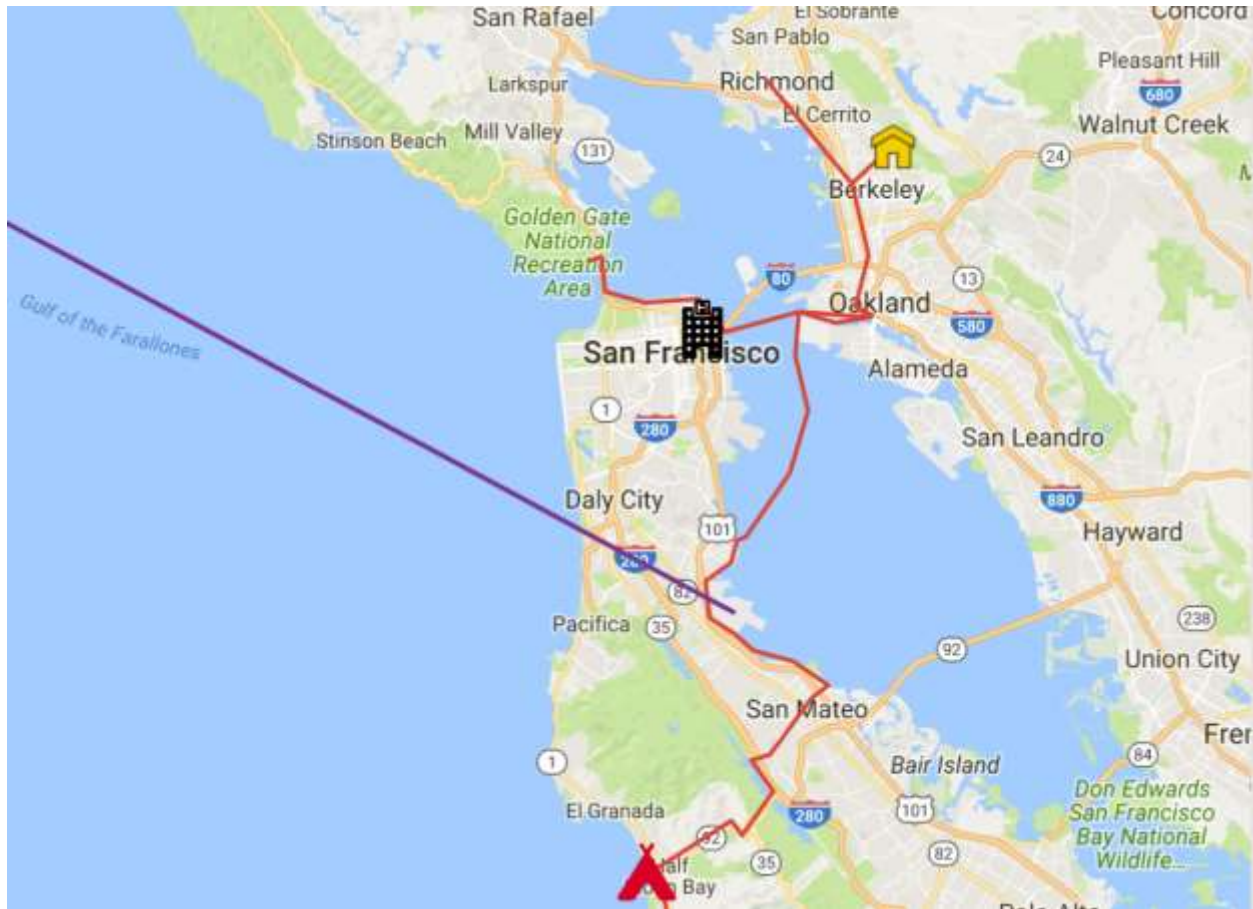


Season 5 – Part 4. San Francisco and flight out of the USA



Tu 26.1.2016, day 198. Ride into San Francisco.

