

Martijn Doolaard

TWO YEARS ON A BIKE

*—From Vancouver
to Patagonia*

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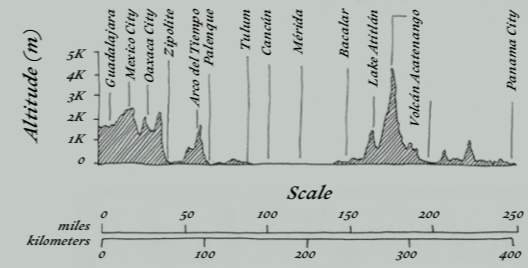




CENTRAL AMERICA

DAY 336 - MEXICO CITY, MEXICO - 5835 KM

After four months in Mexico City, I cannot wait to get on the road again. Ahead of me are the ancient Mayan ruins of the Yucatán Peninsula and eventually Guatemala, and the white-sand beaches of Quintana Roo. With a new bike and new hopes, I am ready for more adventure.





A large diversity of people are on the streets of colonial town San Cristóbal de las Casas. Every day indigenous artisans come to the town to sell knitwear, souvenirs, and artifacts to tourists from around Mexico and the world.





—*Understanding climates*

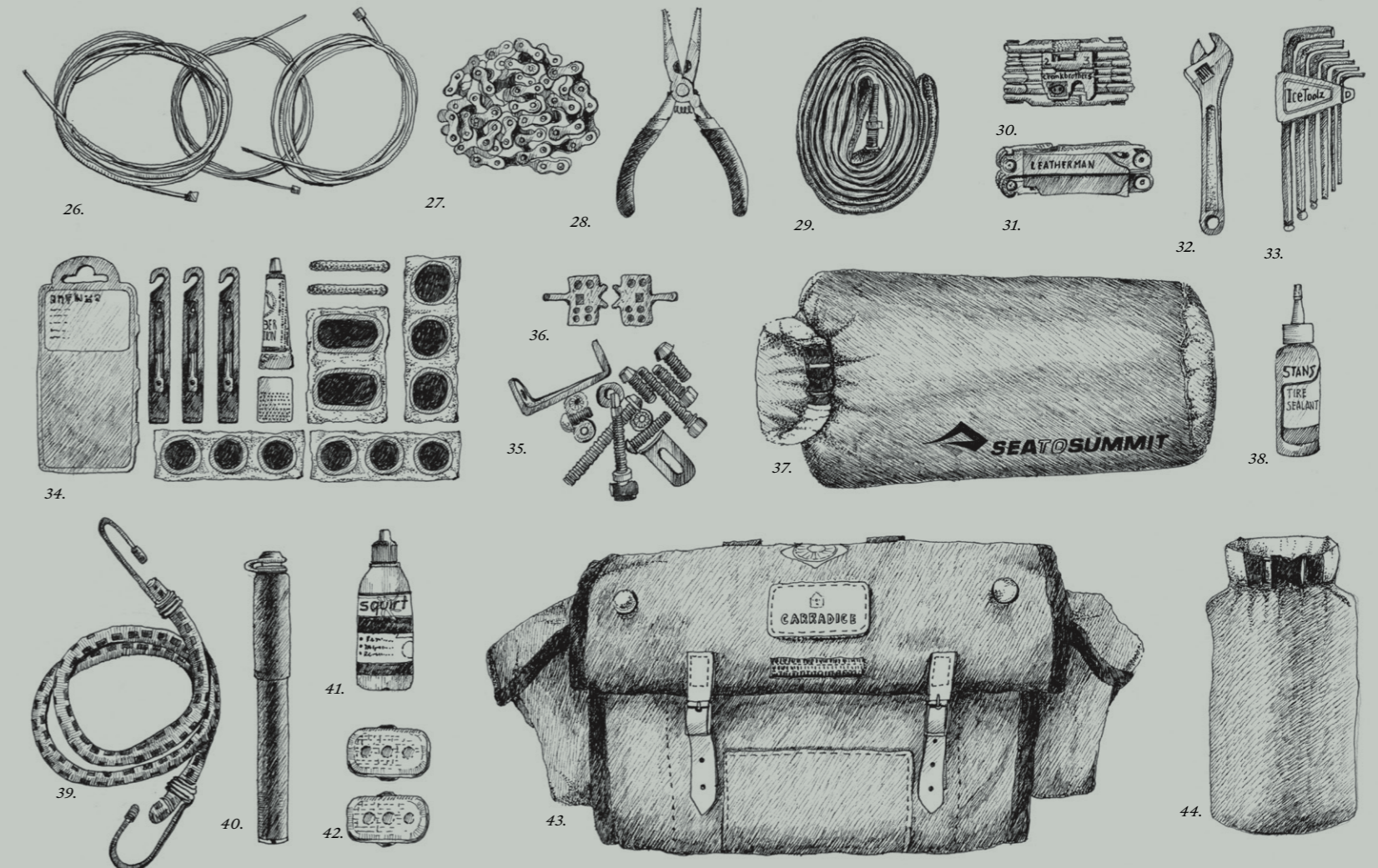
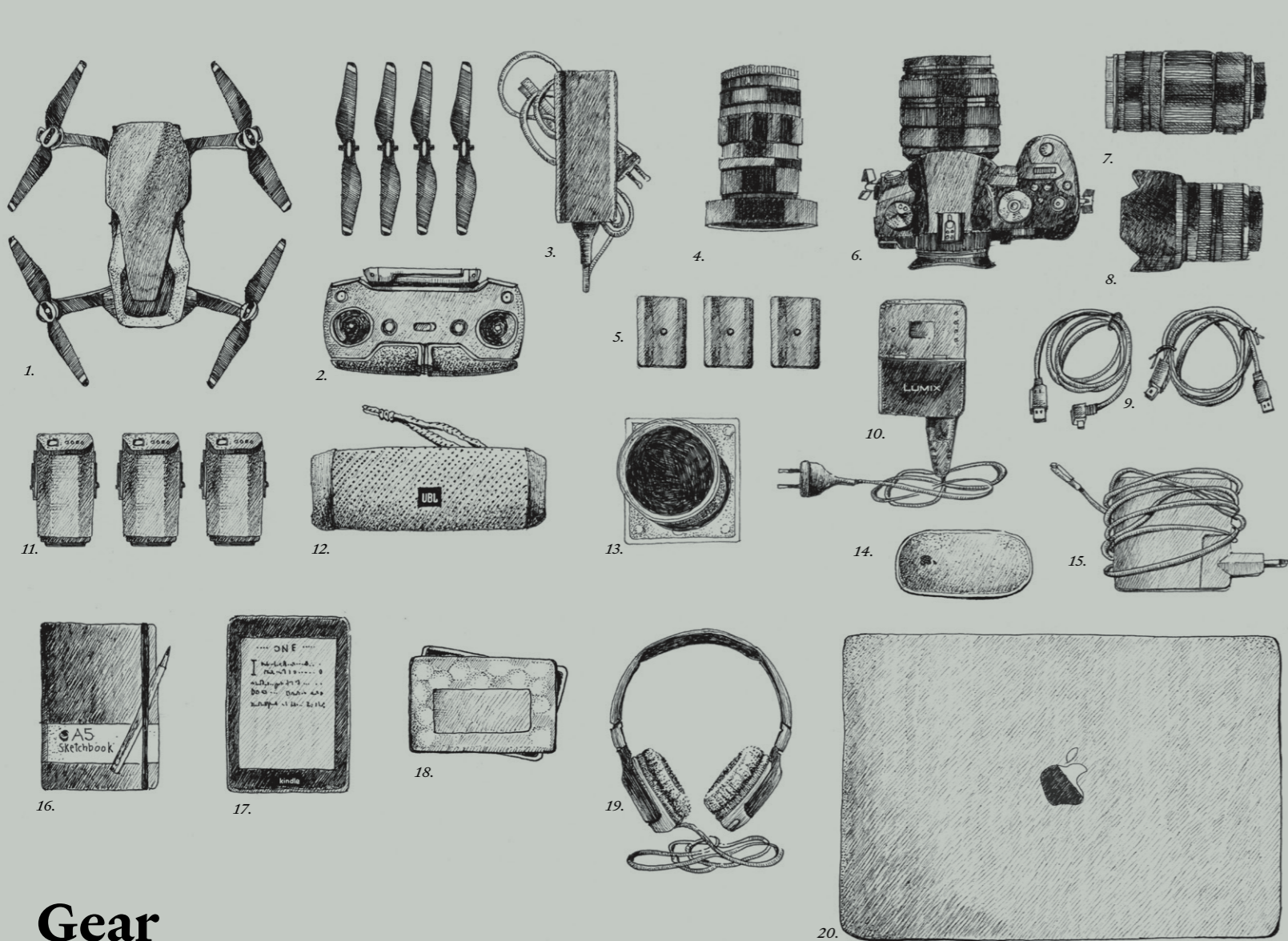
It is common knowledge that it's warmer in countries closer to the equator, but it's not always that simple.

