

green journey 2.0

A Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation

This is the story of my epic journey of a lifetime. I'm newly retired from a career in education and retreat center ministry. I'm also an amateur adventurer on a three wheeled recumbent trike. I recently culminated 9 years and 13 stages to cross the U.S. from the east (West Quoddy, Maine) to the west (La Push, Washington). I am now the new steward of one of the two **green journey** solar assisted trikes that crossed America in 2024 by Megan Routbort & Thomas Polo. The green journey was supported by Steintrikes and [Fairfield Cyclery](#)

Plans are developed in 2024 and early 2025 for my own **green journey** - A *Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation* from the northernmost tip of the contiguous 48 states (Angle Inlet, Minnesota) to the southernmost point, Key West Florida. The pilgrimage would total upwards of 3,500 miles over 75 days from Sept. 1 to mid Nov., 2025. I planned for the journey to pause in Ohio between Oct. 1-4 for the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, before heading south. The mission was to experience earth friendly, sustainable travel, visit sites along the way involved in sustainability and care for the earth and find reasons for hope for our planet along the journey.



During this Jubilee year of Hope in 2025 Catholic communities across the United States came together to organize local Catholic pilgrimages—including Laudato Si' pilgrimages, Jubilee pilgrimages, and Jubilee of Hope pilgrimages—as sacred opportunities to pray for the grace to encounter Christ in Creation and renew our relationships with God, the Earth, and one another. This Green Journey is one of those pilgrimages of hope for creation during the Season of Creation—September 1-October 4.

One of my hopes was to be the first cyclist to go “Buoy to Buoy” in the US. I've drawn inspiration from adventure hiker, Richard Larson, aka "Skittles" and a kayaker by the trail name “Out of Order” who have in recent years completed what is known as the Snowbird Route. I planned to create a second solar trike so that other pilgrims may join in relay fashion along the route. The invitation was open for other adventurous souls to join the pilgrimage with or without solar powered pedal assist. Daily mileage was planned to be from 50-70 miles. Accommodations along the route were anything from camping, “warm showers” hosts, hostels, hotels and private residences.

[Follow the green journey on Facebook](#) or on [CycleBlaze journal](#)

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The Green Journey Numbers

- Trike - E-Assist **Steintrike** with 2 x 200 watt solar panels feeding a 2,000 watt Jackery & recycled trailer
- Est. Weight of Trike, Pilgrim, Trailer & Panels - **430-460 lbs** (one set of panels were removed after MN)
- Total Days - **71 Days**; Aug. 29 to Nov. 14 with 7 day pause in Ohio midway
- Total Distance - **5,706 km, 3,546 mi.**
- Average Daily Distance - **87.7 km (54.4 mi.)**
- Average Daily Moving Time - **5 hrs. 11 min.**
- Longest Day - **142 km, (88 mi.); 7 hrs 57 min.** moving time
- Shortest Distance Cycling Day - **3 Days, 0 km or mi. cycling**, 2-5 miles hiking in rain instead
- Traveled through **11 States** and **10 metropolitan areas of at least .5 million (Atlanta, Birmingham, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dayton, Louisville, Madison, Miami, Minneapolis, Nashville)**
- **42 Distinct Trails; Longest - 210 mi. of the 444 mi Natchez Trace**
- **3 National Parks** - Mammoth Cave, Natchez Trace, Freedom Riders
- **3 Buoys** - Northwest Angle MN (Northernmost point in Contiguous 48 states), Key West FL (Southernmost point in Continental US) Aurora IN on the Ohio River halfway between MN & FL
- Longest States to pass through - **11 Days, tie MN & FL**
- Est. % of Solar Power Assist - **50%**
- Mode of Travel - **4 Days with other riders, 67 days Self Supported Solo**
- **6 National Parks/Monuments** - Birmingham Civil Rights NM, Freedom Riders NM, Mammoth Cave NP, Natchez Trace NP, Mississippi NR&RA, Tupelo NB
- **6 Flat Tires**
- **0 Accidents**
- **0 Single use plastic** silverware, straws, containers of soap & shampoo
- **0 Use of matches** to start fires to cook food
- Planet Healthy Diet (PHD) followed **71 days**, plant based foods with little to no red meat.
- Types of Overnight Accommodations - **25 Outdoors (Hammock 21, Bivy 3, Van 1) 46 Indoors (Hotels 15, Motels 11, Warm Showers 6, Private Homes 3, Monasteries 2, Cabin 2, Bike Shops 2, Retreat Center 1, Hostel 1, Cottage 1, B&B 1, Yurt 1; Average estimated cost - \$46 per night**
- **10 Hills** with greater than 10% grade that required "Hike a Trike" for some portion
- **1 Gap in Route** - Prescott to Menomonie WI, but same or more distance as originally planned
- Est. Ave. Speed - **17 km/hr, 10.5 mph**
- Est. Hours Cycled - **332 hrs 5 min.**
- Est. Pedal Revolutions - **1,276,560**
- Est. Calories Burned - **212,760**
- Est. Pounds of CO2 Emissions Saved **3,224**
- Cost of the Pilgrimage/Adventure - Still adding up all the bills, but all in all, **Priceless** (tried to be frugal)

Green Journey Glossary

Every vocation or sport it seems has its own jargon or vocabulary. The world of the long distance trike cyclist is no exception. Here is a glossary of terms that were common to the Green Journey. Some of the terms have been adapted from other long distance disciplines such as hiking.

Bike Lane - standard is 4 feet, except in Florida where it appears to be around 3 feet which is not quite wide enough for tricycles or quadracycles.

Blow Out - 1. When a tire explodes 2. When things don't sit well in the digestive system and result in an explosive bowel movement.

Bollard - a short post often used to divert motorized traffic from an area or road. Sometimes bollards are placed very narrowly together preventing wider human powered cycles like recumbent trikes from passing.

Boondocking - is essentially free and self-sufficient camping, usually in an RV or camper, away from established campgrounds, meaning no water, electric, or sewer hookups (also called dispersed or dry camping). It often involves parking on public lands like National Forests or BLM (Bureau of Land Management) land, or even courtesy parking at businesses like Walmart or casinos, focusing on using your own solar power, generators, propane, and water tanks. It can be a manner in which [SAG](#) support vehicles for cycling expeditions to overnight economically. See also [stealth camping](#).

Burnout - 1. Burning rubber. 2. Tired of cycling. 3. When a car or truck catches fire and melts on the side of the road. The resulting charred black pavement is melted and very rough.

Canal Path - A canal path, also known as a towpath, is a path running along the side of a canal or river. Originally, these paths were used by horses and mules to tow boats, but today they are primarily used by people for recreation such as walking, running, and cycling. Ex. the Erie Canal Path in New York. Irrigation canals in some areas of southern and western United States are very suitable for cycling with crushed gravel and sometimes paved surfaces.

Contraflow - A contraflow path for cyclists allows bicycles to travel in the opposite direction of motor vehicle traffic on a one-way street. This improves route connectivity, reduces travel distance, and can provide a safer, quieter route for cyclists by converting a one-way street into a two-way street for bikes. These paths are often designated with paint, signage, and can include physical separation for higher safety.

Deuce of Spades - an ultralight backpacking trowel often made of aluminum, an essential tool for Hiking, Camping and Survival to dig a small "cat hole" to bury excrement.

Double Play - photograph that captures more than one element at a time to both identify where the picture is taken and capture something unique.

First Ascent - most often used to describe a new rock climbing route up a mountain, the first person to lead the route ground up with gear and completing the route from bottom to the top. Similarly In cycling the first person to complete a route from beginning to end. See also ["Thru-Trike."](#)

Ghost Bike - small and somber memorials for bicyclists who are killed or hit on the street. A bicycle is painted all white and locked to a street sign near the crash site, accompanied by a small plaque. They serve as reminders of the tragedy that took place on an otherwise anonymous street corner, and as quiet statements in support of cyclists' right to safe travel.

Handyman Secret Weapons - Duct tape, made popular by the Red Green Show, is a tool that can fix nearly anything. Zip ties and hose clamps are also secret weapons.

Hike a Trike - the practice of pushing, pulling and in some cases lifting a recumbent trike short distances on sections of trail that are too steep, rough, or unrideable. It's a way to extend the ride, conserve energy, and tackle challenging terrain, making memorable experiences.

Leap Frogging - Sometimes a technique for completing a trail by moving ahead with assistance to a new trailhead continuing an adventure, then returning to complete the section later.

Oblivion - A walker/pedestrian, often wearing ear phones on a trail completely unaware of any other trail users behind them. Someone in the mental state of being oblivious, generally understood to mean "a state of being unmindful or unaware of something, of being ignorant or not conscious of its existence". Cyclists likewise need to keep at least one ear open to traffic on the road or on the trail.

Peesport - small portable urinal made for car travel, camping & boating constructed of odor-resistant silicone.

Rail Trail - a multi-use public path for walking, biking, and other activities, built on a former railroad line. These trails are typically flat or gently sloped, and are created after the railway tracks are removed. They are a popular way to repurpose old corridors into public recreational spaces for people to enjoy.

Road Pizza - Also known as "Roadkill" referring to animals killed by vehicles on roads. Specifically the remains of animals who unfortunately have been flattened by traffic. Sometimes the disc shaped remains are less than a half inch in thickness and are otherwise indescribable or unidentifiable.

Road Rash - a skin abrasion caused by a fall in which the skin is scraped against a hard, rough surface. It ranges in severity from a minor scrape to a deep wound where the top layers of skin are torn away or damaged. This type of injury is common in accidents involving motorcycles, bicycles, and other falls. The chances of road rash are greatly reduced while riding a recumbent trike.

Road Score - finding something on the road of value like coins, cordage, clothing, etc.

Roadside Memorial - a tribute to a person who died in a traffic accident, often placed at or near the site of the crash. These memorials can range from simple bouquets to elaborate displays with photos, crosses, or other personal items. While created out of love and grief, they can also serve as a public reminder of the dangers of the road. Many government agencies have guidelines, and sometimes outright rules, about placement and content due to safety concerns, and often have processes for removing memorials that become hazards.

SAG - 1. Screen Actors Guild 2. slang style of wearing pants (usually jeans) so low they droop around the hips, often revealing underwear 3. "Support and Gear" vehicles and services providing assistance (food, water, mechanical help, transport) on organized rides, carrying riders' gear and responding to fatigue, injury, or cycling issues, with riders needing personal gear like helmets, tools, and nutrition.

Section Triking - breaking a long-distance trail, like the [Appalachian Trail](#) or [Pacific Crest Trail](#), into smaller, manageable segments completed over time (weeks, months, or years) instead of all at once, offering flexibility to fit hiking into busy schedules, enjoy various terrains, and experience long trails without the full-time commitment of a thru-hike. It allows hikers to choose ideal weather, mix directions, and potentially hike with family, making it more accessible and less financially demanding than a thru-hike.

Side Path - a wider, shared-use path alongside a road for pedestrians and cyclists (a "sidepath"), or a smaller, decorative walkway in a yard or garden, often used for access or landscaping. In transportation, sidepaths are distinct from sidewalks and are designed for all non-motorized users.

Signature - the foot on the bottom corner of the photograph taken by a recumbent tricyclist, which is sometimes difficult to get out of the picture. It does qualify as proof that a cyclist has been somewhere. Signature photographs also may include just half of the cyclist's face. Half a face is more than enough to prove identity and ownership of a photo without filling the picture with a full face thus allowing for more space in the photo for capturing other subjects.

Speed Bump - a traffic calming device, also called a traffic threshold or "sleeping policeman," that uses a raised bump on the road to force drivers to slow down for improved safety, especially in areas like parking lots, school zones, and residential streets. Made from asphalt, rubber, or plastic, these typically 3-4 inch high obstructions slow vehicles to 5-10 mph. Also signed as "Speed Humps", "Speed Cushion", or even "Speed Table". While effective, they can increase noise, slow emergency vehicles, and be difficult for low-clearance cars, sometimes requiring angled passage at slow speeds.

Stair Stepping - a route planning technique of travelling down one road then a 90 turn to another road. The resulting path looks like stair steps on a map. This technique breaks up what would otherwise be a long sometime monotonous single direction path.

Stealth Camping - camping discreetly in an unapproved or hidden spot, often to avoid fees, crowds, or detection, common for hikers, motorcyclists, and van dwellers. Key principles involve using low-profile gear that blends in, minimizing noise and light, leaving no trace

(Leave No Trace), respecting local laws (especially on public lands like BLM or National Forests where "dispersed camping" may be allowed), and choosing remote or urban spots carefully. It prioritizes being quiet, clean, and inconspicuous for free, low-impact overnight stays. See also [boondocking](#).

Thru-trike - triking a long-distance trail or route from one end to the other, in one continuous journey, usually over weeks or months, embracing the entire experience.

Verge Creep - when grass creeps onto the trail, in effect narrowing the path and in some cases reducing safety on the trail by forcing cyclists to enter into the lane of oncoming trail users.

Wag Bag - a sanitary, safe, and environmentally friendly portable toilet solution in the form of a bag equipped with a NASA-developed gelling agent that traps, deodorizes, and breaks down waste. Each kit comes complete with toilet paper and hand sanitizer. It gets used, sealed, and tossed in the trash.

Wrap - A wrap, "Mexican crêpe", bicycle burrito is taking a tortilla and filling it with either cheese, jelly, avocado, hot sauce, Nutella, Vegemite or any other suitable filling that may be either savory or sweet.

“Go gently today, don’t hurry or think about the next thing.”

– JULIA FEHRENBACHER

“What fuels your spirit, fuels your body.”

– CAROLINE MYSS

Best of

Best Bicycle Shop Bicycle Museum - Weber Sports in Aurora, IN

Best Portable Toilet - WI? IL?

Best Bike Coop - Recycle Birmingham, AL

Best Cycling Parkway - Natchez Trace, TN

Best stone trail - Elroy Sparta, WI

Best Paved Trail - _____

Best Marked Cycling Route - Mississippi River Trail MRT, MN

Best National Park on this route for cycling - Mammoth Cave, KY

Best Urban Trail System - Atlanta Belt Line

Best Recumbent Trike Shop - Fairfield Cyclery, Fairfield, OH

Solar Cycling - August 5, 2025

One goal of this 3,500 mile cross country north to south journey is to use only solar energy to power the electric assist on a recumbent trike I'll be riding. The solar assist will be used sparingly to help get up hills and simply extend the range of daily distances.

I have incorporated two 200 watt solar panels from the 2024 Green journey. Those panels and the mast hardware to support them have been installed on two Stein trikes. In addition, I've taken two Burley trailers and mounted additional Jackery solar panels on those to carry the Jackery generator batteries that will store the solar energy. Those generators will be used to charge the batteries every night as needed.

The first Green Journey back in 2024 by Megan Routbort and Thomas Polo did not include the trailers and relied on generating power on the go. There were some issues we understand with that kind of system so learning from their experience we've added the trailers to increase the capacity of the solar.

This is my first foray into solar power, so I am learning a lot along the way. I want to use a system that was relatively simple and I could use off the shelf solar gadgets that I could understand and use.

My wife Michele and I had used the jackery generator system on our last cross country van camping trip and it worked fine. We use the solar power to keep our trike batteries charged for exploring national parks on our trikes. We also used solar to power, all our electronic gadgets, phones, lights, and our small electric kettle pot to prepare our meals. So we are just using that technology now on a big bike ride.

The old classic Burley with the red tires is the one we used to pull our children when they were young, close to 30 years ago. In recent years, I've used the Burley to carry all kinds of stuff. The newer Nomad trailer was given to me by a friend who simply wasn't using it much.

My wife will be joining me for at least the first three days of the journey starting in Angle Inlet, Minnesota.

The Proposed Route

I have used Ride with GPS to plan most of my cycling adventures. I usually break a large adventure down to smaller distances. In this adventure I am sectioning it state by state. So the first section is the state of Minnesota. Since the adventure begins in Angle Inlet, MN which is only accessible by land through Canada, we must travel back through Canada. So we'll need to pack the passports. We understand there is no border station from Angle Inlet MN to Canada but there will be one from Canada back to the US.

The adventure really begins at the Sportman's Lodge north of Baudette, MN on the Rainy River where we will board a 30 foot boat to carry 2 passengers, 2 trikes and two solar trailers. We hope there are other passengers to share the fare. We'll be on either a 6:30 am or 7:30 pm launch and likely will not know until we arrive in MN which boat we'll take. From there it is an hour and a half (only half of a 3 hour Gilligan's Isle tour) to Young's Bay Resort where the cycling begins.

We'll start cycling at Young's Bay Resort, the northernmost point in the Contiguous 48 states. Then it is simply a matter of steadily pedaling from there all the way to the southernmost point of the continental USA at Key West. The full route is an attempt to connect as many existing off road trails as possible. I am estimating that for the northern half of the pilgrimage from Minnesota to Ohio about half of the journey will be on trails. The start and end points will be the huge buoys at either end.

This is the logo that Richard Larson created for his hiking expedition from Key West to Angle Inlet. Here is a link to his adventure blog from 2021-2022. And he may have been the first to imagine and name the snowbird route. My route will vary significantly but it will share the same end points and general direction. I did correspond with Richard about using the "Snowbird Route" concept as an inspiration for my journey. I've shared the idea with the Adventure Cycling Association as well and who knows maybe some day this way of crossing the country may become more common and popularly used by others.

I like to create a logo for my cycling adventures that are unique. After a cycling pilgrimage on the Camino in Spain in 2012 I invented an image of cross and arrow for adventures here in Ohio, cycling through an area known as the Land of the Cross Tipped Churches. I used to paint one of these arrows on the end of our driveway to suggest that adventure begins right out the front door, every day. This

version of the arrow is pointing the general direction I will be taking across the US from northwest to southeast. Green represents hope the attention to Mother Earth as I travel. I've thought Kermit the Frog could be one of my mascots. My hope is to turn the Kermit song "It's Not Easy Being Green" around and make the adventure as enjoyable and easy as I can given the limitation of using only my legs and solar power to travel.

And here's a look at the journey from MN to GA. I have three alternative options for going through Florida - gulf side, Atlantic side or right down the middle to lessen the chance of encountering the full force of a hurricane.

Thurs, Aug. 28, 2025 - The Green Journey - Pilgrimage of Hope begins tomorrow.

We were up at 5 AM to catch the passenger boat service from Baudette MN to Young's Bay resort, where the buoy for the northernmost point of the contiguous 48 states sits. Spent half the day, mounting the solar panels on top of the trikes and getting all gear in position between the trikes and the trailers.

Almost embarrassed to say that we didn't come up here to fish. That is pretty much the preoccupation of residents and visitors here. The one and only Jerry's Tavern in Youngs Bay doesn't even serve fish on the menu because so many people bring in their own fish to be cooked by the chefs here that seems to be a common practice of grills here in Northern Minnesota to cook what has been caught. Curious folks asked questions and wished us well. They seem to be very aware of the buoy in Key West and understand the magnitude of the journey.

Prayer before setting out on a pilgrimage

God of the guiding star, the bush that blazes
show us your way
God of the stormy seas, the bread that nourishes
teach us your truth
God of the still, small voice, the wind that blows where it chooses
fill us with life
God of the elements, of our inward and outward journeys
set our feet on your road today.
May god bless us with a safe journey
may the angels and saints travel with us
may we live this day in justice and joy.
Amen.

Getting set to take off on the Green Journey.

We are approaching the Lake of the Woods in Minnesota now, will take a boat trip to Angle inlet MN Thursday and then depart from Young's Bay on Friday by solar assisted recumbent trikes.

We had a nice stay last night with our friend Don Cleaver in Menomonie WI. We had pizza and beer at the new brewery near the Red Cedar River trailhead. On a short hike on the trail Don found a huge edible puff ball mushroom. So that was our breakfast with famous Buckley sweet corn.

Lunch in Duluth was green plant based meal at the Shake It shop. Very eager and excited about starting the pilgrimage knowing that it will be about enjoying and fully experiencing the journey and not focusing on the destination.

Why now?

So the plan now is for a Friday Aug 29 departure at 8 AM from Angle Inlet. By choosing this date it allows us the chance to camp the first night in Canada before the provincial parks of Manitoba close for the season.

That involves a 6 AM boat ride on Thursday, August 28 from the Sportsman's Resort in Wheeler's Point Minnesota with an hour and a half cruise on a 30 foot boat across the Lake of the Woods. That gives us the rest of the day on Thursday to mount the solar panels on the trikes, and load them up with gear so both trikes are ready for departure early the next morning.

Why choose this time of year to take off on a 3,500 mile journey? Good question. Here are some of the considerations.

Moving north to south should afford the best daytime and night temperatures and then gradually moving southward, I will move towards warmer and warmer weather. Actually my hope is to keep it optimally in the 50s 60s and 70s all the way down to Florida by mid November such that I won't have any extreme cold or hot temperatures.

By the end of the first full week of October I should be half way, and well into Kentucky. It's likely that I'll miss much of the color changes that fall brings. For the first time in my life, except for four years living in Phoenix, Arizona, I will not experience the full color changes of fall in the eastern deciduous forest.

When arriving in Florida in November the hope is that the worst of the hurricane season will be over. By choosing a route through the interior of Florida my hope is to lessen hurricane impact even more.

When I purchased the "used" solar trike way back in January I selected Sept 1 as my target date and I kept that time frame to myself except for sharing with Michele. From the beginning early on the idea of dedicating the journey to a climate and green theme was definite. When the Catholic Climate Covenant announced intentions to support pilgrimages across the US from Sept.1 to Oct.4 to mark the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si it seemed very providential that the dates lined up with my adventure. It confirmed for me that this was the time, the right time for the green journey.

Day 1 - Fri, Aug. 29, 2025 - 40 km (25 mi) Northwest Angle, MN, USA to Moose Lake, Manitoba, Canada

We rolled off this morning at 8:15 AM from Youngs Bay resort at angle inlet.

Splendid weather with temperatures around 70° with just a light breeze. Our route today was on gravel roads. The gravel is normally very smooth because they mix calcium chloride with the gravel and it's almost like a paved road. Sure enough they decided this week to pour more gravel and re-grade. It was not too bad, It did slow us down and was certainly not like riding on a paved path or road. There were many wildflowers along the edge, and sightings of deer crossing the road.

We had to check in with the Canadian government by phone with our passport numbers and other details about our trip including the make and model of our "vehicles" Steintrike Wild Ones.

Once into Canada, some big trucks blew up a storm of dust which settled on our solar panels which are now caked with dust. They are still very functional and charging up our batteries to be ready for tomorrow to assist the ride.

We kept our speed down to 10 miles an hour, and I only used level 1 of 5 assist levels. I was needing to constantly pedal but very enjoyable and easy on the legs today.

The original start date was September 1 so I feel like we are getting a head start. The decision to start early mainly was to have this opportunity to camp at Moose Lake. Camping up here ends on September 1, and this is the last weekend with checkout only on Saturdays.

All in all, it was a very good first day for the green journey.

Day 2 - Sat, Aug. 30, 2025 - 72 km (44 mi) Moose Lake, Manitoba, Canada to Warroad, MN

It was another beautiful day, plenty of sunshine and a high of 28 C, that is about 83°F in the afternoon. We departed Moose Lake at 8:30 and had paved roads and even our first paved trail for a couple miles into Warroad. We were able to pick up the pace a bit today between 15 and 18 miles an hour on highway stretches. That's with hauling a ton of gear and some assist, thanks to the solar powered batteries.

We made stops every 10 miles or so including a grocery in Sprague Manitoba and the US border checkpoint.

We made it into town about 2:30, in time for the last five minutes of the Ohio State vs. Texas football game. We found the Nomad Tavern, ordered a couple beers and a veggie calzone. Warroad is known as Hockeytown USA for its rich hockey history. But walking into this bar, you would think it was a soccer town with all kinds of international soccer paraphernalia on the walls.

We are camping tonight in the Warroad city campground with hundreds of sites both for RVs and tent campers. I am so glad they do not discriminate against tent camping, which unfortunately is the case in many RV parks and resorts. Warroad appears to be a nice little town, with a lotta boats and a lot of fishing.

Day 3 - Sun, Aug. 31, 2025 - 73 km (45 mi) Warroad to Baudette, MN

Nearly identical day in terms of mileage and temperatures, but very different in the flow of the day after breaking camp, we gleaned apples from the campground, orchard and then traveled to St. Mary's Catholic Church for Sunday mass. The theme of the readings and homily was humility, which is always a good reminder. We further hit the jackpot as it was Donut Sunday.

One fellow on the way out of mass asked if we were the owners of the solar trikes in the parking lot and he invited us to sit down with his wife, two daughters and parents in law we shared about the green journey. And he explained that he was an electrical engineer from Saint Paul, MN and consultant on large grid level solar projects throughout the United States, including one 800 megawatt array covering three counties in the state of Texas, enough solar powered for 150,000 homes. Right there on the spot, without consulting his wife he offered to be a warm showers host as I travel through Saint Paul in about a week.

As we walked out to the church parking lot, we found some Trail Angel slipped us two \$20 bills, one on my seat and one inside Michele's helmet. So we were doubly blessed!

The ride today only involved two turns, once left and once right with long stretches of 10 or more miles at a time traveling through wheat farms mixed with forested areas and a few lakes.

And like most days, there were the usual number of unique and unusual sights to see that you only tend to find when you're going between 10 and 20 miles an hour.

We picked up the van again near Baudette so this was the last riding day for Michele. This was one of her longer multi day rides in recent memory.

