

The Great Adventure

Cycling from Mexico to Gatineau 2023



April 11

As we embarked on a “historic journey” that would take us through, and over mountains, rivers and valleys, we were excited about the places we would see, the people we would meet, and the storybook adventure that awaited. My buddy Pierre and I left from Acapulco to Tampico with our Mexican hosts Tony and his brother-in-law. They drove us to our starting point in Tampico. From there, they would follow us to the United States border. After crossing into the US, we would continue our pilgrimage on our own through several states, then cross into Canada and home.



April 12

First day of cycling. We were pioneers on a quest, eager and anxious, and couldn't wait to get started. On a beautiful and hot sunny day, with a cloudless sky, we set off on what would be a "life altering event". After a few hiccups to find our route, we cruised along with a crosswind and tailwind and managed to cycle 115 km, not bad for the first day. Our escorts then took us to visit a beautiful quarry and underground caves to explore. Pretty cool stuff!





April 13

Very hot day, with a moderate tailwind which allowed us to maintain a fairly high tempo. As we cycled, we observed in awe the beautiful mountains on both sides, as well as the gigantic lakes and multi-colored flowers on the side of the road. "We were really doing this", and it was awesome! We finished our ride before noon and took some time to unwind, then picked up some edibles for next day and went for dinner with our companions.



April 14

On the third day we encountered many hills and a rough road for a good part of the way. The legs were pumping, the ticker was pounding, with a “do or die” attitude, to the tune of Iron Maiden’s “Running Free” blaring in my ears and propelling me forward to San Fernando. It was hot and sticky, but with a change in direction, the tailwind picked up and allowed us to maintain a swift speed and cycle 135 km by the time it was over.



April 15

We started early on this day, and with the help from a barreling tailwind and kickass music blasting on my Spotify, we arrived 150 kilometers later at the US border in Los Indios Texas. After a quick spotcheck at US customs, we headed to our first Warmshowers destination in Harlingen Texas. We thanked our Mexican escorts as they departed for their drive back home. Our host John greeted us and took us out to dinner. After he paid our restaurant bill, he had a large bedroom waiting for us upon our return. What a big generous Texas welcome!







April 16

Slow start to the day as we had strong headwinds all the way to our next destination in Raymondville. Texas is very windy, as demonstrated by the numerous windmills we cycled by. We rode on highways for a good portion of the way, there was a good shoulder but heavy traffic at times, and a lot of debris. We also took service roads, where we had the whole roadway to ourselves, but could only ride on so far, as they would merge back on to the highway. We didn't challenge any speed records on this day, that's for sure. We had chicken for dinner then picked up provisions for the next day.



April 17

Shortly after taking off, we passed a security checkpoint. Since we didn't see anybody we proceeded through, when suddenly a half dozen security officers ran after us and screamed at us to stop. We showed them our passports and explained our journey, and they became very friendly and wanted to know all about our trip. We then continued cycling for a bit and it started raining. We stopped at an underpass for a bit then continued. With the rain still pouring, Pierre got a flat on his front tire, then again a little later on his back tire. After repairs we took off and the rain stopped. We arrived at our second Warmshowers host later than expected. Juan was a very friendly and kind person, and informed us that we were his first guests. He set us up in the guesthouse, which was overstocked but comfortable. He showed us around and introduced us to his numerous cats.





April 18

Again we face strong headwinds and a bit of rain, nothing serious. Our bodies are holding up except for our butts. I'm having trouble getting comfortable on my seat, and it's slowing me down big time. Pierre got another flat tire, nevertheless we put in another 125 kms for the day. We arrive in Refugio, a small Texas town. A good meal and a beer would hit the spot for sure!



April 19

We were about to leave when Pierre noticed he had a flat tire. Once fixed, we took off facing yet another persistent headwind, not to mention a sensitive butt. With sun and cloud through most of the day, I was immersed in the vitalizing and shifting panorama. Later, I connected the mobile to "War" as we dashed to our next stop. After a 120 km day we arrived in Edna. As there were no restaurants nearby and I was too "sore-assed" to ride to the nearest place to eat, we had pizza delivered.



April 20

Every morning I woke up with excitement and anticipation about what was in store for us. Just before taking off for the day, I would get pumped and shout out my favorite rallying cry "Let's Rock n' Roll". I enjoyed discovering new things and meeting interesting people as we cycled and progressed in our expedition. We took off with our familiar headwind, but it was sunny and warm. My ass was sensitive so I made a few "butt" stops along the way. Pierre had his fifth flat and only had one tube left, so we'd have to stop to buy some new ones soon. There are many ups and downs on a protracted trek like this, but I had the music booming, and life was good!





April 21

On our tenth day, we were heading for Houston with our friend the headwind. With Pierre's sixth flat and my ass in excruciating pain you could definitely say "Houston we have a problem" big time! As we cycled, there was more and more traffic as we approached the city. Yet, with the assistance from our dependable GPS, we were able to find our third Warmshowers stop quite easily. Each Warmshowers place that we stayed at was different and unique. This one had several students renting a room within a large house, it was pretty awesome.