There are many factors that influence climate. Elevation is a key player. Quito, the capital of Ecuador, is very close to the equator, but it has a much colder climate than Los Angeles. This is because Quito is situated at 2850 meters above sea level and Los Angeles is at sea level. Temperature drops roughly one degree Celsius per 150 meters of elevation gain.

The seas are another factor. Why is it that summers are hotter in Bend, Oregon, at 1104 meters than in the coastal town of Coos Bay, which is at the same latitude? This has to do with the cold, wet air coming inland from the Pacific Ocean. And not every sea has the same effect. Going for a swim in the refreshing waves of the Pacific in Puerto Vallarta is a completely different experience from swimming on the opposite coast in the Gulf of Mexico, which is soothingly warm.

In the same way, humidity influences temperature differences. The more moisture is in the air, the less extreme the temperatures will be between day and night, or sun and shade. Nights are much cooler in the desert than in the rainforest, where the humidity keeps the temperatures more equal.

The seasons and their severity vary greatly by latitude. In the north, there's a clear distinction between summer, fall, winter, and spring. The same goes for the far south, where the seasons are reversed. When it's high summer in Vancouver, it's winter in Patagonia. Countries near the equator are not familiar with these seasonal changes. The amount of rainfall signals the changing of the seasons, but the temperatures remain more or less the same all year.

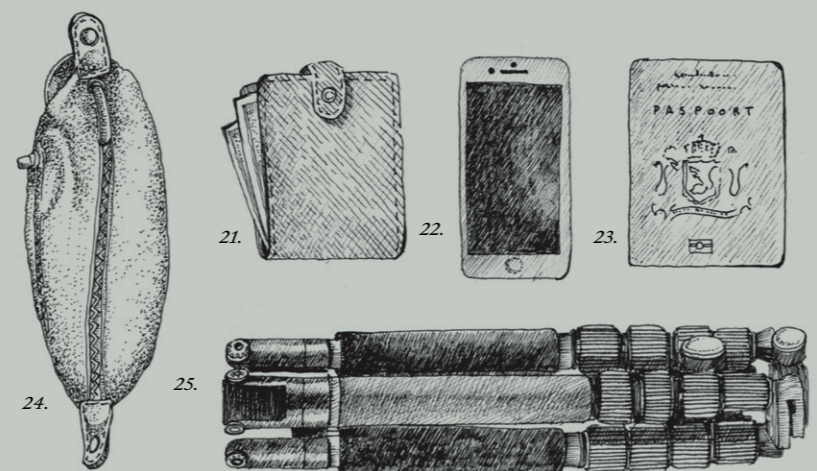


Gear

—What to pack and how

Climbing the first hills with the sheer weight of a fully loaded bike always makes me reconsider everything I am carrying. “Do I really need this bluetooth speaker? Should I lose the Bialetti and settle for instant coffee? Is a drone worth the extra kilos? Maybe I could ditch the heavy tripod and forget about time-lapse photography?” I thought long and hard on what to bring with me. A few nonnegotiables emerged. First and foremost, I wanted to be 100 percent independent, having a shelter and the means to cook my own food at any moment. Second, because documenting my journey in film and photography was going to be a key part of traveling, I needed the tools to process and store content on the road. Finally, I needed to be able to do common repairs on the bike, like patching tubes and replacing gear cables.

