

New Zealand/ Australia

On December 20, 1991, I finished my finals at 11:30 AM and boarded a plane for New Zealand that afternoon, at 1:00 PM. I was very tired from studying all week and slept for most of the 11-hour flight from Los Angeles, California to Auckland, New Zealand. When I arrived in New Zealand at 6:00 AM I immediately assembled my bike and started riding. It took forever to get out of Auckland, at one point a motorcyclist stopped to give me directions. Out of town, I meet a native cyclist (Māori Indian) whom was riding his bike to Auckland from Wellington, so he could spend Christmas with his relatives (He was on his sixths day of riding). I also met 2 cyclists from East Germany, that where cycling around the world. These guys rode barefoot. They already rode through Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia and around New Zealand. The Germans gave me a map of the North Island and headed towards Auckland to catch a flight to South America. That night, I camped near a house at a rest area north of Te Aroha, New Zealand. (December 22, 1991/ Day 1/ mile 94.8; kilometer 152.6)

I cycled along the mountains past Wairere Falls and got lost at Opal Hot Springs. At a motel, a lady gave me a tourist map that helped me get to the main highway. I stopped at Ngongotahā for fish and chips. The locals told me that I could get away with camping at the park on the other side of the lake. The park was across from a golf course. When I got to the park, I saw several signs that said no camping, so I continued towards Rotoiti Lake. I ended up camping on a grassy spot near the highway. (December 23, 1991/ Day 2/ mile 181.3; kilometer 291.7)

In the morning, a couple of young ladies walked by as I was getting out of my tent. They asked if I slept well with a friendly laugh. That was about when I noticed that I was camped in front of the Moose Lodge. That day I visited two local thermally active tourist attractions, Hells Gate and The Māori Arts and Crafts Institute. At the latter they even had a geyser that was primed daily. Heading south, I saw lots of thermal activity. In fact, more than 50% of the electric power for the North Island of New Zealand is generated from either hydrogenating plants or geothermal plants. That night, I camped at Huka Falls. When I was walking near camp at night, I noticed spots on the ground that resembled fireflies. When I looked at them with my flashlight, I found out that they were glowworms. I guess I slept in a low spot, because I became soaked from a light rain that night. My sleeping bag stayed wet for days. (December 24, 1991/ Day 3/ mile 255.3; kilometer 410.7)

On Christmas day, almost everything was closed. Finally, I found an Asian restaurant open for breakfast in Taupo. Going south a cyclist from Sweden, Gunnar, joined me for about 60 kilometers. He was on a two-year ride and had to send his brother home

early in the trip. His brother became very ill in Indonesia, he caught some sort of bug. Gunnar finally decided that I was too slow for him and left me in his dust. After getting to the top of a hill, a lovely lady stopped to offer me a ride. It was raining and I was soaked, the lady said I looked like a wet rat. When I declined the ride, she gave me her number (with her husband's name) and some biblical propaganda. I walked along the beaches on the way to Napier. The ocean was very similar to that of Scotland. That night, I stayed at Kennedy campground and took my first shower since I arrived in New Zealand. I put my sleeping bag in the drier for a \$1.50, but it did not dry completely. (December 25, 1991/ Day 4/ mile 351.9; kilometer 566.2)

In the morning, I saw Gunnar at the campground. In New Zealand, the day after Christmas is a holiday, Boxing Day. I took the 9:30 AM bus to Wellington. The bus driver gave me student rates (\$15.00 +\$10.00 for the bike, otherwise it would have cost \$60.00). I slept for most of the ride and then took the ferry to the South Island of New Zealand. There were several cyclists on the boat and some of them told me the best route to go on the South Island. The coast was a beautiful ride and I stayed at Ngakuta Bay. There was a no camping sign in front of my tent. I was not going to camp there, but when other cyclists that were also camped there, asked me wants wrong. I decided I could also camp there. One of the kids, said it must be nice to be a wealthy American. He thought all the people in the US had expensive cars and lots of money. He commented on how much he liked the Ford Mustang. I told him how I bought a hamburger at a restaurant and it was a piece of ham on a bun. We bought thought that was strange, I thought it was a New Zealand thing, but he said it was not. (December 26, 1991/ Day 5/ mile 366.5; kilometer 589.7)

