a metric century ride in less than a month. Looking back, my thrill-seeking endeavors, though fun, were a mix of exhilaration and jubilation with a hearty side of misery. Trying bikepacking for only the second time, I had learned my lesson and was less eager to throw caution to the wind.

As my trip date approached, the 14-day forecast shifted from cool to colder temperatures with plenty of precipitation. This weather combination, coupled with increasing attacks of Raynaud's syndrome — a condition that restricts blood flow to my hands and feet — ensured that “winging it” was not an option. Canceling is always an option, but I desperately needed some alone time to rest and recharge.

To salvage my trip, I started searching for practical alternatives. With the local park campgrounds closed for winter, I could bikecamp along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Camping at a hiker/biker site would be less than ideal, but a lockhouse or hotel near the canal could be suitable options. Instead of bikecamping, I'd be bikeglamping.

In or near Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, lockhouses were quickly crossed off my list. At almost \$200 nightly, with no linen or fireplace, and room for five, this wasn't

the right fit for a solo trip. Airbnb options were too pricey or too far from the trail, and the hostel provided more questions than answers. Ultimately, my best option was a hotel that was a stone's throw from the trail.

I loaded fully packed saddle- and framebags on my bike with housing settled. Starting at Fletcher's Boathouse, the 57-mile trek was a muddy, chilly, cathartic ride. When I reached Harpers Ferry, I desperately needed a hot shower, food, and rest.

Over the next few days, the rain subsided and clouds gave way to warmer-than-expected temperatures. I planned to ride to Williamsport, but a flat, a persistent slow leak, and a mechanical issue forced me to about-face near Shepherdstown. That evening, some basic mechanical skills, a few YouTube videos, and an abundance of patience helped me find the glass shard impaling my tire. Between riding, I opted to explore the town off the bike.

Hiking the sparsely populated Maryland Heights cliffs allowed me to take in Harpers Ferry from another angle. I took a breather atop a ridge while leaning against a gravity-defying boulder. Inhaling the crisp, cool air, I looked down at the town from my bird's-eye view to appreciate the picturesque panorama of clear blue skies meeting a sea of trees as an errant bird darted toward the churning Potomac River below. My breath slowed; a sense of calm enveloped me. Suddenly, I was jolted from my peace by a barking, unleashed dog charging toward me. The owner called the dog and he quickly pivoted and ran back to his owner, but not before he was less than

a foot from my leg. Wide-eyed and flushed with adrenaline, that was my cue to hike back to town and prepare to head home.

On my ride back to Fletcher's Boathouse, the extended wet weather that weighed me down also brought down several trees and blocked the towpath. Lifting my fully loaded bike over the tree trunks required a herculean effort. What should have been an easy roll quickly shifted to an obstacle course. Coming into Great Falls, my arms were exhausted and my toes were numb from the cold, but the addition of foot warmers and shoe covers made a world of difference and lifted my spirits.

As I approached Fletcher's Boathouse, I was thankful I followed through with this trip. Camping in such weather was a risk not worth taking. Additionally, learning that drinking water is turned off at hiker/biker campsites along the canal between November and April made the hotel the best option for my limited camping experience.

Bikeglamping has been fun. Looking ahead to my next adventure, my checklist is growing. I've adopted a *semper Gumby* (always be flexible) mentality and am learning to balance my thrill-seeking desires with common-sense measures. ⚠️



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