As far as how to pack a bike, there are two main setups worth considering, ruling out the endurance setup. The best-known is the classic touring setup, with most belongings carried in panniers attached to racks. Panniers fit a lot of luggage and you can quickly remove them for convenience when you check into a hotel or visit a restaurant and don’t want to leave all of your belongings on the street. But the system is slightly heavier and not ideal on rough terrain because of clearance issues and potential rattling and shaking. The other option, which has gained popularity, is the bikepacking setup, which employs smaller, lighter bags smartly strapped onto various parts of the frame and handlebar. This setup reduces weight and maintains better clearance for narrow trails in the woods and river crossings. Nowadays, these setups are often com-



- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. DJI Mavic Air | 16. notebook | 30. bike tool |
| 2. DJI remote control | 17. Kindle e-reader | 31. Leatherman multitool |
| 3. drone charger | 18. hard drives | 32. adjustable wrench |
| 4. Voigtlander 25mm f/0.95 | 19. JBL headphones | 33. allen keys |
| 5. camera batteries | 20. Macbook Pro 15" Retina (2012) | 34. tube repair kit |
| 6. Panasonic Lumix GH5 | 21. wallet | 35. spare nuts and bolts |
| 7. Lumix 35-100mm f/2.8 | 22. Iphone 6 | 36. disc pads |
| 8. Lumix 7-14mm f/4.0 | 23. passport | 37. 2 drybags |
| 9. various cables | 24. pouch with bike parts/tools | 38. tubeless sealant |
| 10. camera charger | 25. Sirui tripod | 39. bungee cords |
| 11. drone batteries | 26. gear and brake cables | 40. pump |
| 12. JBL Flip 4 speaker | 27. spare chain | 41. chain oil |
| 13. lens filters | 28. pliers | 42. bike lights |
| 14. Apple mouse | 29. spare inner tube | 43. Carradice saddle bag |
| 15. Macbook charger | | 44. seat post drybag |

bined, so I went for a bikepacking setup with racks and panniers on the back for more space. The handlebar bag on the front held my camera, so it would be easily accessible. I learned this from my previous trip: the more effort it takes to get the camera, the more valuable moments you miss capturing. The bag was attached to a second stem, so it rested on the tent and was positioned at an ideal height. The Carradice saddlebag held all of my other electronic equipment. Both bags had quick releases and were easy to take off when I stopped and left the bike unattended. This way, I kept my most valuable belongings at my side.

Photography — I started off with a full frame mirrorless camera, the Sony A7r, with one 24–70 mm f/2.8 zoom lens (Sony G-Master). A flexible setup suited both for landscapes and portraits. I thought I could do with that one lens, because it’s fairly wide, and the 42 megapixels that are captured by the Sony would give me some room to crop the image, if I wanted a longer shot. However, eventually I missed an ultra wide lens and better video- and timelapse capabilities, that I had with the Panasonic Lumix cameras I used previously. So in Mexico City I ended up switching to the Panasonic GH5. The compromise was losing some megapixels and quality in low light situations, and carrying three small lenses instead of one big one, but I knew this setup worked on my previous journey.

Additionally, I carried a GoPro and a drone. First a Mavic Pro, and after it broke a Mavic Air. The drone especially seemed like a no-brainer considering the quality of today’s landscape photography. With smartphone cameras and drone technology evolving so fast, it is getting much easier to carry high quality, lightweight equipment on a bike. You can fly

a drone up without even dismounting and instruct it via your smartphone to fly around you while you cycle. Despite the incredible potential of drones and smartphones, they still don’t beat a larger sensor photo camera, especially when it comes to depth of field and low light capabilities. For editing and backing up files, I used a 15-inch Macbook Pro. I backed up most of my content on Dropbox and external hard drives. Sometimes I shipped the latter home to save weight and keep the content safe.

Bike parts — The great thing about traveling by bike is that if something breaks down, you can most likely fix it yourself. I carried a patch kit, brake cables, brake pads, gear cables, lube, allen and torque keyset, pliers, chain breaker, tubeless sealant, a spare tube, and a Swiss army knife. The tires were not tubeless ready, but I could still put tubeless sealant into them to prevent many punctures. (I discovered this after I found about 30 punctures at once after cycling through some goatheads in California.) Later in the journey, I used tubeless ready tires, which for me was the way to go. Generally, wide tires are more prone to punctures, and in thorny landscapes, tubeless is a blessing from above.

Clothes — I try not to overpack on clothing and carry only what the season demands. Cycling across two hemispheres means going through varied climates, and it doesn’t make sense to carry down jackets, sweaters and gaiters across the jungles of Central America. Outdoor goods stores can be found everywhere, and because my trip started in the summer in the US, I packed lightly. I prefer to cycle in casual outdoor clothing that dries fast but doesn’t look too sporty. I want to go out in the city without looking like I just got off my bike.



