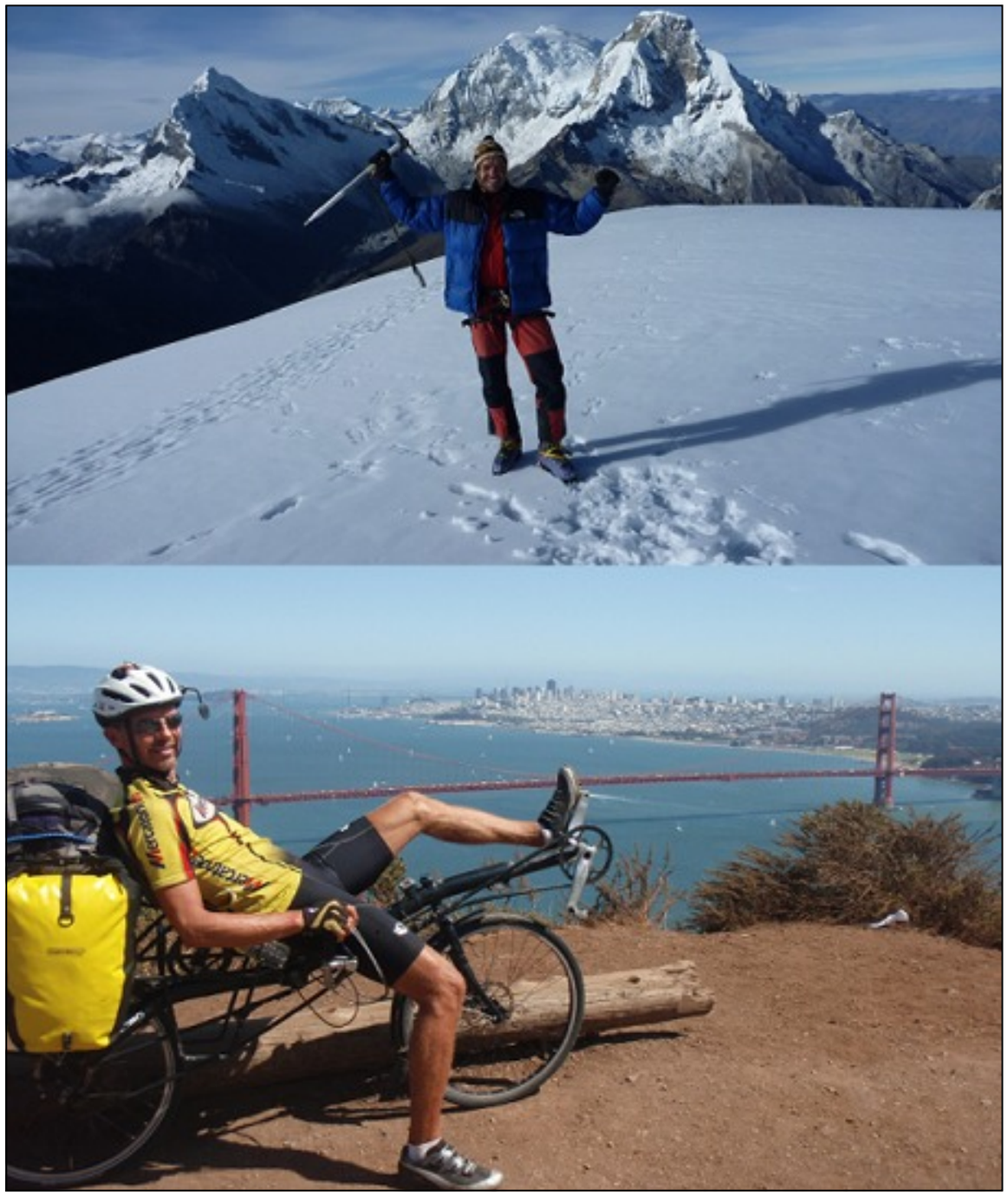
Panamerican Peaks



A Novel Cycling And Climbing Adventure

By Thomas Laussermair

Maps

Cycling the Panamerican Highway

Climbing all Country Highpoints

ADVENTURE, BY ELEMENTS OF NATURE

HILLS - Cycling the Dalton Highway in Alaska

ICE - Climbing Mount Logan, top of Canada

WOODS -Giant Redwoods in California

COAST - Cycling the Pacific Coast Highway

ROCKS - Climbing Mount Whitney, top of (cont.) U.S.

HEAT - Cycling the Baja California

TROPICS - Cycling in Central America

VOLCANO - Climbing Chimborazo, top of Ecuador

COLD - Climbing Huascaran, top of Peru

SALT - Cycling the Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia

PAMPA - Cycling long days in Argentina

ALTITUDE - **Climbing Aconcagua, top of the Argentina**

RAIN - **Cold, wet and broken on the Carreterra Austral, Chile**

WIND - Cycling in Patagonia

Map 1 Country Highlights

ADVENTURE, BY PEAK

COUNTRY	PEAK	SUMMIT	DATE
Alaska	Denali	6194 m	(6/20/09)
Canada	Mount Logan	5959 m	6/01/09
United States	Mount Whitney	4421 m	9/21/09
Mexico	Pico Orizaba	5636 m	11/5/09
Guatemala	Tajumulco	4220 m	11/15/09
El Salvador	Cerro El Pital	2730 m	12/3/09
Honduras	Cerro Las Minas	2849 m	12/4/09
Nicaragua	Mogoton	2106 m	12/11/09
Costa Rica	Cerro Chirripo	3819 m	11/24/09
Panama	Baru	3475 m	12/19/09
Colombia	Cristobal Colon	5776 m	(no attempt)
Ecuador	Chimborazo	6267 m	6/26/10
Peru	Huascaran	6768 m	6/7/10
Bolivia	Sajama	6542 m	(5/16/10)
Chile	Ojos del Salado	6893 m	(3/18/10)
Argentina	Aconcagua	6962 m	3/6/10

Legend: mm/dd/yy = date of summit
(mm/dd/yy) = date of high-point during *attempt*

Map 2 Country Highpoints

ADVENTURE, BY ROAD

COUNTRY	DISTANCE	DAYS	MONTH
Alaska	1395 km	12	Jul 09
Canada	3181 km	23	Jul 09
United States	3010 km	27	Aug-Sep 09
Mexico	3706 km	33	Oct-Nov 09
Guatemala	510 km	5	Nov 09
El Salvador	386 km	4	Dec 09
Honduras	95 km	1	Dec 09
Nicaragua	471 km	4	Dec 09
Costa Rica	445 km	4	Dec 09
Panama	567 km	5	Dec 09
Colombia	0 km	0	-
Ecuador	16 km	1	Jun 10
Peru	827 km	9	May-Jun 10
Bolivia	694 km	8	May 10
Chile	866 km	11	Jan-Feb 10
Argentina	3894 km	38	Jan-Apr 10
Total	**20063 km**	**185**	**14**

Map 3 Country Highways

Panamerican Peaks Project

Overview and Links to Project Website

... then Click on mountain picture displayed here to view **Climbing**
http://tlausser.com/blog/peaks

Tap any country icon on left ...

... then Click on riding picture displayed here to view **Cycling**
http://tlausser.com/blog/rides

ADVENTURE, BY TIME

May 2009: Mount Logan, Canada, ICE

June 2009: Denali, Alaska

July 2009: *Alaska*, HILLS

Canada

Aug-2009: *Pacific Coast Highway, U.S.*, COAST

----- Vancouver Vacation -----

California, U.S., WOODS

Sep-2009: Mount Whitney, U.S., ROCKS

Baja California, Mexico, HEAT

Oct-2009: *Mainland Mexico*

----- Florida Vacation -----

Nov-2009: Pico Orizaba, Mexico

Tajumulco, Guatemala

Guatemala, TROPICS

----- Costa Rica Vacation -----

Chirripo, Costa Rica

Dec-2009: *El Salvador*, El Pital, El Salvador

Honduras, Las Minas, Honduras, TROPICS

Nicaragua, Mogoton, Nicaragua

Costa Rica

Panama, Baru, Panama

----- Christmas Vacation -----

Jan-2010: *Patagonia, Argentina/Chile*, WIND

Feb-2010: *Carreterra Austral, Chile*, RAIN

----- Valentine's Day Vacation -----

Feb-2010: Aconcagua, Argentina, ALTITUDE

Mar-2010: Ojos del Salado, Chile

Argentina, PAMPA

Apr-2010: ----- Easter Vacation -----

Argentina

May 2010: *Bolivia*, SALT

Sajama, Bolivia

Peru

Jun-2010: Huascaran, Peru, COLD

Ecuador

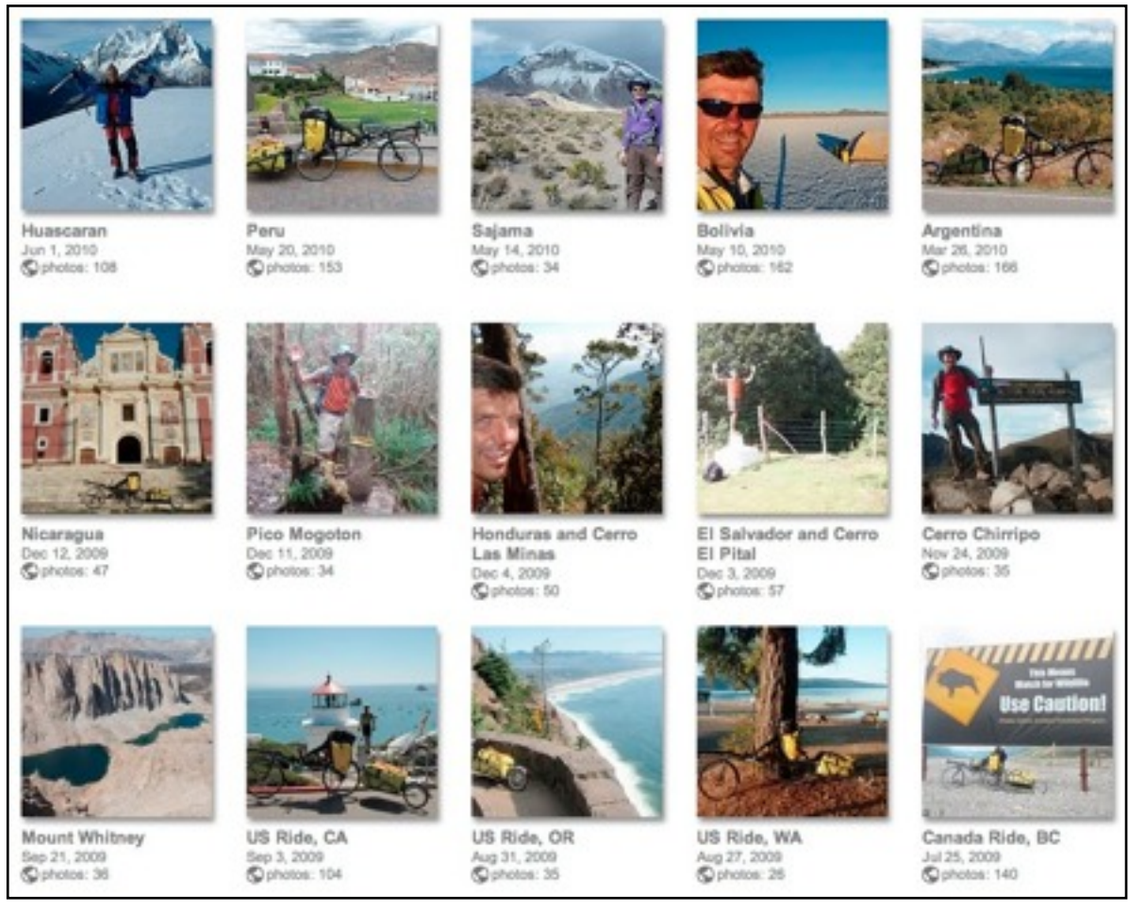
Chimborazo, Ecuador, VOLCANO

Jul-2010: ----- Galapagos Vacation ----- (Climb, *Ride*)

ADVENTURE, BY MEDIA

Photos:

In the companion online photo gallery to this book there is an album each for the cycling and climbing portion of almost every country. Click here for the photo gallery.



