Vacation, All We Ever Wanted
by CAROLYNE WHELAN
A couple years ago, I flew to visit my family in Fort Myers, Florida, for Christmas, then took a ferry to Key West. The Florida Keys had long been a goal destination of mine. First it was the Beach Boys song “Kokomo,” which my parents used to encourage me to sing at Christmas parties as a little sprocket. Then I heard about Sushi, a drag queen lowered in a sparkling red high-heeled shoe during the countdown to the new year’s start. How could I miss that?

I arrived on December 27, realized the hostel I had booked was actually in Guatemala (which explained the wonderful rate and Spanish-language website), got myself situated in the much more expensive hostel of the same name, and started planning. I only had a few days to ride up and down the Keys to make it back in time to see Sushi. I followed Adventure Cycling’s Atlantic Coast section 7 map. It was a simple ride that mainly followed along a boardwalk connecting all the islands. Along the way, I jumped off here and there for a swim, aiming to hit each nature reserve I could find.

I got back to Key West in time to take a nap and a shower, then pedaled around until I found the biggest New Year’s party on the island. Strangers bought me piña coladas, showed me their secret beach spot away from crowds and free for the people. I ate cart food, slept for an hour, and hopped on the ferry back to Fort Myers to sleep off the excitement before having to jump back into the world of Zoom meetings and magazine proofing. It was epic, exhausting, spectacular, and exactly the refresh I needed between holidays and work, to find my wild spirit and bring her back to life.

Sometimes, we just need to get away — escape the doldrums of winter, the expectations of work, the pressure of holidays. Unfortunately, especially in the U.S., vacation isn’t a guarantee, and it typically takes a lot of strategizing just to get a week to ourselves. As dreamy as a five-year circum-navigational adventure or a five-month pedal down the coast of the Americas sounds, even a single week away can work wonders to hit the ole reset button on our spirits. More than mere distance, truly disconnecting from the causes of our stress to connect with our passions is the relief we need to avoid short-circuiting our noggin.

Winter is especially fraught, with so many holidays to budget time and finances around, with less daylight for cramming in miles on the saddle. For this last issue of the year, we are highlighting some tours that can be finished during a week or 10-day vacation including travel to and from the tour location, in places mainly known for their sunlight and warmth (except Alaska, but not everyone has the last week of the year off, and I imagine some of you will be planning for a week off during the summer).

Whether you travel to another continent for a day ride of epic proportions or squeeze a few days in the American Southwest, I hope this issue gives you the inspiration you need to make it happen. At the very least, I hope the sunny stories bring you some warmth on a chilly early winter’s day.

Carolyne Whelan
Editor-in-Chief
cwhelan@adventurecycling.org