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Home : Destinations : Activities : **Community** : Travel : Gear : Books & Maps

GORP Experts : Discussion Boards : Join GORP : Family : Pets : Humor : Food

Back Refresh Options Search

**Past Guest: Ethan Gelber, BikeAbout the Mediterranean**

<a href="#">Welcome</a>	Mark Leger	06/20/99
<a href="#">biking aches and pains</a>	Juan	06/21/99
↳ <a href="#">biking aches and pains</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/22/99
<a href="#">Bike maintenance</a>	Antonio	06/22/99
↳ <a href="#">Bike maintenance</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/22/99
↳ <a href="#">Bike maintenance</a>	dannevman	06/25/99
↳ <a href="#">what to know how to do</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/27/99
<a href="#">mtb in NJ</a>	Ricardo Rangel	06/22/99
↳ <a href="#">mtb in NJ</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/23/99
<a href="#">Fellow Bike Rider</a>	Anthony	06/23/99
<a href="#">next trip?</a>	international woman of mystery	06/24/99
↳ <a href="#">what's next?</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/24/99
<a href="#">educational gig</a>	Noah	06/24/99
↳ <a href="#">staying in touch with schools</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/24/99
<a href="#">Maps, Books and Modems</a>	Anna Lembke	06/24/99
↳ <a href="#">Maps, Books and Modems</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/24/99
<a href="#">water</a>	Laura	06/24/99
↳ <a href="#">staying hydrated</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/25/99
<a href="#">those who come after</a>	Harry Merkin	06/24/99
↳ <a href="#">generations future</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/25/99
<a href="#">cycling in Maine</a>	Carl Smith	06/24/99
↳ <a href="#">BikeAbout Maine</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/29/99
<a href="#">use of biking trailers</a>	chip marker	06/27/99
↳ <a href="#">trailers</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/27/99
<a href="#">Turkey</a>	Brian	06/27/99
↳ <a href="#">cycling in Turkey</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/29/99
<a href="#">Bikeabout forever and wherever!</a>	Valentina	06/28/99
↳ <a href="#">physical challenge</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/03/99
<a href="#">Tour Biking in New Hampshire.</a>	Bill Knipp	06/29/99
↳ <a href="#">New Hampshire biking</a>	Ethan Gelber	06/29/99
<a href="#">Touring Bike Recommendations</a>	Ahren Reed	07/01/99
↳ <a href="#">bike types</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/03/99
<a href="#">Cultures and differances</a>	Fadi Alawneh	07/02/99
↳ <a href="#">the best in people</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/03/99
↳ <a href="#">Hello , Sorry I accedently pasted this letter in a wro...</a>	Fadi Alawneh	07/12/99
<a href="#">Biking from London to Brittany</a>	Dominic Courage	07/03/99

↳  <a href="#">packing list</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/09/99
 <a href="#">service projects and cross country</a>	elise donnelly	07/06/99
↳  <a href="#">helping out</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/08/99
↳  <a href="#">more on community bike programs</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/13/99
 <a href="#">Food</a>	KJ Petrie	07/08/99
↳  <a href="#">good eatin'</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/09/99
 <a href="#">History</a>	Bill the Bureaucrat	07/08/99
↳  <a href="#">other Medi-travelers</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/09/99
 <a href="#">What Is To Be Done?</a>	Survivor of Barrelling SUVs	07/09/99
↳  <a href="#">city biking</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/11/99
 <a href="#">Israel</a>	Ari	07/09/99
↳  <a href="#">biking in the Middle East</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/11/99
 <a href="#">Biking in Brazil</a>	Rineu	07/10/99
↳  <a href="#">Brazil</a>	Ethan Gelber	07/11/99
 <a href="#">biketrek LA to New York</a>	Chris Lakeman Fraser	07/15/99

 [Post new message in this thread](#)

 [Top](#)  [Previous](#)  [Next](#)  [Print](#)  [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 20, 1999 04:45 PM

**Author:** Mark Leger ([markl@gorp.com](mailto:markl@gorp.com))

**Subject:** Welcome

When GORP editor Ethan Gelber isn't whipping articles into shape or strategizing about GORP's bicycling content, he runs an organization called BikeAbout. The BikeAbout folks, well, bike about the world developing greater understanding, and hence peace, through both face to face, and face to tech, interaction.

The BikeAbout folks went from Ceuta, a Spanish-controlled city on the Moroccan coast, to the coast of Gibraltar. Along the way they visited some of the hotspots that have been making the papers lately: Israel, Palestine, Yugoslavia, Albania. And none of the other countries they visited exactly have a trouble-free recent history: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, France, Spain, and a fair heaping of Mediterranean islands. The group met with people wherever they went for the simple, yet profound goal, of trying to get to know them better. They kept a daily journal that was uploaded to the net, along with digital still images and videos.

Ethan was GORP's guest from Monday, June 21 to Sunday, July 11.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22507](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22507))

 [Top](#)  [Previous](#)  [Next](#)  [Print](#)  [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 21, 1999 04:52 PM

**Author:** Juan ([Jguanaba@hotmail.com](mailto:Jguanaba@hotmail.com))

**Subject:** biking aches and pains

Wow - biking in Cairo must have been intense! What is the best way to ride in intensively urban environments. I think I read somewhere that Cairo is one of the most densely populated areas of the world. I imagine that is not the best of places to work on your defensive biking skills. Is there a best approach to biking with a loaded bike in heavy traffic, or, indeed, traffic of any kind? I tend to be an aggressive biker - asserting my right to 8inches of pavement (short of actual physical contact) but

imagine that is not the best attitude in Cairo.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22544](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22544))

---

● Top ● Previous ● Next ● Print ● Reply

**Date:** June 22, 1999 10:05 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** biking aches and pains

Biking in Cairo was intense! More than that - it was wild. We graced a number of cities along our way around the Mediterranean - Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul stand out in my mind - where urban cycling was about as treacherous and outrageous as I have ever seen. Traffic laws really are just suggestions in some of these places, and instinct, a highly developed sixth sense, and pure adrenalin-monitored passive-aggressive caution are what keep you from befriending bumpers and windshields as yield and merge signs are taken a little more literally than anyone would like.

One particular experience ranks highest on the bike-versus-beast list: leaving Beirut (perhaps the worst traffic nightmare we faced) heading north, there is only really one major artery: a four-lanes-in-each-direction treacherous slab of urban and suburban tarmac. Six lanes of cars cram into those four lanes. And traffic crawls. Cycling through this honestly made me feel like I was in the midst of a herd of colorful bison. We ducked and weaved with the "flow" of the herd, dodged rogue waves making surprise exits and entrances, tried to take up as much space as we could and make our presence known. Looking back, I am surprise we made it out alive.

For years I have used the bicycle as my primary means of urban transport in cities like New York City and Paris. These were (and still are) my training grounds for city cycling comportment. What have I hit upon as the best way to ride in intensively urban environments? Two things: 1.) ride at a steady, regular speed with which you are comfortable (don't go faster just because everything else is) and at which you aren't prone to make any surprise swerves; and 2.) ALWAYS ALWAYS catch the eye of the driver who is trying to do whatever he or she thinks he or she can. Regardless of the place and the time, a driver in a car knows that the car is bigger, heavier and better armored than a bicycle. When you catch a driver's eye, you are letting that driver know that you know that he or she sees you. And that gives you a second with which to exercise your smaller, lighter, less armored priority.

