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Pierre & Janick's
Excellent Adventure



THE ORANGE MOUNTAIN GOAT

by Sarah Raz Photograph by Greg Siple



WHO ON EARTH CAN RIDE 2,600 MILES — FROM EDMONTON, ALBERTA TO DURANGO, COLORADO? If you ask Noel and Mary Harroff, who cycled through the Canadian and American Rockies during the summer of 2008 on their orange recumbent tandem, anyone can! “We are not athletes,” states Noel, “and we’re of the opinion that you do not have to train for a tour. Your body will start getting used to everything after day five or so. Mary and I are proof that bicycle touring can be accomplished — and enjoyed! — by two healthy 49-year-olds.”

The Harroff’s bicycle was dubbed The Orange Mountain Goat as they climbed up and over mountain passes at the respectable average speed of 10 miles per hour. Both Noel (captain) and Mary (rear admiral) agree that Alberta’s Sunwapta Pass, the first big climb, was the most difficult. “Maybe it was the grade, maybe it was the altitude adjustment, maybe a combination ... whatever the case, we both donated our lungs to this pass.” Afterwards, though, all bodies on deck adjusted well, and there were no more complaints other than the occasional ache associated with hard-working muscles.

The hardest part for everyone, the Goat included, was hurtling downhill. The bicycle weighed 48 pounds bare naked; fully loaded with 60 pounds of gear plus two adults, the crew could gain just a wee bit of momentum, to put it mildly. The couple was cautious with road conditions, vehicle traffic, speed, and made extra sure to communicate about braking. Because direct-pull brakes can get hot, the rear admiral also controlled a drum brake, which was used, upon agreement, in especially steep situations. Despite the challenges of touring on a bike built for two, Mary and Noel wouldn’t have it any other way. As Noels says, “Tandem riding is not for everyone, but we’re still happily married after 27 years!”

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