From Half Moon Bay we biked straight up over the hills direction San Francisco Bay. The road was a pretty bad one for bikes with lots of traffic and trucks and virtually no hard shoulder. After the first hill we came down into a valley which is exactly on the San Andreas fault line with some lakes, one of them is actually called San Andreas Lake. This lake probably even gives the fault line its name. I tried to make out some interesting features of this geologically unique structure, but saw nothing at all.

The ride along San Francisco Bay was very nice, we passed the airport and then biked along a lovely trail right on the water's edge. Unfortunately, I broke two more spokes. I am now down to my last spare spoke! We cooked spaghetti on the water's edge and got to the ferry terminal with time to spare. We killed the time over a coffee and then took the ferry which is also very scenic with the San Francisco Skyline in front of the setting sun and then past Oakland port with all the big container ships. I broke another spoke right after getting off the ferry. That's it! Down to the last spare spoke right when arriving where the bike shop is. Perfect planning...

Our friend and Warm Shower host Brent had organized a place for us to stay with friends of his in Berkeley. They live up on Grizzly Point on the top of the steepest road I have ever seen. I simply could not resist the temptation to try and ride up. It was absolutely crazy, I gave it my all, but could only keep

going for about 200 m. Then I had to get off, legs burning and heart pounding. It was so steep I had no chance of getting back on again and continue riding, so I had to push. Even pushing the heavy bike up the hill was virtually impossible.

The place where Rebecca and Jeff live is absolutely fantastic. The house is huge with big windows and a lot of wood. On the upper floor there is an incredible vista of the bay area including San Francisco and even the Golden Gate Bridge. We got to stay in the guest room, or rather the guest apartment with our own huge TV, couch, shower, bathroom, bed, even fridge, well stocked with beer 😊

They are two lovely people with two of the nicest kids I think I have ever seen. I really can't believe how many fantastic encounters we are having!







We 27.1.2016, day 199. Bike maintenance day.

I got up just in time to see the kids before they left for school. We biked down to Berkeley to have some great bagels for breakfast and settled down to get some administrative work done. All flights are now booked, the homepage got a facelift and the financial book-keeping is up to date.

We biked up to Richmond for the 13:30 bike maintenance appointment at Cycle Monkey. It was a truly professional high end shop. Apparently the problem with my breaking wheel spokes is a known problem of corrosion cracking that affected only a certain batch of this particular brand of spokes. What a bummer! There was no choice but to rebuild the wheel. Also both my chain ring and rear sprocket were worn out, so the sprocket was flipped and a new chain ring mounted. The chains were of course worn out as well, so we got new ones. These ones are really heavy, almost like motorbike chains. I hope this chain will get us back to Switzerland, it certainly looks as if it is man for the job! I also went and lashed out 200\$ for a USB charger to attach to my hub dynamo. It's such a useful thing, I couldn't resist the temptation.

The guys at Cycle Monkey were really interested in our project and got some pictures taken of us and our bikes to put on their web page. Riding home I simply could not resist the temptation to try and ride up Marin Drive again, this time with no luggage and this time I made it. It really is quite a remarkably steep road!

We were treated to some fantastic home cooking when we got back to Jeff and Rebecca's place: Kale Chips, Potato fries, salmon burgers and a beer. All fully home-made!

After dinner Siria conjured up a remarkable flower made out of some old coloured envelopes we had flying around and wrote a nice thank you card to go with the Swiss chocolate we had brought along, however we did not get to give it that evening as Jeff and Rebecca fell asleep while putting the kids to bed.







Th 28.1.2016, day 200. Over to San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge.

