

## Europe

On May 15, 1989 three days after a difficult semester at UNM I boarded a plane for Europe. I was starting my fourth long bicycle tour (this was also my first tour on a mountain bike). On the flight to London, I sat next to this man going to Nigeria; he told me he had been to Europe several times. I kept this guy laughing by telling him Ted stories and asking him dumb questions about Europe. Questions like are there bathrooms, grocery stores and drinking water in Europe I had no idea what to expect due to the lack of preparation. In London, I took a bus to another airport (Gatwick to Heathrow), then I flew to Munich, Germany. On this flight the man who sat next to me was German and spoke some English. This was my first encounter with the language barrier. At the airport in Germany, I could not communicate with the customs man at the airport and he searched all my belongings because he could not figure out if I was coming or going. From the airport I took a bus to the train station. At the train station I needed to call my brother's friend, Shawna, who lived in a small German town, Parsberg. It was tough to use the phone, but luckily a man that overheard me trying to ask for help came over and called directory services for me. Then I had trouble figuring out how to buy a train ticket and missed the train I told Shawna I was going to be on. After calling Shawna back I caught the next train. They would not let me put my bike box in the language compartment, because I did not get check in tags and it was too late to get them. I loaded my bike and gear into one of the small passenger rooms and then two more men also entered (It was very tight). One of the guys asked me where I was from and when I told him New Mexico, he started singing "Oh Mexico" (a song that I've never heard). Shawna picked me up at the train station around midnight. It was nice to sleep in a bed after two days of traveling (3 planes, 2 buses, a train, and a BMW).

I guess the jet lag really got to me, because the following day I did not wake till noon. It took me till 4 PM to get my bike put together and ready to go. That day I cycled through farmland and past a few old castle ruins. In Regensburg, I rode over one of Germany's oldest cobble stone bridges. Germany has great bike paths in ever town (even the small towns); some of them even connect the towns. The streetlights even have a light for bikes. I traveled on a few connecting highways (these are one lane farm roads that have light, fast moving, traffic in both directions). I camped in the woods near a connecting road. (May 17, 1989/ Day 1/ mile 48.1)

In Germany you can normally see a church steeple that towers over all the other buildings of a small town. As I traveled by all the farms, I noticed family member are always working hard, swinging thistles, racking hay, etc. (not very many tractors). On the second day, I had lots of trouble with the language barrier. First an old farmer that spoke no English tried very hard to communicate with me and then he gave me a

running push up a hill. Then I stopped at a street to look at my map and a man stopped his car and gave me directions by drawing a route on my map to the location that I pointed to on the map. In Geiselboring, Germany I asked a young man for directions. He knew some English and I thought he asked me where I started from and then he gave me direction back towards Parsberg. Everyone was very friendly and I think the bad directions were because I mixed him up. Once I figured out, I was headed in the wrong direction I turned back. I saw the guy that gave me direction and waved to him as a headed in the correct direction. After this I never showed anyone where I started from and did not get any more bad directions. At my first grocery store stop I did not want to talk (language barrier fear). The girl at the cash register said something and I just smiled. When I was outside the store packing my bike, I noticed the cashier smiling (we both found this a funny experience). In Europe I saw cyclist everywhere and they were of all ages, but I was the only one with all the camping gear and this seemed to keep people interested in me. All the women watched me and I often wished I could speak their language. The second night it was tough finding a good place to sleep (lots of farmland). I finally found a place between the highway and a stream (not level, but I still slept fine). (May 18, 1989/ Day 2/ mile 159)