Michele will sag support the next day to Big Bog State Park. Tomorrow's route is about 50 miles with nothing but a big peat bog on either side of the road and no villages or stops along the way. It should be a very beautiful contemplative trike ride.

Day 4 - Mon, Sept. 1, 2025 Labor Day - 70 km (43 mi) Baudette to Big Bog State Recreation Area, MN

Another beautiful day, very nice temperatures, slight breeze, sunny conditions, no rain until expected later after midnight. I may have exaggerated about the distance to travel today through the peat bog. It was more like 20 miles on route 72 to Waskish MN. Earlier in the day I took a side county road through farmland and forests of aspen and encountered only three other vehicles of any sort in about 20 miles of cycling.

Came across a historical marker for a pioneering family of "Ole" & Elise Hansen, who homesteaded in this territory in 1907. A big forest fire burned their home but his family persevered and built again.

To save readers a search for a definition of a peat bog, here it is: A peat bog is a type of wetland ecosystem characterized by spongy, waterlogged ground where plant matter, mostly Sphagnum mosses, decomposes very slowly due to acidic and oxygen-poor conditions, forming thick layers of peat. These acidic, nutrient-poor environments are saturated with water from precipitation, and they support unique, adapted plants and act as significant carbon sinks, preventing flood risks and filtering water.

I pulled into Big Bog state recreation area about 2:15, which has camping where Michele and I will stay for one more night together. Before dinner, Michele climbed to the top of the big bog fire tower, I just watched, too pooped to make it to the top. We took a little hike around Ludlow Pond, which had a large beaver lodge at one end. And then we waded into Red Lake, the largest lake in Minnesota, and perhaps one of the most shallow, with a nice sandy bottom, probably once a favorable place for a wild rice to grow.

And right at this moment, enjoying a Leinenkugel Summer Shandy with my honey, and snacking on sesame sticks.

Tomorrow may turn out to be a big day with a longer distance than the 43 or 44 miles that I've been doing consistently the last three days. I may get over 100 km into Bemidji, MN as I enter the Paul Bunyan Trail at Black Duck MN. Two highlight attractions for tomorrow are Paul Bunyan's grave in Keliher, MN and the world's largest black duck, in guess where...

Day 5 - Tues, Sept. 2, 2025 - 97 km (60 mi) Big Bog State Recreation Area to Lake Bemidji State Park, MN

AM Weather: cool 50°

Dep Time: 8 AM

Noon Weather: starting to get overcast and cloudy

Arr Time: 430

Evening Weather: starting to chill, wind is picking up and sprinkling of rain

My goal today was to get to Lake Bemidji State Park. I did along the way find the grave of Paul Bunyan in the Kelliher City Park. It was a beautiful gravesite. I almost expected two large mounds at the end of the rectangular mound covering his grave to accommodate his big boots. I'm just a little suspicious that maybe the grave could be doubling as a septic system drainfield for the park. Kelliher also had some cool agricultural implement sculptures welded by I'm guessing local artists. I always enjoy seeing folk art when traveling.

There was more highway riding on route 72, with not much of a shoulder. Most motorists have been considerate and slow before passing. In the town of Black Duck, passed the high school ball fields, the home of the "Drakes". I pulled over in the center of town to have lunch at the Hungry Duck. Nearby at the corner was the original largest black duck in the world. I spread out my solar panels and harvested a bit of energy to power up my trike batteries while I dined on a vegetable omelette since they were still cooking breakfast at 1:30 in the afternoon. I finished the meal with bread pudding and ice cream. Yum.

On the last 20+ miles into the state park I was on Highway 71 with a nice 10 foot shoulder protected by a rumble strip. So cars and trucks could proceed at their pace and I was fine at mine on the side.

I picked the first campsite in the campground and set up camp with my hammock and rain fly attached to my trike which I had covered with tarps. I may end up spending two nights here.

Today's theme was about tires. From tire shreds along the highway to the worn bike tires that are only a few hundred miles old. The weight of the solar rig and the gravel road on which we traveled for 25 mi. the first day have done a number on these tires. I have spare tires and tubes, however I decided to call Amerityre out in Boulder City, Nevada to order 2 solid 20 inch tires for the front of the trike. They will be shipped and delivered to the local bike shop hopefully tomorrow in Bemidji. I've had good success with these kind of solid tires before. The suspension on my trike will take care of the slightly harder ride. I think the solid tires will wear much longer.

Amerityre has a compelling argument that solid tires are very environmentally friendly in contrast to pneumatic tube tires that we are so familiar with. Here is the link to their website: <https://amerityre.com/environmental-advantage/>

Whereas car tires can last 50k to 75,000 miles, I discovered from a restaurant patron today who had questions about my ride that he's ridden motorcycles and he finds they only last from 5k to 10,000 miles and bicycles should last at least 1000 to sometimes 5000 miles, depending on how they are ridden. That's much longer than the two or 300 miles I've gotten on these.

The previous owner of this trike had filled the tires with a green slime that protects from punctures, but does nothing to preserve the tread and they are a mess to change.

So I will hang around the camp and visitor center tomorrow while the forecasted rain in the morning passes through.

I have intended to take one day a week as a green Sabbath, off the trike. Some call this a zero day, or a rest day. Rather than specify a particular day of the week like Saturday or Sunday for a Sabbath I may just take them as they come for whatever reason.

Day 6 - Weds, Sept. 3, 2025 - 71 km (44 mi) Lake Bemidji State Park to Leech Lake, MN

As the morning started, I loafed around the park visiting the lakefront and spending time in the visitor center just biding time until I could see if the trike tires had come in. I was surprised to get the call at 11:00 that they had arrived already. I quickly broke down camp and headed out just as the rain was starting. I cycled on a detour, just north of the Paul Bunyan Trail through Lake Bemidji Park. The detour was caused by downed trees from a blow down wind storm in June with wind speeds of 130 mph.

It was close to 8 miles to get into town. Alex and Jeff at Northern Cycles did a wonderful job getting the solid rubber tires installed on the front of the stein trike.

I had lunch nearby at the Cork & Keg Irish Tavern. One special of the day was Hungarian mushroom soup, and I could not pass up the beaver droppings, which were actually jalapeño poppers. While eating I was able to line up a warm shower's host for the evening, Martin and Jennifer, who live near the banks of Leech Lake not very far from the Paul Bunyan Trail.

I arrived a few hours later by 7 o'clock and immediately knew that I would feel at home with an Ohio star" pattern mounted on the house. They had a second separate garage where I could bring the trike and trailer inside and dry out my tarps. Jennifer and Marty

actually had another warm showers guest fellow name Anson from Boston on his own cross country journey going west. We had a wonderful meal - tomato and bean salad, pasta, hummus, and vegetables. It was the best meal I've had this week, 10 of 10.

Anson shared tips on his travel by cycle throughout the US as a budding hip hop artist. I learned that Jennifer was on the soil and water conservation board for Cass County. She shared how they are doing projects throughout the county to preserve wetlands.

We all agreed to be up around 6:30 AM in the morning and we'll head our separate ways.

Day 7 - Thurs, Sept. 4, 2025 - 68 km (42 mi) Leech Lake to Pequot Lake, MN

AM Weather: chili in the 40s and 50s

Dep: Marty and Jennifer's house

Dep Time: 830

Noon Weather: cold 48°

Arr: Pequot Lakes

Arr Time: 1 o'clock

Road Time: three hours and 15 minutes

Was up by 6:30. Jennifer had many breakfast options for us, and even accommodated one load of laundry. Took a quick tour and some photos of their backyard raised garden beds tree plantings The tomatoes, carrots, cucumbers for last night's dinner we're all fresh from the backyard garden. She shared some crab apple butter this morning, which I had never tried before, and it was excellent. I did not know that butter or jelly could be made from crab apples.

Well, my streak of six days fully utilizing solar to assist the trike came to an end due to overcast and rainy conditions the last couple days. So I did charge up here at the house of my "warm showers" hosts. You could say that between 4 and 10% of the battery power did come from solar because that's the percentage of solar electric in Minnesota.

With rain projected all afternoon and evening. I figured I must better make good time this morning so I covered 67 km or 42 miles by 1:30. The trail was newly paved between the towns of Hackensack and Backus. After that it was a little more uneven at the expansion joints every 30 feet over the last portion of the ride, but still very enjoyable being off the road traveling through the Chippewa National Forest. I saw small lakes, a beaver lodge and trees and trees of all sorts, mostly white birch.

I came upon a major intersection of sorts where the Paul Bunyan Trail cross the North Country Trail. The North Country Trail is one of the nations longest hiking trails. During the day on other parts of the trail, I saw a few groups of cyclists, a few dog walkers, but there was no one probably for a mile either way in sight of the intersection of the hiking and biking trails as I passed through.

I should mention something about land acknowledgment. Much of this part of Minnesota once was occupied by the Ojibwa. In fact yesterday, I passed through tribal lands of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwa.

I am trying to camp as much as possible, but today was going to be tough with the cold rain. Furthermore camping availability for tonight was a ways off the trail and the one warm showers host in this area was not available for, so I tried two motels in Pine River, but they were not open. I pushed on to Pequot Lakes and checked in at the Americinn.

I asked to park my solar trike under the hotel awning. The hotel maintenance staff was summoned to grant approval for the parking. Jason came out and was very interested in the solar trike, and then gave me a tour of the back of the hotel covered in solar panels. He was very proud that much of the hotel energy needs are satisfied by this solar array, and that any surplus is sold back to the utility company. So I did bring two e assist trike batteries into the room with me to recharge, and I am happy to say that they were charged with solar power.

A fellow named John Vaughan, approached me at the entrance of the hotel, and had questions about the solar trike, which naturally begs curiosity from anyone that sees it. He was curious about my adventure. I mentioned it being part of the Catholic Climate Covenant pilgrimage of Hope. John's work is as the managing director of community and economic development for a 501c3 charitable organization, called Fresh Energy. His business card pictures a solar array, and modern windmills with the caption "bold policy for a just, carbon free future."

I lamented the loss of federal support for alternative energy development, but one interesting thing he shared is that the state of Minnesota actually provides more support than ever before (including what was lost from the federal government) for solar and wind projects, so things are very hopeful for Minnesota, particularly in communities of color and the indigenous.

So any regrets about checking into a hotel and not camping were wiped away as I learned a lot about alternative energy today and now I am more hopeful.

Day 8 - Fri, Sept. 5, 2025 - 103 km (64 mi) Pequot Lakes Charles Lindbergh State Park, MN

AM Weather: cold morning

Dep Time: 745

Arr: Charles Lindbergh State Park

Arr Time: 6 o'clock

Pass through some nice railroad towns often with a long city green space in the middle of town where the railroad depot used to or still sometimes stands. The first village I passed was Pequot Lakes. They had an avenue of the 50 US flags which was impressive. In the town of Nisswa. I saw signs that it is home of the annual turtle races.

I passed through about a mile swath of land that apparently had been hit with a wind storm toppling many trees, and now loggers were coming in to clean up the wood. Brainerd is a big town. I came to the edge but passed on entering the downtown the saving me about 5 miles and maybe a half an hour or hour or more. presuming I would've stopped to explore and would've lunch. This made it possible to get to my destination for tonight the Charles Lindbergh State Park to camp overnight.

After passing by Brainerd, the Paul Bunyan Trail changes from a rails to trails path that is fairly straight ahead trail to a curvy up and down trail along the Mississippi river. The Paul Bunyan Trail ends at a rest stop in the middle of route 371 divided highway. I took photos once more of a larger than life Paul Bunyan statue, a quick lunch of items I had carried with me, checked my solar production, not so great with cloudy skies again today.

The only way to head south at this point was to get on the freeway with a large 10 foot shoulder and every once in a while was the opportunity to ride on a service road parallel to the freeway. Beyond the freeway I passed through camp Reilley I had heard there was a fantastic lodging there for just \$35. I called and it is only open to current and former military staff and their families there is a national cemetery there for veterans.

Before passing through Little Falls was a historic Catholic Church one of the first in the area. I wandered around the grounds and spent time in the church.

Around dinner time I passed through the downtown of Little Falls where vendors were setting up for blocks and blocks, preparing for a craft fair to begin on Saturday. I was disappointed that the food vendors, including a cheese curd wagon we're not open yet for business.

I pulled into the state park around 6 pm and now have a pretty good routine for setting up camp, having dinner, showering, and then hitting the hay in my little Haven hammock. It is supposed to dip to 41° tonight so I will sleep with layers to be prepared for the cold sleeping conditions.

Tomorrow I head to Collegeville, Minnesota, and St. John University where I will stay at a guest house with the hope of participating in mass with the Benedictines and seeing the St. John Bible, the last great hand-written, hand-illuminated Bible completed and blessed in 1998.

stopped for restroom break in Nisswa home with the turtle races, will have to check that out later my pilgrim thoughts this morning reflections contemplative thoughts were about speed and what is the attraction to speed. Why do people race cars enjoy roller coasters is it about the adrenaline or just the sense of feeling alive And the other thought was time measuring time in days like Don Cleaver's clock? I would like to get one of those clocks saw a tour group getting ready to start now being passed by members of the group. I wonder what they paid to do a ride in Minnesota I'm guessing between two and \$4000 for a week. I'm wondering if I've spending that much money on my little solo tour having some challenges keeping my front solar panel straight it seems to be knocking out of kilter with the jolt of every expansion joint. Every 10 yards I think is what's contributing to the problem wondering if I'm getting solar power right now

Day 9 - Sat, Sept. 6, 2025 - 69 km (43 mi) Little Falls to St. John's, Abby Collegeville, MN

AM Weather: 41° at 7 AM

Dep: Charles Lindberg State Park

Dep Time: 730

Noon Weather: raining

Arr: St. John Abbey

Arr Time: 5:00

I weathered the night in my hammock with the temperature dipping to the low 40s and woke by 6 AM. My day riding paused just 10 meters from my campsite with a stop to adjust the seat of the trike. With the weight of the solar panel mast attached to the seat plus my weight the bolts attaching the seat to the frame had come loose and needed to be tightened. Once everything was solid again I was off down the Great River Road on the west side of the Mississippi. Every once in a while, I got a glimpse of the river from the road.

The next trail I would begin to explore this day is the "Wobegon Trail". From AI - Wobegon refers to the fictional town of Lake Wobegon, a creation of humorist Garrison Keillor that served as the setting for his weekly radio broadcast segment "News from Lake Wobegon" on NPR and the basis for his book Lake Wobegon Days. The town's name may come from an Ojibwe word meaning "the place where we waited all day for you in the rain" or may allude to the English word "woebegone". The town's inhabitants and features are described by the famous line: "all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average"

So this AI description of Wobegon is very fitting as you might, guess this day was anything but woes be gone. I don't often share some of the normal challenges one might encounter during an expedition like this. flat tires, mechanical issues, aches and pains, the wind, occasional rain, unseasonably cold temperatures, but when all of these challenges occur in the same day, then you got to find humor in it, or you might lose hope.

So not a half mile into the "Wobegon Trail" I paused to take a picture and suddenly realized the back tire was flat. That tire is the most challenging to change as it has the derailleur to contend with, and you have to take all the panniers off to get to it. This occurred right next to a field where the farmer had spread fresh manure so besides the "dairy air" odor there were more than ordinary number of flies around covering my bags and solar panels while I worked on changing the tire. During the course of the tire change, there were three pop-up rain showers that halted work while I covered the panels and generator.

Ok so back on the trail again I passed through the towns of Holdingford and Albany, where I wish I'd had more time to stop for lunch and see the sites, but I wanted to arrive at St. John Abby by dinner time so I just took photos along the way they all have a story in their own.

One chance encounter was seeing a newly married couple, taking photos inside the historic Holdingford covered bridge. As I snapped the photo, the bride looked like she was pregnant, but she was just gathering up her dress so it would not get wet or dirty from the passing cyclists like me.

As I was approaching St. John Abby, my second battery was just about to expire, but I pushed on up the last big hill to cross over I 94 on a pedestrian bridge. I lost all power going up the hill and I was stuck dragging the 200 pound solar assist trike rig up the crest of the hill for about 50 yards.

To add to the challenges when I arrived at St. John Abby guest house they had not received my registration submission, which I had proof had been submitted online. Father Cyril the guest master kindly explained that there was no room, that all 10 guest rooms were reserved. At first, the suggestion was that I ride another 5 miles and stay in a motel, but miraculously a room was found inside the cloistered area for monk guests. I had a wonderful meal and joined about 30 monks and guests for evening prayer.

After evening prayer, I retreated to my guest room and fell asleep all woes set aside.

Day 10 - Sun, Sept. 7, 2025 Feast of St. Cloud, and Grandparents Day - 53 km (33 mi) St. John Abbey to south of Clearlake, MN

AM Weather: 4° at sunrise, which is 39° so I slept in a bit till seven then had breakfast over at the guest house

Arr: John Schlegel's warm showers host home

Arr Time: 5 o'clock

Since the a.m. outdoor temperature was 4° C or 39°F it was a luxury to be indoors and sleep until seven and make my way to the guest house for a hearty breakfast. Prior to mass at 10:30 I hiked through the Arboretum grounds of St. John Abbey along Lake Sagatagan and then sat in the library and leafed through the six volumes of the St. John Bible smaller coffee table top editions. Unfortunately, the museum with the large original manuscripts is closed on Sunday.

I treated the books as if they were picture books and focused only on the pictures, since of course it would take more than a year for me to read the whole Bible. I was particularly struck by the use of insects in the margins of the Bible.

All through the morning I had my extra pair of solar panels out and by midday I had nearly replenished the full Jackery generator battery.

I did bring two of the trike batteries into my guestroom for recharging. I checked and yes, St. John's University uses solar power through a large solar farm that was built in phases starting in 2009. The solar farm, on St. John's Abbey land, provides electricity to the campus and serves as an educational tool for environmental studies, allowing students to compare different solar technologies. It was one of the first major solar projects in Minnesota and has been expanded multiple times, contributing to the university's and the Abbey's commitment to environmental stewardship and carbon neutrality.

At mass young Fr. Nick shared about the Jubilee of Hope and a walking pilgrimage that was held on the campus yesterday, just hours before I arrived. He noted the fact today is grandparents day and the feast of St. Cloud. I would be later passing through St. Cloud, which is the seat of the diocese. Earlier in the morning during my own reflection, I found on Matthew Kelly's website the saint of the day is St. Cloud for Sept 7 and the theme of St. Cloud's life was "do not worry." And here was the text of Matthew Kelly's reflection, seeming like it was pointing directly at me.

"Take a moment to review your day yesterday. Or, if you are reading this in the evening, review today. What did you worry about most during the day?

Whatever it is, Jesus has the same answer: "Do not worry." (Matthew 6:25)

Saint Cloud had a lot of reasons to worry during his 38-year stint on this earth, but he learned to turn those worries into prayer."

There is certainly plenty of time for prayer as my mind wanders and I quietly meander on the trails each day.

I have plenty of pictures and so many stories to go with them.

Day 11 - Mon, Sept. 8, 2025 - 115 km (71 mi) Clearwater to Saint Paul, MN

So today I did a metric century, and cycled my age with 67+ miles.

While my Warmshowers host Paul was still away at work He was a wonderful host trusting me in his home for the night. As I left around 7:30 am, I picked few apples from the selection of fallen ones a weight and that I wasn't on the scale so I moved the trike backward in but

I realize all the way since Bemidji I've been following the Mississippi River Trail noted by some attractive signs with the initials MRT and the outline of a bicycle. The outline of a bicycle.

The highlight of the day was coming close to Lake Itasca and entering into a wetland area where I was completely surrounded by tall wetland plants and a small stream passing under the boardwalk. This is Lake Itasca just thirty north of Minneapolis, not the one associated with Itasca State Park, where the headwaters of the Mississippi begin.

Could not find a restaurant when I needed one and was faced with detour on the route so I stopped sometime between noon and one pulled over to a Casey's to figure out things and take a break. Of course Casey's is mostly geared towards the motorist. It is challenged to find nutritious food at convenience stores.

I found some trail mix, ordered a slice of cheese pizza, and some cheddar filled tater tots. I found a spot out of the way in the back of the Casey's lot to settle down for a couple hours for a siesta and a chance to recharge the batteries with the sun that peaked out once in a while from the clouds.

The couple we met up in Ward, Minnesota Josh and Abby Hill were still open to hosting me at their house in Saint Paul so that was my destination. Josh sent me a ride with GPS route to get me from downtown waterworks park in Minneapolis to his home in St. Paul about 12 km away. By that point I had already reached my maximum solar trike record distance of 103 km, so what is 12 more? I was running out of juice and cut it right to the last battery charge. I made it to their house by sundown. They had pasta and broccoli ready for me when I arrived and Abby was kind enough to go out for a soft serve ice cream cone at the neighboring Dairy Dream before it closed at 8:30. Their daughters, Ann Marie and Margot were all already to bed after their first day of school. We talked to bed and then I retired to my bedroom next to the laundry and there was space to charge batteries.

Though Josh is a solar energy consultant, he does not yet have solar on his home, so I did have to rely on regular electric electricity perhaps generated by the nuclear power plant I passed by earlier in the day.

Day 12 - Tues. Sept 9

I hesitate to call this a zero day, because it was anything but zero. Spent the morning doing a little solar cycle maintenance, and some test drives to ensure the whole rig is still roadworthy had some phone assistance with trike mechanic Joe Allen from Fairfield Cyclery. I can hardly call it a rest day or Sabbath either. I ventured out and probably walked close to 5 miles as I circled Lake Como and visited the Como Park zoo and conservatory during a light rain for much of the afternoon.

Yesterday was my longest day so far and with rain in the forecast today, I thought it was good to just take a day off from cycling.

Abbey and Josh prepared maple syrup drizzled, brussels sprouts and salmon for dinner. And I treated the family to soft serve ice cream cones from Connie's just a half a block from the Hills house.

It's fun watching Josh and Abbey take care of their two daughters. It reminds me of our grandkids Camden, Hailey, Ella and soon to be on the planet baby Audrey.

Thankful that the Hills welcomed me to stay an additional day. I shared with them the old Ben Franklin adage, that visitors and fish begin to smell after three days. So after just two days I shall be taking leave tomorrow morning early heading for Wisconsin!

Day 13 & 14 - Weds & Thurs, Sept. 10 & 11, 2025 - 76 km (47 mi) Saint Paul, MN to Prescott, WI

I said farewell to the Hill family just prior to the girls being taken to school around 7:30. Josh prepared for me a route to ride with a GPS route that took me through downtown Saint Paul, and then connected with my original route on the south side of the Mississippi River. I was on trails most of the day.

Morning temperatures were comfortable in the 60's and it was cloudy. While traveling through downtown Saint Paul on bike lanes I passed the state capital where there were hundreds of police officers and their squad cars parked nearby. There must have been some type of breakfast event in honor of police officers.

The trails and scenery south of Saint Paul were beautiful. I was not lucky enough to see the bison that live in the Spring Lake Reserve Park along the Mississippi Greenway. The Ravine Bridge view looking down upon an evergreen little micro climate of wetland plants that stay green year-round even during winter snows was incredible.

One unexpected attraction was a sculpture park of figures made from scrap metal by an artist named Dale Lewis. I took pictures of each of the items and the most fascinating probably was the flying pig on the Wright flyer. Since 2010, Dale has created nearly 150 large-scale sculptures from scrap metal and found objects at his home workshop in Hastings, MN.

Arrangements were made to meet in Hastings MN with Denny and Cindy Marach, good friends from Menominee Wisconsin. Just as I rode into town, they pulled up to the same intersection in perfect timing. We had lunch at the log and dam restaurant sitting outside viewing the Mississippi river and the bridge that crosses it that I would later after lunch cross myself.

Once crossing the Mississippi, and then the St. Croix River into Prescott, my route turned to the Great River Road. This meant riding on the shoulder of a road and no more railroad grades of 4% or less the geography changed along the river as the road goes up and down the bluffs. After about 6 miles I started up about a 1 mile incline and my e-assist began to fail and I got error messages. I struggled to drag the rig of 260 pounds up the hill for a couple tenths of a mile, but then gave up at an intersection with a dead end road. I cached all my heavy items wrapped them up in a tarp next to the road with hopes of getting my gear lifted to the top and then tried to ride the trike with less weight. Found out it didn't matter, weight or not. The assist was out.

I called good friend Don Cleaver from Menominee, Wisconsin and he agreed to come over from Menominee about 45 minutes away and pick me up in his truck. We got all the gear in the backseat of the truck in the trike and trailer in the bed and made it to his house around 9 PM.

After spending the morning doing diagnostics on the trike, changing out a spoke on the back tire, spending time on the phone with Joe Allen, trike mechanic from Fairfield Cyclery and Electric Bike Outfitters in Denver, a decision was made to take the trike to Stevens

Point 2 1/2 hours away to the Hostel Shoppe, what I would consider the Mecca of recumbent trikes in the country. Don loaned me the truck to drive to Stevens Point. Chris at the hostel shop moved my case to priority as a touring cyclist coming through, even though they have a backlog of three weeks of trike work. I have purchased items online from the shoppe before so they had me in the system. The repair of my trike will involve overnighting a new back hub and wheel to replace the damaged part. So I get to stay in Stevens point overnight.

It is likely that the heavy load that I'm pulling may have stressed the E assist system. So I may review my route and try to avoid any more long hills. My intent has always been to use as many rail trails as possible and avoid roads, but sometimes that is very difficult to connect all the trails.

One option when I return to Menomonie, I can travel down the Red Cedar Trail and the Chippewa River Trail to connect with the Mississippi. We used to ride, walk, and ski these trails when we lived in Menomonie from 1990 through 1999.