The coastal ride was beautiful, then I turned at Havenlock and rode through farmland, till I reached Renwick where I followed a turquoise-colored river. I saw a sign that said, "Welcome to the West Coast, rain forest". I met a family of cyclist that just completed a camping trip, where they biked over a mountain on a dirt road (private farmland). They said, "It was beautiful, but very rainy." I slept under a tree in front of a log cabin. In front of my tent was the beautiful mountainous Rotoiti Lake. It was too rainy and cloudy to see the mountains. (December 27, 1991/ Day 6/ mile 461.7; kilometer 742.9)

In the morning, I went swimming from the boat dock in my underwear. There were too many people to go skinny-dipping. Then I went for a hike through the rain forest. That day's ride was mostly downhill along a gray colored river. I saw two men crossing a suspension bridge; they had a dog that they sent across the river in a bucket that was attached to a line with pulleys on either end of the bridge. I stopped; they told me that the bridge was private, but that I could try it out if I wanted. I wanted to walk across the bridge, it was a long suspension bridge and looked neat. The first part of the bridge only had ropes; they removed the bottom to discourage crossing. The bridge

crossed a large river, swung a lot and was about 30 feet over the water. I was hungry and stopped at the only store in Inangahua Junction to find that it closed at 5:00 PM and it was already 6:00 PM. Too bad! That night, I slept across from a farm in a little pull off near the road. (December 28, 1991/ Day 7/ mile 554.4; kilometer 892.1)

At 5:30 AM some kids stopped, woke me up and asked if I knew how to get to Reefton. I told them it should be about 4 kilometers down the road (I remembered seeing it on my map). I stopped at an abandoned coal mine, Brunner Mine, for about an hour and a half in the pouring rain. That night, I stayed at the youth hostel in Greymouth. I walked along the beach looked for jade (I read that you could find jade on the beach, but I only found a few green rocks, I do not think any of them were Jade.). My dad called from Rotorua and said he probably would not make it to Queenstown by New Years (his flight was delayed). Before leaving for New Zealand, I talked my dad into going. We were planning on meeting and I told him where he could reach me (I gave him the numbers to some of the youth hostels). (December 29, 1991/ Day 8/ mile 617.3; kilometer 993.3)

I decided if I was going to Queenstown that I would need to rent a car. No rentals in Greymouth, so I had to either take the train to Christchurch or a two-day bus to Queenstown. I decided on the train. I rode out to a point and around town, while I was waiting for the train. The train was not working properly, so they bussed us to a place where we could catch the train. The train kept stopping in the tunnel on Arthur's Pass. One of the passengers said, "that is what happened when the train broke before." When the train finally started working properly, it was a beautiful trip through the mountains with several large waterfalls to either side. I lost my glasses on the train. In Christchurch, I could not find a rental car, so I stayed at the backpacker's hostel. (December 30, 1991/ Day 9/ mile 636.3; kilometer 1023.8)

Had a tough time finding a rental car. One man had a car, but did not want it to go far and did not want a bike in the car. I ended up waiting till 6:00 PM for an Avis rental car. I went to visit the Christchurch tourist attractions. I could not get the phone to work. Starting for Queenstown, I was tired and went to sleep on the side of the road. That was how I spent New Years. (December 31, 1991/ Day 10)