Videos:

Using iMovie I created a few movies from raw video footage. Many of those videos are also included in this eBook. However, to keep download size manageable, most of the videos have been abbreviated (to about 1 min) in their embedded form. Including all of the videos in their full 5-6 min length would have created an extra 1 GB of book size!

Here is a list of the embedded videos:

Cycling the Dalton Highway, chapter HILLS

Climbing Mount Logan, chapter ICE

Cycling NorthAmerica, chapter COAST

Climbing Mount Whitney, chapter ROCKS

Cycling in Patagonia, chapter WIND

Climbing Aconcagua, chapter ALTITUDE

Cycling in Argentina, chapter PAMPA

Cycling in Bolivia, chapter SALT

Climbing Huascaran, chapter COLD

To see the full version of the videos, just visit the companion website's video page.

CHAPTER 1

Preface

Panamerican Peaks - Cycling from Alaska to Patagonia and Climbing the highest mountain of every country along the way. This project took three months to prepare and 14 months from start to finish. How did I come up with this idea? How to plan and prepare for such an adventure? This chapter looks at what needed to happen before I could set off cycling in Alaska and climbing in the Yukon.

How did you come up with this idea?

Growing up in the 1970's in Munich, Germany, my friends and I would spend a lot of time on the bicycle. Prior to getting a driver's license at age 18, it was our main mode of transportation. Riding a bicycle just always felt like the most natural way to go places - to school, to see friends, to buy groceries, to get to the soccer field or to a lake for a swim and barbecue. In the summer we would practically ride every day.

Over the years I developed a more genuine appreciation for the outdoors, for nature and its landscapes. More than my friends, I had this somewhat youthful amazement about the distances one could cover on a bicycle. I would frequently ride around nearby lakes South of Munich, stringing one or more lakes together for a long day-ride. I enjoyed coming up with ideas for small adventures, mostly day- or weekend trips on the bicycle. For example, to extend the range of such trips, I would take one of the Munich commuter trains to its final station and then start my bike tour there. Thus it was possible to ride to the foothills of the Bavarian Alps and back in one day, therefore getting to enjoy more diverse scenery and often less traffic.

Likewise I have been drawn to the mountains from an early age. My Dad introduced me to mountaineering in the Austrian and Swiss Alps with all its characteristic experiences: The anticipation, planning and preparation of a particular tour, the early rising in the pre-dawn hours, the hiking through the cool shadow of its forests, the solitude and splendor of Alpine meadows away from the busy and crowded cities, the roping up for safe glacier-travel, the basking in the freedom high up on the mountain ridges, the elated feeling of reaching a summit and taking in the view...

Compared to other countries like the United States or Canada, Western Europe is very densely populated. As a result, it is not easy getting away from the crowds and experiencing solitude while enjoying the outdoors. The Alps provide one of the few remote places and intact wilderness areas in Western Europe. I often felt immersed in a different world while in the mountains over a weekend, and I greatly emphasized with the writings of many mountaineering authors expressing a longing to come back as soon as possible.

In the 1980's I dabbled a bit in rock-climbing, but never developed this into a more serious pursuit - perhaps because I was too afraid to fall and injure myself, perhaps because I didn't find as much enjoyment in tackling difficult ascents. Although literature provided plenty of drama around mountaineering exploits at the time - big wall free climbing, oxygen-free high-altitude mountaineering, grueling winter ascents, dare-devil ski descents, etc. - I personally always felt most motivated by the simple ability to explore new terrain, see the views from up high, and venture farther during short periods of predictably good weather.

This notion of exploring territory and combining cycling with hiking interests got a big boost with the advent of mountain bikes in the eighties. With those one could venture deeper into the mountains with until then unmatched mobility. You could ride far back into a valley, hike for a few hours and then return and roll down and out to the start (rather than having to walk out). Thus many trips became possible on a single day which would otherwise have taken at least two days. You could even cross the Alps in roughly a week-long trip over some mountain passes - at times involving carrying your bike over a few stretches of un-ride-able terrain. For example, we went around the Mt. Blanc - highest mountain in Western Europe - twice by mountain bike, to this day some of the finest and most memorable trips I have ever done.

Another idea hatched back then was to combine road cycling to and then hiking up a mountain. One particularly exciting example for me was the following single day marathon project: Riding from my home in Munich to Garmisch, then running up and down the Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain (2200 m vertical), and finally cycling back home (180 km roundtrip). I did this twice with times around 13 hours. It felt great and I realized that I had a certain talent for this kind of combined endurance activity. My body was more suited for stamina than sprinting speed. Besides, beating a competitor was never a big motivator for me. By contrast, coming up with ideas on how to go farther or to do a long bike-trip in the mountains would endlessly fascinate me. This was a pursuit of open-ended complexity and beauty.

Early on I started pushing the idea of very long day-rides, for example the ambitious idea of riding from my home in Munich to the Garda-lake in Italy over the Brenner-Pass in a single day (360 km). It was much later during my time living in Fargo while working for Microsoft that I developed this notion of "How-far-can-I-go-in-24-hours?" to its full potential. Leveraging the often strong and consistent tailwind of the Great Plains in the Upper Midwest I embarked on longer and longer day-rides in Minnesota and the Dakotas. I managed to push my limit via several 400+ km rides to 535 km and finally to one 700 km ride in 24 hours. As of 2001 I also started to document these kinds of trips - or 'micro-adventures', as fellow adventurer Alastair Humphreys would call them - on my personal website at www.tlausser.com. My writings and photo-journals garnered some positive feedback from family and friends, thus encouraging me to move forward in my evolution of such projects and their online documentation.

When not riding or hiking myself, I was reading books about mountaineering, cycling and adventure travel. Not surprisingly, many authors captured my imagination with their big bold projects like Reinhold Messner's first ascent of all 14 Eight-thousanders (8,000 m peaks) or various cyclists' Round-the-World touring. Swedish adventurer Goran Kropp was particularly fascinating to me for his fresh and unconventional style and goals. He took my single-day ride-&-climb from Munich to the Zugspitze to the logical extreme: In 1996 he rode 8,000 miles from Sweden to Kathmandu, then single-handedly carried some 240 pounds of gear to the base camp and proceeded to climb Mount Everest unassisted and without supplemental oxygen! After some rest he rode his bike all the way back to Sweden. A novel approach to completely muscle-powered and self-sufficient, independent climbing of even the most remote and highest peaks on Earth!

Another book which made a big impression on me is the story on the "**Seven Summits**" by Dick Bass and Frank Wells. This unlikely pair of successful businessmen hatched the idea of climbing the highest point on each of the seven continents - a fascinating, multi-year effort with challenging logistics, mountaineering and lots of adventure along the way! They not only were the first to succeed in 1985, they also spawned a big following with their project - today the Seven Summits is quite a popular mountain adventure pursuit. Like to the 14 Eight-thousanders, the Seven Summits have become a highly coveted trophy of high-altitude mountaineering. Both pursuits have seen much activity over the last 25 years (Seven Summits: ~ 348 repeats, 14 Eight-thousanders: ~27 repeats, as of Dec-2011). There are also combinations thereof, such as the three poles (North and South Pole plus Mount Everest), the Adventure Grand-Slam (North and South Pole plus Seven Summits) and finally the true Adventure Grand-Slam (ditto plus 14 Eight-thousanders). If you are strongly motivated and have the physical stamina and the financial means, there are many mountaineering trophies out there to repeat!

After graduating from college, for the better part of the next two decades I was looking for ideas to do a big bike-based adventure, something like a bike ride around the world - which I had read about a lot in travel books, ideally combined with some mountaineering challenge. At one time I even pondered the idea of cycling and climbing the Seven Summits - an extension of Goran Kropp's ride to and climb of Mount Everest. However, this concept had some major drawbacks: You can't ride between the continents. You can't ride on the Antarctic Continent. It would take at least two years and cost a lot of money, especially Mount Everest and Mount Vinson in the Antarctic. I figured that to remain somewhat acceptable for a family man the trip shouldn't take more than a year. I also didn't want it to be so expensive as to require sponsorship and the resulting media/marketing efforts. I much preferred the trip to be within more reasonable cost limits so I could self-finance it from my own savings and be completely independent.

I had also read many accounts of the **Panamerican Highway** ride through the Americas from Alaska to Patagonia. After all, this is a long-distance bike touring classic: Following the rim of the Pacific Ocean over some 25,000 km through North-, Central- and South-America along the longest road in the world. Except for the nearly impassable *Darien Gap* between Panama and Colombia there would be a fairly straightforward set of roads to follow, with no intercontinental Ocean crossings required. Could this be combined with a suitable mountaineering challenge?

In the fall of 2008 I had the idea to combine the Panamerican Highway ride with the climb of the highest mountain of each of the 15 countries along the way. I named this project the **Panamerican Peaks**: Cycling the Highways and Climbing the Highpoints of the Americas. This was the big dream I had been looking for over nearly 20 years. From the moment I first considered it this project fascinated me: It seemed quite ambitious, if not audacious, yet it would likely fit within my self-imposed time and cost constraints. It would be a great match for both my cycling and hiking interests, yet post formidable challenges in either domain: I had never cycled anywhere near that far, and many peaks on the list were far higher and far more remote than any mountain I had ever climbed before. It would (barely) fit into one year, if only I could find a way to get to the mountains within their respective annual climbing season. And while certainly challenging, none of the mountains normal routes were technically too difficult or dangerous.

Sometimes you know immediately and intuitively when something in your life is a good fit for you and life will never be the same going forward. This was one of those times. As an added benefit on the side, I believe this had not been done before, so I would have a chance at pioneering something new and exciting.

Logistics and Preparation

The transport logistics at the beginning of my Panamerican Peaks project proved to be quite challenging. I needed to fly to Alaska from my home in Florida, with all my bike and mountain gear. I would need to somehow get to the starting point of the bike journey up North at the Arctic Ocean in *Prudhoe Bay*. During a period of three months or so I would have to ride down across Alaska towards the Yukon while at some time stopping for two to three weeks each to participate in both the Denali and Mount Logan expeditions. While on the mountain I would need to store the bike gear. While on the bike I would need to somehow get the mountain gear forwarded, because I couldn't carry that additional, heavy load on the bicycle.

