

THE RIDE OF A LIFETIME

GET OUT OF THE DAILY GRIND

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Self portrait at Lindis Pass

A few years ago I quit my job and bought a one-way ticket to Australia. In France, I felt lost and wanting to find out who I was. The best solution, I thought, was to travel on my own. I needed to get out of my daily routine in order to gain perspective about what I was supposed to be doing with my life. At this time I didn't have any idea of what that was and to be honest, I didn't have time to think about it. I had this feeling that something bigger was waiting for me than sitting at my desk and getting a nice paycheck each month. I became inspired by all the stories I was reading and seeing others achieving these great goals or going on these big adventures. I wanted that to be me.

I was afraid to quit my job and not have a steady income. An adventurer's life, as seen in magazines, looks like a dream. How did they reach this point? How was it possible to leave the daily grind and jump into a life full of adventure? Well, let me tell you, I never thought I would be able to one day write for a magazine about the epic adventure I decided to take.

The most difficult part was deciding to quit my

job and saying good bye to my monthly salary. It's like stopping a drug. Once I did it though, I felt relieved and started to get excited for the unknown future. Ready to discover a brave new world!

I was anxious about how I was going to fund my adventure, buy food and all the necessities I would need along the way. Thankfully, I had some skills in web design and photography that have become a great source of income. Thanks to this, I've been able to travel while taking photos and making websites on the side. This allows me to travel and have enough time to enjoy the places around me!

2 YEARS ON THE ROAD

It has now been 2 years since I've been travelling around Australia and New Zealand. During this time, I have discovered a lot about myself and how much I enjoy inspiring people to get out and explore the outdoors and discover who they really are. It was in New Zealand where this self-discovery took place. I remember waking up on the top of Mt Ngaruhoe, it was still early and I was totally alone. I got out of my tent, sat there

and cried. I was totally fulfilled. The beauty of the place, the feelings of leaving everything behind and the freedom to be whoever I wanted to be. That's when I knew who I was and what I wanted to accomplish in life. A few weeks later I met a group of professional photographers in Wanaka. They were having an Instameet (a worldwide gathering of Instagramers). I'd recommend attending if there is one in your city! I didn't know what it was all about but I discovered that this was going to be my avenue to get some visibility out there. Combining my outdoor photography with stories. It seemed to work since a few months later I became Wanaka Social Influencer!

I was finally able to make it happen! Finding a passion of mine that would support me to continue exploring. This had led me to my big adventure. Since touching Australian soil I began entertaining the idea of cycling from Australia back to France. Travelling by plane would be much more boring. However, since being in New Zealand I felt like this was home and where I had grown the most so I decided Wanaka would be my starting point.

THE DREAM

I love traveling but I wanted to create something more than just flying to a tropical island, having beers in an infinity pool and getting another passport stamp. Something bigger and more challenging than anything I had ever done before. I have just one life and I want to live it fully and make a difference in the world rather than sit at a desk back in France. This adventure was my way to change myself and hopefully part of the world while I'm at it. In France, I had so many ideas of businesses I wanted to start and creative projects I wanted to do, but never really achieved any of them. I want this big adventure to be different. My goal is to bike from the beginning to the end to prove to myself that I can accomplish a project. Afterwards I hope to write a book on my journey to inspire others to achieve their goals and give tips that I learned along the way.

THE ESSENTIALS

Cycling and sailing from New Zealand to France. Avoiding the use of engines as much as possible on my way from Wanaka to Paris. First essential item was a strong bike. After looking for the best quality touring bike online, I realised I would need a steel frame bicycle. That's when I found the German brand, Tout Terrain. They make incredibly robust bicycles and I'm feeling very confident that this bike will get all my gear half way around the world. Next item was panniers. I found another European company called Mainstream MSX. Waterproof, minimal in design and built to last - I knew these were going to keep my gear dry and protected from all the elements.

THE SOUTH ISLAND

I started the trip in Wanaka on the 11th of March 2016. My first pass was Lindis pass and man it was a tough climb (probably because my legs were still building muscle for the months ahead!) And what a relief to be on the top where I could cycle down 30km in less than one hour all the way to Omarama. New Zealand is one of the most famous countries for bike touring so it was no surprise that I passed and met a few along the way, even at the end of the season. From Lake Pukaki, I cycled on the Alps to the Ocean bike trail which was a nice change in pace from all the noisy traffic.

