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LONG-DISTANCE, LONG-DURATION TOURING: FROM THOUGHT TO ACTION

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Date: February 07, 2000 06:38 PM

Author: Ethan Gelber (ethang@gorp.com)

Subject: the framework

The world is getting smaller. Bus tours do not have the cache they once had. To many travelers, meeting other people is now more important than seeing the outsides of the houses in which they live. Biking and outdoor gear is getting lighter better. Put this all together — and plenty of other elements — and it is clear why long-distance cycling has become so much more fashionable.

But fashion has rarely been bundled with ease. Planning for and then completing a long (or even medium-length) trip is difficult. Personal, physical and mechanical strengths/weaknesses, logistics, partners, and much more have to be assessed and then sussed out. With whom do you really want to travel under tough but amazing conditions? If you hit a rock the wrong way in the middle of nowhere, will you be able to get yourself and your bike to shelter and more complete repair? If you are traveling in a foreign land, will you be ready to deal with foreign languages, unfamiliar customs, and misinterpreted signals? Basically, will you be ready to anticipate the unpredictable?

I have been working in touring trip planning, preparation and guiding for years. My own trips have lasted between one week and 10 months and tackled roads in some unusual places (Albania and Lebanon being some of the more far-out and challenging). I have learned a lot, mostly by making my fair share of mistakes, but also by helping others to overcome theirs.

Over the next month, each week, I will be adding information to this forum about some of the many challenges and successes I and others have had in moving from tour planning stages to the awe of free road time. I hope that you will join me with your own tales, your own insights, and help direct this

forum with some of the nagging questions you have always wanted to ask about trip planning.

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Date: October 25, 2000 06:11 PM

Author: sheila (sresari@hotmail.com)

Subject: first long tour

I just started cycling regularly, and I'm toying with the idea of doing the Alaska AIDS ride next year...

Friends of mine did the NY-Boston ride this year, and then AK being my homeland, originally, I figure it would be a great vacation/tour combo.

500 miles seems like a long, long way ... even driving from Fairbanks to Anchorage takes a good six hours.

Any advice for a newbie?

thanks,
sheila

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Date: November 04, 2000 12:20 AM

Author: Scot Domergue (sdomergue@aol.com)

Subject: Long Distance, Long Duration Touring

I don't find it nearly as daunting as the original message in this thread might suggest.

My first long tour was in 1970, on a Raliegh Competition (a racing bike, with tubular tires, back before high pressure clinchers were available). I biked from the Bay Area in California to Olympia, Washington and then on up the Olympic Penninsula, across to Vancouver Island, and back to Olympia via Whidbey Island and Seattle.

In 1973 I biked across much of the US -- from Glacier National Park north through the Canadian Rockies and back south to Glacier, then down the Rockies to Taos NM, East to Cape Hatteras, and north to Vermont. This was on the same Raliegh Competition and, while I had only one flat in 1500 miles on my Pacific Coast trip, tires were a great problem on this trip.

It is a lot easier now, with fairly high quality bicycle parts available almost anywhere.

Summer before last I rode from Bend, OR to Zihuatanejo, Mexico.

I generally travel light and self-contained, camping much or most of the time. I do a minimum of planning - just a basic approach and direction - then make it up as I go along. I do try to start out with most or all of what I need, especially those things that will be hard to find along the way (special bike parts or tools). If I'm going where there are medical issues, I research them ahead, get vacinated and buy

medications to take with me. I may also get guide books.

A year ago I bought a high quality folding bicycle, a Bike Friday Pocket Llama from Green Gear Cycling in Eugene, OR. It's a wonderful bike. Rides as well or better than my regular bikes, fits into its own suitcase for bus, train, or air travel, and the suitcase becomes a trailer that tows easily behind (at least on good roads and with reasonable loads). Last week I towed 90 lbs in the trailer over the North Cascades (Washington Pass and Rainy Pass) from Winthrop to Tacoma via Seattle (all Washington state). That much weight makes uphill much slower and tougher, but the bike and trailer performed wonderfully.

I'll be happy to respond to any questions and concerns about long distance, long duration touring.

Tailwinds! Scot

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