

Pedego GLB Group Ride Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) June, 2018



Lift Off! Here we go to the GAP

June 18, 2018/in [GAP Ride 2018](#) /by [BeGreater](#)

POST 1

Pittsburgh! The Wild POGs enjoy our first dinner. After a desperate 4 hours' sleep, Brian and I leapt from our bed as soon as both our phone alarms rang. Mine played Rascal Flatts' emblematic "Life is a Highway," more a *bike path* for us. Only a couple hours later, we inched our way to LAX and the flight we shared with nine of our Pedego pals. Imagine! Eleven of us, all smiling and joking as we boarded our flight to Pittsburgh.

The rest of the 20 riders either flew out of John Wayne or took another LAX flight. Two, we knew, had driven a van and trailer across the USA. Dennis and Stephen, two 70-something men (superheroes, really) hauling all our bikes and gear to meet us there, ready for the ride.

Our grand plan was simple: Land, party, sleep, and then the next morning... hop on our bikes and go! As Robert wrote on Facebook last night to our private group, "We are embarking on the adventure of a lifetime." Riding the plane that soared us toward our adventure, I couldn't help but think of the friends and family I've known through my life who played it safe and never took to the path on two wheels, preferring instead to sit life out. But life has a way of getting you no matter where you go or what you do. As they say, no one gets out of life alive. So I'm grateful to the Wild POGs for drawing Brian and me out even more than normal. We are enjoying life full throttle. And that's how it should be.

See you on the bike path.

Beth



[And The Ride Begins](#)

June 19, 2018/in [GAP Ride 2018](#) /by [BeGreater](#)

POST 2

Our first day riding began with an ominous sky. Murky clouds swirled while relatives sent texts warning us to watch for a bad nor'easter. In the end, our luck held. There was drizzle, but no downpour. It was cool, but comfortably so, especially with the breezes we felt while riding our Pedego bikes. And, there was scenery. The most fascinating, glorious, surreal green world enveloping us. And ... frankly, it didn't matter that mere weather might try to intrude with its storms. All 20 of us had dreamed of this ride with such passion that, by the time our minivan and trailer-pulling van parked in the vacant lot across the Monongahela River from Three Rivers Park, no amount of downpour would have the power to stop us.

We formed an assembly line of sorts, pulling bikes from their nest in the trailer, rolling each down the ramp to a waiting set of hands that then rolled it out to a spot on the parking lot. Before long, all the bikes were out and waiting. We also had to grab our bags and supplies and try to figure out what was most valuable to carry and what could stay in the chaser vans. You'd think a simple list would suffice, but when you're in a strange land, it's really hard to just know. Would we need water? Juice? Snacks? Deet? Sunscreen? Rain poncho? In the morning before our first ride, we couldn't know exactly what the right combination of supplies should be. Though we would learn throughout the day, as we rolled into and out of some challenges.

First, before she'd ridden 5 feet, Chris' front tire went flat. At that point, many of the group were already on their way toward the huge yellow bridge that crosses the river toward the park. Stephen and Bob volunteered to stay behind with Chris and fix her flat. I stayed a few minutes for moral support but eventually left them to try and catch up with the others. Now, it should be said that I'm no fan of heights. And the group had already pedaled their bikes over this bridge by the time I arrived at it. There was, fortunately, a segregated bike path, safe from cars. But there I was, sandwiched between the rush of traffic to my right and the river — at what seemed a mile below — to my left. This is a testament to the power of this trip. I rode partly, and when that was too much, I walked the bike partly. But with my Pedego, I made it. Over the bridge. And the view was worth the fear.

Thanks to Bob and Stephen, Chris' bike soon rolled like new, and we found our group together, again, setting off on our adventure. The path along the Monongahela River had some

twists and turns, as we were forced to ride around a construction site. It turns out, the Great Allegheny Passage is a huge new industry in this part of the country, and big cities, as well as small towns, are doing their best to build something to attract the steady flow of cyclists and hikers who travel this route between Pittsburgh and Washington D.C. What an exciting time to ride a bike! Dennis, our fearless Facilitator, had spoken to us about the importance of our riding through and supporting the small businesses in this region that had suffered so much with the end of 20th Century industries.