Of course, most people don't have eyes in the backs of their heads. And many people do not feel comfortable turning around to look behind them while circulating in city traffic (although this is a skill that I would definitely develop). So, do you aggressively assert your right to 8 inches of pavement? In slow-moving, tight traffic where people are prone to make stupid sudden turns and lane changes... ABSOLUTELY. But in flowing traffic, we must all keep in mind that we are sharing the road. Blocking a lane is a bad idea since it just pisses people off. When they finally get around you, they do so quickly, nervously,... and dangerously. But cycling in a steady straight line in a space big enough to let people know you are there and yet small enough for people to squeeze around seems to be universally accepted and appreciated. Wearing brightly colored or reflective material (especially at night or in low light) doesn't hurt, even if you think it is flashy.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22562](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22562))

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 22, 1999 10:38 AM  
**Author:** Antonio ([alz@valise.com](mailto:alz@valise.com))  
**Subject:** Bike maintenance

So, on such an extended trip, especially in that part of the world, you must have to have quite an extensive tool kit available. Did you/do you carry lots of spare parts? What sorts of tools have you found to be invaluable? What is the most bizarre experience you have had as far as bike breakdowns and repair?

Does anyone else have suggestions for tools to take along on a bike trip of moderate distances (1-2 months)? Thanks!

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22563](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22563))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 22, 1999 05:53 PM  
**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))  
**Subject:** Bike maintenance

When we began our trip, yes, we did indeed have a great many tools. However, to tell the truth, as the months passed, we sent quite a bit of material home and finished with a kit much smaller and lighter than anticipated. At the start, we had spare parts - extra derailleurs, chains, brake cables, spokes, bolts, etc. - but we discovered that with regular maintenance a bike and its parts can go a long way. And, even more important, a good knack for how to jerry-rig something can get you to the next shop where a part can be purchased or a piece repaired. All in all, the most important things we needed were for the things that were most likely to be damaged: inner tubes, tires, spokes, brake cables, etc. The bigger parts just weren't necessary, even after 7,000 miles!

That said, as you very wisely asked, there were tools that we knew we would need in the event of a real emergency... tools that could help us twist and bend anything into a good enough shape that we could get where we had to go. Some of the most invaluable were various multitools, like Gerber CoolTools (with an adjustable wrench and different size hex [Allen] wrenches), and Gerber or Leatherman SuperTools (with a whole host of options packed into a folding pliers). (The latter were also extremely useful for a variety of other things, including cooking luncheon meats and prying things open.) In addition to that, there were the bike essentials: spoke wrench, freewheel remover, extra hex wrenches, inner tub repair kit and tire irons, small replacement parts and screws, electrical tape, etc.

With regard to the most bizarre experience I have had in dealing with road breakdowns and repair, my personal favorite did not occur during the Bikeabout Mediterranean journey. I was cycling in Slovakia in 1994 and accidentally didn't make a sharp left turn at the bottom of a hill. As I ran off the road, my front wheel got caught in a ditch and pretzeled beyond repair, twisting the front fork with it. Fortunately, I was with a friend, but we were in the middle of nowhere and utterly without any heavy machinery tools that could do what needed to be done. So, using big rocks, a gap in a fence, gravity, and sheer brute force, we more or less corrected the warp in front fork and twisted the wheel enough so that it could turn without rubbing anywhere. Then, while my friend carried both sets of bike bags, I pedaled 10 kilometers on a bike that leaned and wobbled perilously. The bend in the front fork made the front of the bike feel like it wanted to lie down and the effort to

hold it up and move it forward was exhausting. Despite the sudden rain storm (of course), we made it to the next city and found an extremely well stocked bike shop with a new fork exactly the same color as the bike. By the next morning, we were back on the road as if nothing had happened.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22584](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22584))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 25, 1999 02:19 PM

**Author:** dannewman ([danneyman@hotmail.com](mailto:danneyman@hotmail.com))

**Subject:** Bike maintenance

Ethan,

The notes from you and Anthony on repair kits are helpful; could you also suggest some basic skills I'd need for long-distacne field repair?

I'm planning a climbing trip in the far Waddington range on Canada's West Coast. Bikes are for fun and backup transportation -- it's way, way out of the range of even a cel. I'm reasonably mechanically inclined, but I've never needed to do more than add little air and make some simple brake adjustments. What else do I need to know how to do for maintenance? What is most likely to need fixing?

thanks,

Dan

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22707](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22707))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 27, 1999 02:59 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** what to know how to do

Basic field repair. Hmm. There are the rudimentary things that you really must know how to do, like

- \* patching and/or replacing an inner tube
- \* adjusting/fine-tuning brakes and gears.

Beyond that there are a good number of more involved tasks that it would be good to experience and practice before you get out into the wild (i.e., far from help) and discover that you are improperly equipped for or incapable of tackling. These are the things that qualify as the "likely to need fixing" things you asked about. These include:

- \* changing a brake or gear cable
- \* removing/repairing a chain
- \* changing a spoke (which might involve removing the freewheel).

Beyond even this, there are useful things to know about the bike -- about dismantling, cleaning, regreasing, and reassembling the moving parts (wheel hubs, front stem, crank) -- but in general these things require heavier tools that you might not be inclined to carry with you. These are also more about maintenance than repair.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22769](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22769))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 22, 1999 10:54 AM

**Author:** Ricardo Rangel ([humidor@infosel.net.mx](mailto:humidor@infosel.net.mx))

**Subject:** mtb in NJ

Hi! I just moved to Morris Co. in New Jersey, and would like to find out great MTB spots near my area.

I'd appreciate any tips I can get

Ricardo

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22564](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22564))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 23, 1999 09:28 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** mtb in NJ

I confess that I don't know a great deal about mountain biking opportunities in NJ. You might want to check out the following GORP resources for some potential answers:

\* GORP Biking at <http://www.gorp.com/gorp/activity/biking.htm>

\* the general GORP Biking Forum at <http://www2.gorp.com/forums/index.cfm?CFAPP=52>

\* the GORP Regional Biking Guide at [http://www.gorp.com/gorp/activity/biking/bik\\_guid.htm](http://www.gorp.com/gorp/activity/biking/bik_guid.htm).

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22601](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22601))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 23, 1999 12:09 PM

**Author:** Anthony ([aleez@hotmail.com](mailto:aleez@hotmail.com))

**Subject:** Fellow Bike Rider

Greetings All,

I am have the honor and pride to proclaim that I too was a part of the BikeAbout team. I also have the dubious honor of having broken approximately 90% of the broken spokes that we had on the entire trip.

One big point I would like to suggest to people (and this is pretty much a no brainer): make sure that all your equipment has been well tested before setting out on any sort of trip.

The reason I broke so many spokes on BikeAbout is that we did not have the luxury of testing all our equipment to the extent we would have liked. While our Wheeler bikes proved to be pretty much BombProof, this did not apply to my rear wheel. The only way that I can describe it is that my rear wheel had a severe lack of karma. No amount of truing, poking, prodding, pleading or begging allowed me to go more that 300k without having to replace a spoke. There was little truth in that wheel.

