

DANNY BEER

A tour of Eurasia



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Аннотация

Cycling around the world? Has anyone done it? Tour diaries from Danny Beer, an Australian guy, who found his passion in exploring the cities by bike and made his dreams come true. His daily adventures are shared on the pages of four different books. This book is about a tour of Eurasia. 8,202 km (5,096 miles) over 161 days from March 19, 2010 to August 26, 2010

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The deported: A good reason to go cycling Wednesday March 17, 2010



Well it has finally happened. Danny's getting deported. And what a great excuse for a bike ride. So the whole Eurasia thing has had its appeal for a while now so a flight to Vienna, a month looping around Czechland and then it is Slovakia and beyond.

Feelings are mixed. It is great to be going but it is really shit to be going this way. With less than two weeks to plan, not to mention finding lawyers, giving and selling my stuff, yudda,

yudda, yudda, details of the trip are a little bit scarce. But that's okay. Why not wing it!





The bike.

**Vienna airport to Bratislava:
Welcome to Austria. Wait,
now welcome to Slovakia
Friday March 19, 2010, 58 km (36
miles) – Total so far: 58 km (36 miles)**

Emigration out of Taipei isn't a problem. There is no red 'deported' stamp. No hassles. Nada. You finish work around lunch time and it is only then that you are told to pay your tax. Fuck. 500 US smackers straight to the government because you are in the country less than 6 months. They already took a k and as a further consequence of being deported they can take 500 more. So it is off to the tax office to file 2 years of tax records. After a confusing interval the good news arrives. A 2000 Americano dollar refund. Brilliant. Except you have to wait 2 weeks to pick it up. So despite the triple F U from Taiwan you do have a little bit of cash to help finance this trip.

Not long after boarding the flight to Vienna do you realize that not only do you not possess a credit card but your debit card is also absent. But worry not because it was not left behind. Hidden somewhere in one of the bags it is at last procured. Relief.

It is quite cold in at Vienna airport around 6 AM. Ice still sits in puddles. But it doesn't feel that cold as you piece back together

the bike and sort out the luggage. The next problem to solve is a lack of a nut and bolt to fit the front rack on. Actually you have the bolt. You just need to find a nut. Until a nut is found a cable tie is used.

The route from Vienna airport to Bratislava is the same I taken 3 years previous. Except this time you don't get on the freeway but onto the smaller road running parallel. Traffic isn't as light as you would like but at least drivers here are courteous. None of this me first mentality you are used to braving.

A bike path runs most of the gauntlet. Unfortunately a lack of a map and knowledge of the place names means you at times abandon the path for the road. If only you had known. So for future reference, route number 6 takes you to the border.

The day is uneventful. You see some ancient roman ruins that you missed the last time round. Last time you took the detour to the 'ruins', ie amphitheater and in so doing missed out on seeing the much more spectacular gate. You see the trips first castle ruin. Not long after you spot Devin castle across the Danube and in nearby Slovakia.

You stop by at the border to get your passport stamped. But, according to the polizie, there aren't any border formalities. From the border it is only a few more km, over the bridge with the UFO and welcome to Bratislava proper.

Coming into the hostel you find that the cable tie used to secure the front rack is gone, broken off. It is just luck that the whole thing stayed on. Tomorrow will be spent looking for a nut

and bolt to secure that thing. But wait, Macgiver to the rescue. You do have such a set. You have a spare quick release for your seat. It fits snugly. But only time will tell if it lasts.

Time for a beer.









Men at work.

**Bratislava to Breclav:
Welcome to Czechtopia
Sunday March 21, 2010,
122 km (76 miles) – Total
so far: 180 km (112 miles)**

A day of procrastination in Bratislava and you are off to see the world. Following the Danube to Devin castle you then head north along the Morava River. You see some of the hundreds of bunkers along the Iron Curtain bikeway, built originally against Nazi Germany.

It is a pleasant day. That is, pleasant until it starts to rain. But it is good to be out on the bike in the beautiful countryside, passing through quaint towns and eerily quiet woodlands.

You stop over in Austria for a late lunch and then it is back into Slovakia and then Czech Republic to Breclav, your stop for tonight. It is not until you buy a beer do you realise that you don't actually have any money on you, at least not Czech money. And the exchange place is closed for the night. Damn.

Tonight's host is a lovely lady called Zuzana. And no, it's not like that. I met her on Couchsurfing. I slept on the couch. Soon it all catches up with you as those heavy eyelids close shut. It must be time for bed. Apparently you are quiet lucky with the weather.

It was winter 2 weeks ago. It still is cold though.