We stopped for lunch a little early today, because the opportunity to dine at [Hofbrauhaus](#) in Pittsburgh was too good to pass up. After lunch, we hit the trail for real. And boy, were we rewarded almost immediately with eye-popping scenery. As we rolled on the path near the river, the trees grew more dense, and we came upon a few gorgeous, early thickets of tree canopies covering the bike path, something that would become more commonplace with each mile. What SoCal has in browns and grays, Pennsylvania has in shades of green. The downtown area faded behind us, and we were surprised to come upon some familiar animals — Canadian geese had set up a home along this river. For a moment, they seemed as out of place as us, because so many live seasonally in Orange County. But like us, the Canadian geese had discovered the Great Allegheny Passage. We scooted past families with goslings and thrilled at the sight of them.

One river flowed into another, and we rolled nearby on the most verdant bike paths I have ever encountered. Forget what photos and videos you see online. They are no match for the vision that met us today. We passed waterfalls and pastures, a doe and her fawn, and small “this-is-America” towns dotting the path for miles. At one point, we took a moment’s rest at a small cemetery by the river. It had to be at least a century old. A few times, Dennis stopped us to explain something we saw along the path. We saw the last surviving steel mill left in the region, as well as remnants of former mills, and markers for historic events that shaped American history.

We rode just under 45 miles today. And each mile was packed with so much that it left our hearts bursting with pleasure. When I saw the faces of the others, I knew they felt as I did — that this was indeed the trip of a lifetime. At one point today, we stopped to see a bald eagle that had perched on a tree branch above us. Yes, those are the things you just pull over to see. I wondered if that majestic symbol of liberty took one look at us and thought, Now...*that’s* freedom! See you on the bike path.

Beth



[Riding Out the Storm](#)

June 21, 2018/in [GAP Ride 2018](#) /by [BeGreater](#)

POST 3

There's a saying among Pedego people: *The most important part of the bike is the rider.* Today, we learned the deep meaning of those words.

The Wild POGs rolled out of Belle Vernon around 9 a.m. and swooped en masse down a long hill to the GAP trail. Within minutes, we were back in nature, away from roads, houses, businesses and civilization in general. It became clear on today's ride that this trail has one overwhelming trait — at any point, a person on the trail could be one bend in the path, one mile or one thousand miles away from civilization. From everything you see, it's impossible to tell which is true. Now, if the sun is dappling the trees, the air is pleasant, and the river plays its music, you feel at ease and filled with joy. Different riders react differently to this feeling.

Riders like Laura and Al thrill to a spirited jaunt down the path. They often push their pedals a little harder and spend their moments gulping in the freedom they have found here. Others, like Janet and Robert, enjoy savoring their surroundings as they roll more leisurely with the group, pausing now and then to take pictures of their friends riding past in this bucolic setting. Today, long swaths of the path seem more remote than we noticed yesterday. At dinner last night, our Fearless Facilitator Dennis had said, "It's going to be better and better each day for the next few days." I didn't completely understand that until today's ride. Oh, yes. The beauty of wilderness was even more astounding. And the effects it had on each of us became even more pronounced.

I rounded a bend to catch up with Paula and her daughter Noelle. The two women had dismounted their bikes and were having some fun cavorting beside the trail in a tiny hamlet occupied by a single home. The house was set partly up the rise to our right. A sign draped the front that read: MOSAICS FOR SALE. Near the trail, the artist had placed a painted golden bicycle with golden antlers on its handlebars. In the grass right in front of it, Noelle stood on her head while Paula snapped some quick photos. To me, this seemed the perfect compliment to the artist that such mirth was inspired in these women.

We stopped for lunch in Connellsville at a place called the Valley Dairy. These people knew food, and our group downed an invigorating feast together. It was a lovely small town just a short ride from the path. We also stopped to meet the folks at a local bike shop. There are several small bike shops along the GAP, and they all perform invaluable services for riders. We said our farewells and zoomed back to the path, once again leaving the busy world behind.

A couple hours later, the nor'easter caught up with us.

