



A happy, but very belated 2 years on the road... Today marks 2 years, 23 days, 4 hours and 35 minutes since we handed in our front door keys to the lady behind the counter at the council office in Arnhem.

That's life... Sorry, we missed celebrating exactly two years on the road with you all, but just so you know, we awoke on the 31st of July at Cultus Lake, east of Vancouver, just south of Chilliwack and very close to Vedders Crossing in British Columbia. Gallant blue skies escorted us along with quite a number of oversized RV's as we travelled down Lougheed Highway towards Hope. Yes, that is a place and not what we were full of as we set up camp late that afternoon. The blue had turned to grey and a mist bank slowly made it's way over to our tent and drearily dumped its entire rain content right on top of us. Sometimes, you just have to take the good with the bad.

As each six months comes around, we reminisce. I mean, how could you not? So much happens each day, each week, each month and yet it all seems completely normal to us these days. Our last newsletter was written from a hotel bed in Yellow Guesthouse, Kathmandu. Since then, we have flown on three occasions, confirming that this activity is definitely not one of our favourite pastimes, cycled through Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Korea and we are currently just about to finish our short stay in Canada and cross over into the US.

From the hot and humid to the land of the rising sun and beyond... For us, South East Asia is quite familiar territory and although tourism has flourished in a big way and spoiled many beautiful places that we remembered from the mid nineties, there are still a few hideaway spots to stumble upon that are special enough to make the visit worth the effort. After a short ride into Singapore, we finally got to cycle the East Coast of Malaysia. While the people were kind to us, the weather was not and at times it was more like paddling than pedalling. Thailand showed us two sides of the coin: the land of smiles can also be the land of frowns, but as is destined when you travel by bike, we did manage to experience a few magic moments with Thai people in their true environment: this being exclusively in small towns and sea side villages and well away from the taint of tourism.

Japan would have to be the surprise draw of the year: Although the cities are generally massive concrete sprawls punctuated with pachinko slot parlours, the rural aspect of the country was pretty amazing: challenging cycling through beautiful landscapes. Mount Fuji literally stopped us in our tracks as we rounded a bend on the shoreline of Yamanakako Lake. Right there in front of us: one breathtaking 3776m emergence of snow capped volcano shrouded in mist. You can't cycle up Japan's iconic cone shaped mountain and the rest of the mountainous territory wasn't a patch on the elevations we have traversed before, but my oh my, if you did have to go up, it was steep.

When the Japanese haven't tampered with the rivers or tried to tame the cliff faces with sprayed cement walls, it is an immensely gorgeous country: birds, butterflies, wild flowers, days that smell of honeysuckle and pine, gushing fresh water and every shade

of green patch-worked as one huge big mountain blanket. Camping wild everywhere and anywhere is tolerated. Food is delicious and after a bit of spitting and spurting, we got our Primus stove back into full swing after several long months of dormancy. Ali fell in love with the udon noodle and the firefly. I developed a fetish for man-hole covers.

Now, if we thought Japan was tough going, that's because we hadn't yet embarked on the Korean countryside. Unrelenting ups and downs of intensely thigh crunching gradients got the better of me on more than one occasion, but the vibrant, inquisitive folk certainly made up for it in other ways. Koreans showered us with enthusiasm and gifts of food and drink as we panted our way up many a hill; motorcycle riders gave us the thumbs up; and in general, we were a hit wherever we went. Korea is definitely worth a visit, if only to get in a bit of practice for the next Tour de France and sample a few dinners of rice cakes and kimchee.

Initial plans to enter China from Korea were immediately struck out in fat scribbly red pen, as soon as we caught wind of the hard-line policy on issuing visas. Basically, a 30 day permit with no chance of an extension, a loaded push-bike and a country the size of China is pretty futile. Menace as it is, we'll leave the Tibet leg of the journey until another date. And so, off to Canada we went...

Another world, the same planet

North America is a world away from the hot and humid Asia we had grown so used to over the last year and a half and there has certainly been a bit of adjusting to do on our behalves. It is not only much, much colder here, but the cost of living has blown our budget right out the front tent flap. Furthermore, we understand everything everyone says, which was quite a novelty at first, though I did find myself needing to refrain from overuse of hand and foot signals when conversing with someone. Travelling by bike is not always pleasant: the major highways are overrun with heavy traffic and the alternative routes can be rough going as they are not often paved.

After just 20 kilometres on the Trans-Canadian Highway, we both decided that dying was not high on our list of priorities and scrapped our plans to cycle through to Banff. Sadly enough, we'll miss out on encounters with moose, bears and the Rockies, but, turning off at Revelstoke was the best thing we ever did. The journey that followed into the Kootenay Lake district was scenic, relaxing and just what we needed.

Who knows what the next leg of the journey will bring? Both the US and Mexico are very big countries and will probably take up all of the following 6 months. No doubt, this time round, like all the times before that, we'll have a tonne of experiences to share with you.

Cheers for now
Son and Ali

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PS: In no particular order, our thanks goes to Maki and [Nigel](#) (Tokyo), [Gerry](#) and Shoku (Singapore then, now France), John and Linda (Ko Samui), [Pedal Revolution](#) (Bangkok), [James](#) and the toasty warm boys (Victoria; Vancouver Island), and Shannon (Vancouver) for the life-comforting accommodation and all the mod-cons that comes with it. Also for assorted reasons too numerous to mention: The Korean Police Force, Mary at Air Canada, Nathan and Tina from [Cascade Designs](#), Lincoln at [bicycles](#), Hoam Chul Lee, China Airlines, The Patagonia staff in [Ogawamachi](#), Masao at [G-style](#) and Bettina at [Schwalbe](#), taxi driver 36062 from Kra Buri, Sonam Gurung at [Dawn Till Dusk](#), [John](#), The staff at Yellow House, [Yeti Airlines](#), Allan Goh from [Transit Budget Hotel](#), Marlene and Victor and everyone who sent us a two year congratulations message. Cheers once again!