



Becky in Idaho
Inset: Smith Rock
State Park

USA

TransAm recovery ride

After a harder journey from hospital bed to bike, Ash Eagles cycled coast-to-coast across the USA

In 2021 I woke in a hospital bed feeling scuppered, done for, on the scrap heap.

Major surgery to remove a tumour from my chest wall had been a success, yet left me feeling like it was all over. I asked myself: "Will I ever ride a bike again?"

Then my tenacity reared its head. "I'll prove everyone wrong. I'll ride 100km a year from today," I told myself. Then the thought crossed my mind. "I'll show them, and I'll cycle across the USA."

A year or so later, with my partner Becky, we decided to follow through on the idea. Her grandparents had made the trip we had

chosen in the early 2000s as part of their retirement. The route was planned for just over 4,000 miles, through 10 states, plenty of mountain ranges and beautiful national parks.

We started in Florence, Oregon, on the Pacific coast and finished in Yorktown, Virginia, on the Atlantic coast. Following the TransAm trail, we crossed three beautiful major mountain ranges, explored Yellowstone and the Grand Teton National Parks, embraced the flats of Kansas, danced in Nashville, gazed in awe at the colours of autumn in the Appalachian Mountains – and celebrated my third year in remission.

The trail is lined with kindness, a linear community where knowledge is shared, friendships are formed and experiences are gained. Locals host cyclists, giving them a bed for a night and sometimes supplying meals and laundry facilities. They find your journey inspiring, but their kindness is far more inspiring than riding your bike every day. It reaffirms the good in society.

When I woke up in that hospital bed three years ago, I did think I was finished. Cycling has been critical to my recovery, mentally and physically.

Where will it take me next?



Setting off from the Pacific coast



Joel's family rode from west to east

Northern England Canal cruising

With his father and his son, Joel Stokoe followed the Leeds and Liverpool Canal towpath

THE TOWPATH WAS silent and the flat waters of the canal reflected the upcoming bridge perfectly. It was impossible not to smile. While never far from civilisation, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal offers a serene, well-surfaced route through often breathtaking countryside. At just over 127 miles, it's the single longest canal in Britain, an engineering miracle that crosses the Pennines and offers two centuries of history to explore.

Our three-day ride was a multi-generational one for myself, my dad and my son. It was a chance to spend some quality time together and make priceless, lifelong memories. The leisurely schedule left time for snacks, photographs and regular stops just to appreciate being in the moment.

It was obvious whenever we were within the boundaries of towns and cities, such as Liverpool, Wigan, Blackburn, Burnley, Skipton, Bingley and Leeds. Here, towpaths were lined with scrapyards, Victorian buildings, warehouses and homes. We shared the towpath with runners, dogs, walkers and families. There were no issues.

The canal links these urban centres via scenic stretches of countryside full of fields, hedges, trees, wildflowers and birdsong. Along the way we spotted signs of the past: concrete mileposts, sculptures, mill buildings, staircase locks and more. There's plenty to see on this accessible route. If you are looking for a gloriously simple off-road route, you really ought to give the Leeds and Liverpool Canal a go.



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