Ethan has already mentioned Gerber's CoolTool for bike repair. I strongly recommend this tool - unlike many of the mini-tools out there this one is actually functional (albeit at the cost of a bit more weight). The only problem I have with it is that it is about 2 mm too narrow for the cassette removal tool - you do not want to know how long it took me to file down the cassette tool so I could use my cool tool to remove the cassette - and the spoke wrench function is not really usable. Aside from that the tool kit I used on our trip easily fit in my hand. You can never have enough patches (though they are easy to come by almost anywhere). Two of the most useful tools in my kit are zip-ties and my Leatherman. The latter is handy for cutting cable and housing and the file comes in handy for squeaky brakes (and filing down that cassette tool...). I also always carry super glue and a small bottle of Lock-Tite. I really think that it is worth while to carry spare cables too - they weigh next to nothing and I have personally seen 3 different brake cables break on the road. Another odd thing I carry is a small tube of Vaseline Intensive Care petroleum jelly, it is invaluable for lubing and this is a handy and easy package to carry.

saludos, Anthony

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22609](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22609))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 24, 1999 01:16 PM

**Author:** international woman of mystery ([kjs@yahoo-inc.com](mailto:kjs@yahoo-inc.com))

**Subject:** next trip?

hey ethan,

your bikeabout trip sounds amazing? are you going to write a book about it? where and when is your next trip? are you considering a peace across america trip?

best regards from california!

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22649](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22649))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 24, 1999 05:11 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** what's next?

You do have an inquisitive mind for an international woman of mystery. ("Yeah, baby!") Thanks for the fine thoughts about the trip. It really was amazing, all the more so because we were able to share it with as large an audience as we did.

So what comes next, you wonder? Well, a lot has been planned: yes, a book; hopefully a CD-ROM; perhaps some educational video shorts; and, of course, more trips.

The book is something that I have already begun to write. In an unusual twist, there is sincere interest in a French translation of it if I can find an American publisher willing to go out on a limb. I remain optimistic. The hundreds of pages we were able to produce as a result of the trip tell an incredible story. But there is also the untold story about the often-difficult team dynamic and the personal challenges involved in undertaking a nine-month endeavor. That is something I do hope to be able to share.

As to the CD-ROM, the material we gathered for and during the trip includes a developed history of the area, thousands of pictures, hundreds of sound files, and scores of ways of approaching the whole lot. It will be a major undertaking--but one I feel will be well worth the effort--to remanipulate everything in such a fashion that it lends itself to the structure of an interactive adventure on CD. But, as with the book, the funding and the people to help execute such a project are not easily found.

The video material we hope to produce is based on scores of hours of digital video taken during the trip and dealing with everything from personal issues to topical Mediterranean ones.

Finally, the next trip... Well, we were well along in our planning and preparation for the next trip, when geopolitics stepped in and forced us to cancel everything. Working with partners in the Balkans, we had planned a 10-day trip involving some 30-50 young people and adults biking in southern Albania, western Macedonia and northwestern Greece at the end of June (in other words, right now!). Needless to say, the unfortunate turn of events there put an end to that idea. But, we are hopeful of other developing opportunities that could include areas as far-flung as the South Indian Ocean, Brazil, India and the rest of the Himalayas, and, of course, a return to selected regions of the Mediterranean.

Are we considering a peace across America trip? It is an idea that we have been tossing around for quite some time. It is certainly something that we are giving serious consideration. It is so easy to be lured overseas by the "exoticism" of other places. In part, that is what makes BikeAbout-style trips important: the demystification and re-evaluation of other people, cultures and places. However, the people, cultures and places of the US are as many-faceted, misunderstood and "exotic" as anywhere else in the world. Yes, we will ultimately tackle our own neck of the woods.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22664](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22664))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 24, 1999 01:41 PM

**Author:** Noah ([nfinkels@ucsd.edu](mailto:nfinkels@ucsd.edu))

**Subject:** educational gig

Ethan, Great site, amigo. Have you kept in touch with the schools you worked with in both the states and around the Med? and have folks continued to use the vast materials you collected and developed? and how about some more pictures of you and the Sphinx? on the road, Noah

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22651](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22651))

● Top ● Previous ● Next ● Print ● Reply

**Date:** June 24, 1999 05:28 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** staying in touch with schools

We have made every attempt to stay in touch with just about everyone we met. This has been possible in many cases (especially if email was involved), but been terribly difficult in others. In addition to that, as anyone involved in education knows, time is not a currency in grand supply. The time needed for regular correspondence even with distant educators is sometimes hard to come by. That said, we have been successful in maintaining and further developing working relationships with many educational partners (schools, etc.).

Plus, to our great satisfaction, new people definitely continue to use our materials, even a year after completion of the trip. While there is no question that the "live" appeal of the journey is now absent, we worked very hard at making sure the material we wrote would still be relevant even after the trip had ended. It is always remarkable looking back at something and realizing that, despite the speed with which things seem to change, even a year later, much of what we commented on is still very pertinent. The BikeAbout resources remains a compendious resource on contemporary Mediterranean life, couched in a full past history.

And how about some more pictures of me and the Sphinx? I think you are referring to is this



picture: . Actually it isn't THE Sphinx, located in Giza, near Cairo; this is a much smaller sphinx in Alexandria on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast.

There are lots more pictures where this one came from: [www.bikeabout.org/gallery.htm](http://www.bikeabout.org/gallery.htm).

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22666](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22666))

---

● Top ● Previous ● Next ● Print ● Reply

**Date:** June 24, 1999 01:44 PM

**Author:** Anna Lembke

**Subject:** Maps, Books and Modems

When visiting so many countries in one trip, how did you manage to carry all of the maps and travel books that you needed? Did you rely on a single guide (something like Around the Mediterranean on a Shoestring)? Did you download everything onto your computer ahead of time? Or did you buy maps and books along the way and dispose of them when they were no longer needed?

Also, how did you get Internet connections in such remote areas? Did you dial in to servers overseas or did you actually find local Internet Service Providers in Algeria and Bosnia?

Finally, did you have to carry adapters for non RJ-11 telephone jacks or did you rely on an acoustic coupler?

Thanks, in advance, for providing a snatch of insight.

- Anna

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22652](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22652))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 24, 1999 06:06 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** Maps, Books and Modems

We began our trip with a great deal more material than we needed: maps, books, paper printouts, etc. However, after a week or so we pared back to an acceptable minimum.

In general, other than a large scale Mediterranean atlas, we did not have any maps ahead of time. We were able to purchase everything locally. Our logic, sometimes proven wrong, was that local resources would be better and cheaper than anything we could assemble in advance. In addition, by buying locally, we did not have to lug around a complete set of materials in anticipation of being places we wouldn't see for months. When we were done with locally acquired materials, they were either discarded or mailed to our office in New York for future reference.

That said, we were well stocked with guides. Lonely Planet was one of our sponsors and generously provided us with everything we needed for the Mediterranean rim. These included a single Mediterranean on a Shoestring volume as well as more detailed regional and country guides, maps in a few cases, and small language instruction books providing snatches of dialect when we were linguistically challenged.

We also had CD-ROM interactive encyclopedias and, with regular connections to the Internet, opportunities to download new relevant material. This was not always useful during the day since, for the most part, our high-tech gear remained stashed and protected until we were settled wherever it was that we would be spending the night.