At the turn off to Mount Cook, I called the Youth Hostel in Queenstown. They told me the number that my father was at in town. I raced to Queenstown and met dad for lunch. We chartered a plane and flew over Milford Sound. The flight flew over a lake with a large waterfall, over glaciers and near 1000-foot mountains that dropped off into the sea. We flew to the coast and then back to Queenstown (spectacular flight). Then we went to a historical 150-foot bridge for bungee jumping. I went about 2 feet into the water and my father took the bouncing record without hitting the water. That night we stayed at the Queenstown Lodge. (January 1, 1992/ Day 11)

The following day we tramped (hiked) the Routeburn track (trail). Hiking for about a mile we ended up at the bottom again. OOPS WRONG WAY!! Then we decided we were on the wrong side of the river, so we took our shoes off and crossed. After crossing three freezing rivers our feet were numb. Then we bush whacked our way to the trail. I went one way and dad went another way. I became very lost, but finally met up with my father on the correct track, after about an hour. The hike starts following a beautiful river to Howden Lake. Then we continued to the ridge. At the top we saw a man that recommended that we took the short hike to Conical Hill. It ended out being a long drawn-out hike, but the scenery was beautiful. On the way down, we did some tennis shoe skiing. Dad's knee popped and started hurting him for a while. He still walked the long trip back fine. In the tourist pamphlet it says the hike was a three-day hike. Well, it took only one long day for us. (January 2, 1992/ Day 12)

The last day in New Zealand, we drove from Queenstown to Christchurch in separate rental cars. On the way, I had to stop several times looking for a bike box. Sometimes it's tough to find a bike box! The scenery went from beautiful beaches (like in Hawaii) to majestic glaciers (like in Alaska). I stopped and hiked to Blue Pools, here I found suspension bridges and deep blue pools in the river. On the way to Fox Glacier, I came around a corner and found a lady driving on the wrong side of the road. To avoid the head on collision I swerved and hit the cement corner of a bridge. The car was airborne for an instant. The rim was bent; tire blown out and the mirror broke on the rental car. OOOPS!!!! The lady that ran me off the road stopped to see if I was OK, then she quickly left when she realized I was not hurt. Someone that witnessed the accident said that the lady was at fault, but she did not get damaged. When I told the man I was from the US, he said that we are normally the ones on the wrong side of the road (In New Zealand the traffic is on the opposite sides of the road). I needed to hurry up, so I fixed the tire and headed off. I stopped at Fox Glacier and then continued to Franz Josef Glacier, where I hiked to the base of the glacier. I could not find gas and almost ran out. I took a detour to Greymouth and found an open gas station. On the ride over Arthur's Pass, I became tired and went to sleep for two hours in the car. Arriving at the Christchurch airport at 2:30 AM, I boxed my bike in preparation for an early morning flight. (January 3, 1992/ Day 13/ mile 670.5; kilometer 1078.8)

I had a hard time getting on the plane. My knife had to be put on in an envelope and the security guard also said that I should not have the chain lubricant in the plane (flammable). In Sydney, we stored my bike and a box at the Oxford Koala Motel, where we stayed that night. Then we took the ferry to Manly Beach and ate Australian white fish for lunch (Barramundi fish). After returning, we took a bus to Bondi Beach

and then went up the Sydney Tower. At the Sydney Aquarium, we saw sharks in the tank that was fed by the bay in Sydney. (January 4, 1992/ Day 14)

In the morning, we visited the Sydney Opera house and then ate lunch (Australian crab) at Doyles Restaurant. Then we boarded an all-night train to Brisbane (January 5, 1992/ Day 15)

The next day, we drove all day (over 1000 kilometers) from Brisbane to Airlie Beach. Dad was getting tired of all the driving and the long train ride. (January 6, 1992/ Day 16)