April 22

Our first rest day was a blessing for our butts, although we had to find the nearest bike store to shop for parts. The first shop did not have what we needed, so we went to a second place. After buying tires and tubes and returning to our host, Pierre realized he forgot his cellphone at the bike shop. I called the store to confirm that they had it, then asked one of the students Eric at our Warmshowers place if he could drive us there to retrieve it. He obliged, so we picked up the cellphone, then grabbed some food for dinner. We thanked him for helping us, and paid for his gas and dinner.



April 23

We “blasted off” from our control center in Houston under cool conditions and our ever-present headwind. Along the way, we met other cyclists and people who asked us about our trip. It was nice to see that people took an interest in our journey. Dogs were also enticed by our passage, as several of them chased us as we cycled by. We arrived at our fourth Warmshowers destination. Pete was very welcoming, and had a nice room waiting for us. We watched the hockey game while sharing stories and snacks. Notwithstanding my healthy appetite, they had more food that we could possibly eat. He offered to ride with us to the main route the next day, which we gladly endorsed.







April 24

We headed out with Pete who led us through beautiful trails and neighborhoods. He cycled with us for about 50 kilometers and took us to the main road out of town. With strong headwinds slowing us down, we took several butt and snack breaks. It was a long 150 km day as we arrived at our hotel to relax and prepare for the next day. We penned down our thoughts about our amazing adventure in Texas, and looked forward to continue our pilgrimage in the great state of Louisiana tomorrow.



April 25

Like most days we headed out early, eager and juiced up about the day ahead. Although we had a bit of rain and a headwind, we were pumped and entered Louisiana like “ bats out of hell”! We took several pictures, then headed out to our fifth Warmshowers location in Merryville. It was so unique, a cabin on a lot with a museum, an outhouse, a stage, several cabins and an old jail. The town only had a few houses and a small restaurant, yet they had a police station, so authentic American! We thought to ourselves that you could only discover a place like this on a bike.







April 26

Another glorious day of biking awaits! We took off riding with yet another headwind. Prevailing winds are usually predominantly from the west in north America, but for some reason this was not to be the case for this journey. Shortly after leaving, we took different routes due to all the distractions and wonderment of the moment. Pierre contacted me and we agreed that we would meet up at the hotel in Oakdale, the day's final stop. So we rode solo for most of the day, admiring the breathtaking hills, rivers and valleys, coupled with stunning forests, woodlands and animals. We were truly privileged, to be living this unique experience.



April 27

We left our hotel in the rain, however we had one of our rare tailwinds, so we soared to our destination in Alexandria under our rallying chant "It's time to rock and roll"! We arrived at our sixth Warmshowers and met up with Karen. She is an amazing person who works with individuals with special needs. She set us up in a splendid old country house with gigantic rooms and tons of food. For dinner, she treated us to a traditional Louisiana meal that consisted of crawfish, tomatoes and corn on a cob, along with local beer to drink. We were in heaven!







April 28

Today was a rest day, or maybe not? We realized that the chips in our cellphones did not work in the US. We had obtained them from AT&T in Mexico, and had been assured that they would work in Mexico, the US and Canada. NOT! So our host Karen drove us to the local AT&T store, where we were informed that our phone numbers did not exist in their database. After a lot of back and forth we ended up purchasing a phone so we could make calls. Then Karen brought us to the place that she worked, where we were joined by another cyclist from France. He informed us that he has been cycling around the world for two years, pretty radical. We then joined her group for a wheelchair demonstration, followed by pizza. Karen is an incredible, generous and kind person, and it was an honor and privilege to be able to spend some time with her.





April 29

Pumped from yesterday, and with a tailwind pushing us we cruised to our next destination. We weathered a few more dog encounters with the help of our powerful legs and strong wind. Most dogs are more “bark than bite” and just like racing with us for a few seconds. I had my ears on with Thunderstruck, and enjoying the backdrop and landscape. As we approached our journey’s end it started raining, so we put our bikes in overdrive to the finish line. We were revved up, as tomorrow we’d be gunning for the state of Mississippi.



**BLUE STAR
MEMORIAL HIGHWAY**

**A tribute to the Armed Forces
that have defended the
United States of America**

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NEVER FORGET GARDEN
THE HISTORY OF A GARDEN TRAVELS TO ALL
OF AMERICA'S GARDENERS THROUGH
THE HISTORY OF GARDENING AND THROUGH
THE HISTORY OF GARDENING AND THROUGH
THE HISTORY OF GARDENING AND THROUGH
THE HISTORY OF GARDENING AND THROUGH





April 30

We took off early with “you guessed it” another headwind. We arrived at the mighty Mississippi river and crossed into our third state. We rode through the quaint little town of Natchez, where we set about on the renowned Natchez Trace Parkway. There are no commercial vehicles allowed, and the speed limit is 80 kilometers an hour. On the Parkway, cyclists reign supreme and have priority over motor vehicles. We were in “Bicycle Kingdom”, and this would be our route for the next several days. It was a gorgeous day, the sun was out, and all you could hear was the sound of the whispering wind. “Is this a great country or what?”







