

FLORIDA TO MAINE

BY BIKE AND TRAIN



Thanks to Tom Mullen and everyone else who donated to make this trip happen.

Thank you friends from Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook and the Bike Nerd blog.

Thank you to all the people who gave me a floor, couch or bed to sleep on.

Thanks to those that have gotten in touch and told me to keep going.

Thanks mom and dad for the home base.



A bit about me: My name is Seth Werkheiser and I'm a nomadic bike nerd. I've been on the road since July 31, 2010. I worked remotely for AOL Music until I quit on February 11th, 2011 to live a life of bike nerd adventures.

I've played bass since 1991. Founded the music blog Buzzgrinder.com in 2001. Landed at AOL Music in 2008 and launched Noisecreep.com. Music has always been in my blood. My parents play music. My uncle played in a band and had a record. I played lots of shows in the 90s.

Playing music was a means to see other bands, meet people and make new friends. I could explore small towns and eat at tiny pizza shops. I'm still in touch with people I met over a decade ago from playing shows. I even stayed with some of them on this trip.

I love that.

Now I'm traveling again, only instead of carrying a bass amp I'm riding a Brompton folding bike.



Since being on the road so much I've sort of, "found myself."

I'm learning about what I want out of life, and how to achieve that.

No TV channel called and sent me on this journey.

No magazine hired me to write a story about train travel on the east coast.

No media outlet emailed and offered me this assignment.

Sitting around and waiting for that to happen didn't sound appealing. So I just did it.

For me, this is an adventure and that makes me smile.

I hope you're doing something that makes you smile.

Hopefully you're doing good things for yourself and making people around you smile, too.

Life is short. Stop doing things you hate.

(Watch this talk by Gary Vaynerchuk: <http://youtu.be/EhqZORU95d4>)

Now, on this adventure I'd be staying with several people I've never met in person.

I'd be biking from train stations on streets I've never ridden.

I'd be buying train tickets to cities I've never visited.

Driving to the grocery store for ice cream for a night of reality TV isn't an adventure.

There's no risk, no danger, no investment.

I was getting too comfortable bouncing around my hometown.

The occasional trips to New York City and Philadelphia were nice but there was no risk.

No danger. No investment.

I had to do this.

New York, NY:: Tuesday, June 14, 2011

I'd be taking a train from New York City down to Miami, FL; a 27 hour Amtrak train ride. It cost me about \$160, and I was able to simply walk my Brompton onto the train without question (try that with an airline).

Traveling via train is great. Some decent food options (though you should bring some of your own), comfy seats, a cafe cart so you can stretch your legs and bathrooms that are much more usable than bus travel.

I slept overnight in my seat. Not the most comfy, but it worked.



Day One:: Miami, FL :: Wednesday, June 15, 2011

I travelled by train because I could show up in new cities (Miami, FL, below) and then ride with friends.

When I used to ride from city to city* I would arrive sweaty, caked in salt, and wanting only to devour a whole pizza.

My friends would welcome me with open arms, and all I wanted to do was sleep for 14 hours.

* I wrote about this more in [‘Seven Months.’](#)



KNOW THE LAW: Before hitting the road with your bike nerd friends, always ask how police treat local cyclists. Obey all local laws and stay safe!

I stayed with someone that I met through someone else. Online. Through Twitter.

When meeting people online, do your homework; Google their names, check out their Facebook and Twitter pages, scan their Flickr photos. You can get a good feel of who they are from a few minutes of online research.

I don't drink, smoke or do drugs, so I always try to find people who live similarly.

The guys I met were awesome. When we got back to their place, I nearly cried when they showed me my room with private terrace.

This was a nice start.



PLAY NICE: During our ride in Miami, a car pulled up, and a lady in the passenger seat asked if we were “night riders.” I replied kindly, telling her we were, in fact, “night riders.”

Day Two:: Tampa, FL :: Thursday, June 16, 2011

In Tampa, FL I had dinner with Josh (at right).

I've only chatted about bikes with Josh on Facebook before. While riding his bike a few months ago a car drove over him. Then it backed up over him.