Most of the group had pulled over to stretch and chat. Janet, who had been a little ahead of me, said, "Robert and I noticed a path down to the river, and we stopped to take a look. Now, we've come back to see *everyone* has stopped!" She laughed. Then we heard a rumbling from a ridge overlooking the far side of the river. A couple drops of rain came down. We returned to our bikes. Suddenly there was this faint sound growing rapidly louder. Like every leaf in the forest that surrounded us was suddenly shivering. And then they shivered louder. From the rustling emerged a roar. The group twisted their throttles and zoomed off down the path. But then the roaring wind brought torrential rain. Brian and I stopped to grab our rain covers. I yanked a plastic poncho from my basket and fumbled in the storm with it. Brian yelled, "Grab the Frogg Toggs!" So he held the poncho over us as a makeshift shelter while I pulled on the pants and jacket, zipped and raised my hood, and slammed my helmet over that. Then I held the poncho while he did the same. The storm showed no sign of abating. We tucked our drowned phones away.

Finally, we glanced around to discover that the others had not stopped. And instantly, we were alone on a deserted path, deep in the forest, with the nor'easter screaming in our ears. We made only one mistake, but it had repercussions. Brian had tried to make additional use of the poncho as a rain cover for his battery. Normally, such a move would not be necessary, but the forest was so drenched, it seemed prudent. So we started to roll on, but the wind tugged the poncho loose, and it quickly wrapped itself around both sides of his rear wheel. The derailleur and motor were both hopelessly ensnared in the plastic sheet. I was behind him and shouted for him to stop, but it was too late. Still, we worked as a team. Brian had packed along a Swiss Army knife.

Thanking the Frogg Togg people, he laid down in the mud and reached up under the rear panniers to hack away at the plastic. The rain and wind whipped around us, but he doggedly freed the wheel just enough. He couldn't pedal, but he could ride with the throttle powering the bike along. It saved us.

We pushed on. The storm howled and thunder boomed over our heads. Rain pelted us. Trees fell from the rise, and we had to dodge debris as we rolled. The path grew dark, so we turned on our lights and kept on. I thanked Pedego for making lights I could switch on by tapping a button on my LCD. With me following, Brian wanted to keep in touch, so we began to sing. We started with "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head," and I tried teaching him "My Favorite Things." "Raindrops on Roses, and zippers on kittens," he warbled. Brian's misunderstanding of the lyrics made me laugh, even in our situation. We stopped at a road crossing the path. I wondered aloud if we should turn, but he refused. He was right. A quarter mile from there, we caught up with the group. They had experienced their own challenges, among them a huge fallen tree that blocked the path. Their bikes were just past it, however.

First, they all greeted us with the warmest smiles. I swear they made the storm pause. Dennis said, "With your lights on the dark path, you two looked like a train coming out of a tunnel!" We all laughed at the absurd picture of a train on the path, as we'd heard the loud chugging of one earlier in the day. But we asked why our friends had remained out in the storm.

Dennis explained, " We devised a way to team up and lift each bike through an opening in the branches." They could have continued on, but they waited in the storm for us, because they knew we would need the team's help to get through. Surely, in that moment, we learned the full meaning of the most important part of Pedego bikes. The riders. Always the riders.

See you on the bike path.

Beth



[United at the Great Divide](#)

June 24, 2018/in [GAP Ride 2018](#) /by [BeGreater](#)

POST 4

We rolled out of Meyersdale, PA, Friday morning. The trail, again, was gorgeous, and excitement soared our spirits, as we moved on to the next step. *Today, we cross state lines, I thought. How many senior cyclists can boast that they've ridden across one state and into the next?* Along the way, there would be plenty to see. Already, I had seen our group gel into a hearty bunch of Pedego pals, and I have no doubt that some lifelong friendships have developed since we first formed our amalgam of likeminded travelers. In these few months, our bonds have grown deeper, stronger, and each picture taken at group meals has shown us off as great friends.

But I have to admit, I wondered if we could gel on the bike path too. We've all seen the smooth moves of the peletons, watching them flow as one down the path. Would we, *could we*, ever be like that? During the day's ride, my answer arrived in a surprising way. It happened near the Eastern Continental Divide.

In small — but separate— bunches, our group climbed to the high point where the Divide waited. Upon reaching it, Brian and I posed with a few members of a group, knowing others — faster riders —had already reached it and rolled on. Everyone felt so proud to reach this milestone, and we had fun seeing what was there and taking pictures. While not as dramatic as the Western Continental Divide, it is still impressive. When traveling east, as we were, the second half is a fairly steep downhill run. Due to the recent rains, we splashed puddles, skirted mud patches and slid a little on gravel that seemed to be everywhere (and, boy, was I glad I put knobby tires on several bikes, including ours). This downhill run is known as the Laurel, a famous miles-long incline for trains. Indeed, a railroad track kept us company much of the way.

