

Beginnings

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I remember my first road trip like it was yesterday, even though it was over 40 years ago. Like any serious rider, I checked my equipment meticulously: tires, good wear and inflated. Chain, tight and well oiled. Gear, packed and ready. Map, course planned and route checked. I'd done my homework on this one. I left late afternoon...pedaling swiftly away. Did I mention my ride was my Huffly Buckaroo? Oh, and I was 8.

My first road trip on two wheels was on my trusty bicycle. And everything I needed to know about two-wheeled touring, I first learned on that epic journey...all 8 miles of it. Being the independent type, I asked my mom to let me bring my bicycle with me to my friend's house. Knowing I'd eventually want to come home (and not wanting to wait for my mom) I secretly prepped my bike and packed a map for my homeward voyage. It sounds funny today, but no one thought twice about it at that time—an 8 year old pedaling off solo into the suburban Southern California sprawl. I knew the main arteries well. But being a safety minded fellow, I followed those arteries a few blocks off on side streets. Inglewood Avenue was the biggest street near my friend Gene's house. I followed it for two miles before intersecting with El Segundo Blvd. In that distance, I'd managed to work up a voracious appetite. The only place I knew of in the area was a Jack-In-The-Box restaurant, and having a modest budget (about 2 bucks) and an insatiable appetite, I ordered a small armada of tacos and a coke. Newly recharged, I swung back onto El Segundo Blvd. heading due west into the bracing breeze of the Pacific Ocean...or that would be what it would feel like on a motorcycle. On a bicycle, the headwind was taxing. Each pump of the pedals on those miniature cranks pumped out a fraction of a foot pound of torque. Luckily, as the transformation of my muscles into rubber continued, I shifted south again, hugging the perimeter of the Chevron refinery. It made an excellent wind block, and few, if any pedestrians walked this admittedly inhospitable stretch of road. Finally, the home stretch. Back in town, I flew down Rosecrans Avenue, the feeling of the familiar propelling me along as much as my weary

legs. A few minutes later, I cruised into the driveway of our house and walked in the door. My mom's mouth hung open in equal measures of terror and surprise. After a short (and admittedly deserved/anticipated) conversation on responsibility and risk, I returned outside to my trusty Huffy. I slowly wheeled it past my mom's bottom-of-the-swimming-pool blue station wagon and into the garage. I thanked it with a silent thought.

All these many years and miles later, all the basic lessons of two wheeled travel were honed on that youthful adventure. 1) Prepare your bike. Tires, chain, luggage—all it takes is one small overlooked detail (whoops—whrere'd that nail head come from?) to ruin a trip. 2) Have a map: Sure—you have GPS, a cell phone—but technology can fail (batteries die, cell service disappears). Good old fashioned paper maps are worth their weight in gold. 3) Bring only what you need: Gear for temperature variations, water for hydration, snacks for energy. All three preached and practiced on my first two-wheeled voyage. Who can forget their first foray into the unknown? Pointing your front wheel into the horizon and having faith you can achieve it, I know I will never forget my first time. Pretty sure my mom remembered it for a long time too...