We went scuba diving at Shute Harbor. A boat, The Reef, took us to a platform out on the Great Barrier Reef. They supplied snorkeling gear, lunch and had a glass bottom submarine. When I was about ten feet underwater my watch broke (it was supposed to be good up to 50 feet). There were people feeding the fish from the boat and one man was bitten and started bleeding. I then carefully feed the fish as my dad took pictures. That evening, I hiked to Swamp Bay via Mt. Rooper. When I was in the jungle a bug bit me; it felt like I had a large needle in my back for about 20 minutes. At one point, I could hear something large moving in the woods, maybe a kangaroo. After the sun went down, I could see movement on the ground. I was afraid to touch the creatures since they might be poisonous. I ended up taking a flash photo of the moving creatures and did not figure out what they were until I developed the photo in Albuquerque after returning from Australia. The creatures turned out to be frogs. That night, dad and I drank beer with some locals at the motel's bar. (January 7, 1992/ Day 17)

We stopped at Billabong Sanctuary and fed kangaroos. When we arrived in Cairns, we made reservations on a boat for scuba diving in the morning. The trip required a bus ride at 7:10 AM. That night we ate a good meal at a bar and sat at a table with a couple of students from New Jersey. We stayed at the Lyons Motel. (January 8, 1992/ Day 18)

At about 1:40 AM, dad woke up and said, "Oh no we missed the bus!" Dad asked the man at the motel if the bus had already left. He said, "No it doesn't leave till 7:10 AM." That is when dad noticed he had his watch on upside down. OOPS!! It seemed too dark to be 7:00 AM. It was an hour and a half bus ride to the boat dock. This dive trip was even better than the first dive (Shute Harbor) trip. The people were friendly, we took two dives and the corral was more colorful than at Shute Harbor. We saw a shark and giant clams. Dad even saw a sting ray. That night, we stayed at Lyons motel and dad left for Hawaii in the morning. (January 9, 1992/ Day 19)

The next morning, I left with dad's rental car at 6:30 AM and headed towards Tablelands. The previous night I was looking at some tourist pamphlets and decided to go to the same places as in the Tableland tour. I hiked around Lake Barrine, a thick rain forest where I saw a Jungle Turkey and large jumping rats. Then I continued to a place called Curtain Fig Tree, which is a tree that leans on another tree with a thick growth of vines (up to 40-foot vines). I saw several waterfalls in the Tablelands area; Malanda falls, Millaa Millaa falls, Zillie Falls, Ellinjaa Falls and Dinner Falls. I also stopped at The Crater, a deep green stagnant lake about 58 meters below in a 200-foot diameter crater. Then I headed north, after leaving the rain forest I came to an area that had large Isolated rocks, they looked like large anthills (an odd sight). At the Daintree River, the paved roads ended and the rain forest returned. I had to take a \$2.00 ferry to cross the river. After crossing the river, a sign was posted saying, "Warning Estuarine crocodiles inhabit most rivers, swamps and lagoons throughout Cape York Peninsula." In this forest, I saw large tree, intertwining trees, thick ferns, large leafed plants, a cockatoo, parrots and beautiful thick foliage. At one point, I stopped to take a picture and left my dad's glasses (my dad gave me his spare set of glasses, since I lost mine on a train in New Zealand) on the car's hood. It took about 15 minutes to find them and it appeared they were nearly run over (a lens was popped out, they were dirty, scratched and bent). I found that no gas was available at cape tribulation, so I started back. On the way back, I stopped at a desolate beach and became stuck in the sand. Luckily there was a couple in a Toyota Land Cruiser with a chain to pull me out (they were probably the only people around for miles). I offered to give the man money for pulling me out, but he refused. All day long I was listening to the radio; north of me Cyclone Mark was tearing up towns, a day earlier in the same area the natives were fighting with spears and rocks. That night I returned to the motel at 9:00 PM after an excellent 520-kilometer day with no lunch breaks. Dad pre-paid my motel room before he left for Hawaii. (January 10, 1992/ Day 20)

