

Hi everyone,

We hope you had happy holidays and that you are in good shape. We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy New Year 2020!

For our part, as you know, we now travel without bikes. To reach Santiago in Chile, from El Chalten in south of Argentina Patagonia, we decided to hitchhike! A real challenge when you know that there are more than 1,400 miles to cover, 3 lakes to cross and a border crossing that is only done on foot ... all with 2 big bags each and the objective of arrive before Christmas!

We leave on December 14 from the small village of El Chalten in the pouring rain. We already have our ticket for the first ferry the next day at 10 am 35 miles from the village and we hope that the stop will work here on a road where there are very few passages.



After half an hour, the first van stops. It is a gypsy family of 7 people who will lead us to our destination. The opportunity for us to exchange and learn to count in Gypsy until... 3. 1 Yek, 2 socket, 3 trine ... The rest we had a little trouble remembering ;)

First mission accomplished, we arrive at the pier the day before our departure. We still have to find a place to camp in this light rain that doesn't stop. It will be in the middle of the forest on a small hill, where we will pitch the tent that evening. In addition the sun is back, it's great!



The next day, after 1 hour by boat on the lago del Desierto, we have the most difficult part. 14 miles hike to reach Chile. Indeed, the border here is between two lakes and the 14 miles that separate them are not accessible by car.



It would be fairly easy in normal times but we are exceptionally burdened (everything we usually wear on our bikes, 66 pounds for Sylvain and more than 44 pounds for Kalima). It will take us 5 hours of walking in the rain to get there. Tired but happy to be able to put down our heavy luggage.



Arriving at the Candelario Mancilla campsite, we discover a dozen travelers who have been waiting here for a boat for 4 days for some ... They are not sure why but the boats have been canceled or delayed. Most of them have run out of food, and here there is only a border post and a family that makes its garden available for travelers to camp, so there are no shops to stock up on supplies. Everyone therefore hopes that there will be a boat tomorrow and that we can all embark (the number of places is limited).



By talking to each other, we meet two French travelers, Pauline and Lauric, who travel only on foot from Ushuaia to Quito. And guess which association they belong to? "L'enfant @ l'hôpital"! What chance and what a nice encounter! We are impressed by their little bags. All of their belongings weigh no more than 13 pounds each! Compared to them we are loaded like mules. What courage they have to walk all this way!



Good surprise the next morning when we learn that there is actually not one boat, but two boats that will arrive at the same time. So we all cross the lake under a beautiful sun but with a strong wind which makes the boat slam with each wave.



Arriving at Villa O'Higgins, some decide to hitchhike, while others reserve the next bus. This is the end of the legendary southern route and there are very few cars passing by here. We are lucky to find a car that leaves the next day for Cochrane. An appointment is made. We leave the next morning with him and will take the 3rd ferry of our trip.





Arriving in Cochrane, we start the hitchhiking at the end of the day at the same time as half of the people we met at the campsite before. We arrive first on the outskirts of the city, always in the rain and leave first with two Germans in the back bucket of a car which will take us to Puerto Tranquilo.



Only one road, little passage and a lot of hitchhikers, we realize that it will not be easy ... We have one last day of boat to officially leave Patagonia. It will take 9 hours to go from Chaiten to Puerto Montt. The climate begins to change and warm up slowly as we head north.



From there begins a race against the clock: We have 2 days to do the last 600 miles that separate us from the capital of Chile. And as you can imagine, it's not always easy to be in a hurry when you are hitchhiking. Hitchhiking is a story of patience and confidence. Confidence that we must inspire in the driver, confidence in the driver who will take us and confidence that we will end up being taken ... And even if we sometimes waited 2 hours 30 minutes on a deserted road, we always end up moving forward.



Little boost after little boost, we are getting closer to Santiago. The landscape has already changed a lot and is now reminiscent of the French countryside. We are suddenly back in the summer, which is all the more strange when we think of the temperatures in France this December.

Here we are 1 day ahead of our schedule! In the end it will be no less than 18 drivers of cars and trucks who will help us during this journey which will have lasted 9 days in all.

We are very happy to meet our cycling friends to celebrate Christmas together.



See you soon for new adventures!

Kalima and Sylvain

Written on 04/01/2020