My initial thought after studying the maps had been to start the ride all the way up in Prudhoe Bay, heading South on the bike, then pause for the Denali expedition, continue the ride South to the Yukon, then pause for the Logan expedition, and finally continue on South. I hoped that it would somehow be possible to forward the mountain gear between mountains via bus transport.

However, despite extensive Internet research I found only one commercial Mount Logan expedition planned for all of 2009, organized by the *Canada West Mountain School*. By contrast, there are half a dozen outfitters running expeditions on Denali, starting one each on almost every weekend from May through July. And that one Mount Logan expedition was scheduled to start in early May! There was simply no way I could ride from the top of Alaska to Yukon and do the Denali expedition prior to that: Neither riding nor climbing season in Alaska even start before May. I needed a different approach. Instead of choosing whatever expedition would fit into my bike schedule, I would have to fit my bike schedule around this one expedition.

After some research, I concluded that my best option would be to do the Mount Logan expedition first, followed by the Denali expedition, and only then start the actual bike ride. I would cover the distances between Mount Logan, Denali and Prudhoe Bay by bus. While on the mountain I would leave the bicycle in a motel or hostel. After the two expeditions I would send my mountain gear back home, and worry about retrieving it again several months later (for Pico Orizaba in Mexico). The first major parts of my journey were planned like this:

- Flight from Florida to Whitehorse (with bike and mountain gear)
- Mount Logan expedition (bike stored in Whitehorse)
- Bus transfer to Anchorage, Alaska (with bike and mountain gear)
- Denali expedition (bike stored in Anchorage)
- Bus transfer to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska (mountain gear sent home)
- Start bike ride

Mount Logan would be the first expedition, indeed the very beginning of the entire Panamerican Peaks project. It was around February 2009 when I signed up for Mount Logan and paid the first installment of the expedition fees (total about $5,000) via Canada West Mountain School's website. This felt like the first 'official' step in my project. Now I had committed to a start date and location: On May-9, 2009 I needed to be in Whitehorse, Yukon. Everything else would be planned from this date forward. So I bought a ticket from Fort Lauderdale to Whitehorse with Air Canada, as well as three bus tickets: From Whitehorse to Anchorage (start of Denali expedition), from Anchorage to Fairbanks and finally from Fairbanks to Prudhoe Bay (start of bike ride).

You need and want to be prepared for a mountain expedition like Mount Logan or Denali. The various outfitters websites have extensive material and checklists on required physical constitution, experience, gear, etc., the details of which I won't repeat here. I also bought a great book on such preparations: "**Climbing: Expedition Planning**" by Clyde Soles and Phil Powers. This book proved invaluable for many reasons, including many practical tips on how to organize multi-week expeditions, the transport logistics, the cooking, the preparation over many months prior to departure etc. One of the most valuable items for me was a table listing the climbing seasons for many mountain ranges worldwide; I used this table as a critical element to schedule my Panamerican Peaks project for North and South America.

I had been in good health and physical condition, and I exercised fairly regularly. Hence I didn't change my workout routine much, except for focusing a bit on shoulder and upper-body strength due to the expected carrying of heavy backpacks (25+ kg) and pulling of heavy sled loads (30 kg). Furthermore, I had accumulated enough general mountaineering and skiing experience and a few high altitude exposures over the years, so I was confident to fit the requirements for a commercial expedition on Mount Logan, certainly for its fairly non-technical normal route via King Col.

As for equipment, I personally had had some mountaineering gear such as well-worn leather boots, warm clothing, ice axe and the like. Much of it still dated back to the time when I was climbing in the Alps many, many years ago. It also wasn't up to the demands of a three week expedition in Arctic climate conditions and potentially extremely low temperatures. As a result, I decided to go shopping. You can find and buy a lot online these days; consequently I browsed and ordered many items via the Web. That said, for an item like plastic mountaineering boots you really want to be able to try it on in a store, walk around in it and talk to some experienced people prior to buying it.

Unfortunately, in Florida we don't have any good mountaineering stores. So I accompanied my wife on one of her business trips at the time to San Francisco. While she was in business meetings I visited the local REI store. There I bought several items like shoes, mittens, jackets, etc. This process of completing my gear checklist took quite some time. In hindsight, my initial idea of doing all these preparations while still employed in a full-time job, during evenings and weekends, was naïve and not realistic. I wasn't happy about being laid off by my former employer in February 2009. But the timing of this layoff was fortuitous, as it freed up a lot of time for extensive logistics. All told, I spent about three months nearly full-time with preparations.

Winter camping gear test trip

One important aspect of my reading Soles' and Powers' book on expedition planning was that it put me in a frame of mind needed to systematically work on my preparation. For example, I followed the books suggestion of going out and doing at least one test trip for any new gear you buy. You won't find out how your backpack feels on your shoulders with a 25 kg load, how your tent and stove deal with windy conditions

or how comfortable you are in your sleeping bag at -15°C in your tent by just reading product labels in a store or reviews on the Internet. Living in Florida there is no way to properly test winter camping equipment. Hence I needed to fly somewhere North with wintery conditions for such a gear test. In March 2009 I booked a four day weekend trip to the *Grand Targhee* skiing region in Idaho near the well-known Wyoming ski resort of *Jackson*. In some ways, I considered this the first more tangible, outdoor part of my journey.

The trip starts out testing patience more than anything, as my last leg from Denver to Idaho Falls has been cancelled due to a blizzard in Denver. I'm thinking at least there is some wintery weather! But I get stuck at the Denver airport for almost 24 hours. Time to sleep and to work on that Panamerican Peaks fund-raising email campaign – courtesy to my little Netbook computer and the free wireless Internet access at the Denver airport.

Finally I make it to Idaho Falls on Friday and check out the local ski rental shops. I meet some very friendly locals in the ski shops. They give me some good tips for winter camping and also for a good area for my gear shakedown trip. In the hotel I spread out all gear prior to packing it into my *Gregory Denali Pro* backpack.

Next day I drive up to the *Pine Creek Pass* (6764ft) and park the rental car. From here I start hiking with snowshoes. The 50 pound backpack weighs heavy, but otherwise conditions are good as I set out at 2 pm. I hike up along a ridge-line with views down to the *Driggs valley*. After two hours I reach a nice saddle between two high-points and descend into an untouched winter forest. This will be a good spot for the campsite, as there is a severe weather alert for a winter storm moving in with 30 mph winds… I get out my new stove and start cooking some tea and hot soup. Now I still have some time to explore the upper ridge and the nearby surroundings. I take a few photos with my iPhone and from high on the ridge I have a signal so I can send them home to my wife just for fun. I return to the tent prior to darkness to get my gear organized. There is heavy snowfall and an eery silence in the forest.

After a reasonably good night sleep I prepare to hike out in conditions which have become quite stormy overnight. In the relative calm of the forest there is a foot of fresh powder; crawling uphill with the heavy pack is hard work and you sweat quickly. Then I step out on the ridge and the 30 mph wind hits me with blinding snowdrift. Normally I don't cherish such conditions, but in this case I don't mind, as it's a more realistic test for mind, body and equipment. After all, even the more extreme Idaho weather at 7,000 ft is still rather tame compared to Logan and Denali conditions at 19,000 ft.

Back at the parking lot I need to clear the fresh snow off the car and shovel some snow to get out. That aside, I'm happy about the gear test. Most of my gear proved to be quite functional, including my new mountaineering boots, with only minor adjustments around the camping, cooking and some clothing.

This trip also allowed me to see how the electronic equipment would function out in the field: Apple iPhone, Garmin GPS, Olympus digital photo camera, Flip MinoHD digital video camera, Dell netbook, SPOT satellite tracker, Solio solar charger.

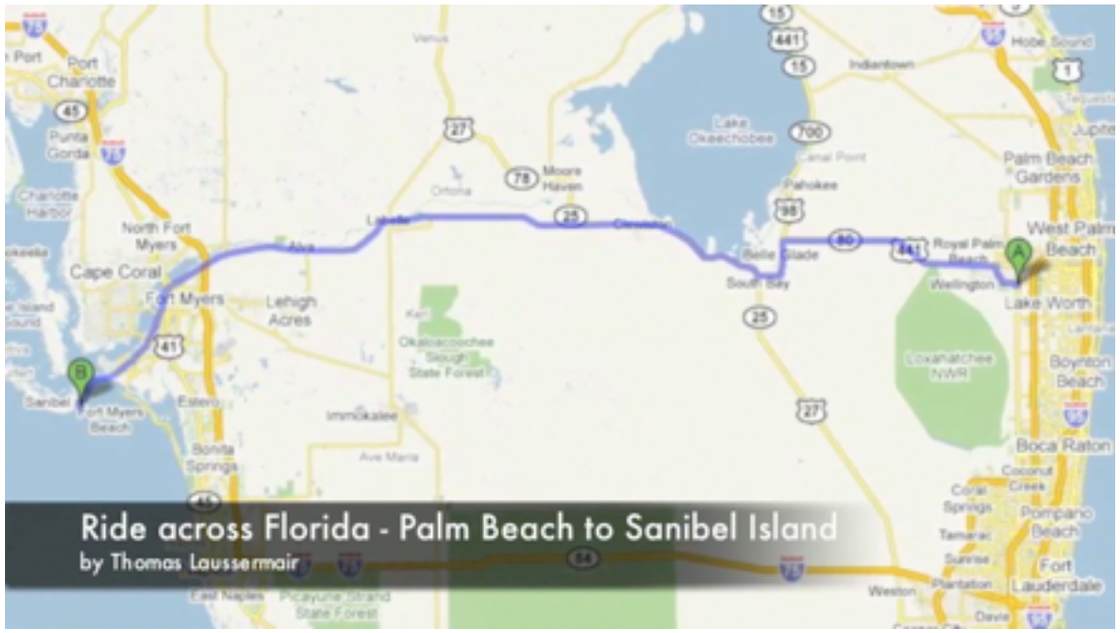
Selecting the right bike

Prior to this adventure most of my long bike rides had been on road bikes designed more for speed than comfort. For example, my Titanium frame Colnago OvalMaster is a light-weight machine with 30 speeds suited more for racing than for touring. Whenever I went really far on a weekend and my back and butt would hurt, it didn't matter that much as I could relax in an office chair starting Monday morning at work. The occasional week-long rides on a mountain bike in the Alps were tolerable, although not particularly comfortable. As I was planning to ride six hours a day, every day, for months on end, I thought I might well want to look for something more comfortable.

Enter recumbent bikes: With leaning back and supporting your entire upper body similar to sitting in a reclining chair, nothing beats recumbent bikes in comfort. I had never ridden much less owned a recumbent, so it was a bit of a leap of faith when I decided to get a recumbent for this adventure. I looked at three main criteria: Front wheel size (relative to back wheel), under-seat vs. over-seat steering and short vs. long wheel base. I preferred the front wheel to be the same size as the back wheel (26"), both to simplify spare tire inventory, have better rolling characteristics on bad roads and be able to get tires or tubes in South America. Under-seat steering provides a much more natural and relaxing arm position as if resting next to your legs on a sofa, rather than reaching up in front of you. Although it takes a bit more time to get used to, steering is a bit less intuitive and getting on and off the bike is a bit awkward. Finally, I wanted a short wheel base to minimize the hassle of packing the bike into boxes for air or bus transport.