May 1

On day twenty we start our first full day on the Natchez Trace. As always, we were up early and I was restless and thrilled to get going. With a modest crosswind we cycled up and down hills and through forests and valleys, stopping periodically to acknowledge the ancient monuments. We indulged in our freedom and privilege. Upon arriving at our seventh Warmshowers checkpoint, we were greeted by a warmhearted and selfless lady. Cindy opened her humble home to cyclists, motorcyclists and others who passed through and needed a place to stay. She cared for her ailing husband and grandchild, yet found the time to accommodate us and cook homemade pizza for dinner. People like her restore our faith in humanity.





May 2

After Cindy took pictures of us, we departed for another exciting day on the Natchez on this glorious sunny morning, with a light crosswind and a perfect 25 degrees forecasted. We peddled at a steady pace and marveled and gazed at the mesmerizing scenery, as it unfolded in front of our eyes. We rode by many historical landmarks, stopping to rest and take pictures. As I was peddling, I noticed some deer at the side of the road so I took my feet off the pedals, and as I got to within a few metres from them they noticed me and trotted off into the bushes. It was entrancing to be so close to nature.



INDIAN TREATY

The line of trees crossing the Parkway immediately to your left marks a parcel of the boundary accepted by the Choctaw Indians and an American Commissioner under Andrew Jackson in the treaty of Doaks stand, October 26, 1820. You are on the Choctaw side of the boundary.

The Choctaw reluctantly gave to the United States the land west of the line "with the land lying on the old Indian path" northwards to a black oak stand on the Natchez Trace. They also gave to you territory from Doak's trace, marked A, J, and beyond...

This was succeeded by the Choctaw Nation's agreement to give five and a half million acres, about one third of their land. In 1832 the Choctaw were forced to give up all their lands. Other Indians were forced to do the same by 1833 after clearing for white settlement all areas of their lands ceded by the Natchez Trace.

CHOCTAW BOUNDARY



CHOCTAW CESSION 1820

DOAKS STAND

About 1812 William Doak established his stand or tavern on the Natchez Trace, which is five miles north of the Parkway at this point. The treaty of Doaks Stand was signed there in 1820.

Because he conducted himself respectfully toward those who called at his house... and made considerable improvement on the land Doak was given the right to purchase his land after it was opened for settlement, when the Robinson Road took traffic from the Natchez Trace. The stand was moved to the crossing of the Choctaw Boundary and the old road — about half a mile north of here.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



May 3

Our fourth day on the Natchez was cool in the morning, and a balmy 25 degrees by the afternoon. It was quiet, with the occasional car driving by and other cyclists waving or inquiring about our trip. We basked to the sites and sounds of the wind, water running down picturesque creeks, and the chirping of birds and other small critters. We arrived at our motel which was old and unkept, but the owner was very courteous, and even gave us some cookies from his homeland in India. Such small gestures from strangers were typical during our voyage, and they touched our hearts deeply.





May 4

Day five on the parkway was memorable, as we would be cycling to Tupelo Mississippi, birthplace of the "King of Rock n' Roll" Elvis Presley. I had the opportunity of visiting the house where Elvis was born six years before, and didn't think I would have chance to see it again, so I was ecstatic. Upon our arrival we toured Fairpark, where history was made when Elvis gave one of his first concerts in front of thousands of delirious fans. It has a stunning statue of the King in front of the City Hall building. Then we visited Tupelo Hardware, where Elvis got his first guitar. Residents of Tupelo are so proud that their native son became the greatest social, cultural and musical icon in history. Remnants and tributes of Elvis are everywhere, it's so surreal!









May 5

Rest day in Tupelo. We had breakfast at Johnnies Drive In, a quaint little restaurant where Elvis would go for breakfast when he first started out. We even got to have our meal at the Elvis booth, where he would sit. I was ecstatic! Then for me, the climax of the whole trip, a visit to the birthplace. Less than a kilometer away we arrived at the house where it all started. I was in a trance and thought to myself, "this, is history". Like John Lennon once said "before Elvis, there was nothing, then Elvis changed everything, so long live the King, and long live Rock n Roll. "





**BIRTHPLACE OF
ELVIS PRESLEY**
Elvis Aaron Presley was born
Jan. 8, 1935, in this house,
built by his father. Presley's
career as a singer and enter-
tainer redefined American
popular music. He died Aug. 16,
1977, at Memphis, Tennessee.





May 6

After the emotional high of the previous day, we set out on our last full day on the Natchez Trace. It was sunny with an expected high of 28 degrees, and a light crosswind. With about 15 km to go to reach our Bed and Breakfast, the Trace was closed for repairs, so we had to alter our route. Not long after, on a quiet and winding country road (so we thought) we were confronted by dogs who got dangerously

close. After honking our marine horns and shouting at them they backed off. It's surprising how quickly we can switch to overdrive when properly motivated!





May 7

Last day in Mississippi and on to Alabama. We took the Natchez Trace Parkway one final time for about 25 km, then exited and headed for our hotel. It was sunny and hot, with a light headwind and 29 celsius forecasted for the day. We felt pretty good, no aches, soreness or muscular cramps, and our butts were getting used to the daily grind. We were becoming "hard assess"! We arrived early in Florence Alabama and settled in and prepared for the next day.



