

Introduction

On September 30, 2005, we flew from Klamath Falls, OR to Burlington VT. It was a fall colors ride that we've wanted to do for many years. I wanted to post some information about the ride. I've arranged three sections for you below:

- How we faired with the airlines traveling with a tandem in the post 9/11 era.
- How we setup our tandem for touring.
- Where we traveled on our tour.

The report uses hyperlinked text, the text in blue print, to jump to other information on the Web. Make sure you are connected to the Internet before clicking any of the hyperlinks. Clicking on the link will open a window in *your Internet browser or email program*.



Stopping at Fort Lennox on the return from Chambly to Plattsburg

The Airlines

We have [Da Vinci tandem](#) with S & S couplers. We packed the bike for travel using two tandem hard cases. This was our first trip traveling with the bike since 9/11 with the stricter security provided by the TSA. I read a few reviews online that compared the TSA agents with Nazis. I am happy to report that we had few problems.

This was the first flight were the ticket agent paid close attention to the 50 lbs maximum rule for checked bags. One of our cases holds the three frame sections, rear wheel, handle bars, and a few smaller items. The other case holds everything else, including the front wheel, racks, fenders, bags, etc. . . . The case with the frame sections was overweight by 6 lbs and we were charged a \$25.00 surcharge for being overweight. *I am going to experiment with packing the front wheel in this case for the future.*

After re-checking with our insurance agent, we purchased additional insurance for the case with the frame sections from the airlines. Our homeowner's policy would not cover the tandem while it was with the airlines. Automatically the airlines cover each checked bag up to \$2500, and we added another \$2500 for the frame case. The maximum the airlines will insure any single piece of luggage was \$5000. Cost was \$25.00 going to VT, but almost \$100.00 coming back. We checked into this after we returned and learned that on the way out, the ticket agent under charged.

Before we left, we packed each suitcase with note stating what was in the case and how to get a hold of us should they need help. We did this in case there was a TSA



The two travel cases packed for the trip

inspection and the agent needed help putting the bike back in the case. We put our full name, address, and cell phone number on the sheet as well as packing instructions for the frame sections. You can't actually lock the cases since 9/11. If a TSA agent wants to do an inspection and finds the case locked, he/she can cut the lock. We wrapped each case with two 2" luggage straps. You have an option to buy TSA approved locks, but we didn't actually find any of these until we landed in Portland OR.

The actual check-in process was great leaving Klamath Falls, but more difficult coming back. While the Burlington ticket agent was helping us, the TSA agent opened our second case upside down. Some of the parts fell out of the case and he became upset. I wasn't allowed to physically help him repack the case, but he did allow me to give verbal instruction from my side of the counter. When he was done repacking, he dropped the case on the belt and turned away. This guy definitely had a bad attitude and I'm sure he wouldn't have called me for help. Lucky I was there when he opened the case. We had no damage to the tandem.

Our Bike Equipment

We ride a custom made [Da Vinci tandem](#) with S & S couplers. We bought this bike in 2001, and it was our third and hopefully final upright tandem! We really love this bike. We also own a custom designed Rans Screamer that you can read more about [here](#), but it was not our first choice for touring. We've ridden a lot of day rides doing as much as a century, but as a couple we've never done any overnight touring.

The bike was already outfitted with a Blackburn rear rack and panniers. I decided to upgrade the rack before the trip so that we could use the larger panniers that I use on my daily commuter bike. For the rear rack, we purchased from Wayne Boroughs, www.TheTouringStore.com. Wayne has a great online store and actually checks his email! Not only does he check it, but he checks it frequently and get right back to you! We ordered the Tubus Cargo 26". This rack allowed us additional room for our panniers so that Heidi's heels didn't hit the bags. I wanted to order a front rack from his as well, but at that time there was a shortage of Tubus racks in US. I prefer steel racks to aluminum, but more about that in just a moment.



At the canal in St. Jean sur Richelieu. The trail to Chamby is on the other side of the canal.

The rear panniers were made by Arkel, <http://www.panniers.com>. I purchased a set of red T-42's some years ago and was very impressed with the quality. Since they also sold front bags, I decided to order the new front bags and rack from them. They have an easy to use web site and a toll free number in case you want to talk to someone. We ordered the T-22's for the front with an AC Low rider rack built by Old Man Mountain: <http://www.oldmanmountain.com>. The rack was made of lightweight aircraft aluminum tubing and came with a lifetime warranty. Since it's limited to 30lbs, I think it should last us for a while.