As to Internet connections, we had them in every country through which we traveled except Syria. One of the important things we wished to demonstrate during the trip was easy accessibility to the Internet. We were determined not to use satellite technology or cell phones. Everything would be through local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and regular telephone lines. So, prior to and during

the trip, we worked hard to establish working relationships with at least one ISP in every country in the Med. As a result, we had local dial-up access wherever we went. It might seem to us here in the Internet-savvy USA that some of the areas through which we traveled are remote. However, in the world in which we live, anywhere you find people, there are often phones. And where there are phones in countries open to the Internet, there is a chance (sometimes difficult to swindle) to connect. You asked specifically about Algeria and Bosnia. We did not actual go though Algeria, but there is an ISP there that would have provided reliable access. In Bosnia, then and even more so now, there were (and are) a number of services making reaching the rest of the world a simple matter. In addition to direct access through ISPs, there were many individuals and Internet cafes which graciously let us use their connections if ever our ISP was down or there was trouble making a connection with our laptops.

Finally, with regard to connecting through non-RJ-11 phone jacks, we had two possibilities. Another of our sponsors, TeleAdapt, provided us with both a full set of adaptors for all the Mediterranean countries and an acoustic coupler. In the end, we did not have much call for the coupler, but the adaptors were endlessly useful.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22669](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22669))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 24, 1999 03:04 PM

**Author:** Laura ([LLVanWie@lbl.gov](mailto:LLVanWie@lbl.gov))

**Subject:** water

Hi, Ethan! First, hi! Love the article about Egypt. As I sat there reading it and guzzling my bottled water, I wondered what you and the others did about water in all of the countries you visited. Did you have a super-strong water purifier? Iodine? Did you rely on bottled water?

Did any (or all) of you get sick at some point during your trip?

Looking forward to hearing about your continued exploits.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22658](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22658))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 25, 1999 04:07 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** staying hydrated

Water is serious business and something to which we gave a great deal of thought. Let me excerpt here a portion of one of the reports we wrote about water. It is taken from the same "dispatch" from which the Cairo piece is taken (available uncut in the [BikeAbout journal entry for November 28, 1997](#)):

"Water and BikeAbout: Why is it important to us? According to one of our resources, if it weren't for the water in the human body, the amount of heat that one human being could produce during one day's activity would raise his or her body temperature by as much as 149°C (300°F)! Normal body temperature is 37°C (98.6°F). Can you imagine being at 204°C (400°F)? The BikeAbout

team would probably be even hotter, since we are doing more than the normal share of one day's activity... and in an already hot climate. If we didn't have water, we would probably melt! And it would be awfully difficult to pedal if we were nothing more than a puddle. So, we try to follow (but rarely succeed) the cyclist's rule of thumb: drink one water bottle-full of water every hour.

However, finding drinkable water is one of the challenges we face if we are to continue drinking as much as we need. You see, unlike the water of most large cities, the water of some small communities can be dangerously impure. In cities these days there are treatment plants that make water clean, clear and as tasty as possible. Methods used today include screens, mixing and sedimentation tanks, filters, chemical sterilizers. But in rural communities, especially in countries where there are few protections against contaminated water, or there is a history of water-borne diseases (like giardiasis, dysentery, cholera, typhoid, and hepatitis), the water can be unsafe.

We have four ways of getting around this. First, we are careful to try not to drink or come in contact with questionable water. In some cases, this can mean not using a glass or eating vegetables washed in local water, or even using ice. Sometimes we also have to be careful when we brush our teeth not to wash our toothbrushes with sink water. Second, we drink bottled water. Third, we use the SweetWater water filters that we brought along. Fourth, we can use chemical purifiers - like a small amount of iodine in the water - that help eliminate the risk of contamination as much as possible.

It is hard to be vigilant about something as commonplace and important as water."

So, given our attempt to be vigilant, did any of us get sick? Absolutely. When traveling to foreign lands, it is sometimes impossible not to come in contact with foreign microbes. We all have habits that we don't think about that make this hard to avoid. For example, I often bite my nails. In cities where I feel it is safe to wash my hands in sink water but not drink the water, I could inadvertently be taking in new germs when I nibble my finger tips. There are many more examples.

When we did get sick, it was usually a passing stomach ailment. We just had to suffer through it... which we always did (sometimes in the saddle of the bike). And we always recovered.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22711](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22711))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 24, 1999 06:42 PM

**Author:** Harry Merkin

**Subject:** those who come after

Will other BikeAbout groups be following in your tracks in the years to come, building on the relationships you forged in the countries you visited on the virgin journey?

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22675](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22675))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 25, 1999 06:40 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** generations future

The idea has always been that the BikeAbout principles and objectives -- those involving the sharing of information for educational and cooperative reasons -- be passed on to a variety of people. Yes, it is absolutely our intention to send future BikeAbout teams back to the places through which we passed. In addition, there is nothing to stop other groups from traveling to these places and using the information made available by BikeAbout (free on the BikeAbout Web site) and other benevolent and non-profit organizations toward beneficial ends. The relationships we succeeded in forging are just examples of what is possible and should be pursued by as many others as possible. Again, BikeAbout will certainly continue to work in the area as well. But there is a lot of preparatory work, networking and fundraising that is required before the next steps can be made.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22721](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22721))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 24, 1999 09:16 PM

**Author:** Carl Smith ([cu2@gwi.net](mailto:cu2@gwi.net))

**Subject:** cycling in Maine

Hi Ethan, Nice to see you are into some new projects. We thought your visit to Augusta Schools was one of the best things we were able to do for geography all year. We all heard about Albania from you first. If we could have sent as many bicyclists for peace as we did bombs to Yugoslavia, maybe we could have prevented some of the horrors there. I don't really have a question, except as a thought to consider. What about a Bikeabout journey to Maine? Instead of your team going to the Mediterranean, how about using your contacts to invite a team of cyclists or several teams to tour Maine? I would hope to be able to help with housing, logistics, etc. and I know that Mainers all over the state would be glad to meet international students and cyclists traveling as goodwill ambassadors. Late summer, with all the harvest festivals, Common Ground Fair, and schools back in session in the fall would be great times to cycle here. Let me know if this ever seems like a possibility. Best to you, Andrew, and Elizabeth when you see them!. Carl

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22683](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22683))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 29, 1999 02:22 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** BikeAbout Maine

Carl, it is great to read you here. Thank you for contributing a comment.

As a word of explanation for others, in late September and early October of 1998, immediately following the BikeAbout riders' return to the U.S., two of the team members (myself and Anthony Ziehmké [who contributed a comment about tool kits]) made a short tour of schools in Maine to talk about what we had done. With a slide presentation and our computers (through which we could demonstrate the Web site, play sound files and even video), we talked with hundreds of students about geography, Mediterranean culture and history, and other issues. (We continue to visit schools in other areas as well.) We also shared our motto with everyone: We believe that the more people know about one another, the less inclined they will be to fight. If only, as Carl has

expressed, people and governments were more interested in peaceful informational exchange than they are in laying claim to and holding onto pieces of land.

The suggestion of a BikeAbout Maine journey is very, very interesting. For so many years, I have been oriented toward bringing experiences from faraway lands to people at home, I do sometimes lose sight of how much opportunity there is for teaching and learning right here in the United States. I will ponder what you have suggested. It is true that there are people and contacts and resources all over the state and that we could probably do something very interesting. Let's discuss this some more (perhaps also with Jeff Miller of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine)!