So tonight, I'm hanging out at an "economical" hotel, at \$61 a night room and tax included. So today I drove a car and watching TV for the first time in over a week. My favorite football team the Green Bay Packers are on tonight. Sort of reminiscent of the cycling pilgrimage on the Camino where pilgrims would gather in a local tavern to watch World Cup football.

If all goes well tomorrow, then it looks like Saturday I can get back on the Green Journey.

"It is impossible for you to go on as you were before, so you must go on as you never have." – **CHERYL STRAYED**

Day 16 - Sat, Sept. 13, 2025 - 102 km (63 mi) Menomonie to Merrick State Park, WI on the Mississippi

AM Weather: 60s, pleasant

Dep Time: 8 o'clock

Noon Weather: 80s, warm

Arr Time: 6:15 PM

Back on the road again! I wouldn't say it's an everyday occurrence, but it's common to encounter obstacles along the trail or detours along the road. Today I had both. Out of Menomonie on the Red Cedar Trail I had to remove dead and live tree branches covering the trail to get my trike through. The dirt trail was just enough wet from the night before to scatter mud all over my trike and trailer.

The Red Cedar Trail merged with the Chippewa River Trail as the two rivers meet north of Durand Wisconsin. The Chippewa Trail is paved. I purchased a few quick lunch items at the Durand market and then moved to highway cycling for the rest of the day, another 70 km on route 25 and 35 along the Mississippi river.

I was warned by Sue the park attendant at Merrick State Park that I would encounter a road construction that would mean either a detour up a tall hill paid Buena Vista or try to squeeze by the road construction site. She was confident that I could get by the construction. It took me about a half an hour of preparing a path through the worksite by moving pipes, pallets, steel drain cover covers, and a lot of sand and rocks. When I came out, a young fellow was having a beer, watching me from the balcony of his home. I asked if he was enjoying that beer while watching me work so hard. He said yes and then asked if I would like one. I said yes and so Will and his friend Mason and I had a beer. I answered their questions about the trike journey. They gave me tips about towns along the road ahead.

Two enormous energy related facilities were along my route today. One was a big coal fired power plant with a mountain of coal probably 100 yards long and 40 yards high. Mason and Will told me that trains passed in front of their house every hour throughout the day, many of them delivering coal to the power plant.

Not 10 miles further down the road next to farmland were solar arrays covering acres, and acres of land.

I'm lying in my hammock now close to 11 doing combat with mosquitoes that managed to sneak in my hammock netting. Today I found about 100 new unused earplugs along the road that had fallen out of someone's car. Those are coming in handy now to help slightly muffle the noise of young camping neighbors.

On the same throughout the Mississippi River Trail, J Peter Bay former winner of the Iditarod challenge and the tour to divide. I'm hoping to meet up with him if he passes me thinking what I would say to encourage him to stop, and then I could shake his hand.

This is crazy, divine, inspired, how God speaks with me moment in this adventure. This morning, I woke up in a dingy motel in Stevens Point knowing I would be waiting to find out if a new electric motor hub arrives at the Hostel Shoppe for my trike. I went online to find out things to do in Stevens Point. One of the first things that popped up was an outdoor sculpture park that's part of the "Green Circle" of trails that surround Stevens Point. I love visiting sculpture parks outdoor ones like Pyramid Hill near Hamilton, Ohio, and others our family has visited through the years.

So I drive Don's truck over to the sculpture park and I'm blown away by the pieces that have a message for me or connect deeply with my Green Journey. This absolutely was not on my planned route, or anything remotely on my radar.

The most remarkable one is a giant Leopold bench just like the ones I've made from scrap wood over the past few years. It carries a quote about conservation from Aldo Leopold.

There are a series of road signs with messages that you'll never see on a highway. Like Meander or Yield...

So I will let the photos of the sculpture tell their story. This will be my post for today, Friday, September 12. Trip day, 15.

Day 17 - Sun, Sept. 14, 2025 - 116 km (72 mi) Merrick State Park to Sparta, WI

As I departed this morning Merrick State Park it was clear there were areas of prescribed burn where the vegetation had been burned off, intentionally probably by Wisconsin State Park staff later on while traveling through the Trempealeau national wildlife refuge was an exhibit speaking about the importance of fire in ecosystems.

Speaking of fire, I've made it an intention on this trip to use solar power to cook. I have a small "Joule" brand kettle pot that will heat up a cup of water in just a few minutes and I find that's really all I need for camp meals in this way. I don't need to have a campfire to cook. I will agree if I can be a mesmerizing, integral part of the camping experience. Cooking something quickly and then walking around with the meal in my hands like a walking taco is more relaxing for me after a ride sitting down all day. Sometimes I just like walking.

Was on Crushed gravel path, in places sometimes like a two lane country path. And I was on brief sections of paved trail and half the day street riding due to detour.

Believe that someone set a fire to one of the wooden boardwalk bridges on the great river state trail, this causes writers to detour around, probably as much as 25 miles. Very disappointing.

Got some cool shots of the sunset directly behind me as I really extended the day to make it to Sparta. This was my longest trip to date by a kilometer or two. I passed up camping out outside of Onalaska and a motel in West Salem to make it to Sparta, one trailhead for the Elroy Sparta Trail. This will put me in good position to see Don at the first tunnel on the Elroy Sparta Trail sometime tomorrow afternoon.

A super eight hotel driveway was short but at a steep incline. So I had to circle around in the cheese shop parking lot across the street a couple times to have enough speed and make sure traffic was calm in either directions before I speed it across with enough momentum to get up the hill so I gave it my best shot And I almost made the crest of the driveway to get into the parking lot when my E assist could not boot me any further I was stuck I could not go forward. It could not go backwards two ladies working at the hotel or walking in the parking lot and I asked them each to grab a pedal and they pulled me up the last 5 feet of the driveway. They were my trail angels for the day.

A Wisconsinite cyclist named Dave arrived the same time I did after a 56 mile ride from Reidsburg to Sparta. He bought the both of us beers and I reciprocated and both being of the same vintage we had some things in common besides our interest in cycling and age. David's been an educator around the world at international schools. He lost his wife to Alzheimer's several years ago. He still enjoys cycling, but still teaches three days a week special needs high school students.

He shared that some years ago he had formed an environmental caucus in the state of Wisconsin that still exists today to provide environmental information to legislators. I shared that it was the inspiration of Gaylord Nelson, a legislator from Wisconsin who helped found Earth Day back in the early 70s that inspired my interest in protecting the environment.

Random PILGRIM thoughts while riding make signs or sculpture for the Dayton connector Trail utilize all the crazy signs like me under yield find more online.

How many of them made smaller size 12 x 12 that could be sold as part of a friend of the Franklin area human powered and recumbent trike society

Make little wood grotto's for all the different stations of the cross.
This Stein strike up as a museum piece at Fairfield Cyclery.
Make a flag a green flag with the logo on it.

Have it ready to be taken on the rest of the trip?

Try to put the state flag on.

Make a list of all of the Trail signs of all the trails that I did on this trip.

All the crazy disaster things like losing the bag.
Forgetting or having the connections for the solar not be connected for extended hours
Make collection of wild one baseball card sleeves.

Go back up one line.

Different themes for different days today would be fire prescribed fire no fires at my campsite no matches no fuel no burners just a kettle pot to make meals.

All the other ours, repurpose, reuse, resist, refuse, recycle, restore, renew

Day 18 - Mon, Sept. 15, 2025 - 97 km (62 mi) Sparta to Reedsburg, WI

Today was a very enjoyable cycling day. Sparta claims to be the bicycle capital of America so I began at the train depot. Most of these trail towns still have a depot that is now a chamber or tourist office plus cycling services – restroom, water, sometimes historical panels, gift store, bike rentals. One little town today, even had showers at the depot.

Sparta has one of the largest cycling themed statues in the country. Known as “Biken Ben” he probably stands 20 or 30 feet tall.

The trail is crushed limestone and even though there may be grass between the north and south lanes it is usually very flat so I was able to keep between a 10 and 14 mph speed for most part of the day.

The Elroy Sparta trail is one of the Early rail trails created back in the night teen 70s and 80s. One highlight was meeting Don Cleaver at the tunnel, Trail Campground and then hiking down to Tunnel number 1 where his grandfather George Durkee was a watchman for the tunnel back when trains still travel the rails. Watchmen like George would flag trains to enter the tunnel or not and make sure in cold weather that the big doors 15 feet or more high at each entrance of the tunnel was closed to keep warmer air in the tunnel and prevent icing during the winter.

It seems every day I meet an interesting character. Today it was Mack, an 80 year-old who likes to ride his mountain bike with E assist. Mack is wearing a camouflage pocketed shirt and a hardshell hat. He had a lot of questions about the solar express and was helpful with taking pictures. He's a local cyclist who travels on all the area trails. He was a horticulturist by trade and he pointed out the names of plants along the trail as I rode with him for a couple miles.

The Old 400 state Trail from Elroy ended at Reedsburg. I passed through a little “Harvester” park where an old retired John Deere harvester had been fitted with stained glass windows that were lit up in the early evening. It was an unusual sculpture surrounded by quotes on park benches and a recycled symbol made from scrap metal barn siding

I had discussed recycling with a couple people earlier in the day, including how I repurposed the Burley cart that our children used to ride in to make it a solar trailer for this expedition.

Tomorrow, I'll be on roads earlier in the day and then the sock trail my destination I hope is the holy wisdom Retreat Center, where I have submitted a reservation for an overnight retreat.

Random pilgrim thoughts

Our words

I have repurpose the Burley trailer from a child carrier to a solar panel cart.

I am reusing the Stein trike and panels that were part of the green journey 1.0.

I am recycling cans and plastic that I find along the way

I am resisting and refusing any bottled water, plastic straws, plastic cutlery that gets served at restaurants by using my own reusable software excuse me flatware.

I am wearing socks spun from recycled pot bottles.

I am using panniers's made from billboards recycled material.

Using clean compostable Clean McComic quart bags for clothing.

I hope to start growing sprouts soon once I get settled into a routine I should challenge myself to do that today.

My Wallet is made from recycled tire tubes and I have a belt at home made from recycled tire tubes. I am opting to use the cloth belts that come with my repurposed hiking fishing pants to make them my cycling wear for the trip so I don't purchase any exclusively bicycle clothing as such.

I am using the jewel kettle pot to cook my food

Day 19 - Tues, Sept. 16, 2025 - 91 km (56 mi) Reedsburg to Middleton, WI

I was going to zoom in live with other leaders of the Pilgrimage of Hope events all throughout the country at noon, but got so into the cycling day and really wasn't in a good place to spend an hour. I understand the hundred plus other pilgrimage of Hope leaders were encouraged to follow my Pilgrimage of Hope by cycle. I'm sorry I missed the zoom call meeting.

My journal for today is rather lengthy and have it taken the time to condense or clean up all the text so here it is and it's more raw form.

At an intersection on County Road W west of Baraboo. I met a fellow named Jim who lives in Alaska went to school University of Wisconsin Madison. He was kind of burning up in the sun so he's now gonna take a route along a river where it's cooler instead of over the hills. I asked if he had any intelligence about the routes ahead and he pulled out a Wisconsin biking map. He says Wisconsin has the best maps and I could get one at a bike shop. He had to order it online. We traded Tipps about our direction he's riding across Wisconsin Over eight days.

I stopped in Taqueria to get a Tuesday taco. I asked if they could do something vegetarian and the response was no so I just got some corn tortillas, plantain and a can of tuna.

At the Abelman's Gorge, I turned in and found a truckload of ladies in the parking lot standing around in a circle talking all 55+ age in appearance, asked me if I knew anything about kayaking and I said absolutely nothing I said I hardly knew what I was traveling on. I shared a little bit about my Green journey and they were heading down the river to scope out their kayaking trip on the Baraboo river, which I had crossed already three times as it meanders through this area.

Just down the road was the Hise rock, which apparently is fundamental in the study of geology in that an academic named he who was the president of the University of Wisconsin laid out the principles of metamorphic rock formation in the 1800s which was groundbreaking (no pun intended) science of that age.

So I am traveling near the Wisconsin Dells, and this part of the state is hilly with all kinds of interesting what I think are limestone rock formations. It's home of house on the rock and the Wisconsin Dells. It reminds me that folks I grew up with who may never have traveled much out of the state this would be often the one destination

So here are 55+ folks, enjoying travel and outdoor recreation Because they have time in this beautiful time of the year that ordinary working folks don't have the opportunity to do. So fall is a wonderful time to travel and travel locally in the US to see all the sites in our backyard so to speak. It's not necessary to travel internationally to see some cool things.

I encountered some road construction and got a chance to see up close grinding machine taking off probably a 2 inch layer of asphalt leaving it in a trail behind for another machine to gather it up, add tar and put down a new road surface all within a couple hundred feet. At the end of the construction coincidentally was a lavender farm that I did not have on my radar. I pulled in and was fortunate that it was open this day for a tour group. I missed the tour but did my own and purchased some lavender honey, lavender ice cream I spoke with the owner about how this was a family business and thanked him for making this a special stop on my tour.

Today I passed through what was the Sauk Prairie munitions amunition production facility with once over 2400 buildings covering miles and miles of Prairie. One time there were 12,000 people working here building music for World War II . It was decommissioned and handed back over to the hochunk nation and is now a natural protected area.

Day:

Date: Tues. Sept. 16, **2025**

Start & End: Reedsburg to Middleton. WI

Distance: 91km

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Day 20 - Wed, Sept. 17, 2025 - 50 km (31 mi) Middleton to New Glarus, WI

Started the day with prayer with the Benedictine sisters in their monastery chapel. Then prepared my own self serve breakfast in the kitchenette over at the guest house. Received a brief overview of the net zero efforts of the monastery to generate all their own power through solar and geothermal means. It is very much part of the Benedictine spirituality to care for the Earth, and they have done that on these lands by restoring the prairies, the shallow lake on the property and invested in alternative energy sources to become

self-sufficient off the grid. The monastery is considered a safe place in case of natural disasters and can house area neighbors and government officials in the event of a natural disaster emergency.

Spiritual direction is something that can be arranged with any guests and I opted to have a session with Chris Roberts who met me at 9:30. We walked the grounds and Chris was a great listener and had great feedback and prayers of reflection as we gathered in the beauty of the Holy Wisdom grounds.

Then an extensive tour of the solar array and geothermal with Toby the Director of Operations for Holy Wisdom. Toby explained how they have 100 volunteers each spring and fall for a manual tilt of all the solar panels so they are in position to better capture the sun's power. Toby is preparing for a tour and presentation this Sunday, September 21 which is universally known as Sun Day to celebrate the benefits of solar power.

It seems that Retreat Center's and monasteries around the country are so forward thinking and earth conscious, just like Mount St. John and Bergamo back in Dayton, Ohio, where I used to serve. I appreciate what the Benedictines, Marianists and other religious orders have done to become more caring of the Earth

Chef Felipe prepared a lunch of beet rice, squash, & kale from the monastery gardens, and fish, strawberries and chocolate chip cookies for dessert. Sister Barb and a couple named Al and Helen invited me to their table to hear the story of the green journey.

I briefly spoke with Erin the executive director who dreams like I do that one day there could be a network of retreat houses that would welcome cycling pilgrims to come and stay for a while while traveling from retreat house to retreat house. Oh how this would be like the auberges of the Camino in Europe. Who knows, that might be something I could dedicate some volunteer time helping create when I return from this pilgrimage.

I had wanted to stay another day, but discovered a large group was coming to the retreat guest house this evening, so there was no room and I needed to move on.

So I loaded up the solar express and headed south through the Madison urban area on bicycle lanes most of the way separated slightly from some of the busy traffic of late afternoon on a Wednesday. Then eventually I found the Badger Trail that headed south out of Madison, initially a paved trail and then turning into a crushed gravel path. My destination for the night was the New Glarus Woods State Park Campground. I arrived late in the dark and set up camp by headlight. I believe I'm the only one here at the campground and set up in a walk-in campsite. Pleasant dreams, nestled in my Haven hammock for the night.

As I was riding, I was filled with memories of bringing the family here to the new Glarus area for camping when the kids were young. We enjoyed the Swiss heritage of the area and remember seeing the outdoor drama of the William Tell story complete with William shooting an arrow at an apple on the head of his son Walter.

And here's a bit of pilgrimage trivia. Saint Fridolin, the patron saint of the Swiss canton of Glarus, whose name is honored in the town's heritage. Additionally, the name appears in other local contexts, such as in the naming of a beer from the town, and a historic walking stick sold in the area. Saint Fridolin is a patron saint of pilgrims!

PILGRIM thoughts how do I thought about stringing connecting retreat centers together for long distance touring cyclist? Creating a network of retreat centers. It would be willing to host cycling PILGRIM images like mine not sure there's a lot of folks out there. Interested in doing that in Europe to have something called monastery stays.

<https://www.monasterystays.com>

Monasteries it seems the life is revolves around prayer
Erin Trondson

Day 21 - Thurs, Sept. 18, 2025 - 73 km (43 mi) New Glarus, WI to Freeport, IL

On the Badger Trail this clear morning, I met a fellow e-cyclist named Bill who stopped before passing and we had a conversation. He said from afar as he was approaching me on his E bike he said to himself "what is that coming ahead?" He shared intelligence

regarding the area trails and places to eat and things to do in Monroe, my next stop. He was intrigued with the trike and trailer and said, "Now there's somebody who's got some smarts to put together a system like this." I countered with, "Maybe smart, but crazy."

He shared with me the best place to get curds is a place that has the vats from his grandfather and great uncle's cheese making operation. When he was a kid, he worked on that farm milking cows by hand. He explained how his great uncle was upset with the government that supplanted some of his dairy operation so he pulled all his money out of the bank and put it in a safe in the office at the farm. When Bill worked for him as a kid, he would open the safe and pull out a single five dollar bill off the top of the pile of bills to pay him his daily wage.

Bill further warned me about hills around Monroe, "big ass steep ones" that even he on his E bike without being loaded has trouble getting up. I did see somewhere on the map in Illinois something called the Devil's backbone. I'm not sure where it is, somewhere much further south near the Ohio river, and I certainly hope I don't encounter that. This I heard about from a book written by Dayton author Allen Johnson, who penned a whole series of books about adventures with his grandchildren, and one of them was riding bicycles over the hills of the Devils Backbone in Illinois. My aim is to find all the rail trails that I can, but sometimes the connecting roads are where the hills are. These were the books that we passed out for free to the grandparents at Ascension School, since Allen donated many of his unsold books to the Catholic schools to distribute. They have been an inspiration for me.

Met two more interesting people today besides Bill. One was Mike from the Bike Haus on the north side of Monroe. Mike saw me coming through the window of his bike shop about 11:30 prior to opening at noon and came out and had to say hi and check out the "rig". He's just four years older than I am and does about 75% of his business now with E bikes. He has a very nice shop. Everything is relatively new or has been expanded and he's at the very best location right on the bike trail. He co-owns the shop with his son. I bought a couple tubes since I really like to support bike businesses along the trails.

Apparently he told a lady customer named Kara because 10 miles later she approached me from the other direction on an E bike in a bright pink shirt and stopped me and says, "Are you heading to Key West?" And I said well how do you know and she said she had been at Mike's Bike Haus. She is a traveling nurse from Saint Augustine, FL doing a several month stay up here in Wisconsin. She says this is her prayer space out here riding on the many trails. I told her about how Michele and I had started the adventure at the Northwest Angle. She invited Michele and I down anytime and if on the return trip coming through, but she won't be back till December. She says she impresses her adult sons by moving around the country and they enjoy coming to visit her especially when she is staying in ski country and they think it is cool to join her to go skiing. As we parted, she asked if I was a praying man and she had a very nice prayer for me for my safety and Thanksgiving for the great trail and experience outside in nature.

Bike Pilgrimage

Kara Frye <karalinagirl@yahoo.com>
Dec 23, 2025, 10:28 PM (5 days ago)
to me

Hello Brent!

It's Kara the travel nurse from St Augustine! I just finally got a chance to sit down and read your blog from start to finish and what an amazing journey you had! I had shared at the nursing home in Monroe, WI about your journey and several of my patients were following along and praying for you as well! I'm so glad that you made it safe and had such an awesome experience! Just wanted to thank you for letting us share along in your adventure! I am back in St Augustine to spend Christmas with my mom and then I will head out to WV in January to work another contract in a town near Snowshoe! Super excited to be able to ski for a bit and in an area I've never skied! They say there are some good bike trails in the area but I'm not keen on biking in snow so it will stay home this trip! Anyway, just wanted to drop you a line and let you know I really enjoyed your blog as well as seeing God answered our prayers for your safety! I hope you got out to see the new grand baby and that you and Michele are enjoying your family during the Christmas season! Wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas and blessed New Year!

Kara Frye

Once I crossed the state line into Illinois, the trail continued on, but another name the Jane Addams Trail. This trail is a tribute to Jane Addams who I discovered on one of our family trips to Chicago was an American settlement activist, reformer, social worker, sociologist, public administrator, philosopher, and author. She was a leader in the history of social work and women's suffrage. We could use more of her influence in today's modern America. Though the trails honor to Jane Addams was inspiring, I have to say I was disappointed with how the trail was maintained. They apparently used only a herbicide to kill all vegetation on the trail and 10 feet on

either side, so the trail simply looked dead and still the weeds in the middle of the path were 2 to 3 feet high making it a challenge for my three trike wheels to get through.

My best prospect for overnight in Freeport looked like the Stephenson County fairgrounds on the southside of town. During my GOBA experiences Great Ohio Bicycle Adventures and the Xenia weekend bike events at the Green County Fairgrounds I've learned that fairgrounds can be nice places to stay - usually very quiet, bathrooms, and showers, electric availability, and sometimes places to hitch up a hammock that is sheltered.

My very first camping experience on a multi day state ride in my quest to cross the country was on the Katy trail back in 2014 at the Sedalia Missouri State fairgrounds. And that was the only other state crossing trail that I used the old Burley trailer that we used to haul our children in 30 years ago!

Day 22 - Fri. Sept 19, 2025 - 86 km (53 mi) Freeport to Rock Falls, IL

"Autumn is a second spring, when every leaf is a flower." – **ALBERT CAMUS**

Just passed Dogwood Inn and restaurant on route 26 three miles north of Polo Illinois just got off a heat map inspired shortcut that turned out to be a grassy country lane so now I'm back on a county highway. that's got bumps And recently reconstructed pieces of the road so it needs a lot of work. It's not very level. I have to reduce my speed so it's not a jar the solar panels loose and meanwhile, I have traffic big trucks. Walmart trucks passing me.

This morning I woke to find that I was not the only person at the county fairgrounds. A young fellow named Dillon appeared east of my beef show barn location. As he was heading out, we introduced ourselves. Dillon is a working young man who took time off to travel by bike from Seattle over the Cascades mountain range through the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and now heading towards Chicago to get to his home in Connecticut, I shared that I had ridden on the Erie Canal trail in New York and he said that's part of his path to get to Connecticut.

Last night stay at the county fairgrounds reminded me of my very first multi day, long distance, state-by-state crossing, and that was on the Katy trail across Missouri and the very first night. I stayed in my little single tent, pulling the same Burley trailer with all my camping gear on the Katy Trail and I stayed at the state fairgrounds in Sedalia, Missouri.

I am reminded that fairgrounds can be a great place for a distance cyclist to camp with big open spaces, sometimes not so many trees to tie a hammock up to, but still there may be open air buildings to go post to post that you can hang a hammock and that's what I did last night and avoided the rain that occurred for about a half an hour. I stayed dry while my friend Dillon had to weather the storm. I gave him one of my cards and he asked a lot of questions about the green journey, and it was fun sharing with a younger touring cyclist how I am doing it. He seemed impressed with the solar power.

The countryside was rolling with hills, and I have become much more adept at gearing properly with the right level of assistance to get up the hills cleanly. On gentle incline, I can keep between a 10 and 15 mile an hour speed, which is so much faster than if I was pedaling with only my own power. I am beginning to feel that the E-assist is simply indispensable and by carrying the battery/generator I can recharge batteries multiple times during the day to extend my range greatly so the solar assist is working very well.

On the way out of Freeport, just a mile from the fairgrounds. I was able to take pictures of a new solar farm going to support electrical needs for the city of Freeport.

I passed through the little town of Polo well before noon. Polo is home of the high school team known as "the Marcos". I plan to send pictures of this little town to Thomas Polo, the previous owner of this green journey trike who crossed the country with a young lady named Megan just last August to become the first solar assist trike pilots to cross the country west to east. I hope to be the third, crossing north to south.

With the threat of thunderstorms this evening, I thought it best to finish my ride today in Rock Falls. I spent some time at a city park on the north side of the rock river just north of Rock Falls in the park, where Hopewell mounds the same culture of folks that built mounds in the Ohio Valley and traded extensively with peoples of the superior lake region for copper, Pipe stone from Minnesota and obsidian from out west. I have always been fascinated with the early indigenous cultures of America going back to my days working as I park interpreter at the Mountain City National Monument (now Hopewell Culture) in Chillicothe. A reminder that the land has been inhabited for a long time.

After exploring options at a RV park or at first, they said they did not permit tents or hammocks, they did relent and would allow me to camp with a tent. But they had no big enough trees or posts close enough to string a hammock.

The park manager showed me the restroom where she suggested I could duck in late at night if storms got really bad. Plus, there would be no shelter house storage to park my "solar express." All of this for \$60 a night so I politely declined and made a reservation for not much more money across the street at the Super 8. There I will "recharge", prepare my own meal with my kettle pot, eat with my own utensils, wash my clothes in the shower, dry my clothes with the room fan and kick back and catch up on all my correspondence/social media/journaling.

