

Season 3 – Part 3. Westwards into the Rust Belt.



Sa 31.10.2015, day 111. On the road again

We got off a bit later than we wanted to. We had a Warm Shower fixed up for the night with Tracy and Joanne in Princeton. We had to do about 90 km. Going was tough, especially round Newark traffic, roads and also Neighborhoods were really bad. Right on a very busy Multi-Lane road I had a puncture. This is no. 3 and it is starting to be routine. We pulled up at a Truck Stop and fixed the hole. It was caused by a bit of glass in the tire and was easy to fix. A very friendly Indian guy who was driving a truck came up to us for a chat. Turns out he lived in Fribourg for two years. It's absolutely amazing how many people have links with Switzerland! Before we left he gave us a bunch of energy drinks as good-bye gifts. Again a very nice person we meet!

Eventually we made it out into the leafy suburbs. Roads and traffic got far better. We toasted some bagels in a park. The bike ride got really nice outside of Princeton. There was a bike trail running all along a canal through the forest. Finally we made it to our WarmShower hosts Tracy and Joanne in Princeton just about as it was getting dark. They were absolutely great, as was their dog, a very funny Portuguese Waterdog. Apparently these dogs are bred to work on fishing boats and will go and fetch fish or nets or other stuff that fell overboard.

It was Halloween, Tracy and Joanne had carved Mr. Mets (The New York Baseball team that lost the World Series to the Kansas Royals) and Donald Trump Pumpkins. And while we sat there eating, the doorbell rang again and again and all sorts of kids, all dressed up, turned up for candy. My favorite costume was "sheep". A little Asian girl, wearing white and a pair of white ear muffs. After wonderful fish dinner, Tracy took us out for some ice creams in Princeton.





Su 1.11.2015, day 112. Another warm shower night

We headed off more or less early after porridge breakfast and went straight to Princeton to have a look around the college campus. Apparently it is one of the oldest in the USA and the campus building was the biggest building in the USA at that time. But it certainly is an impressive campus with great architecture and they also seem to take care that the ivy prominently grows up all facades. After that we stopped by the local café to get organized for the next leg. Washington crossing was nice and we had a quick stop there by the river. We cooked lunch (spaghetti) in Doylestown right outside the museum. It was sunny and warm with a beautiful autumn atmosphere. We did a quick pit stop in Starbucks and headed off for our hosts for the night, Barbara and George. When we got there we found that there was also Winston and Sky, two labs, Dory, a golden retriever and a standard poodle called Jamie. The two were again absolutely great. They had 8 kids, all grown and left house and were not volunteering for Seeing Eye, an organization that trains dogs for the blind. They were planning to open a hostel in South Carolina next spring. I really hope that when I am getting on for 70 I will also have so much energy and be so full of plans. They cooked pizza for us and dessert was a splendid chocolate cake. We are really being spoilt by our Warm Shower hosts! Such a great organization!















Mo 2.11.2015, day 113. Craig and Marybeth, Ella, Alayna and Duchess.

The next day was just a very short hop over to Exton PA, where Craig, Marybeth and their kids Ella and Alayna and Duchess the dog, some more friends of our family, live. We arrived for lunch and pretty soon it was clear that we would also be spending the night there. Again this turned out to be an utterly fantastic stay. They live in an enormous house that is very tastefully decorated in a very nice neighborhood. Craig and Marybeth took the whole day off to spend time with us and we chatted, did a bit of organizational stuff on the computer, finally had dinner and chatted some more. We were very impressed by the two girls. Such nice kids and absolutely amazing what sort of an extra scholar program they have.



Tu 3.11.2015, day 114. Visit to Craig and Marybeth's company.

The plan for next day was to load the bikes into the van and visit Craig and Marybeth's company that they have been running for more than 20 years now.

