

Season 3 – Part 5. Train to Chicago and on to Albuquerque!



We 11.11.2015, day 122. Train to Chicago!

The plan for the day was to first drop by a bike shop to fix our bikes, then have lunch, then box up our bikes. Bob and Maggy joined us for the trip on their tandem. The visit at the bike shop was a full success, I learned how to fix hydraulic brakes and we got new chains on our bikes as ours were both severely stretched out of any tolerance. Then we did the scenic tour of Pittsburgh and had some great Thai food in the Strip District. Then we went to Amtrak to box up our stuff. We decided on using Amtrak instead of going with our original plan to ship everything with FedEx as Bob found out that it was significantly cheaper and we could check everything through straight to Albuquerque. However it took us forever to box everything up! First we packed some small stuff up with the bikes resulting in the boxes being above the 50lb limit, so we had to chop the boxes open again and take as much out as we could to get the weight down. But it was really a great solution to our shipping problem, as in the end it cost us only 40\$. 10\$ for each bike and 20\$ because we had to ship an extra box full of all sorts of stuff that we couldn't fit anywhere else. They took the trailer without blinking an eyelash. We finally spent well over 3 h in the railway station organizing all our stuff. Exhausted we headed downtown to find some food and relax for a while.

Then at midnight we boarded the train. I was dead tired but even if the seats were comfortable and had lots of legroom, I still couldn't find a good way to sleep...



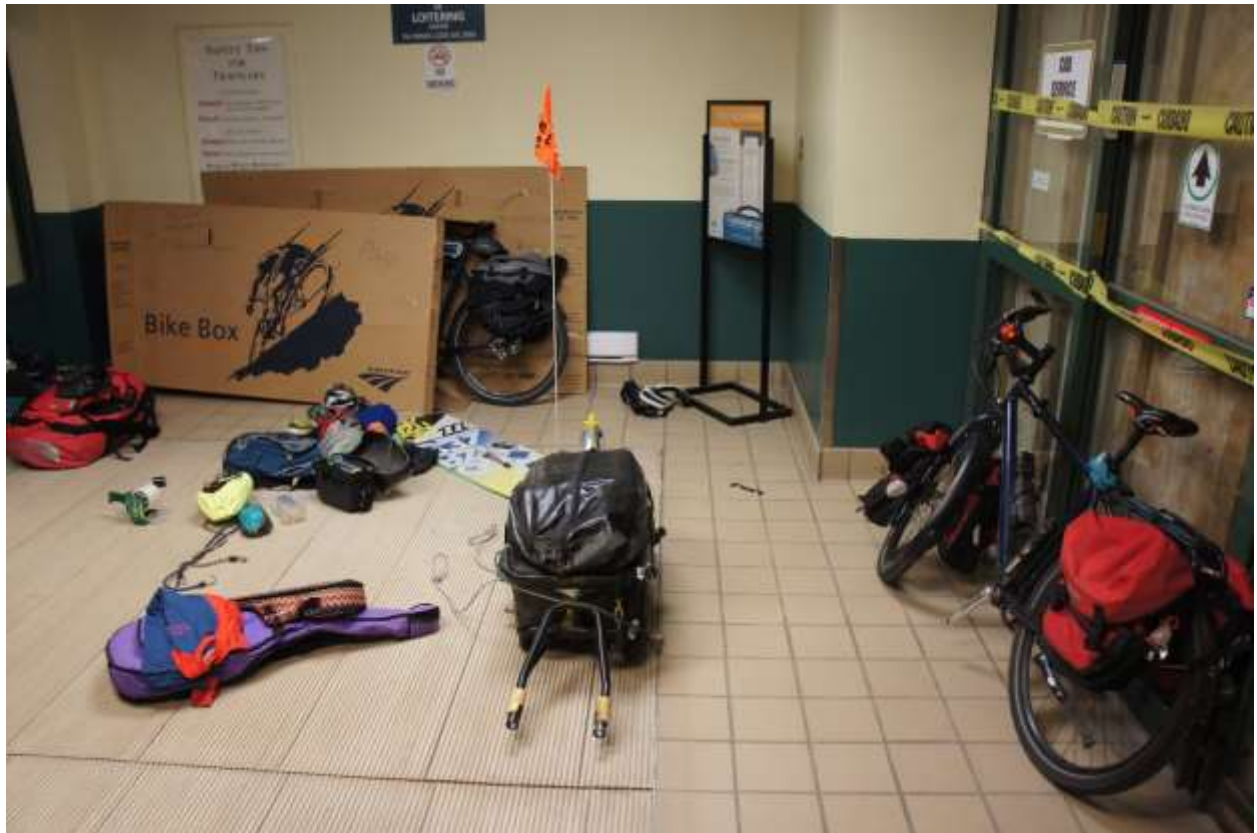














Th 12.11.2015, day 123. A day in Chicago.