Bratislava castle.



The iron curtain.



From Breclav to...: Castle hopping
Monday March 22, 2010,
90 km (56 miles) – Total
so far: 270 km (168 miles)

You change some money over but the fuckers only give you big notes. Big notes that everyone else will refuse to take. Can I have some smaller money please? No. Fuckers.

Lunch is had in Mikolov and none too soon. The castle here looks pretty cool but you are too early in the tourist season for a tour. So you move on. Lednice is nice. You have a quick look at the castle but with all of the renovations going on you don't stay long. Besides, it is getting late. It would be good to put away a few km before dark.

You find a pension but it is closed. You ask the lady in the bar next door. You need a card she says. But how do you get a card? One asks. Not to worry though as a very nice pension is to be found just a couple km further along. Time for a pivo.





To Zarici: Night in a castle

Tuesday March 23, 2010,

107 km (66 miles) – Total

so far: 377 km (234 miles)

After a little while along the road you beeline off to Brecljev castle. Unfortunately it is closed. Wait until April apparently. After Brecljev you kinda get lost, mixing up the hiking trail with the cycling 1. Results are anything but good but you must have gotten out alive. After all, who would be here to write this?

Eventually a road is found. Then a late lunch. You see a lot more snow today as you roll through a couple minor ski resorts. It is sunny and hot but the wind bites cold, especially on the descents. There have been some beautiful rolling hills these past 2 days. Lots of vineyards abound although it's a little too early for any colour.

Then there is only a couple of hours of daylight left until you can make it to Kromenz, today's destination. And those legs just don't seem to want to help. No matter. The last 12 km are all downhill. Kromenz is lovely with a beautiful town center. Unfortunately there isn't anywhere to stay so you move on, in vain hope of a pension before night fall.

It doesn't happen though. The lights go on but only for

3 km more. In Zarici you find a pension, all decked out like a castle. In the entrance there is a gallows with a dummy hanging. Ominous perhaps? You go up to your room. Wait a minute. A quick look from the outside confirms it. You are staying in a turret. How cool is that!



Gallows.



My turret.



**Zarici to Olomouc:
Beautiful beautiful Olomouc
Wednesday March 24, 2010,
37 km (23 miles) – Total
so far: 414 km (257 miles)**

It's not far at all to Olomouc. You arrive by 12 and spend the rest of the day wandering about town. Olomouc is a wonderful city. Very livable. But there's no one else about the hostel so there's not really any point to stay. Otherwise Olomouc would make a great rest day or 2. But as today already is pretty much a rest day.







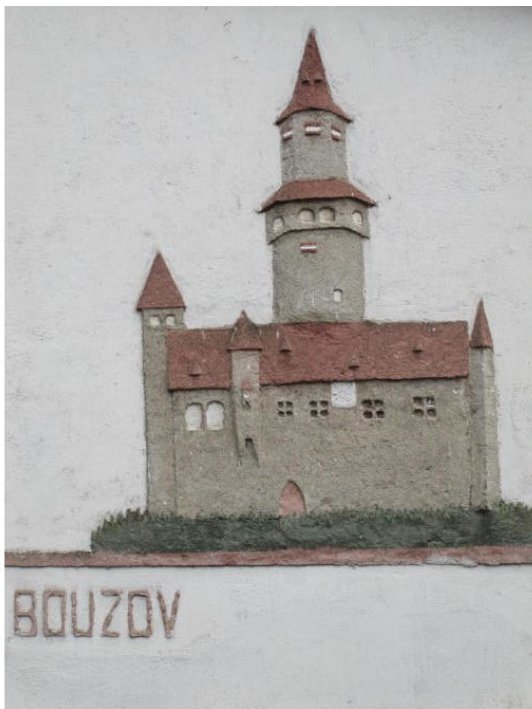
**Olomouc to Moravsca
Trebova: Damn that headwind
Thursday March 25, 2010,
83 km (52 miles) – Total
so far: 497 km (309 miles)**

Yesterday was pretty much a rest day so it is back on the road again today. You follow the bike paths but even then you still manage to get yourself lost. On the outskirts of town you stop to fix the mp3. Just ahead a branch breaks off a tree and lands on the path in front. Missed it by that much. A little further out the path disappears entirely as you trudge through the mud.

Bouzov castle looks pretty cool but alas you are a week too early for a tour. Restaurants are also closed.

Just an easy day today. No need to ride too much. Except there's a biting headwind.