The trike and trailer will be safe in the parking lot covered with tarps. I hope it rains and thunders as forecasted so that this decision becomes clearly a good one.

Day 23 - Sat, Sept. 20, 2025 - 56 km (35 mi) Rock Falls to Langley IL Hennepin Canal State Park

It has been very pleasant temperatures 70s in the day 60s at night, which is very nice for cycling and camping. Today's ride was almost entirely on Canal Trail. Canal trails have just a different feel than railroad trails. First there is water on one side and the trails are usually rougher and not a smooth to ride. Today I passed over at least 100 walnut trees that had dropped walnuts directly onto the trail. I did not see much wildlife, which was surprising to me. I saw no turtles sunning themselves. I did see one bald eagle, a large hawk and three great blue herons. Had a brief rainfall mid day that I waited out on the trail by tarping over my panels to keep them dry. Just don't want water to infiltrate all the battery systems.

Met Els. She informed me that Els is the Dutch version of Elsa. I posted about her adventure exploits, including through hiking the Appalachian Trail with her husband. And on her bucket list was cycling across America and she's doing it on the Great American Rail Trail. She started at the very same point in Washington at Rialto Beach and we could share stories of our experiences in common along the Washington trails across Snoqualmie pass and on the Palouse to Cascades Trail. We agreed that it was one of the tougher sections through the desert of eastern Washington.

We traded phone numbers and photos and figured we would meet each other again somewhere along the common section of her path in mind through Illinois.

So I continued on the Hennepin feeder trail, which took me to the main Hennepin Canal Trail to the visitor center. It was there I realized that the hitch on the Burley trailer had broken. It remained attached, but wobbled considerably and really needs to be fixed before moving on. And sure enough it's Saturday night, hardware stores, bike stores nearby and not even any towns within 15 miles.

While inspecting the trailer, I heard noise at a distance which sounded like a rodeo. I checked my GPS and discovered that the Psycho Silo Saloon was nearby in the middle of nowhere. The pictures intrigued me. It is a biker bar with cold beer, live music, and hot food. I thought a place like that might have some hardware lying around it. Meanwhile, I was hungry and thought that some food might inspire some hacks. I could use to make the trailer better if I was unable to fix it altogether.

The Psycho Silo Saloon is a real trip in its own way. Only pictures can describe the scene there with cowboys and biker folks and a live band being warming up made for a surreal scene. After something to eat and two beers, I asked the bartender if he could help me find something to fix my bike. I figured a place like this should have some hardware lying around. He directed me to the owner named Troy and he took me to the back where he had a little shop and he offered me some wire that I could tie the hitch with. I thanked him and he asked how old I was. I answered and he explained that when he was younger, the coolest thing he did was to take 30 days off from work and motorcycle down to Florida. He really enjoyed the freedom and the experience so we could relate on that note.

I made it back to the visitor center of the Hennepin State Park. Signs indicate no camping is allowed here, but given the challenging circumstances with the trailer breakdown and thunderstorms forecasted for tonight, I'm sure the park staff who will not be reporting back to the park until Monday morning shouldn't mind if I camp. I'm going ahead and using the shelter house with a mat in my inflatable mattress and simply sleeping on the floor of the shelter, without the tent or hammock.

Day 24 - Sun, Sept 21, 2025 - 89 km (55 mi) Langley Hennepin Canal State Park Visitor Center to Starved Rock Kayak campground, IL

AM Weather: foggy 64° with the sun peeking through the clouds

It's Sun day, a day to celebrate the sun. Unfortunately it may be cloudy most of the day so I won't be generating too much solar power. I was able to top off the batteries here at the shelter house.

It is also world gratitude day, and I have many people to be thankful for. So I begin the day before my venture listing all the people I have to be thankful for.

Michele, my wife for supporting me in this venture in the sense that she tolerates and allows me to go off and do it and really helps at times like joining me the first three days of this adventure.

The, other Kettering cyclists who inspire me take on an adventure Jeffrey McElfresh, George Sideras, Mark Messer, Kendall Draeger, Eileen Maloney, Charles Eber, Jan Kinner, Jordan Hart.

Our children Brendan, Christine, Madeleine, Catherine, who follow my journeys, along with Facebook and cycle blaze friends who comment and support the trip.

All the Trail angels who have offered support, kindnesses along the way. Big thank you and gratitude for Don Cleaver for offering major support just when I needed it most with mechanical issues as I entered Wisconsin.

And thanks for the other adventuring travelers and folks I've met on the trail. You are all inspiring how you have found cycling such a great way to stay fit, save gas and connect with nature.

To the warm showers, hosts, inn operators, retreat centers, camp hosts, and park workers who offer welcome and lodging along the journey.

Thank you to the Pilgrimage of Hope care for creation community who are supporting pilgrimages all throughout the country to encourage all of us to care better for our one planet.

Gratitude to Megan and Thomas, who made the first green journey venture across the US just last year in August from San Francisco to New York City. For continued use of the trike and solar panels from that journey that will now make a historic north south trek through the US.

To my parents, Jack and Helen Devitt, who gave me life and inspired in me a passion for travel outdoors through places near and far.

I thank God for this amazing, wonderful, beautiful, awe inspiring opportunity for life, to enjoy the flowers and fruit of creation.

Received a blessing from the father. I joked that this was practice for blessing of animals on October 4. He says he didn't do blessing of pets. He said I would bless farm animals because they provide us with a living but Petteys get far too much attention already.

Forgot to mention the smoking fire and the gentleman I will call Abe who came out of the woods who had his bird feeders and a fire going along the river Canal excuse me he said he liked to get out of town and all the traffic and the rat race and come here where it was quiet along the canal

Brother Phillip, former Abbott of the Saint bead monastery answered the door and gave me a blessing. He says it's up to Abbott Michael now if they were to host any guest PILGRIM's in the future, they have 300 students here at the Academy used to have 450 they have acres and acres of land stretching probably a mile square all the way down to the river. As I was departing, someone approached me from behind and said may I help you. I asked if it was brother Abbott Michael, and he said yes, I explain my journey to him as well. I inquired about if an individual or group would want to stay at Saint Pete Abby and he said they did have a guest house called the Bethany house and I could find details about it online and reserve it if I wanted to.

I checked my course to stay on roads rather than the canal with the bumpy conditions that would cause further damage to the trailer and I didn't want to lose the trailer altogether, so I'm trying to stay on flat roads. I saw a little town called Ott Ville since it sounded so much like Autoville where I grew up. I thought I should pass through this town. I imagine stopping there at the city entrance sign and

making it a photo opportunity and pull out my green and gold flag like the colors of the Ottoville big green back home. Well, I came through a little residential section with no signs and wasn't paying attention to my map and before I knew it I was a half mile beyond what apparently was an unincorporated place on the road called Ottsville that I missed entirely he did give me about a half an hour of reflection time on how proud I was to represent the big green of Ottoville in sports like track and field, cross country golf basketball during my high school years. It also reminded me of my high school pledge written in my high school Yearbook that I one day wish to cross the country either by bicycling.

Day 25 - Mon, Sept. 22, 2025 - 94 km (58 mi) Starved Rock Kayak Campground to Joliet, IL

Along the trail and in the campground side, collected unsightly trash, some of it recyclable. And I have been searching the last three days for a recycling container of any type - commercial or residential and have not found one. Finally today I spotted some yellow top Waste Management recycling bins in front of a house. And the owner pulled in the driveway just as I was going by so I called out ma'am ma'am may I use your recycling and she said, "yes, by all means, anytime." She had two containers because her son has a medical condition that requires a lot of recycled material. So we had a conversation, I explained I also had a little live snapping turtle that I had found on the street and was trying to find a place to drop it in a stream or river. And she pointed towards the Illinois river just down the street. She thanked me for taking care of the environment, and I shared with her the purpose of my journey.

Then I pedaled two blocks towards the river and a Green Bay Packer banner in a second story window caught my eye at the last house before the dock. Then I noticed a distinguished white haired gentleman sitting in front of his house and I said hi and explained that I wanted to find a home for this little baby snapping turtle and he said yes that I may use his dock area where I released little Willy. I came back and had a conversation. I noticed a decorative cannon and he explained how he had landscape around his house with these cannons he had cast in concrete. He had owned a treasure finding business for metal detecting and took me through his house to see the concrete cannons I has back patio. He spoke about his wife who I presume has is no longer with him. We shared our common bond as Green Bay Packer fans, and he gave me some tips on where to eat and how to get back on track with my path.

For much of the first part of the day I was on roads that parallel the Illinois and Michigan canal. This probably doubled my speed over what I would've been able to manage on the Canal with rougher surfaces with having to be very careful on the trail and slow to avoid doing more damage to the hitch.

I got to the town of Seneca and noticed a little car repair shop. Both bay doors were open and a car was on the lift being worked on. I pulled in and called out, "Hello." Nobody came out so I went inside and listened to the owner closing a conversation with a customer lamenting about how America has changed so much and the world seems so angry today. I agreed with much of what he had to say and shared some of the same concerns about our country, however I only listened and kept my comments to myself.

Then I explained my predicament that the back hitch needed either to be welded or some creative solution to replacing the pin that holds the hitch arm to the trailer. He took a look at it, gave me some suggestions and then I went to the Ace Hardware for parts. When I returned he was ready to take on the challenge and got right in under the trailer. We brainstormed how to make the fix and he had all the tools, drills, torch, socket sets, allen wrenches needed to make the repair. After about an hour altogether, we had the trailer back to almost good as new. I offered to pay him but he refused. He suggested that I cycle on to Morris where there was a little state campground where his former office manager now had a job. He let her go just recently in Aug so that she could take this new job that offered insurance and the possibility of retirement that he could not offer there at his shop.

So as I moved on another 10 miles to the next town of Morris, I did find the campground and surprised Roberta, Scott's former office manager and she said yes he was a good man and she was happy with her new position and the chance for retirement.

The look and feel of the canal towns on the Illinois and Michigan Canal is slightly different than the railroad towns. Mainly the element of water either near a river or with the canal running nearby. Sometimes the towns seem slightly older, given the heyday of canals, preceded the trains.

As daytime was ending and darkness approached, I was fortunate to find a path that brought me to some inexpensive hotel options under \$75 which is now my limit.

So there are many little moments or things that I see along the path each day. Often there is some just simply not enough time in words to tell stories about them all, but the pictures do trigger memories.

Day 26 - Tues. Sept. 23, 2025 - 78 km (48 mi) Joliet, IL to Schererville, IN

Ally the piper

Today I met Denis Brennan 782181758 of New Lennox. Denis has a German made HP Velotechnic trike himself so he was very interested in my trike and adventure. He invited me to coffee a few miles away not far off the trail at Gost Coffee Roasters. Owner Daniel Bednarz took time from his coffee roasting duties and met with Dennis and I and we discussed what a great location this is with respect to the Great American Rail Trail for cyclists crossing the US.

My day was spent on three nicely paved rail trails - Old Plank Rd. Trail, Thorn Creek Trail, and the Pensy Trail. The Thorn Creek Trail was very smooth and had many curves through the forest. My day started late while I waited out the rain and I spent a couple hours at the coffee shop so I was still riding at dusk into the darkness on this beautiful trail. With my bike lights, I could see deer eyes in the woods before they began to dart across the trail.

Jeff was my trail angel today. He passed me, but then circled back, realizing I might need help as I was trying to tighten up a quick release on the trailer wheel. He explained this was his first ride since returning from South Africa Kruger National Park on Safari with his wife and friends. He helped me lift the trike so I could adjust a quick release on the trailer. He sees many people crossing the country either east or west or west to east but I may be the first one that was heading entirely north to south. He asked if I was a believer, my answer yes, so he blessed me with a prayer for my safety on the adventure.

Both Denis and Jeff offered me a room to stay overnight in their homes on my journey, but I politely declined expressing how I felt the need to move on. Both of these men are examples of the goodwill that you find while cycling long distance.

Day 27 - Weds, Sept. 24, 2025 - 124 km (77 mi) Shereville to Tippecanoe River State Park, IN

Had to negotiate through some bigger busier streets in Schererville to get back to the Pennsy Trail. The trail is well surfaced and signed. When it ended, I bridged over to the Erie Lackawanna Trail, equally well paved, signed, and amenities along the way with benches, parks, water, restrooms.

I did have to make a decision early on in the day. I saw signs for the Christ's Passion Shrine in St. John, Indiana, which is a place I've wanted to go for sometime but it would add about 15 km to the day and it was going to be a long ride anyhow, if I was going to make it to Tippecanoe so I passed on that experience. It would've probably taken a couple hours. So we'll have to plan on a trip some other time by car to stop there and visit with Michele.

Traveled through country roads to get to the Erie trail in North Judson, probably 25 miles through country farmland. Surprisingly I saw literally miles and miles of solar farms. Which had me thinking a lot about the use of farmland for solar. Saw at least one sign that suggested solar wasn't welcome in the area. I wonder how the arrangement works with the utility companies if the farmers retain ownership of the land or they just simply sell it outright. I got some interesting shots of the day.

Coming into Tippecanoe about 5 miles south of the end of the North Judson Erie Trail on gravel roads through huge Ford areas was very cool. I made it to the campground at dusk, set up camp had my meal and a pleasant night sleep. I was reserved for a site in the river rustic camping area, which was another kilometer on down and further deeper into the park, but it opted to go to the electric camping area which was only a 10th occupied by RV's so there were plenty of open sites That allowed me to top off the batteries and the jackery.

Pa
40% of US corn is grown to produce ethanol.

30% of all crop land is corn in the US.

Less than one percent of all US farmland is used for solar.

Solar farm in Indiana.

Day 28 - Thurs, Sept. 25, 2025 - 137 km (85 mi) Tippecanoe River State Park to Marion, IN

Got going about 9:30 and after about 20 miles of country roads approached Rochester, IN, where the Nickel Plate trailhead is that would potentially take me all the way to Kokomo. Riding into town I noticed a group of children and adults at the library exploring the trees. I road up and spoke with one of the parents who explained it was a homeschool group learning about trees. The young parent I

spoke with gave me a good recommendation for a lunch spot with good sandwiches named Garreti's. So I had lunch there. More and more I've been engaging with folks along the way. They usually have a lot of questions about the journey and the vehicle I'm riding on the adventure. I've been passing out small cards with the QR code about my journey.

A couple invited me to sit next to them at lunch and it was good to get a perspective from some local folks about the bike trail.

I was able to move quickly down the trail stops every mile. After 15 miles at Peru, IN I decided not to go all the way into Kokomo, so I opted to diverge from the trail and took country roads that diagonally cut down to the trail town of Converse where the Sweetser Trail begins.

I'd have to say the Sweetser section of trail, as short as it is, about 5 miles, was the most well-maintained and had interesting things along the way. Apparently the local Lions club are the major champions for this trail. There was an ice cream store at the beginning, historic train cars positioned at the trailhead. There were two covered bridges, each wide enough to include seats and picnic tables, which was very nice to have that shaded space along the trail. One humorous item was the largest nugget of silver in the world, which I suspect was simply a boulder painted silver. There was a little legend portrayed as history next to the boulder.

At one of the intersections a couple stopped me. They had seen me pass by their door and their dog had alerted them. They noticed the unusual vehicle so Joanne convinced her husband to chase after me and meet me at the next intersection and asked if they could ask questions. and we had about a half hour discussion. Harold was an industrial arts teacher, Joanne a consumer education teacher, so it was much like my parents who were teachers of Vocational Agriculture and Home Economics.

They wondered what they could do to support cyclists as they passed by their house on the trail. I mentioned something about Warmshowers and that even folks who aren't active cyclists can sign up to be hosts. It would be great to have a host on the trail for folks doing the great American Rail Trail.

This was going to be my longest day, so I knew the last section of the Cardinal Greenway trail into Marion might take me close to dusk. Some large clouds loomed over and a rainbow appeared and within 15 minutes I turned around and the sun was setting so I got some very cool photographs.

Make wooden signs with white letters on plain wood amount those on poles on the Dayton Kettering connector interesting place names like meandering loafing soldering tinkering

Could've made this a circus themed trip on the snowbird route Baraboo, Wisconsin Circus world, Peru with the Circus Hall of Fame in Indiana, Sarasota, Florida Ringling Brothers

Rochester is known for round barns

Day 29 - Fri. Sept. 26, 2025 - 127 km (77 mi) Marion to Richmond, IN

I departed the Hart Motel in Marion around 9:30 am. There was a lot of activity near the trail this morning as I passed through South Marion. There was a classic car show, a motorcyclist event, and James Dean Days going on this weekend and that explains why it was hard to find a hotel or motel last night. James Dean was from Marion IN. Volunteers for the Trail we're out charging five dollars for parking along the trail to help generate funds for gas money to mow along the trails.

My entire ride for the day was along the Cardinal Greenway Trail. In 2018 it was named a Hall of Fame trail. The trail has not been repaved since it first opened 25 years ago and there are sections that could use some help. There were long grooves or ruts in the trail sometimes hard to see with the leaf litter. Sections just beautiful for miles at a time very That I could move along at 15 to 19 miles an hour.

There more interesting folks to meet today, including Mike Flanagan, retired elementary school, teacher, and Cat trike owner. We shared Experiences being men in the elementary School school scene. He thinks Indiana's backward state compared to Ohio. During his college years, he used to come with friends over to Greenville and Union City Ohio to get 3.2 beer. He reminded me that the McCoys, authors of Hang on Sloopy were from Union City, Ohio.

Mike encouraged me to stop at Mike's bike shop south of Muncie a few miles. Mike Oniell is of Irish descent originally from Massachusetts, married and Indiana lady and has a bike shop right on the trail. I did stop there, got a sticker and some goodies to eat. He has hosted numerous cross country cyclists in his backyard and has crossed the US five times himself.

My host tonight is Kurt Ritchie, he's hosted more than a dozen cross country cyclists in his big house in Richmond. As I rode through town, I was impressed with all the old historic homes and drove through what look like a thriving entertainment section of town with music and restaurants. Richmond is known for recording jazz music.

Tomorrow, I should make it back home to Kettering.

Day 30 - Sat, Sept. 27, 2025 - 90 km (56 mi) Richmond, IN to home in Kettering, OH

Very nice day down the homestretch back to Kettering. The highlight was stopping in Brookville rather than indulge in buffet at Rob's. I went on to a new place in Brookville called Mulberry and Main. Got a tour of the place from Ben Wright who is cousin of the owners Jeff and Brandi Wright. Jeff and Ben, the Wright's grandfather was a fireman out of this once city building/fire station/city Council chambers and jail. The place has much history and has been turned into a delightful café, a nice inviting atmosphere for cyclists and good food & beverages for all.

Now that I am home and Kettering, I will spend the week prepping for the last 2/3 of the adventure to Key West. I'll be doing some work on the trailer seeing my grandson Camden for his birthday. Participating in care for creation pilgrimage of Hope out at Mount St. John on the feast of Saint Francis October 4, then I will be heading south on October 5.

I like finding places like this along the trail. Most every town has one or more. Only so much time to explore and enjoy along the way.

Kurt Ritchie was host in Richmond. As I leave this morning I see that Glen Miller Park not far from Kurt's house offers camping and it's a beautiful big park. Has the pioneer woman Madonna of the trail statue I have changed my reaction to the statue a bit now, knowing that it represents some of the manifest destiny of white America to Expand Westward. I'm getting an early start this morning since it's Saturday to try to get to Brookville for lunch had a good conversation with Kurt. He suggested a book called collapse. We talked about how travel a slower speed. Let you see America how towns should be built with people in mind a core set of services in a town and then work outside in the fields outside of town

Found Hayes Arboretum really need to come to Richmond sometime to explore this town. The jazz may be a trip to Indianapolis with Michele on our trikes would be good.

As I travel east from Richmond on the big gap on the great American rail trail that passes through new Paris and country villages north of I 70 I contemplate how I can be an advocate or forced to create safer conditions like share the road signs on this portion of the trail, where there is no shoulder on the roads, but 6 inches of pavement Cyclist on a long distance trip really need to be careful.

It also makes me wonder again about becoming a member of the Ohio bike Federation board and what I could do to help promote long distance cycling

Along the way, I have spotted Ohio star quilt patterns painted on houses barns I've taken a picture of some, but some I have passed by without a photograph. It's a reminder of all the Ohio stars that I made out of wood a reminder too, that I would like to put one with a black center up in front of our house.

Put sign up along Wolf Creek Trail that says it's part of the great American rail trail. I'll see today if there are signs already in place I'd be willing to pay for them.

What's the history of the little black boy with a lantern?

Stable boy.

Is it OK to camp in a cemetery, should I try camping? Kurt suggested I try camping behind a church I should try that at least once on this trip when I can't find anything else find a church?

Should I work harder at trying to camp every night Trying to avoid any motels hotels finding an outlet outside of a church could be possible to recharge batteries top them off.

Make sign post with quotes like the Wright brothers quote about being born to parents in Dayton, and a Kettering quote about questions and curiosity

Make wooden whirlybirds question me?

The highlight of the day was stopping for lunch at Mulberry and Main. I'm still sampling plant based dining along the way so I had a lean green smoothie and a Panini sandwich called the fig with Gouda cheese and aioli and it was good. I'm at a fellow there. It happens to be cousins with the owners, Jeff, right

Mascot Selection

In recent years I have noticed cyclists will attach a small plush toy to their bicycles. Why?

Bicyclists carry mascots or plush toys for several reasons, including for charity, as lucky charms, to personalize their bike, or as a trophy. In professional cycling, it is a specific tradition for winners of certain races.

Motorcyclists may attach them for Charity and toy drive reasons.

- Donations for children: Many organized cycling events, similar to motorcycle "toy runs," involve collecting and delivering stuffed animals to children's hospitals or those in difficult situations.
- Symbolic gesture: Cyclists might attach a teddy bear to their bike as part of a charitable event to symbolize the donation they are making, or to represent the children they are helping.

I think bicyclists do it more for personal expression

- Personalization: Attaching a toy is a way for cyclists to customize their bike and add a touch of warmth and personality.
- Memorial: Some cyclists use a plush toy as a memorial to a loved one, like a child, as a way to remember them during their rides.
- Anthropomorphism: Long-distance touring cyclists, in particular, may give their bicycles human qualities and name them. A plush toy can serve as a friendly travel companion during solitary journeys.

Professional cycling tradition

- Trophies for race winners: In the professional racing circuit, some races award a plush toy to the daily winner. The Tour de France, for example, awards a toy lion to each day's winner, a tradition that dates back to the bank Crédit Lyonnais' sponsorship. The Giro d'Italia has also used a mascot as a prize.
- Team and event mascots: Certain events and teams may have official mascots, some of which appear as life-sized characters or are given as prizes to reflect the event's history and spirit.

Good luck charm

- Source of luck: For some cyclists, the plushie acts as a lucky charm or mascot to help them on their journey and provide good fortune. This is similar to the tradition of sailors attaching mascots to the bows of their ships.

So I was thinking I should have a mascot for the remainder of my Green Journey.

I'd like to get feedback on some possible choices. I can't take them all so I'll just have to decide. Here are the candidates:

Pope Francis bobblehead - We are marking the 10th anniversary of Laudato si' (Praise Be to You) the encyclical of Pope Francis, subtitled "on care for our common home". This is a big part of the reason of dedicating this ride as the Green Journey 2.0 A Pilgrimage of Hope

"Wilbear Wright" teddy bear - I got Willbear some time in the early 2000's as Dayton was celebrating a century of flight, for visiting 8 of the 17 sites on the Dayton Aviation Trail. Willbear has been on many journeys with me in the past.

Green Peace Crane - from the Bergamo Center John XXIII celebration I recently attended. The fragile green paper crane might be a challenge to survive the whole trek.

Buddy the Bison - I got Buddy at the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Wilberforce, OH. I've had Buddy on trike rides with me in Bryce, Zion, Arches, Death Valley, White Sands, Saguaro National Parks. Buddy is the National Park travel companion

to help encourage kids to get outside to enjoy nature and the park system. I would bring Buddy along in case I get into Mammoth Cave, Everglades and even the Dry Tortugas at the end of the Keys. The government shut down might change those plans.

Puss in Boots - for the recycling value, since I found Puss in Boots on one of my previous trips just lying along the road and picked him up. I'd bring Puss along as his story teaches us about cleverness and the importance of using our wits to overcome challenges

2 other possibilities are Kermit the Frog and the Lorax who have long been my heroes when it comes to environmental consciousness. I do not have these in a plush form now, only these paper facsimiles. I would have to order them online and have quick delivery by Sunday, unless anyone locally has one I could bring along.

Lorax - Can you believe the Lorax was banned by some school districts because its strong environmental message was seen as anti-logging and anti-capitalist, with some arguing it promoted an "environmentalist agenda" and could turn children against the forestry industry.

Kermit the Frog - spokesperson for environmental causes for his subtle message that it's not easy being green. I want to demonstrate that it can be easy and fun to be green on a long distance cycling expedition.

Any thoughts or recommendations?

Day 31 - Sun, Oct. 5, 2025 - 89 km (53 mi) Kettering to Fairfield, OH

Back on the trail again. Cyclepaths friend John Belt was there at the start of the day 8:30 to document the departure from home. John's goal for the day was to ride his age in metric measure, 68 km so he rode with me to a little past Franklin, OH [06] and then headed back home as I turned onward.

I broke out my Franklin Area Recumbent and Trike Society T-shirt for the occasion and photo opportunity.[06] Yes our motto is "we break wind". I'll be stopping at two other Franklin's-Franklin, Kentucky and Franklin, Tennessee.