We were out of the house by 8am to go to the Cheese Board (great scones!!) for breakfast with Rebecca and young Forest. Before taking the ferry over to San Francisco we quickly popped into REI to see if the ordered trailer hitch had arrived. Unfortunately, it had not. We had a great ride along the shoreline of San Francisco and then rode over the Golden Gate bridge. We had a great day for the ride, warm and sunny. It was already dark when we got back to check into the hotel we had booked. It turned out that the hotel was in a really bad part of town with scores of homeless people loitering around. It is crazy how close extreme wealth and extreme poverty are in San Francisco. We somehow managed to get our bikes and all our luggage into the antique elevator of the hotel and into the tiny hotel room. With all our stuff in the room there was hardly room to stand. We prepared a huge bowl of salad that we eat in bed together with a nice bottle of red wine. I stayed up quite late preparing my CV. Siria found a job opening at the University of Norway in Trondheim that matches my profile pretty well. I'm not sure what my chances are, but it is a good excuse to start getting all my documents in order. After all, I very probably will have to get back into a normal working life at some point in time.















Fr 29.1.2016, day 201. A very wet and rainy day in San Francisco.

We spent most of the day each of us doing our own thing. I had to go back over to Berkeley to pick up the trailer hitch at REI, that arrived only about 1h after we left the place the day before. After that I settled down and continued working on my CV while watching the rain pouring down outside. We met up again in the evening, put our bikes back into the hotel room and strolled through San Francisco. We ate some great Chinese food in China town, then went for a first dessert and coffee and then had Burger King soft-ice as second desert before returning to the hotel. Our eating habits will certainly change when we get to the Philippines!

Late that night, Siria checked the status of our flight and it looked as if it was cancelled! I got onto Philippine Airlines and sure enough, flight cancelled. We thought a bit about what to do and finally to go ahead as planned and pack up our bikes, hoping to be able to check in all our baggage and then spend the night at the airport hotel that would hopefully be provided by the airline. The next flight was a day flight leaving at 11am on Sunday. Coming to think of it, this cancelled flight is actually great for us: we get a free hotel night, free meals and the day flight will get us to Manila more relaxed and rested than a night flight arriving at 4 am.