**Moravski Trebova to Pardubice:
Penzion where are you?
Friday March 26, 2010,
128 km (80 miles) – Total
so far: 625 km (388 miles)**

Lots of snow today. You head to Policka trying to find this castle but it looks like it doesn't exist. Oh wait, there it is on the map you got from the tourist office. Oh well. Too late now. Policka is nice though with a nice square and plague column. No pensions in Chrudim so you keep riding to Pardubice.

And now oh so sleepy. Cannot write. Not another.



Gallows.



No snow here.

Pardubice to Nova Pecka to...: Riding around in circles

Saturday March 27, 2010, 125 km (78 miles) – Total so far: 750 km (466 miles)

It is already 9 pm. It is cold. There's snow everywhere. And there is nowhere to stay. Prices are outrages. Penzions cannot be found. And now you have a flat. 16 km to Jicin. Looks like a long hard slog but there will be places to stay there. If only it isn't too late.

Days are usually biting cold until around 11. It gets hot but an icy wind keeps the coat on. It cools down some by 5 or 6. 8 pm is still warmer than 10 am. But not today. Today is icy cold all day. True, it does warm up some but then it cools right down again. On go the gloves. On go the mittens. Yes, there are mittens. Want to know a cool trick? Socks make great mittens. Especially on a long descent.

You passed through a couple really beautiful towns. You detour to Kuks because you remember reading about it in the guidebook. You reread the section on Kuks. Give it a miss. Oh.

Bike trails have you riding on dirt tracks along the river Lube and through a muddy field.

You fix the flat and move on. Oh, and your headlight is almost dead as well. Fortunately a big round moon helps shine your way.

The road to Jicin has for the most part a nice shoulder. But, and take it from someone who knows, it is not good for the shoulder to end when high beams are being shone into your eyes.









**Jicin to Strad pod Ralskem:
This looks familiar
Sunday March 28, 2010,
85 km (53 miles) – Total
so far: 835 km (519 miles)**

In true form you get well lost trying to find Kost castle. On muddy tracks you ride (push) around in circles. Eventually Kost is found and wouldn't you know it. You've been here before. 3 years ago you chanced upon this most exquisite of castles, even managing to camp outside its walls.

You also spot the remains of another castle high up on a high in the middle distance. Anyway, it is already 3. Time to put some kms in before nightfall. Today's destination is Liberice.

You stick to the road rather than brave the poorly signposted bike paths. It is 5 before you see just how far/close you are from town. 24 km. That is possible to make before 7 barring any big hills. Barring any big hills.

But what is there in Liberice anyway? It is a convenient stopover on the way to Lemburg castle. But coming from the south it is more like an inconvenient detour. So you go to Straz pod Ralskem instead.

A hotel is found. It has the cyclisto stamp of approval. This is

to show that the hotel is of quality standard. What THAT means is that it is not cheap. But this 1 is. Very cheap. The room isn't much but food and pivo are at hand. Speaking of which.



Kost castle.



To Litericice
Monday March 29, 2010,
98 km (61 miles) – Total
so far: 933 km (580 miles)

It is a very wet day. All day. You detour to see a castle. It is of course closed and after a couple wet outside photos you just ride on. The area around here is quite pretty with lots of rock formations. Houses are built around and into many of the rocks.

The plan is to ride towards Litericice. Wasn't going to get here but when a map FINALLY says how close the town was then, well, why not go? Besides, there isn't anywhere to sleep before then anyway. Litomerice is a pretty place.

You drink a pivo in the bar. Someone offers a joint. Sure, why not?



**Litomerice to Praha: Spaced
Tuesday March 30, 2010,
70 km (43 miles) – Total so
far: 1,003 km (623 miles)**

Finally a nice sunny day. Too bad about that headwind though. And a lack of maps has you riding along the busy highway all the way into Prague. But before all that it is time to check out this concentration camp.

Eventually you make it to town. Just in time for some pivo. A group of dutch students brought some space cake over. You try some. Then some more. Then some more. Mmmmmmm spacey.



**Praha to Zvikov.: Let it
snow. Let it snow. Let it snow
Friday April 2, 2010,
134 km (83 miles) – Total
so far: 1,137 km (706 miles)**

After a couple lazy days in Prague it is time to once more hit the road. The hope was to make it to Cesky Krumlov but it looks to be a little too far.

It is a sunny albeit cold day. Soon the inevitable happens. Clouds take over the skies and it begins to.. snow. It actually snows! Momentarily. Then it just rains.

Lunch isn't had until after 90 km and 4 pm. Then it is only a short ride to Orlik castle where apparently a nice cheap hostel is found. Except it isn't. They tell you to go elsewhere. Then those people tell you know. So you just keep riding. So fuck you Lonely Planet.

