



28th May 2021

Q&A with Andy Cox the pioneer of the EDT

1. Who is Andy Cox?

I'm 43 years young, born in Oxford, England, but I see myself as European first, British second. Trained as a bicycle mechanic, worked as an MTB guide in the French Alps. A lover of philosophy and coffee, a cyclist and photographer. Can often be found in the forests of Europe, enjoying the tranquility, quiet and nature.

2. What was the idea behind the EDT route?

I left on a bikepacking trip 4 years ago looking for a new place to live and some long distance off road routes to ride around Europe. I found that most of the existing routes I rode were too challenging for a bike laden with enough equipment to last many months or years, so I started thinking about, and planning, a route across Europe similar to the Great Divide mountain bike route in North America, in a dirt road touring style. I prefer to ride my bike than push it, and I wanted the challenges of the route to be it's length, the logistics of food and accommodation, and the amount of time it would take, but the technical aspects of the trails.

3. How long has it taken you to create the EDT?

To put together the route was around 3 years from inception to finish. The first year I mainly rode in circles around the south of France and Spain enjoying the sunshine, the next year I rode to Scandinavia and back, via eastern Europe and again through Spain, which gave me more of an idea of what I wanted from the route. Finally on my second circuit of the Baltic sea, having once again ridden from Spain, I decided on the route, which is from Grense Jacobselv in northeastern Norway to Cabo San Vincent in southwestern Portugal.

4. What was your favorite moment riding the route?

Pushing my bike up a steep single-track in the Jura mountains in France, just close to sunset, coming round a corner to see an adult Lynx just standing there watching me on the path, that's truly a memory that'll last a lifetime.

5. What are the greatest things you've learnt in this journey?

People are great wherever you go. There's so many friendly people out there who are happy to help a bike traveller and eager to hear stories from the roads and trails of Europe. The world is not as the news

media wants to scare you, that is, that those people who might look different or speak a different language are not the same, because they are. We're all similar people trying to find our own way through life.

6. What are your highlights for the route?

Standing on the beach at the Arctic Ocean in Norway, with Russia only a stone's throw away is quite an experience. Highlight

Endless dirt roads in Scandinavia, through forest, past lakes, across rivers and bogs.

An amazing patchwork of fields, forests and settlements across Denmark, Germany and France that go on for thousands of kilometres.

The high and empty areas of eastern Spain, inland from the tourist areas. Beautiful and quite beguiling. Finally seeing the edge of Europe in Portugal, feeling the humid air of the Atlantic Ocean and seeing the huge waves breaking on the wild coastline.

7. What do you hope others will get from the EDT?

Traveling across Europe in such a way by bike breaks down the international borders, it breaks down your preconceptions of other countries, it shows there's another part of Europe that's much larger than the popular tourist areas you might know, as that's where most people actually live, not just go on holiday.