

When I was a kid, I used to watch every pro cycling tour on tv with my dad. He would never take trips on tour bicycles himself, but he loved to watch, and he liked to ride around the neighborhood. He had an old track bicycle that really wasn't well suited to the terrain. He used to race when he was younger, and he still was a pretty strong biker. The problem was that he did not have a proper tour bicycle. The track bike had tires that were too thin for the bumpy roads where I grew up. He was pretty good at controlling his bike, but even still, he would fall more often than he should have.

Still, he inspired a real love of bicycle riding in me. He bought me my first tour bicycle when I was about 15 years old as a Christmas present, and from that point on, I was hooked. I would ride almost everywhere that I could, sometimes doing twenty miles in a single day. By the standards of a professional bicycle rider that is not a lot, but for a kid that is quite a ride!

When I was in college, I met a tour operator during the summer of my sophomore year. Besides fixing and building touring bicycles, he also ran Ireland bike tours every year. He helped me build a new tour bicycle, and I decided to go with him that summer on his Ireland trip. It was one of the best times I ever had. Ireland was great bike country, filled with rolling hills and rugged, gorgeous terrain. It was cool, windy, and comfortable the whole time. To this day, I have never seen anywhere else that was quite so lovely.

Since then, I have taken a lot of tour bicycle trips on my own. Once you figure out the basics, it is not so hard to do. You can get almost anywhere on a bike nowadays. My favorite trips, however, are the serious off road ones. Mountain bike tours are a pretty new activity, but they are gaining popularity. They let you enjoy the thrill of biking while also experiencing the beauty of the backwoods. It can be a little bit nerve wracking to be on a road bicycle day after day, dodging cars and fighting traffic. I'll take bike trails over that any day! It is my very favorite way to travel!