

Introduction

I have decided to publish a day to day log to keep track of our progress. It's more for us to remember, but maybe some friends and family might also be interested to read how we are getting along.

So basically Siria and I are on an open ended trip westwards. We want to cover as much distance as we can by bicycle, we want to take small, less travelled roads, make detours and take time to enjoy all the nice places on our route. We want to fly as little as possible. We want to cross oceans by boat if we can and we want to use train or bus if we need to get somewhere quicker than we can by biking. Finally we also want to Kite Surf as much as we can, whenever there is wind and water.

We are on a budget, this means we prefer to cook instead of going to restaurants and we try to camp whenever we find a good place to do so. Also we are using WarmShowers.org, a great organization for touring bicyclists.

And why are we doing this? Simply because the world is a wonderful place full of wonderful people. Bicycle speed is the perfect speed to take everything in, to enjoy the smells, the sun, rain and wind on your face and the sounds. We have time to wave and chat with all the people we meet. And we look on in wonder how the landscape, vegetation and people slowly change as we move through time and space.

Now, almost 1.5 years after having written the above, we can very happily say: "it is done!". I did indeed keep a day to day log of our travels that now encompassed well over 1000 pages. It can be downloaded at www.bikenkitetheworld.org but it is far too much for anyone to plough through, therefore I have made this short summary of our trip.



Biked 23'922 km through 33 Countries in 530 days, kite surfed on about 30 spots in 9 countries.

Covered a total distance of about 66'000 km, 19'500 km by plane, 11'500 km by train, 5'500 km by bus, 4'000 km by ferry, 1'700 km by car and about 70 km on a sailing boat)

Summary

Europe

So, what did we do in the last 18 months? We quit our jobs and flat, got rid of most of our stuff and left Switzerland in July 2015, travelled up through Germany, Holland and Denmark, took a boat to the Faroes and Iceland, biked the length of Iceland East to West crossing the barren central highlands, bathed in innumerable natural hot springs, cursed the terribly bumpy roads, marvelled at otherworldly volcanoes, fumaroles and geysers and got battered by severe weather.



Iceland

Canada and Eastern USA

At the end of August 2015 we flew from Reykjavik to Halifax in Canada biked through the north-western provinces up to the Gaspé peninsula and then followed the St. Lawrence down through Quebec and Montreal into the USA. We went canoe camping in the Mauricie National Park, kite surfing on the Iles de la Madeleine and sailed up Lake Champlain on a yacht. We biked down the East coast of the USA through Boston and Long Island into Manhattan. We crossed the Appalachian Mountains on the Allegheny passage and got as far as Pittsburgh.



Brooklyn Bridge, New York

Southwest USA and California

To escape the cold, we took the train to Chicago and further all the way south to Albuquerque in New Mexico . We biked through the deserts of South Western USA through Joshua Tree National Park and Palm Springs to San Diego, the most south westerly corner of the USA. We biked up the West Coast spending Christmas 2015 and New Year in LA, then continued up the coast through Big Sur, getting drenched by downpours that were caused by one of the strongest El Niño events in history. We biked up through Big Sur on Highway Number 1 to San Francisco and and took selfies of ourselves in front of the Golden Gate Bridge.



Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco

Philippines

At the end of January 2016, we then decided it was time to escape the wet and the cold, so we took a flight to Manila on the Philippines. We spent the best part of one month kitesurfing like crazy, first on crazy Boracay, then on a far quieter beach further south. We then shared a fisherman's boat with some other fanatic kite surfers to camp and kite for a few days on an uninhabited island far out in the ocean. We then worked for one more month on a permaculture aid project in the remote mountain village of Mablad, successfully completing the Permaculture Design Certificate course.



Mablad, Philippines

Singapore, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia

In March 2016, we then flew to Singapore and biked up Malaysia, taking a small side trip to Kuala Lumpur to organize our Visa for Myanmar and to marvel at the amazing Petronas Twin Towers. We crossed into Thailand and then over into Myanmar in a small twin tail fishing boat. We travelled northwards up Myanmar fearing for our lives during an overnight ride in a rickety bus with no brakes, travelled through the jungle in the world's slowest train, visited the famed temples of Bagan and hiked up to the Golden Rock Pagoda in the middle of the night. We biked out of Myanmar, through Thailand and into Cambodia, visited the other worldly Angkor Wat temples, biked through Cambodia's desperately poor hinterland and down the mud trails along the Mekong River to Phnom Penh. There we shuddered as we learned about the horrors of the Khmer Rouge while visiting a former prison camp that is now a museum.



Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon, Myanmar

Vietnam

We then biked into Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh City in midst of thousands of buzzing scooters and up the marvellous coast finding paradise in form of a remote kite spot with buttery flat water, constant wind and a small bar serving frozen banana chunks in coconut milk. We visited the spectacular caves in Phong Nha and enjoyed the crazy city of Hanoi before bicycling towards China past the stunning rocks of Halong Bay.



Ninh Chu Bay, Vietnam

China, Macao and Hong Kong

We crossed the border into the economic power house of southern China, biked up the coast and through the Megacity Guangzhou finally arriving in the gambling paradise of Macau. From there we took the ferry over to Hong Kong, arriving in the middle of the night with no place to sleep.



Skyline of Hong Kong

Japan

From Hong Kong we flew to Japan and biked from Kyoto, through the hills of central Honshu and along the magnificent northern coast through Tottori and down into Hiroshima, took a ferry to Shikoku and on to Kyushu. We bathed with the locals in the hot springs of Beppu and biked past Mount Aso volcano. In Fukuoka, Siria left me for about one month as she went home for the wedding of a good friend of hers.



Mount Aso, Kyushu, Japan

South Korea, China, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan

I took a ferry from Fukuoka to Busan, crossed all of South Korea in 4.5 days catching a ferry to China in Incheon, just north of Seoul. In China I took a night train from Qingdao to Xining, biked over the Qilin Shan Mountains in the centre of China, crossing a 4100 m high pass into Gansu province. Two further night trains took me first to Urumqi and further to the remote extreme western corner of China. I biked through the desert to the Kazakh border, then through the steppes of Kazakhstan, inhaling the scent of wild rosemary. I then turned south and climbed up the remote gravel road to the border crossing with Kyrgyzstan. I followed the south shore of the magical Issyk Kul Lake camping wild and enjoying a refreshing swim every evening. I arrived in Bishkek just in time to catch a bus to Almaty to pick Siria up from the airport.



Qilin Shan Mountains, Central China

Kite surfing on Lake Karakul

Together once more, we took a van through Kyrgyzstan to Osh. From there we bicycled off up towards the Kyzil Art Pass at 4200 m and Tajikistan on the famous Pamir Highway. We arrived in Karakul by mid October 2016 in time to take part in the Roof of the World Regatta, a kite surf race on Lake Karakul, the highest navigable lake in the world. This was undoubtedly the highlight of our adventure. We even made it onto Tajik TV!



Arriving at Lake Karakul

The Pamir Highway, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

We then biked along the Pamir Highway camping at -19°C and battling into icy cold headwinds at 4000 m altitude through sublime desert mountain landscapes, followed the border with Afganistan down the Panj Valley finally arriving in Dushanbe where we spent some magical days with fellow bicycle tourers camping in the garden of Veronique, an unbelievably welcoming Warm Shower's host. We then biked westwards into Uzbekistan taking in the magic sights of Golden Samarkand, continued by train and bike past the vanishing Aral Sea, back into Kazakhstan and on to Aktau from where we caught a ferry across the Caspian Sea to Baku in Azerbaijan.



Biking into Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Italy and Switzerland.

We biked through Azerbaijan along the south foothills of the Caucasus mountains into Tbilisi in Georgia, took a train to the Black Sea and then biked along the coast into Turkey. In Trabzon we took a night bus to Istanbul and another bus to Tirana, the capital of Albania. From Albania we biked through Montenegro and up the Croatian coast towards Italy. In mid-December, we crossed the alps back into eastern Switzerland, bicycled through Switzerland arriving back home again just in time to celebrate Christmas with our friends and families.



Arriving in Croatia