

# Heart-to-Heart



## Note from the President September 2020

Do you miss bike touring yet? I do. This is the first season in about 34 years that I have not gone on a multi-day bicycle tour. I had scheduled to do four tours; all have been cancelled. Although I have been riding regularly, usually 20-30 miles at a time, and I have a variety of terrain and routes near my house, I miss the motivation of having a tour (or several) to train for, not to mention looking forward to traveling to new places. Nowadays the motivation is often just getting out of the house. With local Covid-19 restrictions discouraging travel, activities in groups, dining in restaurants and much else associated with going far afield, it's hard to plan much ambitious travel by bike. Yes, I know: I could take up bike packing or fully loaded touring. I have done self-supported touring in France. All the gear fits into two panniers, the towns are about 10 - 15 km apart, small quiet roads abound, and good food can be found almost anywhere. This year, France (and the rest of Europe and much of the world) is off limits: Americans are persona non grata. The United States is not especially well laid out for that kind of self-supported touring. Distances between towns here can be very long; road quality and vehicle traffic can be trying; chain restaurants are tiresome; we're short on charming, family-run hotels and I don't really want to do camp chores and eat lukewarm beanie-weenies after a day in the saddle. On a HeartCycle tour, the great support means we are better able to focus on the pure enjoyment of cycling and seeing the world from the saddle.

When I ride these days, I have to be content with just being outdoors, turning the legs, and listening to the hum of my components. About 20 miles into the day's ride, I find myself wishing that I could look forward to a reinvigorating SAG stop with appetizing edibles and a cold frappuccino, instead of the stale bar in my pocket and the warmish water in my bottle. Yes, I know I could stop at a convenience store and buy a cold one. But I find most convenience stores to be dispiriting places to enter. And that's the point of bike touring, is it not? It lifts the spirits in a way that is lacking on the daily training rides from one's garage.

I have faith that bike touring will return next year. Of course, we don't know if there will be an effective, accessible vaccine available or some other development that will render Covid-19 irrelevant or diminish its threat. But even if Covid-19 is still a factor in 2021, HeartCycle will adapt and conduct our tours in a way that our members should feel comfortable with resuming an activity that we miss and recovering the joys of travel to new places by bicycle. For one thing, the tour groups will likely be a bit smaller than in the past to make COVID logistics easier. I hope that you have been reading the descriptions of the 2021 tours in the newsletter and that one or more of them have piqued your interest. It's now less than a year away to the first tours. Time to start thinking ahead.

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**Bike Tour Dreamin'**

Since we did not tour together this year, you did not hear what potential tours the club is organizing for 2021. This month you will find 7 new teasers for 2021 to get you dreamin'. The HeartCycle editor would love to have a story or photo essay of a bike tour that you participated in that might not have been published in Heart-to-Heart before. Maybe it was not a HeartCycle tour, but some of the participants were HeartCycle members, like this months' stories about the Alvarez's bike packing tour. There is nothing like a magical location to get you dreaming about future places to cycle. Remember there will always be scenic places to visit and see from your bike, so while it might not be in 2020; those places will still be there in 2021 or 2022... but only if you are healthy and ready to ride in the future. Keep dreaming and soon we will be on tours together again.

Newsletter Editor

## Southern Albania - Fall, 2021

Emerging in the early 90s from nearly 50 years of Communist rule, this wild and picturesque land of scenic beauty still feels suspended in time. Until a few years ago it was one of Europe's most secretive countries. Although gaining popularity with European travelers, unlike its neighbors —Croatia to the north and Greece to the south— it remains largely untouched by mass-tourism and Americans. Albania's endless coastline offers long stretches of white-sand beaches, clear spring waters, and charming Mediterranean villages. This 11 day/11 night tour takes us through unspoiled forests, UNESCO world heritage sites, archeological sites, lakes, valleys, and high craggy mountains. In the historic towns you will feel the traces of cultures long past This tour is rated advanced due to several days of substantial climbing (Days 4, 9 and 10).

