

# Backbone of South America Tour

## The 5 Ws – What, Why, Who, Where, When

### What

A solo cycling journey along the Andes to raise money for Heifer International ([www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org)) and for personal exploration and growth.

### Why

There are endless things to do and see and learn and as I grow older I have come to realize that I will never even come close to doing a fraction of them. The best I can do is to focus on things that reflect the way I wish to live my life and do so with respect for the people and world around me. Cycle touring is a unique way of seeing the world. It allows you to slow down and experience your surroundings – to interact with them rather than just watch them and your life whiz by.

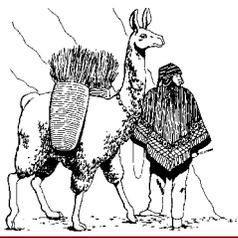
The main goal for this journey, besides actually doing it, is to raise money for Heifer International. Heifer's approach to charity is to "provide long-term solutions for sustainable futures". They teach people how to provide for themselves rather than to depend on others.

I too will need monetary support for the journey itself and hope to gain this thorough sponsorships and donations.

Please see the "Goals" page for a more streamlined take on "The Why" of this journey. The points listed reflect what I would like to accomplish on this trip rather than the desires that drive me to take it. But where do goals come from but out of a drive to do something for yourself and those around you?

### Who

Jen"Nif"er Minnick. I currently live in the Chelsea area of New York City with David, my boyfriend of 6 years. We live in a studio apartment along with one very fat cat named Psycho (who lives up to her name) and have been here for five years. Our studio, our room, wins the award for my longest place of residence since leaving my hometown of Damascus, MD for college in Virginia. As a testament to this form of wanderlust, I have lived in six cities since leaving Maryland. And with an average of 1.28 years per address it seems that, until settling in NYC, I apparently really enjoyed lugging futon frames up and down staircases.



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After living a predominately sedentary life here in Manhattan, I feel the need to reconnect with the world and myself; the need to get back outside to explore and to ride my bike – for months, and months.

Some things that I like (besides David and the cat):

- Friends – “To all my friends...” – they like me for who I am
- Vegetables – especially Brussels sprouts and yams
- Talking to myself – this will come in handy on a solo journey
- The writings of Robert Heinlein – especially Something Wicked This Way Comes – a formative part of my adolescent development
- The look, feel, smell, and stories of books
- Flowers – cut or not – perennials mostly
- Sparkly things – does this need an explanation?
- Talking and Silence both

Some things that I do not like:

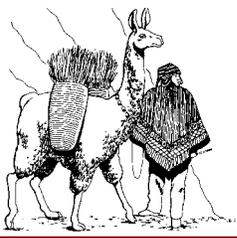
- Cleaning the bathtub
- Greed
- Built-in obsolescence
- The misuse of disposable items
- Car accidents
- Feeling alone – drastically different than being alone
- Mayonnaise

## Where

This trip will take me approximately 7,500 miles through South America on a route which follows the Andes from North to South. Distances and dates are subject to changes due to circumstances along the way.

## Table Version

Country	~Miles	~Month	Highlights
Ecuador	825	April '06	Quito, Lojas, Volcanoes
Peru	1,875	April '06- June '06	Lima, Nazca, Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca
Bolivia	825	July '06	La Paz, (Santa Cruz*), Potosi, Villazon
Argentina	1,460	Aug '06- Sept '06	Salta & Jujuy Departments, San Juan, Mendoza
Chile	1,370	Oct '06- Nov '06	Santiago, Lake District, Carterra Austral
Argentina	725	Nov '06- Dec '06	Infamous Ruta 40, Perito Moreno Glacier
Chile	200	Dec '06	Torres del Paine, Puertos Natales, Punta Arenas
Argentina	180	Dec '06	Ushuaia – Land of Fire



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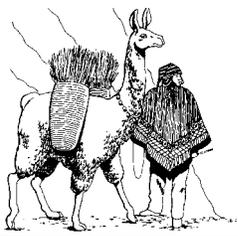
### Verbose Version

This trip will follow the Andes, the backbone of the South American continent, through Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. From my starting point in Quito I will head south, through the central and southern highlands of Ecuador. Along the way I plan on visiting the Black Sheep Inn ([www.blacksheepinn.com](http://www.blacksheepinn.com)) and talk with the proprietors about their cheese – a food which I adore. Cotpaxi, the highest active volcano in the world, will be to the East as I cycle and hopefully will not be active during my visit. Farther south, in Loja, I was to spend some time with a close friend who runs the Fundación de Protección Animals ([www.fpa-ecuador.org](http://www.fpa-ecuador.org)) but recently learned that it has shut down due to lack of funding. A disappointing turn, but I look forward to exploring this university town with her Ecuadorian friends.

