

Wednesday, 13 July 2011 00:29

Markus Schorn

Featured Traveler

ON THE ROAD WITH MARKUS SCHORN



I met Markus Schorn almost 3 years ago in Miami, Florida, before the idea of The Hostel Life was born, through a great website called CouchSurfing.com.

For those unaware, CouchSurfing is a website that lists available couches for travelers to crash on, a great alternative to hostels for those on a tight budget and the perfect way to meet interesting locals. You can find a place to stay for a night (or a few nights) or offer up your own couch to travelers as they pass through your city. It might sound a bit crazy, but I highly recommend giving it a try. You might just meet someone like Markus.

The 29 year old from Cologne has been traveling the world for almost three years now, pedaling well over 15,000 miles across Europe and the Americas. I was blown away, after reading his blog about his journey. This is just simply amazing. I have heard my share of unreal travel stories in my time but this one takes the cake. As a fellow traveler and an avid cyclist myself, hearing about his trip and imagining all the people and countries he had seen, I knew I needed to learn more about Markus and more about his amazing journey.

After his road trip through North and Central America in 2009, Markus found himself in Panama, low on cash. He found work as a deckhand on a South African boat heading through the South Pacific on its way to Australia. Upon his arrival down under, he quickly found work as a tour guide in the Outback. He continued dreaming of returning to South America to continue his travels on two wheels. Markus saved enough money to purchase a flight to return to South America to complete his next cycling adventure. He flew to Venezuela, going against the warnings of family and friends about it being one of the most dangerous countries in the world.

About his first few hours in Venezuela, Markus told us, “At the first intersection I had to ask for the directions and instead of getting directions, I got invited to breakfast... how dangerous does that sound?” He goes on. “A few minutes later I basically had to fight a taxi driver who insisted on contributing five dollars toward my trip.

A bit later, as I cycled out of town and into the Andes, I approached a police checkpoint. I was nervous they would give me trouble, but I left smiling after politely declining an invitation to one of the police officers' homes for lunch.”

Markus continued his journey south, ultimately headed to Argentina, with numerous highlights along the way. From the Uyuni Salt Flats in Bolivia to stunning Lake Titicaca straddling the Bolivian-Peruvian border, Markus was able to visit places on two wheels that most travelers only dream about. Also among the highlights were trips to Iguazu Falls, Machu Picchu, Nazca and Easter Island.

It was an incredible story and we agreed that he should write articles for The Hostel Life about his cycling adventures. Then, a week later, a 45,000-ton truck traveling at 60 miles per hour sideswiped Markus on his bike and he was thrown some ten meters. “I didn’t see it coming, and I don’t remember the moment it actually happened. I do remember lying on the hard asphalt, unable to move my legs,” Markus recalls. He fractured four bones in multiple places, essentially shattering his left leg and any chance of continuing his bicycle trip. He also broke his pelvic bone, among various other injuries. According to the doctors and nurses taking care of Markus, it was nothing short of a miracle that he survived the accident. And like any smart backpacker, Markus was equipped with top-of-the-line travelers insurance and was able to receive extraordinary care in Buenos Aires.



Obviously not the way Markus was planning to spend his time in Argentina, but he never lost his positive outlook or his optimistic attitude. After spending what seemed like a lifetime in the hospital in Buenos Aires, Markus was flown home to Germany in early November to continue his long and grueling recovery process with family and friends.

But his love for cycling is still intact, and he tells The Hostel Life that he will be back on his bike in no time to see the rest of the world.

To read more about Markus and his incredible journeys, check out his website: www.markusschorn.de