

Forever Young – April 2007

2-wheel touring

Six Brothers rediscover the joys of long-distance biking – and herring smokehouses – during a bike tour of Denmark.

It started innocently enough.

My older brother in Calgary was the first to be hooked. Pretty soon he got me hooked; a year later my younger brother in Denmark as well.

Two years ago two of my elder brothers in Denmark also succumbed and this year my eldest brother who lives in New Zealand.

Am I talking about drugs, sex, and rock'n'roll? No - bicycle touring. Last year I enjoyed a tour in Denmark with my five brothers who range in age from 57 to 69.

Denmark is a beautiful country and is an ideal destination for anyone who likes to bike. The country is relatively flat (although it seems a lot less flat on a bike than in a car!). There are bicycle paths everywhere. Distances are short between towns and there is a lot of history dating all the way back to the Stone Age. Also drivers, because they are used to them, pay very close attention to cyclists making it very safe.

We spent a tremendous five days in August cycling a 174 miles, mostly on the island of Bornholm. It's located in the Baltic Sea just south of Sweden and was important to fishing and trade during medieval times. To this day it still has a few smokehouses for fish, mostly herring.

The island itself is only 227 sq miles. It's relatively flat and numerous trails follow the coastline and also cross the island so it is ideal for easy biking. It has plenty to offer: huge castle ruins, beautiful sandy beaches, peaceful forests, burial mounds, runic stones, art museums and some unique round churches. The climate is benign and the island has more hours of sunshine than the mainland.

Our group congregated at my brother's house in Copenhagen on the first day and after a leisurely lunch (we never missed a meal during the tour) got on our bikes and proceeded toward the small town of Koege 31 miles away. Along the way we stopped in at art museums, churches and other historical places.

From Koege we took a ferry overnight to the island on Bornholm and arrived the next morning. The next three days were spent biking around the island and visiting smokehouses (the herring was delicious), castle ruins, museums, churches and historical sites. On the final day we hopped a ferry to Sweden (a two-hour ride) and biked back to Denmark.



During the tour we stayed mostly at four-star hotels and ate at local restaurants where the seafood was excellent. Despite Denmark being a fairly expensive place to live, we were able to do the tour for less than \$1,000 per person (double occupancy) including everything but airfare to Copenhagen.

So why do six brothers decide to go on a week-long bike tour when we could just as easily have gotten together someplace where we could sit around the pool and enjoy some cool ones?

When we planned the trip one of my brothers wrote: “Not only do I want to go on trip, I need to go.”



What is the “need” he alluded to? I think bike is the common denominator. When you ask bikers why they enjoy it, they talk about exercise, fresh air, socializing with people with a common interest, but they always get this faraway look in their eyes and are suddenly

in touch with something important that they can’t express.

In my own experience I have found biking is a great way to get exercise that is relatively gentle on your body and as I approach 60 my body is constantly reminding me about the need to be gentle. But aside from being good for me physically, it is also great for me mentally. It becomes an almost Zen-like experience when the sun is shining, everything is green around you, a gentle breeze behind you and only the sounds of nature and the singing of the tires on the road.

When you are in a group there is an added element. As you move along you have an opportunity to talk. After the day’s exercise, you have a chance to kick back and relax and, because of the shared experience, you get closer to your fellow-bikers.

In the case of my brothers, we all enjoy good food and wine and take the opportunity to relive past battles when we were kids, brag about ourselves and tell bad jokes. It is also a time to reconnect with our past and understand where we have come from. As we get older, the need to stay physically active, maintain social relationships and have many and varied interests becomes so important to continued good life quality.

So what’s next for us: A 10-day bike tour in Provence this year!

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