As it turned out, while searching the Internet, I found all of the above in the *Seiran* model built by *Challengebikes* in the Netherlands. I came across a Blog by two Swiss cyclists who rode the Panamerican Highway in 2007-2008 on two such Seiran recumbents. After reaching out to them and communicating via email, one of them (Stefan Dudli) offered to sell his used recumbent to me. I was interested as this clearly demonstrated that the bike was up to the challenge. It would be perhaps the first recumbent bike to do the Panamerican Highway twice! And friends told me that then at least the bike would already know the way… Eventually I flew to Europe and picked up the bike from Stefan's home in Zurich, Switzerland. Back in the United States I had some parts replaced, bought new tires and a new chain, had a general tune-up done and got it ready for some training rides.

Movie 1.1 Recumbent training ride in Florida



Video about training ride coast to coast across South Florida

During the month of April I put almost 1,000 km on the recumbent bike in Florida. The weather was great and hardly a week went by without me being out on the bike three to four times. On one occasion I rode all across the Florida peninsula to the Gulf Coast and back the next day, some 450 km or so. These rides allowed me to get used to the recumbent and mentally prepare for the long journey ahead. It was not without a problem, though: On one of the training rides I crashed badly when my front wheel got caught in a diagonal railroad track. The large rashes on my left hip and elbow took a week to heal, but luckily no major damage to either my body or the bike. Eventually I got a lot of confidence in the recumbent and was certain I had made the right choice.

The Swiss cyclists had loaded four panniers on their bike racks. I thought it would be better to tow a small trailer behind the recumbent to take the additional weight and volume of the tent, sleeping bag and cooking gear. I quickly settled on the market-leading *Bob Yak* trailer. I was going to order online from REI - the same store I had bought most of my other climbing equipment from - when I pondered how to get all the equipment up to Alaska at the beginning of the trip. First I would have to pay the shipping of the trailer to Florida, then there would be a significant surcharge for the extra bag to be flown up to Alaska. Luckily REI has a policy that you can get merchandise sent for free to any of their stores for self in-store pickup. So I decided to have REI ship the trailer and two new panniers to their Anchorage, Alaska store. I called the store and explained my situation, and they agreed to hold the trailer there for two months until my arrival in June. While I thus couldn't test the trailer at home in Florida, this worked out well logistically.

Unfortunately, two things I didn't test were riding uphill with a fully loaded bike and riding on rough roads. Obviously there are no hills in South Florida, and without the panniers and trailer I never thought too much about how the bike would feel fully loaded. As I would find out later, riding uphill on a recumbent is harder than on a normal mountain bike due to the unconventional body position. And riding uphill with more than 100 pounds of gear is very hard work and frustratingly slow. This is one of the main reasons that my average speed would be much, much slower on the entire journey than what I expected it to be. But at least the recumbent was very comfortable, and even after long days of riding I would not be unhappy to start again day after day.

Electronics Equipment

For safety, fun and documentation I brought along several pieces of electronics. Most of them I had bought specifically for this trip. Here is a list of these powerful, yet small and light-weight electronic gadgets, sorted roughly by their frequency of usage during the trip:

Olympus Stylus 790 SW Digital Camera: Shock-proof and water-proof 7 megapixel camera, with 2GB xD storage card for thousands of pictures and hours of video. Capable of being operated with one hand (important while riding the recumbent) and always available in all weather conditions. For the second half of the trip I switched to a Panasonic Lumix with slightly more megapixel, 16*9 HD image format and better software. Probably the single-most important piece of equipment to document the trip and especially the summits. Images are also the best way to remember the experience. I took more than 10,000 photos.

Dell Mini 9 Netbook Computer: Light-weight (2.2 pounds) mini computer with 16 GB solid state disk, Windows XP, wireless Internet, Bluetooth, integrated webcam, USB ports, running four hours on a battery charge. Very useful and reliable platform to document the trip (Blog, photos, daily notes), stay in touch with family and friends (email, skype) and provide backup storage for photos and videos (via integrated photo card reader and USB sticks). I was pleasantly surprised to find WiFi in even the most remote places (about 80-90% of the time).

Apple iPhone 3GS: Portable phone, camera, GPS, music and audiobook player, app and game platform, with wireless Internet and AT&T 3G cellular network. Most versatile gadget, used in many different ways, essential for calling (while within the US), some tweeting and photographing, some game playing and lots of music, especially during some long days on the bike. Also came in handy many times with the Spanish language translation app.

Flip Mino HD digital video camera with USB interface and power supply. Capable of storing one hour of video in its 4 GB solid state disk. Takes surprisingly good quality video, although shaky images and sound was often sub-optimal (wind noise). From a total of about 300 video clips I would later create about a dozen movies with iMovie.

Sigma 906 Bicycle Computer. An obvious piece of equipment, surprisingly sturdy as it was exposed to the elements every day. Allowed to record riding time and distance, average and top speeds, which I kept track of in my daily notes. The main benefit was to show daily progress towards the next goals. The data also allowed me to develop some interesting statistics after the trip. In hindsight, an integrated altimeter

would have been useful to measure and display daily and cumulative elevation profiles.

Highgear Altiware Altimeter and Wrist Watch. This relatively inexpensive and waterproof piece of equipment proved very durable and useful for calendar, time, alarm clock, altitude and temperature readings. It also gave an approximate elevation gain reading for the day.

SPOT Personal Satellite Tracker for near real-time tracking of my location via webpages and basic Ok / Help / Emergency signaling capabilities. This high-tech gadget brought peace of mind and also came with an attractive insurance package to cover the cost of potential emergency rescue operations. It also provided the ability for family and friends to see where I was at the time, particularly useful when in the mountains out of cell-phone range. I used it to send an OK message at the end of every day and at the summit of every climbed peak to signal both my position and that I was doing ok. This allowed me to reconstruct the entire route on a Google Map with a pin for every night's stay.

Amazon Kindle eBook reader allowed me to bring along hundreds of books in one small, light-weight package that runs for weeks on a single charge. While not a necessity, the Kindle proved useful in many places where I was either stuck in a tent or hostel due to bad weather or had time on my hand traveling by bus or airplane.

Solio hybrid Solar Charger: Universal charger for electronic devices; charges from sun or socket – anywhere in the world. Proved useful mostly on the long mountain expeditions (Denali, Logan, Aconcagua, Huascaran). On the bike I was never away from electric outlets for more than a few days.

Garmin Oregon 400t GPS: Integrated topographic maps for North-America, intuitive touch-screen interface. I ended up not using this instrument a lot; on the roads I rarely needed GPS navigation, and in the mountains I was either with a guided expedition or it was otherwise easy to navigate.

How to?

This book is not a how-to guide for cycling or climbing. Many excellent books and blogs have been written on these subjects. Anybody interested in touring and/or mountaineering can find an abundance of such resources both online and at local bookstores.

For cycle touring, I find "**The Bike Touring Survival Guide**" by Friedel and Andrew Grant invaluable. Check their website TravellingTwo.com for a free basic as well as the full 241 page guide. It covers nearly everything I can imagine, with lots of great photos and inspirational quotes. Their last ten pages alone - with packing list, insurance, recommended equipment, and additional reading - is worth the entire small price (€5).

Check the companion website PanamericanPeaks.com for more details on the logistics prior, during, and after this adventure took place.

Now you know what made me decide to take on this particular adventure and how I prepared for it. In the following chapters you will find the highlights I experienced along the way, structured by the various elements of nature which I encountered on this journey.

CHAPTER 2

Hills

The Dalton Highway, built in 1974 for the Trans-Alaska pipeline, stretches from Prudhoe Bay at the Arctic Ocean down South to Fairbanks. It starts in the treeless tundra, crosses the Brooks Range and the Arctic Circle, then bridges the majestic Yukon river and connects with the Elliott Highway to arrive in Fairbanks. Among the biggest challenges here were the long stretches without infrastructure, the dusty gravel road, the incessant hills and millions of mosquitoes. My very first week on the bike...

HILLS – Midnight Sun and Mosquitoes on the Dalton Highway, Alaska

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 3

ICE

I couldn't have asked for a better opening. The expedition to Mount Logan at the very beginning of my Panamerican Peaks project was a great adventure on its own: Remote wilderness, ice fields and high altitude mountains, winter camping and glacier travel, unnerving periods of bad weather and finally a great summit day with incredible views from the highest point of Canada.

ICE - Mount Logan, massive mountain in a remote wilderness

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 4

WOODS

The Boreal Forest has accompanied me for thousands of km at the beginning of my journey. The most impressive trees I have seen, however, are the massive Redwoods along the Pacific Northwest in California. Some of these trees are more than 1000 years old and more than 100m tall, which makes me feel small and humbled.

WOODS – Big Trees in the Pacific Northwest

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 5

COAST

Cycling down the Pacific Coast from the Canadian border near Vancouver to San Diego just before the Mexico border was a highlight. The scenery and atmosphere of the laid-back coastal towns combined with the many State Parks and campgrounds make this a touring biker paradise. If I could only have done four weeks out of the entire trip, I would have chosen to ride them here.

COAST – Cycling the Pacific Coast Highway

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 6

ROCKS

On the last day of summer 2009 my friends Gary and Lynn Clark and I completed a day hike up on Mount Whitney, highest peak in the lower 48 United States. It was a perfect day in the High Sierra, with great visibility, warm, sunny and dry with hardly any wind. In more ways than one, Mount Whitney rocks!

ROCKS – Climbing Mount Whitney, California

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 7

HEAT

South of San Diego I entered Mexico and cycled down the Baja California for two weeks. The main challenges were the heat and a recurring technical defect (snapped shifter cables). The scenery was magnificent, especially along the Gulf of California. The remoteness of the desert interior was a good mental preparation for the harsher terrain following later during my project in South America.

The **HEAT** is on – Riding in the Baja California

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 8

TROPICS

After the dry heat of the Baja California riding South into Mainland Mexico and Central America brought me into the tropics. Here there is not only intense heat but also high humidity. The many mountains meant I was sweating like never before. I learned more Spanish now interacting with the locals. And I had a tight schedule to reach Panama City and catch a flight back home for Christmas.

TROPICS

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 9

WIND

Patagonia is a land of rugged beauty, of barren landscapes and wide open spaces. But most of all it is a land of strong winds. I had read many a cyclist tale of fighting tiring headwinds or downright unmanageable riding conditions. While I came prepared, I had also underestimated this force of nature: As I would find out, the wind in Patagonia can indeed literally blow you away.

WIND - Blown Away in Patagonia

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 10

RAIN

To escape the wind-swept plains of Patagonia I entered the rainforest of South Chile. Here starts the famously beautiful, yet rugged Carreterra Austral. I got out of the wind, but into the rain! Rain for weeks without end, during one of the wettest seasons ever recorded. Then I had a major equipment failure which I couldn't fix. I was wet, tired, and my bike broken. My morale hit a new low ...