My trailer went into the van without problems and the bike rack was ready. However, Marybeth found that there was a nail in the tire of the car! So after consulting all options with the garage the decision was finally taken to rent a car, put the bikes and trailer in the rental. It was a huge Chevi Suburban so everything fitted without problems. In retrospect I am really grateful that they went to all this trouble for us, as visiting the factory was a real eye opener for me. I was really impressed by the set up and even more impressed by their courage to go all in and buy a company doing something they didn't know much about at the time and work hard to make it successful. It was interesting to hear the whole procedure of evaluating the company and others as well before finally deciding to take the plunge. Also impressive to hear how after the good years in the 90ties and 00s they had to fight during the crash of 2007, 2008. It must have been a terrible time, having to lay off staff, working day and night trying to make business, not knowing if the company would make it or not. Anyway, the good news seems to be, that things are ticking along pretty well at the moment and they both don't seem rather relaxed.

We said our goodbyes and headed off, stopping for a quick lunch in DDs. This time the bagels were actually not all that bad! I think the trick is to tell them not to put too much butter on them.

We were planning to go to Lancaster and maybe on to York, hoping to see some of the Amish culture on the way. I found myself so deep in thoughts from the experiences of the last days, that I didn't even notice where we were going, let alone look out for Amish. Lancaster did not make a good impression on us. There were very funny characters hanging round town. We went to the central market where the Amish sell their produce to get something for lunch. We eat in front of McDonalds as there was no good place to sit and we soon decided to head on towards York. There were plenty of Motels on the route and we figured we were sure to find one. It turned out to be more difficult than we thought. The first one we stopped at was full and I also would not have liked to stay there. The couple running it looked as if they came straight out of a horror movie with brown rotting teeth. No doubt former Crystal Meth consumers.

We pushed on in the dark, which was also not very pleasant and finally found a place in York run by an Indian couple for 50\$. It was nice and clean and perfect for us. We went for Mexican food, that was not so very good and then on for coffee and internet. Back in the hotel Siria fell asleep immediately and I stayed up watching Donald Trump on FOX news. Scary!! I know why Tracy carved a Donald Trump Pumpkin.