I woke up at 5 AM and cycled to the fortified city of Salzburg, Austria. Walls with gun ports encircle the city. From Salzburg I rode to Berchtsgarden. This is a beautiful national park in the Alps. At the park it seemed like people didn't like English speaking tourist. The man at the tourist center came over to me nicely and when I asked him for a map in English, he gave me a map and then immediately walked away. When I stopped at a lake, I tried to get several people to take a picture of me with my camera and all of them shook their heads no. I cycle to Eagle Nest, one of Hitler's hideouts and hiked the cliffs trail over the monument the trail had a steel cable uses as hand rails. The trail was not easy to follow, at one point I could not find the cables and it looked like a storm was moving in. I did not want to be stuck on the wet cliffs, so I quickly hiked back to my bike. Leaving Berchtesgarden, I cycled down a steep, two-mile, cobblestone road. On that day, I used my passport three times. Germany to Austria, back to Germany, and then I ended up camping near a stream in Austria. (May 19, 1989/ Day 3/ mile 240.7)

Back in Germany, I cycled to the town of Bayrischzell. It was at the top of the Alps with a ski area and a single pub. It looked like a neat pub, a lot of people on motorcycles and a fairly young group (probably in their 20s and 30s). I thought about getting a beer at the pub, but did not because of my language barrier fear. It was Saturday and I found out about the grocery store hours (M-F 8 AM-to-noon and 1 PM-to-6 PM, Saturday 8 AM-to-1 PM, and closed on Sunday). They were closed until Monday and I ended up paying \$3.00 for a half loaf of bread at a restaurant. Between my bread and the chocolate flavored bread spread (I never saw peanut butter in

continental Europe), I survived until Monday. Normally I ate more sardines, chocolates and drank cokes. Near the highway I found a mountain bike trail and meet a lady that spoke good English and who had actually been to Albuquerque (she was the first person that spoke good English since I left Shawna's). That night, I slept near a turquoise-colored lake in Germany. (May 20, 1989/ Day 4/ mile 316.2)

In the morning, I got a flat and a guy on a motorcycle stopped, I showed him my patch kit. Shrew! My sign language saved me from having to deal with the language barrier. I cycled to another German National Park, Garmisch-Parktenkirchen. This was the site of the winter Olympics (near Munich); ski jumps, ski lifts, and a nice small German town. From the park I rode through a town, Ettal, to a dirt bike trail that led to Linderhof castle. At the castle I found lovely gardens, fountains, and statues covered with gold leaf. Here a lovely girl I saw at Berchtesgarden a few days earlier gave me the hungry eye look and her dad came over and tried to communicate with me (his English was limited, but still quite a bit better than my German which consisted of five words). The man kept asking me if I was going to Innsbruck, I think he was trying to set me up with his daughter in Innsbruck. After this castle, I cycled to the famous, Neuschwanstein, castle (most photographed in Germany and the father to the Disneyland castle of California) which has very tall doors and rocketing watch towers. Here I meet people that spoke English from Australia and others from New York. I really wanted to spend time talking with these English-speaking people, I had not talked English to anyone in a while. Oh well, they were in a hurry and we only talked for a few minutes. You can get a good view of the castle from a bridge that is about a thousand meters over a river. I saw my first and only large wildlife, two deer, near a dirt bike trail. That night, I slept near a lake off a rough, bike trail on the Germany/Austria border (I'm not sure which country I was in). (May 21, 1989/ Day 5/ mile 390.7)

After leaving Germany, for the last time, traffic was being stopped by people herding cows up the highway in Austria. After this, I stopped for a swim in a tri-country lake (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland), Bodensee Lake. On the way to Switzerland, I asked a girl for directions to "Switzerland". She did not understand and then finally she said oh Swizzer and pointed me in the right direction. I was always asking people for directions and since I could not speak their language, I always asked by only saying the name of the place where I wanted to go as clearly as I could and pointing at my map. I ran out of water and could not find any bottled water, so I showed a farmer my water bottle and pointed at his cow's drinking trough. He shook his head no and pointed me towards his neighbor's water hole. This was when I decided to start drinking the European water. I got lost in the mountains on my way towards Appenzell. There were several small towns that were not on my map. I had to keep asking directions and finally ended up on the wrong side of the mountains in St.