Welcome to
Sweet Home
Alabama

Governor Kay Ivey



May 8

We departed with some light rain that didn't last long and a headwind of 20km/hr. We cycled in Alabama for about half way, while being saluted by a few dogs. Then we came up to a large bridge with signage "road closed". We asked the workers if we could pass, as a detour would lengthen our route big time! We explained our long journey home, they were impressed with our story and let us through. We rambled on a bit before entering the state of Tennessee. It didn't take long before we noticed there

were more and more hills. This would be a prelude of what was to come. We entered Pulaski, a charming little town nestled between hills and mountains.







May 9

It was a sunny day with a few clouds and expected high of 29 celsius. Like we always do, we left early so it was cool and comfortable. We soon ran into a series of long and steep hills, so that slowed us down for a while. Further along we vaulted on the highway where I plugged in my Spotify and blasted "Highway to Hell", which I much prefer to listen to than bustling traffic. Then it was smooth cycling to our hotel in Franklin Tennessee.



May 10

Our next stop was Greenbrier. I was itching to go and see what the day had in mind for us. We circumvented downtown Nashville and zigzagged suburbia until we reached the outskirts of the city. After many twists and turns and hop-skips and jumps, Pierre and I got separated. I got on the horn and contacted him, and not long after "The Extreme Machine" was back together. However, several long and steep hills awaited, and the last part of the ride would be strenuous. After climbing several 13 degree hills we reached Warmshowers number eight. At the top of a monstrous hill, Joel and his dog buddy awaited. Joel took us out for a few errands and we picked up pizza for dinner, then it was time for some shut-eye.







May 11

On day 30 we would cross into the state of Kentucky. After climbing a few steep hills we took the highway to avoid the biggest ones and cycle on a more direct route. This proved to be dangerous, as a long stretch of the highway was under construction and we had little shoulder room to avoid the large vehicles that bristled by us. Some honked their horns as they passed inches from us, at one point an ambulance screamed on the loud speaker to "get off the highway"! We stayed composed, kept our cool and carried on until we reached our hotel.