It was there that one of our riders had a flat tire. This can happen to the best of bikes. But what took place next thrilled me. As the small groups reached the spot where the bike had pulled over, everyone else stopped too. Quickly, they formed a response team with assigned roles. The bike was turned on its back for a clear view of the operating field. Pedego electric bikes require a couple extra steps to replace a rear tube. The team knew what to do thanks to our practice rides. "I've been assigned *this*," said Freda, as she carefully held the bike's battery. Others, including

Jean and Janet, handed parts to the surgeons, while still others provided flashlights, CO2, mini-pump and tools. Meanwhile, John, Robert, Brian and Bob performed the tube replacement procedure. Others stayed near, capturing the moment on video or offering words of encouragement. *Everyone*. Then, within about 15 minutes, when the bike was uprighted and ready to go, we hugged and continued down the path. In my book, that's a peloton — a *smart* peloton of people who know when to be individuals and when to team up, as needed.

Of course, we're not perfect people. This kind of challenge is tiring. But a little rest and a shared meal always brings out the smiles. We smile because it's a good kind of tired. Inevitably, someone then says, "How soon can we get going again?"

And though the continent may split apart in that hilly countryside, so long as the Wild POGs ride, we remain united. We pedaled off in small bunches again, and had more fun at the Mason Dixon State Line, queing up to place one wheel in Pennsylvania and the other in Maryland. Here we come East Coast! Fun is rolling your way.

See you on the bike path.

Beth



‘Seventy-Five and Still Alive!’

June 26, 2018/in [GAP Ride 2018](#) /by [BeGreater](#)

POST 5

(Written June 25.)

Today was Joan’s 75th birthday. She celebrated in ways that would leave most people her age awestruck. As a special gift, the sun shone. However, it was not quite enough to wring dry a path that only days before had been flooded by a storm-whipped river. We left behind the Great Allegheny Passage and have been riding the C&O Towpath for the rest of the journey to Washington. While both are gorgeous and historical, the two paths have their differences. The GAP path is composed of shale that dries quickly, but the C&O is quite muddy for long stretches after a major storm. Also, while the GAP is wide, the C&O is mostly two narrow strips of dirt separated by a grassy median. Repeatedly, we crossed from right to left over that median with its clumps of short grass. So, today was a test of skill, stamina, strength and a steadfast determination to succeed.

As always, Joan rode among the fiercest of the gang. The group cruised gingerly down the path, its steep edges leading down to the river on one side and the canal (sometimes filled with murky green water, sometimes nothing but trees and mud). Joan rode right along, swiftly zooming over shallow mud pockets and walking her bike over the deeper patches. And then it happened. A particularly long, deep and slick patch of mud sent her bike out from under her, and she took a tumble. But true to this amazing woman, she got up, wiped off as much mud as possible, and resumed the task at hand. Of course, Joan is a beloved member of the Wild POGs, and everyone kept an eye on her. When we needed to fight our way over two huge entangled trees that had fallen across the path, several pals held out hands to help her navigate the slick mud leading down to a ravine, where she then climbed over the giant tree trunks and then climbed out on the other side of the blocked path. But even with help, not a lot of 70-somethings would be up for this.

Later that evening, we surprised her with a cake and entertainment at dinner. Joan’s eyes twinkled as always and she canted her head with a mischievous grin. “No matter what nature

threw at me today, I'm still alive!" she quipped. And not only that — this 75-year-old Pedego pal is truly full of life. For tomorrow, she rides again ...

See you on the bike path.

Beth

[Photo Op](#)

June 26, 2018/in [GAP Ride 2018](#) /by [BeGreater](#)

POST 6

Time to share some shots.







Joan crossing the Eastern Continental Divide.





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[An Authentic Adventure](#)

June 29, 2018/in [GAP Ride 2018](#) /by [BeGreater](#)

POST 7

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. — Helen Keller

More than 6,000 combined miles later, we did it! With a few pictures taken in front of our destination, Pedego Alexandria, our journey was complete. Hooting and cheering, the Wild POGs succeeded in their mission of riding from Pittsburgh on their Pedego electric bikes. At that point, all that was left to do was celebrate and reflect on a job well done. I particularly enjoyed the latter. Any English student can recite the difference between *farther*, as in to go farther in miles, and *further*, as in to go further in changing your life. On this GAP Ride, I'm proud to say we accomplished both.