There is another castle just to the south. Zvikov Castle. Apparently there are a few houses that rent out rooms. Except you can't find any. On the way out of town you spot the cyclista sign and try 1 last time. Victory is found.

**Zikov to Cesky Krumlov:
Time for a hiatus
Saturday April 3, 2010,
107 km (66 miles) – Total
so far: 1,244 km (773 miles)**

A tour of Zikov castle is worth the time and money. Guess who is the first guest of the year? That is right. Yours truly. Then it is off on the road once more. Pisek is a pretty town with an old stone bridge and cathedral. Not to mention all the pretty buildings in the square. Prachatice, further on also has a pretty square but by the time you arrive it is already 4.

The legs ache. Even the smallest of hills becomes too much work. The muscles need some relaxing time. And as soon as Cesky Krumlov arrives they will get it too.

At last the most beautiful of medieval villages comes to view. Time for a few days hiatus.

**Cesky Krumlov to Jindrichuv
Hradec.: De ja vu
Thursday April 8, 2010, 96
km (60 miles) – Total so
far: 1,340 km (833 miles)**

It was a nice little hiatus as it was but as always the road ahead beckons. A late start followed by a tour of a nearby gothic monastery has you already behind the ball. Getting lost immediately after also does not help.

Trebon is a pretty little town with a pretty little square. But with just a few short hours of daylight left it is time to move on and to Jindrichuv Hradec, tonight's accommodation. Hey, you've been here before. Yews, this all looks somewhat familiar. So why not stay once more at the same hotel then? Sure, why not.

**To Znojmo.: Hello pretty bunkers
Friday April 9, 2010, 116
km (72 miles) – Total so
far: 1,456 km (905 miles)**

Slavonice, the first town of note, is quite pretty but unfortunately anything of note is closed for winter. “Bike routes’ take you on minor roads making for a pleasant ride. So close to the Austrian border, many bunkers are found along the way.

You see a castle. It is pretty and all that but of course you are too late for a tour. It is a good thing you approach from the South. The long climb up would have been heartbreaking otherwise. A couple other castle ruins are found on route.

Znojmo looks interesting. A hostel is found and surprise surprise the only customer there is you. How do they even make money doing this???

**Znojmo to Bratislava.: Hello
Austria. Hello Slovakia
Sunday April 11, 2010, 170
km (106 miles) – Total so
far: 1,626 km (1,010 miles)**

Znojmo is quite pleasant. But after a tour of the underground tunnels (as distinct from the above ground 1s) it is time to get going. It is already after 11 but with a head wind speed is maintained throughout the day. The plan was to head to Vienna. But the fuckers in the hostel won't take your reservation. You need a credit card they say. Easy No credit card though. So you just give the details of your expired card. They only use it if you don't turn up. So after 3 days of this Sorry. No room for you. Fuckers.

So you just go to Bratislava instead. There are none of those all so useful maps in Austria. So you just head in a South Easterly direction and hope for the best.

After being in Austria a bit too long it is time to cross the border into Slovakia. How? You head north against the wind, then south. At last you come to March where a ferry awaits. And waits. And waits. Why isn't the fucker coming over to pick you up? Hello?

You move on. It will be dark enough as it is. Thanks for the unnecessary wait though. So you arrive in Bratislava. Finally. And get to the hostel. Sorry. We are full. Fuckers. There are some other hostels nearby though and if you do happen to luck out you can pitch the tent in the backyard of the 1st place. Did you mention yet that it is 8 degrees outside?

Bratislava to Komarno.: Why hostel?

Monday April 12, 2010, 118

**km (73 miles) – Total so
far: 1,744 km (1,084 miles)**

12—4 Bratislava to Komarno. 118 km

After a shite couple nights in a hostel being woken up all through out the night by drunken douchebags it is certainly time to leave this place. And what wonderful weather to accompany you along the way. Rain

That's right, it rains. All day. Without letting up. Lucky you. The ride is quite nice up beside the river. You overtake some sort of ferry. The river on the left is a couple meters below but the land on the right is much further below the water line. Now that looks ominous. Soon however you find the damn and the lock. The water downstream is sever meters lower. Ahhh.

Crossing over the bike trail loses the pavement. Speed drops as you ride on gravel. Good fortune, a sign says just 42 km to go, is immediately followed by bad, flat tire.

At last Komarno is found and none too soon. Pensions here are expensive though. A relatively cheap room is found.