The final piece of equipment we needed was a map holder. Arkel makes some very nice front handlebar bags, but we didn't want a bag. We've tried several map holders that attach with Velcro to the handlebars, but were disappointed with them. The straps were glued to the pouch and often came loose in hot weather. While shopping for bags at the Arkel site we noticed that they sold an all weather map case. We ordered one and we were not disappointed! As with all the Arkel bags, the map case was well made and designed. Heidi ended up carry her wallet in the back pouch and the holder was large enough to accommodate the map.

The bike performed perfectly for this tour. We didn't even have a flat. We like the 1.5" IRC Metro tires and I had changed them at the beginning of the summer. They have a high pressure rating of 100 lbs. and smooth tread. The temperatures were unseasonably warm for this time of year. We actually brought more warm clothes than we needed.

- We each brought two cycling jerseys and shorts. We washed them out in the sink each night and rotated each day.
- We brought a bright cycling windbreaker, one pair of long tights, a long sleeve jersey, and full fingered gloves but we didn't wear them.
- In the evenings we wore shorts and sandals. The bike has SPD pedals and we wore cycling shoes. The sandals were heavy to pack, but we both liked the comfort of the change in the evenings.

The Tour

Plans to do this trip were in discussion for a couple of years, but serious preparation didn't begin until about a year before. Our plan was travel for five days staying in inns hotels along the way. We wanted to do about 50-60 miles per day. We didn't bring any camping gear, unless you consider a credit card camping gear! In planning the trip, we found that Vermontians organized and very interested in having us tour their state. Emails were returned promptly and requested materials were sent in a timely manner. One of the best resources for planning the trip was a map of the Lake Champlain bikeway. The map can be obtained here: <http://www.champlainbikeways.org/> and here <http://www.champlainbikeways.org/maps.htm>. The map outlines the basic routes and some less traveled routes. Text directions were also provided with exact mileages.

If you want to tour this part of country, there are three basic routes:

- Travel along the coast of Vermont that borders the Lake Champlain.
- Travel down the middle of Lake Champlain through the Lake Champlain Islands.
- Travel down the New York side that borders Lake Champlain.

We planned to travel by airplane to Burlington VT and then by tandem to Chamblly QC via the Champlain Islands. Chamblly would be the turn around point, and we would travel back to Burlington via the NY side through Plattsburg NY. We choose this route for a couple of reasons.

- First, we had previously been along the western side of Vermont with our kids in the 90's. Everyone we talked to said that the Champlain Islands were a must do!
- Second, my father was born near Plattsburg. All of my aunts live in Plattsburg and I have a special aunt, Yvonne, that we wanted to surprise with a visit.

On September 30, we flew to the Burlington VT airport, which recently became an international airport. As it turned out, the next weekend was parent's weekend for the University of Vermont. This presented some accommodation challenges because we wanted to start and finish at the same hotel. Eventually we were able to secure lodging for both weekends, but the town of Burlington was taken over by parents and their college kids for the first weekend of October! Surprisingly, there weren't a lot of hotel in Burlington. We stayed at the Sheraton, which had shuttle service to and from the airport. We liked the idea of not renting a car for the week. The hotel was accustomed to having cyclist stay with them and offered to store our suitcases while we were on the road. Our flight arrived in Burlington at 10 PM, and we started flying that day 6 AM. We were very tired from the flight and decided to put the bike together in the morning.

We woke up late the next morning and assembled the tandem. We were on the third floor and used the elevator to get the tandem down to the lobby. It was a little tricky getting it into the elevator. We had to go down by ourselves and wedge the front wheel towards the elevator. We brought our suitcases and panniers on the second trip. The suitcases were checked in at the concierge's desk and we were off!