RAIN is inevitable, suffering is optional

It has been raining now near continuously every day for a week in South Chile. I hate cycling in the rain and try to avoid it as best I can. So far in this adventure I have been truly blessed with dry and sunny weather, especially in the Northern hemisphere. And in most cases, there were just some brief showers which often could be dodged while having a good meal at a nearby gas- or way-station. I still remember the words of Stefan, the Swiss friend who I had bought my bike from. He had cycled the Panamerican Highway on this very same bike the two years before and assured me about what a great trip it was. When I asked him about rain, he stated that he only had two days of full-on all-day rain in his entire trip. Two days in two years - I now have six days in one week! As much as I hate cycling in the rain, waiting here for the rain to stop is not an option: This entire summer had been rainy and cold. With the Andes the first obstacle strutting up against moisture-laden air-masses flowing in from the Pacific it is just simple physics: Air is forced to rise over the mountain, thereby cooling and releasing its moisture. The result: Rain. South-Chile is one of the wettest spots on Earth, one of the few areas with rain-forests outside the tropics, and this summer is one of the wettest on record.

Gallery 10.1 Rainy ride along Carreterra Austral, South Chile

Other riders waving me good-bye at the 'El Mosco' hostel in Villa O'Higgins, southern terminus of the famous Carreterra Austral.

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I understand better now why the Southern-most road in Chile – the 'Ruta 7' or 'Carreterra Austral' as it is called - has earned a reputation of being a really wet ride. Just 10 days earlier, the beginning of the Carre-

terra Austral was not so bad. There were two long and hard days between Villa O'Higgins and Cochrane, on bad gravel road, over some significant hills and with some rain, but all quite manageable. And with scenery as beautiful and unspoiled as any I'd seen since leaving Ushuaia, the Carreterra Austral was growing on me. I can see why it is considered one of the finest cycling roads in the world. To recoup some of the time lost due to the cancelled ferry and to save myself from the worst gravel sections I had taken a bus some 300km from Cochrane to Coyhaique. After some Internet connectivity, a hot meal and a warm bed at night I am mentally ready to continue cycling on North, no matter what weather awaits me.

On the first day upon leaving the town of Coyhaique, dark clouds are hanging in the mountains. I need to cross a little pass following Ruta 7 North-bound. It is cold and starts raining. There is also a gusty wind, driving some nearby wind-turbines, but also driving any remaining heat out of my numb fingers. It is just a few degrees above freezing; a few hundred meters higher in the mountains the trees are white from fresh snow. Reminds me of the way the European Alps would look after a cold-front had brought some seriously bad weather and one would do best to stay at home. One certainly would not go out cycling in this weather… On the downhill after the pass I need to stop once just to warm my fingers as I lose all feeling in my numb hands. If only the headwind wasn't this strong I would stay a bit warmer and reach my goal a bit sooner. There is a short cloud-break, and I take a quick photo in the moments of what may well be the only two minutes of bright sunshine that day. During this brief interlude of less rain and more sun I remind myself: It is quite scenic here! Dark granite rock slabs and lush forests, as well as plenty of streams gushing down the mountains on all sides, with many waterfalls, some big and impressively plunging into the abyss under road bridges, some small and incessantly trickling down my GoreTex jacket into my long pants. If there is any upside of riding many hours in the rain, I find it to be the fact that after a while one can't get any wetter, which makes me somewhat oblivious to any additional rain.

And I spend hours day-dreaming of that warm and dry shelter or restaurant at the end of the day. Anticipation heightens pleasure, or so they say – but I feel too wet and hungry to get philosophical right now. When I get to the village of Mañihuales that day, I stop at a little bistro to warm up over two cups of coffee and some delicious 'Kuchen' as advertised on their wooden sign outside. I move really close to the stove in the corner of the room to soak up the heat, prompting the friendly waitress to stoke it with some additional fire wood. I am savoring the hot coffee and sweet cherry cake, while reflecting back to the past hours. In those blissful moments time seems to stand still and the world

outside ceases to exist. Almost every day I go through a roller-coaster of emotions: During the rainy and cold hours of the day I often ask myself the question “Why am I doing this?” In those moments I feel like I haven’t found the answer yet. However, at the end of such days, the pleasant feeling of settling in a dry, warm place with a fresh hot coffee or meal provides a visceral feeling of doing the right thing and a reassuring contentedness for having done it. Another daily leg of the journey is behind me …

The rain is pounding the metal roof all night and continues during the grey morning. After a good night’s sleep in the dry shelter it’s back to the wet reality of the Carreterra Austral. Alas, since the rain is unlikely to stop here, I will just cycle away from here until I get some place where the sun is shining again. That has been my motto for several days now. Come to think of it, we have done more cycling in the rain in this last week than I did during four months in North America. We, that’s me and Wolfgang, another cyclist from Germany. We serendipitously joined in this ordeal – after all, misery loves company. At least we will have earned our stripes when we get there - wherever the rain stops - and the first sunny day will be all the more appreciated.

While I chew on this little bit of dry theory of reasonable self-motivation over breakfast, the wet practice of putting on the damp cloths, hopping on the bike and pedaling away into the cold rain still feels quite unattractive. Wouldn’t it be so much easier to just get on a bus and skip this wet section altogether? What motivates us to continue day after day, despite the cold rain and the low hanging clouds obscuring the views? But other cyclists have braved the elements before, so we know it can be done. And in the overall scheme of things, it strikes me as not so bad considering all I had gone through up to this point: Impossible headwinds had slowed me down in Patagonia, sometimes literally blowing me away and off the road. Endless and lonely stretches had to be crossed in Argentina, where the distance between two villages often may be a 100km and the biggest thing happening after two hours of riding is a slight turn in the road between straight roads to the horizon. Bustling city traffic had to be navigated in the major metropolis of Los Angeles, where one needs to find the right balance between cyclist assertiveness and suicidal naiveté. Searing heat in the Baja California or the hills of Panama made me juggle between minimizing weight on the uphill sections and running out of water before reaching the next place to refill. Hunger and thirst were often steady companions, driving me to eat record amounts and still losing weight in every body part other than my legs. Emotional ups and downs were as regular as the ups and downs of the roads through the mountains of Mexico. This, too, shall pass. It is not that bad. And definitely not so bad that I would want to quit – even though obviously during weekends at home I would gladly pass on the ‘opportunity’ to cycle all day in weather like this. On the one hand, I try to tell myself that even if I quit now, after having endured all the previous miles and challenges, this trip might still be considered respectable. And yes, cycling in cold rain like this is not fun. Quitting would be easy to do, and perhaps even reasonable. But I’m not really listening to that voice of doubt or reason. In the strange world of values constructed in my own mind, quitting would be devastating. Even though I don’t quite know for sure what I came to prove by riding here, I certainly do know how I don’t want it to end: I will not be called a quitter. Simple pleasures, complex motivations!

So, on we go, minute after minute, mile after wet mile in the rain. At least there are many hills here, often quite steep hills. This forces us to work hard, thus generating a lot of body heat, so you stay warm as long as you keep going. Nothing much to look at with the low hanging clouds all day anyway. After crossing a 500m pass into the National Park of Queulat we ride towards a fjord-like bay with some salmon-fisheries. The tour guide recommends a detour into a little valley where one can see a stunning glacier calving over a big rock wall. With some patience and a bit of luck one can see and/or hear big chunks of ice breaking off and plunging down the face of the mountain. We don't see anything but low clouds. The prospect of setting up our tents in this rain and just munching on the little bit of food in our panniers is not so great and we decide to keep going. At the Northern end of the bay is the little town of Puyuhuapi. Another long day comes to an end with the wet clothes being strung across a clothes line in the middle of our hostel room next to the hot oven-pipe which is conveniently leading exposed through the middle of the room. Not exactly up to normal fire-safety standards, but certainly a welcome source of heat for us. And we feast over a hearty steak and some delicious dessert at a nearby German restaurant, homage to some immigrant roots at this place.

Another two days of wet riding follow. At one point Wolfgang needs to replace his brake pads. We stop on the road near a small home whose smoking chimney is the only sign of warmth and dryness around. But I just stand in the rain outside and wait for Wolfgang to finish. A small snack and then quickly back to the bike to keep riding and stay warm. That's the other aspect of rain: There is no fun in resting, as you get cold quickly. The only reasonable thing to do is to keep going and get it over with. Not a lot of traffic here, so we can mostly ride side-by-side along

the single lane dirt road. Wolfgang and I share stories from the road, a favorite pastime of touring bikers. This makes the time go by a little faster. Anything to take your mind off the discomfort… We also pass an old steel steam engine carriage, abandoned near the road and left to rust away in history. Later we come upon a truck that is lying on its back right next to the road. Must have flipped over when the trailer got too close to the rounded edge of the single lane road and pulled the whole thing down into the ditch. I can't help but feel that life here is tough. Eking out a living in such weather conditions, in such a remote place, with such limited infrastructure surely can't be a picnic. I admire the tenacity of the people living here. Just spending a week cycling here is well beyond my comfort zone. But spending years living in this wilderness without what I would call summer is beyond my imagination.

Expect the unexpected

In the hills I'm having trouble keeping up with Wolfgang, who rides on a normal Mountain bike with considerably less weight. So I often fall way behind him on the uphill sections. On one stretch slowly grinding uphill on the gravel road my bike starts an unusual up and down wobble. Something doesn't feel right; it's different from the occasional rattle when riding over a stretch of 'washboard'. I haven't had this particular feeling before, despite many months on the bike almost every day. It's one of those moments when you instantly feel that something is wrong before you can quite figure out what it is. As usual, intuition is faster than cognition. Then all of a sudden my seat sinks down a bit and the bike stops dead. I fall over to the side before I can even unclip my shoe from the pedal. What was that? Have I lost it? Lost the balance to stay upright? Lost the strength to continue riding? Lost the will-power to move on in my quest to cycle the entire Pan-American Highway on this lonely, rainy outpost in South Chile? I get up quickly, as much to avoid the embarrassment of Wolfgang looking back on me lying on the wet road as to inquire what happened. At first I can't find what's wrong, the tires are still inflated, the chain hasn't come off, and both wheels are still turning freely – none of the usual suspects. Then it hits me as I notice what's wrong in a place I least expected it: My bicycle frame is broken at the rear fork! Welcome to cycling the Carreterra Austral.

"Expect the unexpected!" I must have read this slogan in some cycle-touring book in the chapter on how to prepare for a long trip. I have come to realize that most often solutions to the mechanical challenges along the way can be found in a combination of good preparation, thoughtful improvisation and stoic determination. I certainly had my fair share of flat tires over the last 15.000 km of roads in North- and Central-America. I was lucky to obtain a spare tire from another touring

biker after I had waited too long to replace a worn-out rear tire in the Yukon. I dealt with a snapped tent pole long enough through British Columbia to get to a two week break in Washington State where I could send the broken pole in and get it repaired by a local company. After many aging spokes broke I had my entire rear-wheel rebuilt in San Diego while I was climbing Mount Whitney so as to ensure safe passage through Mexico. I improvised the repair of a broken gear shifter cable in the Baja California with a break cable from a local hardware store long enough to order a better-fitting replacement. That said, none of these things had really been unexpected, as statistically at least some of those incidents were quite likely to occur over the course of a one year bike ride. Mechanical things do wear out and break, especially when you use them every day in every kind of weather and road conditions. But a failure of this magnitude! My aluminum beam cleanly broken apart in two pieces. How can I get this repaired? How can I get back to the sunny side of these mountains? How much is this going to change the schedule or even the entire outcome of this adventure? I am thinking to myself: This is going to be interesting, a mechanical and mental challenge.