THE REDWOODS

DAY 42 — JEDEDIAH SMITH REDWOODS STATE PARK, CALIFORNIA — 1910 KM

It hasn't been boring. In a relatively short period I've been through rainforests, pine forests, high deserts, and snowy alpine roads, and now, I'm back on the Pacific coast in California.

My first encounter with the redwoods is an otherworldly experience. I have heard of the mythic trees, but I haven't known exactly where to find them. It's late in the afternoon when the main road I'm cycling goes through the forest. As the forest deepens and evening falls, the trees grow larger and larger. Mighty giants rise straight up right next to the road, with trunks as wide as a single lane. Some are nearly 2000 years old. Like little toys, the cars disappear in between the trees as the road

winds down to the sea. Once, these trees grew across the entire Northern Hemisphere, but now they only remain in California where they are protected. It's incredible how much history those trees carry, how much they've seen. Many of them were here long before Europeans arrived on the continent.

Although I'm tired after the long ride, I'm giddy like a child, going off on trails through the woods while the sun sets. The fresh smell of the trees and the fog of the Pacific does me good. I reach Crescent City late in the evening having cycled 132 kilometers—my longest day on the road so far. I couldn't wish for a better welcome into California.





DAY 124 - ARCHES, UTAH - 4324 KM

Canyonlands

—*A road trip with Rachel*

From the edge of the cliff, I watch the clouds cast their shadows over the plains in the lower canyons. I'm overlooking what was once a sea, millions of years ago. These canyons were carved out over time by wind and water. It's midnight, and it's chilly. Rachel has just crawled into the sleeping bag. I'm staying up because I love the nights at viewpoints like these. The quietness grants me perspective and clarity, and I can let my thoughts wander. I recall the events of the day: hiking the arches in Moab, smoking weed through an apple, walking through the strange sandstone formations in Goblin State Park, and driving deep into Canyonlands.

Rachel has taken a flight to join me for this small road trip. To be honest, I've been looking forward to this every day since I left San Francisco two months ago. It's great to have a friend who shares the same adventurous spirit. She challenges and inspires me to approach things differently, and as a local, she knows much more about the landscape and geology. In the months we've known each other, we've been on dates in the city and microadventures out in nature, and it is during those times outside, being spoiled by the beauty, that I feel our strongest connection. The nights under the stars, the long walks into canyons, sharing sunsets together at the Pacific... knowing we love those things allows us to create a bond and share memories whose power will only grow with time. The intense fights we had in San Francisco are still in the back of my mind, but the last two weeks together in the city we were growing together, and any bad memory simply melts away sharing moments together in these awe-inspiring landscapes.

We're sleeping in my tent, which is way too small for two people, so we keep the inner tent in the bag to have a bit more space. The alarm is set before sunrise because as usual, we're not actually allowed to camp here in the park. We want to have the tent packed before any park ranger might appear. I'm sitting outside to edit some photos on my laptop and finish our bottle of wine. All the clouds are gone now, and the moon creates sharp blue shadows in the ravine. The mountains in the distance are hazy. There's a crack in the earth with a white rim around it. Tomorrow we are planning to hike down, descending 400 meters into the steep canyon and hiking to the next one. I've never seen a landscape like this; it's eerie and sublime. No birds, no insects, no signs of life at all, just the wind sweeping





DAY 114 - ZION NATIONAL PARK, UTAH - 3892 KM

Zion

—*Sharing the road*

"You're going the wrong way!" is often the response I get when I tell fellow cyclists I'm going to Patagonia. They are right: Patagonia is in the opposite direction. But now that I have finally arrived in Zion, I don't regret this detour at all.

Utah is different. I've never seen so many deep reds and browns. I noticed it by zooming in on Google Earth and turning off all the labels. (It's a great way of exploring landscapes and planning a journey, because one can discover little-known mountains, canyons, and scenic roads.) In St. George, I am hosted by Chris and his girlfriend for a few days. On

my way forward, he joins me for a day en route to Zion National Park. Chris is a "hard case-only guy," and has been creative in rigging out his bike with repurposed plastic containers, like cat litter buckets. They serve as panniers, chairs, and a kitchen table when camping. A chair is a big luxury after cycling all day. Usually, cyclists sit on the ground to take breaks or when they stop for the night. Personally, a foam pad and my saddle—to serve as back support—work well enough.