Stopped along the way for two conversations with folks inquiring about the solar express and the journey. The first was Galen, who I discovered rides a trike also and is a customer Fairfield Cyclery I [06]invited him to the cookout Monday night at Fairfield Cyclery. Galen transitioned from Biking to triking just a couple years ago and was just out walking and was so glad we rode by and he stopped us to ask questions.

The second encounter was with Matt, a young fellow who works at Brook and Whittle who was just in the parking lot for his weekend shift to either end or start as I made a wrong turn. He called out and was interested in the solar panels as he has installed a solar system in his backyard on a shed to power his pool pump and other backyard applications. Matt explained that his company is a leader in the label production industry with packaging that is recyclable and planet-friendly. They really seem to more than greenwash their operation and look to seriously build their business on being sustainable. I had no idea that a wrong turn would educate me on this company I had never heard of before.

I'm starting my first day with sprouts on the go with a hemp mesh bag and my first attempt at growing micro greens as I travel.

Other interesting sights in pictures that I know would never have captured traveling any other way than cycling.

Praise be to you for a beautiful day back on pilgrimage.

Day 32 - Mon, Sept. 6, 2025 - 0 km Paused in Fairfield OH

Spent the day at Fairfield Cyclery for a check up on the Trike and trailer so it's ready for the next 2000 miles to Key West.

After a very brief, morning sprinkle of rain, I was greeted with a huge rainbow visible from the bike shop parking lot. Spent the morning working with Joe Allen to tune up the trike. Then took a short trip down to jungle Jim's just a mile away to make some limited food purchases like avocados, kiwis tortillas, honey, Vegemite, olive oil.

Joe Allen, the owner of Fairfield Cyclery hosted an evening cookout for a group of trike enthusiast customers. I enjoyed meeting Kevin and Mary, David and Marilyn, Bill, Stephanie and Larry Varney. Larry is a local guy who is recognized far and wide for his online reviews of new recumbent bike and trike models.

Joe put out a nice spread for the cookout with traditional picnic items favorites of mine, macaroni salad, potato salad, baked beans, and he was even able to honor my request for black bean burgers, and Leinenkugel Summer Shandy beer.

Responses on mascot selection was mixed so I ended up bringing just about everyone along except Will Bear, who is sort of a local Dayton legend so he'll stay home. I've got Saint Francis bobble head tucked in a pocket upfront with his head out bobbling along the way. I have the delicate green peace crane hanging from my solar panel, laminated versions of the Lorax and Kermit, and Buddy the Bison and Puss in Boots all on board. I thank Eileen Maloney for the large plush Kermit she contributed, however, plush Kermit was too big for the ride I thought, but he certainly is along in spirit.

Looks like thunderstorms and rain all day Monday so I might just hang out here for another day before continuing the trip back into Indiana on Tuesday.

Things to tell Joe about
Seat, webbing riding up.
Solar panel mast shifting
Front tires wearing out.
Install back tire
Front tire alignment.
Oil on chain
Tighten brakes
Trailer
500 watt motor questions to Amerityre
Are the tires rated
Would've backed tire driven by a hub motor at 500 W be too much torque for a rubber solid tire
And how far can you go down on the tires?

Last night I camped out with my hammock strung between two brick pillars in front of Fairfield cyclery. Fortunately, I have plenty of earplugs and the highway traffic calmed down significantly after 10 so I slept pretty well.

Today I won't be riding so much as i'm having Joe at Fairfield Cyclery look over my trike to Make sure it's ready for the next 2000 miles. In the evening, he's hosting a cookout with other trike riders and customers as a sendoff. I'll stay another night here at the bike shop.

I get a daily message from Catholic author Matthew Kelly titled Saint of the Day, Daily Journey with the Saints. Today's saint is Saint Bruno who led a life of silence and contemplation. When I began these long solo adventures, one of my daughters commented that cycling alone would be a lot of "thinking time." I like to think of it as contemplation time.

From Matthew Kelly, "Contemplation is not just for monks and nuns. In truth, we all lead lives of contemplation, but we spend our lives contemplating very different things. What do you contemplate? Is it the riches of the world? Is it every woman who passes you on the street? Do you ponder the latest fashions? The local gossip? Or do you contemplate the wonders of God, the glory of His creation, and the joys of the spiritual life? It is not necessary to go away to a monastery to live a life of contemplation. We are all contemplatives because we are all thinking all the time, and what you contemplate will play a very significant role in the life you live.

The reason prayer and contemplation are so integral to the Christian life is that thought determines action. If you send your thoughts down one road, your actions will follow your thoughts. Thought determines action, and so the actions of your life are determined by your most dominant thoughts.

Consider the heroes of Christianity, the men and women we call saints. They have lived in every place, in every time, and in every culture. Some of the saints were young and some were old. Some were rich and some were poor. Some were educated and others were uneducated. Some had positions of power and authority, and others did not. My point is that you cannot find a more diverse group of people in history than the saints. And yet, the people of their time say exactly the same thing about every single one of them: They brought Jesus to life for us. Why? Because the saints all spent their post-conversion lives pondering the life and teachings of Jesus Christ—the Gospel—and they simply became what they thought."

Day 33 - Tues, Sept. 7, 2025 - 48 km (29 mi) Fairfield, OH Lawrenceburg, IN

I can add the inside of a bike shop now to the list of places I've slept. I had a good night sleep on a very cushy camp pad that Joe provided. Among his many hobbies is outdoor camping and he has plenty of gear. Joe left me with the keys to the shop and he arrived around noon and completed inspections of the trike so I was ready to go just waiting for a window opening without some rain. Radar indicated that there would be no major rainfall after 4 o'clock so things were dry at 3:30 and I left.

I passed through Fairfield and hit the E. River Rd. of the Great Miami river down to Miamitown. I was surprised when the route took me through a cemetery in Miami town.

There was some drizzle and I did get wet but no thunderstorms in the rain was light couldn't take many pictures except for a bright rainbow that came out near Elizabethtown. Route 50 on the Ohio side for several miles was very nice with a 10 foot shoulder.

I'm at a red roof Inn tonight since I started late, was wet and arrived as it was getting dark. Tomorrow I follow along the Ohio river to Madison Indiana, where I have lined up a warm showers destination.

Day 34 - Wed, Oct. 8, 2025 - 30 km (18 mi) Lawrenceburg, IN to intersection at 156 and 56 detour Hill then back to Aurora IN

Took off from Lawrenceburg and wanted to do the section of Trail on the river next to the strip where the hotels were. Turn towards the casino, found a hiker who explained that the trail was up on the levy so I scrambled up the hill with the trike to get to the levy Trail and then went down about a mile and then came back with beautiful view of the river with the coal fired power plant belching smoke into the sky.

Then came back towards Lawrenceburg near the casino had an option of going uphill along the levee or going through the casino Property and hoping to find another approach to the levy trail, but did not find any through all the way through town. Then got on the Dearborn trail at the trailhead. At first, it was very industrial feeling with chain-link fence and a lot of electric power infrastructure then it did get a little bit more natural and there were some children learning stations along the trail. Interesting to find that three men spearheaded the move to the rail trail and their last names began with MUND and were known as the mud brothers.

The trail was cool until it ended south of rising sun then it was on the river route 156 wide at points but then narrow at others until I approach the intersection of 56 and 156 big sign that said detour up the hill towards 56. Josh at the bicycle shop had warned me about this at 56 would be shorter, but it would be up a big hill. meanwhile I called sheriff departments to get an update on the detour if it really was in effect yet And got mixed signals from both locals and sheriff people, and I consulted the Indiana Department of transportation maps, which said that the detour was still in place till 13 October, so I felt like I had no other option than to go up the hill. It did look very steep and it would be a real test of the motor. I got halfway up The motor ground and then stopped. Then I had to pull the trike a half mile up the hill at 10% grades. The hill even had a runaway truck ramp which you don't see often in the Midwest found out later that the hill tops out at 12% grade I was stuck at the top of the hill. Neighbors came to offer me water and M&Ms and I called AAA to see if I could get service and at first was told it would be an hour before a tow truck could come then it was two additional hours. Finally a fellow came right at dusk. He was astounded with the vehicle and had never seen anything like it in the 25 years he has been towing cars 15 cars a day. He was very good about it and got the trike secure on the flatbed and brought me back 12 miles to Aurora at about 30 miles an hour. I took videos of the flashing lights so I got back to Aurora thinking I would secure the bike at the bike shop and then take an Uber back to Lawrenceburg, but then decided to find something closer here locally. I called the police and they suggested going to a rehab center where they would take gas no matter the reason anytime. I stopped there, but The would not answer me knocking on the door so I gave up on that and then found an Airbnb, which coincidentally was right next to the rehab church so for \$158 I had a place to stay overnight. I had a Mexican vegetarian burrito with rice and beans. I use that time to figure out what I was going to do and secure the Airbnb location

Spent time on the phone with EB and Denver. Jason, the owner seem to think it was a controller issue suggest for that long trips like this that I should've had a second controller just in case because it's the first thing to go. Tried to place an order for these items to come overnight to Aurora's bike shop, but Jason said the order would have to come through Joe Allen at Fairfield Cyclery. It got too late in the day and EBO didn't call back for the last time so I did not get the overnight order placed.

Spoke with Joe on the phone and he said he would bring a new controller sometime in the early afternoon. So that is the plan now for him to come and replace with a brand new controller. Not an external one this time.

Day 35 - Thurs, Oct. 9, 2025 - 0 km (0 mi) Aurora, IN

Woke up at the Airbnb, got things organized on the trike again moved it over to a children's park about a half a block away so panels were in the sun collecting juice. Went down to the bicycle museum talked with Josh the owner, then had lunch again at the Mexican Alejandro's Mexican restaurant and tried another vegetarian dish. Came back up the hill to the trike and found that the middle school students from the Fiat Catholic Academy had gathered around and had a lot of questions about the trike. I gave them a card and told them all about it. One of the older boys wish me a good trip.

I explain that I was a former Catholic school principal so it's kind of neat to just share in a casual way Catholic pilgrimage trip.

During lunch, I spoke with both Jason from electric bike outfitters and Joe about what the trike needs as far as new controllers. I asked Joe to give Jason a call just to make sure we have everything that we need.

Can't help but regret not following my gut and taking the river road and Disregarding the detour signs. I might well be in Madison right now if I had avoided the steep hill. I realize up on the hill I left some good bungees. I left two bags of recyclables up there too, and regret not putting a note on them because they are sitting in front of the yard of the people who offered me water and M&Ms. I hope they realize I picked up the trash in front of their yard and was hopefully doing them a favor.

Day 36 - Fri, Oct 10, 2025 - 64 km (40 mi) Aurora to Vevay, IN

Long story. Spent two days here in Aurora, trying to regroup after the failed attempt at detouring up a big hill on Wednesday. Could not have happened in a cooler little Rivertown than Aurora Indiana.

Well, let's talk about my lodging for last night. I wanted to be close to the bicycle shop to catch the delivery of two new controllers. Instructions to UPS were to deliver them into the Studebaker sitting in front of the bicycle shop if the delivery was before 11 AM. This apparently has been common practice with all shipping companies with the bike shop.

I was not going to pay for an Airbnb another night, so after notifying the mayor and the police department, I was authorized to sleep in the alley behind the bike shop. I laid down a tarp, next an inflatable mattress from my hammock, then my Bivy bag, and finally my sleeping bag. I wore layers of clothes and some insulated booties for my feet, and a balaclava for my head. After visiting a couple of the town water holes I headed to bed in the alley about 10 PM. The temperature dipped to 40° might've even made it to 39. This is the coldest night since back in Minnesota earlier on the journey.

After breakfast at the city diner, I headed back to the bike shop and between 10 and 11 sure enough I was there to greet the UPS driver and accept the delivery.

Josh from the bike shop spent a couple hours with my assistance troubleshooting and installing a new controller. When the new controller made no difference, we discovered a wire that had melted. in the end we replaced a \$20 cable and we are back in business, or I should say the pilgrimage moves onward. Much of this was done in consultation with Joe from Fairfield Cyclery, and electric bike outfitters in Denver. This trike has been across the country already and had some modifications made to the E-assist system that have been a mystery.

I finally took off about 1 o'clock and retraced my pedal strokes all the way back to the 156 and 56 Junction where on Wednesday the detour led me up the hill with a 12% grade that taxed the E assist system too much. Today I was disregarding these detour signs and forging along the relatively flat river road on old 156 that has been on and off again closed for the last year for landslide repairs along the road.

I finally did encounter the closure and no cars could get through. I arrived just as the workers were departing. They had used their backhoe, water truck, and asphalt roller to block the highway, along with many white and orange blockades. I was able to move around the cones, blockades and squeeze by the backhoe to get through. There were two other spots along the route today where traffic was reduced to one lane and I had to queue up just like the cars and wait for the lights to allow our platoon of vehicles through each time.

I passed interesting landmarks including the Markland dam & bridge that takes folks across the Ohio river. And not far away is Belterra a huge resort, casino, and golf course. Also passed what looked to be another coal fired power plant on the Kentucky side with five tall smoke stacks.

The last half of the ride was in Switzerland County Indiana, with the final destination of Vevay for the day. Vevay's Main Street was lined with huge Linden and Sycamore trees just as small towns used to have tall trees generation ago. I had read the day before about

this town, known for its sculptures of white goats. This is in memory of Fred, the billy goat who wandered wild on the hillsides around Vevay for 15 years until his relatively recent passing in 2013.

My stay tonight is at the Swiss Ogle Haus Inn. When I stay at a hotel, I usually try to make inexpensive meals in my room in order to offset the cost of lodging. My first crop of micro green sprouts I harvested from the hemp bag that I've had hanging from my solar panel. I've been faithfully watering it three times a day and the yield was bigger than expected. The quarter cup of seeds turned out to be nearly 2 cups of sprouts. So now I have to eat all of these greens somehow. I had some for dinner and will have more for breakfast wrapped up in flour tortillas. With a little hot sauce and avocado, they're not bad.

I see that Louisville is about 50 miles away now so I hope to cross the Ohio river and be in Kentucky tomorrow night.

Day 37 - Sat, Oct 11, 2025 - 89 km (55 mi) Vevay to Charleston, IN

Took off from Vevay a little before at 9am. It was a nice quiet Saturday morning ride with not a lot of traffic. Found a historical marker for Chapman Harris, who fought for his freedom and helped deliver fellow slaves to freedom as part of the underground railroad. Got to Saint Michael's historic Church in Madison while a tour was going on. Then found the African Methodist Evangelical AME church in the north part of Madison that also played a role in the underground railroad.

This is a very cool historic town with many brick buildings, very nicely kept and restored. Many people ride golf carts with golf cart parking in the downtown area. They had a soup stew and chili cook off festival downtown lining both sides of the main street for three or four blocks with music going on. So I hit the town on a very good day. Stopped at the visitor center and watched a short video. There's a historic mansion of one of the early founders who had a lot of money and built a railroads.

Found a lot of murals, one of an Edward Eggleston, called the "Hoosier schoolmaster" an author and historian of Midwestern life in the style of Mark Twain. His mural featured him sitting on a tricycle with multicolored rays, pouring out in all directions. So it was really cool.

So after Madison came the hill that I've been concerned about for days. It was just as long, about a mile, not quite as steep at 6% as the one out of Rising Sun at 12%. But this one has very little shoulder and a big S curve in the middle, which prevents upcoming traffic from seeing me. There are two lanes going uphill. I got up the first maybe quarter mile and was pushing the E assist to its limits, then had to stop. I took on a harness and started pulling the trike up the hill. I walked backwards in order to keep an eye on the traffic and motion for drivers to slow down. Halfway up a county sheriff pulled down his window and said "how about I give you a hand and run my flashers and follow you?" so for the next 20 minutes he did just that about 50 to 100' behind me and I felt very protected.

I passed through the town of Hanover, home of the Hanover College Panthers. Famous graduates include Woody Harrelson and Mike Pence. Google says they were friends in college, hard to believe.

As I passed by the college, I could see their cross country course with a big wooden fence chute, pylons and a finish line. Boy did that bring back a lot of memories of fall cross country meets, the smell of cut grass, running over hills and dales, through woods. Those were really good memories of high school athletics.

Out in the country, I stopped at a farmhouse to switch out batteries and take a little sustenance. Soon after out came the resident on a golf cart to inquire about my contraption. His name is Brett James, and he and his wife had just returned an hour before from Key West. We discovered that we are of the same age just a couple months apart. And he called his wife and daughter down from preparing dinner to see my solar express. They gave me tips on a route to take to get to Charleston State Park and it sounds like they'll be following my trip. They wished me well, even offered for me to stay the night. But I pushed on to take route 62, the most direct and flattest route to the park.

Well, I did get safely to Charleston State Park but disappointed to find that it was absolutely full. Indiana does not have a no turnaway policy so I was out of luck. I simply looked for a hotel and there was only one in Charleston the next town and they had a room so that's where I ended up at a Red Roof under the budget figure of \$75 per night.

I am just a few miles north of Louisville so will pass through the town tomorrow.

Day 38 - Sun. Oct. 12, 2025 - 83 km (51 mi) ^{OBJ} Charleston, IN to West Point, KY through Louisville

I will start with pictures of the day beginning with tonight's camping spot on the Ohio river watching barges go by.

“You’re only here for a short visit. Don’t hurry, don’t worry. And be sure to smell the flowers along the way.”

– WALTER HAGEN

Terms for measuring depth

call the lead man
passing the word.
Quarter less four
2 Wayne
Quarter Wayne
Mark Twain
No bottom

People who moved goods

Steve door
Roustabout
Bargeman
Waggoner.
Drayman
boatman

Different boats on the river

Steamboat
Keil boat
John boat
Kentucky boat
Canoe
Broad horn.
Flat boat.
Porsche boat.

Riverside businesses

Chandler
Boat store
Grocer.
Dry goods
Ironware
Confectioners
Oats, and grains.

Measures of goods

Hogs head of tobacco,
a tears of sugar,
pig of iron

Rivers forms

Stream
Harbor
Channel
Slough,
Eddie
Chute

Woke up at 5:30 and started the process of packing up by stuffing my travel stuff into stuff sacks and when daylight appeared, I still could not see the Ohio river a heavy blanket of fog covered the river banks.

The Muldraugh Hill was as advertised, a beast to get up I powered up about a quarter mile, but it's the first half mile that is the most steep at 6%. I ended up pulling the trike and trailer up the full mile.. There was a 6 foot shoulder and then a rumble strip between me and the traffic and it was a straight shot up so people could see me in advance.

For most of the day I was on a shoulder on Lincoln Parkway a high speed divided highway, but I felt particularly good and safe from Elizabethtown south about 6 or 8 miles. Then I veered off onto country roads and happily connected with US bicycle route USBR 23. As soon as I hit the sign then all the dogs came out. I'm not sure who let the dogs out but house after your house had dogs running up to the edge of their property, but none really bothered me.

There was one more big hill before Mumfordsville that I got halfway up and then the E assist was straining to a degree that I had to then had to "hike a trike" with the harness the remaining distance.

Since Elizabethtown, my focus has been getting to the Green River Park and Arboretum. My green journey would not be complete without visiting the Green River and camping along it. The hill was so steep going down my brakes barely stopped me. It's at least 100 m in elevation from the bridge above down into the park. So first thing in the morning, I will have to hike the trike up the hill one baby step at a time and that'll take about a half an hour just to get on the road again.

That evening at Green River Park and Arboretum I met Sky and her dog Amber. They are van camping three weeks in, out of a Transit low roof van. She hand painted her van named Beatrice and has an organic mattress on a frame inside. She has only done free camping since her departure from Arkansas. She has documented her adventure and plans to write a book called "Van camping on a budget" We traded pictures of RV vehicles.

"No friendship is an accident." – O. HENRY, *HEART OF THE*

Day 40 - Tues, Oct. 14, 2025 - 47 km (29 mi) Munfordsville to Mammoth Cave, KY

Alarm off at 5:30 out of the sack at six, Off the bat up the hill. got about 100 yards and it's all I could physically do. A water department worker stopped at the treatment plant at the base of the hill. I came back down the hill after securing the trike with rocks at a historic 1810 home of Elijah Creel. I asked the young man if he could help me. He said yes, but he had to do a few numbers and then would assist. He came back with two other city workers and they hauled my rig up the hill the remaining distance like pack mules (that was their description not mine). They said liability wise they could not tow me up the hill with the truck.

Then took off on route USBR 23 across the big bridge over the park and the Green River. I stopped at a historical sign that spoke of Morgan's Raiders forming a regiment of 84 volunteers at a church nearby. Across the street I heard morning announcements broadcasting from the school with the Pledge of Allegiance and a minute of silence. I noticed that the mascot for the school is the Raiders, commemorating Morgan and his Raiders of the confederacy that made raids into Indiana and Ohio from confederate Kentucky during the Civil War.

Made it to the town of Horse Cave next to the interstate, I saw kangaroos and large birds that I thought at first were ostriches in pens. Found out later, they were emus. I figured I was getting close to Kentucky Down Under that someone had told me about where they keep Australian animals and tours next to an old Onyx Cave attraction. Apparently they are seeing a lot of business right now with tours at Mammoth Cave closed due to the government shut down. I chose not to take the senior discount at \$19.95 for the tour which I would have to wait around for an hour and a half. Instead, I would keep on trucking down the trail through Mammoth Cave, which should be delight to travel the US bicycle route 23 through the park.

I did stop at our Lady of the Cave Catholic Church. So far as I could see there is no apparition of Mary in a cave. There was an Our Lady of Lourdes grotto in front of the church, not as big in grand as the one at Mount St. John. OL of the Cave is a jubilee shrine for the year of hope. I spent some prayer time there and I picked up a wooden cross that I've added to my collection of mascots and inspirations.

I don't often talk about ailments along the way, primarily because I have very few. But I will spend one day today, talking about a bit of a saddle sore right on my tailbone. I stopped in a Dollar General store looking for some kind of donut cushy object that would relieve the pain. I didn't know exactly what I was looking for. I enjoined the help of one of the cashiers and did not ask her specifically for anything

but some creative thinking to solve the problem and she found a child's travel neck rest. I asked if it was only a dollar and she laughed. No it has Mickey Mouse on it so that Disney feature jacked the price up to \$9.99. I went ahead and purchased it, and it seems to be relieving some of the agitation

I arrived at the Mammoth Cave visitor center about 2:30 so there were rangers working at the visitor center, but all tours are canceled due to the government shut down. I have been to the cave twice, once as a child and once as an adult, so I was not as disappointed as one fellow who had to explain to his family that he had not checked on tour reservations since the shut down and he and his family were quite disappointed. I spent time in the visitor center museum learned a lot from the video including the fact that there are 390 miles of chambers in Mammoth Cave.

I got a campsite right next to fellow who introduced himself as Fahad from Texas. He was overseas in the Middle East during wartime as a contractor. He found out less than a month ago in September that he was diagnosed with bone cancer throughout his body and that he has only months to live. Rather than stay in a hospital for treatments he took off the day after his 50th birthday on a cross country camping trip. He is visiting national parks across the country. He is refusing treatments and simply going to live the best with what time he has. He invited a few others over at his campsite, and we talked about health and matters of life and death for about an hour.

Mammoth Cave has a little grocery/laundry/post office and showers about 100 yards from the camping area. I brought my batteries over to get topped off in the laundry mat and meanwhile volunteered picking up trash around the park for about 40 minutes and out purchasing a lifetime senior pass to the national parks, because Michele's does not work for me without her with me.

I have to check, but I think tomorrow's destination is Franklin Kentucky not far from the border of Tennessee.

Fahad told me how he had sent pictures of waterfalls to his two boys and they ask dad where are you thinking that there would be no place like this anywhere in the US. Their past family trips have been to Asia into Indonesia where they saw waterfalls there. Fahad's response was yes these waterfalls are in the US. You just have to get out and look for them. .

Mammoth cave people

Brian, the nurse Middle East veteran

Mohanad cancer

Wesley barefoot

Couple from Columbus

Andy and Mark from Portland together 30 years, dimension, little dog E bike flat tire

"The land knows you, even when you are lost." – ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

Day 41 - Wed, Oct. 15, 2025 - 107 km (66 mi) Mammoth Cave to Franklin, KY

I bid so long to my Mammoth Cave camping neighbor Fahad, and gave him a big farewell hug. I can't imagine what's he is going through now. As we walked back to his camp, he visibly was in pain. Simply walking he said the whole right side of his body is painful. The bone cancer metastasized throughout his body is getting worse.

I took off on the gravel trail for less than a half mile and then got on the Park Road. The roads are very nice and smooth as were all of the roads on the route for most of the day. I only encountered two potholes all day. I hit one of them and sheared off the bolt holding the trailer together. I jerryrigged some things with zip ties, duct, tape, and what remained of the bolt and it held all the way until Franklin where I immediately got to an Ace Hardware store and got some more hardware to help shore it up it's still not the best, but it should hold for sometime.

Out of the blue I met a fellow named Jason Childers at a crossroads when I was having difficulty with my phone. He was so excited to see my rig and knew that I must be doing a long distance cross country kind of trip. He is a cycling, advocate and long distance adventure cyclist himself and we spent about a half an hour talking. We shared numbers names and corresponded with a couple pictures right away. I showed him my path on US bicycle route 23 and he learned a couple things about the path that is in his backyard. Both of us agree there could be better signage but as for the road surface itself, it is the best I've seen anywhere low traffic country roads that are well paved.