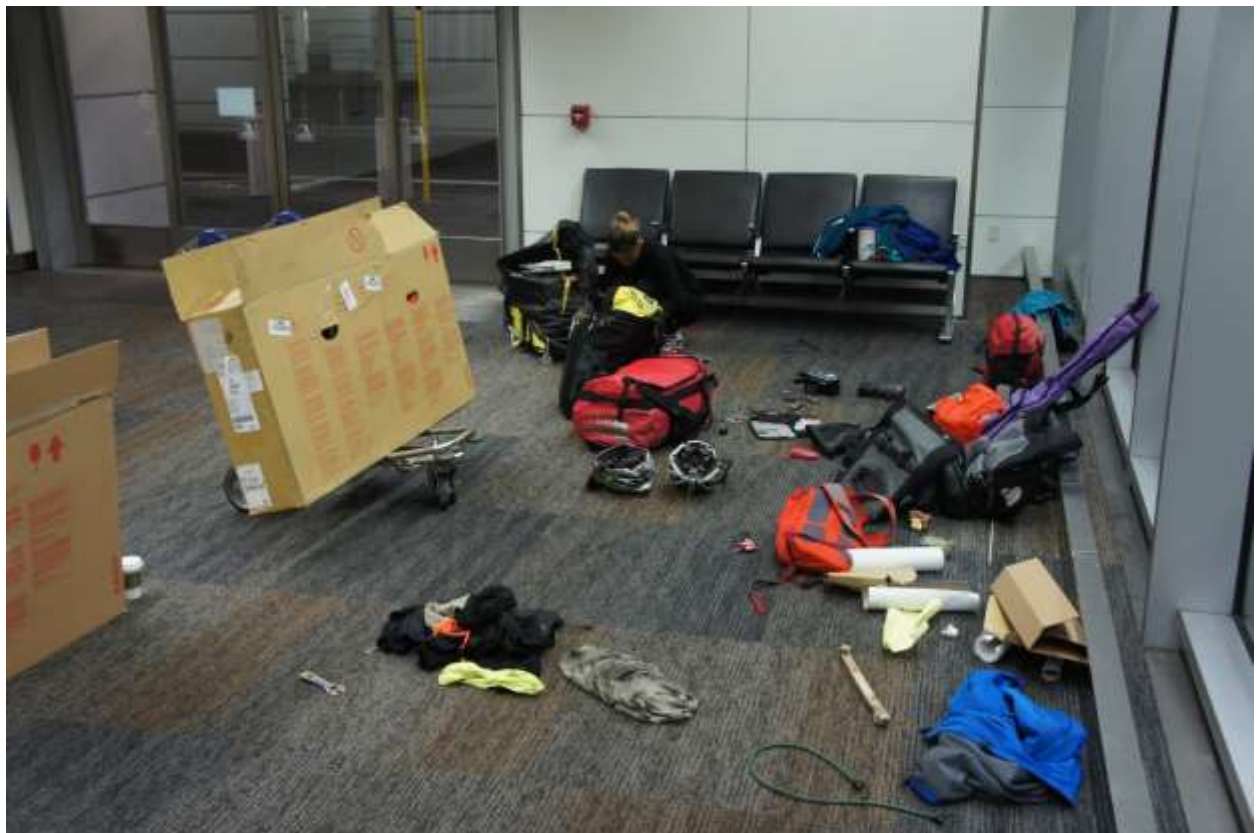


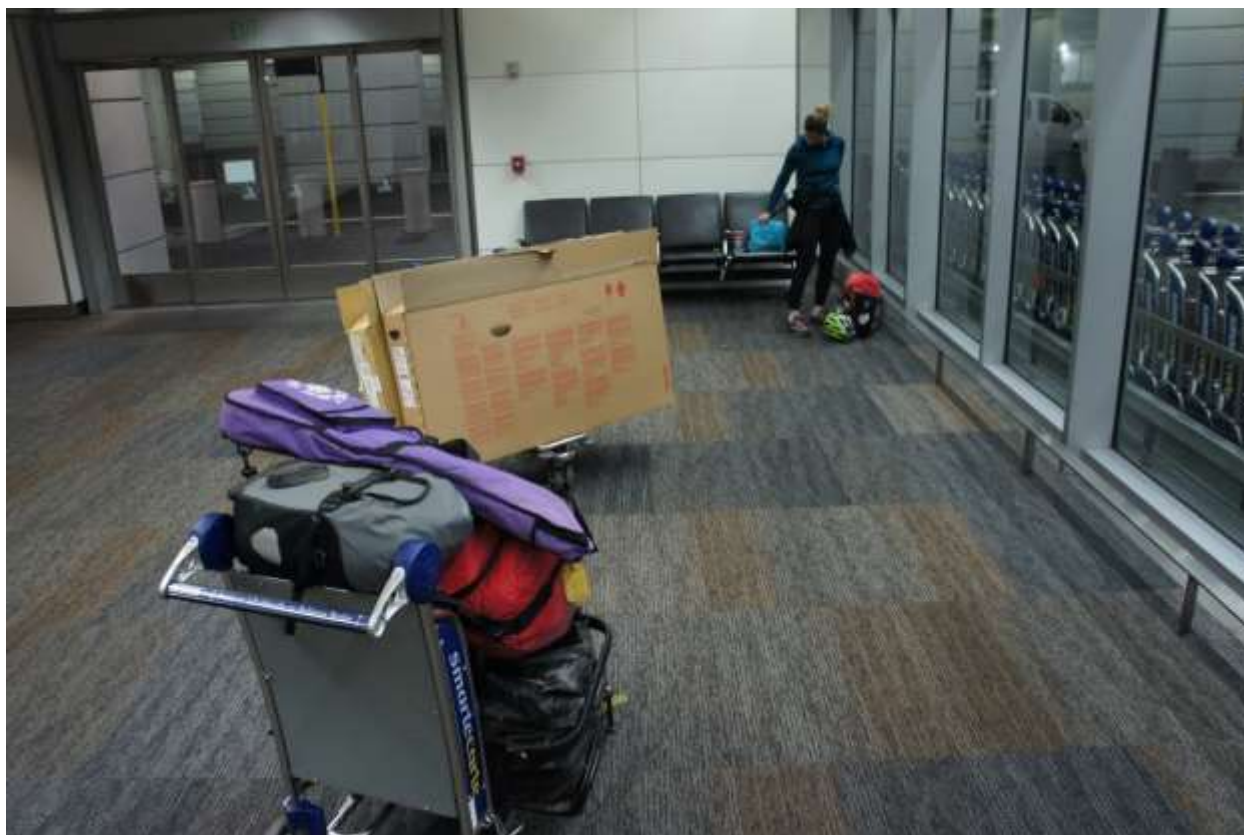


Sa 30.1.2016, day 202. Off to the airport.

We packed up quite efficiently and headed out without breakfast. We had figured out a laundromat that was close to a café and also to the airport in Brisbane. This way we could have breakfast while doing laundry. On the way we got chatting to an interesting bike touring couple who shared the experiences they had had in the Philippines. We found the laundromat without problems and also the café was great, but unfortunately out of Bagels. I had a long FaceTime session with friends back in Switzerland who were having a Fondü evening. Made me slightly melancholic, but only slightly considering the adventures that surely still await us.

We then biked to the airport, Siria stayed with all our luggage and I organized some bike boxes at a close by bike shop that I strapped to the trailer. Everything went as smooth as silk, we had our bikes disassembled and in the boxes in no time. There was a weighing scale we could use to weigh everything and we soon realized that we have lots and lots of luggage! We were going to have to check in one extra piece of baggage and we spent quite some time getting all the bags up to the absolute maximum weight of 23 kg each. We were still left with quite a lot of carry-on luggage, certainly well above the allowed limit and I also had the guitar. At check in there were some problems as they first insisted that the bikes had to go into hard cases. Also this time my old trick of leaving the bike boxers open and stuffing them with extra stuff while dumping them off at the over-sized luggage belt didn't work as they took the bikes right at the check-in desk. But finally we got all our luggage checked in and sure enough, we were taken to a nice hotel and given dinner and breakfast vouchers for a local Denny's Diner. Food was really quite good and also the hotel was really nice. Only problem was that they organized the shuttle for 7:15 the next day, even though the flight was only at 11!