On our way we meet Robert, a Dutch cyclist doing a recreational version of the Trans Am Bike Race, a popular cycling route crossing the US from east to west. Funnily enough, he lives in the village where I grew up in the Netherlands, though I've never heard of him. On the road into the park, we realize that we will have to hitch a ride, because cyclists are not allowed through the dark, narrow tunnels. It doesn't take long before a truck stops to take us all through. As we zip along, I notice—not for the first time—that the US is a car country, even with respect to its national parks. They are designed to be easily accessible to drivers, but not cyclists or walkers. I would love to see more of an

impetus to get people on bikes or out for a walk. That would be the best way to explore the stunning rock formations of Zion.

In the evening we camp in a field just over a hill at the end of the park, still in the gorgeous landscapes, and swap camping tricks we've learned on our travels. Robert teaches us to make a fire by putting wood on his gas stove for a few minutes, without bothering to start with kindling. Chris is able to get my greasy pot, which I just cooked an Indian dish in, totally clean by rubbing it with soft sand. It takes a while, but what else do we have to do besides sit around a campfire all evening sharing stories? Robert has been on the road alone for a long time like me, so meeting other cyclists means instant family bonds. Whenever I share camp with other cyclists, great friendships are born, and I deeply appreciate the company.



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From Vancouver to Patagonia

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NEW



SAMPLE COVER

A bike is all you need to join this epic adventure, spanning continents and years, that will awaken your thirst to explore.

Could you live permanently on the road? When all your belongings fit in a few bags, your office is a roadside diner, and your home is a meandering route from Canada to the southern tip of Argentina? In *Two Years on a Bike*, Martijn Doolard puts it to the test. Strapping the necessities onto his bicycle, he ventures into desolate wastelands and sojourns in vast cities, exploring what it means to be at home in the world while embracing a life of minimalism and long-term travel. Along the winding roads of California's coasts, the impenetrable jungles of Mexico, the ever-higher passes of the Andes Mountains, and the severe alpine forests of Patagonia, Doolard eschews comfort and convention for the sake of documenting life on one of the world's most breathtaking—and notorious—routes.



Gear —What to pack and how

Chasing the first trail with the sheer weight of a fully loaded bike always makes me reconsider everything I am carrying. This trailhead (the "Mountain"?) should I leave the blades and wicks for some other? Is a dinner worth the extra kilo? Maybe I could ditch the heavy tripod and forget about time lapse photography? I thought long and hard on what to bring with me. A few nonnegotiables emerged. First and foremost, I wanted to be 100 percent independent, having a shelter and the means to cook my own food at any moment. Second, because documenting my journey in film and photography was going to be a key part of traveling, I needed the tools to process and store content on the road. Finally, I needed to be able to do common repairs on the bike, like patching tubes and replacing gear cables.

As far as how to pack a bike, there are no main straps worth considering, relying on the endurance strips. The best known is the classic orange strip, with most belongings carried in panniers attached to racks. Panniers for the bags and you can quickly remove them for convenience when you check into a hotel or visit a restaurant and don't want to leave all of your belongings on the table. But the reason is slightly heavier and not ideal on rough terrain because of its size, weight and potential rattling and shaking. The other option, which has gained popularity, is the bikepacking strip, which employs smaller, lighter bags usually strapped over the top tube of the frame and handlebar. This setup reduces weight and maintains better clearance for narrow trails in the woods and over rocky terrain. Nowadays, these strips are often com-



binet, we were for a bikepacking strip with racks and panniers on the back for more space. The handlebar bag on the front held my camera, but it would be easily accessible. I learned this from my previous trip, the more often it takes to get the camera, the more valuable moments you miss capturing. The bag was attached to a second stem, so it rested on the seat and was positioned at an ideal height. The Cervelo's saddlebag held all of my other electronic equipment. Both bags had quick releases and were easy to take off when I stopped and left the bike unattended. This way, I kept my most valuable belongings at risk.

Photography — I started off with a full frame mirrorless camera, the Sony A7, with one 24-70 mm F2.8 zoom lens (Sony's Master A), a flexible tripod (used both for landscapes and portraits), a thought I could do with that one lens, because it's fairly wide, and the 42 megapixels that are captured by the sensor would give me some room to crop the image. If I wanted a longer shot, however, eventually I moved to an ultra-wide lens and better build and handling capabilities, like I had with the Panasonic Lumix camera I used previously. So in Mexico City I ended up switching to the Panasonic GH5. The compromise was losing some megapixels and quality in low light situations, and carrying the small known instead of one big one, but I know this setup worked on my previous journey.