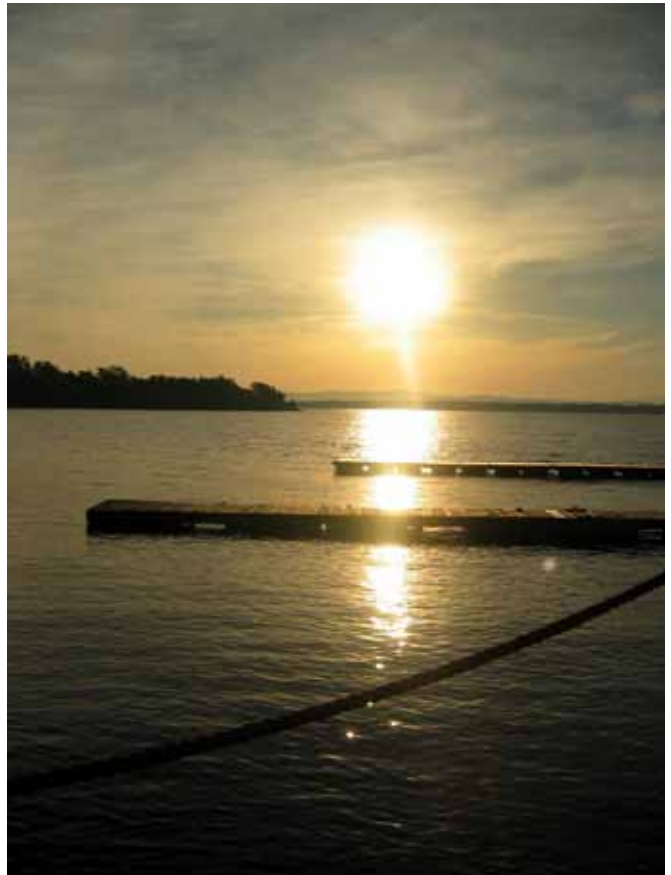
I wanted to mention that we had planned on having colder weather for riding. This was the reason for adding the front bags so that we could carry the extra clothes. However, most days were in the high 70's and low 80's and we didn't find rain until the last day. The weeks

before, storms from hurricanes Katrina and Rita pelted the area with record rainfall. Some trees didn't have any leaves because the high winds had blown them off! Wind blows primarily from the south in VT, although the famous winter storms blow from the northeast. We made great time traveling on the northern route of our tour. As we were traveling through the Islands, most of the time we could see the NY and VT coasts. Winds were 10-20 mph in the afternoon and it blew everyday. We could see the haze on the NY side caused by the winds blowing across the farmlands.

Our first day began with us making our way out of Burlington to an inn in North Hero. The Lake Champlain Bikeway was well marked and it was easy to follow through the town. Once out of the town, the main road was Highway 2. HWY 2 ran all the way through the Islands and in most places had a very nice shoulder for cyclists. We rode nearly sixty miles that day and ended up at the North Hero House Bed and Breakfast, <http://www.northhero.com/>. We stayed on the lakeside in the Cobbler Room. This room was part of the Cove House which was built in the 1700's. The house originally belonged to Horace Wadsworth. He rented the room to a local blacksmith, and since that time had been called the Cobbler room. The food was great that night, as it was just about every day! The view from our bedroom window looked right over the lake. In the morning we were treated to one of the best sunrises on the trip! There was another group of cyclists staying at the Inn that night, so we had lots of company.

The next day we continued north to our next stop, Alburg. On the way, we toured the Isle of LaMotte, <http://www.virtualvermont.com/towns/islelamotte.html>, and the French Fort of Saint Anne. Fort Saint Anne was the first white settlement in VT. The Jesuit priest celebrated the first mass and erected the first chapel here. As luck would have it, we were there on a Sunday morning and the priest was celebrating with an outdoor mass. It was the first time I'd seen an outdoor mass. There's a 12-mile section of beach open to the public as well. We looped back through the town passing the historic public library. We spent the night at the Ransom Bay Inn Bed & Breakfast, <http://www.bedandbreakfast.com/vermont/ransom-bay-inn-bed-breakfast.html>. Rick and Loraine were great hosts. We had their house to ourselves. In the morning, they made buckwheat pancakes. If you stay with there and like buckwheat, you've got to eat them!