There are regular Pedego tours, of course. We offer them at our store, Pedego Greater Long Beach. They provide an easy cruise for people who are seeking a relaxing, fun experience. The experience might seem a little basic for those who own their own Pedego bikes, but they make a great introduction to electric biking. And If I didn't already say it, they're fun.

But then there's the *Pedego Authentic Adventure*. Designed for Pedego owners who are ready to experience a more robust level of riding. They're seeking something grand that may change their lives forever, as they rediscover the hidden powers we all possess. Years of working for bosses who held us back have made us forget the great things we're capable of accomplishing. Being told that we're unemployable because we're over 40 or 50, that we're not worth the expense to a company, has taken its toll on our spirits. This is the kind of adventure that brings back our invincibility. It's the difference between hopping on an amusement park ride for six pre-planned minutes or jumping from a plane for some real-life skydiving.

So, I asked myself, what is the nature and deep purpose of such an authentic adventure? We rode more miles, surrounded by acres of silver maple, Pawpaw, Tulip Poplar, Box Elder and American Sycamore as well as Northern Spicebush and American Bladdernut — forming a canopy that enveloped us from the first day. This was real forest, not a few trees in front of a building. Animals, such as deer, racoon, snakes and more paid us visits. Some deer ran alongside us as we rolled. The riders appreciated being on their own personal bikes that they have equipped to their tastes and needs. We made suggestions, of course, and there were some required supplies. But Pedego builds 15 models to suit every body type, and the riders who own bikes know what they like.

I know this: A lesser electric bike might not have survived the rigors of the wild trail. Buckets of rain affected some of our electrical components (and most were easily fixed), but Pedego's sturdy motors held strong, and the frames kept their shape intact no matter how much mud we threw at them. The muddy condition of the trails meant that electric bikes were more necessary than ever. They provided the safest, most effective mobility option available. In the planning

stages, we figured that the weather would have an impact on the event. Boy, were we right! No one could predict the amount of damage to the trail system. But then, no one could predict the amount of true grit each of us had buried in our souls. One downed tree? We formed a team to go over it. Multiple downed trees? We knew what we had done before and adjusted it to surmount the obstacle and keep moving. Any employer out there would be lucky to hire the people whose talents and inner strength were on display that day.

This wouldn't be complete without a nod to the RAC team. Dennis Bueker's unswerving calm in the middle of every challenge inspired the rest of us to do our best. Gwen Bueker worked hard to keep up with a chaser van and organize our nightly rooms. Stephen Mulcock's steady hand at the wheel of our trailer-van kept us moving forward.

Emotional about her experience, Jean said, ["It was the most fabulous, fantastic, wonderful, challenging, scary, wet, muddy, joyous, victorious, empowering ... see you next year!"](#) I wager that every member of our group has known someone who sat on a couch until their health failed. Some told me they purchased bikes from GLB after a family member died of heart disease or diabetes. Our group has worked hard to make it all more meaningful and life affirming. When Paula rode a particularly challenging leg of the journey, her daughter Noelle was concerned. But Paula went anyway. "If I die, just know I died doing something I love," she said.

Brian's favorite quote is, "A ship in harbor is safe, but that's not what ships are built for." We all found the adventure we were built for while enjoying a lot of fun and beauty along the way. And you know what? At 50, 60, 70 and beyond...we're strong, smart and ready for our next adventure on the Katy Trail in August. Are you ready to join us? We are the Wild POGs!

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This was, indeed, the adventure of a lifetime. Not just for a *rider*, but for a *writer*. One of these posts was written on top of a hotel dryer at 1 a.m. while everyone else rested. I had laundry to do and a post to write before allowing myself the luxury of sleep. But while it was a working vacation, it was also a not-to-be-missed part of the history of Pedego GLB. We were the first store to host such a ride with so many people traveling so far. There are a few things having to do with GLB that have left me feeling proud. Creating, enduring and surviving this trip was at the top of that list. My thanks to the riders who braved so much with true grit. Special thanks to the RAC team for their magnificent contributions. Mostly, a special thank you to Brian Ballard, my partner in life and bikes, who worked so hard to make this dream come true. *Beth Black, December, 2018.*