Additionally, I carried a GoPro and a drone, first a Mavic Pro, and after a Mavic Air. The drone especially seemed like a no-brainer considering the quality of today's landscape photography. With smart phone cameras and drone technology evolving so fast, it's getting much easier to carry high-quality, lightweight equipment on a bike. You can fly a drone up without even disassembling and retract it via your smartphone to fit around you while you cycle. Despite the incredible potential of drones and smartphones, they still don't have a range of zoom lenses, especially when it comes to depth of field and low light capabilities. For editing and backing files, I used a 1 TB rack MacBook Pro. I had my most of my content on Dropbox and external hard drives. Sometimes I stopped and later home to save weight and keep the content safe.

Rider parts — The great thing about traveling by bike is that if something breaks, there are many places to get it fixed. I carried a patch kit, brake cables, brake pads, gear cables, hubs, allen and torque keys, pliers, chain breaker, cable cutters, a repair valve, and a spare pump kit. The tires were not tubular ready, but I could still put tubular sealant into them to prevent many punctures. I discovered that I don't found about 30 punctures at once after cycling through some gravel roads in California. Later in the journey, I found a ready-made tire, which let me use the same gear. Generally, wider tires are more prone to punctures, and in heavy conditions, tubulars is a blessing from above.

Clothing — I try not to overpack on clothing and carry only what the weather demands. Cycling across two hemispheres means going through varied climates, and it doesn't make sense to carry down jackets, sweaters and gaiters across the length of central America. Outdoor gear stores can be found everywhere, and because my trip started in the summer in the US, I packed lightly. I prefer to carry a casual outdoor clothing that does not look too sporty. I want to go in the city without looking like I just got off my bike.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Stunning visual journey from North to South America
- Travelogue and first hand tips from Martijn Doolard on long bike travelling and gear to plan your own bike adventures
- Follow-up of gestalten bestseller *One Year On A Bike*

MARTIJN DOOLAARD

is a dutch photographer, designer and travel writer. In 2015 he paused as a graphic designer and packed his bicycle to ride to China. This journey became the gestalten bestseller *One Year on a Bike* and also a documentary that won various awards.



Hosteller's thoughts about the world, your life, your wishes about how you see things and how you would like them to be and how we might go about doing it. Your guiding thoughts and favorite sayings.

—Jimmy's hostel

The last few days have been busy, and because most of my complete equipment is now I decide to look for a hotel. I end up in the Rain Forest Hostel, situated on Highway 101 but far from any town.

It looks like the shore and inside. An older man—Jimmy—and three girls who appear to be travelers, are sitting on a couch in a small living room. It's somewhat warm inside. Everywhere are books, photographs, drawings, notes, letters, pens, pencils, pens, newspapers, fishing rods. Everything is old, well-used, and cared for. It's debatable whether this is really a hostel, or a home with some spare bedrooms. Jimmy greets me with a friendly "Welcome!" Without getting out of the chair, he gestures for me to join on the couch.

As I take my place on the sofa, he delivers an introductory speech about the hostel, which he does in all three languages. It consists of three points: the first is about the payment, which is based on donations. The last part is 10 dollars per night, and guests may decide for themselves if they want to pay less or more. The idea is that the ones who pay more cover for those who pay less. Jimmy is a former leader of a group, and this payment policy is based on his experience. If the second point is about judgment people, I'm not sure if I completely understand it, but he tells me that the man behind the hostel never gives away when they come to his house. He wants to be more open, less judgmental, and less afraid of people. He says there is a lot of fear in the US of strangers, particularly of foreigners, because the US has a lot of enemies. I've noticed that fear myself in a similar sign declaring "NO STRANGERS." "You are a white man," or even stronger. "There is a newspaper called WORKING WITH YOU," although a picture of a gun barrel aimed at the reader. Jimmy has been in Vietnam, but he won't talk about it, even when I ask him about it later. He won't talk about it, but he says he's never in Vietnam, but he won't talk about it, even when I ask him about it later. He won't talk about it, but he says he's never in Vietnam, but he won't talk about it, even when I ask him about it later.

I end up staying for two nights so I can explore the forest around the house and all the objects inside. There is a photo book in which people have written their stories since 1992, a tree, where people will have to write their stories, so there is a little story you, and thank Jimmy for the hospitality.