



Discover America

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A Day on the American Discovery Trail—Uniquely Like Any Other

By Joyce Cottrell

Joyce and Peter Cottrell hail from Whitefield, New Hampshire. They have backpacked on the American Discovery Trail from the Atlantic shore of Delaware to the western edge of the Colorado Rockies. Joyce wrote this essay as they were traversing the Rockies.

Every day Laurel and Hardy exercise the art of “sameness” while on the American Discovery Trail. They both arise just after sunrise. Hardy mixes the powdered milk, while Laurel pours the dry cereal. They pull on the same clothes, whether freshly laundered or five days soiled. They pull down the tent, each having the same jobs, and then proceed to stuff their backpacks.

The same heave-hoes get those heavy “Winnebagos” on their backs and the same clicks of the walking sticks on a

rock or two means the day of walking has begun. They put one foot in front of the other for eight to ten hours a day. They take a morning cereal break, a midday ramen noodle lunch break, and at last, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich dinner.

Then, with the same system, the tent goes up and home is made for the night. They slip into their down sleeping bags, say goodnight as they have for 32 years, and shut their eyes. They try to ignore the physical pains from the day’s toil, rerun the events of the day, and play forward the plans of the next day. Sleep comes to Laurel and Hardy easily after physical and mental exhaustion. “Sameness” that began the day ends it.

Every day the sameness brings differences. Never once is the sky the same blue, never once is the temperature or feel of the air the same, and never once are the same birds singing the same songs.

From Delaware to Colorado, more than

one half of the 4700 miles of the American Discovery Trail, Laurel and Hardy have adventured. They experienced beautiful snow, biting ice, raw yet refreshing rain, uncomfortable mugginess, pleasant sunny dryness, and wind of different velocities. They’ve traversed through the beautiful farmlands, homes, and roads of Delaware; across the Chesapeake Bay to the rail-trails of Maryland; the bike trails and rural towns of West Virginia; woodland trails of Ohio; rustic towns of Indiana; a bit of Kentucky; bridle trails of Illinois; and the trail through small town U.S.A. Missouri. They’ve walked through the nation’s capital from its historic river trail to its brick residential streets.

Now they’re making their way through Colorado’s national forests by way of forest roads, mountain passes, and historic towns. The forests, towns, cities, buildings, wildlife, and landscapes of the states are all different. Never once is their home for the night the same.

Every day the “sameness” brings a new person into their lives. The American Discovery Trail is a network of kind, generous, warm, giving, and loving people. Laurel and Hardy have tented in people’s yards, slept in their homes, eaten at their dining room tables, ridden in their vehicles, chatted with them in their shops, but mostly shared time with them and their families and exchanged life’s stories, hopes, and dreams. Laurel and Hardy have made friends and learned about the history of their families, towns, and states in a way so different from any other means of education. “Sameness” brings different friendships.

Every day the “sameness” has made a difference in Laurel’s and Hardy’s lives and hopefully everyone else’s lives they’ve touched. For sure, go out in God’s beautiful country, respect and care for it, but mostly live your dreams now. The American Discovery Trail is truly an amazing discovery.



Joyce and Peter Cottrell, a.k.a. Laurel and Hardy, wave from the trail in Colorado. Joyce did not specify which one is “Laurel,” but after covering more than 3,000 miles of the ADT, they both qualify as “Hardy.”

Photo courtesy Faye McNabb

Equestrian Explorers Discover ADT

By CuChullaine O'Reilly

In the summer of 1975, a diminutive American equestrian traveler swung into the saddle and focused on a dream. Mary Ellen Eckelberg had no way of knowing she wouldn't step down from that altar of travel for 6,000 long, hard miles. What she did realize was that she and Sahnson, her Arab gelding, had a mission that was not going to be stopped by physical discomfort, geographical obstacles, or a lack of courage.

Mary Ellen and Sahnson set out to prove what they believed in, that the United States had an urgent need for a comprehensive system of riding trails for its citizens.

"The Great River Ride" is what they still call it, for Mary Ellen and Sahnson not only rode down the length of the Mississippi River from Canada to New Orleans, they then turned around and rode back!

The strong-hearted Sahnson carried his rider from border to border through a rich tapestry of towns and traditions, and he did it all for naught. For no one in Washington, D.C., listened to Mary Ellen Eckelberg when she finished that amazing trip. Seventeen months and 12 sets of horseshoes later, Sahnson and Mary Ellen watched their message disappear on the wind of indifference blowing through the corridors of power in those days.

But it's a new century now, with new

leaders and new organizations. And Mary Ellen's dream of constructing a cross-country, non-motorized trail system has become a reality with the birth of the American Discovery Trail. It is in support of this historic national treasure that The Long Riders' Guild is writing today.