Gallen. Then I decided to change my route (I was being cheap and didn't buy maps, all my maps I got before leaving the US for free by writing to the different country's embassies). (May 22, 1989/ Day 6/ mile 485.5)

In the morning I traveled through St. Gallen and Herisau, large cities with architecture similar to Boston, Massachusetts, narrow streets with tall brick buildings on both sides. When I arrived in Rapperswil, I found a Riviera type atmosphere. A large lake with water front restaurants, some on second floor porches and red/white striped umbrellas. On a poster near the lake someone painted "fuck the USA". The ride to Lucerne included a nice bike trail along Zugersee Lake. Lucerne is a nice old town with some castle walls around it and I saw a pasture in the middle of town with cows. I slept near a rest area four miles out of town with a river to take a cold bath. The road to this campsite was very steep, the thing that I noticed about the Alps is the roads are steeper than in the Rockies, but the distance is shorter. (May 23, 1989/ Day 7/ mile 574.3)

The next morning started with a steep hill climb and then a long flat stretch to Bern. Bern consisted of all red topped buildings and at a bridge I found people feeding bears. A girl from UNM that was assigned to write a story about my bike ride told me about these bear. The girl was an exchange student from Switzerland, she never did write a story. I bought some post cards and tried not to say anything. Then the girl (cashier) smiled and said, "Ah English". I don't know how she knew I was English, maybe my bike? From Bern I rode to the fortified town of Murten. This was another place that the UNM exchange student recommended that I visit. This town was completely inside the walls of a castle like structure and all the shops had bomb shelters. By this time, I was adapting to Europe; I was comfortable with drinking water from the fountains and when I heard a bell it was usually a cow. I saw other people drinking the water in one of the fountains. When I returned to the US, someone pointed out that the water was probably recirculated and not filtered. The worst part is that I even saw people wading in these fountains, probably not good to drink. That night I camped near the highway a few miles before the town of Fribourg. (May 24, 1989/ Day 8/ mile 665.9)

The traffic was heavy everywhere and I came to a fork in the road that said Juan-Pass, here I decided to change my route. The exchange student from UNM recommended that I see a cheese factory, but I was tired of the tourist attractions and wanted to head for the mountains. The climb to the pass was gradual until the last four miles which was a 12% grade. At the top I could see several snow-covered mountains and at a small store I bought a beer and an ice cream. Since I rarely drink, was at a high altitude and was drinking strong beer, I caught a good buzz. I turned towards Kanderstag. I did not know what to expect at this town, because on my map there were dotted lines instead of the solid lines of the highway. Also, on the way to the

town there were several signs with a picture of a train flatbed carrying cars. Mountains covered with glaciers surrounded the town and the only way to continue was to take an auto-transporter. I didn't have much money and the lady wouldn't take visa. Luckily it only cost four franks (approximately \$3.00) and I was able to pay cash. At one end of the train there was a room for bicycles and motorcycles. I sat in this room with a man from Switzerland that gave me part of his map. I talked with the man and he spoke fair English, he told me things about Switzerland. An interesting thing he told me was the number of Languages spoken in the small country (I believe there was 4 or 5 different languages in Switzerland). The train took me through a high mountain. On the other side of the mountain, I traveled down a steep hill with several tunnels. That night I slept under a bridge in Gampel. (May 25, 1989/ Day 9/ mile 749.8)

To my luck the steep road to Zermatt (a place the UNM exchange student recommended) appeared flat, even though it was a steep uphill climb (a good illusion). The road to Zermatt passes a few ski areas and trams. The town does not allow cars (bikes are permitted) and dead ends at the ski area near the Matterhorn (14,500 Ft Top elevation - rock that towers above everything around). The ride down the mountain was fast and then I rode to the town of Brigs. In this town, I saw a man standing on the sidewalk with a semi-automatic rifle. To leave Brigs I boarded an auto-transporter to Italy. When I arrived in Italy I slept under a bridge. Some people parked near the bridge and partied for about an hour. They never saw me and I was glade, because I was a little scared of Italy. (May 26, 1989/ Day 10/ mile 823.6)