The day was filled with rolling hills, which are a lot of fun up and down with just enough momentum to get you almost to the top of the next hill. There were a couple occasions I had to get out the harness and pull up steep hills. I was constantly changing gears and shifting levels in order to have the best gearing and least strain on the E assist.

Day 42 - Thurs, Oct. 16, 2025 - 93 km (58 mi) Franklin, KY to Nashville, TN

My day started in Franklin Kentucky. The perfect opportunity to wear my Franklin Area Recumbent Trike Society T-shirt think about the acronym that would result from that organization. I received the shirt as an honorary member of the Franklin Indiana group The Greene journey has also passed through Franklin, Ohio, and hopefully make it to Franklin, TN.

Had a nice day at the dad's bluegrass campground. The owner is Jim a graduate of Kettering Fairmont West high school.

Near the Franklin courthouse and visitor center there was a chamber event going on. A young lady came out and said are you the guy on TikTok crossing the country? Apparently someone has posted about my journey.

Met cyclist Mel Davenport while passing a cemetery and then later at Bike Americana bike shop, he had suggested I stop by up ahead. along with the owner Mike who is away taken care of paperwork. Later on met Jesse along the route who offered me a room overnight in his home and he was very interested in my ride. In both cases, I spent 15 to 20 minutes explaining my ride and rig. I had phone issues charging right in downtown Nashville, where I could've had an opportunity for some cool pictures crossing the pedestrian bridge right into downtown Nashville.

In an incredible coincidence Tyler saw me coming across the bridge while on his bicycle to a volunteer event. He knew it had to be me and we had a short discussion in passing. Trust me there were very spectacular city views and felt very safe on all the bike lanes throughout town. There were bike lanes, often with bollards, entirely from outside Nashville all the way into Tyler's house on the southwest side of Nashville.

It was dark by the time I arrived at Tyler's house. a

His directions to get into the backyard, into his lower level apartment and a place to store my trike were very good. I waited up for Tyler to get home from his volunteer gig. When he arrived at 11:30 we probably talked for half hour or more of a shared art adventures cycling. Tyler has had some long distance tours across the US.

I also got to meet Fran Tyler's Fran. What a delightful lady yeah show me that told me about her garden and her little space back here the bamboo garden. She had me imagine what it would've look like with all the ferns and all the flowers and everything so I said I can kind of picture it yeah OK yeah she show told me about her best friend living over here. Yeah she said something about she supplied all the Zinnia's for the wedding.

Day 43 - Fri, Oct, 17, 2025 - 95 km (59 mi) Nashville, TN to Gordon House historic site

Wow, what a day from Nashville onto the Natchez trace. It's so hard to recount all the stops and conversations. So glad I have all these pictures for memories. I'm posting this about a week later. Big thanks to Tyler Long for a night's stay with Warm Showers and to Fran his landlady who was delightful to meet and hear about her stories of travel abroad and to experience her backyard garden.

Sleep 44 - Sat, Oct. 18, 2025 - 44 km (27 mi) Gordon House to Merriweather Lewis, Campground, TN on the Natchez trace

Erich from muscle Shoals

Took 12 days for horses to carry mail from Nashville to Natchez 37 miles per day

Mike and Joanne, have their card met me at the Falls took interest in the trike and a little sports car that they attach to their RV that they live out of now they sold their home. He's had three knee surgeries and a hip surgery retired traveling the country Seeing national parks presidential libraries.

Eric first person I met at the Merriweather Louis Campground disabled in the handicap spot offered space in his teardrop camper if it gets bad.

John and Denise from Arkansas likewise traveling all over Denise has to retire yet John has had 21 jobs has low solar all his life put solar on top of his camper and his charging one of my batteries with his access, solar energy Offered me bratwurst and potato salad. I couldn't refuse.

Roman the own business in tying down securing homes mobile homes, he uses ABS material, same material as Legos to plastic his business staff of 13 was joining him for barbecue. He makes his own barbecue he thinks he is the best and so do his customers, and I plugged in at the shelter house where he was about to have his party and then knocked out the fuse. He was very good about it. He said if that is my biggest problem all day then things are pretty good. They ended up having to call in the camp host and she brought out an extension cord so they could have power to keep the Barbecue meat at temperature. He says that the key to good barbecue is temperature.

Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS): A common thermoplastic polymer known for its impact resistance, rigidity, and durability.

I'm at a gentleman and his daughter hosting a party for his business staff at noon. I arrived at 11:30 and wanted to power up the Jack and to the E bike batteries. But there was no one at the office I phoned the number provided and let them know what my needs were for Power And was hoping to get breakfast, but everything was closed up. I went over to the shelter house and asked the gentleman if there was additional outlets besides the one he was using for his barbecue and he said yes so I plugged in the Jack battery no problem then I went to add The charging systems for the batteries themselves and then I heard the dreadful click and knew that we had blown a fuse or breaker. I went to other outlets on the building on light poles and nothing seem to be open. I found another one at a campsite. Meanwhile, the gentleman hosting the barbecue want to make sure his meat was at temp so he called the camp host and she brought a long extension cord and they hooked into another campsite. The gentleman the barbecue King I will call him has made barbecue for as many as 500 people for big church functions and he says the key is and he knows his responsibilities to keep it to temp so nobody gets Sick. He thinks he's got the best barbecue or at least people tell him he does that he should go into business.

I told him that on my journey I'm trying to do Plant based and wondered if he had added his barbecue sauce to things like brussels sprouts or cauliflower And he said he nodded, but I don't think he really has experimented much in that way at least for today he has pork and he invited me over. I said I may have to break my fast to try some of the best Tennessee barbecue

Yeah, entering thoughts part of this Natchez trace is the trail of Native Americans further west. Jackson Falls. I spent time there thought it was dried up due to climate change. Well it's what they call a pirate stream that over 1 million years ago. Water got diverted in a different way and so the falls do not run like they used to 1 million years ago

Day 44 - Sat, Oct. 18, 2025 - 44 km (27 mi) Gordon House to Merriweather Lewis, Campground, TN on the Natchez trace

Got a kick out of the "Sheboss" site where the Chickasaw natives had a guest house on the trail. It was a chickasaw woman who managed the inn and her husband spoke little English. Whenever asked about staying at the inn he would point to his wife and say "she boss", There were two big white dogs there at the park. It was kind of eerie. They seem like ghost dogs of a past, perhaps the spirit of the historical inn hosts.

Thunderstorms are expected all night from midnight to 7 AM and the forecast proved to be true as it rained the entire time I really hunker down my hammock and thankfully, we did not have to move out of the campground to a safer hollow nearby, which was the emergency plan.

I was able to sleep the entire night so it was a memorable sleep with rain pelting my hammock all night. And some cultures time is marked by sleeps so I'm thinking for the remainder of my trip. I will record each days events and title them with the number of sleep it is.

Millersburg Hill make a note of it for future reference. Great going down would've been a harness to get up.

Dawn John turner

Sleep 45 - Sun, Oct. 19, 2025 - 100 km (62 mi) Merriweather Lewis Campground TN to Colbert Ferry bicycle Campground, AL

My destination for the day was the Meriwether Lewis historical site and campground. There is a monument at the grave of Merriweather Lewis, 1/2 of the Lewis and Clark team that explored the Louisiana territory. I did not know this about Merriweather Lewis, that he presumably took his life at age 35 while on the Natchez Trace heading towards Washington DC carrying all his memoirs. It seems kind of strange. I'm thinking ahead to visiting Key West. Ernest Hemingway is celebrated as a former resident of the Keys. He also took his own life. Meanwhile, I'm inspired by a gentleman I read about recently named Steve Fugate who's been across the country a half dozen times pulling a small Burley trailer with a big sign above him that says "love life" celebrating life and was so inspired to hike because of the suicide of his own children.

Stopped at the welcome center in Collinwood. Got some tips from the fellow working the space. There were big quilts hanging from the ceiling. Lots of brochures and maps of the Trace. He gave me directions to the Q barbecue joint the only nice place to eat in town.

So I went to the Q and got mac & cheese with a Alabama white BBQ sauce, fried pickles with red barbecue sauce, coleslaw, and soup with orzo with a little bit of chicken and to complete the meal ice cream and honey cake. I'm still trying to go plant based and sometimes meat is just a garnish.

I really pushed hard the last 27 miles from the visitor center to Colbert ferry. I hypermiling or kilo maxing trying only to use three batteries for the day to do 100 km. So I was turning off the system going on all the sharp and gradual downhills and being very conservative of power. So that meant I was on my own power about half the time and then just used the assist on the uphill.

Sure enough as usual. The destination was at the top of an incline, and my battery was nearing its end of charge. I went to the bicycle only camp area, but it was very rustic. So I went over to the picnic area where there is the bathrooms and found an outlet that I could charge so I decided to camp in the picnic area. There probably are no Rangers on staff now with the shut down so I shouldn't have to worry about breaking the rules. It seems that water is turned off at all of the sites. I'm hearing coyotes in the background and a highway nearby occasionally people come and park and use the restroom.

Sleep 46 - Mon, Oct. 20, 2025 - 105 km (66 mi) Colbert Ferry bicycle campground, AL to Tupelo, MS

The last four days on the Natchez Trace have been amazing. I have to catch up on several reports, but I'll start with this one for today. I have plenty of pictures, memories and new friendships to share about the previous days, but simply did not have good connection to the outside world to upload any journals or posts.

Realizing that traveling by trike with an unobstructed 180 view from a lounge chair on wheels at 10 miles an hour allows me to see pinecones on the Loblolly pines, gumballs on the sweet gum trees, and even acorns, still clinging to the branches of oak trees. If I had better bird identification skills, I'd say I could ID birds from their calls, they're silhouettes and their flight patterns from the seat of a trike because I can't hear and see nature right in front of me. During this trip I've seen murmurs of starlings and impressive V formations of geese, all preparing to head south.

The last picture in this series was taken by Michael Gomez, a professional photographer who was following and photographing cyclists on the trail. The picture you see here is just one he took with his phone camera. The prize shot was taken from the hill above the road with me in the foreground, and the three Pharr mounds in the background. Just before I came into the picture he had been excited seeing and photographing a red Corvette. He said my solar express rig took the cake and even surpassed the Corvette. He says there's a good chance my picture with the Pharr mounds in the background may even make it into his book about the Natchez Trace.

After 183 spectacular miles of the total 444 mi. length of the Natchez Trace I am going to move off the trace and start heading for Georgia through Alabama. There have been warnings about a closure of the trail south of Tupelo. It was my decision even before not to complete the Natchez trace because it takes me farther away from Florida. Hopefully far enough south now to avoid mountains of the southern Appalachia.

I shared with Michael Gomez that I worked at Mount City National Monument for the park service. This was the coolest national park there Little did I know on the signage interpretive for the farm mound was a map showing the routes of the Hopewell people and it included Mountain city national Monument on it. What a coincidence this is the only person I believe I've told on the whole trip so far that I used to work for the park service.

Michael Gomez doing a book on the Natchez trace

Sleep 47 - Tues, Oct. 21, 2025 - 107 km (67 mi) Tupelo to Aberdeen, MS

Got started about 9 AM this morning. My first stop was at a post office to send a box full of paperwork I had collected and parts that I didn't need for the trip to reduce some weight. On the way to the post office the skies let loose, and I ducked into an old car wash, which provided shelter.

Upon leaving the car wash, I noticed a car parked with a bicycle hanging off the back and then some monuments and wandered over to the small park. I found a national park service interpretive board about the black union regiment who played a role in the battle of Tupelo. I saw a fellow wandering around, taking photographs of the monuments and point-blank asked him are you a cyclist historian. And his response was is there a problem? I forgot that I was decked out kind of strangely with my black sunglasses helmet, safety vest

and may have looked a bit imposing. I responded. Oh, I'm just parked behind you with my bicycle and then his reaction softened and he asked if I was running on solar power and I said yes, and then he began to talk about the significance of the battles of the Civil War in the area. So indeed, he was a civil war, historian and cyclist.

I decided to go back to my original plan which was to cycle down to Witch Dance bicycle campground on the Natchez trace trail and then cut over to be sure I was safely south enough to have more level roads. I really didn't have time to reroute anything different so I thought it best to go back to the original plan if the Witch Dance looked OK I would stay there otherwise move on to Aberdeen Mississippi for a full hundred kilometer day.

There were some cool stops along the Natchez trace, including the Bynum mounds and the Chickasaw council house. I saw two young ladies on horses off the trail and two cats at the mounds which like the dogs that she boss site felt a bit eerie. I arrived at the Witch Dance campground about four in the afternoon realizing I still had a few hours of light and I felt good so I pressed on to Aberdeen.

On the road to Aberdeen I stopped at the Dollar General for a pitstop. Next-door was a manufacturer/assembler of modular homes with a few models out front. While riding and carrying so little the mind wonders about living in a tiny house and these modular homes looked fascinating.

Getting off the Natchez trace onto Mississippi Route six the road was less hilly, but had joints in the road surface every 10 feet, often with potholes at each crack so it was a rough ride and I had to slow down in order that the trailer would not take such a beating. I made it into Aberdeen at dark.

I found a giant cross towering next to the America's best value inn. If camping is not available or practical I typically select the lowest cost 2 star motels for my sleep. Too bad there are not the network of albergues - small dormitory style hostels like you would find in Europe along the pilgrimage routes. I've been successful at keeping the rate down to less than \$75 a night and most of these places include free breakfast. I try not to run the air, don't use any of the single use hygiene items. And many times I'll prepare one of my dehydrated camp meals for dinner in the motel room, rather than go out to eat.

Sleep 48 - Weds. Oct. 22, 2025 - 77 km (47 mi) Aberdeen MS to Winfield. AL

Another incredible day on the road with chance, meetings, and unusual things that catch my eye.

I rolled into a town called Guin, Alabama named after the founder, whose last name was Guin. The town center featured a tribute to military forces. I stopped for a photograph and read about a tornado that struck the town in 1974 out of the blue, no pun intended the towns mayor elect Bobby Bellew met me and introduced himself and explained that it was indeed the same day as the Xenia tornado. The tornado here in Guin leveled the downtown and took the lives of 23 local people.

Guin is part of a five county area noted for its lumber industry and the making of model homes. A division of the military from here was sent to Iraq to rebuild schools and hospitals, no doubt because of their skills in the building industry.

I had to stop for a cookie dough milkshake at Jack's fast food restaurant, one of my very few fast food stops in the last two months. Another tribute to my father who loved ice cream. I enjoy using that reason to feed my penchant for ice cream too.

I'll let the captions tell the story about the other pictures of the day.

Sleep 49 - Thurs, Oct. 23, 2025 - 58 km (34 mi) Winfield to Jasper, AL

Michael Broughton of Winfield Alabama met him at the family hotel Book is titled "Just one more", will be coming out on Amazon soon book about I life. He was raised in the church Church but when he Turned 18 he started drinking and bars topless joints or the next 72 nothing DUI

Met Kevin at the crossroads near Eldridgeworks for the Eldridge water department worked for 27 years with Chevron. He said mark my words Cole will come back to keep on the lights.

Not not sure if the motel I stayed at last night would've garnered even a single star. It isn't listed on Google maps in any fashion, but it was adequate. The owners it seemed were in a bit of a rush to check me in yesterday afternoon. It looked like they were on their way to

some kind of I'm guessing religious function. I noticed a sand painting right in front of the office door very intricately and beautifully done to celebrate Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, which apparently is going on now.

I was told originally \$55. As I hemmed and hawed about staying, then the price dropped to \$50. The owner said he could even go lower so he blurted out \$45 and said I could ask for even a lower price so I said well OK how about \$40 and that's what we settled on. I don't think I've ever tried to negotiate a discount on a motel stay before other than asking for typical discounts for AAA, AARP etc., but this one was pretty easy. Lately I have been going online as soon as I arrive at the hotel or motel and getting a rate usually 10% less than the rate they might quote over the phone when I called to see if they have availability.

They were impressed with the solar express trike and the distance I had traveled and had a lot of questions. Maybe I could have bargained for a free stay.

Well was a short distance a little over 30 miles to Jasper. I chose to stop there rather than risk getting caught without either camping or motel option options between Jasper and Birmingham.

The one camping option it looked like, called spooky Hollow campground. I asked if they could accommodate a tent or hammock. They said no we only do RVs. I think I'm going to start a movement for truth in advertising so that no campground can advertise itself as a campground unless they accommodate tents or hammocks if they only allow RVs, then it should be called an RV resort.

I have downloaded the "Boondocking" app. Believe it or not it was just recently on this trip that I have been introduced to the term Boondocking, which I understand to mean "free camping". There were no sites within 30 miles of Jasper Alabama listed on the site further away included places like Cracker Barrel and Walmart parking lots, maybe be fine for an RV or camper but not suitable for tent or hammock camping. maybe the Boondocking app will be helpful when Michele and I go on our next Van camping adventure.

Met some interesting folks today. These are all spontaneous chance meetings, and usually the conversation starts with "what is that you are riding?"

Rolling into a little town called Glen Allen I saw a historic sign and mural painted on the city buildin. A lady just entering the door of the building, waved as I passed by and I circled around to get a picture and I met the Jennifer, the Asst clerk. For Glen Allen a town of about 500. She said and assistant mayor were out of town for the day, so I joked that she then must be in charge of the. I mentioned that I was from Ohio and then she said that she was born in Pioneer Ohio up in Northwest Ohio somewhere near Montpelier. Her friends and family tease her that people come up to her and tell her their life story. I did not begin telling her my life story. We did joke how easy it is for people without any provocation to share their whole life story. I assured her I wasn't gonna ask her life story. So I was on my way and on the road again within a few minutes after Jennifer agreed to be photographed in front of the town sign.

Earlier in the day just as I was leaving the motel a truck pulled up and the fellow was about to enter the room next to mine and asked how my day was going, and I said fine. He had questions about the adventure and then began to tell his life story which he says will be in a book at the publishers now, soon to be available on Amazon titled "just one more" about his life as a welder for petroleum notably in Saudi Arabia And Venezuela. The book. Is largely about his battle with booze and return to the church.

I'm met another fellow at crossroads literally near Eldridge Alabama. Kevin is a waterworks employee for the city. He worked 27 years for Chevron and asked me to mark his words that the coal reserves in Alabama. Will one day be reopened and will keep the lights on in America. I pointed out that I was running on solar power, and the impressed with my distance of travel and mode transportation not so much about the solar. Three times we he shook hands during the conversation and he blessed me on my way.

My last stop of the day was victorious restaurant, cafeteria style with good home cooking. I went with all the plant-based options available, including turnip greens among those eating. There was a look alike of Jimmy Carter, eating solo and I had to snap a picture.

And there was a group of six gentlemen eating and sharing stories I did not get a photo of. They walked out of the restaurant coincidentally in order of height, tallest to shortest and asked me about my adventure once outside. I asked if they come to eat here often and they said no they were just all getting together for the first time since there deployment in Iraq years ago. They all had veteran hats on and were part of the division from this part of Alabama that went over to rebuild after the destruction. They built schools and hospitals. I thanked them for their service.

Sleep 50 - Fri., Oct 24, 2025 - 77 km (47 mi) Jasper to Birmingham, AL

Where do I begin on this day?

Well, I started riding from Jasper. I was on a four lane divided state highway that provided a 10 foot shoulder and a rumble strip as protection from other vehicles. In video game fashion I did have to dodge debris on the shoulder including branches, shredded tires, rocks, glass. In some places it was recently swept, in other places, the shoulder narrowed and was covered with debris. The advantage of this route is that it was relatively direct to Birmingham and any hills (there were plenty) were gentler up and down. I would not recommend this route to anyone else.

Once in Birmingham, I made a beeline for the Birmingham civil rights national monument. I don't like to miss chances to visit national parks to stamp my NPS passport, I knew there would be a good chance it would be closed, with the government shut down, but I also knew that there would be some outdoor features.

So the NPS site was closed, but the Birmingham Institute of Civil Rights was open with exhibits chronicling the civil rights story in Birmingham and the United States. The Museum was interesting and I learned again more history that I was never taught or at least don't remember. And as a bonus, the gift shop carried the national Park service stamp.

I then headed out towards the direction of Irondale looking for the Red Roof Inn. I somehow got on a cool urban trail called the Rotary Trail, which led me to the hip side of town with restaurants and breweries. I noticed a logo on a building called Red Mountain Recyclery which caught my eye. I wasn't quite sure it was bike related, but there was a bike tire appearing in the logo so I went to check it out and by chance the director of this nonprofit, formerly known as "Trips for kids", which is a League of American Bicyclists program to get young urban people out on long distance bike rides. I asked if he was open on Friday night and he said, "no, but you can come on in and I'll show you around." We introduced ourselves. His name is Brent Marshall. There aren't a whole lot of Brents in the world. The ones I've met have all been exceptional people and Brent was no exception. When sharing about my adventure, I mentioned that I'd even had stayed in a bike shop along the way which led to an invitation to stay at this one. Brent left me with the keys as he was heading out for a work related event with his day job as a facility manager for a school.

I then headed out to Saw's soul food restaurant. I asked if I could have the loaded fries with sweet potato fries instead of regular potato fries and Mr. Wilson the proprietor obliged and scratched his head and said you know I might put that on the menu. So I got a heaping stack of sweet potato, fries covered with cheese, sour cream, chives, broccoli and just a hint of bacon as a garnish.

After Saws, then I headed back to the bike shop and right next-door is the Good People brewing company. They have a "leave no trace" logo and their in-house restaurant is called "Trail magic" These are all themes of my pilgrimage ride.

Tomorrow I have about 120 km to the trailhead of the Chief Ladiga Trail. I had downloaded a route to this location from Ride with GPS. I asked Brent if he thought it was a good route. Brent knows the person here in Birmingham, who created the route And thinks it's very similar to the one he's done before himself so I feel more confident about this route tomorrow.

Red Mountain Recyclery
Brent Marshall

Brian Toone. Sanford Univ math & Computer professor
Tune cycling online website
Number ride. 250 x 250 miles

You got the bicycle wheel recycle yeah recycle if they heard yeah I don't know. I'm one in all our stuff so I've been riding trikes for for 12 years now, so I like to be inclusive of all cycles. So I try to make it cycles and everything I do so in Dayton it was bike bike Miami Valley this whole we've got 350 miles of paved trails and it's just bicycling. It's great and so this nonprofit organization advocacy group for the whole city is called bike Miami Valley and then they have chapters in each city Bike Centerville, bike bike, yellow spring bike this bike that and I thought on a trike and there's other cycles out there so let's go cycle Kettering because we have two bike shops named by that bike in their name for Kettering so I thought just to avoid some confusion. Let's go with the cycle kind of thing and that was a big deal to convince them to go with the cycle Kettering Name because they didn't stay within the brand of this bike this bike that but my daughter's a graphic artist she made a nice logo like it with a site with a bike wheel you know and and then they checked it. Oh yeah, she's good. She's professional, and it was really nice logo and everything so I said well yeah you're gonna save money if you go with my logo or my daughter's logo and everything and Anna so we broke the mold and we cycle. Kettering is our little logo and name of the six chapters of bike Miami Valley so but we do stuff a few. I didn't think we do so many rides But that that's one thing just getting from one end of town to the other and taking people out and doing that you know, get them comfortable riding in our community and that's it. We have speakers and people talk about bikes fact our last meeting was at the bicycles for all place yeah Well it wasn't for me because we've had trouble getting we had free space at the library at the library is gonna charge public library. You know they are getting funded

like they were and so so I gotta find a new place so that meeting was a field trip so let's go because this bicycle was founded in Kettering and then they moved it today and let's let's go find out. I encourage everybody bring your donated bikes and people brought some donations and stuff and then we got to see behind the scenes on the night when they were in business about the bike shop so then they have volunteer their entirely all the you know they get dozens of people that work on the bikes put them together and fix them up and stuff, but they were pretty Empty in comparison to times I've seen them so they had gotten through the whole summer and given away, they probably had a major giveaway or something and then it builds like in the winter like from now on through the winter now people probably bike a little bit more around here than what they wouldn't and date and so the seasonally it's probably a different but Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah right anytime of the year. Yeah, yeah I'm heading that way. Yes, that's next Atlanta. Yes, I've got it laid out and I don't know exactly how it's gonna get through Atlanta last year. I was here for the national championship. My son and I came for the football game so we got an Airbnb somewhere west of the stadium and I had wanted to ride down there the day of the game and find a place to park. I did it the day before and then my son isn't the biggest bicyclist. I had two folding bikes I brought down. I got my riding in, but it was cold. That's why we needed it. It was it snowed it snowed like a week before big blizzard here yeah you might've got the same weather yeah yeah so so yeah so I just downloaded. This is probably part of it on ride with GPS. Somebody did had a ride. I just put in keywords Birmingham to chief Ladiga, and so I've got that right on presuming that's good. They will get me to chief Ladega OK OK

Sleep 51 - Sat, Oct. 25, 2025 - 127 km (79 mi) Birmingham to Anniston, AL

"Choosing to have joy is not naively thinking everything will be easy. It is courageously believing that there is still hope, even when things get hard." – **MORGAN HARPER NICHOLS**

The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands, and then work outward from there."
– Robert Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

Ten miles into the day I had an urge for a second constitution of the morning and as I passed under an interstate and came out the other side, there were signs for a sprawling Buc-ee's roadside oasis. I've been to just one before and thought OK I do need to go so let's go see. I rode in through a maze of gas pumps and cars and parked on the sidewalk apron right next to the entrance.

