

Bicyclist completes cross-country round trip



SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX

The Signal met up with cyclist Matt Welch at the end of his cross-country, round-trip tour at the Quality Inn in Seaside. Welch was at the finish of the ride before heading back to Portland via Astoria and then to Bellingham, Washington.

Q: Have you been out to Seaside before?

Welch: I used to live in Portland. Seaside is one of my favorite places on the Oregon Coast. That’s why I decided to start my trip here.

Q: How old are you?
Welch: I just turned 27.

Q: Tell me about yourself.

Welch: I moved to Bellingham, Washington, about a year and a half ago. I went to grad school at the University of Portland. My graduate degree is in higher education and student affairs. I kind of bounced around the country a little bit, and then decided to go on this trip after I got fired from my job in March. I was pretty high caliber running track, but failed to qualify for the Olympic trials.

At that point, I was like, what’s next? I needed to find some kind of meaning, some kind of challenge.

My oldest brother, Ben, biked across the country when he was 21. He biked from Duluth, Minnesota, to Anchorage, Alaska, with his then girlfriend of three months. They broke up very quickly after that. It’s always been in the back of my mind that I wanted to do a cross-country bike tour. And the timing worked out. And I knew I wanted to go coast to coast.

Q: How long have you been on the road?

Welch: Since June 21, when I started in Seaside at the Turnaround. I actually jumped in the ocean, hopped on my bike, biked to Portland, and then all the way to Portland, Maine. My trip ended up 11,310 miles, all the way around from Seaside back to Seaside.

Q: On the same bike?

Welch: On the same bike, a Surly Long Haul Trucker.

Q: How much were you carrying?

Welch: About 90 pounds total. The Surly’s a steel frame bike specifically designed so it can handle all that weight.

Q: What was your average speed on flat ground?

Welch: Not too fast. Maybe 14, 15 miles per hour.

Q: At what point on the road did you feel you’re committed, you’re not going to turn around and go back?

Welch: The day I left. I was committed to making it across. But when I left I didn’t know that I was going to go all the way around the United States. That’s what I ended up doing.

Q: What made your decision to do the round-trip ride?

Welch: I ended up meeting a guy in Missoula, Montana. He was a 66-year-old guy who was doing the whole circle



R.J. Marx

Matt Welch in Seaside after a round-trip cross-country ride. He left Seaside on June 21 and covered more than 11,000 miles.

around the U.S. His nickname is “Rocket Man.” And he inspired me to do the same. I was 26 — he’s 66 and he’s doing it. What excuse did I have?

Q: Tell me your route.

Welch: I got to Portland, Maine, went all the way down to Jacksonville, Florida, and crossed over to San Diego, California, and then back up to Seaside. I went through 35 states.

Riding through the Bronx (New York) on this was the most intense experience whatsoever. There’s just so much going on. Cars parked in the bike lane. Electric bikes zipping at 18, 19 miles per hour all around me. Pedestrians in the road. I’ve never been to New York, and all the drivers talk through honking, right? It’s their way to communicate. And it’s new for me.

Q: I can’t imagine your trip, especially considering the weather.

Welch: The last week and a half has been so rough, with the rain. Major storms. I saw a little bit of snow on the California coast like near the redwoods near Redway, California, where I ended up staying. But what’s so brutal about the cold and the rain is you just can’t escape it no matter how many layers that you put on. The cold and the wetness seep through.

Q: Is that a GoPro on your helmet?

Welch: It’s a mirror. My mirror actually saved my life. There were times where I’ve been targeted as a cyclist. A truck purposely went on the shoulder to try and hit me. And if it wasn’t for this guy (the mirror), then I would have been hit. But those occurrences are so rare. Most people will give you plenty of space, honk, wave.

Q: Where did you stay on the road?

Welch: I’m usually a stealth camper. This is a rare treat for me to be in a hotel or to be having a roof over my head.

Q: Have you made friends along the way?

Welch: So many! All across the country. I’m riding, it’s really a hot day and people stop and ask, ‘Hey, do you need water?’ ‘Do you need a place to stay tonight?’ ‘Is there anything that I can do for you?’ Others would hand me money and tell me stories when they were on a tour and they received guidance, or support from somebody else, encouragement. They wanted to share that and pass that along.

Q: Is there any place that you really enjoyed, where you want to go back?

Welch: Asheville, North Carolina. I fell in love with Asheville. I rode the extent of the Blue Ridge Parkway just because of its scenic beauty. It was right as the leaves were turning, so I got a taste of the fall colors.

Q: What was the hottest weather you experienced?

Welch: The first week, there was a major heat wave out here. In Kennewick, Washington, it got up to 116. I ended up staying there for three days. But I think the hottest day that I actually rode was about 111. There were moments where I shouldn’t have been riding and I ran out of water. And I was really kind of a little delirious at some points.

Q: Did you encounter any animals?

Welch: I rode through Yellowstone, so a lot of bison and buffalo, like I was right on the road with them. And then a bunch of curious raccoons digging through my stuff. Many snakes. I saw elk riding through Cannon Beach.