Su 31.1.2016, day 203. Take off and good bye to the USA!

We had a huge breakfast of oatmeal, pancakes, scrambled eggs and toast and fruit washed down with a coffee. We wolfed down everything in about 15 min as the shuttle was leaving. While waiting for food I had a little jam session with two guys that looked sort of half homeless and were having breakfast in the diner. It was really quite funny!

At the check-in I was looking a bit like the Micheline Man, as I was wearing a sweatshirt and 3 jackets and had all pockets filled with cameras, chargers, battery pack, etc. I really didn't want the carry-on to be over the allowed 8kg and to have more discussions. But again, things went very smoothly. After security I settled down to finalize my CV and submit it. Deadline was the 31st, so it had to go. It took me for ever to go through all the stuff required for the on-line application. I was fully focussed and working as fast as I could. I got to the prompt "would you like to review your documents before final submission?" just as we were called for boarding. I clicked "no" and hit "submit" and stood in line hoping everything would upload before getting on the plane and out of range of the WiFi. I had no time to even check the submission. It is probably full of errors and mistakes, but I got it off! I'm really interested to find out if and what sort of a feedback I will get...

The plane was half empty, so we had a full row of 4 seats all to ourselves. The flight was really really long. It is quite incredible how big the Pacific Ocean is! Also I am coming down with a cold. I think it's the aircon...

So now it is out into the unknown. I think our adventures are now really starting.....