Welcome
To

Kentucky
UNBRIDLED SPIRIT

Andy Beshear, Governor

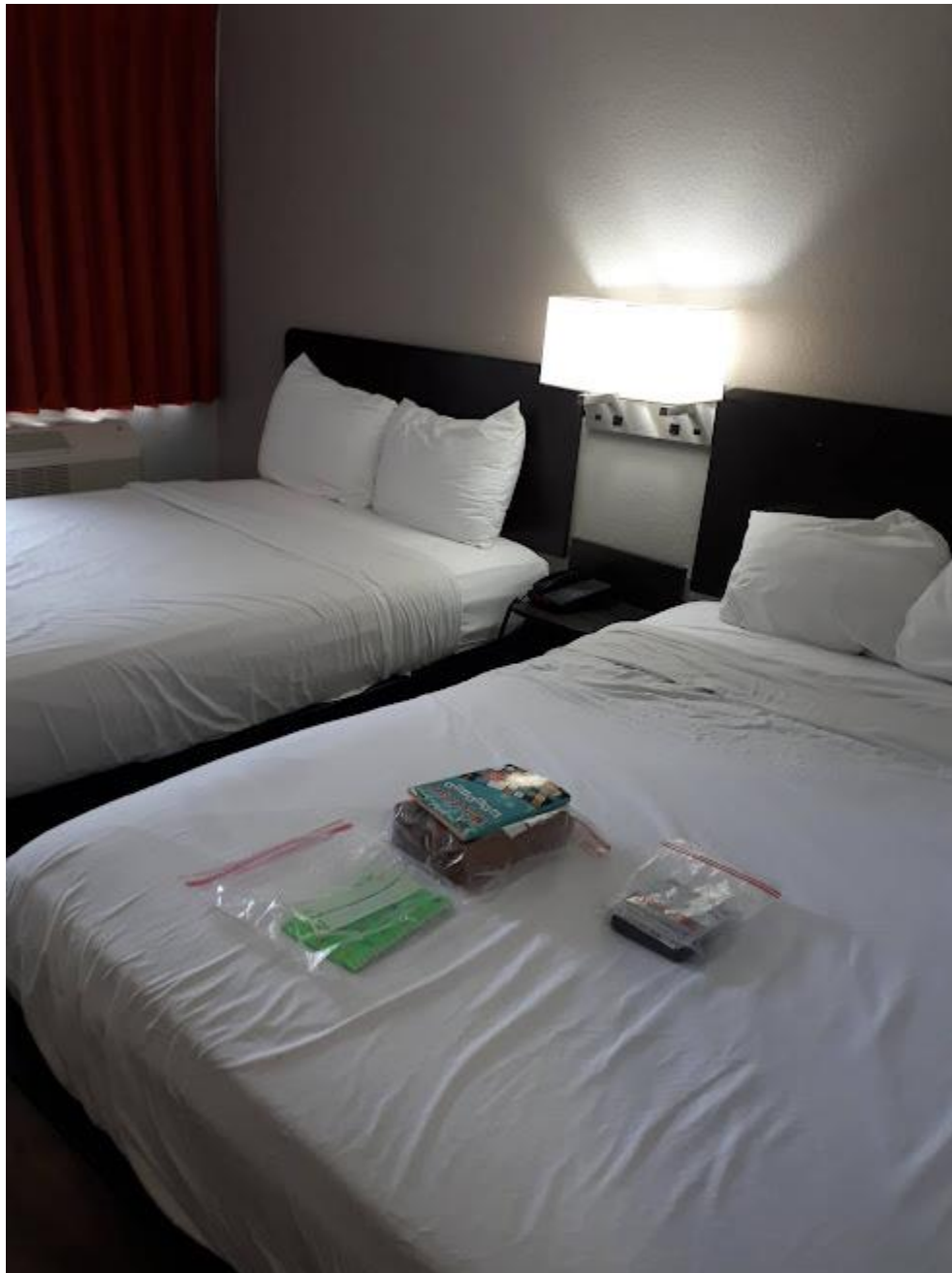


May 12

After breakfast at our hotel we left under a sinister sky, hoping for the best. In order to avoid the rain, cycle a more direct route, and evade the bigger hills, we decided to take highway 65 again.

After a short distance, we noticed that there was construction ahead. Not knowing the length of the road work, we decided to persevere. As we began to make our way through the construction zone, it started to rain. Soon after, our visibility became scant, large vehicles splashed water on us as they zoomed by, and there was no shoulder to ride on. After 15 kilometers it finally ended, and it would be

smooth cycling from here, so we thought. We continued on the highway until we noticed a police car on the side of the road. The policeman had pulled someone over for speeding. Pierre cycled by him unnoticed, I was not as lucky. As I cycled by he turned to me and shouted "GET OFF THIS ROAD NOW". I continued toward the nearest exit but the officer caught up with me before I reached it. He was courteous, and informed me that cyclists were not allowed on the highways. He then escorted me to the next exit. I took an alternate road which would add 34 km to my route. I got in touch with Pierre, and we agreed that we would meet at the motel. Shortly before he reached his goal for the day, he was also stopped and instructed to get off the highway. To top it all off, he got a flat tire just before arriving at the motel. This was a premonition from beyond, and we would not cycle on the highway for the rest of our trip.



May 13

We fixed Pierre's tire before leaving, and just as we were about to set off it was flat again. The tire itself was damaged, so we duct-taped it, hoping that it would hold until our next destination. It was another beautiful sunny day, as we made our way to Louisville through many hills and winding country roads. As we peddled, you could hear the sound of the wind blowing and birds chirping, it was music for the soul. We arrived at our ninth Warmshowers host Jannette who had a whole apartment ready for us in the lower level of her big beautiful house. Tomorrow was a rest day, so I popped up my tent and slept in the great outdoors.







May 14

After a restful sleep in my tepee and Pierre having the vast apartment to himself for the night, Jannette taxied us to the nearest bike shop. After Pierre got a new tire installed, we went to the grocery store to pick up some chow. We spent the rest of this gorgeous day cleaning our bikes and doing some overdue laundry.



May 15

With our batteries recharged and a much appreciated rest yesterday, we took off “locked and loaded” toward Sparta, right next to the Kentucky Speedway. The weather was a comfortable 20 degrees with sun and cloud, and a fair headwind. We started on a picturesque country road with lots to see, the scenery gradually changing to more and more hills as we progressed. Our legs had gotten used to the hills, but we ran into a few towering ones of 14 degrees grade. Just before our arrival in Sparta, we encountered an extremely long and arduous hill that went on endlessly, but we were driven and soldiered on to reach the top. Shortly after, we made it to our hotel, which was on top of another short but steep hill.





May 16

After a physically demanding day yesterday, we rode off towards Cincinnati Ohio, the “Buckeye State”. This day would not be as physically tough, but mentally debilitating. There were many hills, although less than the previous day, but it started to rain early on and didn’t stop. It poured on and off all day for the first time since we started the trip, so we had been lucky until now. We arrived at our Warmshowers number ten soaking wet. Our host Kate let us in the house where we showered and changed our clothes. Later, we had dinner with her and her husband and shared cycling and other stories. They were avid cyclists, and informed us that Ohio had an extensive trail network that covered the whole state. This was music to my ears!









May 17

We got up ready for action, looking forward to cycling on trails for the next several days. We headed out on the little Miami trail, which was part of the extensive state trail grid called the Ohio-Erie trail. During this splendid sunny day we crossed paths with many fellow cyclists, rolling by beautiful parks and endless greenery. Well into our ride, I got my first flat tire. Once fixed, we headed out to our eleventh Warmshowers. Buddy and his wife, along with their two pooches welcomed us into their home. We had a scrumptious BBQ dinner and delicious pie for dessert. Was this a great trip or what?







May 18

I was up way before dawn, waiting in anticipation to leave for another day of “thrills and chills”. The weather was perfect, sunny, with a light wind and the temperature in the mid twenties. We were on the Ohio-Erie trail without a care in the world. We reached Columbus Ohio, home of the Columbus Blue Jackets of the NHL. Columbus is a beautiful city, and very bicycle friendly. The main road downtown has a full road-lane strictly for cyclists. Continuing on, and just north of the city we reached Warmshowers number twelve. Our new friend Bob welcomed us with freshly baked chocolate chip cookies. Bob is a

kind, generous and considerate person. He cooked us dinner, and we ate and chatted outside on the patio. The next day he was up early and had our breakfast ready. People like him made our trip worthwhile.











