Stage 4: Panama City to Phoenix

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

Overview

Being that we are from Phoenix, Arizona, this particular stage was quite special. As we rode through Mexico along the western coast, we felt anxious to get to the US border and to make it in time for scheduled events we had in Phoenix. In particular, we had to be at the Arizona Hiking Shack scheduled on the 21st of February to talk about our journey and to share our project to raise awareness. We did take some buses where convenient to make time and where it was safer due to either traffic or relevant concerns. We only managed to make school visits once we crossed into the US given the time constraint.

Table of Contents

Overview
Project Summary
Ride Summary
Expense Summary
Special Thanks

Total to date:
Ushuaia to Phoenix
17,670 km / 10,948 miles
Dec 2011 – Feb 2013

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
5669 km / 3508 mi
Nov 2012 – Feb 2013

Stage 5:
Phoenix to Lake Watson
TBD km / TBD mi
Feb 2013 – June 2013

Stage 6:
Lake Watson to Deadhorse
TBD km / TBD mi
June 2013 – Aug 2013
Project Summary

For this stage we focused primarily on getting to Phoenix. As we rode through Central America, we tried to get in touch with schools and organizations for the blind; however, given our limited Spanish and the difficulty of finding contacts, we were unable to visit anyone. For awareness, we met and spoke with people along the way about our ride. It wasn’t until we reached Arizona that we started getting in touch with contacts in Tucson and Phoenix.

Visiting Schools & Organizations for the Blind

Tucson & Phoenix, Arizona

We met the students at the Arizona Schools for the Deaf and Blind and shared our story in hope of encouraging them to also fulfill their dreams. We also spoke at the Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired in both Tucson and Phoenix. In Phoenix, we gave a presentation at the Arizona Hiking Shack and did a fundraiser for River of Dreams to support their mission to share the outdoors with persons with a disability. We raised $860 that ight.

Raising Awareness In The News

KPHO CBS 5 and 3TV

Our friends at KPHO CBS 5 invited us into the studio for an interview when we arrived in Phoenix. After 13 months and some 11,000 miles, returning to the studio to talk with Paul and the TV crew was surreal. We actually made it! Though the journey still has 6,000 miles to go to reach Deadhorse, Alaska, we felt that the remaining leg was simply a matter of waking up and doing it – the logistics and concerns about endurance had been tested. We also got in touch with 3TV to share our project with their Phoenix viewers.

Both news clips are on our website in the Archives page under “In The News.” We promised to come back into the studios if and when we complete our journey and return to Phoenix later this end-of-summer.
Camping in Costa Rica

The heat and humidity in Central America was made bearable by cheap hotels ($7 to $15 per room per night). We only camped one night (in Costa Rica); otherwise, we were able to find affordable rooms in towns we passed along our route. Road traffic varied from country to country: Costa Rica was difficult due to limited shoulders, Nicaragua was fantastic because of good roads and good shoulders, Guatemala was horrible because of high traffic and no shoulder, and Mexico was good with good shoulders.

Round The World Japanese Cyclist

One of the pleasure of cycle touring is meeting other cyclists. In Mexico, we met a southbound cyclist from Japan who had been on the road for a couple of years now. He was on his last leg of a round-the-world journey that started in New Zealand and Australia and routed him through South-east Asia, Asia, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, and now North America. He was en route down to Ushuaia where we had started our trip a year ago. We chatted for a little bit, but then the road beckoned we parted. Good luck to him!

Finally in the US

After 13 months on the road and almost 11,000 miles, we finally reached the US border at Nogales, Arizona. Though it felt like a home coming and an end to the journey, we knew we still had 6,000 miles to go to reach the northern-most part of Alaska. But being “home" felt giddy because we could now speak English and actually be able to communicate with people.

Our first night in Green Valley with a Warmshowers host was a very much welcomed and warm reception. Being back in the States has rejuvenated us for the final push up north.
Expense Summary

After four stages over 15 months, we are averaging on a monthly basis a $700 per month budget that we had originally planned. As noted in the graph to the left, we were below the $700/mo budget for the both of us in the beginning. Argentina and Chile were expensive countries; therefore, we camped for the great majority of the first half of this trip. Once we got into less expensive countries in the northern half of South America and throughout Central America, our monthly average went up because we were staying in hotels (though inexpensive) and visiting stores for snacks. The two months that we went over $1000 can be blamed on potato chips and cookies! 😊 Overall, we think it is possible to budget $500/mo for a couple if you really skimp it and $1100/mo for a couple if you enjoy it. Note that the expenses for bike related items are not included. The figure below on the right contains all expenses.

The pie chart to the left illustrates the breakdown of our spends. For Lodging, approximately $1500 of the $2426 was for rooms in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Central America from July 2012 to February 2013. This averages out to ~$200/mo for hotels. We hope this information will help others who are considering a similar trip.

Extra-Ordinary Expenses

There are times when expenses incur for more than just daily living expenses. The list to the right illustrates such expenses related to the trip (such as visas) and to the bike (such as repairs and/or replacement parts).

In total we have spent approximately $14,000 for the past 14 to 15 months of adventures.

The figure below on the right contains all expenses.
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
Paul Wenz
Dan Sharp
Alex Biegel
Marilyn Geninatti
Georgina Gallagher
Heather Devine
Doug Pace
Carly Antus
Christine Wallis
Patti Kuluris
Chris Lawson
Jim and Lorene Schaffner
Norm Roach
Larry Reinmuth

In Partnership with RPB to raise awareness about blindness.

Research to Prevent Blindness

Preserving vision and restoring sight through research.
The leading voluntary health organization supporting eye research.

Visit at rpbusa.org

Special thanks to the Arizona Hiking Shack and Desert Voyagers for hosting our presentation in Phoenix, Arizona on February 21st, 2013: