

Putting Slippers on the Dog

by
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55 degrees is warm enough to ride a bike, but it's too cold to think. I gladly toss on tights, put tepid water in the Camelbak and strap the Titus to the roof when the mercury is above 50°.

As a side note for those you raised with only digital clocks and thermometers, mercury was once used in temperature reading devices. When the red-colored mercury (as mercury is metallic in color when in its natural state) sunk into the bottom of a thermometer, wise riders knew that snot rockets would be required during their ride to avoid having mucus-laden facial hair thaw onto their chest during the car ride home or during the post-ride gorging at iHop.

While 55° is just about right for both mountain and road rides, it's horrible as an indoor temperature. Right now it's only 55 in the house because I smartly shut off the heat yesterday and forgot to turn it back on. I wasn't being cheap, but the 60°+ temps on the weekend fooled me into thinking that Spring had sprung and all would be right with the world again.

Nope. Now it's 30ish outside and a frosty 55 in my hovel.

Needless to say, my brother and his dog are a bit irked. But I'm safe from their wrath because the wood floors are too chilly for them to pad across in bare feet and I've hidden their slippers.

Well, I've hidden Ben's slippers. Fletcher doesn't wear slippers, except—I imagine—when we're not home and he likes to dress up in human clothes and strut around the house.

Since even I'm getting a little sidetracked talking about the merits of mercury and the vulgarities of a dog dressed in bike shorts, I'll get to the point. When it's still too cold to ride every day, that's when you should be thinking about a road trip in a plane (oxymoron) to someplace dirty and 70°+. And what better place than Moab?

I've never been to the "Mecca" that is Moab, but 2004 is the year for my pilgrimage. And, as with any bike ride there will have to be a bit of planning, so I'll take you through the three steps I've deemed vital to make my Moab trip a success. Your preparation might be different when you take a biking trip and your mileage may vary. So keep your hands and feet inside the vehicle...here we go.

Clothes. Yes. I plan to bring clothes.

Bike. Yes. I plan to bring a bike.

Money. Yes. I plan to bring money.

There. Done. If you feel a bit cheated because my preparation seems a bit light on the preparing part, here are a few more specifics and a little timeline of my trip as I envision it.

Working backward from my return date of April 27, my calendar looks like this:

April 27—weep continuously as I return the rental car and stride slowly to the plane in Salt Lake City.

April 26—Tears start to form in my eyes as I pack up my clothes and seal the bike case for tomorrow's ride to the airport. Glorious days have turned into a completed, fantastic trip. I have the memories, but my riding here is done and the salty tears course unabated over my sun-bleached lips and cheeks.

April 25—Just starting to get my lungs. Have been riding for five days now and my legs are working seamlessly with the rest of my body. Didn't even get cramps in my calves last night. VICTORY! I truly feel like I could do this for another week.

April 24—My fourth day on the trails. Doing Slickrock again to see if I have any more courage to ride the roller coaster-like curves and trust the traction and physics to keep me safe. My math and science skills are still weak and I decide just to take some more photos and ride calmly with a permanent smile affixed.

April 23—I'm anxious. The trip is about half over and I'm still riding like crap. Maybe I'll plan my fitness better for my next trip. Or maybe I'll get smart and schedule my next riding vacation at the END of the season when I'm

presumably in shape. I hope some nice ranger or tourist brings my lungs to the lost and found here at the hotel. Utah's not flat!

April 22—Oooh. I'm still a bit wiped out from last night. Birthday drinks with local bike shop guys was NOT the best thing I could do and expect to ride well today. Luckily it's cooler today. Camelbak full of Alka Seltzer, I'm ready to ride.

April 21—Happy Birthday to me. It's sunny out, I'm waking up in Moab, and my bike is begging me to get out of bed so we can go explore the trails. I'm thinking that if I'm still single next year I might take my bike to Vegas and get married to her in the drive through. I once took a bike through a Dairy Queen drive through and got scolded, but I'm pretty certain the pastoral staff in Vegas would understand.

April 20—Just flew in to Salt Lake City, got the rental car and drove to Moab. \$238 plane ticket on SouthWest. Unlimited miles on the puny rental car with my Titus hanging out the back. 68 degrees in the morning. And a priceless vacation ahead.

Well that's my vacation in reverse. It sure makes 55° in the house seem like a miniscule problem. If you plan to go to Moab or any biking destination, there are resources everywhere to help you. Just make the decision to go and then have fun. It sure beats sitting home and being glared at by Benji and Fletcher.

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