



Summer Getaways



★ Lodging ★ Overnight Accommodations ★ Rentals



BIKING AMERICA

Surviving the spaces in between

Chicago-based Jerry Soverinsky is riding coast-to-coast and documenting his trip weekly in the Herald. Soverinsky is a contributor to National Lampoon and is a graduate of Chicago's Second City Training Program. He also was the founder of a bicycle touring company, and is the author of "Cycle Europe: 20 Tours, 12 Countries."

By JERRY SOVERINSKY
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

It's a bit unpatriotic, a story about an American cycling journey plugging the Aussies, but what can I say? They're the most confident, easy-going travelers, full of neurosis-free travel advice. Last week, I was cycling through Idaho, the scenery along the Clearwater and Lochsa rivers the visual highlight of my tour's first 500 miles.

Since I've left Oregon and Washington, however, I'm traveling through regions whose roadside services are infrequent. One lilly stretch contains a 95-mile gap between services — in an area without cellphone coverage. So I've been anxious about some of these upcoming rides, and was thinking about them when I came across an Australian couple, cycling in the opposite direction. We chatted about our rides.

"You only need food and water," came the man's reassurance, in between blows into a worn handkerchief (Australians pack little to no clothes, obviously making room for a cloth Kleenex).

"I mean, for water, you've got streams and rivers," he said. He next described water purification techniques, and in the midst of his explanation, I became confused as he detailed the quantities of iodine per volume of water. One drop per liter? One tablespoon per gallon? What's the difference, I quickly realized. Where am I getting iodine?

"And food ... well, look around you! There are miles and miles of vegetation everywhere."

Before I could ask how to identify edible plants, I watched in horror as he reached down and grabbed a handful of weeds, dividing the bunch into two piles.

"See, these here, the white ones? You can't eat these," he instructed. His wife shot him a look, and they both laughed.

"Well, you can," she said. "Though you'll spend a good fortnight in a clinic, puking your guts out." The man then started in with the "good" pile and their dietary benefits, before stuffing a wad in his mouth, as if it were Bazooka gum.

I stood there, unable to speak. He and his wife wished me well, then cycled off, as confident and self-sufficient as any travelers I've met.

I felt a bit self-conscious, as I washed down the last bites of my Almond Joy with my \$3 Evian water, before turning on my satellite radio and continuing my journey.

Massachusetts

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