I marched into Buc-ee's and after taking care of business in their famous restrooms, I was overwhelmed with the selection of items one could purchase here, everything from fresh tortillas, jerky, clothing apparel, fudge and sundry trinkets of all kinds. It was like a department store, deli, grocery all in one. I asked the clerks at the front of the store if there were any bicycling related items for sale. And they said no, they did not.

Normally, when I visit a convenience store, gas station, or Dollar General I will purchase a very inexpensive treat item. Here at Buc-ee's I did not and figured no one would notice. So I left slightly empty-handed, there was nothing I needed or wanted. I did however leave a deposit heated toilet seats.

I asked a lady out front of the store who was part of the sanitation staff. I expressed how much I like stopping at Buc-ee's and I asked her if it was my imagination or not, but are the toilet seat seats heated. She said I probably got lucky and was in a stall where the heat vents above must have shot down and warmed the seats so that coming in from the cold outside it might've had the sensation of being a heated seat. I told her thank you for the information and she replied, "I like your car." to my recumbent trike.

As I circled around to get a picture of my trike in front of a large peace, love and Buc-ee's mural I observed that virtually the whole section of pumps in that area of the lot were empty, but that was just 14 of the total 120 pumps that were unoccupied. A series of Mercedes EV charging stations were all empty as well.

Just after leaving Buckys, I got a phone call from a fellow named Christian, who said he had found a bag with my address on it. So one of my dry bags with all my food items had somehow slipped through three bungees.

I asked the fellow if he could bring the bag to me. I offered him \$20 for his time, but he said he was sorry he could not leave his work site. So he hung it from the mailbox. I started heading back but calculated the amount of time wasted running all the way back and down a big hill and back up the hill would cost me so I called an Uber and one arrived in just a few minutes by coincidence the driver's name was Christian also. He took me down. We got the bag I offered to pay him for the return trip and he said don't bother. Just write him a good review so I did follow up with a good review and I was back on my way with less than a half an hour lost in time.

I had a pitstop-battery change lunch Siri in a big crosshatched no driving near a interstate offramp.

I cruised along on on route 78 and then 144. I stopped at a Family Dollar and picked up an ice cream sandwich and went to the restroom. I changed the battery. Not even a half mile passed. I had to change the battery again as I had rotated the wrong one. 10 miles later I was approaching the city of Anniston and had just gone through Alexandria when I needed to change the battery again and could not find my keys. A lady pulled up and a lady also came calling across from her yard apparently the two ladies knew each other both offered to help. I said that I had lost keys to my batteries and they offered to help look for them so I gave them my information. I had a second set of keys so I made the battery change and then headed on into Anniston. I ended up staying at the McClelland. In after taking a look around at the Michael Tucker trailhead for the chief La I didn't see much in the way of camping options there even though the trailhead bathrooms and signage all were very nice and you. I then took the chief Ladega Trail further down on a new section not even showing up on Google maps I had seen on the sign that The new section of the trail had been dedicated in April 2025. I somehow pushed further south than the end and then had to backtrack up on a busy road that had been just ground off for new paving.

I finally arrived at the McClellan and checked in. Again, another two star motel owned by an Indian family.

Sleep 52 - Sun, Oct. 26, 2025 - 85 km (52 mi) Anniston, AL to KTM Highland Park all-terrain "resort", GA

I found the chief Ladiga Trail again and first attended mass at All Saints Catholic Church. The parish administrator, I would call her a deaconess whether she was ordained or not, had done the readings and gave me a tour and explained all the relics at the front of the church. This was an Edmundite mission in the 50s and 60's with the expressed purpose of integrating Church membership. They even had the relics of Saint Edmund and Saint Martin De Porres in a case in the front of church. They have visiting priests on a weekly rotating basis, some from the diocese and once a month from EWTN including father Mitch Pacwa. My route could've traveled a little farther north in Alabama near monasteries close to the EWTN, but I chose to go farther south to avoid the more hilly country north.

After sharing a few Marianist holy cards featuring the care for creation, prayer and an image of Mary mother of the sea done by Sr. Emily Sandoval I went over to the parish building for a doughnut - maple glazed with a few bacon bits sprinkled on top I must admit.

I then traveled south on the Chief Ladiga trail to its southern terminus, newly paved just in April. The path took me to a railroad and bus terminal, Amtrak and Greyhound, and there was just one gentleman sitting on a bench waiting for a bus there. There was a historical sign where the freedom riders had been beaten for trying to integrate the buses.

I asked the gentleman if he minded getting his picture taken, and I took a photo of the whole station with him in the foreground. Then I set my sites a couple blocks away to the Greyhound terminal where there's a National Park service site commemorating the freedom writers coming into Anniston and an angry mob, including the KKK burned the bus and threatened to burn alive the passengers inside for daring to integrate the bus.

Thankfully, this peaceful act of civil disobedience, unfortunately met with violence resulted in six months later for desegregated travel throughout the US.

Then it was onward to move along on the chief Ladiga Trail. The trail is beautifully newly paved in many places tree lined with rock outcroppings where the railroad cut through the hillside. The rain started to fall. I put on my rain gear and protected the batteries with a big clear sheet of plastic in the trailer.

I got to the Chief Ladiga Silver Comet connection at the Alabama Georgia State line and ducked into a shelter for a little while. Large rose bushes were blooming there at either side of the iconic state line arch and of course I had to ceremoniously stop to smell the roses as now is my custom, even in the rain.

I set my coordinates for the Highland all-terrain resort where a cabin was waiting for me. Cabins on the property cater to the dirtbike crowd with trails throughout the woods. It's the kind of place where people enjoy tearing up the woods at high speeds on dirt bikes, and ATVs. Not the kind of activity I would participate in or advocate for a more the quiet, gentler, silent sport type.

It was about a 2 mile gravel road trek the final stretch into the resort at a slow speed. The door to the cabin had been left open for me. There was an electric heater a lamp, a ceiling fan a microwave and fridge, a full-size bed plus a loft. I only made use of the heater and the bed.

Restroom facilities were shared in another outbuilding. The dimensions of the cabin or 10 x 15 the same as Henry David Thoreau's little cabin in the woods near Walden Pond. Thoreau one of my most inspiring authors with his essays on simplicity, civil disobedience, and history. His essay on civil disobedience helped also form the likes of Gandhi, and Martin Luther King and were guiding principles for the freedom riders..

So as the rain poured all night and well into the next morning I hung out in the cabin for a longer period of time that I've spent anywhere along the trail just waiting for the rain to clear. It gave me further time to reflect on whether if I if back in that time of the 60s or during abolitionist times pre-civil war would have been courageous enough to be a peaceful civil disobedient. I'm not sure I would've had the courage to do so, not sure I would've been courageous enough to take arms either. Not sure I would've been courageous enough to be the pioneer the explorer, one of the many that traveled into the lands of our indigenous peoples in America.

I sympathize with the indigenous groups that I'm seeing historically, time and time again along this trail we're here and now they are gone. Many were forcibly moved out, in spite of treaties their land taken from them or forced from them, and then they were pushed farther west into desolate lands of the lower plains.

I think it's just something to be aware of that this land of ours Has a history and we need acknowledge that. Traveling by Trail certainly gets one a little closer in touch with the land.

Sleep 53 - Mon, Oct. 27, 2025 - 76 km (47 mi) Highland Park Resort to Hiram, GA

I had registered for two nights at the Highland Park resort because Monday look like a washout with rain forecasted all day. I kept an eye on the radar and it looked like things would clear up a bit by noon so I prepared myself to be ready by then to take off and get as many miles on the silver Comet trail as possible. I alerted the front desk Office at the resort and let them know ID be requesting a refund for the second night if that was possible. They said it was at noon things to clear up and I took off down the gravel road a couple miles back to the trail.

The Silver Comet trail is unusual in that its surface is concrete. It is very wide at least 12 feet with two lanes. Each 6 x 12 pad of concrete seamlessly fits with the next and it alternates with a yellow stripe down the middle every other pad. There are a few places where they have been cracks forming laterally along these big pads. The cracks are not uniform. I wonder if they should have put a expansion joint in the middle. And the water tends to puddle up on these big expanses of concrete too. Other than that, they are fairly smooth and good riding. A fair amount of leaf litter, pine needles have collected on the trail. So I don't think they maintain or groom the trail as we do on the Little Miami by blowing off the leaves regularly, so there was a lot of branch debris in a couple spots. I had to move branches and at least one small downed tree off the trail.

The trail was beautiful. There were tunnels under passes and bridges along the way, very mature trees and valleys sometimes on either side of the trail I would've taken many more pictures had the weather conditions then more optimal. In fact, it was just stunningly beautiful and pictures really can't describe.

Though it wasn't raining it sort of felt like it. It was cold, and a lot of water spun up off the wheels and debris collected all over the trike and trailer. The Silver Comet had presume was entirely a rail trail, but the last 20 miles of the 60 were curvy up and down hills that paralleled an existing train line that is still in use. More than one train passed by at a pretty fast clip. The next 20 miles were on an old rail bed and I could really move along faster at 15 miles an hour or more, usually with very little grade change. The rail trail move through major cuts through the terrain so there were rock ledges sometimes as high as 30 feet on either side that had been blasted through way back probably in the 1800s.

Went through a little historic town of Van Wert. An Eagle Scout had created an audio history along the way, and I pulled up the QR code for that particular part of the history and learned a lot about Van Wert and Paulding who were revolutionary war heroes who were honored with place names here in Georgia. It explains for me after many years, the naming of Van Wert and Paulding counties in Ohio adjacent to the Putnam County where I grew up.

I had planned on staying in Dallas, Georgia, which had 2 motels, the Sunset motel on the west side of town and Sunshine on the east side. I did not call ahead or explore any further online about both of these. I just figured that at least one would have open rooms. So it turns out I assumed too much and later when I did call found out that both only offered weekly rates and catered more to long-term rentals so I had to push farther onto Hiram and found a Best Western that had an online deal for \$68 instead of the regular \$102 so I stayed there. It was a step up to a three or four star hotel, but the rate was within my \$75 parameters.

After a hard half day of riding, I decided to treat myself to Steve's all you can eat pizza buffet. I found all the vegetarian pizzas, including dessert, pizzas, and had my fill. I next stopped at a sporting goods store that had a small camping section and picked up only a couple Non-meat mountain house dried meals. Their selection doesn't include very many vegetarian, friendly options.

Checked into the hotel, tarped over the trike. Got a luggage cart and to carry all my stuff in including batteries to plug-in. There was no sunshine today. I guess that would've been the irony if I had stayed at the Sunshine or Sunset motels.

Getting this far today on the trail when I had only expected to hang out another day was good and moves me along the adventure/pilgrimage. It puts me within reach of the Holy Spirit Monastery south of Atlanta tomorrow if the weather is good.

Sleep 54 - Tues, Oct. 28, 2025 - 60 km (37 mi) Hiram to East Atlanta, GA

So today's objective was to complete the Silver Comet Trail and make my way through Atlanta to the other side. I called early in the morning to see if the Holy Spirit monastery was available for pilgrims. The response was they were had a full house and there were no rooms at the inn. I suppose I could've made an earlier reservation, but it may not have helped. I just don't like the pressure of Making reservations and then meeting the schedule with all the unexpected turns a journey like this can take.

The silver Comet Trail was very cool. It led onto a silver comet connector trail that was equally cool. I measured the width of the track and it is 14 feet wide and it appears most of the Atlanta belt loop trails are designed this way. I noticed many many more cyclists and pedestrians on the trails from Smyrna into the city. I got some good directions from a fellow named David at the Silver Comet bike shop. He's a local, Warm Showers host and has done tours himself. Based on his recommendation, I about a 4 mile route otherwise I kept on the very same route that I had planned way back in August.

One highlight of the day, a further example of how spontaneous things can be...at one intersection on the way into Atlanta I saw a sign for the Bold Monk Brewery. That intrigued me and even though it was just 4 o'clock, approaching rush-hour traffic I decided to get off the road have a beer and maybe a bite to eat. I entered and took a seat at the bar, ordered a glass of "The Way" and a Saint David stack of eggplant, mushrooms, spices and a salad.

The young female bartender asked about my journey and a fellow sitting nearby overheard my explanation. His name is Ben, just a few years out of college and a professional working in finance for Norfolk Southern Railway.

He heard that my journey started in Minnesota and that's where his father grew up. He said he would have to share my story with his dad who is a big cyclist. I asked Ben about the pending merger of Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific. He said that even though his work mates are not looking forward to the merger, he thinks otherwise that it's probably a good move and hopefully he'll have a job with the new Union Pacific. I explained how we had an interest in this in the Dayton area as Norfolk and Southern has upped the price of the land for the proposed Flight Line bike trail right away that could connect Dayton and Kettering. My hope is that with the Union Pacific merger that they will come down on price.

So another fascinating conversation and meeting. I even had a conversation with the assistant manager of the brewery and she's very interested in getting copies of my saints of suds collector holy cards.

I felt very safe and was on trails and bike lanes most of the way except for about a mile stretch in the very downtown of Atlanta. I rode right by the Olympic Centennial Park in other familiar sites from our trip that Brendan and I took to the national championship Back in January.

I rode near the Mercedes Stadium and Coca Cola museum and right by the football Hall of Fame. I was right in lanes mixed with cars, but it was about 6 o'clock rush-hour which means very slow traffic in downtown stop and go.

Without a reservation at the monastery, I really didn't know for sure where I would stay or how far I would get for the day. As it was dark, I pulled over and did a search and found something. Very curious on the map in a search of lodging. It was for the Atlanta alpaca treehouse in the bamboo forest.

I found out later that this Treehouse has been featured on television shows. It was occupied for the night, but they did have a cottage nearby so I took it without any viable motel hotel options within the area. The forecast for Wednesday is for rain so I took the cottage with the idea. I may need a rest day indoors.

Sleep 55 - Weds, Oct. 29 - 0 km (0 mi) All day at the Atlanta Alpaca Treehouse in the bamboo forest, GA

After 19 straight days on the trail today, I took a rest day. It rained nearly all day, so that was mostly my inspiration to take the day off. Last night I booked into a cottage at the Atlanta alpaca treehouse in the bamboo forest property.

The property is owned by Kara and Katie. They have 10 alpacas, guanacos, llamas in addition to chickens, rabbits, dogs, bees. Kara has been a general contractor of historic home restorations she had built a treehouse and a barn event space largely from recycled historic home parts. This is all set in a huge bamboo forest.

I had no idea this place existed until I did a Google search for places to stay last night at 7 PM.

This afternoon Kara gave me a tour which ended with an opportunity to feed the herd of llamas.

I spent much of the morning and early afternoon, catching up on all my Facebook posts and journal entries for the journey so far so I feel good about being completely up-to-date. I look closely at the next two weeks, taking me into Key West. And made adjustments on towns to stay in to even out the daily mileage totals to around 60 miles a day. Forecast for the next two weeks look sunnier with daytime temperatures in the 70s and nighttime lows around 50. I also got a chance to do some shopping at a grocery store walking distance away in the rain to load up on for five day food provisions.

Sleep 56 - Thurs, Oct. 30, 2025 - 109 km (68 mi) East Atlanta to High Falls State Park, GA

I was up at early and was off before daylight from suburban Atlanta. Took me a few miles before I connected with the South River Trail. The South River Trail is just one of the many trails in the Atlanta network funded by the path foundation. The trail created by the path foundation was the silver comet connecting Atlanta to Alabama state line. The foundation has raised millions and millions each year through public and private contributions. It has been responsible for building 327 miles of trails.

After a bit of a gap riding on streets, I connected with the rock Mart trail, which led me all the way to the Holy Spirit Monastery in Conyers Georgia. This trap is monastery was founded in the 1940s as a branch of the Gethsemane Kentucky Trappists.

I had requested a stay at the monastery, but they had a full house, so my visit there was just a couple hours, including a video, museum tour visit to the chapel gift store and the café for biscotti and cookies made at the Abbey bakery. I bought some of their honey And some holy cards of Saints to add to my collection.

Then it was over hill and dale on country roads including a mile stretch on a red dirt road. The up and down on hills really stretches the batteries on the E assist. Anytime I was on level or going downhill. I turned the system to zero for no assist and then only used assist for uphill. This helped me get the 60 miles today to the High Falls State Park. As usual the entrance. Was uphill and I didn't have quite enough battery to make it to the yurt I had reserved.

I pulled over at the entrance to change the battery and a couple of ladies stopped to see if I needed any help. Virginia and Mary from Atlanta are down here at the park for the first time camping. They were very interested in the trike and my journey. So I answered questions and gave them one of my green journey business cards with contact information for the website, cycle blaze journal, and tracker.

I shared with them that I had only one set of keys for my batteries and that if I lost them, I would be sunk. Virginia suggested that I should have a smart tag and even offered to give me a new one she had extra. She brought it over to the yurt. I set it up the tag and now I feel better if I should have the misfortune of misplacing the keys, then I will be able to track them with my find app. So Virginia and Mary are the Trail Angels of the day!

Best of all Virginia informed me that I had arrived at the fall line in Georgia and that I had now entered the coastal plain and there would be no more hills. Flat all the way to Key West. Woo hoo!

Sleep 57 - Fri, Oct 31, 2025 - 116 km (72 mi) High Falls State Park to Perry, GA

Again up early. Made my way through the park and across the road to the steps down to view the high Falls got some great pictures and videos of the falls.

There would be no trails in today's route. The last 15 miles were on what I think was the world's longest sidewalk from the town of Centerville to Perry. It was not pleasant being on the narrow sidewalk, but it was the safest option getting through the busy towns of

Centerville in the afternoon on a Friday of Halloween. I think I passed every imaginable fast food and namebrand store. My only stop was at a sporting goods store to look for a back up. Light did not find one. And then I did some grocery shopping at an Aldi's.

The experience checking into the Swan Motel was unusual manager had questions about where I had traveled and then took me into his family's quarters to show me a US and world map on the wall in their kitchen. He quizzes. On geography, and so I showed him my route from Minnesota to Florida. His son could name all the world countries and capitals as well as all state capitals.

Again, this motel is one that gets no stars rating at all on Google, just a phone number. The only trick or treaters I saw were an adult couple from the motel, dressed to go next-door to the pizza dive.

I've not taken many pictures of any of the Halloween decorations at homes. I just think it's so overdone. I did take a photograph of a skeleton riding a bicycle to my sister's. I captioned it saying it was a picture of me and that I had lost a few pounds and I ditched the trike and trailer for a bicycle. One of my sisters shared her concerns that I am not getting enough protein with a more plant-based diet and less meat. I explained that I'm feeling better than I have in quite some time and that I am getting all the building blocks and plant based forms of protein.

Now the biggest challenge of the adventure may be finding a Catholic Church for mass on Saturday night to be in solidarity with the mass being said back in Ottoville to commemorate my dad, Jack Devitt, who died in the last year.

There is a little Mission church in Fitzgerald, Georgia. It may be in Spanish and that's OK. It seems almost a tradition now that I find myself celebrating mass in Spanish, at least what's during my adventures. My aim will be to arrive in Fitzgerald by 5:30 for mass.

Sleep 58 - Sat, Nov. 1, 2025 - 119 km (74 mi) Perry to Fitzgerald, GA

Temperature at takeoff this morning was 39°. My first stop of the day after 14 km was at a Shell gas station Food Mart. I bought a tall cup of hot chocolate.

On my way out I saw a lady rummaging through the trash, pulling out aluminum. I asked her if she was a recycler and she said yes. I asked if she would mind taking a few cans I had collected. I haul them with me until I find a place that I'm sure will recycle them. Recycling does not seem to be as prevalent around here.

She took them and all the while kept telling me I was blessed. She said she had no transportation so she had to walk and as she walks, she picks up cans. She said I am blessed to have transportation. She was heading to the first Baptist Church for a veterans ceremony. She invited me to come along. That's where she was walking. She introduced herself and asked my name. Her name is Terry Lynn Stevens.

What I heard the other day about no more hills on the coastal plain should have been no more mountains. Slightly fewer hills, but still, I have to be constantly gearing up and down to be the most efficient with the E assist and my own cadence. It's still a lot of pedaling. And on some steep pills it is like leg pressing at least 100 pounds, but alternating one leg with the other.

My goal was to reach Fitzgerald where there is a Mission Catholic Church of Saint Williams. The church answering machine and mass times.com says the Saturday vigil mass is at 5:30. I pushed through the day trying to be efficient with battery usage and made it by 4:30 there were no cars in the parking lot at five 5:15 and at 5:30 when no one showed up for mass. I realize it wasn't going to happen just as I was leaving. Someone pulled up and said mass was at the neighboring town Tipton at 7 PM I asked how far away the town was and the response was 35 minutes and then with some hesitation, the lady looked at me and my trike and said, well maybe longer. The Sunday mass is at 11:30, and unfortunately, I should be long down the road by then a mass was being said for my dad and other souls who have entered into eternal life this past year, back in Ottoville at 5 PM.

Sleep 59 - Sun, Nov. 2, 2025 - 118 km (73 mi) Fitzgerald to Valdosta, GA

Common sights today were seeing peanuts being harvested and big rolls of cotton. More uncommon was traveling through the towns of Utopia and Enigma. Christmas decorations were up already in Enigma just a day or two after Halloween.

Utopia. Unincorporated only saw one sign.

Sleep 60 - Mon, Nov. 3, 2025 - 110 km (68 mi) Valdosta, GA to Live Oak, FL

Entered Florida. No welcome sign but instead a reminder that they verify immigration records for employment. The trail of the day was the Four Freedoms in Madison County Florida from the Withlacoochee River. quick can you name the four freedoms? Answer in the photos of the trail.

It was simultaneously the most challenging trail to get to, the least maintained and the most beautiful arching oak trees with Spanish moss to line the trail much of the way. The road to get to the trail was 6 inches of sand in some places. I almost turned around, but had hope that things would get better, and it did.

I had to stop and take photos at Ellaville to send back to granddaughter Ella in Columbus, Ohio.

Also had to stop at a little food truck right off the road, making it nearly impossible to pass up. My lack of Spanish was a challenge, but I learned a new word for a fruit smoothie. Batido - a mango one and it hit the spot.

I had hoped to make it to a state park for camping, but the distance was just too far today. But what caught my eye on the map was the Weed Camp and conference center. It is an Episcopal Church retreat camp with a beautiful chapel jutting out into the lake with an incredible view. I did not make it in time in the evening as the office was closing to get a tour. I've included a photo from the slideshow rotating in the guest office.

The conference center had just closed a large weeklong conference in the morning and I believe I was the only one behind the sides staff on the beautiful grounds that has over 200 rooms between lodges and cabins. this is my first stay at a Retreat Center. I shared with the host that I had spent the last 10 years working in a Retreat Center.

One more night indoors again with temperatures dipping close to the 30s overnight. It looks like nighttime temperatures are going to be warming as I go further south.

Tomorrow I try to reach the outskirts of Gainesville.

314 ft2

Sleep 61 - Tues, Nov. 4 - 110 km (68 mi - the same distance as yesterday) Live Oak to Gainesville, FL

Today I passed by three or four State Parks preserves that I would have enjoyed exploring. But I simply would not get further down the road to the Keys if I had stopped and explored them all.

My lunch stop for the day was early about 10:30 after 50 km and expending my first two E assist battery charges for the day. in the town of Fort White I found The Collective Garden Kitchen not far from the downtown with four food trucks surrounding an open air pavilion eclectically decorated. I enjoyed a garden sandwich with mushroom, spinach, onion, tomato, and an egg on a croissant plus a beans, rice, lettuce, salsa, sour cream, cheese, onion salad.

Finishing lunch a fellow pulled into the parking area and said hey tell me about your trike. His name is Frank and he was a joker. He's 85 years old and also a recumbent trike owner of a Cat Trike which I'm guessing may be popular down here in Florida since they are made in Florida. He peppered me with a lot of questions and in the end said here I want to pay you for the interview and he handed me a two dollar bill. I said thanks I've been looking for one to put in my wallet some time. He said, do you want another. I said sure and he gave me a second one There's a country bluegrass tune called a Two Dollar Bill and that I am fond of so I will attach it to this post.

In the next town of High Springs, I discovered a new ice cream treat called spin witches based on a Hungarian bread dough treat baked on a wooden spindle and filled with either sweet or savory items for lunch and dessert. I highly recommend.

I checked into the Hilton at the University of Florida campus. Online deal of \$74 a night was within my budget of \$75. It also has a business center with a computer and printer that I can generate new green journey contact cards and send out a November Cycle Kettering newsletter. Ing a computer and printer at some of the economy motels/hotels.

This puts me close to a Batteries Plus to have a battery checked tomorrow morning and a Whole Foods market not too far away. I hope to get past Ocala and possibly The Villages by tomorrow.

Sleep 62 - Wed, Nov. 5 91 km (56 mi) Gainesville to Santos Campground, Ocala, FL

My left front tire has worn so much that it was imbalanced and making a lot of noise and I believe slowing me down. So had a spare and thought I'm nearing the end of the journey so why not use it. I just would have to find a bike mechanic willing to change a solid tire. Not all bike shops have experience or willing to try it.

So I stopped at the Crank Works bike shop in downtown Ocala and Mark the mechanic was willing to give a shot at changing out my solid tire. When he was all done. I asked how much I owed him and he said, "Let's count this one as Trail Magic. I appreciate what you're doing crossing the country. I'm planning my big trip from Banff Canada to Arizona." And I immediately knew he was talking about "riding the divide" That is 2700 miles along the Continental Divide in the Rocky mountains

So he is planning this two years in advance in order to coordinate with friends and get off of work for up to seven weeks. He is a bike packer and gravel rider. He recommended the Santos campground tonight, which is a state park that has mountain bike trails like no other Florida State park.

