



Stage 3: La Paz to Panama City

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Total to date:
Ushuaia to Panama City
11,284 km / 6,997 miles
Dec 2011 – Nov 2012



A 16,000-mile journey to raise awareness about blindness and the abilities of the visually impaired.

Overview

Crossing the Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama was the most challenging part of Stage 3. There is currently no road that connects these two countries due to dense jungles and drug trafficking activities in that area. Aside from flying over this crossing, travelers can make this passage by sea via the Atlantic side. We were curious to try it on the Pacific side since it was less known. The crossing took two weeks due to limited boats available for the crossing. ; it was definitely worth it to see and experience that part of Colombia and Panama.

For this segment, we focused on riding and crossing the Darien Gap. Tauru got a sinus infection that delayed us until he was strong enough to get back on the bike. With limited time and wanting to move on, we only visited one school for the blind, and it was in Panama City.

Overall, the ride continues to keep us excited about the prospect of completing this journey. Wow, half-way there? 16,000 miles!

Stage 1:

Ushuaia to Santiago
3457 km / 2143 mi
Dec 2011 – May 2012

Stage 2:

Santiago to La Paz
2616 km / 1622 miles
May 2012 – Aug 2012

Stage 3:

La Paz to Panama City
5444 km / 3375 mi
Aug 2012 – Nov 2012

Stage 4:

Panama City to Phoenix
TBD km / TBD mi
Nov 2012 – Feb 2013

Stage 5:

Phoenix to Fort Nelson
TBD km / TBD mi
Feb 2013 – June 2013

Stage 6:

Fort Nelson to Deadhorse
TBD km / TBD mi
June 2013 – Aug 2013

Project Summary

Stage 3 was difficult in terms of coordinating visits with schools for the blind. With a distance of over 3,000 miles to cover and the challenges of limited Spanish, we were not able to arrange visits in Cusco and Lima in Peru and Quito in Ecuador. For Colombia, we only had information on a school in Bogota; however, our route through Colombia did not pass through this capital city. In Panama, we were fortunate to have the assistance of Shirley Alonso Miranda of Oferta Simple. Shirley made arrangements for us to visit the Escuela Nacional de Ciegos Helen Keller in Panama City. As always, we continue to talk to people everywhere we go about our project to promote the abilities of the visually impaired.

Visiting Schools & Organizations for the Blind



Figure 1 The school is one of two schools for the blind in Panama City.

Panama City, Panama

We visited Escuela Nacional de Ciegos Helen Keller in Panama City to talk to the teachers, parents and children with visual disabilities. The students' ages ranged from a couple of months old to 18 years-old. During the time we were there, there were mostly toddlers and young children; therefore, we did not video or photograph the students.

We spoke with a mother and encouraged her to always give opportunities to her visually impaired baby girl so that she will define her own limits rather than having others define them for her.

Raising Awareness with the General Public

In the News

Whenever we get good internet connection, we Skype with our Phoenix local news station, KPHO CBS 5 News; but it has been since Santiago, Chile that we Skyped with them. When Skyping, we need two connections – one for video conferencing and one for audio. We use our laptop's webcam to video Skype and an old iPhone that we still have to Skype.

We Skyped with KPHO CBS 5 News in Boquete, Panama. The opportunity to get on our local news helps promote our message that people with disabilities can still do amazing things.



Figure 2 2B2R updates with Paul Horton of KPHO CBS 5 News.

Ride Summary

Stage 3 had its benefits and challenges. The good thing about riding through the northern part of South America is the availability of inexpensive hotels. Rooms without private bathrooms started from \$7 per night, making decisions on whether to camp or take a room really easy. On the Bolivian altiplano, where nights dropped below freezing, it was nice to be inside and away from the elements.

In Peru, Tauru got sick with a sinus infection that lasted almost four weeks. The first bout was in Puno, where the elevation was above 10,000 ft, and therefore recovery was slow. With time lost and Tauru still feeling weak, we took some buses down to the coast for warmer weather and oxygen. Once Tauru recovered, we continued riding along the Peruvian coast towards Ecuador. The equatorial warmth was much welcomed given that we had spent months already in cold weather.

By far, the most dramatic part of Stage 3 was the crossing of the Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama. There is currently no road connecting the two countries; therefore, the only way to get across is either by flying or by taking small boats along the Caribbean side. On the Pacific side, it is less common to cross due to the limited availability of transport. We chose the latter and took two weeks to travel to Panama.

The adventure started in Buenaventura. We managed to find a cargo boat to take us north, and that ride took 60 hours due to various delays. We then found a lancha, a small motorized boat common in that part of the world, to take us further north to Jurado. The price for adventure finally took its toll. We were stuck in Jurado for nine days looking for transport to take us further north to the Panamanian border. Fortunately, the small village had an inexpensive hotel and some shops where we could get provisions. We arrived in Panama in time to see a parade celebrating Panama's Flag Day.



Figure 3 Riding by Lake Titicaca in Peru.



Figure 4 Day 6 on Jurado, Colombia waiting for a lancha to cross the Darien Gap.