I am not dwelling much on these questions for the moment; I somehow focus on just the next steps of how to get to the nearest village or town. I can't even push the bike with trailer as the weight just sits on the rear tire and blocks it from rolling. Much less could I carry the entire weight of bike and trailer plus bags anywhere: In Canada I had once passed a trucker weigh station several months ago. Just for fun I rolled onto the weigh scale, my recumbent bike and 1-wheeled trailer a somewhat unusual sight for the folks working there, used to seeing 18-wheelers rolling by to determine their tonnage. In good fun one of them came out with an official ticket displaying my total weight. Subtracting my own body weight the bike and trailer and bag combo came to about 65kg. This at least explained why I have always been so very slow riding uphill, and effortlessly rolled away from everybody else on the downhill sections…

So I am truly stranded here and need to enlist some help. Luckily, less than a half hour into my new calamitous reality setting in, a friendly driver of a small pick-up truck stops and offers me and my defunct equipment a ride. Wolfgang will cycle the rest of the way, another hour or so to the nearby little village of Futualeufu. From there I inquire about a bus connection to Esquel, a reasonably sized town across the border in Argentina. As luck would have it, that same afternoon is one of only two scheduled bus links per week. So I buy a ticket and soon after a brief re-unite with Wolfgang we say our Good-bye's as I leave with my broken bike in the bus, heading to Esquel. At the Chile / Argentina border we need to switch buses and wait for a while outside. And there, at last, for the first time in a week I see blue sky and feel the sun shining on my skin. When you are out in the elements, nature has a way of focusing your sensibilities for some basic things like food and warmth. And I rarely recall enjoying the warm rays of sun as much as on that evening, after one week of cold rain and clouds… The evening sun comes out and paints everything in bright yellow colors. Although it almost felt that way for many days, the world did *not* end on the Carreterra Austral. Standing under the waving Argentinean flag and seeing the proverbial sunlight at the end of this Chilean cloud-tunnel quickly makes me forget the agony of those rainy days.

The next day I meet with the only two bike repairmen in town; none of them, however, is equipped to weld aluminum frames. I remember reading in those bike books about the benefit of sturdy steel frames: Somewhat heavy, but nearly indestructible; and in the rare case that something does happen one can hope to find folks who can repair steel frames almost anywhere. Again, I don't dwell much on what this means for me here and now. I go on a day-trip to nearby National Park and enjoy the beautiful nature – hoping to clear my mind and come up with a good decision as to what to do next. It turns out that such uncertainty about the next steps occurs regularly during such a trip, and although often unpleasant, dealing with them effectively is often one of the more rewarding aspects. One might even say that the very nature of any ad-

venture is that it throws unexpected challenges at you and then you have to respond and figure out how to deal with them.
First, I decide to continue a few hundred miles by bus to Bariloche, the region's largest city with my best chance at a good bike repair shop. And Bariloche is also a tourist hub with plenty of opportunity for outdoor activity, if I need to wait a while for this to get fixed. I hobble with my broken equipment from the bus terminal to a nearby hostel. It is surprisingly hard work as I can't roll the bike and need to I move in short bouts of heaving my defective equipment along. People in passing vehicles share brief and pitiful looks as they see me laboring and sweating – what a huge difference from the relaxed seating position on the recumbent rolling into town at the end of a typical day. Then I would enjoy lots of people looking at me on my unusual, but graceful and functional bike. Now I just want to get through this and would rather dump the whole stuff in the trash than having to haul it around so awkwardly. But somewhere further down the road, I know, there will be light at the end of this tunnel as well…

After a good night sleep, some email and skype conversations thanks to my little Netbook computer and free wireless Internet at many restaurants here in Bariloche a solution is starting to take shape: I will order a replacement part from the manufacturer of my bicycle in the Netherlands and have it express-shipped here. But realistically this will take at least one to two weeks. And I have only about 12 days before the planned expedition to Aconcagua is supposed to start in Mendoza! What to do in the meantime? There are plenty of outdoor activities here in Bariloche: Mountain-Biking, hiking, wind-/kite-surfing on the nearby Lago Nahuel Huapi, motorcycle tour through the Seven Lakes region to the North – there is no shortage of ideas if one has the time and a bit of extra money to sweeten the stay. But I have an even better idea as I'm thinking about what to do next.
I have to go some place and will be incommunicado for almost two days. To my wife, I pretend being down with a cold and sleeping a lot so as to not arouse her suspicions why I wouldn't skype for such a long period of time. I leave all my stuff in Bariloche at the hostel and my bike at a local bike shop. Over the course of the next two days, I take a 17 hour bus ride North to Mendoza, followed by two flights via Santiago de Chile to Miami, then public transportation TriRail and metrolink bus to our home in Palm Beach Gardens, all the while pretending to be in Bariloche resting and occasionally emailing her from the various airports. I buy a few gifts such as fine chocolate from Bariloche and a bottle of good wine from Mendoza. As it turns out, timing is on my side today as well. An incredulous, but priceless expression sits on my wife's face as she opens the front door of our home in South Florida and sees me on this mid February Sunday morning. I take her into my arms and give her a big kiss: "Happy Valentine's Day!"

CHAPTER 11

ALTITUDE

Aconcagua - highest mountain on Earth outside the Himalaya - would be the highpoint not just of Argentina, but of all Panamerican Peaks. This chapter tells the story of how my friend Antoine Labranche and I climbed Aconcagua in a private mini-expedition late in the season.

ALTITUDE – Climbing Aconcagua

It's way past midnight. Antoine and I are feeling the altitude above 4,000m during our first night at Aconcagua's base camp. I don't sleep well and toss from side to side for a few hours. Thoughts go up higher on the mountain. Will we be prepared for the harsh environment up there? Will we have the required stamina and the good weather to climb this peak, the highest point of Argentina and of all the Americas? Some gusts are audibly flapping our tent fabric, yet for Aconcagua this can be considered a relatively calm night. Then suddenly the whole tent seems to be shaking. Am I imagining things? Now not only the tent, but unmistakably the ground is shaking quite strongly as well. A sudden realization races through my half-awake brain: Earthquake! I poke my head outside the tent and scan for any signs of avalanches to see if we are in harm's way. There are some dust clouds from various small rock falls triggered by the ground shaking. But I can't hear any big rumble, and soon everything is quiet again. It is an eerie sight, gray dust against a black sky with brilliant stars and near full moon, as well as a cloud layer in the valley below. I fall asleep again until the morning hours. Only later will we learn that this tremor with epicenter off the central Coast of Chile near Concepcion was one of the strongest Earthquakes ever recorded, 500 times more forceful than the one which devastated Haiti six weeks earlier.

Movie 11.1 Aconcagua Expedition

Climbing Aconcagua, 6962m, highest mountain peak of the Americas

Acclimatization at Base Camp

Climbing Aconcagua will literally be the absolute highpoint and thus hopefully one of the highlights of my 'Panamerican Peaks' adventure. At 6962m (22841ft) it is not only the highest peak in Argentina and South America, but the highest mountain on Earth outside of the Himalayas. On Denali in Alaska and Mount Logan in Canada I have joined guided, commercial expeditions. These mountains are too remote, too cold and too dangerous to approach without a team, especially the notion of solo glacier travel with risk of falling into crevasses. On Aconcagua, however, I will attempt to climb unguided in a small, private expedition with just one friend of mine: Antoine Labranche, a young moun-

Gallery 11.1 Impressions from climbing Aconcagua

Aconcagua as seen from the pass road with park entrance in foreground.

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taineer from French Canada. Aconcagua is a somewhat unique mountain among those of similar altitude: Its normal route has no technical difficulty, very little snow and no glacier or crevasses, which makes it safe to travel un-roped. And last but not least, my previous expeditions on this adventure have increased both my experience and confidence in handling the challenges of a multi-week stay at high altitude. Just like on the bicycle, the many months of prior outdoor exposure make me more confident that I can better handle whatever challenges the mountain will throw at me.

The two main risk factors on Aconcagua are directly related to its high altitude: Lack of oxygen and the fierce cold, especially during the stormy winds of the feared "viento blanco" (white wind). Because it is so high, the upper portions of the mountain can sometimes be exposed to jet streams, ferocious winds of up to 160 km/h. Wind always exacerbates the cold, and wind chill ratings at such high winds are truly off the charts. As one outfitter puts it: "Ignore the elements up on Aconcagua at your own peril!"

We are at the end of February, early March, which is the tail-end of the climbing season for Aconcagua. This timing was mostly dictated by the fact that it took me the first two months of this year to cycle up from Ushuaia to Mendoza. On the plus side, the late season reduces both the crowds on the mountain and the Park fee for the climbing permit. On the down side, you can rely less on some of the infrastructure and

amenities which get shut down at the end of summer, and of course the weather is a bit more likely to turn and potentially close the season early. We are hoping that the weather will hold out for us.

Coming up and staying at the tent city that is the Aconcagua base camp is a new experience for me. Since Aconcagua is part of the Seven Summits – the highest mountains on each of the Seven Continents – there are lots of people interested in climbing it. Later we learn that it is one of the largest base camps in the world, second only to Everest base camp. Judging from the size and sprawling area of the base camp I can hardly imagine how crowded it must be at the height of the season! Even now it is still quite busy with expeditions and climbers. Hence we still get some benefits of the infrastructure here. For example, they have a physician one can consult with to check for symptoms of altitude related problems. And as we get to witness on our second day up here, the stationary ranger calls in a helicopter to fly out three climbers with various serious health issues. We already noticed this helicopter at the very beginning as it is parked down at the park entrance. It is also used to provide food and gear to rangers at higher camps, as well as to bring down trash and human waste. At least this provides some peace of mind, even though it doesn't quite fit into the idyllic picture of a remote and pristine wilderness area.

There are multiple expedition outfitters who have their large dome-shaped tents here all summer. Some hang out improvised signs with "Pizzeria" or "Internet Café" written on them. At others you can barter for food or even equipment, if you have to. And not far from here is the 'Refugio Plaza de Mulas', which claims to be the highest hotel in the world. I felt encouraged during my planning of this expedition by the presence of this hotel. We could get hot meals there and use their expensive Internet connection to stay in touch with the outside world, or even seek shelter in case of bad weather or an emergency. So naturally on one of our acclimatization rest days we walk over there – about a 20 min walk across the moraine of a glacier – only to find out that today is the day they close it up for the winter. It is somewhat symbolic when the last pack animals leave heading down - there go our hot meal and bad weather shelter plans. It's going to be a stay in the tent, not the hotel after all.