The transition from Switzerland to Italy was similar to the transition from the US to Mexico. Italy is poorer and more trashed out than Switzerland. In Italy I rode through a two-mile tunnel (longest tunnel ride to date for me). When I stopped at a lake to eat lunch a bus loaded with 11 and 12 year old Italians came over to try and talk to me (what a nightmare). I think every one of them asked me my name and age. One of the boys asked me what "fuck off" means. When he asked me that it shocked me and I looked at the adults in the group. The adult's faces were blank, they had no idea what the kid was asking. My reply to the young man was don't say that, it's very bad. Outside a town, Novara, I asked a man on a bicycle for directions and he kept pointing in two different directions and saying the same Italian words over and over. I think the man was mad that I did not understand him, because as he rode off, he kept shaking his hand and speaking Italian words to passing motorist. The route I took went through several small towns that were not on my map, so I kept thinking I was lost (It ended out being the best route). People kept honking and yelling, as I cycled down the road. I am not sure if they wanted me to move or if they were cheering me on. That night it was tough to find a good camping spot, because of all the farmland. At about 11 PM I finally found a place to sleep in the bushes on some rocks next to the

highway. This was my most uncomfortable sleeping spot of the entire trip, but I still slept well. (May 27, 1989/ Day 11/ mile 954.3)

It was a nice easy ride to the city of Genova. This was a large crowded city. After about ten miles of city riding, I finally reached the Mediterranean Sea. My bike odometer read 999.9 miles from Shawna's house in Germany. At this point I was at a boat dock and asked some guards, that did not understand any English, how to get to the beach. I went through the swimming motions and they pointed in a direction. After about two and a half miles I started seeing very crowded beaches. All the beaches were only accessible through drinking establishments. Finally, after about six miles I found a stairway to the beach and went for a swim in the warm water. The beach was very crowded and I saw one topless lady sunny side up, tanning her lovely breasts. Next, I decided to take a train to Rome, I was lucky and found the train station right away. I found that the trains did not take-charge cards and I could not get money exchanged, because it was Saturday (no exchange till Monday). Then the police kicked me out of the station, because I had my bike in the building. I did not want to stay there that night, so I decided to fly. It was impossible to find anyone that spoke any English and when I was trying to ask the police for directions to the airport a guy overheard and he understood enough English to draw me a map to the airport. On the six-mile ride I learned how to say airport in Italian (I asked for directions several times). At the airport the attendant spoke very good English and was able to quickly help me get a flight to London. I then packaged my bike and was on my way to London. It was the only flight out at that time, so I charged it and did not have any idea of the cost (back home I got the \$344.00 visa bill). On the flight I had my first good meal since leaving Shawna's. After landing at Heathrow airport in London I started riding south and ended up sleeping at a school's playground. (May 28, 1989/ Day 12/ mile 1023.8)

England was the first country I visited that the traffic flows in the opposite direction from that of the USA. I cycled through the town of Oxford and walked around the college campus. It is a very beautiful campus with stone buildings and a large duck pond. I was the only one on campus with a bike and this seemed strange considering how many bikes were parked outside the campus wall. I had a man take my picture near a tree and as I was leaving, I noticed a sign on the tree saying, "No bikes on campus by order of dean". I quickly departed and back in town a girl in the back seat of a car flashed a sign at me saying, "Would you still respect me in the morning". I smiled, shook my head yes and rode off into the sunset. I slept at a nice spot near a farm road that night. (May 29, 1989/ Day 13/ mile 1076.7)

It was cold and I slept later than usual (8 AM.). In Gloucester, I visited a large cathedral with high ceilings, at least three alters, monk wash room, tomb stones (one of Edward the second) and much more. Then I stopped in the town of Ross-on-Rye a

nice old town with an old stone building in the center of a park. West of town I saw ruins of three old castles, probable thirteenth century. That night, I slept in a roadside bus stop near Abergavenny. (May 30, 1989/ Day 14/ mile 1177.9)