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22881](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22881))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 27, 1999 09:42 AM

**Author:** chip marker ([pjmark4@aol.com](mailto:pjmark4@aol.com))

**Subject:** use of biking trailers

Ethan; Good morning. thanks for your good work. while reading your article about egypt i noticed that you and your team used a couple of bicycle trailers. i am planning a 3-4 week tour for next year and am thinking about replacing my worn panniers with a trailer. can you give some insight on how the trailers performed and if you would recommend them for touring in general. Thanks for your time and best wishes for the future.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22763](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22763))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 27, 1999 03:39 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** trailers

We had two excellent BOB trailers along with us for the first five months of the trip. BOB trailers are superbly designed and constructed one-wheel trailers that attach to special extended quick release rear axles. Attached here unlike others that attach to the seat post, they are lower-slung, less cumbersome, and feed right into the geometry of the bike. They are light-weight and can carry more than you would want to load. I recommend them very highly.

However, I would think twice about switching to a trailer from panniers. We had the trailers along because we were carrying more equipment than we could in our panniers. We decided to send the trailers home after five months because we had succeeded in reducing our material such that we could fit everything in our "onboard" bags.

I have been told about the physics of loading material on a bike versus pulling it behind you and I confess that I don't fully understand. But I can tell you that practically speaking (and perhaps because I am a traditionalist in this respect), carrying the gear on your bag will always be preferable to pulling it in a trailer behind you. For one, you might be inclined to bring more than you need if you have a trailer. Second, keep in mind that when you move your equipment by bus, car or plane, the trailer is a bulky piece of additional baggage. Third, although you do eventually

adjust to pulling a trailer, the bike never quite handles like a bike... without a trailer. You lose momentum much more quickly on uphill and you have to be additionally cautious on bumpy roads or trails (trailers can squirrel about quite a bit behind you on very uneven terrain). Lastly, if your trailer should suffer any unfortunate (and rare) mechanical failure and you are far from repair opportunities, you are faced with some tough choices (see my second point).

Basically, if forced to choose between a trailer and panniers, I would always opt for panniers. However, if you know that for whatever reason (and they better be good reasons -- I can pack all I need and more [tools, a laptop, etc.] for a 2-month cold-weather trip into only two bags) you are going to be carrying more than fits in your panniers, a trailer is an excellent option. If you exploring trailer options, I could not speak more highly about BOB trailers.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22779](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22779))

---

● Top ● Previous ● Next ● Print ● Reply

**Date:** June 27, 1999 10:48 PM

**Author:** Brian ([bdmcco@aol.com](mailto:bdmcco@aol.com))

**Subject:** Turkey

Hello: I am considering a solo bike tour in Turkey, and am just starting to gather info, Do you have any general suggestions for scenic, road bike friendly, areas? Are bikes generally allowed on trains/busses? Is camping generally available and safe for a solo traveler. I will have 2-3 weeks and will try to tour in 2 areas rather than one journey. I like to cover about 80 miles a day. Thanks, Brian

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22797](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22797))

---

● Top ● Previous ● Next ● Print ● Reply

**Date:** June 29, 1999 01:55 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** cycling in Turkey

First and foremost, Turkey is an amazing country. I have every confidence that you will have an incredible time. The people are open, friendly, and engaging, and you should be not at all concerned about traveling solo, especially if you are considering some of the more touristed areas.

Where could you go? Well, I can't speak authoritatively about \*all\* of Turkey. I can only speak enthusiastically about where I have been and what I know: the whole Mediterranean Turkish coast, and Cappidocia (although the latter was not on a bike). The western Aegean coast of Turkey, while full of tourist sites of great importance (Ephesus stands out as the most incredible, but there are many more), is more densely populated and developed. The southern Mediterranean coast, on the other hand, is an incredible mix of lesser-known historically significant attractions and some of the most incredible coastal riding I have ever done. It is also very, very challenging (unless you are very strong, you will probably find 80 miles a day more than you can handle). In particular, the stretch of road from Silifke to Fethiye is a marvel. While it is not always entirely bike friendly (most of the truck drivers don't see enough cyclists to know exactly how to respond), nor is it so heavily trafficked that you will hate it. And the terrain -- especially the repeated long fantastic climbs into the coastal hills -- could not be more splendid. (For more about our ride talong this

coast, go to our [Turkey calendar](#) page and read the dispatches for February 14-23.)

From this stretch of coast, you are not that far from Cappadocia. It would be a challenging ride to get there or a medium-length bus trip. Once in Cappadocia, there are fine regular roads for the road cyclist as well as many walking paths and dirt trails through the arid serenity of this spectacular "badlands" environment.

As to transport, bikes are definitely allowed on both busses and trains (although you will find yourself having to deal almost exclusively with busses, which are faster, cheaper, more frequent and quite comfortable). You will usually have to pay an extra fare for the bike. Some companies make you pay more than others; but in general, if you feel like you are paying too much, say so in a friendly fashion. On big busses (of which there is a sizeable fleet), the bikes will go in the underneath baggage compartment. On small busses and minivans, you actually bring the bike onto the bus and take up a seat (which, depending on how friendly the driver is, you don't necessarily have to pay for in full).

One random word of warning: since I assume that you will be flying into Istanbul and want to bus elsewhere from there, if you can find an alternative way of getting to the bus station (the subway), use it. The bike to the main station (a good 10 km north of the city) is terrible and dangerous. I did it twice. I was foolish both times. There are no small alternative roads, only major highways. If you arrive with a boxed bike, leave it in the box until you are where you want to be. (I don't know anything about the trip to or from the Ankara airport or bus station.) Also, do some aggressive comparative shopping when you get to the bus station in Istanbul (there is no need to buy ahead of time unless you want to save yourself the trouble of dealing with hawkers and touts). The Istanbul bus station is an incredible experience. It is VAST! And there are many companies going where you want to go. Check prices and times and the cost of a bike.

Once you are on the road, yes, there are camping opportunities. Since we were staying in cheap hotels and with hosts, we never stayed in a campground, nor did we really look out for them, but I know that they are there. If you are ever stuck, there are many cheap and respectable hotel alternatives that should not be ruled out.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22876](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22876))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 28, 1999 04:45 PM

**Author:** Valentina

**Subject:** Bikeabout forever and wherever!

Hy Ethan, I'm Valentina, your neapolitan friend! The greatness of an enterprise consists of the power to involve also people who didn't take part of it. It's beautiful knowing that the big treasure of a great experience like the Mediterranean journey never gets lost. I want to take this chance to ask you one thing about it: what about the athletic preparation before starting such a long trip by bike? And there was a moment, during the trip, in which one of you thought he/she shouldn't have been able to make it? I mean: is it possible for who is not a cycle-rider to undertake your enterprise? I will be true, mine is not only a curiosity. I read the messages about "Cycling in Maine" and next Bikeabout trips (America!). It sounds so good, that I immediately started to think of it... Good luck to you and see you soon!

Valentina

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22828](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22828))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 03, 1999 11:55 AM  
**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))  
**Subject:** physical challenge

My dear friend, Thanks so much for writing from your amazing city. The time we spent in Naples was an exciting and rewarding one... and we know, as you have expressed, that some of what you taught us was shared with other people. Naples has not always had the reputation of a safe city. It was important to us to spread the knowledge we developed of how tremendous an urban environment it is!

As to your question about preparation for the Mediterranean journey: it is true that one of the BikeAbout riders had actually never been on a long-distance bike trip. At the beginning she was unsure of many things, including her ability to bike all day every day. In fact, at the beginning, all of us were unsure about our ability to cover the 12,000 km that we did ultimately complete. Before the trip we had been working so hard in offices that most of us were quite out of shape. But riding as we did is like any challenge, physical or mental. We set our minds and our bodies to a task and we learned and adapted. There were many times, especially at the beginning, when the weight of everything that we had to accomplish was so great that at one time or another we each thought it would be impossible to finish. However, we took one day at a time. We biked the distance we had to. We met the people we wanted to meet. We planned a few days ahead. We just kept going. And, one day at a time, we were able to get where we had to go and to grow stronger, physically and mentally.