Speaking of tents, we brought two tents with us. One is my regular REI Half Dome, my trusted companion on the bicycle during the last nine months. It can handle some cold and wind, so it can serve as our base camp tent. However, it is not designed for the elements up high on a mountain with potentially very strong winds and massive loads of snow. For those more serious conditions I have another small, two-person expedition tent. That one we brought down half a year earlier

from high on Mt. Logan after we had met the owner who was heading down and had left the tent abandoned. With both tents set up here now at base camp and access to some common areas in larger tents of one commercial outfitter we have plenty of space to sort our gear and clothing, to prepare and eat food, and to prepare for the climb ahead.
During the preparations I sometimes wondered how I would deal with the altitude. After all, Aconcagua is 1,000m higher than Mount Logan, so far my highest summit. In fact, I have never been above 6,000m and here this mountain is almost 7,000m! Now that we are here at base camp we are starting to feel the impact of altitude on our bodies. Antoine is complaining a bit about headache, but for now I luckily don't have any symptoms other than slight shortness of breath and elevated resting heart rate. We rest and drink a lot. Even doing nothing at base camp serves an important purpose. You just need to spend time at altitude to get your body to create more red blood cells to better deal with the lack of oxygen at higher altitudes. It's a slow adaptation which takes time, usually a few days, similar to developing a sun tan.
Another part of the preparation is to stay well fed and well hydrated. Somehow I have always had a good appetite on this journey. If one is active and moves around all day outside, inevitably food takes on a very important role in your daily life. But it is never more on your mind than in the mountains, where you lack many of the creature comforts you otherwise take for granted. And in addition to the physical exertion of moving up and down the hill, you lose more body heat to the cold up here, so you need more calories to compensate and keep your body warm. Plus the air up high is much drier which means you lose moisture with every breath, so you need to drink often to remain well hydrated. In short: You are almost always hungry and thirsty – unless you're sick. And even then you need to force yourself to drink and eat enough.

To properly deal with our anticipated food obsession, on our last day prior to departure from Mendoza, Antoine joined me for a day of shopping and packing. We ended up buying what felt like ridiculous amounts of food for two weeks on the mountain. We had trouble stuffing it all into our duffel bags, together with some freeze-dried food Antoine had procured from the Canadian military. Its bland exterior made me a bit skeptical when I first saw it. As if to silently ask: "Can you really eat whatever it is that's in these vacuum-sealed bags?" "Oh yes, it has lots of calories to keep us going, and it doesn't taste too bad!" He assured me. Plenty of time to sample this food now, much of it instant meals, just add boiling water and wait for a few minutes. And to my surprise, most of it tastes fairly good.

Antoine and I make an unlikely team: We first met last November in the Piedra Grande hut, a cold, damp place supporting climbers on their way up Pico Orizaba, Mexico's highest peak. We were stuck there for two nights and one day waiting for the weather to clear to allow us finishing our climb. During that time we talked about our mutual projects and motivations. Over these conversations we became friends and it turned out that both of us wanted to climb Aconcagua. Eventually we started planning the climb together, which played a big role in my not joining a guided expedition. I would not have tried to solo Aconcagua, but together with a friend we both feel strong enough to give it a try.
We get to meet some other climbers who share our time at base camp. There is a large Russian group whose main distinction for now seems to be the loud music and partying until late at night. There are comparatively few independent climbers like Antoine and me. Most are clients or guides on commercial expeditions. We make a friend in Pablo, a freelance photographer who accompanies a small expedition in his quest to take photos and write a coffee-table book about Aconcagua. It's good to have a few friends up here, so you stay connected with the other people on the mountain and can share information and if necessary help each other out.

Cache and Carry to High Camps

After two rest days the time has come for our first carry above base camp. The typical approach to high mountain climbing is the so-called 'Cache and Carry': You carry about half of your total load up to where you plan your next high camp, deposit it there in a cache (possibly buried under some rocks or in snow so the birds or other animals don't get to your food), and come back down to your current camp. The following day you pack up your tents and all remaining gear, carry that up and then set up the tent at that new high camp. Unless bad weather interferes, you continue this rhythm all the way up to your highest camp, from where you launch the summit bid.
We will set up three high camps using this method and end up spending a total of 12 nights at the following altitudes:

Location	Altitude	Ascent	Descent
Summit	6,962 m		
Camp Colera	6,000 m	1 night	1 night
Camp Nido de Condores	5,400 m	1 night	
Camp Canada	4,950 m	2 nights	
Base Camp Plaza de Mulas	4,300 m	4 nights	1 night
Confluencia Camp	3,400 m	2 nights	
Park Entrance	2,900 m		

We pack food for five days and some cold weather gear which we will need up high into our backpacks and start our way up. It is slow going, and unfortunately the weather is cloudy and looks somewhat unstable. After 2.5 hours of slow but steady carrying up the huge slope we reach Camp Canada, a spot on a little ridge near 5,000m. Several other tents are clustered together and mark the camp site. There is quite a lot of trash and it smells of urine in many places. These are just two of the reasons why big crowds can be detrimental to the experience. We pick out a usable spot and deposit our big duffel bags there to claim it for tomorrow when we return.
As we descend some dark clouds are coming in. Within minutes we are engulfed in a snow flurry with gusty winds. We start to hear thunder in the area. A thunderstorm at 5,000m exposed on a big featureless slope without any shelter is not a good thing, so Antoine and I are rushing down. Then I notice a faint ticking sound near my neck. It is unfamiliar to me and quite strange, almost as if somehow I had an active Geiger counter in my backpack. Then the sound seems to get closer and now it is unmistakable. I have never heard this particular sound before, and I

can't explain to myself where this is coming from. Then I feel a prickling sensation on my forehead and scalp. Yikes! This is the effect of electrostatic charge from the storm all around us! Suddenly I am afraid of a potentially fatal lightning strike. Actually, I am more than afraid; *terrified* is the right word here. I feel totally exposed and helpless. We are on a large scree slope with nowhere to hide. What can we do to reduce the risk? I tell Antoine to put away the metal trekking poles and sit down low to the ground a few meters away from them and from each other. We can't think of any other precaution and so we just hunker down, hoping for the best. Once I try to stand up again and immediately feel the prickle on my head. It's serious but also somewhat comical, as if I am being punished by someone with electro-shocks for standing up. So I sit down again and wait some more. Eventually after several tense minutes the situation passes. We pick up our poles and continue on down. A brief but powerful reminder that up here you are always at the mercy of the weather conditions!

Later that afternoon it starts to snow heavily. I hope my simple general-purpose tent can stand up to this rather unpleasant weather. By next morning everything in base camp is covered in two inches of fresh snow. Luckily, the sun comes out and quickly starts melting the snow. In the daily and seasonal battle between the sun and the cold, it seems as if the sun is still hanging in there for a few more days of late summer weather. We take our time to let the sun dry everything out and begin our second carry up to the next camp by 1:30pm. In the mountains, this can be considered a fairly late departure. But when you plan to stay up high you don't need to hike so early. We just need enough time and daylight remaining to set up our tent, melt snow for water and cook our meals.

Here at Camp Canada we now enjoy the evening view for the first time from 5000m down to base camp and out the 'Horcones Valley' to the

North. The tent feels like an island of shelter and warmth in an ocean of rocks and cold. We sort through our stuff. We will have to make do for the next five days with only those things we brought up in our two carry days. The most important is access to water, since you could never carry that much water. Luckily, there is still enough snow nearby that we can collect and melt with the two gas stoves we brought. You want to bring more than one stove, for the simple reason that without a working stove you have to turn around and head down right away. You can't last long at altitude without drinking lots of water. After months of preparations and weeks on the mountain, you don't want a simple mechanical defect with your stove to end your dreams of reaching that summit... Besides, two stoves melt snow and heat up water twice as fast, which means more time to rest and enjoy.

When I wake up in the morning I notice my pee bottle is empty. I hadn't bothered emptying it out last night after using it. I see Antoine is already out and about. "Hey Antoine, thanks for emptying my pee bottle!" I shout out to him, assuming he must have emptied it out like he did with his own bottle. He just looks at me and shakes his head: "Sorry, but I didn't empty your pee bottle." "You didn't?" Oh this is bad, I'm thinking, as it's dawning on me that the only other reason for it being empty must be that it leaked. It's folding roll-up design proved to be quite useful ever since last summer on Denali, but the frequent folding must have worn it out and torn a little leak into the plastic. And leak my urine it did, right on the bottom part of my sleeping bag and my fleece jacket! I hadn't planned on wearing urine-soaked clothing or sleeping in a wet bag. But when you have no choice, you find a way to make do. Here I air them out as best I can after rubbing them in snow to take off at least some of the smell. While definitely unpleasant in this case, such situations teach you to improvise. Next time I'll skip on the foldable pee bottle design…

As we move up higher, the views are getting more spectacular. Especially the Camp 'Nido de Condores' (Condor's Nest) offers fantastic views. As we are climbing from the West side (view to Chile) this marks the first time we reach a shoulder where we can look over to the East side (view to Argentina). The sunset up here at 5,400m is stunning and we take lots of photos. For me, the views from up high have always been one of the strong motivators to hike up mountains in the first place, and here on my highest mountain yet the views certainly don't disappoint.

However, moving higher also means that our movements become slower and more labored. Everything takes longer. Even putting on our clothes and boots in the morning requires more time and effort. Antoine suffers from headache a bit more than I do, which concerns both of us. But luckily he always recovers in the mornings. I come to regret not having a larger tent with vestibule, since we need to do all snow melting and cooking sitting outside in the cold wind. On the first evening at our highest camp, Antoine is struck again with an immobilizing headache and disappears moaning into the tent. Hence I end up doing all the snow melting. That's quite unpleasant sitting in the cold and melting snow now; but I know that avoiding it and not drinking would be far worse later. In outdoor adventures in general one learns to deal with unpleasant things in the present to avoid unbearable things in the future. Sounds like the cousin of 'seeking delayed gratification', perhaps one can call it 'avoiding delayed suffering'. Yet how does one estimate the Net-Present-Value of Future Avoided Suffering?

Summit Day

We are at Camp Colera, our high camp at 6000m. Neither one of us has ever been this high, much less stayed overnight. And neither one of us sleeps well, either. I lie awake and think about the coming ascent. Unfortunately my throat hurts a bit and my sinuses seem stuffed up; it feels as if I am catching a cold – perhaps from sitting in the cold wind to melt snow all the time? What a shame, of all days I should not get sick on summit day!

