

# Happy 2005 from Somewhere in America

Dear Friends,

What a year this has been! As 2004 dawned, I was juggling two competing plans for the year: would I find a new place to live in Minneapolis, or would I follow the dream I'd been harboring and bicycle around the country? By the end of January I had decided to hit the road. I sold most of my belongings, stored what was left, and said so long to my friends. From August to December I pedaled nearly 3000 miles through 11 states.

It's been a wonderful experience: camping night after night in all sorts of places, visiting friends and family, making new friends and learning new things, trying to put together the puzzle that is America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I've received so much hospitality and generosity that I'll never be able to repay it, but I'll try!

Here are just a few highlights of the trip so far:

- The mile-long tunnel through solid granite on the Elroy-Sparta Trail in Wisconsin
- A man in western Michigan who, on hearing that I was headed "south for the winter," exclaimed, "What, all the way to Indiana?!"
- Exploring Ann Arbor with my sister, who hadn't been there since she was two years old
- The intoxicating energy of First Friday Art Walk in Fairfield, Iowa
- Finding a bikeable route into St. Louis from the north, in spite of multiple assurances that no such route existed, and then discovering that the city itself is a lot of fun on a bike
- Camping with my father for the first time
- The achingly familiar landscape, wildlife, and landmarks of my native Oklahoma
- The change of season, which left me behind in Oklahoma but let me catch up in Texas
- Reconnecting with a long-lost friend as if we'd never been apart
- The tremendous hospitality of my friends here in Austin, who are hosting me for over a month

The greatest adventure is what lies ahead... so far I've been in my comfort zone: the flat, central part of the country where I've spent practically my whole life. In January I'll head east through the Deep South, where I've never been before, and then north along the east coast in the spring, and back to Minnesota through Canada in the summer. This is uncharted territory for me, but I trust that I'll continue to find new friends and helpful strangers all along the way. And then there's the question of what to do when this trip is done...

To those of you I've already visited, thank you again! To those of you along the road ahead, I hope to see you soon! Please call me anytime at 612-961-9881 or write to [ben@workscited.net](mailto:ben@workscited.net).

For descriptions of the photos on the reverse and many others, visit <http://zanerokklyn.250free.com/migration/>.  
Poem by J.R.R. Tolkien.