The Long Riders' Guild is the world's first international association of equestrian explorers and long distance travelers. We have members in 35 countries, including the most historically important long riders alive today, such as Gordon Naysmith of Scotland who rode 13,000 miles from Rhodesia to Austria, Manfred Schultz of Germany who spent five years riding around the world, and Magali Pavin of France who is currently attempting the first solo female equestrian journey from France to China and back. An individual must ride a minimum of 1,000 continual miles to qualify for membership in the guild.

At more than 400 pages and growing, The Long Riders' Guild website (www.thelongridersguild.com) is the largest repository of equestrian travel information in human history. In addition, The Long Riders' Guild Press (www.horsetravelbooks.com) now has nearly 100 travel titles in production and available via Amazon.com.

Yet these would be sterile intellectual achievements without the freedom, and the trails, which we long riders need to make our equestrian dreams a tangible reality. It is for this reason that the long riders in both the United States and



After crossing Nebraska on the ADT, Gene Glasscock is greeted at the state capitol by Gov. Mike Johanns.

distant lands are sending their unqualified support to the leaders and members of the American Discovery Trail Society!

Mary Ellen Eckelberg finished her ride almost 30 years ago. Yet her legacy is being carried to every corner of the United States by another long rider. Gene Glasscock is making a 20,000 mile journey to all of the lower 48 state capitals. Wherever possible Gene is riding the American Discovery Trail to show both his and The Long Riders' Guild's support for this critically important project.

The American Discovery Trail will be many things to many people. Yet regardless if you are a hiker, a bicyclist, or a long rider, this 6,300-mile-long jewel will uplift our souls and free our bodies – regardless of our mode of transportation. And for that vital reason it will receive the undivided loyalty of the world's greatest equestrian travelers at The Long Riders' Guild!

CuChullaine O'Reilly is a founder of The Long Riders' Guild.

***Making
Connections...
Coast to Coast***

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Mary Ellen Eckelberg and her Arab gelding, Sahnson, set off on a 6,000-mile journey to demonstrate her belief in the need for a cross-country trail system.

Biking the ADT: Will Pedal for Food

By Mike McCann

Over the course of 56 days this summer, I pedaled my bicycle 4,181 miles from Seattle, Wash., to Washington, D.C. I made the journey solo, and I spent a majority of my travel time on the American Discovery Trail (from Moab, Utah, to the east along the northern route).

The journey was by far the most amazing and enlightening experience of my life. A retelling of all the adventures and exploits would take far longer than the trip itself. The challenges were entertaining...and the problems were plentiful.

One of my favorite problems developed slowly over time. It grew larger as I spent more time traveling; it intensified as I spent more days by myself. I knew it had become a serious issue when I realized that those people I did have an opportunity to be around were no longer safe. I felt sorry for the unfortunate souls who had the bad luck to be seated near me in a restaurant. No matter how hard they tried to ignore me, they were guaranteed to either be disgusted or amazed...and they most certainly would be left with a loss of appetite. I felt pretty guilty about it, but I also felt quite helpless. My problem was that I no longer knew how to eat food...I only knew how to consume fuel.

Before I departed on the trip, I had a very simple and regulated diet. I shied away from meats. I lived mostly on vegetables and breads. Occasionally, I would try to be a good Seattleite and cook up some salmon or Dungeness crab. I even paid attention to my dairy intake. Now, picture if you will a snapshot of a moment I savor, from an evening I spent somewhere in the Midwest:

“Captain’s log, 8-02-02, a little over three thousand miles from home. I’m sitting in a lonely booth, in a restaurant called the Sirloin Stockade. This is a professional, mega-bar buffet joint, where people come to gorge themselves...to truly test their limits. However, at the present moment, everyone within a ten-booth radius is staring at me...and no one seems to have the appetite to touch the food heaped upon their plates.

“My table is barely visible under the gris-

ly scene I have created. To my left is a stack of plates littered with potato debris (baked, mashed, fried, shredded, spiced, diced, twice baked...and the smeared remnants of various potato salads)...it is my shrine to the God of Carbohydrates. To my right lie plates covered in crumbs. They have been fueling my reflexive habit of shoving rolls into my mouth on every third bite (each roll has been stuffed with multiple packets of butter to provide a lubricant for the more abrasive foods I am trying to get down my throat). A trail of crumbs stretches from my chin to the plates. It could easily be stretched out long enough to guide Hansel and Gretel safely back across the state of Ohio.

“Directly in front of me is where the real guilt resides. The outer stretches are lined with greasy plates that shimmer amongst the shrapnel of this battle. Pork chop bones outnumber the fried chicken cartilage. But what’s even more impressive than the amount of bones is the lack of any gristle or fatty skins. Not even the third eight-ounce steak slowed the pace enough to warrant it efficient to cut away the fat before ingesting it. Since this, seemingly, is a confessional, I feel I have to come clean and inform you that I had actually eaten it with my hands.