So that's how I found out about my next overnight stay. The Santos campground was filled with cargo van conversions inhabited by active older folks like me, pretending they are young and cycling on mountain bike trails. one fellow said this is the premier mountain bike park in Florida and that visitors come from as far away as Europe to ride.

Santos by the way, I recognized as a Spanish word that means holy or saintly.

Sleep 63 - Thurs, Nov. 6, 2025 - 94 km (58 mi) Santos State Park Campground to Snowbird RV Resort, Center, Hill, FL

When planning this route, I saw many green lines that look like bike trails through the community of the Villages, which is a series of planned retirement developments in North Central Florida. I have come to find out today that they are nearly 80,000 seniors living here in patio homes among 50 golf courses. Many of the homes have screened in back patios that are sometimes as large as the home and the communities are built for a golf cart is. What looked to be bike trails really are golf cart paths, still open for bike use, but primarily freeways for golf carts. I experienced my first golf cart roundabout, a dedicated bridge over I-75 for golf carts, parking slots just the size for golf carts, and golf carts designed like classic cars.

And I was routinely being passed by ladies and gentlemen golfers speeding along at the 20 mile an hour speed limit. With power assist on my trike I'm usually between 10 and 15 miles an hour so I was being passed like I was standing still.

I chatted with several folks, including a guy named Bill who had questions. He was a resident of The Villages originally from Pennsylvania. He told his wife before entering Aldi's that he had to find out about this trike. He explained how he was working on asking more questions and listening better. He told me that he was a little worried moving down here because The Villages he was told would be predominantly Republican but he was amazed at the turnout of thousands of folks here in the villages for No Kings protest.

Spoke with another fellow who had just moved to The Villages two days ago. He only likes to ride on trails and is looking for trails in the area. He found out that it is OK for cyclists to ride on the paths.

Stopped at the Sunset Park facing west, looking out over a large lake, which was a pull out only for golf carts.

Traveling south out of the villages, I encountered a hole swap of new development going on that had totally wiped out some of the streets that I had on my route, so I had to follow detours that nearly doubled the distance I needed to go to get to my lodging for the night. And the detour meant cycling on busier streets without bike lanes, and on a stretch, about 5 miles being repaved with the 3 foot shoulder all chopped up yet to be paved. Not so much fun.

Midway through the detour was a short stretch through a forest of live oak trees covered with moss where the "Black Seminoles" had a thriving community in the early 1800s. These were black slaves who had married into the Seminole tribe, but were ostracized, yet protected by the native Seminole.

I had to do some sweet talking to get a reservation at the Snowbird RV resort, which like other resorts has a policy against tents and usually few trees to accommodate hammocks. We agreed that it would be very appropriate for me following the "snowbird route" to get a chance to stay at the Snowbird resort. So they made an exception and put me in the second to last site way at the back of the resort.

I checked online and there are over 50 golf courses in the village so it appears residents have their pick of golf courses to play each day in a years time if they golf once a week they wouldn't golf the same course all within about a 15 mile radius oh and I went online to find out that Holmes here are on the average \$375,000

Sleep 64 - Fri, Nov. 7, 2025 - 142 km (88 mi) Center, Hill Snowbird RV Resort to Sun Ray, FL

Since I got to bed early, I easily had eight hours of sleep when I woke up at 4:30 and decided to go ahead and break camp and was ready to hit the road at 6 AM. Turn on all my lights, traffic was lighter at the early hour. I know about 6 miles to get to the Van Fleet trailhead as the sun was coming up.

The van Fleet Trail is 29 miles long a straight shot rail trail through the Withlacoochie Forest. Besides deer, after deer, crossing the trail, I stopped at a little wood boardwalk and spotted a snake along the path. I photographed it and sent it to a naturalist and add confirmation from two herpetologist that it was a pygmy rattler. Good I didn't get any closer than I did for the photograph

I saw the profile of another triker ahead and kept my pace and caught the triker pedaling Tara trike on his own without any power assist. I pulled up to introduce myself. Don is his name he didn't think he was doing too bad for a 94 year old. I agreed and asked him what advice he might have for a young triker like myself. He said, "keep moving!"

Two other cyclists Mike and Richard stopped and talked with us. They had tips for where I should stay up ahead and knew a lot about the trail. I appreciated their Trail intelligence. Mike is the one in the pictures with the sloth racing team jersey.

I traveled through a lot of agricultural land. Most interesting were acres, maybe miles of canopy, covered fruit trees, citrus I'm guessing. Somewhere along the line, I saw a gopher tortoise crossing the road.

This was my longest day of riding at 144 km thanks to a detour in the last several turns on my route which added additional miles.

I'll be hearing about a record cold front coming to the south, temperatures expected in the 30s coming next Monday and Tuesday in this part of Florida. Even the Keys are expecting temperatures in the 40s and 50s my luck coming to sunny Florida and they get record cold weather I'm on target for arriving in the keys on Thursday, November 13. I'm also hearing a lot of talk about "flight anxiety" which really shouldn't impact me because I'm not flying back to Ohio, but the flight interruptions are also impacting rental cars and that my pose a problem for me. I'm gonna check into U-Haul truck rates just as a back up plan.

I've been asked how I'm getting home. Some people ask if I'm gonna ride all the way back to Ohio. My plans are to disassemble the trailer and solar panels and load everything into a van for the return trip. I'm hearing a lot about flight anxiety. I do not have flight anxiety as I do not plan to fly as part of this pilgrimage.

On the Van Fleet Trail, I could see up ahead what looked to be a profile of a recumbent trike rider. Sometimes I mistake a trashcan or a walker, but this really looked like a triker so I kept my speed and gradually came closer till I could make out for sure that it was indeed a recumbent trike. I was just about to end on my first battery of the day. I decided to catch the rider and Chat a little bit and then change out the battery in case I would never see him or her again so it was an older fellow. I asked if he rode this trail often and he said twice a week I asked about Trail conditions ahead. He said everything was clear at least as far as he knew we talked about wildlife sightings. He sees deer tortoises once in a while turkeys not too many alligators lately because things have been really dry in the watering hole up ahead has no water. I introduced myself and he is well. His name is Dan and he exclaimed I'm not doing too bad for 94 years old. I came back with the natural reply to that that I'm just a young one at 66.

I asked if I could take a picture and he said that would be fine. Then I peeled off to change out batteries said I might see him up ahead again. The next town is Polk city and then the last terminus town is Auburndale. He said he's from nearby Woodland. He said he moved to Florida 1988 from Toledo Ohio. I asked if he was familiar with the towns of Neapolis and White House and he said yes his first job was in White House, Ohio

So after changing the battery, I was able to catch up with Dan second time and I've learned that in conversation it's always flattering to the other person to ask their advice so I asked Don if he had any advice for young track riders. First, I asked him how long he been riding a trike he said for over 20 years. He's only ridden this Trail and The with Coochie Trail not too far away. He did not know about further trails to the south, but I proceeded with my question. What advice do you have for a young rider and he simply said keep moving keep moving

To Bella's one on a two wheel recumbent and another wearing a sloth racing team shirt suggested that I camp out at saddle Creek near Lakeland. They said it was a nice place to camp at everything I needed.

They looked at my Rigg and said did I talk to Henry Back where I saw the chickens and the Kermit sign Henry was at Homestead or started out with only a tent, but he routinely hitches up trailers to his bike and carries all kinds of things. I told them about the Carrie shit Olympics website that Henry would be a good candidate for getting on that platform.

Richard and Mike caught up with me at a rest stop with a big bridge. They gave me last-minute instructions on how to get to saddle Creek in about 8 miles but since it 30, I said I had a lot of daylight and I would probably push on beyond saddle Creek. I appreciate it there advice they asked about my distance per day and seemed impressed with 50 miles a day I joked with them they had not told me about the roller coaster ride the last mile prior to the rest stop Had a lot of issues with big holes not really holes but dips and humps. I gave Richard and Mike my card and they said they would follow me.

Sleep 65 - Sat, Nov. 8, 2025 - 114 km (70 mi) Sun Ray to Okeechobee, FL

First an apology for some of my first draft posts riddled with spelling, punctuation, grammar errors, and incoherent dangling thoughts. Here's my excuse. Most nights I'm getting this down online as it's still fresh in my mind, but at the same time I'm falling asleep and not proofreading very well. OK now for today.

Besides maybe 10 miles of side path cycling on the Panther Parkway, the rest of the day was riding in what Florida calls bike lanes, about 3 to 4 feet depending on how much vegetation has grown back up over the shoulder. And then there's a rumble strip usually to contend with. I realize that the trike is too large for the bike lane and some of my high viz green and blue pool noodles are sticking out into the road. I figure this just adds visibility and gives me a little more space. Most motorists are passing cautiously and giving me room...some motorists not so much. Nothing today would have constituted a close call.

One car pulled over in front of me a few hundred meters. The occupants quickly got out of the car motioned to each other and had cameras ready. At first, I thought they were photographing me and then I saw this huge bird with white tipped wings soaring overhead and realized these were birding folks taking pictures.

When I pulled up beside them, the bird had flown away. They said they had gotten pictures of a Northern crested caracara, a large, falcon-like bird of prey found in open country in the southern U.S. (Florida, Texas, Arizona), Central America, and South America. I did not get a picture myself, but include one from the Internet, all credit to the owner of the photo.

I set a goal of arriving in Okeechobee to attend mass at 4:30 at Sacred Heart Church. I made it with about 15 minutes to spare on this the feast of St. John Lateran the cathedral of the pope in Rome. The message was about how we take care of the temple - our churches as temples, and our bodies as temples.

I have to admit that the routine 60 mile days now are causing some mild aches and pains. And that is as it should be expected for a pilgrimage of this length. Tomorrow may be a little shorter mileage just getting from one end of Lake Okeechobee to the other will be around 40 miles. And all of it should be on a canal trail with no car traffic!

Nothing I'm gonna share with my fan base, but I felt yesterday a little pain in my upper chest on the right hand side. I don't know what it is if it's a muscle or some kind of cardiovascular thing usually things like this disappear after day or two

This morning, I'm feeling just a bit lightheaded. I don't know if it's the heat or if I've not been drinking enough water combination of so I took a lot of water this morning dressing a little lighter as far as shirts so that I can be cooler I put on my our bands. They're very cool right now cause they're slightly wet from washing them yesterday.

I do have a sore butt so I did readjustment on my seat cushion while sleeping. I really couldn't feel comfortable between the pain in my upper chest lying on my right side. I couldn't do that. I couldn't lay on my back because of my butt so I was limited to sleeping on my left hand side. I usually toss turn and alternate all kinds of positions during the night.

So when the alarm went off at 4:30 and thoughts about doing an early start in the cool air of the morning I decided I needed this the rest more than to get off on an early start. I may pay for it later with warm temperatures in the late afternoon. We'll just see how it goes. Toying with the idea of utilizing the highway with its so-called 3 foot bike lane as opposed to the longer county country roads are particularly concerned about one stretch that I have routed. It takes me through a park that I don't know what the condition of the trail will be if it's it shows a dotted line which sometimes is an indication of a gravel Road could be grass. It could be anything so I'm concerned about doing that section if I don't do that then I will be on a divided highway for a long period of time. I went back to my original route to see if there was a US bicycle route through the center. I could not find it, but I swear that I had use some of on second thought, though there wasn't anything only at the very southern section that I use on the US bicycle route one from Key Largo, so this is

uncharted territory for cyclists, even though I did see what appeared to be some bike, friendly infrastructure or signage yesterday I share the road which indicates possibly a bike route I haven't seen those again yet today.

My thoughts are reminiscent of my trip out west that I did not complete on the great American rail trail feeling really woozy and depleted not drinking enough water all of this amount to a three day layover in a fellow just because I wasn't paying attention to my body. I don't want that to happen at all of this again. Takes me back to the high school 2 mile race that I did not complete the only race I never finished in high school because I was overheated and drinking enough water. Part of the rationale for doing this big adventure is to complete the race to finish the race to finish what I did not complete in high school

Sleep 66 - Sun, Nov. 9, 2025 88+ km (55 mi) Okeechobee to Belle Glade, FL

88 was the number today that's the number of kilometers projected for the day and with spare change at the end of the day the number of kilometers that I actually covered. It also was the high temperature of the day at 88. I certainly saw at least 88 sugarcane trucks pass by me, some full of sugarcane, some empty. The trucks are open at the top and sure do allow a lot of sugarcane debris to fall into the bicycle lanes.

I was going to feature this song called 88 Years by Springfield, Ohio Celtic band Dulahan the other day when discussing folks like Don who I met the other day who has seen more than 88 years.

I haven't mentioned this in any previous post but life on the road the reality is wildlife all too often make the unfortunate decision to cross the road at the wrong time. And as a cyclist, it is impossible to not see the carnage. In the roadkill department, I'm sure I have seen well over 88 raccoons since the green journey began. Opossum probably would rate second place, then squirrels, then deer. I really don't keep count. But today I did see 2 Barn owls and a 10 to 12 foot alligator that met its demise right in the bicycle lane. And I risked my own life on the road by trying to guide a 3 foot iguana across the road. He was surely going to get squashed and was holding up traffic, but we got him safely across. My blue pool noodle turned out to be an effective iguana prod.

As far as the route today, unfortunately I discovered the Okeechobee Trail around the lake has many gates, many of them locked so I gave up on riding any more than a mile or two on the Herbert Hoover Dike that surrounds the 116 miles around the lake, and instead rode on the bike lane on the highway thanks to the lake. A good portion of the bike lane was 6 to 8 feet wide, much wider than any other bike lanes I have experienced in Florida so far.

On a bright note, I stopped at St. Mary's Church in Pahokee Florida. The old original church was open with a Russian icon of Mary of Bethlehem. Two young fellows, Eduardo and Jesus took interest in my trike and had some questions. I gave them a green journey card and told them they need to study electronics and learn about solar power in school. They wished me luck and left in their car. 20 minutes later, as I was finishing my lunch in the church picnic area Eduardo returned. He had stopped at the store, said he had been thinking about my journey and asked if I wanted a bottle of electrolyte drink. I accepted it, even though I was in really good shape with water and electrolyte of my own. I didn't have the heart to refuse his offer and tell him that I have avoided any plastic bottle drinks for the last two months of this journey. I explained that he was a trail angel for me today that when anyone does a kindness in an unexpected way for someone on the trail that's called Trail Magic offered by a Trail Angel.

I called ahead to tomorrow night's lodging at Mac Fish Camp. Mac or whoever answered the phone assured me they would have a place for my hammock. I'm starting to feel the finish. I continue to be observant and safe.

Sleep 67 - Mon, Nov. 10, 2025 - 99 km (61 mi) Horizon Motel, Belle Glade, FL to Mac's Fish Camp

Sugarcane
Drive safely
Mack's Fish Camp
Pumbaa the warthog
Peacocks
Alligator in the Canal
Sunset

Sleep 68 - Tues, Nov. 11, 2025 - 62 km (38 mi) Mack's Fish Camp to Hoosville Hostel, Florida City, FL

A little distress in the morning there was commotion around my stage area with the hounds howling, and I didn't know if they were upset with me being there or what but come to find out Marshall's daughter's raccoon is missing. It's a pet she has raised since it was a

little one the hounds have scratches on their face, and whereas normally they could lay on the living room floor together in peace they are worried that the dogs had a fight with the raccoon outside a hole for the best outcome, but they are worried that the raccoon didn't survive. You i

In my photography, experimenting with the sun, how it cast shadows or bright sprites or halos around things. I think we're taught when taking photographs to avoid the sun and not shoot into the sun, but I think it can add a lot to photos that we ordinarily avoid.

The new cameras on phones can adapt and take out some of the brightness.

Realizing that from ancient times people took trips vacations pilgrimages to holy sites native Americans would come on seasonal solstice, want her to pay respects to the dead at their mounds and burial places way way way piggy piggy piggy piggy no no get away from my stuff

Andy Zimmer with turtle nuts and frog legs

Justified, Ballers, Glades, Graceland
African queen

Burt Reynolds's chuck norris

Sleep 69 - Wed, Nov 12, 2025 - 77 km (48 mi) Florida city to Key Largo, John Pennycamp State Park

A visit to a beer and bicycle Emporium

30 km scenic detour to find the safest route to Key Largo- fortunately met a local cyclist who warned me that the popular was a gravel road with a gate that I would not be able to get around or through at the end so ended up taking route one as originally planned.

Two flats on the back tire and an issue with Tire shred wire wrapping around my back hub. Ended up having to take off the back wheel four times during the day.

Met Steve and Lisette at All Keys Bicycles who had the right tire and tube I needed to finish the journey.

Checked into John Penny Camp State Park. They had just won campsite left no permission to hang a hammock so I had to bivy on the ground.

Sleep 70 - Thurs, Nov. 13, 2025 - 80 km (49 mi) John Pennycamp State Park to Curry Hammock State Park, FL

Spoke with my sister on the phone and told her I was hoping to see some 3 foot deer with antlers. She thought I was going to see three footed deer and thought that was a bit unusual.

Made my way along the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail (FKOHT). The trail is over 90 miles long bouncing back-and-forth between side path trail, former railroad bridges, and riding on bike lanes on the shoulder.

Had to stop first at the Key lime pie factory just as it opened at 9 AM for a slice of Keylime pie for breakfast. Next stop was San Pablo's church. I almost passed it by and noticed the sign on the door. They said all masses were in the church hall. I figured the church might be closed. I tried opening the door and just as I did, a young lady named Stephanie was just about to lock the door from the inside. Just a minute later I would've been locked out. She was knowledgeable of the church and gave me a tour and pointed out the newly restored mahogany pews and new talian marble floors. I explained the nature of my green journey pilgrimage in this Jubilee year of Hope celebrating the 10th anniversary of Ladauto Si. She gave me tips on where to see the key, dear in the fields behind Saint Peter's the next Catholic Church on big pine key on the way to Key West.

Along the route, I took pictures of businesses that use green in their branding and also collected photographs of unique animal themed mailboxes.

I'm staying at Curry Hammock State Park. Hammock is a term used in the southeastern United States for stands of **trees**, usually hardwood, that form an ecological island surrounded by wetlands.

It is a bit of irony that hammocks are not allowed to be used on trees in Florida State parks unless they are non-native invasive species of palm or posts to hang them from.

The campground was full, so this is my first opportunity to invoke the “no turnaway” policy in Florida State parks. If all the campsites are full then for long distance cyclists, kayakers or hikers the park will open up an area of grass on an emergency basis. So that’s what I’m doing tonight. I went ahead and hung my hammock in a picnic shelter near the overflow spot and they said that was OK. So in the end, yes I am sleeping in a hammock at Curry Hammock State Park.

I met the camp host next to the day use area where I was camping and she introduced me to two other camp hosts who were cleaning the bathrooms. They said they had seen me each of the two previous days as I was traveling. They had been up visiting up north and spotted me riding along the highway both days. I met another couple who live in Sparta Wisconsin down here in Florida vacationing. They live just a half a mile from the Elroy Sparta Trail that I had traveled now almost 2 months ago.

Met Jim and Ellie from Marathon here on the Keys who came out tonight for darker skies here at the state park to use their telescope. I wandered over and Jim set the scope to see Saturn and one of its moons, Neptune, and a ring nebula. I also spotted a shooting star.

As I return to my hammock under the picnic pavilion, I saw a fellow who had been circling the park with a flashlight, and I asked him if he was looking for any kind of critters. He is an iguana hunter contracted by the state of Florida to help eradicate the invasive green iguana from the park. At night they slow down and with the light shining on them, they are easy to grab out of the trees while they are asleep.

I laid awake making plans for the last day arrangements for lodging, etc.. I decided to take a shower and on my return to the hammock, saw that the moon had risen I was able to take a picture of it hovering like a bowl over bay.

Sleep 71 - Fri, Nov. 14, 2025 - 93 km (58 mi) Curry Hammock State Park to Key West, FL. Southernmost point of US

so the last day was no less adventurous than the rest of the trip if you want to call riding an solar E assist lounge chair on wheels an adventure.

Much of the Riding on the keys between the bridges is a strip of many familiar, fast food restaurants, marinas, resorts and palm trees. Cycling on the bridges, including the 7 mile bridge require a good deal of focus because the bike lane is maybe 6 feet and I have my pool noodles set for 4 feet across the width of my solar panels so there’s not much leeway, either side with the rumble strips and white line next to the traffic and the retaining walls on my right. Some portions of the route include off-road Trail on what used to be the old route 4 for cars.

I did stop on one of the bridges to get a photo of Fred the tree that is growing on the old bridge that is crumbling that parallel the new bridge. I missed seeing the deer next to Saint Peter Church at sunrise. But I did get photos of the cute little key deer statues that are painted and seen throughout the big pine key where the 700 to 800 only key deer are left in the world.

The other day, Stephanie at Saint Pedro Church said that some fraternity young men got drunk and decided it would be a good idea to take one of the key deer back to their frat house in Miami. The deer was found in their car and they were arrested, placed in jail for three years and fined \$100,000.

I paste myself today, taking it easy over all the bumps on the trail and sidewalks, just praying all the way that everything would hold together, hoping for no flat tires and that the trailer would hold. With just 10 km 6 miles to go outside of Key West my hopes were dashed when the trailer started dragging on the pavement. I was thinking oh no, how could this happen when I am so close. I got off the trike to inspect and found that zip ties and even hose clamps would not bandage the damage.

Then the miracle occurred. A fellow on an E bike with a trailer and his pet dog in the front basket just like Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz. Except this was in the form of Skip Sollinger on his way home from construction work. Skip rolled up and asked if I needed help and I said as a matter of fact, I do we put our heads together and realize that the weight of the Zachary about 50 pounds was just too much if we took the jack off and balance the load with my other gear Then I’d be able to limp back with a balance load without dragging. But that meant Skip would have to hold my generator in his empty trailer. He was going as far as his home a mile short of the southernmost point and would need to recharge his batteries and feeding his dog he could drop off my generator at my motel.

So we traded contact information and I would give him a call when I arrived at the motel. So meanwhile, I rode on to the southernmost point for photographs at the buoy. Which I discovered today is a block away from the spot where the historic buoy is now being restored. So for those familiar with what the original buoy looks like, be assured, I’m not trying to fake my whole trip like some conspiracy theorists think the moon landing was faked.

When I arrived at the motel, I began stripping everything off the trike and trailer and into my motel room, which was very convenient next to the back alley my motel room was closest to.

So about an hour later, Skip and his dog Calico Jack arrived to drop off my Jackery Generator. I offered to treat Skip to dinner, even contribute something to help treat the workers he supervises, but he refused all offers and simply suggested I pass it on, pay it forward. I explained that any of the few donations I received on the trip. I in turn contributed those to other causes.

So that's pretty much been the economy of my adventure. Some of the greatest kindnesses and services have come at no cost. I have had to pay for food and lodging and other assorted expenses. I've certainly not saved any money by traveling this mode over 71 days to get to Florida when it should take me two days renting a minivan for \$282 on the return trip. But of course, the trip is not about costs. It's been a pilgrimage of inspiration and hope. And as much as adventures like to think the journey is not the destination. For me, it has been a great sense of accomplishment, completion, and finishing the journey that now is most rewarding. And a lot of great memories!

After a shower, I hiked a couple blocks to a El Siboney Cuban restaurant enjoyed conch chowder, grilled shrimp, beans and rice, plantains and Key lime pie. And then back to my motel and soon to rest for, if I might say so, well deserved sleep to be ready for the next day of adventure in life tomorrow.

Green Journey Postscript - Sat. Nov. 15

Found the neighborhood laundramat and washed every piece of clothing I had carried with me so I had something clean to wear on the trip home.

I then found the public beach for photographs and wade into the ocean. Went back to the buoy for some more photographs in a little better lighting..

Made my way to Ernest Hemingway's home. Interesting trivia about Hemingway...married four times, was fond of six toed cats, thought to be good luck for sailors. He had as many as 70 of them at his home. Many of his family members for generations likely suffered as he did from hereditary hemochromatosis a disorder in which too much iron builds up in the body and can cause severe liver disease and other health problems.

One of Hemingway's favorite hangouts was Sloppy Joe's. Went there for early dinner of fish sandwich and a drink to celebrate.

Then caught the 6 o'clock mass at Mary, Star of the Sea Basilica in Key West. So the first mass I attended while on this journey was in Warroad, Minnesota at Saint Mary's church. Perhaps even more of a Godincidence is that I had brought along Catholic prayer cards with the prayer of creation by Pope Francis on one side and an image of Mary, Star of the Sea on the other created by Marianist sister, Emily Sandoval. I passed out some of the cards to young folks after the mass. So Mary, Star of the Sea from beginning to end I believe has been my protection the whole journey.

The final tally of miles from the northwest angle of Minnesota to Key West is 3544 miles (5,702 km)

By comparison, the southern tier route across America, from San Diego, CA to Saint Augustine, FL is 3,078.4 miles.

I'm certainly not the boxer, hunter, fisherman, journalist, or author that Ernest Hemingway was, but I do resonate with this one quote of his,

"It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and coast down them. Thus you remember them as they actually are, while in a motor car only a high hill impresses you, and you have no such accurate remembrance of country you have driven through as you gain by riding a bicycle."

Ernest Hemingway

Hemachromatosis, Mariel, Hemingway, Ernest Hemingway. Remove a pint of blood.

EH defined manhood. Hunter drinker, fisher woman's man,

Gertrude stein

6 toed cats. 70 at one time. Staff of 5

Box of grenades for them picasso for cats sculpture