Q: How many tires did you go through?

Welch: Six pairs of tires, with about 25 flats.

Q: What were you thinking about in the long stretches?

Welch: As a solo adventure, people think that I get lonely and afraid, and

maybe at moments, but it’s so temporary. I feel like I’ve met so many people along the way. I never felt completely isolated from the world. I think I listened to 31 audiobooks. I listened to the entire ‘Lord of the Rings’ series.

Q: Did you have any injuries?

Welch: Just very small stuff like. I’m dealing with some Achilles tendonitis and I had some tendonitis around my knee too. But no crashes, so I’ve been very fortunate.

Q: You must be over the moon now that you’re in the homestretch?

Welch: I am. I’m pretty psyched up. I’ll be staying with some friends in Portland. And then I’m spending the holidays with my mom up in Bellingham.

Q: What did you learn during the last six months in terms of the state of America?

Welch: I’ve met everybody on the political spectrum, and a lot of people lead with that in conversations. That’s just our current climate.

But one thing that I’ve realized is that we all really just want to be happy, healthy and live a life of meaning and fulfillment, and we want to share that with others. So I think we’re just at a point of change of what that means. People are grappling with that. But I think when you strip that away, people really are just trying to live a happy and healthy life and then focusing on that.

Q: Now that your ride is complete, do you feel triumphant?

Welch: Yes. I already had a min-celebration last night. It took like two minutes, ‘It’s pretty cool that I did it.’

And then I’m like, ‘OK, what’s next?’

I want to get back into running, marathon running. I already have a couple marathons planned for next fall, so I’m pretty excited about that.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Home is more than a vacation rental

My husband and I are the owners of the “Vacasa Vacation Rental” you featured on the cover of the issue dated Dec. 28, 2021.

While this is indeed a vacation rental, first it is our family vacation home. My grandparents purchased the property on the prom when my father and his siblings were in college.

When my grandmother passed away in 2008, she left the property to my father. He lived in the house from then until his death in 2017. As his only child, I inherited the property. My husband (an Astoria native) and I had plans to remodel so our kids could grow up spending sum-

mers on the Oregon Coast as we both did as children.

But, as the house was built in 1900, it was just too old to remodel. So, rather than sell the property, we poured our life savings into creating a retreat that our family can enjoy and that one day our children’s families can also enjoy.

It’s not just a vacation rental. It’s a house for our family to make memories in, renting it while we’re not using it helps us pay property taxes and rebuild our savings. It’s not a property we purchased to flip or make money off of, but rather one that’s been in my family for decades. And, hopefully it will be for decades more.

**Rhiannon West Chamberlain
Portland**

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

MONDAY, JAN. 10

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 12

Gearhart City Council, work session, election training, 6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, JAN. 13

Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave., Seaside.

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., cityofgearhart.com.

TUESDAY, JAN. 18

Seaside Planning Commission, work session, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

OP-ED

Creating safe spaces for patients

GUEST COLUMN

ALYSSA EVANS



It’s not unusual for a patient to be scared of surgery or test results and what they might mean. Patients often come to surgeons when they’ve hit their most vulnerable point: they’re scared, sick and in pain.

“However, it should not be normal to have fear of judgment or ridicule in the health care setting,” says Dr. Juliette Moore.

Dr. Moore hopes to be a calming force and to make Columbia Memorial Hospital a safe space for all patients.

When Dr. Moore works with a patient, she asks the patient for permission before doing anything. She also informs the patient about care options and what her care recommendations are.

“This is very much a team dynamic. It’s not me telling them what to do. It’s their bodies. I want to make sure that we are acknowledging that and respecting their body autonomy,” Dr. Moore says.



Juliette Moore, M.D.

When creating safe spaces, it’s important to acknowledge and respect other people’s identities. For example, before a patient is seen, Dr. Moore informs her staff on what the patient’s preferred name and pronouns are.

“Creating safe spaces means regarding and respecting people’s personal experiences including, but not limited to, gender identity, sexual orientation and religious beliefs,” Dr. Moore says.

By allowing patients to comfortably be themselves, Dr. Moore creates a strong

connection with her patients.

“The coolest thing about creating a safe space is that patients will open up to you about things. I’ve had a couple of people make the comment ‘You know, I’ve never told anyone this.’ And they’ll just open up about something,” Dr. Moore says.

If a patient has a question or a concern, Dr. Moore does what she can by providing information or by referring the patient to another resource. Her care essentially reflects the golden rule: treating others how you want to be treated.

“The way that I approach my patients is the way that I approach anyone that I’m going to interact with. The idea of creating safe spaces doesn’t stop when you leave the office at the end of the day,” Dr. Moore says. “We should all be striving to create space for people for things that they need.”

Alyssa Evans is marketing and communications specialist with Columbia Memorial Hospital. This article was written with the participation of Juliette Moore, M.D.

Seaside Signal

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