We arrived in Chicago at 9am after a long night on the train with very little sleep. I had a bad back pain from lugging the bike boxes on and off the scales the day before and was feeling quite tattered. We had a Warm Shower organized. So we gave them a call and headed out there with all our carry-on baggage: two back packs, the Ukulele, the Guitar and our two day packs. We were fully loaded and I found it hard to imagine that in addition we had two cardboard boxes and the huge trailer fully loaded with more stuff that went directly to Albuquerque. We are really travelling with lots of stuff!!

The guys hosting us, Brent and Jana were young artsy guys, very nice and hospitable, living in a great place under the roof with a very slobbery but adorable dog called Hickory. Jana keeps bees in the city and she tends to them by bike. Apparently bees do quite well in the city as there are many flowers all over the place. Jana has made a business out of it called bike-a-bee and now has 36 hives to take care of. When we arrived she was out on an emergency. The windstorm had knocked over one of her hives and the bees were all over the place.

We then walked for about 10km back down town taking in the skyline and of course the famous bean in Millenium Park. This was undoubtedly the highlight. Absolutely brilliant piece of art that has to be seen to be fully appreciated! We then went down low to the underground city and had a double cheezburger in Billy Goats and then high up to the 96th floor bar of the Hancock tower for a cider and stunning views of Chicago by night. Jana and Brent were out for some drinks at a local joint, so we joined them and had some inspiring conversations about urban gardening. THIS is something I could really get into! I'll have to start doing some research...















Fr 13.11.2015, day 124. Train to Albuquerque.

After delicious coffee at a place called Nite Cap, we collected our stuff from Brent and Jana's place, said our good-byes and went downtown to catch the train, making sure we bought enough provisions so we wouldn't starve during the long ride ahead of us. So we boarded and settled down to watch the sun slowly setting while the train took us south and westwards towards New Mexico.

The train ride was certainly quite interesting and it seems as if the strangest people take the train in the USA. There was the cigar smoking Texan girl, who could no longer travel abroad as she was arrested for assaulting a police man, then the old guy with the his service dog who was wearing dark shades, a backpack full of blinking lights and had a steel prosthetic leg. Then the extremely fat lady sitting next to us, who just didn't stop stuffing fast food and sweets and bucket loads of ice into herself. Then started vomiting. It was absolutely disgusting! Then there were a couple of very shady looking guys with tears tattooed under their eyes. To me they looked like a bunch of escaped convicts! The train was quite empty and we found more or less comfortable ways to sleep and so we had quite a good night.







Sa 14.11.2015, day 125. A full day on the train.

We woke up in the middle of Kansas somewhere in the flattest country I could imagine. For me it was really amazing to see how empty the interior of the USA is. Then it was really mesmerizing to watch how the landscape was slowly changing getting dryer and dryer. We crossed into Colorado and some hours later we caught the first glimpse of the snow covered Rockies. Then soon we were in small foothills of the Rockies and crossed over into New Mexico. The locomotive was having mechanical trouble and we stopped in the middle of nowhere again and again while they tried to fire her up again and fix whatever problem there was. Soon we were running with hours of delay and soon night fell and I started wondering if we would ever reach Albuquerque!

We finally did and we were also thrilled to find that our bikes had arrived without a scratch. We started screwing everything together again and packing everything back where it belongs. My back was killing me after having pinched a nerve heaving the bikes on and off the scales in Pittsburgh trying to get the weigh to exactly 50lb. Sitting on a train for 28h didn't help to improve it so I was having a hard time. We were also in quite a hurry to finish everything as the railway station turned into a very dark desolate place with lots of strange characters loitering round after the train had left.

But finally everything was rigged up and we biked up to our pre-booked motel room, cooked some instant rice in the coffee cooker and fell asleep immediately.