Then it was Lake Tekapo to Christchurch. During this section I did 150km in the rain, my longest and most challenging day yet. When I arrived at my friends (thanks to my sponsor Further Faster NZ!) I was totally soaked and frozen. I remember wanting food and a shower at the same time so that I could get to bed faster. I decided to take a few days after the hard riding before getting on the road again.

I cycled from Christchurch all the way to Picton where I had to rest for a week while finding a sail boat to the North Island. Unfortunately it was looking like no sailing boats were heading to the North Island this time of the year. I finally decided it was best to take the ferry for 90kms rather than to wait here and miss a sail boat from North Island to Australia (which is a 2500kms crossing). I obviously gave back the carbon footprint to 1% for the planet for this crossing.



TOP TO BOTTOM:
Morning view at top of Mt Ngaruhoe where I realised what was my life purpose

First night of my trip in New Zealand

Sunrise in Kaikoura



THE NORTH ISLAND

From Wellington, I cycled up to Wanganui where I stayed with Ann and John. They gave me the advice of following the Wanganui river all the way to Pipiriki. I decided to take their advice and it's been one of the toughest parts of my trip so far! Going up and down and up and down... but after this part of the hilly Northland, I would be by the ocean in Raglan for a few days. The smell of fish n' chips kept me going.

Raglan is known for the longest lefthand surf in the world and I had to make sure to do it. After a relaxing 5 days break, I got back on my bike to cycle up to Auckland then on to Whangarei. That's where I was going to find a sailing boat to Australia. After a few days in Whangarei, everyone was telling me to head to Opuia for the boats. So I went and found a boat the first day going to Fiji but they wanted way too much money for a spot on the boat.

I decided to push my luck instead and keep looking. Thankfully, back in Whangarei I found a boat going to New Caledonia then over to Australia. Unfortunately the boat wasn't leaving for 4 weeks. I decided this would be a good chance to hop on board and learn all that I could about the boat and sailing. I even fixed the pipes, mounted the sails and learned my knots. Our crossing of the South Pacific Ocean was to depart on the 25th of May.

SAILING THE SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

I've only had a few experiences sailing so all this was pretty new to me. And did I get thrown in the deep end! The crossing was rough. Really rough. From day one to day eleven, with only 2 days off from the storm. I spent many nights steering the boat in the dark and was getting smashed by waves that I couldn't even see coming at me. One morning after a night awake steering, the rain started turning into hail and was so strong that I couldn't even keep my eyes open to see where I was going. I ended up putting ski goggles on to navigate the rest of the way in 20 meter waves!

During this crossing, I learned a lot about sailing a boat. It was definitely challenging but a great experience. Knots, navigating by the stars and managing the sails depending on the wind you encounter. I think I'll be ready for the next crossing.

When we arrived in New Caledonia, the boat needed some work done before we could keep going. The storms had taken its toll. Engine needed fixing, 3 sails ripped, leaks...

My time frame was short as I needed to be in the Australian desert during the winter. It was my only chance to cross it without dying of heat stroke. So I decided to look for another boat from New Caledonia to Australia. Thankfully luck was on my side again and I found one heading to Newcastle. We were to leave in a few days. That crossing was much nicer than the first one and we even ended up in Brisbane due to the winds.

AUSTRALIA AND ITS DESERT

I made it to Oz! One country down and many more to go. Since I'm in Australia, my roundabout wouldn't be complete without heading to Ayers Rock. To reach this however, I will need to cross the Simpson Desert. The world's biggest sand dune desert, where the climate is equivalent to the Sahara Desert. As you're reading this I'm probably right in the middle of it trying to find water and a place to set up my tarp...

FOLLOW THE ADVENTURE

Keep following my adventure on Instagram @agphotofr or on my website www.pixnbike.com. Hope to see you out there!



TOP TO BOTTOM:

Raglan Surf Beach

Self portrait at night on my way to New Caledonia

From New Zealand to France by bicycle

RIGHT: Sunset in the bush