He had to be rushed to hospital by helicopter to save his life. His wife was eight months pregnant at the time.

As you can see, Josh is up and smiling. He's still got some injuries, but he's filled with joy. I'm glad I got to have dinner with him and his daughter Emmersyn.

(Recognize my shirt? [Email me](#) if you know!)



Later that night I got to ride with Jeff Harrington. Jeff does the BMX stuff that I used to dream of when I was a little kid (watch [this video](#)). We're the same age, but instead of office jobs over the years he kept riding and does bunny hop tailwhips and stuff.

Jeff showed me around downtown Tampa. It was a nice cool evening, and the small city was lit perfectly.

We rode around art museums, cool downtown districts, along the water and through ghettos.



Day Three :: Heading to Jacksonville, FL :: Friday, June 17th, 2011

On Friday I rode back to downtown Tampa to do some internet work stuff.

I had no idea how brutal the heat could be down south during the day. I camped in a coffee shop for a bit and drank iced coffee.

I got into a rainy Jacksonville, FL late Friday night. My hosts were rad, and we were up until 2am talking. That's the latest I stayed up on this trip.



LESSON LEARNED: When traveling via Amtrak, make sure you have your confirmation # jotted down somewhere. When I arrived for my bus to Jacksonville, FL their computers were down and they weren't able to print my ticket.

Day Four :: Heading to Savannah, GA :: Saturday, June 18, 2011

Saturday morning in Jacksonville, FL. We explored a farmers market, an abandoned school and saw the [Treaty Oak](#), a tree that is over 200 years old.

It was fun riding around with my four new buddies. We've since kept in touch via Twitter and Facebook.

This trip cost me a fair amount of money, but meeting rad people is priceless.

My train to Savannah, GA was at 5pm, so our time together was short.



SO RAD: Someone on Twitter saw that I needed a place to stay and these folks opened their home to me. They even held a sign saying “BIKE NERD” up at the train station when they picked me up. Look at those smiles!

This trip was meant to be fast, sure, and it was already starting to wear on me.

I had a tight schedule, and always feared missing my train.

It's never easy saying goodbye to the new friends I meet.

I second-guessed buying every train ticket.

I cringed having to book a hotel in Savannah, GA.

This was money I wasn't planning to spend.

When I thought about the money, I got a knot in my stomach.

I was having second thoughts about this trip.

Day Five :: Heading to Charleston, SC :: Sunday, June 19, 2011

I was in Savanna, GA for just 12 hours, but I got to meet some more friends from [Tumblr](#) for dinner. We talked about bikes and jobs and work and shared some good laughs.

I shared my hotel with the largest cockroach I've ever seen, and then the power (and air conditioning) went out for four hours due to a storm.

I was up early to catch an 8am train to Charleston, SC.



BE PREPARED: Carry a flashlight when traveling. I was in a completely dark hotel room and had no way of finding my way around without one.

It was a six mile ride from the train station to my friend in Charleston, SC.

I stopped at a grungy grocery store for bananas, an orange and a bottle of Gatorade then rode to meet my friend Erin.

I met Erin on Tumblr, too. She runs [High Heels and Two Wheels](#) which is all about giving up her car and only riding her bike to work and anywhere else she needed to go - and doing it fashionably!

We rode our bikes, drank iced beverages and I gasped at the streets lined with beautiful homes.



FINDING MY WAY: I made sure to have everyone's street address stored in Evernote on my iPhone. When I arrived at a train station, I plugged their address into Google Maps and mapped my ride from there.



I told my “tour guide” that I get emotional biking large bodies of water.

Adventures like this make me smile when riding next to the water, feeling the breeze and breathing in the scents of the water way. To me, there is no better place to ride. Well, maybe scenic vistas on mountaintops, but we weren't being that adventurous.

We rode so much that we locked up our bikes and just walked around to take in more beautiful buildings. It was quite hot out, and I think we both got sun burned.



It's nice when you've known someone on the internet for awhile, and you get to walk with them and talk about nearly everything and anything. My friend Erin was a great host and wonderful tour guide (she'll kill me for calling her a tour guide twice).