It *\*is\** possible for people who have never trained in something to do amazing things in that same field. Of course, it helps to have some preparation and a realistic vision of what lies ahead. But, as long as you believe in what you are doing and see the personal and public value in it, you can do what you want.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23045](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23045))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 29, 1999 06:14 AM  
**Author:** Bill Knipp ([Beenipp@aol.com](mailto:Beenipp@aol.com))  
**Subject:** Tour Biking in New Hampshire.

Ethan, I have been looking for some info on biking in New Hampshire and cannot find much. I'm referring to biking trails or road routes. Seems all there is to find is Mountain biking. I would appreciate any Web link that would give me more on touring on hard surfaces. Thanks

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22862](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22862))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** June 29, 1999 02:09 PM  
**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))  
**Subject:** New Hampshire biking

In my limited experience in New Hampshire, I have been faced with the same problems. There is a heavy emphasis on mountain bike trails. (In fact, here at GORP, one of our editors recently completed a lengthy piece that includes information on [cycling trails in White Mountain National Forest](#). That said, there is more information available about road biking alternatives in nearby Vermont if you go to the [GORP New England Biking Guide](#).

Otherwise, you might just ponder doing what I often do: call the tourist board for New Hampshire and ask for suggestions. The phone operators there will name attractions and you can build a road itinerary that connects the dots. Since it is New Hampshire, if you stay off the major roads, you will be in for some fine bucolic vistas and winding New England roads. Of course, for a challenge, you could always pedal to the top of Mount Washington.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22879](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22879))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 01, 1999 07:50 PM  
**Author:** Ahren Reed ([hf.anr@forsythe.stanford.edu](mailto:hf.anr@forsythe.stanford.edu))  
**Subject:** Touring Bike Recommendations

Hi Ethan! I enjoyed your travel-tales of bicycling in Egypt. Could you give some advice on the type of bicycle you would recommend for this sort of travel? Did you ride a "standard" road bike, a "hybrid" bike, or a shock-absorber equipped mountain bike? I am interested in the models ridden by you and your companions. Thanks for the info!

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=22980](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=22980))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 03, 1999 12:12 PM  
**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))  
**Subject:** bike types

We were thankful to have been sponsored by Wheeler Worldwide, a Taiwan-based bike manufacturer with a strong European market. Wheeler-France understood what we were trying to do and cannot be thanked enough for providing us with the steeds we had.

In my opinion, the type of bike ideal for what we did is what Europeans call "touring" bikes. These are not the thin-tired light-weight beasts that you see under racers, nor are they the hybrids you mention or the mountain bikes that are today so popular. Each of these bike types has structural kinks not necessarily useful in long-distance carry-your-own-gear bike touring. Road bikes are just not built to carry the weight that we were carrying, and not tough enough to deal with the battering that we gave them. Hybrid bikes are usually more adapted for urban or recreational biking and have a frame geometry more like a mountain bike, which is not ideal for long-distance road riding. Mountain bikes, with their shocks and knobby tires are just not intended

for and actually quite frustrating on the road -- the friction on the tires, the frame geometry, the shock-prompted give, etc. are just not meant for road biking.

So... what did we use? Well, there are touring bikes with a geometry closer to that of a road bike, but with a stronger construction and more durable parts (although non-hi-tech or hi-maintenance). These bikes often come with straight handbars (like those on mountain bikes), as they did on our Wheelers, but we would have preferred the drop handle bars you see on most road bikes. The riding posture and grip alternatives are better suited to the longer distances. These bikes also have braze-ons where racks and other touring tools can be attached.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23049](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23049))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 02, 1999 11:48 AM

**Author:** Fadi Alawneh ([spectra76@hotmail.com](mailto:spectra76@hotmail.com))

**Subject:** Cultures and differances

Hello Ethan :) Everybody

I have been lucky to meet Ethan when he was passing by Jordan, we talked for a while and we shared thoughts and information... But there are two questions I would like to ask... Among this trip you had Ethan, you met alot of people, differant races, colors and religions... even languages... What was it the most diffecult thing(s) you faced in this misxture of people? one other thing.. Whats the best thing ever, you noticed, or liked about the Arabian people and thier culture?

Thank you :)

Fadi

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23009](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23009))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 03, 1999 12:57 PM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** the best in people

Fadi, my friend! It is wonderful to read you here. You ask two very interesting questions.

The most difficult thing we faced in the fantastic mix of people is exactly what we expected to confront and one of the primary reasons why we did the trip in the first place. The BikeAbout motto was: "The more we know about one another, the less inclined we will be to fight." Thus, everywhere we went we gathered information about the people and place we visited and shared this information with others either through live events or through the [BikeAbout Web site](#).

One of the most curious exemplifications of the need for the free exchange of information as a means of breaking down the barriers of miscommunication and misunderstanding came every time we told people in the Mediterranean where we were going next. At every step of the way, we were warned by one population about the dangers of the neighboring one: in Morocco, we were warned

about the Tunisians, in Tunisia we were warned about the Sicilians, in Sicily we were warned about the Egyptians, in Egypt about the Palestinians, in Gaza about the Israelis, in Israel about everyone, in Jordan about the Syrians, in Lebanon about the Syrians, in Turkey about the Greeks, in Greece about the Turks and the Albanians, in Albania about the Yugoslavs, in Croatia about the Bosnians, in Bosnia about the Croatians, etc.

Is it not amazing that in every country of the Mediterranean the local populations warned us about the people of the neighboring populations? Is it not amazing that this is true of most places in the world (what do most Americans unfortunately think about their Mexican neighbors)? When we then asked what the warnings were based on, what first-hand experiences the alarmists were basing their cautions on, most of the time there was nothing. Perhaps news reports, or a general understanding based on what is taught in school and discussed informally. In other words, people's fears and bias are based on what they hear and have been told, not on what they know. We were actually able to try to dispel many of the misconceptions

About the Arab people and their culture: the most outstanding features are their warmth and hospitality. Absolutely everywhere we went -- and this is also true throughout the Mediterranean -- we were graciously welcomed into each new environment (a home, a school, a cafe, etc.) and generously invited to discuss a variety of issues about which people always spoke with great honesty, emotion, and pride. There is a long and rich history to Arab culture (which is often misunderstood or misrepresented today) and every person we met was eager to share a piece of it with us -- food and drink, language, personal insight, past and present history, religion, hopes for the future, etc.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23050](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23050))

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● Top ● Previous ● Next ● Print ● Reply

**Date:** July 12, 1999 03:19 AM

**Author:** Fadi Alawneh ([spectra76@hotmail.com](mailto:spectra76@hotmail.com))

Hello ,

Sorry I accedently pasted this letter in a wrong reply place, pardon me :)) here it is again...

