PUTTING THE PEDALS TO HER METTLE

FOR DEEP AND DETAILED EXPLORATION,
A SPIRITED ROAD-TRIPPER PREFERENCES TO BIKE AROUND A DESTINATION

BY MELANIE KAPLAN
Special to The Washington Post

Some folks cross the country on a bike. I prefer to drive with a bike in my car. Over several road trips with a two-wheeler in my SUV, I’ve come to appreciate driving to faraway places but exploring them on a human-powered vehicle. At my destination and along the way, I hop on a bike to breathe fresh air, get my bearings, stretch my limbs and act like a local for a spell. Cycling allows you to access routes impractical or unreachable by automobile; and unfailingly, getting out of the car on a road trip sets the stage for serendipity. When you slow from 70 mph to 15, the joy is in the unexpected. I’ve learned some lessons on my six-wheel adventures. Here are 10 of them.

Carry a bike survival kit
Last summer, on a 7,400-mile road trip, I was halfway into a 30-mile rainy bike ride in Portland, Ore., when I realized that I had been negligent. I rode my steel-framed commuter, towed my beagle Hammy in a trailer, and wore a helmet and padded biking skort. But inexplicably, I had left my travel bike pump at the hotel and my extra tube and patch kit back home. I was lucky that I hadn’t blown a tire. During that ride, I vowed to never again bike without emergency gear at hand.

REI stores offer free bike maintenance classes, even if you don’t buy your bike there. Your local mechanic can teach you basics, such as how to care for your chain and brakes and how to remove wheels and pedals if you are transporting your bike inside your vehicle. Once you know how to change a tube and use a patch kit, carry those along with a multi-tool (like a Swiss Army Knife of bike tools) and a pump or disposable CO₂ cartridges. Always bring a bike lock, phone, money, local map and more water and food than you think you’ll need.

Learn from the locals
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For the effort, bicycling offers a sense of belonging

SUNDAY, JULY 3, 2006  THE WASHINGTON POST

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONTIER

by Melanie Kaplan

I biked up the Rocky Mountains, and I biked down the New York City streets.

I biked through the flow meant avoiding awkward

Elinor R. Foreman

In June, I embarked on a 1,500-mile bike ride that took me from Big Timber, Mont., to Seattle, Wash.

For my second trip, I plan to bike from May 31 to Sept. 15, 2006, through the Rocky Mountains.

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