May 19

We left for Millersburg Ohio after a hearty breakfast that Bob had prepared. Today was a mixed bag, rain for about an hour, light headwind, and a 24 degree high. We peddled on and off secondary roads and trails, moderate hills, waving at Amish people crossing our path on their horse drawn carriages. By now our bodies were accustomed to the daily drill and my sore butt was subsiding, but unfortunately Pierre's was intensifying. We had a rest day coming, and it couldn't come at a better time.







May 20

The day started with rain, which subsided after an hour. We rode the Ohio-Erie trail for about halfway, then on secondary roads, encountering more Amish people riding in their carriages. It was surreal, like going back in time. We rode by a scenic river, marveling at the ducks and geese swimming with their offspring. Upon reaching downtown Akron, we encountered a precipitous hill, followed by several more drawn-out climbs towards our daily objective. A little while later we arrived at our thirteenth Warmshowers, where we would be staying two nights. Fritz and his wife had a cozy chalet style old house, with little cabins and a chicken pen on their property. I set up my tent and slept beside the enclosure and in tune with nature.





May 21

Day 40 was a well-deserved leisure day. Our hosts cooked us a delicious breakfast, then gave us a tour of the city. Kent became known as the Tree City when, in the late 1800s, John Davey, an expert horticulturalist, planted hundreds of trees throughout the City. He later founded the Davey Tree Company which is still in existence today. Kent has a population of less than 30,000 people, which triples when students arrive at the University for the school year. It is also known for the infamous Kent State Shootings, where Ohio National Guardsmen opened fire on unarmed students during a peace rally against the Vietnam war. "God Bless America". We had pizza dinner with our hosts and talked about our cycling adventures. Fritz was galvanized by the conversation, and offered to ride with us the next day and guide us to the trail that would lead us to our next destination.





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Kent State shootings

Article Talk



The **Kent State shootings** (also known as the **May 4 massacre** and the **Kent State massacre**^{[3][4][5]}) resulted in the killing of four and wounding of nine unarmed college students by [the Ohio National Guard](#), on the [Kent State University](#) campus. The shootings took place on May 4, 1970, during a peace rally opposing the [expanding involvement of the Vietnam War into Cambodia](#) by United States military forces as well as protesting the [National Guard](#) presence on campus. This incident marked the first time a student was killed in an anti-war gathering in United States history.

Kent State shootings

Kent State shootings



John Filo's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of Mary Ann Vecchio kneeling over the dead body of Jeffrey Miller minutes after the unarmed student was fatally shot by an Ohio National Guardsman.

Location [Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, United States](#)

Date May 4, 1970; 53 years ago
12:24 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time:
UTC +4)

Injured	9
Victims	Kent State University students
Perpetrators	Troop G of the Ohio National Guard

May 4, 1970, Kent State Shootings Site

U.S. National Register of Historic Places

U.S. National Historic Landmark





May 22

As we talk and peddle with Fritz, he navigates us out of Kent. It's a temperate 24 degrees with a 20 km headwind, sunny with cloudy periods. We press on to our fourteenth Warmshowers hosts Pat and Carol. They have a lovely chalet on Lake Erie, were they collect rocks from the lake, paint them, and donate them to local charities. They were two of the kindest, compassionate, thoughtful people you could meet. We had stew for dinner, as well as a salad that Pierre had prepared. Then they left for home, which was about an hour away. We got things ready for the next day then crashed for the night.







May 23

It was 4:30 am and I was already awake and keen to start the day. After cycling on the beautiful roads and trails of Ohio for almost a week, we would reach the state of Pennsylvania by the afternoon. We left as the sun was rising, another bright sunny day and an ever present headwind. Pierre was struggling, as every peddle rotation brought unbearable pain to his derriere. He withstood the irritation and discomfort and persevered. To top it off, Warmshowers number fifteen was at the top of a long and lofty ascent. Our host Leo was a chatty and straight forward guy, and enjoyed telling us about his biking expeditions. He and his wife provided us an informal dinner with drinks and lively conversation.







PENNSYLVANIA

Founded 1681 by William Penn
as a Quaker Commonwealth.

Birthplace of

THE DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE

and

THE CONSTITUTION OF
THE UNITED STATES.

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND HERITAGE COMMISSION

1740



May 24

After a good night's sleep, we bound for our ninth and final state of New-York. As we made our way east along the side of lake Erie, we delighted in the ever-changing scenery as it unraveled with each stroke of the peddles. It was another fine sunny 20 degree day, with a light crosswind. With each passing day, the pain in my butt had eased considerably, unfortunately this wasn't the case for Pierre. The pain was intense, and was eating away at him and sucking up his energy. We crossed into the "Empire State" and checked in our hotel in Fredonia, where he could take a load off.