I cycled through the lush countryside of England to the town, Carniarthen. The scenery was so nice that I missed a castle and an old tower (they were on my map) on the way. All the churches have their own cemetery and I decided to look at the dates on some of the stones and found dates from 1810 to present. In the center of a town, Haverfordwest, were the ruins of an old castle. The ride to Fishgaud was very scenic, following a river with flowers and honeycombed cliffs. At Fishgaud, I cleaned up and took a short nap at the ferry terminal. Then I boarded the 3 AM ferry for Rosslore Harbor, Ireland. I slept excellently for the full four-hour float. (May 31, 1989/ Day 15/ mile 1284.9)

Ireland was like a vacation in a vacation, because I finally got away from all the people and traffic. I saw houses with grass roofs, churches that were built inside the walls of old churches (It appeared that they did not tear down old churches), and several old ruins with trees and/or vines growing in them. I had a difficult time finding a place to camp, because I did not want to cross any barbed wire fences (lots of farmland). I finally ended up sleeping in plain site next to the highway. (June 1, 1989/ Day 16/ mile 1373.3)

Early the next morning (5 AM) I cycled to a town, Timabe, with a seventeenth century stone round tower in the middle of an old cemetery. The tower was about one hundred feet high and I was the only tourist. After this I went castle hunting, I found three castles, the one I liked the most was in a small town, Delvin (I had a tourist map that shows all the attractions). One side of the Delvin castle was a grocery store and the other side a church yard. These castles were all thirteenth century ruins. That afternoon it rained continuously and I was soaked right through the rain gear. I ended up staying in a bed in breakfast (a nice room in someone's house) for \$18.00. This was the first night I paid to sleep somewhere. (June 2, 1989/ Day 17/ mile 1471.2)

I believe the road to Clones was on the boarder of Northern Ireland, because I saw police stopping cars and looking in their windows. Also, when I stopped at a store a man told me I was in Northern Ireland, but the store took only Southern Ireland money. In Clones, I found an old graveyard with the remains of a bishop that lived from 500 to 548 AD. Most of the stones were half fallen and dated in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In the middle of the graveyard was a 100-foot tenth century round tower. I was the only one at this unique graveyard. Soon after this I came to a sign that said, "welcome to Northern Ireland". The boarder had a small stone building with (I think a man was in the building) a bulletproof window, somehow, they were monitoring the traffic going into Northern Ireland. Next to the building was a

green/red light with a sign reading, "When light turns green one car and only one car may enter" (no passport check). The first town I saw a couple of buildings with tall walls, barbed wire fences and TV monitors. I also saw two trucks loaded with armed soldiers. When I was leaving town a nice-looking girl in a car stopped to talk with me. She was interested in my trip. Once north of this town it looked more like Southern Ireland, very clean, quiet and beautiful. I biked till I made it to Larne. I arrived at about midnight and a man stopped me coming out of a bar, he asked me where I was from. When I told him I was from the US, he explained to me that Northern Ireland was not as dangerous as people say. He said it was a lot like New York, that is New York City is dangerous, but New York State is actually a very nice place. In contrast Belfast is a dangerous place, but Northern Ireland is a beautiful country. I never went to Belfast, but at one point I was about 20 miles from the city. I went to sleep at a park near Larne, Northern Ireland. (June 3, 1989/ Day 18/ mile 1589.2)

In the morning, I cycled up the beautiful winding coastal highway of Northern Ireland. Then I returned to Larne, visited a thirteenth century castle and caught the ferry to Stranraer, Scotland. The Scottish coast was beautiful with roads lined with flowers and long stretches of sandy beaches. In a town, Ballantrae, I asked some people (a man with his wife) if it was possible to put a bike on the bus (I only had a few days left and wanted to see a lot, so I decided to start cheating). They said no and then gave me a ride to their trailer near Tumberry golf course where they fed me lunch. During lunch these people told me that Europeans often appear not to like people from the USA, but they felt that these people really did not like the way that some of the US military people acted while stationed in Europe. I guess the military people were often womanizers and a little bit violent. They invited me to stay the night, but I refused because I only had a few days left. Before leaving Albuquerque, my father recommended seeing Tumberry and Saint Andrew's golf course. Therefore, I stopped at the Tumberry golf course and bought my dad a golf hat. Then I went to Culzean castle, a fancy eighteenth century castle that cost two dollars to park a car (bikes free). To enter the castle, it cost another two dollars, so I checked out the free part, the gardens. Ten miles before reaching a town, Ayr, I saw a boy walking his bike and asked if he needed any help. He had a flat, so I lent him some tools, but he did not know how to fix a flat tire, so I fixed it for him. That night, I spent a cold night on a beautiful sandy beach near Ardrassan, Scotland. (June 4, 1989/ Day 19/ mile 1633.0)