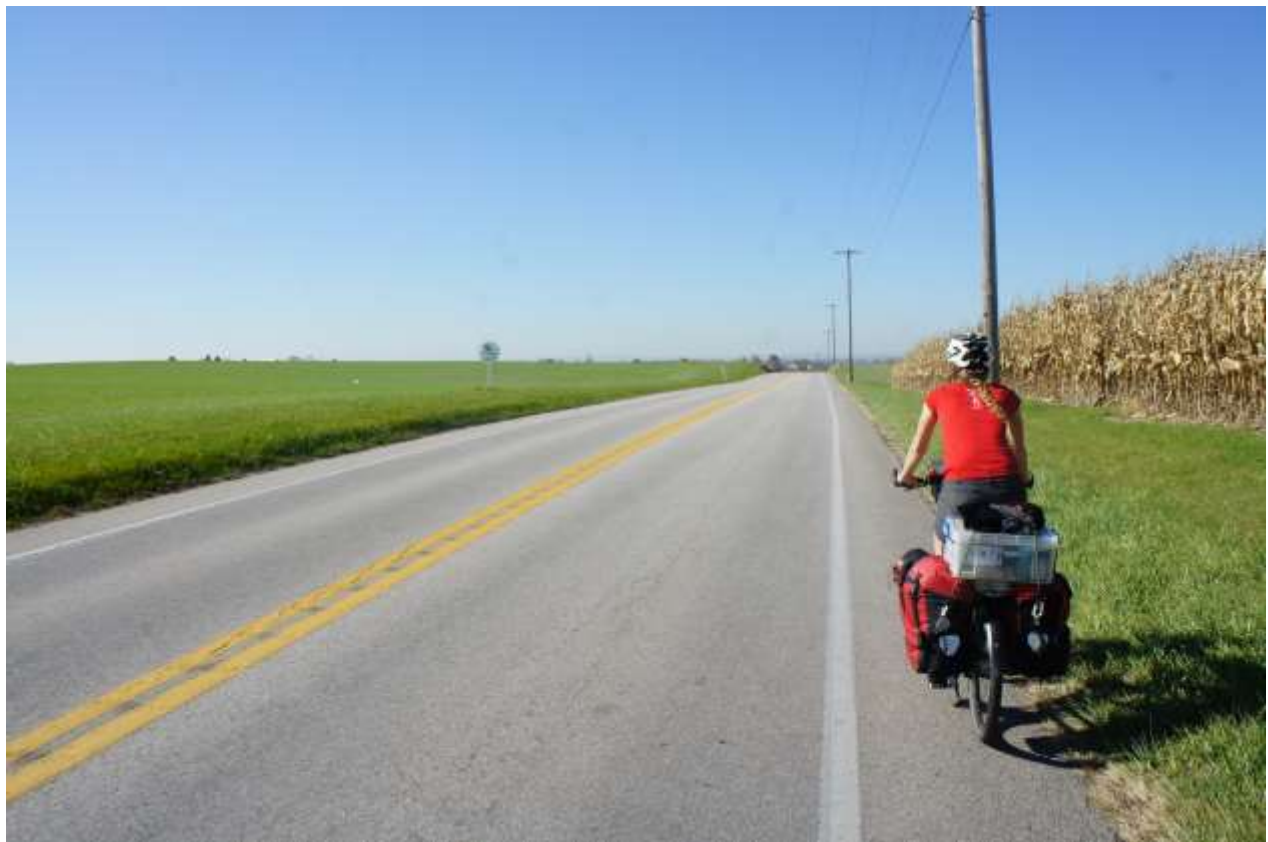




We 4.11.2015, day 115. Down to Gettysburg

We headed out, went shopping and made a Müsli outside the supermarket. Funny how with time you get less choosy as to where to eat. We then rode on towards Gettysburg. It was extremely warm and we were wearing shorts and Tee shirt. After about 50km we stopped at a lovely spot beside a river and toasted some bagels for lunch. We arrived in in Gettysburg quite early and ambled around the town center. It is a very nice little town, but completely ruined by traffic. We had a delicious coffee and sat on a bench doing nothing much. We also had a quick FaceTime session with Siria's sister Morena, which was fun and a chat with the local lawyer who was interested in our bikes.

Then we made the last few kilometers to the camping. They charged 35\$. Camping in the US is incredibly expensive. Good thing that this will be the last time we pay to spend the night for quite some time! But it certainly was a nice place, right by the river with delicious warm showers and lots and lots of space. We spent the evening playing the guitar and writing up this blog and crawled off to a nice candle lit tent.





Th 5.11.2015, day 116. Warm Shower in Hagerstown.

We are starting to get tired of our Müsli. It's good, yes, but every day the same? Also buying Yoghurt is not very practical. So we are going to try the more classic approach of milk powder and granola. The nicest thing about the bike ride, was that we started to get into rolling green farming pastures, finally leaving the more congested area close to the Boston to Washington Megalopolis behind us. We had fried tacos with sour cream and cucumber for lunch, leaning up against a horse fence right on a grassy strip beside the road. Something different, and it wasn't too bad at all.

We arrived in Hagerstown quite early, but this was planned, as we wanted to get some paperwork done and we needed to buy camp stove gas. Petrol works as well, but the smell is really unpleasant.

We wanted to head straight for a big mall which was 3km out of town, but then we thought that it might be nicer to go downtown. Unfortunately, as in many US cities, downtown was pretty much dead. Lots of traffic, but nowhere to buy stuff and also nowhere to sit out and relax. So we headed off to the mall on the 4-lane highway. It is certainly not a country for the carless!

They only had white gas by the gallon, so I bought a gallon. We bought food at Walmarts and went for coffee / internet.

The warm shower we had set up for the night had great reviews and we were really looking forward to it. When we arrived there we were greeted by Rob and Patsy who are Bobby's parents, Cathy and Anita, who is an Australian musician who was "adopted" by the family. They had a garage full of fantastic bikes and bike gear. They literally had everything: Fatties, CrMo touring bikes that had joints, so you can screw them apart, racing bikes including one incredible full carbon Specialized, a trailer, a bunch of monocycles and along with all that all sorts of gear. Also turns out they are all high flyers with top notch jobs. Bobby ran her own surgery and Christy was a project manager for military research, running projects worth hundreds of millions. Anita was a professional Jazz musician. We had dinner and then they asked us if we would like to go to a Jazz concert. And this was the absolute highlight of the day. The musician, Brea, was a friend of the family. She put on an incredible show and afterwards came down to greet us. It was really quite an experience to have the artist come right down from the stage and shake my hand and talk to me. What an incredible time we are having!