I will head into Peru at the less hectic border crossing of Macará and leave the mountains behind for a bit to travel down the coast to Lima. Provided it is safe, I may take a side trip back into the mountains to visit the city of Cajamarca, – once one of the largest cities in the Incan empire and now a prime location to find and taste some Peruvian cheeses. Then it's back down to the coast to explore the ruins of Chan Chan – purported to be the world's largest ancient adobe city. In the Peruvian capital city Lima, I will spend some time recharging before beginning the push up into the heights of the Andes. But before the climb, I first must visit Pisco to have a world renowned Pisco Sour and Nazca to view the famous Nazca lines. From Nazca, depending on road conditions, I will head east and Up into the Andes to Cuzco – the base for exploring Machu Picchu and a vital location of a South American Explorers Clubhouse where I hope to pick up pre-sent supplies for the next leg of the journey.

After spending some time exploring the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu I will again head south towards Lake Titicaca, the world's highest navigable lake, which straddles the border of Peru and Bolivia. At Copacabana which is, alas, not an outpost of fancy drinks and dancing—that one is in Brazil—I will arrange a side trip to Isla Tranquille. Upon returning from tranquility I will again continue south and into Bolivia.

The challenge of cycling in Bolivia is twofold – the roads are reported to be predominately unpaved and the altitude is amongst some of the worlds highest. With elevations hovering around 12,000ft (3,500 km) this landlocked leg of the journey will be very arduous and I will often be



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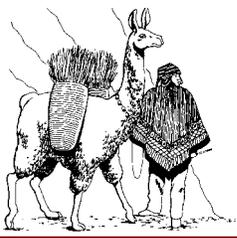
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gasping at the thin air and drinking coca tea along with taking my altitude meds. I will travel from Lake Titicaca to La Paz (highest country capitol in the world) and then continue south toward Potosí. Potosí has the status of being the world's highest city and the silver mines there have been continuously mined for over 500 years. If circumstances are favorable, I will take a 500 mile side trip down to Santa Cruz at the edges of the Amazon to experience just a little of the tropics. This circular side trip comes and goes on two different routes both of which are purported to be difficult and rife with road blockages due to mudslides and washed out bridges.

Bolivian vineyards beckon me at the Bolivia/Argentina border and I will have my first, of what I hope is many, samplings of South American wines (another food item which I adore). This next part of the journey will take me through the more remote, less visited Argentinean provinces of Jujuy and Salta. These areas were the birthplace of Argentinean agriculture and have also been way paths for centuries for both the Incas and the Spanish colonials. The area is, as it has been for centuries, predominately indigenously populated. After a whopping 1,500 miles through Northwestern Argentina I will head west on a visually spectacular, not-to-be-missed route over the Andes towards Santiago. After a well-deserved break in Santiago, I will head down through the center of the country towards Talca and then through the Lake District and finally Puerto Montt. This route will take me through the agricultural heart of the country where I hope to partake of much good Chilean foods and wines.

From this point on the journey becomes much more rugged and rural. I will cycle on the famous Chilean Carretera Austral with its remote and beautiful wilderness vistas. The goal is to ride more than ferry in this land of waterways. There will be multiple border crossings between Chile and Argentina on this segment of the journey. In Argentina, I will visit the Perito Moreno glacier – one of the only glaciers in the world that is said to be growing rather than shrinking. I will also pass the Massif or Mount Fitz Roy which I will view from afar as mountain climbing is a bit beyond my range of skills. I'm sure it's very impressive climb but I'd much rather view it from below sitting on a therm-a-rest chair sipping a glass of Argentinean wine.

As a side trip from the infamous Ruta 40, with its lack of travelers, cyclists or otherwise, I will jump back into Chile to ride to the Towers of Pain—Torres del Paine National Park. I will try to learn the story behind the name, that is, if my Spanish is good enough by that point.



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On the final leg of my journey, I will take a short ferry from Punta Arenas to Porvenir where I will be approximately two days from the end of my journey – Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. Upon arrival in Ushuaia I will rest for a few days and will try to get as far out to the end of land as possible – perhaps to Cape Horn in Drake Passage.

And then this ride, this journey will be finished and I can look forward to a return to the familiar – which will now be unfamiliar – ready to be explored.

### **When**

April 2006 to December 2006.

Using the following estimates the proposed 7,500 mile (12,000 km) route will take approximately 9 months.

- Average daily mileage of 35 miles
- Rest day every 5 days
- Three weeks of extended rest

Base riding time:  $7,500/35 = 214$  days

Rest days:  $214/5 = 43$  days

Down Time: 21 days

Total days: 278 days or 9 months

The estimated daily mileage of 35 miles per day may seem a bit conservative but as much of the trip will be done at either very high altitude or with oppressive winds I feel that it is appropriate. Additionally, my own US touring experience and the accounts of those who have toured in South America verify this estimate as adequate.