After all that riding and a wonderful pasta dinner, we spent the night gazing at our laptops, watched 'Inception' and the season finale of 'Game of Thrones.'

I had to catch a 10am train to Selma, NC the next day.



Day Six :: Heading to Selma, NC :: Monday, June 20, 2011

I stopped in Selma, NC only because the train stopped there, and it was between Charleston and Richmond, VA.

I had to book another hotel room. This time there were no bugs, but I had no cell phone service and the WIFI was spotty.

Downtown Selma was charming, with antique stores but not much else. My hotel was about four miles away and nestled between some busy highways. Biking in this area was horrid.



Food in the area was limited to standard “highway exit ramp” joints. I was able to walk to a Waffle House, so I ate there. Afterwards I napped for about an hour, but then got up to explore.

I rode to Smithfield, the next town over. This area was much more cozy. Somehow I found a paved bike path through the woods which made me smile.

I found a coffee shop and chatted with a guy who grew up in London. He told me how there used to be a “HOME OF THE KKK” sign by the side of the road when you entered town here (and was there ‘till the ‘90s).



Day Seven :: Heading to Richmond, VA :: Tuesday, June 21, 2011

I had to catch a train to Richmond, VA in the afternoon. I chose a later train so I didn't have to rush to mail out my robot postcards and find breakfast (people who donated to my adventure got hand drawn robots). I skipped the chain restaurants and found a grocery store and gorged myself on fruit.

Afterwards, it took me three stops at local shops to find a place in town that served coffee.



OLD SCHOOL: This train station was built in 1923. There used to be two hotels across the street. Apparently this town used to be pretty lively back then. Now this station sees just a few trains a day.

Richmond, VA was a blur.

The city has two train stops, and I got dropped off at the station that was surrounded by high speed roads.

I finally made it to Carytown, where I met up with my friend.

He showed me around, we got some dinner, and then took in a rocking soul funk band in the evening.



Day Eight :: Heading to Philadelphia, PA :: Wednesday, June 22, 2011

I messed up the departure time for my train in the morning, and I ended up leaving the house where I was staying without leaving a note. I felt like a jerk. A one - night - stand couch crasher! GASP!

Hopefully I can spend more time there in the future. I've heard so many good things.

My Washington DC stop fell through, so I went straight to Philadelphia, PA.



ALWAYS BE PREPARED: Avoid pricey food at transit centers by carrying small bits of food with you at all times. Sometimes stores are closed, or vending machines are broken.

At this point in my adventure I was seriously thinking of stopping.

I was tired of the constant checking of departure times.

The rising ticket prices.

My shrinking savings account.

But I re-read Seth Godin's '[Poke the Box.](#)'

To walk to Cleveland I simply have to walk as much as I can today.

Then wake up tomorrow and do it again.

The challenges and doubts I have are real, but they're the difference between adventure and sitting on the couch and watching re-runs.

Being back in Philadelphia was just what I needed.

I'd be staying with an old friend here, and his awesome family. I just needed something familiar to rest in. Some downtime with people I've known for many years.

The bike ride from the 30th Street Amtrak station to my friends house, about a three mile ride, felt effortless and free.

Watching a Phillies game on my laptop that night was nice, too.



Day Nine :: Heading to NYC :: Thursday, June 23, 2011

My second day in Philadelphia. I stumbled upon a 'It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia' shoot, and met up with my Tumblr friend and fellow biker Rogni for coffee.

In the evening I was going to catch a chinatown bus to NYC (just \$12).

On my way I witnessed two bike cops pull over a car and draw their guns on the driver.

It's been fun, Philly!



Day 10 :: New York City :: Friday, June 24, 2011

I made it back to New York City, where I lived for nearly six years.

The best part about this city are my friends. I never have enough time to meet up with everyone or ride with all my buddies.

I moved to NYC in 2004. Lived in Queens. Lived in Bed-Stuy in Brooklyn. Lived in Williamsburg.

To say I miss NYC is an understatement.