The next morning was to be our last day in the Islands. Shortly after we started, we crossed into Quebec using the VT crossing. Customs were easy to get through. There were no long waiting lines and the custom agent was friendly. We brought our passports, but didn't need them coming or going on our trip. Our Oregon driver's license was all that they required. The road from the Canadian crossing to St. Jean sur Richelieu was one dairy farm after



A sunrise from the Cobbler Room



Outdoor mass at Fort Saint Anne

another. St. Jean sur Richelieu was the largest town on our tour. There was a lot to do here, but we needed to travel another 15 miles north to Chambly. In St. Jean sur Richelieu there was a beautiful packed gravel bike trail that paralleled the Richelieu River to Chambly. We were amazed at how many older adults were out and about on their bikes. We were also surprised at how quickly English wasn't spoken any more! Just 40-50 miles over the border and most people spoke French. Living on the west coast, we've traveled to Vancouver and Victoria BC many times. They're fun biking communities and with the favorable exchange

rates make for great places to vacation. Everyone speaks English in these communities, but not so for the French Canadians.

That night we stayed at the L'air du Temps B&B, <http://www.airdutemps.qc.ca/eng/welcome.html> . Marie was a great host. In the morning, her breakfast included fresh herb and mushroom frittata, warm cranberry orange muffins, and a fresh fruit platter with ten seasonal fruits

Chambly was by far our favorite stop on the trip. The town of Chambly was easy to walk and there were lots of sights to see. Heidi liked all the shops. Fort Chambly, <http://www.historiclakes.org/canada/chambly.htm>, was open and we had a chance to do the tour.

The next day was our turn around point and one of our longest days in the saddle.



Historic library at Fort Saint Anne

Aside from the 15 miles back to St. Jean sur Richelieu, we never retraced our route. Before it was done, we spent most of that day riding the 70 miles into the wind. We crossed back into the US on the NY side at Rouses Point. From there we traveled down HWY 9 and stopped that night just outside of Plattsburg. This was the most scenic day of the tour. The fall colors were very bright. We stayed at the Point Au Roche Lodge. This was beautiful lodge, <http://www.virtualcities.com/ons/ny/z/nyz1701ref.htm>. The great room had a suspended catwalk that opened on to second story deck. That night Heidi and I played scrabble in the great room. In fact, every night that we played on the trip I won. Our hosts, Creston and Karen, didn't cook dinner so we had to order in that night.

The next day we rode into Plattsburg to surprise my aunt Yvonne. The two days before we arrived, we sent a balloon each day from the local florist to give her a tip that something was up. When we got to town, it took us a little while to find her apartment. After finding the apartment but not finding her home, we had lunch and waited for her to return our call. When she did, I asked her if I could call her right back. We rode over to her apartment and called while circling in the parking lot. We asked her to look out of the window and tell us what she saw in the parking lot. Her reply was that there was bike built for two circling in the parking lot! Heidi told it that was us!

We spent the next day in town visiting and going to the Lake Placid Olympic Training Center (OTC). Lake Placid was another fun town to walk. Heidi and I shopped and sent



View at Mirror Lake

some gifts back to Oregon. It would have been nice to actually ride the loop from Plattsburg through Lake Placid and back to Dannemora, but we didn't have time to do this section on the bike. The Whiteface Mountains outside the OTC were beautiful. The ski lifts were busy



Some of my relative running for public office

ferrying Kamakazi downhill mountain bikers up to the summit. I've never met a Du Brey on the west coast, but in and around Plattsburg the Du Brey name is very popular. In fact several of my relatives were running for public office. Heidi couldn't resist having me stand by the campaign signs for pictures. The next day we headed south to catch the ferry back to Burlington. This was the southern ferry leaving from Port Kent and it took about an hour to cross the lake. We arrived late in the day and then spent the next day shopping in Burlington and having fun. If you are a chocolate lover, you've got to try Lake Champlain Chocolates, <http://www.lakechamplainchocolates.com>. We sent several boxes of these gourmet treats back to Oregon. This was our last day and the only day we had bad weather. That morning we work up and temps had dropped about 20 degrees with lots of rain coming down.

We had a great time on this trip with plenty of great riding and food. The weather was unbelievably hot for this time of year. I'd like to say that we knew just what days to plan the trip, but we were just lucky. In fact for this time of year the temperatures were record highs. We also saw great fall colors. I hope you found this information helpful and that you will consider touring the Champlain Islands and NY.

Thanks

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So long!