I changed flights three times (Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne) flying from Cairns to Hobart. I had a meal on each plane (4 meals). In Sydney, I stopped at the Koala Oxford for my bike and some of my gear. I made a mistake by deciding to leave my sleeping bag in storage. It was much colder in Tasmania and I froze that night. I camped near a satellite dish on a hill in Hobart, Tasmania. (January 11, 1992/ Day 21/ mile 671; kilometer 1079.6)

I started to ride across Tasmania when my bike chain broke. It was a cheap chain and could not be fixed. It was Sunday and all the bike shops were closed, so I rented a car. I drove to Port Arthur and visited all the tourist attractions on the way. The first stop was at Patterson Arch, a large natural arch. I went for a hike where I saw two Rosellas (red birds) and a Short-Beaked Echidna (looks like a small ant eating porcupine). Then I stopped at Tessellated Pavement. I found the coast had a natural fault that

looked like an ocean side road. Next stop was the Blowhole, a tunnel that comes from the ocean and shoots up water when a wave goes through. Continuing, I stopped at Port Arthur's prison ruins. This is where the British shipped prisoners in the 1800s. It's a well-preserved area with several buildings; a church, 2 prisons, houses, etc. Reading about one inmate, it said he spent 7 years in jail for stealing shoes. The cells were so small that the prisoners could not sleep lying down. The last attraction, Remarkable Caves, did not have a well-marked road. Once I found the caves, I walked down some stairs to a small sandy spot (about 30 feet in diameter) surrounded by cliffs. The caves were very large and entered into the ocean. That night I stayed in the dormitories at the New Sydney motel. (January 12, 1992/ Day 22/ mile 682.3; kilometer 1097.8)

I traveled to Mt. Field National Park in the morning. When I was hiking on a trail I saw a Tasmanian Pademelon (marsupial that looks like a kangaroo). There were several tall trees, ferns and large leafed plants in that forest. I hiked around Russell fall and Lady Baron Falls, before leaving the park. The roads in Tasmania are very curvy and it is not smart to drive too fast. A police car came from behind me so fast that I never saw him coming. About five minutes later, I came across the police car rolled in the middle of the highway (A-10). It was a one-car accident and several people had already stopped to help the officer. The officer appeared dazed and his finger was bleeding. I offered him a bandage. He said, "No thanks, there might be glass in my finger." I was feeding the wallabies (kangaroo like animals) at Lake St. Claire and a girl screamed don't feed them bread! She said "Bread can cause problems and may lead to death for the wallabies." I met some nice girls from Melbourne and we went for a short hike. I almost hit a wallaby that darted in front of my car on the highway. I spot slept (parked several spots on the way and slept for a couple hours at a time) on the way to Cradle Mountain. I arrived at Cradle Mountain at 5:30 AM. (January 13, 1992/ Day 23)

I saw several wallabies on the drive to Lake Dove, where I hiked to the ridge over Crater Lake. It was cold, windy and snowy on the ridge. Around the ridge I could see Lake Dove, Lake Lilla and Crater Lake under the clouds. I replaced my bike chain at a park in Launceston and rode around town. In town, I bought plane and train tickets. I returned to Hobart and found that the rooms in the New Sydney Motel were full, so I went to Mt. Hartz National Park to camp. I spot slept and the only other vehicles that I saw in the park asked me if I needed help (One at 2:00 AM, the other at 7:00 AM). I did not find Hartz Mountain until the following day. (January 14, 1992/ Day 24; mile 685.5; kilometer 1102.9)

There are several dirt roads in Hartz National Park, so I went mountain bike riding on one (Cribs Hill Road near Arve picnic area). Returning to Hobart, I drove up Mt. Wellington and hiked to Silver Falls. In town, I easily found a bike box and a T-shirt.