BE CAREFUL: Taking photos while riding a bike is dangerous. I only do this when on quite street and bike paths. For best results, pose with your bike with big smiles.

Day 11 :: New York City :: Saturday, June 25, 2011

My Connecticut stop fell through. One more day in New York City ain't so bad.

I got to ride with a good friend down to Prospect Park in Brooklyn, ate some yummy food and got some writing done on a park bench with statues all around.

In all my travels, I feel safest riding in NYC. The taxis, buses, delivery trucks and cars at least know bikes are everywhere. Compared to back roads in Pennsylvania? Forget it. Give me NYC.



Day 12 :: Heading to Providence, RI :: Sunday, June 26, 2011

On the morning I left for Providence, RI I took the new [East River Ferry](#) from Williamsburg in Brooklyn to east 34th Street in Manhattan.

It's \$4, plus \$1 for the bike. No extra charge for those giant strollers, though. Grrr!

On this morning I just felt stiff, so I didn't feel like biking over the Williamsburg Bridge and uptown to the Port Authority Bus Terminal with all my stuff.



RELAX: When embarking on your adventures, be sure to take your time. If you're tired, rest. If you feel rushed, slow down. Schedule in time to just sit and enjoy your surroundings.



After a four hour bus ride I made it to Providence, RI.

I found a place to stay (no, not the place below!) on [Couchsurfing.org](https://www.couchsurfing.org), and my host was awesome.

The house was filled with wondrous people and old hard wood floors. If you've seen the movie 'Fight Club,' it was sort of like that, except the roof didn't leak and the water was drinkable.

Dirty hotels, gorgeous condos and now a house filled with seven (or more) people. I loved it.



I spent hours riding around Providence, all through downtown and up to College Hill (those are some big hills). I eventually ended up down by the river and caught this amazing sun set.

I got talking to a lady here where I heard my first New England accent, when she mentioned the “paaak” (she was saying park).

As night fell it got a little chilly. This was quite a change from just a few days ago when I was down south.

I love traveling.



Day 13 :: Boston, MA :: Monday, June 27, 2011

I've only been in Boston, MA once before, but never did I see the city like I did with my host, Eric, another buddy from Tumblr.

He knew Boston backwards and forwards, filling my head with knowledge and zipping along fast enough to give me a good workout.

We rode past MIT and Harvard. We biked silently through the night. Eric knew this city.



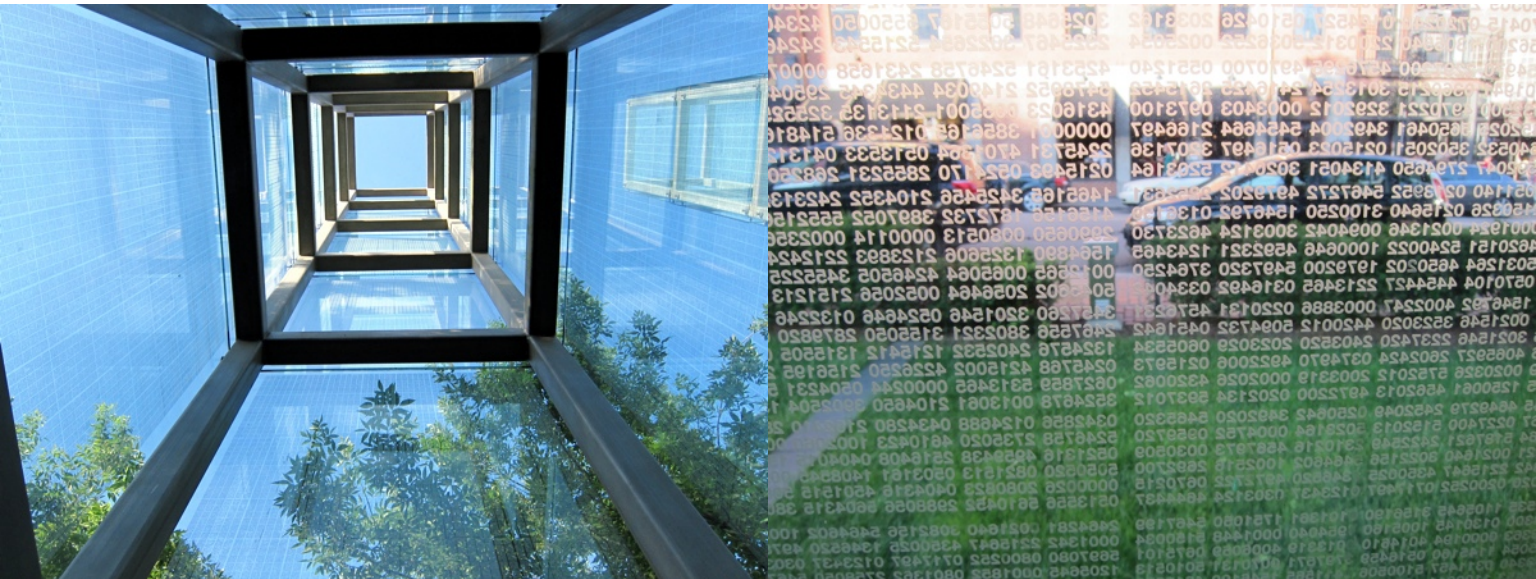
We rode all over Boston on this day; from water fronts to forts to everything in between.