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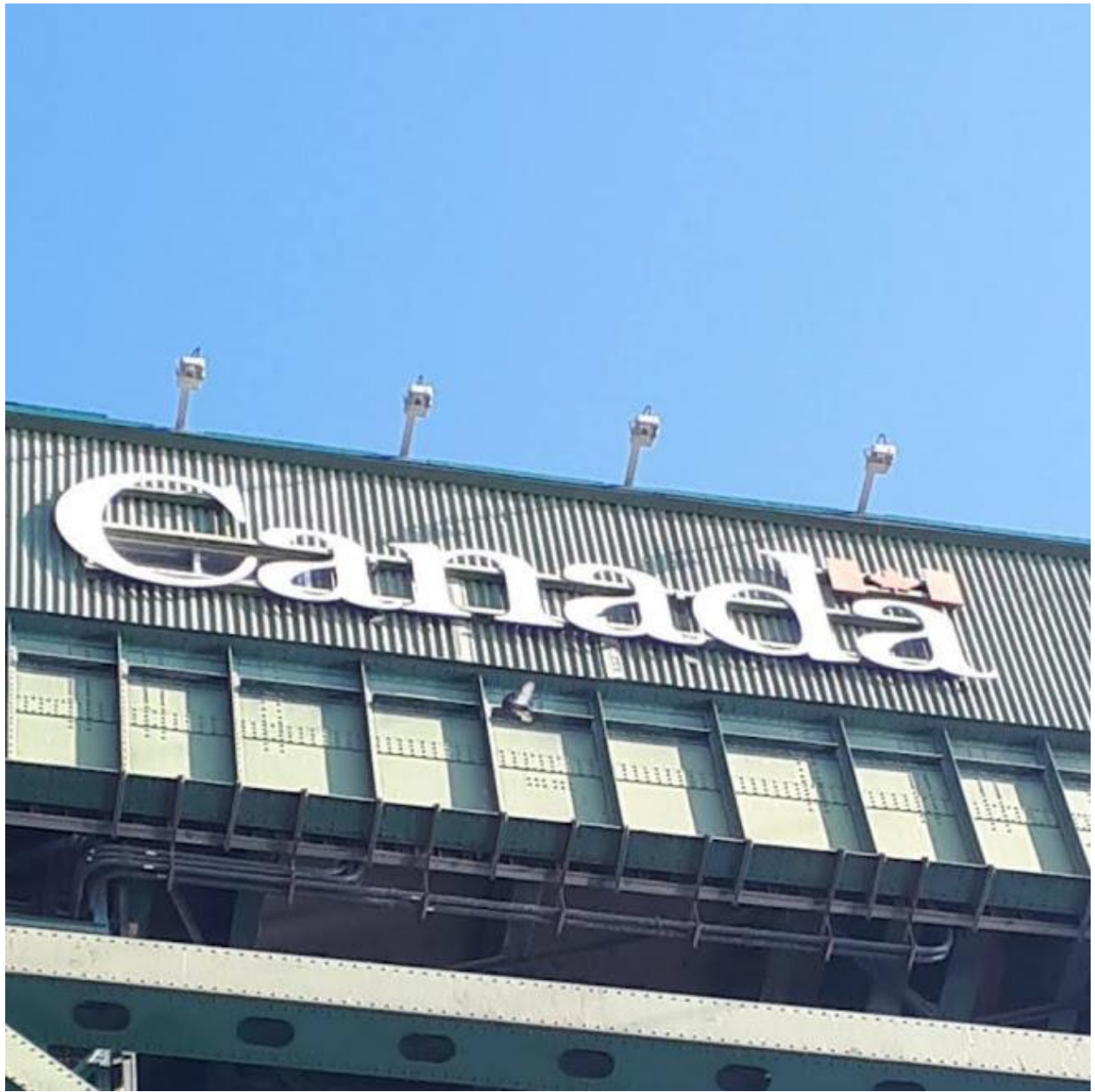
May 25

We are bound for the “True North Strong and Free”. We are jazzed and juiced up, and leave for our home country. We face a vigorous headwind as we make our way towards Buffalo. After a chaotic and puzzling passage through numerous construction and road closures, we arrived at the Peace Bridge. With the wind now at our backs we cross into Canada “flying off the seats of our pants”, relishing and savoring each moment. We point ourselves towards Crystal Beach and dismount our bikes at Warmshowers number sixteen. Our hostess Ginette is a gracious and kindhearted 82 year old French lady, originally from Quebec. Pierre and I take turns chatting with her about family and friends. She lends us her car so we can pick up some groceries and go out for dinner. Her generosity and kindness are an inspiration.











May 26

Next morning we woke up at 7:15 am. We weren't sure if it was the accumulated fatigue, the comfy bed, or the fact that we were now in "The Great White North", we hadn't gotten up this late since the start of our trip. We usually started our day at this time, but it was nice to relax a bit and slow down the tempo. The sun was out, with a 22 degree temperature and a light crosswind. Through paltry hills and winding rural roads we coasted onward to our ensuing landing place in Hamilton. There, Robert and his wife, along with their daughter and kitty-cat welcomed us into their dwelling. Dinner followed, we

enjoyed casual and homey discussions. Robert was a devoted cyclist, and asked if he could ride a portion of the way with us the next morning. Since he knew the trails, he could accompany us near the greater Toronto area.







