

It's the Tiniest Things That Create Wonder in the World



By Frosty Wooldridge

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As you bicycle travel in this world, normally, you take pictures of El Capitan in Yosemite, or perhaps the Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone, or maybe a shot of the epic coastline of Big Sur in California. Who doesn't take a shot of themselves in front of the Eiffel Tower or the Great Wall of China? What about you intrepid cyclists who rode through Torres del Paines at the bottom of South America? What about that Vicinhu (camel-like creature...only smaller version on the way to Torres del Paines) that spit in your face when you stopped to take a picture of him? His snot stunk like hell and I still can't get that odor out of my mind these many years later.

Those provide the 'big' moments of a ride. They last a lifetime, and more often than not, you've got an 8X10 photograph on your office wall or hanging where you can remind yourself of your explorations into the world when you were young or even older.

I show a 36"X40" canvas of my two friends and I standing in front of the sign: **Frontera Peru Bolivia**. It reminds me of our grand year in South America with my cycling mates Doug, Bryan and Bryan.

At the same time, I love the little things in life.

On a recent tour of the West Coast, we found a dirt road to

follow back into the woods. After traveling far enough into the wilderness, we parked the bikes near a barbed-wire fence. We tore the packs off, pitched the tents and ate dinner. As usual, I always lock my bike to anything that will deter would-be thieves from stealing it in the dead of night.

In the morning, I noticed that a spider has spun its web across the back of my seat, on the top strand of the barbed wire, and attached part of his web to my cable. He spun a perfect formation of insect-catching web in the dead of night. Such perfection in the middle of darkness! How do you do that? There, in the morning, his handiwork had collected dew drops. As the sun hit the strands, they sparkled like colorful gems. When he saw me approach, he scampered away.

(Look closely at the spiderweb between the seat, barbed wire and steel post.)



Since I worship the Natural World, it pained me to break the spider's web in order to pack my bike...but I knew it would spin another in order to catch its dinner. As I pedaled out of that campsite, the web remained on my mind as to the power of creative design of Nature. Also, the delicate tenderness of insects. They are going about their business in this life just as you and I are going about our own.

At one point, we camped on the southern shore of Lake Superior during the fall leaf changes. If you haven't seen the astounding fall leaf changes in the mid-west, northeast or even the Rocky Mountains on a bicycle tour—you're in for a stunning visual treat.

While we sat there watching the sun set over Lake Superior, the surrounding birch, maple and poplar trees sprayed the colors across the woods. Sitting facing west, the backlighting of the sun's rays provided a kaleidoscope of brilliant colors. Of course, I wore a very bright yellow, red and green jersey. At a few minutes before the sun sank below the waters of the lake, a hummingbird flew within 12 inches of my face. It hovered there for maybe five seconds thinking my jersey was a nectar-filled flower.

Its wingbeats dazzled me. I looked right into its eyes. Hummingbirds must be the most delicate and phenomenal flying wonders on the planet. They can fly up, down, backwards, sideways, forward and do summersaults in mid-air. Their wings beat 70 times a second. Their hearts beat 282 to 396 beats per minute. Anna's hummingbird flies at 60 mph.

After finding out that I wasn't good nectar material, that tiny creature zipped out of my life. But it wasn't done with me. At a hummingbird feeder down the road at a farmer's house, he told me to place my little pinky in front of the feeder. Within seconds, a hummingbird settled onto my finger. Its little talons ever-so-delicately dug into my skin. I have never experienced such a sensation as that moment ever again.

Whether it's a spider and her web, or a hummingbird with its ephemeral journey into and out of our lives—we each learn that the Natural World sustains us in the big moments...and most certainly at the most delicate times of our lives.

Are we blessed or are we blessed? Anything like these

experiences ever happen to you?

Sandi and Frosty Wooldridge, on tour, West Coast. Latest book:
**The Kickstand Chronicles: The Miraculous, Sublime, Funny and
Downright Terrifying. Subtitle: Inevitable Moments of the
Journey, Bicycling Across Six Continents, 45 Years and
150,000 Miles**

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