Figure 5 Crossing the Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama.

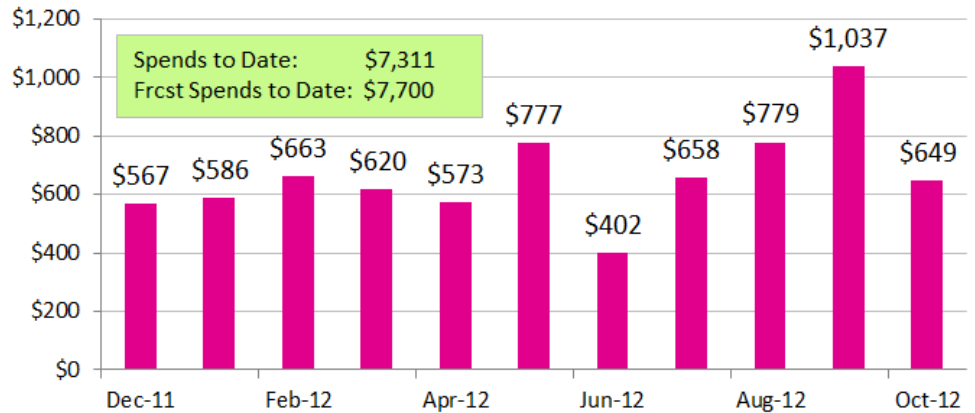
Expense Summary

We budget \$700 per month for both of us for expenses related to traveling: food, lodging, transportation, etc... For the months of August and September, we were over this monthly budget. In particular, September was \$337 over budget. This was due to our using hotels because Tauru was sick with sinus infections (two times). For days, he could not get out of bed because his head hurt. Being in a tent camping somewhere next to the highway would have been difficult. In addition, we took more comfort foods like potato chips and cookies to pass time as Tauru recovered (okay, so there were a lot of sodas and beers, too!).

Inexpensive rooms in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Panama ranged between \$7 to \$14 per night. We often didn't know where we were going to end up for the night, and being that we don't use guide books, we relied on the locals to tell us what lodging is available and in the towns. For the most part, they knew exactly where the cheap hotels were! For \$7 to \$11 per night for the two of us, it was hard to want to save money and camp.

As the pie chart below illustrates, approximately half of our total day to day

Monthly Spends to Date (monthly budget \$700)



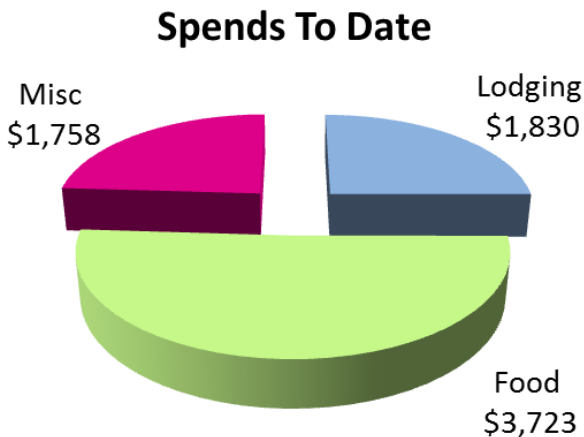
spends is for food. This equates to \$338/month for food for the two of us. Lodging equates to \$166/month and Misc is \$160/month.

We also track what we call Extra-Ordinary Expenses; these are items related to our trip such as visas, major bike repairs, etc... For Stage 3, we spent \$556 for Extra-Ordinary Expenses for a new bike computer and for the boat transports across the Darien Gap.

Total Spends to Date: \$7,311

Total EOs to Date: \$2,485

Total \$9,796



Month/Yr	Amount	Extra-Ordinary Expenses Related to Cycling
Dec-11	\$280	2 visas for Argentina
Jan-12	\$35	New headset (Rio Grande, Argentina)
Feb-12	\$343	Bike repair, new tent and tripod, ferry for Lago Desierto
Mar-12	\$298	Boats for Lago O'Higgins crossing and new bike parts
Apr-12	\$372	New stove, drive train and boats to Puerto Montt, Chile
May-12	\$164	Medical attention for Christi's back pains (Santiago, Chile)
Jun-12	\$167	Bike repairs in Argentina (La Rioja, Tucuman)
Jul-12	\$270	2 visas for Bolivia
Aug-12	\$115	New bike computer & camera tripod
Sep-12	\$0	None
Oct-12	\$441	Boats for Darien Gap crossing
Total	\$2,485	
	\$226 Per Month	

Special Thanks

We want to extend a special thanks to the following people and businesses for supporting our project and for making it possible financially. Their contribution enables us to spread our message that everything is possible throughout both of the Americas and to the rest of the world.

THANK YOU!

Thanks for your donation!

Scott Parsons
Chris Chavez
Garry & Tina Bruchok
DiAnn Galm
Bryan Johnson
Dale Miller
Raymond Landis
Renee Defeo
Dale Mallison
Laurel Arendt
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Dan Sharp
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Patti Kuluris
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Thanks to the Local Supporters for Stage 3