“The only plate with actual food remaining is poised about ten inches beneath my chin. It shines like a beacon, and it almost seems to carry the sound of an angelic choir. The wondered gazes of onlookers prove its hypnotic ability. It is my holy grail...my treasure...an item so enrapturing that I wasn’t even able to dream of its existence. It is... ‘the cake plate.’

“She is a very hearty construction, comprised of equal representation from every cake and pie on the dessert bar. She



World-class glutton Mike McCann, shown in Chesapeake Bay at trip’s end, not only burned off all those calories, but lost 21 pounds during his ride.

stands alone, a complete cake in her own right. Double Dutch Chocolate stands next to Key Lime, who leans against Carrot, as it snuggles up with Cherry Cheesecake. Slice after slice work their way around the circle, forming a multicultural pillar of dessert treats. There is no room for soft-serve ice cream on this plate...the apple pie must suffer sans a la mode! Cookies, brownies, fruits, and other such garnish would be an insult upon this masterpiece. This is a serious selection of pastries. It demands respect; it is not to be trifled with. I have to forcibly avert my eyes in order to concentrate on the task at hand. I must remember that it has been created in order to be consumed. After all, it is functional art.

“A quick survey of my situation alerts me to just how repulsive I must seem. My ‘waitress’ (whose sole job is to remove the emptied plates and fill up my glass of soda) has become so offended with my gluttony that she no longer visits my table. Earlier on she handed me a pitcher of soda, and has since left me to deal with my own ‘fallen soldiers.’ Every once in a while I’ll see her head pop up from behind the servers’ station, her eyes widened, she lights into a co-worker, ‘OH my GOD, he’s STILL EATING!’

After all, I have been occupying this space long enough to see multiple rotations in all of the surrounding booths. Most of the other patrons seem upset with my actions. All of them are drawn to stare and quietly speculate about how a person can end up like this.

“I want to tell them about my journey, and explain what it’s like to carry all your own gear and pedal 100 miles day after day. I should help them picture what this nation looks like from a human-powered perspective. They need to hear how it feels to unwillingly chase down a moose or to accidentally sneak up on elk. I can describe to them the 110+ degree days...wind storms, rain storms, and hail storms. I must make them understand how a 150-pound young man can eat non-stop for over two hours.

“But unfortunately, I am unable to relay any of this information. I cannot help them understand. Speaking with them would take up far too much time...time that needs to be spent refueling.”

Gift Membership

Give a gift that will leave a lasting legacy – a membership in the American Discovery Trail Society. To continue the important work of establishing a cross-country trail we need more members, and you probably know someone who shares our dream. A gift membership to your family or a trail buddy would make a nice holiday or birthday present.

Each membership includes a member I.D. card, a lapel pin, and *Discover America* newsletter. Discovery and Life members also receive an ADT decal, patch and a guidebook.

Yes, please send a gift membership to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ St: _____ Zip: _____

- Life Member – \$1,000
- Corporate Member – \$250
- Discovery Member – \$100
- Family – \$50
- Member – \$30

Enclosed is my check
(made payable to ADTS)
Charge my MC Visa AMEX Discover

Card #: _____

Exp: _____ Sign: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ St: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Mail to: American Discovery Trail Society
PO Box 20155, Washington, DC 20041

At Year's End...

This issue of *Discover America* focuses on three modes of enjoying the American Discovery Trail, and shows that hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians can all agree on the importance of a cross-country trail.

In 1975, Mary Ellen Eckelberg rode her horse Sahnson to dramatize the need for trails. In 1980, the American Hiking Society sponsored the HikaNation cross-country hike for the same reason. And in 1990, AHS and Backpacker sponsored the ADT Scouting Expedition—and the trekkers on that journey experienced each of these modes of transportation: hiking, biking, and horseback..

That expedition was more than a decade ago, and the trail has come a long way since then. A northern leg has been mapped, adding Nebraska and Iowa to the roster of ADT states. There have been countless improvements, places where the trail has been moved off-road onto a quieter, friendlier route. Trail users can now go to the website to find trail directions.

But there is so much more to do, so many ways to improve the trail and make it more user-friendly. The ADT Society is a volunteer-based effort, and our rate of progress depends on the size of our membership. The traditional methods of recruiting members, through direct mail and advertising, are expensive. One of the most efficient ways for an organization like ours to grow and gain strength is by our members finding like-minded people.

The holidays are approaching, and if you're looking for a special present, consider giving the unique gift of a membership in the ADT Society. It offers the opportunity to contribute to building the first cross-country trail, a legacy for future generations. That's not something you can find at a mall.

As a welcoming gift, we'll send your friend an ADT lapel pin, and as a thank-you gift to you, we'll send you a colorful ADT patch, if we receive your order by December 31.

Remember the ADT in your Workplace Giving

Workplace givers: Please remember the ADT when making donations through the United Way or the Combined Federal Campaign. Giving is easy if you remember that the number for the American Discovery Trail Society is #2350, under Conservation and Preservation Charities.