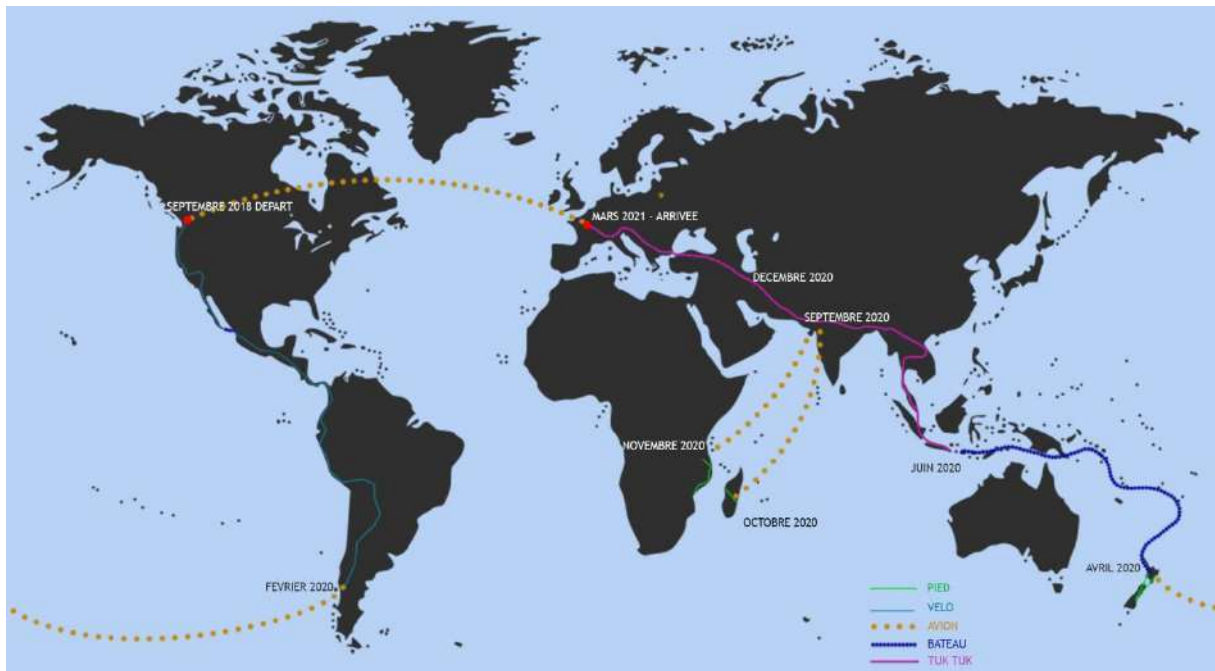


14 months, 14,000 kilometers, 14 punctures ... A good regularity, 1,000 km per month and one puncture per month.



Beyond these few statistics which cannot sum up more than one year by bike from Vancouver to Buenos Aires, we wanted to conduct an appraisal with you of this first adventure on a bike.

First, rest assured the journey does not end there. For the rest, we will first be walking with friends in Patagonia, then hitchhiking to reach Santiago and celebrate the end of the year with other cycling friends, wwoofing on a farm in Argentina, to then head to New Zealand, hitchhiking boats in Oceania then Tuk Tuk to France! Great adventures in perspective! We have just under a year and a half to go to France. So this is a mid-term review.



But back on the bike... Before leaving we didn't know much about the bike and even less about the recumbent bike. We did it very rarely, for short trips in town. So we very quickly faced a reality that was sometimes very different from what we imagined.

Let's start with the good surprises of a bike trip:

- Freedom, again freedom ... The horizon as far as the eye can see. Very few mechanical problems and easy to repair, no need to follow big roads, little need, just a little water and food. We can go where we want when we want and end up in very isolated and wild areas. Our only limit, our fatigue. We thus crossed very few tourists and benefited from incredible landscapes alone in the world.



- An ecological means and the satisfaction of doing all these kilometers with the strength of our legs. We have little impact on the environment by moving around. We glide noiselessly and we feel we belong to these magnificent landscapes. We were thus able to regularly surprise wild animals by the roadside. We are outside all day and we feel deeply connected with the nature that surrounds us.



- Contact with the people we meet. Traveling by bike attracts sympathy, curiosity and kindness everywhere, whether it is the car drivers who encourage us when we meet, the people (like the one on my right now) who stop to ask us the same questions a thousand times which are answered a thousand times as if it were the first time: How do your bikes behave? Are they more comfortable? How much do they cost? How many kilometers do you drive a day? Where are you from? Can we take a photo? (These are the questions we just heard when writing these lines...) We are photographed, we are invited to sleep, eat and share a moment. It's rare these days to be able to make contact with strangers so easily. And our recumbent bikes are formidable weapons for that!



- A family of cicloviajeros (bicycle travelers). One could not imagine the solidarity that there could be between bicycle travelers. We really discovered a family. There are WhatsApp and Facebook groups on which we exchange advices, and each time we meet a cyclist we stop to chat. He's immediately a friend who has had the same type of adventure and with whom the connection is immediate.



- Slowness, in a world where everything has to go faster, moving slowly is a luxury. It's the road that imposes its pace and the number of miles that we can accomplish. We have time to chat, to think, to listen to music, to contemplate every detail of the landscape. We can no longer do 10 things at a time, just keep the regular rhythm of the bike sliding on the asphalt (or on dirt roads).



The bad surprises of the bike trip:

- The climbs. When you are in France and you imagine a bike trip, you can suspect that there will be climbs. We have already cycled in France and we know what it is. When we are told that on a recumbent bike it is a little harder uphill, because we cannot help the weight of our body, that the chain is longer and the front wheel smaller (20 inches), we then says yes, it will be a little harder when there are climbs, but nothing important.

The calculation that we do not do then is that if we do not follow the coast, most of our trip is made up of mountain ranges (including the Andes just that). We have had several times more than 6,000 feet then 10,000 feet of elevation up without descending. When we see that we are going about 10 times slower uphill (average speed 4 miles/hour) than downhill (peak speed 50 miles/hour), and that most mountain roads are not paved, the result final is that we spend most of our journey to advance with (very) difficulty in big climbs.



- Lack of discretion. We had chosen strange bikes to encourage discussions and meetings and we were served on that side. However, at times we would have liked to melt more in the crowd. Already physically as Westerners we are very different from the local populations and in particular Andean, which earns us "Hey gringo!" at our passage. Add to that two recumbent bikes and we are sometimes singled out as two clowns of a traveling circus "Mira la bicileta!" with big bursts of laughter. We then get the opposite effect of what we were looking for and our "gringo" bike widens the gap that we wanted to avoid. We suddenly feel out of step as if we had nothing to do there...



- The difference in pace. We knew that we were not both as sporty and we thought that by adding more weight on Sylvain's bike and after a few months this difference would disappear and that we would go at about the same speed. It was a mistake. There were a lot of small tensions on both sides due to this difference in rhythm, especially in the first part of the trip... We had to wait to be in the middle of the Andes and at least 10 months of cycling for the difference attenuates to make it easier to ride together.

On our last stage in Argentina, the conditions were easier and we had almost the same pace. We even say that we would leave well together by bike, that is to say!



The bottom line is that we absolutely do not regret this part of the trip. We discovered a way of traveling that we knew very little about. We understood the benefits and the cost (physical and mental) of such a trip. For us it's the perfect way to travel off the beaten track and meet new people. It is with a touch of nostalgia that we pack our bikes today to ship them to France. We already know that we will miss them and that we will leave with them one day!



Written on 11/29/2019