Of all the cities I've ridden in, Boston is now in my top three for sure (the others are Philadelphia and New York City). Yea, there was traffic and tourists, but everything flowed in wonderful harmony.

My rear triangle came loose as we were riding, so a special thanks to [Urban Adventours](#) for fixing my bike on short notice. Awesome shop.



The [New England Holocaust Memorial](#) in downtown Boston really hit me.



The numbers represent those killed in the six major concentration camps. There are six towers. Each is over 50' high.

Day 14 :: Portland, ME :: Tuesday, June 28, 2011

I had coffee with Eric in the morning, then hopped on a train for the last leg of my adventure.

A few hours later, and I made it to Portland, ME. This is a beach at Reid State Park, about 50 miles outside of the city.

14 days, 12 cities.
1,500+ miles.
A lot of money.
Too many goodbyes.

It was worth every penny, and I'd do it again in a heart beat.

I'll never forget this.



I hope my adventure inspires you to embark on your own. Maybe stuff like hiking, dusting off your camera, or taking a day trip. Or maybe hard stuff like changing careers or ditching negative relationships!

No matter how big or how small, hopefully you set out and do something you've always wanted to do.

We're on this planet for a short amount of time, so make the most of it. Give lots of hugs, fall in love, quit jobs, break stuff, make other people laugh, travel, read, kiss and high five strangers.

Life is for living!



Starting stuff is hard work.

Planning is easy, but setting a start date is difficult.

Perfection is the enemy of done, so set a date and go do something!

It took just two weeks to put this trip together.

Yes, I had my doubts. It was scary at times.

But I've been learning that things just work out.

I never missed a train. Everyone I met was awesome.

Now I want to do a west coast tour!

What are you going to do?

Go do it.

Thank you for reading! Please, get in touch and let me know what you thought:
email: seth.werkheiser@gmail.com

Follow my adventures on the web: www.thebikenerd.com

Feel free to share this PDF with your friends and family.

If you're in New York City, or planning on visiting, [I provide bike tours](#). Let's ride!

Also available: '[Seven Months](#),' about my first seven months on the road.



Recommended reading:

[‘The 4-Hour Work Week’](#) by Timothy Ferriss
[‘Poke the Box’](#) and [‘Linchpin’](#) by Seth Godin
[‘Do the Work’](#) by Steven Pressfield

Inspirational videos for this adventure:

[‘Dark Side of the Lens’](#) by Astray Films
[‘Way Back Home’](#) featuring Danny MacAskill
[‘Rapha Continental Movie’](#) by Rapha

Blogs:

[The Path Less Pedaled](#), [Heart Brake Biker](#), [High Heels and Two Wheels](#)

Thank you, reader. From the bottom of my heart.