**Komarno to Budapest:
How to get to Ukraine?
Tuesday April 13, 2010, 134
km (83 miles) – Total so
far: 1,878 km (1,167 miles)**

From Komarno it is over the bridge and welcome to home of the Magyars. Important interneting trying to sort out the invitation letter for the Ukraine visa has you wasting an hour or so. You need to transfer some money over for the visa but there aren't enough spaces in the boxes provided over the internet. So walk into a bank stupid. So you do. Transfer, no problem. But only if you have an account. Fuck.

The day countiey. Apparently day. Wet. It rains the whole day. Apparently the Danube bike trail follows the Danube river but for most of the way there is no bike trail. Just a busy road with lots of trucks. It probably would have been better to just ride the direct route straight to Budapest then. Or stay North of the river contrary to the signs.

Part of the signed route has you on a ferry crossing but although there is a ferry it doesn't seem to be doing any crossing. Another time waster. Coming in to Budapest it is already night. The inevitable happens. Bam. A flat. Not so nice.

Finally the hostel is found. Yay Somehow everything is put into the lift and hauled up 4 flights of stairs. But somehow something sometime abouts went wrong. A big gash in the side of the tire is found. Ruined. Destroyed. Tomorrow's job.

**Budapesti days.: Your first
nappy. Congratulations
Saturday April 24, 2010,
76 km (47 miles) – Total so
far: 1,954 km (1,214 miles)**

To spend almost 2 weeks in the 1 place I would think a girl was involved. Alas no, not here. Meeting some expats you become convinced to live here. So.. 4 days was spent 'on trial' at a nursery changing nappies and another day spent at another hostel for a job from May, neither of which you will probably take.

Budapesti to Harta.:
First camping day
Sunday April 25, 2010, 120
km (75 miles) – Total so
far: 2,074 km (1,289 miles)

Finally after almost 2 weeks the escape from Budapest is made. Hurray. And none too soon. The plan is to ride to Pecs in 2 days where another short hiatus ensues. The bike path follows the Danube river down. Sometimes on the left, sometimes the right, and sometimes on the island in the middle.

Being a beautiful Sunday day there are a few local cyclists about. But none have anywhere near as much luggage as you. The change in weather also marks a change in attire. Shorts and t-shirt it is. The path surface is a real mixture of dirt trails, grass, and road.

100 km down the road you arrive at Solt. That's enough for 1 day. But there are no hotels about so it is on the road once more. Not far up the road, Harta has, apparently 3 pensions. 1 is closed and the other 2 cannot be located.

There is also meant to be a campsite on the Danube. Although no official campsite is found you are welcome to pitch the tent in front of the restaurant. And as the setting sun completes the

day pork chops completes yours.

Harta to Pecs.: Meet the gypsies

Monday April 26, 2010, 160

km (99 miles) – Total so

far: 2,234 km (1,388 miles)

After being overcharged for last night's meal it is decided not to give these people any more of your business. Though this does entail not eating until lunch time some hours later. The bike trail has you riding on a sandy track in a head wind. This is not good.

You leave in good time but the promise of a big climb and a long day means things like a sandy track are bad news. Why would anybody place a bike route along a sandy track? But you persevere. There is a ferry crossing which would knock some 10 km off the ride but can you trust it? No. So the bridge it is.

And onto route 55. With heavy traffic and no shoulder these 15 km are not so nice. Still better Hungarian drivers than murderous Taiwanese. Turning south on the 56 traffic doesn't really lighten up but now you also have a head wind to contend with. When you eventually get on the 57 the wind changes into a tail however bicycles are not allowed. No problem. There is a separate bike path. Excellent. For about 2 km anyway. Then. Nothing.

So it is back on the road it is despite the legality of it all. Very

soon the freeway appears but not only does the traffic not lighten up but it is also still illegal for you to ride on it. So ride on. At times a dirt track runs parallel to the road, which is fine for a little while, but mostly the road is the only option.

And hello Pecs. Hello couch surfing and a bunch of new friends. It looks like a few days in this cultural capital of Europe. There is a seminar of sorts to host on Wednesday and hopefully a train ride back to Budapesti for a job interview. Hopefully. Wait and see. Wait and see.

Pecs to Orija: Hello Croatia
Tuesday April 27, 2010, 113
km (70 miles) – Total so
far: 2,347 km (1,458 miles)

Pecs sure was interesting. Through couch surfing you stumbled upon a huge network of friends to waste away the days. There's festival stuff happening on the weekend so you are compelled to stay and see that. Which is interesting and besides, you really don't need to be anywhere else. Also you kinda meet a girl so it would be nice to spend some time with her.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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