Author: Fadi Alawneh ([spectra76@hotmail.com](mailto:spectra76@hotmail.com)) Subject: Reply

Hello Ethan my dear :)

That is such a good answer, but this way of "thinking" between contries is something that you will find in any country, and yes you asked a very good question, what does Americans think about Mexico for example... But this thinking didnt come out of nothing , let me give you an example, and this is a true one because I lived it; now when we went to Palestine, me and my family way back in 1985, things were very bad, and Israili people treated us in a very low and bad way, ofcourse, when we arrived in there, they came in the house and checked in many times, also they came in my uncles house and did the same, not to mention that they arrested them and had them in jail for a while. This all will make me feel and think that Israel is a dangerous place and the people of Israel are agresive, and nothing can change this way of thinking after that day unless I see in my own eyes.. but you Ethan,

yourself you will find out that the conflict between the countries is a minor one, unlike the one between the arabs in general and Israel , or the Palestinians and Israel, because this is a life time conflict, and it is written in the Holy Quran that Muslims and Israilis will always be in fight! This is also something that can not be changed by anyone who ever they are... But the ones between Arab countries is minor, because of little reasons , one of which is the ability to be in that country, for example , Egyptians can not stay in Jordan because Jordan is concededared expenmsive for them, and most of them are poor ( 56 million something ) but jordan is ( 5 Million people ). Also the governments can sometimes make it hard for people to travil into those countries , egyptians have to have a Visa to come to Jordan, and we Jordanians must have a Visa to come to lebanon etc...

This all creates a kind of bad thinking that we can not understand.. Not to mention that after all, we can not mix cultures and make them be one, even if we are all arabs and Muslims. Also Arabs are differant in cultures, and Muslims are 72 branches!

One last Question, What are the things that you think you forgot to do when you came to the Mediteranian? I mean if you have another chance to come, what will you Not forget to do this time!?

P.S: I am sorry everyone, Ethan for my spelling Mistakes... Please pardon me :)

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23488](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23488))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 03, 1999 12:05 PM

**Author:** Dominic Courage ([Courage@compuserve.com](mailto:Courage@compuserve.com))

**Subject:** Biking from London to Brittany

Hi,

I'm 20 and planning a biking tour to Brittany from London. Can anyone recommend any off road routes which could be incorporated into this trip. This is my first independant trip and would appreciate any advice on routes, what to take and anything else you can think of.

Cheers Dom

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23048](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23048))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 09, 1999 11:18 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** packing list

While I can't give you much advice about routes in the area that you will be covering, I can share some thoughts about what to bring. In this forum there has already been a discussion of tools, so I won't cover that much more. The rest – unless you are camping, in which case you need to lug all the camping essentials – is clothes and personal effect. If I can offer one key piece of advice about clothes, it is this: if you are not sure if you will need something, it means you shouldn't bring it. If,

in the end, it turns out that you did need it, you can buy a new one. Plus, do not bring more than one or two spare articles of anything (even underwear). You are better off spending the 5-10 minutes required to handwash your clothes on a daily basis (and let it dry overnight) than carrying around more than you need.

Basic list should include: a couple of t-shirts or cycling jerseys, a lightweight pile warmer top, a microfleece for chilly riding days, a layer of protection against rain, a polo shirt (for the unexpected "more formal occasion"), a couple of cycling shorts, 1 set of leggings, 1 pair of regular shorts, 1 pair of long pants, 2 pairs of cycling socks (double as regular socks), cycling shoes, regular shoes/sandals/sneakers, sunhat. That's it. Oh, and a helmet and riding gloves.

Other things to think about: first-aid kit, sunscreen, sunglasses, and any random things (smaller and lighter than a small light iron) that you just can't live without.

If you would like to see what I packed for the Mediterranean trip (waaaaaaay too much stuff), check out [Ethan's packing list](#).

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23351](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23351))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 06, 1999 07:32 PM

**Author:** elise donnelly ([ekdonn@mail.wm.edu](mailto:ekdonn@mail.wm.edu))

**Subject:** service projects and cross country

I'm interesting in biking across the country but stopping at various locations along the way to do service projects. I want to see the US, not just from the road, and use my energy to help where it is needed. Have you heard of any organized trips like this?

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23195](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23195))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 08, 1999 10:10 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethan@gorp.com](mailto:ethan@gorp.com))

**Subject:** helping out

I have never done this kind of work in the U.S., but there are lots of places that do. You might try contacting the IMBA (International Mountain Bikers Association) and see what they can suggest. Then there is the Rails to Trails group (you could help with trail work), too. You could ask the friendly folk at the League of American Bikers in Washington, DC. They might know of interesting things along the way. Finally, I just received an invitation to join a forum on community bike programs. You can join (and then post to) this list by sending an email to: [community-bike-subscribe@egroups.com](mailto:community-bike-subscribe@egroups.com).

You could also ponder reaching out to non-cycle-related group (AIDS awareness, Habitat for Humanity, etc.) and seeing what projects are happening along the path you plan on following. You could cycle from project to project. That would set your itinerary and certainly make for some fascinating experiences.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23271](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23271))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 13, 1999 05:09 PM  
**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))  
**Subject:** more on community bike programs

I just learned about more information that you might find useful concerning community bike programs. Check out the following URLs:

\* a list, though perhaps not complete, of community free-bike programs at <http://www.ibike.org/freebike.htm>

\* a list of the youth bike programs at <http://www.ibike.org/youth.htm>

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23575](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23575))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 08, 1999 02:00 AM  
**Author:** KJ Petrie ([kyljp@yahoo.com](mailto:kyljp@yahoo.com))  
**Subject:** Food

Great section! I enjoyed it all. I recently did a 1900 mile ride from Delaware to Texas (finished about 3 weeks ago). I did some with my wife as "support van", some with my younger brother and still other parts solo. I was amazed to find very few additional people touring on the southern route. I think in the 5 weeks I was riding I saw only 2 groups. 1 solo and the other was a group of 3. The Seattle to Maine or DC seems to be the popular route, but I would recommend the Mid-South. My only consistent problem was deciding what to pack to eat (oh yeah, I packed way too much of everything in my BOB at the start of the trip). I was wondering if you had any ideas besides oatmeal, pasta, pancakes and fruit. Which seemed to be my consistent choices. Thank you, KJ

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23261](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23261))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 09, 1999 10:52 AM  
**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))  
**Subject:** good eatin'

Thanks for the positive feedback about the piece and congratulations on the successful completion of your trip. Delaware to Texas... that's quit a swath of America. I agree that it is not the most popular route. Everyone I know seems to have opted for the more northerly passage. You have made me wonder why that would be the case...

Anyway, about food... to be honest, since we were traveling for as long as we were (more than 9 months) and through such a wide variety of culinary climates, we made two choices: (1) we did

not often cook for ourselves (although we did end up sometimes cooking for other people!) and (2) we preferred to "go local." In other words, we ate what there was and what other people suggested that we eat. If I can use that as a barometer of the kinds of choices cyclists have, then I would say that the foods you settled on are the staples: carbohydrates (pasta and pancakes) and yummy fruit. We could add to that list cookies and chocolate or any other form of high-energy carb packed snack to stave off hunger during a long ascent on a remote road, plus lunch meats and cheeses for the lunchtime protein hit.

In general, if you are interested in the kinds of food we ate all around the Mediterranean, check out [BikeAbout Web site](#). Each of the 160 daily journal entries also includes a description of a "Food of the Day" (a special food each day) and a review of what we had for every meal!

And remember to try to keep those BOBs light!

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23349](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23349))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 08, 1999 06:34 PM

**Author:** Bill the Bureaucrat ([irving.bill@epa.gov](mailto:irving.bill@epa.gov))

**Subject:** History

Ethan,

What a great site! I have to admit that riding vicariously through Bike About had sparked an interest to do some touring again.