We get up at 5:00am to melt snow and be in a position to leave for the summit by around 6:30am. Mechanical motion to dress and get everything ready, not much talking, anxious expectation about what's to come today…

Finally we leave and soon we warm up a bit. It feels good to get going. On the Eastern horizon one can already see a sliver of daylight. We fol-

low the head lamp lights of a Russian group ahead of us. Some of them actually turn around after just an hour or so – too cold and exhausting for them!
Antoine also has trouble keeping his toes warm, so I offer him my over-boots with crampons – we simply switch and I later take his crampons. However, just fixing the over-boots and crampons on his boots makes me breathe hard and I need to force myself to relax…

Soon the sun comes up and paints everything in spectacular orange colors. Aconcagua casts a triangular shadow to the West which is an awesome sight. We take some pictures and proceed to the 'Refugio Independencia', at 6,400m the highest shelter of its kind in the world. Up here it's relatively mild, maybe -10C with sun and very little wind, quite nice actually. It feels a bit as if I'm out doing some backcountry skiing in the Alps: Cold temperature, but sunny weather, beautiful winter scenery, generating enough body heat to feel good and stay warm. At this point in the climb I feel very confident about this ascent, with the summit less than 600m above.
My confidence level changes dramatically as we come up to the long traverse at the windy ridge. Here a strong West wind blows across the huge, blasting the featureless scree slope with little ice crystals like flying sand on the beach during a tropical storm. The wind chill sends our core temperature plummeting and creates extreme conditions! How stupid of me not to have anticipated this and added an extra layer of my down jacket prior to getting out on the ridge. But now I don't want to go back down either, which surely must be frustrating, despite the fact that it would probably be the right thing to do. I have experienced this before in the mountains, where you go from a pleasant state to one of visceral freezing very quickly. Suddenly your focus narrows and the only thing you can think of is how to escape the cold. Once you cool down too much, hypothermia sets in with its debilitating, potentially life-threatening slow-down and reduced capability to think and act. With my mind's eye reduced to tunnel vision, I can only look at how to get warm again.
We hurry and advance a few hundred meters to a truck-sized boulder. This block shelters us a bit, and we stop to put on our down jacket as an extra layer against the cold. Our next goal is to complete the rest of the traverse so as to get out of this wind. Although it is easy non-technical terrain and only moderately sloped, this traverse knocks the wind out of me. Perhaps I am going too fast trying to escape the cold. Perhaps the altitude is finally getting to me. Perhaps the lack of sleep and my hurting throat are catching up with me. Whatever combination of the above, I am now slowing way down and start to fall behind Antoine and other fellow climbers. Soon I feel as if even reaching the end of this snow

band across the scree field will require an enormous effort. Will I have enough energy left to continue once I'm there?

[Rest of chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 12

PAMPA

In Patagonia there was wind and often dirt roads. In Chile there was incessant rain and the roads were even rougher. By comparison, in Argentina the weather was dry and the legendary Ruta 40 in this part of the country is paved and mostly flat - all in all ideal riding terrain for my recumbent.

PAMPA – Cycling in Argentina

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 13

SALT

While technically not part of the Panamerican Highway, Bolivia's altiplano lured me with two major attractions: The greatest salt lake on the planet, the white Salar de Uyuni and later the deep blue Titicaca Lake, it's shores providing some of the finest riding of the entire trip.

SALT – Cycling in Bolivia

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 14

COLD

Huascaran - the highest mountain in the tropics, rises more than 4000m above the valley near Huaraz, Peru. It is seen here from the summit of nearby Nevado Pisco, our acclimatization climb. Huascaran was the riskiest and coldest mountain of this adventure - but a majestic highlight nonetheless.

COLD – Climbing Huascaran, highest peak in Peru

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 15

VOLCANO

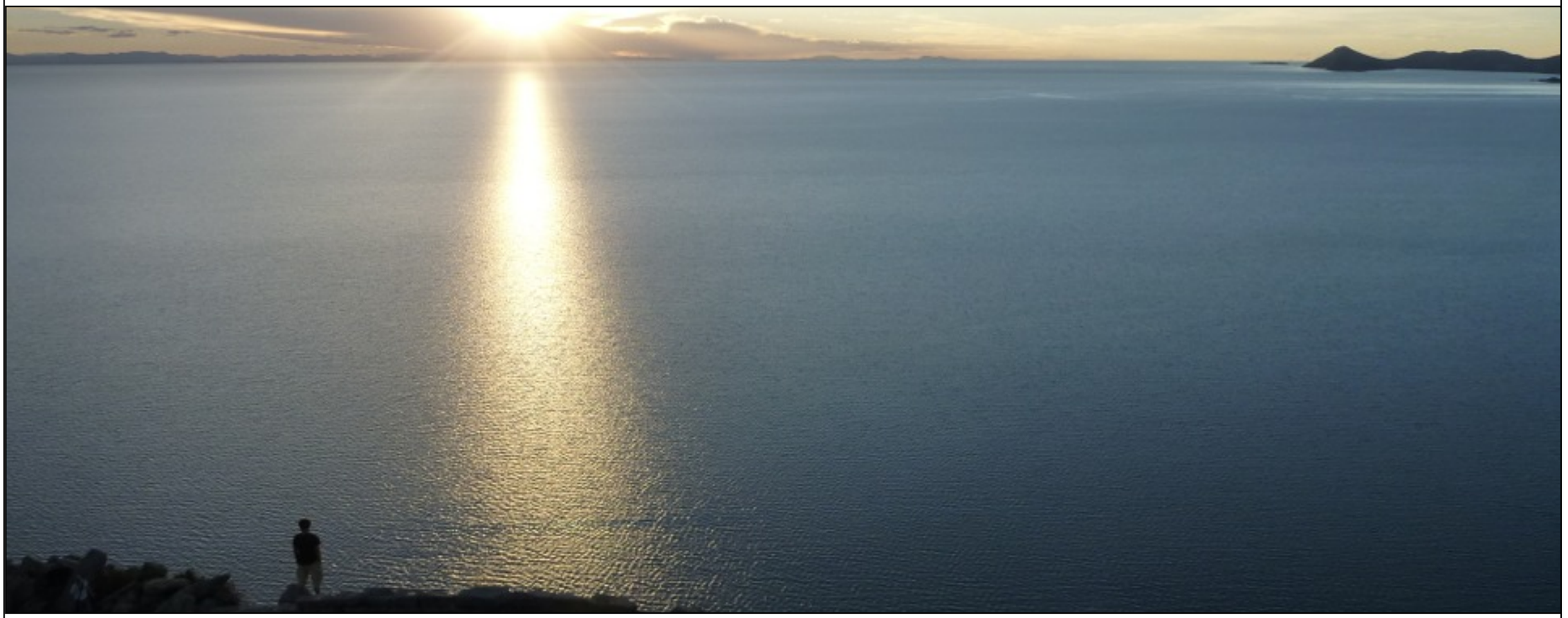
Several volcanos were part of this adventure, including the highest peaks in Mexico, Chile, and Bolivia. But the most interesting were to be found in Ecuador in the ‘Avenue of the Volcanos’, where my wife Jill joined me for the finale of this journey to climb both the beautifully shaped Cotopaxi and then Chimborazo.

VOLCANO – Climbing adventure in Ecuador

[Chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]

CHAPTER 16

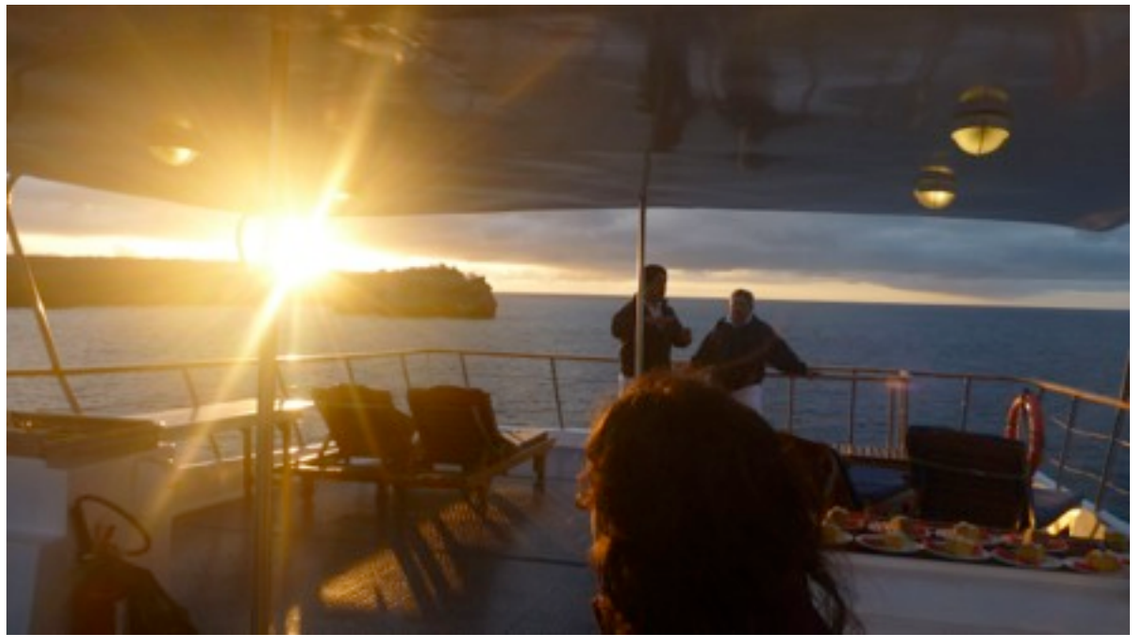
Epilogue



Throughout this adventure I often reflected upon my experiences and emotions. The journey influenced my thinking on challenges, purpose, happiness, life, and memories. Everyone's story is different, but we all face the same fundamental question: Why adventure?

For months I had been awaiting the final mile to cycle, the final descent from the last summit. And then at the end of June 2010, just like that, it came to an end. I arrived in Quito, cycled to the hostel where I would meet Jill for the final Ecuador vacation. I got off the bike and put it in a storage room, later disassembled and packed it in a box for the flight home. No more cycling.
A week later, after coming down from Chimborazo, I took off the backpack and sat down in the Whymper hut. Right then and there it dawned on me that my last summit had been reached. No more climbing. The Panamerican Peaks project was over.

After the volcanoes in Ecuador Jill and I went on to explore the Galapagos Islands for a week – her dream-destination since childhood. For me, the contrast to my rather simple existence of the past year couldn't have been more pronounced. We cruised from island to island throughout the archipelago on board of a mid-sized yacht. We had a nice cabin and could feast on buffets of a wide variety of foods, three times a day, every day. And you didn't have to exert any personal energy to get to the next place: When you woke up in the morning, the yacht was anchored in another bay with the nature guides at the ready to explore the next island after a sumptuous breakfast. It was perhaps the most luxurious week of my life. Jill was super happy; both to be in the Galapagos – in such great style, no less - and also to have me back safely from the adventure. I couldn't imagine a more fitting ending for the year-long trip through the Americas.



The first weeks after returning home from the long journey were a time to reconnect with family in Florida, time to unpack everything and time to settle in. Also time to adjust to a more normal life back home and to think back on the past year of adventure. Many friends had expressed to me that this must have been a big transition for me – and yes indeed, it was. There were many deep questions: To what extent did the trip impact me, and in which way, shape or form? What did I learn from this trip? How would it change my future life? What's next? – Here are some of my emotions during this transition and thoughts on these questions.

Emotions
My very first emotion was that I was very *glad* I had decided to go on this trip in the first place. I know it sounds like cliché, but it really was the adventure of a lifetime! I remember there were many skeptical voices and at least at one point in the spring of 2009 I felt like almost everyone close to me was advising against the trip – I listened to my

heart, trusted my own judgment and gave myself permission to go. I also felt *proud* to have completed the entire journey, to have reached 12 (of 15) summits, some of them way bigger than anything I'd done before. I was *happy* that I had returned home in good health and without any accidents or crippling equipment failures. People have asked me: What is the most important quality to have in order to successfully undertake such a trip? I would say you have to have the determination to start, the perseverance to finish, and a bit of luck to come back unharmed.

I was extremely *content* and *thankful* to see that my family and friends were still here for me (as they were throughout the entire journey), almost as if I'd never left. I was also *proud* to have raised considerable funds for 'Doctors Without Borders' – albeit a bit less than I had hoped.

Surprises

[Rest of chapter included in the full Panamerican Peaks eBook.]