In the morning, I saw a man in a box next to a fire keeping warm. I rode to Gourock and took a ferry to Dunoon. I biked over a small mountain in a very cold rainstorm to a small town, Tarbet, where I found a train station. The station was unmanned and when the next train arrived, I asked one of the men leaving the train how to pay and he said get on the train and they will collect the fare on board. Well, I did not know what I was doing and got in one of the passenger cars with my bike. My bike kept



falling over as the train took corners. The conductor's accent was very tough to understand and a passenger helped me interpret his words. The person that helped me said that she even had trouble understanding his Scottish accent. The train separated at the next stop and I had to change train cars there. It was a beautiful train ride through snow covered mountains (some of the snow was even fresh). Near Fort Williams, I stayed at my only real campground of my European bike trip. I could not figure out how to use the hot water, so I took a cold shower. I planned on paying for camping, but could not due to receptionist's hours. (June 5, 1989/ Day 20/ mile 1735.1)

The scenery was beautiful; big trees, flower lined roads and a couple of long lakes (Lock Lochy and Lock Ness). At Lock Ness, I paid to go into my first castle (Umquhart Castle) and also saw a statue of the Lock Ness Monster. I took a train to Perth and arrived too late to stay at the youth hostel. Someone suggested sleeping at the Bridge of Earn. I kept asking people where the bridge of Earn was, I finally found it and slept under the bridge. (June 6, 1989/ Day 21/ mile 1811.7)

In Abernethy, I found a cemetery with a round tower. After this I cycled to Saint Andrew, the home of golf (world's first golf course). It's a flat ugly course nestled between beautiful sandy beaches and the historical town of Saint Andrew. I visited the town's, ruins of a castle and an old cathedral. On the ride to Edinburgh, I passed castles and a round tower. I rode over my longest bridge to date, 1.5 miles. Edinburgh was a nice stone city with cobble stone streets and a castle on the top of a hill in the center of town. I took the 11:35 PM train to London. I slept on the train, but not like most people. I managed to crawl under the table with my legs under the seat in front of me. If someone had sat in that seat, they would have crushed my legs. I still slept great. (June 7, 1989/ Day 22/ mile 1905.7)

On the train to London, when I woke up, I meet this lady that told me all the places to visit on my one-day stay in London. I arrived at Kings Crossing station and wanted to store my gear at Victoria station for an early morning departure. In order to find Victory station, I following a city bus with a Victoria station sign for four miles to the station. I stored my stuff and left in a random direction. I ended up in front of Buckingham Palace during the changing of the guards (what luck). The rest of the day, I visited tourist attractions; Saint James Palace, Saint James Park, Big Ben, House of Parliament, Saint Paul's cathedral, Lloyd's of London and London Tower Bridge. Then I went to the large expensive Harrods Department store. I decided to stay in my only European youth hostel for my last night, so I could get cleaned before my flight home in the morning. (June 8, 1989/ Day 23/ mile 1926.2)

June 9, 1989, I finished my trip. On the ride from the youth hostel, I cycled all the way around the three-lane roundabout in front of Buckingham Palace. Then I took a train to the airport. I had trouble getting a bike box, but finally got one from American

Airline for \$10.00. My bike got lost for the first time in customs in Dallas and arrived a day later in Albuquerque. (June 9, 1989/ Day 24/ mile 1932.5)