Since the Mediterranean has had a shared history since, well, forever, did you research some of the accounts of voyagers from the past who did similar trips? (not by bike of course, they were probably hocking spices and Crusade insurance by boat). If not, these account would probably provide an extremely interesting comparison for you.

Bill the Bureaucrat

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23318](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23318))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 09, 1999 11:05 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** other Medi-travelers

We did in fact do a fair amount of reading prior to and during the trip, and since having returned I continue to do more. Before the trip we read the "Pillars of Hercules" by Theroux, "The Inner Sea" by Robert Fox, parts of Morin's famous treatise on the Mediterranean, different writings by Mark Twain (like "Innocents Abroad") and plenty more. During the trip, we devoured Homer's "The Odyssey" (of course) and writing about the Crusades, the Muslim expansion, etc. Since my return, I confess an appetite for anything about travel in the Mediterranean, especially old works (some very old) that allow for a comparison with the way things are today. I think we would all be surprised by how \*little\* some things have changed, even if industry and technology have dragged

us into a new era of possibilites.

If you have other suggested reading, please do share them with me. And hopefully, one day, I will be able to share the tale of our travels in a classic book form as well.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23350](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23350))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 09, 1999 03:37 PM

**Author:** Survivor of Barrelling SUVs ([VirinderS@aol.com](mailto:VirinderS@aol.com))

**Subject:** What Is To Be Done?

Hi Ethan -

I ride my bike to and from work everyday here in Washington, D.C. As with most U.S. cities, it ain't easy and occasionally dangerous, especially during rush hour (when I need to ride the most!). I suspect that, as your message about Istanbul indicates, there are plenty of places where biking is downright crazy in some neighborhoods.

Do you have any thoughts on how to make the bike a more reasonable mode of transport for more urban-dwellers? Are there some initiatives we should be aware of to make biking a real alternative for more people worldwide?

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23379](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23379))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 11, 1999 11:36 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** city biking

Ahhh city biking. I can only imagine that it is as tumultuous in DC as it is in NYC.

Do I have any thoughts on how to make the bike a more reasonable mode of transport for more urban-dwellers? Sure I do. First off, I wrote about it a fair amount in an [earlier posting](#) to this forum. But let me follow-up with some more general thoughts.

Bike lanes. Would that every city in America and around the world had a strong enough lobby to labor for city planners to include SAFE bike lanes. New York actually has quite a few... some of them well-marked and carefully chosen. I use these all the time. But wouldn't it be great if delivery trucks, taxis, unaware drivers, pedestrians and the rest of the rolling mass actually respected these lanes as much as they insist on respect for their own right of way? New York has an organization called Transportation Alternatives which fights in council environments for such respect for bikes and in-line skaters, etc. I assume that there is a local organization in DC. And I know that the directors of the these many organizations are in communication with one another. So the fight goes on. But it is an uphill battle.

Pedestrian zones. Americans who have visited Europe have always been struck by the pedestrian zones in the central shopping districts of many of the biggest (and all other) cities there. Some

American cities are catching on too. But not enough. Why is that? Why has the cult of the car become so powerful here that we can't take a small central section of our great cities and deny access by car? People know how to walk, bike, skate... Why do we need to get any closer than the few blocks that would make the final few-block walk to a theater, to a store, to a cafe that much more pleasurable? Imagine eating in a street-side cafe where there were no cars racing by. Imagine the joy of rolling slowly through such zones.

Voies vertes. This is French for "green pathways" and refers to non-vehicle nature corridors (with biking, skating, and walking paths) that cut through the hearts of cities. Many cities in the U.S. have the makings of such paths, but the space is so valuable and commercial lobbies so unutterably blind and strong that turning this kind of land over to city-dwellers is almost unthinkable. How sad.

Are there some initiatives you should be aware of to make biking a real alternative for more people worldwide? Wow. That's a big question. Worldwide? I don't know. But locally and nationally there are many. In DC you might want to contact the League of American Bikers (which is in DC). They have years of study, research and networking behind them and could answer that question far more authoritatively than I could.

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23451](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23451))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 09, 1999 07:50 PM

**Author:** Ari ([aerle@pob.huji.ac.il](mailto:aerle@pob.huji.ac.il))

**Subject:** Israel

Ethan,

Have you ever considered continuing on from Egypt into Israel and even continuing on into Jordan? We have many great places and trails to discover as well as an incredible variety of climate, history, geography and people. Look forward to biking with you in the Holy Land.

ARI

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23394](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23394))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 11, 1999 11:48 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** biking in the Middle East

Have I ever considered continuing on from Egypt into Israel and even continuing on into Jordan? Indeed I have. And indeed I did. If you visit the [BikeAbout Web site](#) you will see that we carried on across the northern Sinai Peninsula and into Gaza from where we went up through Israel and the West Bank to Jerusalem. From Jerusalem we tured to the coast and Tel Aviv and then headed north as far as Akko. We then returned to Jerusalem, dropped down into the Jordan River Valley and cycled to Bet Shean for the corssing there into Jordan and onward toward and into Syria, Lebanon and points beyond. It was a fantastic ride. It is a fantastic part of the world, full of history

and a tremendous variety of hospitable people. I still dream about returning and doing a more southern swing... across the southern Sinai, through the Negev, into Jordan to see Petra, up through Amman, etc.

You live in the midst of great things. I hope that you take advantage of them to the fullest!

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23453](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23453))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 10, 1999 10:29 PM

**Author:** Rineu ([rineu@montealto.net](mailto:rineu@montealto.net))

**Subject:** Biking in Brazil

Ethan,

I was just starting planning a bike trip through the Brazilian coast when I met the Bike About home page. I thought I could get some hints to my plans when I got to the Forum. So I've learnt that there is a possibility to have a Bike About trip in Brazil.

I would like to know more about this idea and the possibility of taking part of the group. Or if you could help me to organize my trip by providing some information. Thank you

Rineu Santamaria Filho

Monte Alto SP - Brazil

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23425](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23425))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 11, 1999 11:56 AM

**Author:** Ethan Gelber ([ethang@gorp.com](mailto:ethang@gorp.com))

**Subject:** Brazil

The planning for anything BikeAbout related in Brazil are still only in the imagining stage. This means that I don't really have any practical advice to offer about traveling in Brazil. That said, I am always happy to help people plan for their adventures.

Since this is the last day of this forum, I think that the best thing would be for us to communicate by email. We can discuss your plans and BikeAbout's future there. My BikeAbout email, also available through the BikeAbout Web site is [hub@bikeabout.org](mailto:hub@bikeabout.org).

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23455](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23455))

---

[Top](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Print](#) [Reply](#)

**Date:** July 15, 1999 12:07 AM

**Author:** Chris Lakeman Fraser ([chrisfraser@fdn.co.uk](mailto:chrisfraser@fdn.co.uk))

**Subject:** biketrek LA to New York

Ethan

I have a friend, Tim Eddis who is cycling across the States. Up to now he has had the backing of a friend but now he's out there on his own - currently riding from Pueblo to Lamar. He will be taking Route 56 to Kansas City and thereafter Route 50 through to Washington DC & New York. Do you have any personal contacts with cyclists along the route who could give him encouragement and possibly ride some of the way with him? You can follow his journey on <http://www.biketrek.com> Any help will be appreciated

Thanks Chris

([http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message\\_ID=23642](http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=23642))



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