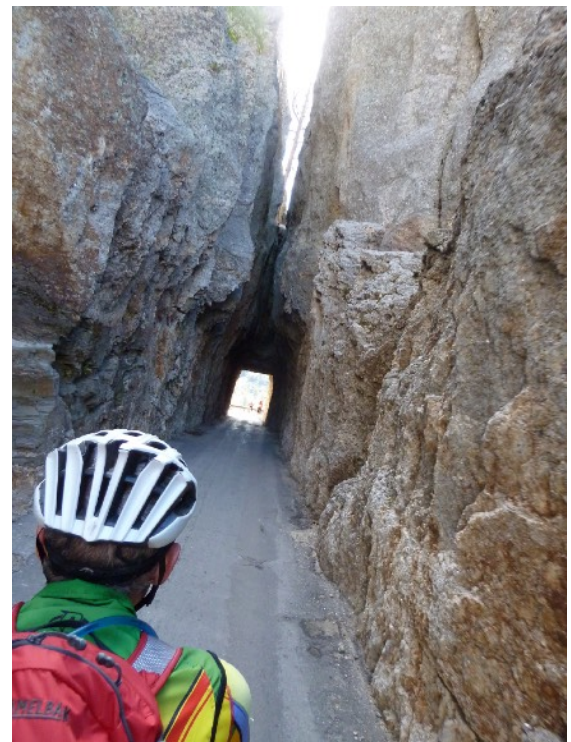


Daily distance averages 37 miles on hybrid bikes (included and highly recommended) with front suspension, low gearing and 28mm tires. This tour is ebike friendly (available at an extra cost of \$190), which allows intermediate riders the opportunity to come along. SAG support is limited, but available, so please be prepared to ride the majority of the route. Overall the roads are paved but substantial sections have rough pavement. There are limited services along the way and we will be dependent on the guides for support and communication. We will regroup at 2-3 stops per day, which gives us time for coffee, soft drinks, snacks and walking around the small villages. Albania is still a developing country which lacks our first world infrastructure. You may encounter some occasional power outages, limited trash pickup, lukewarm and unusual showers; however, this is the beauty of visiting now, before it becomes developed (and crowded). Internet is almost always available at hotels as European and Canadians have already discovered Albania.



## Black Hills of South Dakota September 6-10, 2021

HeartCycle returns to the beautiful & historic Black Hills of South Dakota. Every day we will cycle thru Custer State Park in the Black Hills which encompasses 71,000 acres of spectacular terrain and an abundance of wildlife; with lunch breaks at Wind Cave on Day 1, Mr Rushmore National Monument on Day 2 and Custer State Park on Day 3 & 4. Be prepared for climbing the many hills although the daily mileages is not long. You will want to stop and enjoy the sights of free range buffalo, feral donkeys, white tailed deer, bighorn sheep and wild turkeys walking along the open range or across the roads thru Custer State Park. The Black Hills are filled with scenic beauty, old west history and quiet roadways (although many roads do not have shoulders). We will enjoy a 4 night stay at the Holiday Inn Express in Custer, SD for this fixed base tour with a great outdoor patio, daily morning breakfasts and indoor hot tub to massage your legs after each days route. The closest airport is located one hour away in Rapid City, SD.





## North Puget Sound Favorites

## July 24-31, 2021

We hope you will consider joining us (Richard Williamson and Dave Olausen) for the North Puget Sound Favorites Tour. We will meet July 24, ride 6 wonderful days and depart July 31.

This is a spectacular time of year in the Maritime Pacific Northwest. Days are long, predictably sunny and dry and temperatures usually range from highs of 70-85 degrees- perfect riding weather. Dave and I are biased, but we can't imagine a more ideal place in the US to ride a bicycle this time of year. Rides will range from 40-90 miles with shorter options offered on the long days. There will be an opportunity, but not requirement to do a few long rides with over 6000 feet of climbing over hilly coastal roads with spectacular water views.

We will ride through the fertile farmland of the Skagit Valley with vistas of the North Cascades and Mount Baker, to the popular college town of Bellingham and into the lovely San Juan Islands, crossing the famous Deception Pass Bridge to explore the "roads less travelled" on Whidbey Island. With the exception of a few short sections traffic should be minimal with good road surfaces. This is a wonderful time of year to visit and ride in the Pacific Northwest and we hope you can join us.



## San Diego County

## April 18-27, 2021

After a ten year hiatus Heartcycle is pleased to revisit San Diego Country! The route will start in Chula Vista, just South of Coronado Island, with the first day's ride heading East to Alpine CA. From there we will head through scenic rural areas including the Laguna Mountains, a descent into Borrego Springs, an optional climb up to Mt. Palomar, then the hills of the north country. Finally we will finish with a ride along the Pacific coast, heading through Mission Bay and back to our start point hotel. The daily mileage, while still being tweaked as of this writing, will vary for advanced riders from 45 to 70 miles, averaging about 55 miles per day over 7 bike days. Shortcuts and the extra rest day will reduce this average to as little as about 45 miles per day over 5 days. The ride also includes a good deal of climbing for the advanced riders with similar reductions in percentage of vertical climbing via shortcuts. A perfect early spring ride to bike into shape for the year! Attractions along the routes include: Cleveland National Forest, Laguna Mountains, Borrego Springs, the picturesque Mesa Grande Road up Mt. Palomar (with an option to visit the observatory), Rice and Couser canyons, a ride along the Pacific Coast back into San Diego, Torrey Pines State Park, La Jolla's coastal parks, a ride up Mt. Soledad with great views of San Diego and Mission Bay, and back down through the UC San Diego Campus.