I was running a little late and boxed my gear at the airport. I barely made my flight. In Melbourne, I took an \$A8.00 shuttle to the train station and spent \$A34.40 (expensive!) for my bike's train ticket. The planes don't charge extra for bikes. I slept on the all-night train to Sydney. (January 15, 1992/ Day 25/ mile 692.5; kilometer 1114.2)

The train arrived late (1.5 hours) in Sydney. I stored my gear, assembled my bike and then I rode to Koala Oxford Motel to get the rest of my gear. I rented a car through a travel agent. I took a taxi to the train station (to get box) and the airport (to get rental car). The girl at the rental agency gave me written direction to the Blue Mountains. I still made a wrong turn and stopped at a gas station for directions. They did not know how to get there (its only 60 miles away). At a second station a man gave me directions. The majority of the trip was through the city. When I finally made it to the Blue Mountains, I went for a hike to Wentworth Falls. I saw an Australian King Parrot and several Rosellas on this hike. At the falls there is a trail that goes down the side of a cliff. The trail is about 1000 feet over the ground with guardrails and stairs. I hiked Coachwood Glen Nature trail by flashlight that night. I saw a car over the edge of the road that crashed head on into a tree. I camped at Quota Club of Blackheath picnic and campgrounds on Megalong Valley road. (January 16, 1992/ Day 26/ mile 697.5; kilometer 1122.3)

In the morning, I saw several Crimson Rosellas and other tropical birds around my campsite. I could have taken some excellent pictures with a telephoto lens camera. I road my bike about 5 miles down Megalong Valley road, before packing up my camp. Then I drove to the heart of the Blue Mountains, Katoomba. I parked my rental car and rode my bike around. At the visitor center, I saw an Australian King Parrot and Rosellas at the bird feeders. Then I hiked to the Three Sisters (3 large adjacent spiral rocks that make up a ridge) and to the bottom of the canyon. I kept getting stuck behind slow moving people, the trail had a step downgrade with stairs and guardrails (hard to pass). At the bottom of the canyon, I saw some children swinging on vines. They asked me if I wanted to try. I said, "Of course!" The mother of the kids took my picture as I was swinging like Tarzan. I took the Katoomba scenic railway out of the canyon (steepest railway in the world -

Facts and Figures

- Operates every 10 minutes, every day of the year.
- Maximum gradient: 52 degrees or 1 in 0.82 or 122%.
- Length of incline: 415 meters (1360 ft).
- Vertical descent: 178 meters (587 ft).
- Speed: 4 meters per second.

- Capacity (theoretical): 840 passengers per hour.
- Roof: metal mesh, with transparent cover in wet weather.
- Type: Variously known as an incline railway/railroad, funicular railway, cable railway or cable incline.

). The train comes out of the canyon almost vertically and you end up pushing against the roof to keep yourself seated. When we were on flat ground at the rim of the canyon, the girl next to me told her friend, "I have never been so glad to be flat." When I turned and noticed her flat chest, she said, "I don't mean that!" Then I rode the Katoomba Scenic Skyway (tram) where I had an excellent view of the canyon on one side and Katoomba falls on the other side. Out of town, at Evens Lookout I saw several lyrebirds. The view was supposed to be of the Grand Canyon of the Blue Mountains, but all I could see was a lot of clouds. Then I drove to Anvil rock and hiked to Wind Blown Caves. I camped at Perrys Lookdown on the Grand Canyon's ridge. (January 17, 1992/ Day 27)

I hiked down the Grand Canyon to the Blue Gum Forest in the morning. It took 50 minutes to get down, I spent a half-hour at the bottom and it took 50 minutes to get out (total 2 hours and 10 minutes). The tourist guide said it was a hard 5-hour trip. On the way back to Sydney, I stopped at Butterworth Park and took a cold, \$.60, shower at the pool. I think it's a good idea to take a shower before getting on a plane. I could not find any signs for the airport, so at a street light I asked the people in the adjacent car for directions and then I easily found the airport. I was running a little late and found a box in the airport parking lot. (Lucky!) BOO I had to fly back home after another excellent adventure. (January 18, 1992/ Day 28/ mile 706.8; kilometer 1137.2)