

Drive the Americas



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Hometown

- Karen: Paso Robles, CA
- Eric: New York City

When did you leave and from where?

We left New York City in April of 2006

Expected return date home?

Are you kidding? It took us two years to cover the US and Canada even though we projected it would only take 8-9 months. We spent 18 months in Mexico alone. The whole trip was originally projected to take three years and 70,000 miles but we're already five years in and well over 130,000 miles and we're only as far south as Honduras. So, we're the worst people to ask about dates and timing!

Reason for taking this trip

After spending four years backpacking through South and Southeast Asia (1995-1999) we immediately began planning our next trip. Initially we had our sights set on Africa but then the cost started sinking in and then the attacks of September 11 happened and the various political and social reactions to the attacks made us realize that we'd been so busy traveling to far flung places that we'd never gotten to know our own backyard: The Americas.

Also, we were tired of just complaining about travel magazines publishing so many pieces by writers who seem to be working from a press release, not actual traveling. So we decided to stop whining and radically change the way we conduct our careers as a freelance travel writer (Karen) and freelance photographer (Eric) by hitting the road full time. The Trans-Americas Journey was a way to do that—get out there and really do the things we write about.

Why did you decide to drive?

While we loved the intimacy and contact that traveling by public transportation provided during our four year trip through South Asia, the reality is that much of our current route is not very well served by buses or trains. We also wanted the freedom of having our own aggressive, tough, all-terrain vehicle. You just can't travel the Dalton Highway from Fairbanks to Deadhorse or haul an Airstream to a camping spot right on the edge of the Grand Canyon using public transportation or rental car.

Are you taking along pets? If so, names.

Just our stuffed mascot, a pooch named Grady.

What type of car are you driving?

2007 Chevy Silverado 2500 HD Classic with a custom built aluminum cargo lock box installed in the bed.

Did you make any modifications to your car for this trip?

- Custom-made aluminum cargo lock box that's as weather and theft proof as it can possibly be [BF Goodrich All-Terrain T/A KO](#) tires help us stand up to the roughest roads
- [Injen Power-Flow Air Intake System](#) to keep dust and debris out of our engine and boosts performance and power
- <http://www.milemarker.com/products/toughseries.html>
- [PIAA high intensity lights and bulbs](#)
- [Bilstein Monotube gas pressure shocks](#)
- [Superchips Cortex Programmer](#) to boost our truck's horsepower, improve fuel efficiency and help us see diagnose engine warning codes
- [Transfer Flow auxilliary](#) 30 gallon in-bed fuel tank
- [Weather Guard Steel Undrebed Box](#) which we've installed in place of one of the back seats in the cab we can use it as a kind of safe.
- [Viper security system](#)

How did you save up or finance your trip?

We started working and saving for this trip as soon as we returned from our four years in South Asia (1999). We also have a number of product partners who have supplied us with various goods and services which has helped us as we struggle to stay on budget.

This is also a WORKING road trip and we are constantly freelancing for publications including Travel & Leisure, National Geographic Traveler, Every Day with Rachael Ray, National Geographic Adventure, Elle, Allure, www.itravelishop.com, Fodors and others, so we work hard to keep money coming in as we travel.

How long do you plan on traveling?

The whole trip was originally projected to take three years and 70,000 miles but we're already more than five years in and well over 130,000 miles and we only as far south as Honduras. With that in mind, this thing could easily end up being more than eight years and well over 200,000 miles total.

Where do you plan on driving?

All of North, Central and South America. Yes, all of it.

What were your family's and friends' reactions when you told them about your trip before you left?

No one was too surprised by our plans for our Trans-Americas Journey given our history of taking long, long trips. Mostly friends and family were really excited for us. We hear "I wish I could do that" an awful lot.

Did you speak Spanish before you left your home country? How much Spanish? Are you taking more Spanish lessons as you travel? If so, where and for how long?

We both took Spanish in high school but promptly forgot most of it. We try to listen to our Pimsleurs language lessons in the truck while we're driving and we spent five weeks studying at a language school in Guadalajara

and, most recently, another week in Antigua, Guatemala with TKTKTK. We understand a lot when we hear Spanish spoken (or see it written) and we're great in present tense, but we desperately need more practice/memorization with other tenses so we don't sound like Tarzan speaking Spanish (to quote author Tir Cahill).

Do you have a favorite place or country that you have visited during your trip?

We don't believe in favorites. Every place has something to offer but no one place is perfect—at least not a place we've ever found which is part of the reason we keep looking!

What was the weirdest thing you experienced on your trip?

Being stalked by a big owl while we were parked on the side of the Dalton Highway about midway between Fairbanks and Deadhorse. Terrifying. [There's a photo of the owl in this Photo Gallery](#)

What was the worst border crossing?

Knock on wood, all of the border crossings we've done so far (into and out of Canada and Mexico from the U and into and out of Belize from Mexico and into Guatemala and into Honduras) have gone smoothly.

Do you have any advice for others who may be considering driving the Americas?

Would you do it again?

As we are still in the midst of our Journey, with the really tricky stuff still to come, it's impossible for us to answer this question comprehensively. However, we will be posting any truly useful tips on this site, on our blog and in the road trip stories we write.

Do you have a blog or a website describing your trip?

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