## Shenandoah Valley

May 1-9, 2021

The Shenandoah Valley offers unusually beautiful cycling with quiet roads traversing the rolling terrain of the valley floor past well kept farms. Often a short climb is rewarded by spectacular farmland vistas framed by the Blue Ridge range to the east and more of the Appalachians to the west. This tour features plenty of great miles on the Blue Ridge Parkway and the climbs and views that come with it. Logistics are made easier by a semi-fixed base design for the tour, with several multi-night stays: two nights in Staunton, then one night in Lexington, then three nights in Peaks Of Otter, followed by one night in Natural Bridge and finally a last night back in Staunton.





## Traverse Bay, Leeland Peninsula and Sleeping Bear NP May 29-June 6, 2021

This 8-day tour includes 7 days of riding and 1 rest day in Glen Arbor Michigan, home of the Sleeping Bear Dunes NP. We will stay in Traverse City, Charlevoix, and Glen Arbor. Our route covers the east and west sides of Traverse Bay, and along Lake Michigan.

The area is noted for its water and land beauty. The area has a long history of agriculture and produces the nation's largest crops of sweet and tart cherries. More recently, the orchards have been joined by wineries and there are many nice local wines. In 2011, viewers of ABC's Good Morning America choose Sleeping Bear Dunes as The Most Beautiful Place in America. Last September, a New York Times travel article on the area noted the Dunes are in "a remarkably beautiful, off-the- radar, corner of northwest Michigan....."

If you have more time, come early or stay late, and take a side trip to Mackinaw Island, or take a 40 mile check-out ride Saturday from Traverse City to the Old Mission Peninsula lighthouse.



## Trek to the Tetons June 12-20, 2021

Oh, how I remember the movie *American Flyers*! We all remember “Eddie”, Morgul Bismark, Tour of the Moon, the Red Zinger Classic, and the atypical Russian bike racer. The Trek to the Tetons on June 12-21, 2021 will make you feel like a cowpoke and your bike like your horse. I bet some of the scenes in the movie are just where we’ll be riding. There will be some spectacular canyon climbs, some white water rivers, and lots of lonely and desolate sojourns on the range. The tour starts and ends in the quiet college town of Logan, Utah while the highlight is three days in Jackson Hole and an added day loop of the Grand Teton National Park.





## Six weeks through Canada and the Pacific Northwest

### By Cindy Alvarez

Leaving Wapiti Campground, just south of Jasper, day one, June 21, 2019. And yes, that is our Jack Russell terrier, Asta, in the trailer. One of the best things about this kind of travel. Also making it more difficult to find a dog friendly hotel, restaurant or museum along the route. A little scary in Canada, hmmm, pulling bear bait behind you?



We traveled through the Icefields Parkway, climbing to some awesome heights at Sumwapta Pass and then on to this dramatic summit.





Then off to Lake Louise where we spent 2 days resting and taking in the unbelievable scenery, glaciers and a lake of incredible colors.

Of note for cycling campers in Canada, they can not turn away hiker/bikers even if a campground is full. At Lake Louise (which was packed with summer campers) we found this fact to be true and didn't worry about rolling into a campground again without a reservation.



Moving on we arrived at Banff to warmth and sunshine on June 26, only to have it turn to a thunderstorm before we could get our tent up.

We spent the next morning in a camp shelter trying to dry everything out, and then just moved on. We found Banff to be beautiful, but over run with tourists.



Traveling through more of British Columbia and the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks we arrived for a day off in Fernie on July 3rd, a beautiful little town, worth a return trip someday! Although again it was warm and sunny on our day visit, our ride into town the day prior had been torrential.



Then on to Waterton Lakes National Park, July 6. There is nothing I have seen to date that rivals the Canadian Rockies. It was somewhat sad to know that we were close to the border and leaving Canada. We were greeted near the park entrance by some big horn sheep, who nearly caused Asta to tear a whole in his trailer, trying to get at them.





Two days of sight seeing and hiking to Bertha Lake before we left Waterton and crossed the border into Montana and conquered Going to the Sun Road. A must ride for every cyclist.



Spectacular! Everything I had hoped to see and more. This was the section of the trip that had started my research and the main reason for this journey. The rain disappeared to leave us many gorgeous views at every turn. Although I found all of the Canadian Rockies a place of unbelievable beauty. This road is beyond description.





Leaving Missoula we begin following the Lewis & Clark trail, into northern Idaho and crossing at Lolo Pass below. This area has a special place in my heart. My second bike trip through here in addition to one car trip, it's nearly as scenic as Canada. Idaho has an incredible parks system. Their hiker/biker sites were the best and cheapest that we encountered along the way.



Across Idaho and into eastern Washington where we traversed miles of wheat fields. Weather had turned to very hot days, and rolling hills. But such a way to view the beauty of this country. No more snow capped mountains, or waterfalls, just miles of amber waving grain. A few remote farms and livestock and windmills against a blue sky with high clouds.



Finishing up in Oregon, the Columbia River Gorge, and Multnomah Falls. Final day back to the car in Portland.



1,455 miles  
57,964 feet of climbing  
5 weeks and 4 days

Travel and sites that can't be truly appreciated any other way.

