

Mother and son complete long-distance bicycle trek across Oregon

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A mother and son duo from Washington completed an adventure of a lifetime last week, cycling across the State of Oregon from Astoria to the California Border along Highway 101.

The trip was literally full of ups and downs. Mom, Liz Colver, and her son, 10-year-old Shephard Colver, from Kenmore, Washington peddled up steep stretches of highway while shrouded in fog, cycled through

winding mountain roads and trekked over monumental coastal bridges.

They were able to complete the full 370 mile route in 18 days – all while managing 10-year-old Shep's Type 1 Diabetes.

It was mom, Liz's first long-distance bicycle trip.

Shep completed his first long ride – pedaling 3,300 miles across the US to New York City – with his dad, James, in 2021. This 18-week trek was a mission years in the making, and it was all Shep's idea to fulfill a dream of seeing the Statue of Liberty in New York City.

After the father-son duo completed that ride, Shep decided he wanted to do a long-distance bicycle trip with his mother too.

"It was wild, when he got asked what he wanted to do next and he said he wanted to do a bicycle trip with me. I was startled," Liz said. "I didn't know it was something he had ever really thought about. But because he said he wanted to, and because he asked, I decided to say yes."

Liz said she has never really been a bicyclist. But she said she was glad to take the lead from her son – who has learned a lot from his experiences with long-distance bicycling.

"He was coached last time, and this time he got to be the coach. So I was able to follow his lead and pay attention to what he says about bicycling – and that was really cool," Liz said.

On the final leg of the trip through Brookings to the California border, Shep said his legs felt like jelly and he stopped for a short break to eat a snack to bring his blood sugar up. In spite of this, he was in good spirits.

"My blood sugar is a little bit low right now, but it feels pretty great to say that now I have done this with my mom and one with my dad," Shep said.

Shep said his favorite part of the bicycle trip was spending time with his mom.

"We've gotten to talk a lot about a lot of things and see lots of great things. There is a lot of pretty viewpoints – and we got to see whales for the first time," he said.

The hardest parts of the trip were the more physical parts, he said.

"There was a lot of constant uphill climbs and a lot of ups and downs that were pretty annoying at some points," he said. "But really, not much bad things happened on this trip."

The mother and son were happily surprised not to have to deal with flat tires or mechanical issues with their bicycles. They also expected to come across a lot of different weather conditions – and packed accordingly.

"Being from the Pacific Northwest, we were prepared for different weather, but we didn't even get one drop of rain the whole 18 days we were on the road. I thought that was pretty crazy," Liz said.

The mother and son documented their trip for their family, friends and others on Facebook as a sporting event called Trek 2022. The page has 1,400 followers.

Liz said she and her family did a scoping road-trip prior to embarking on their cycle trek. This gave them a good idea about how many miles they could complete each day. They also bought an Adventure Cycling Guide to help plan for different legs of their journey.

“They have excellent tips for the routes including spots for food and groceries, where you can sleep and camp and all of that kind of stuff – so we really spent a lot of time studying those maps,” Liz said.

The mother/son duo also planned to manage Shep’s Type 1 Diabetes throughout their adventure. He was diagnosed with this illness shortly after his first attempt to bicycle across the U.S. with his father in 2019.

“We started training and we got all the way to Glasgow Montana, and I was getting a little sick. So we went to the hospital and I got diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. It’s a disorder where my pancreas doesn’t work, so I have to take shots of insulin,” Shep said. “So we sadly had to go back, but in 2021 when Covid rates were starting to go down a little, we decided to do it again and we finished the whole trip.”

With new considerations and obstacles to tackle since his diagnosis, Shep has learned how to prepare both physically and mentally to conquer these longer rides as a diabetic — with his nutrition and rest days playing a crucial role.

“When I am riding my bike, usually my blood sugar is pretty good, but when my blood sugar gets low, like right now, I usually eat something – like these power crunch bars and we have apples, bananas and oranges.”

He said he has also learned sometimes it’s best to wait it out and rest while his blood sugar is low.

“If it is low we just wait for it go up. I don’t want to eat too much – it can hurt my body. We aren’t trying to speed through the whole thing,” he said.

Mom Liz said they keep important equipment on the road – including cold cells to keep Shep’s insulin in.

“There’s ice packs that go in those that last for about 48 hours, so we tend to make sure that we have a hotel that has a refrigerator in the room every other day,” she said. “We like to camp as much as we can – but we can’t camp every night on a bike trip like this because we have to make sure that the insulin stays cold. If it gets warm it expires immediately, and if it freezes it expires immediately, so you need to make sure it is kept in the right temperature range.”

Shepard and Liz said their bicycle trip together is something they will remember forever. On the final leg of the journey, Liz said she was wondering what it’s going to be like back at home in Washington.

“Now that we are done it’s wild to think about going back. What is normal after doing something like this? It is just a whole different kind of experience,” Liz said.