May 27

Robert led the charge out of Hamilton. He pointed the way to the trail that would follow lake Ontario and lead us closer to Toronto. After parting ways, we continued along the trail then Lakeshore road. It's sunny with a high of 22 degrees, almost no clouds and minimal wind. Pierre's behind is still tender, but he's not complaining. He carries on, and we clock in at Warmshowers eighteen at noon sharp. After knocking on the door repeatedly, Nancy answers. She wasn't expecting us this early, so we helped her move some stuff from the lower level where we would set up our base camp for the night. Later, we have a BBQ dinner outside and chit chat. Nancy and her husband cycle regularly, and offered to chaperon us out of downtown Toronto.





May 28

As we saddle up for the day, Nancy and her husband take command through downtown Toronto. We rode by the CN Tower and the Skydome, enjoying the scenery and beautiful weather. As we reach Scarborough, we get disoriented and have trouble following the route. Nancy leads us through very rough, narrow and steep dirt trails in the woods. Things were becoming dicey and unpredictable. We had to dismount and push our bicycles and 60 plus pounds of gear up and down paths through muck and mud, not knowing where it would lead us. After several minutes of anxiety and physical exertion, we found our way back to the main road. Once back on track, Nancy apologized for the trouble and confusion that we had gone through. We told her it was all good, said our farewells and continued on our way until we reached our next Warmshowers in Oshawa. Our host Svend was a hardcore cyclist who had travelled extensively on his bicycle. He had a world map with pins indicating all the places he had gone through. It was unreal, every continent was covered with an infinite amount of dots. This guy was "the real deal", he made our trip look like a ride around the block. When he proposed to show us the way to the nearest trail, we gratefully accepted.







May 29

I was up before dawn excited to get going. With Svend leading the charge, we roared out of Oshawa on a new day. He spearheaded the way to a nearby trail where we thanked him and parted ways. The weather was mild with scattered clouds, but we faced a robust headwind. In spite of this, we still made good time and arrived at our Warmshowers in Cobourg early in the afternoon. It was a beautiful property by lake Ontario, with lots of trees and flowers, and plenty of open space. We got acquainted with our hosts Linda, her husband, a kitty cat and a dog named "puck". I was relieved to hear that he wasn't a Leafs fan. We took advantage of the extra time and panoramic surroundings to chill by the lake. Another couple joined in for dinner, we talked and relaxed with a glass of wine before retiring to our room.











May 30

It's sunny again as we leave for Belleville. The roads were nice, with light traffic. Like virtually every day since the beginning of our trip, we had to contend with a pesky headwind. I was wired and listened to Bob Seger's "Against the Wind", how metaphorical was that? Our Warmshowers in Belleville was a young couple with a four year old daughter. They had a big old house and were going through some renovations. Still, they found time to host us for the night. For dinner, we had a wholesome vegetarian meal. Soon after, they left us for an outing they had planned, so I snacked a bit then called it a night.







May 31

On day 50 we are trailblazing our way west to Kingston. The sun is out, no clouds and a high of 25 degrees. Since our crusade began, and despite a perpetual headwind, we have had very little precipitation, and near-perfect weather. For the most part we departed and arrived early, which was the case again today. The Warmshowers was again located on a pictorial setting by lake Ontario. John had informed us that he would arrive later and left the place open for us. A friend of his arrived earlier, and we chatted with him until John showed up, then his buddy left. He had an assortment of food for dinner and wasn't sure what to make, so Pierre offered to make spaghetti and he agreed. We enjoyed our meal while talking about "what else" cycling. John was an inspiring noble man, who had made many remarkable trips on his bicycle, and at the age of 77 years old he showed no signs of slowing down.







June 1

After thanking John for the warm hospitality and uplifting stories, we pointed our compass north towards Perth, our final stop before heading home. Today was a hot 29 degrees, clear skies and a tempered headwind. As usual, we arrived early at our Warmshowers address. Marc arrived awhile later and introduced himself. For dinner he had a smorgasbord of food which we devoured, as we engaged in various topics of conversation. I set up my tent for the final night under the stars.







June 2,

Through the ups and downs, the thick and thin, the good, the bad and the ugly, Pierre and I had gotten along tremendously well. Pierre was cool, calm and collected. He always had a plan, and didn't panic when things got awry or off course. He was flexible, and open to suggestions and ideas. He was patient, and put up with my shenanigans and antics. He was my reality check. But most of all, he was my "friend". Together we were "The Extreme Machine".

“We’re comin’ home baby”. We got up bright and early for our last day. It seems so long ago that we started our adventure, yet it went by so fast. Our host Marc rides with us for an hour before saying goodbye. He points the way to the “The Trans Canada Trail”, which will lead us all the way to Ottawa and Gatineau. Our final ride is picture-perfect, and we savor every moment. Upon our final approach, my front tire deflated, but nothing would deter us from reaching our goal, so I rode the last few hundred meters to the finish line. Our spouses had organized a gathering of family and friends, and as we drew nearer you could hear the yelling and screaming of our welcoming party. We arrived to the sound of “Rocky” blasting out, and our spouses greeting us with kisses and hugs. Pierre’s sister Monique had contacted the local media, and television crews were waiting to hear about our story. The Great Adventure had taken us through 3 countries, 9 states, and 2 provinces. We rode a total of 5,039 kilometers in 47 days, 5 rest days for a total of 52 days. We stayed at 23 Warmshowers places for a total of 27 nights, and 24 nights in motels. We had completed our “Magical Mystery Tour” and reached “The Promised Land”.









