

Two Blind to Ride on the Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia and en route to Alaska.



## Stage 2: Santiago, Chile to La Paz, Bolivia

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*A 16,000-mile journey to raise awareness about blindness and the abilities of the visually impaired.*

### Overview

Stage 2 took us east from Santiago to Mendoza and north through the provinces of San Juan, La Rioja, Catamarca, Tucuman, Salta and Jujuy before crossing the border into Bolivia. In this section of the ride, we encountered challenges such as a broken rear wheel, Christi's lingering back injury and roads without shoulders. We visited schools and organizations for the blind in Mendoza, Salta and La Paz, and we appeared in the news in those cities as well as in Tucuman.

The ride north to Bolivia took us high up onto the altiplano at approximately 12,000 feet. We entered Bolivia at Villazon on July 10<sup>th</sup> and continued north to Tupiza, Uyuni, the salt flats and Oruro before reaching La Paz. Highlights include meeting fantastic people in Argentina, seeing the world's largest salt flat and exploring the colorful and vibrant markets in Bolivia.

### **Total to date:**

Ushuaia to La Paz  
6073 km / 3765 miles  
Dec 2011 – Aug 2012

#### **Stage 1:**

Ushuaia to Santiago  
3457 km / 2143 mi  
Dec 2011 – May 2012

#### **Stage 2:**

Santiago to La Paz  
2616 km, 1622 miles  
May 2012 – Aug 2012

#### **Stage 3:**

La Paz to Panama City  
TBD km / TBD mi  
Aug 2012 – Oct 2012

#### **Stage 4:**

Panama City to Phoenix  
TBD km / TBD mi  
Oct 2012 – Jan 2013

#### **Stage 5:**

Phoenix to Fort Nelson  
TBD km / TBD mi  
Mar 2013 – June 2013

#### **Stage 6:**

Fort Nelson to Deadhorse  
TBD km / TBD mi  
June 2013 – Aug 2013

# Project Summary

The two main goals of our project are (1) to inspire the visually impaired community to push beyond their boundaries and (2) to communicate to the sighted community what it means and doesn't mean to have a visual impairment. To accomplish these goals, we visit schools and organizations for the blind along the way and share with them our project, and we interact with the general public to raise awareness about blindness.



Figure 1 Christi talks to the children at the Corina Lona School for the Blind.

## Visiting Schools & Organizations for the Blind

### Mendoza, Argentina

We started our visit with a group discussion attended by a handful of visually impaired members of the community. The group consisted of two university students, two young professionals and a retired school teacher. We shared with each other personal experiences of life with limited or no vision, and we talked about our project and how important it was to promote *se puede* ("you can do it").



Figure 2 We talk to the students at the Hellen Keller School for the Blind in Mendoza.

Next, we visited the Hellen Keller School for the Blind. We toured the school, shared with the students our ride and talked with a group of parents who have concerns and questions about raising a visually impaired child.

We also visited two organizations in Mendoza. Casa de Discapacitado provides rehabilitation services that include orientation and mobility, independent living and vocation assistance. Uni Redes provides community, education and recreation for young adults (age 18-40) who have visual impairments.

### Salta, Argentina

In Salta, we visited the Corina Lona School for the Blind. We shared our long and challenging journey on the bike with the kids as they sat mesmerized and excited about our numerous adventures. Later, the kids sang and danced for us. One of the school's alumni, now in her fourth year studying to be an English translator at the local university, assisted us as translator.





Figure 3 Two kids dancing at the Corina Lona School.

We were invited to the Universidad Catolica de Salta to talk with the faculty about the importance of providing students with visual impairments the opportunity to succeed in the university environment. We also met with a group of faculty members who were developing methodologies to improve the teaching process for students with various disabilities.

## La Paz, Bolivia

In La Paz, we attended a conference on living with a disability at the Centro de Rehabilitacion Fisica y Educacion Especial. Dr. Ricardo Quiroga (Director) invited us to share our project with the attendees and to promote our message that people like us can be capable with the right opportunities. We then toured

the facility and met with the children who were learning skills to prepare them for the future. We also spoke with parents of visually impaired children and encouraged them to ensure that their child develops the sense of confidence and capability in order to be successful citizens in the community

Tauru visited the Instituto Boliviano de la Ceguera alone because Christi was sick that day. He spoke to a group of adults who were either partially blind or completely blind. They shared with him their experiences of being visually impaired and encouraged him to communicate to the world that they, too, are “normal” people.



Figure 4 Ariel (sighted cyclist) helps two visually impaired members of Instituto Boliviano de la Ceguera ride the tandem.

# Raising Awareness with the General Public

## In the News

The way we get the word out is at times organic. For example, while updating our website in a café in Lujan, a suburb of Mendoza, we talked to the owner about our project. An hour later, we were invited to a ceremony hosted by the mayor of Lujan and a handful of city officials to recognize our efforts

Salta

A+ A A- | Imprimir | Enviar | f | e

**Solidaridad** Llevan un mensaje esperanzador

## Increíble: 2 personas no videntes recorren América en bicicleta

Fuente: FM Pacífico | Martes, 03 de Julio de 2012. 14:43hs.

Adriana Pauna, directora de la Escuela Corina Lona, recibió esta mañana la visita de una pareja de ciclistas no vidente. Se trata de una travesía que llevan a cabo Christiana y Tauro por América. A cada lugar que llega la pareja busca el establecimiento referente a su discapacidad visual para dejarle el único mensaje de que “No hay discapacidad que impida llegar...”. Los aventureros trabajan en un documental.

to promote the abilities of the visually impaired.

At other times, we solicit news agencies to help us share our project. For Stages 1 and 2, we were on Chile's national TV news and Mendoza's and Salta's local TV news in Argentina. We have also been featured in a handful of newspaper articles. Our original project goal of reaching 10,000 people has been surpassed!

### Two Blind to Ride in the News:

Dec 5, '11:	CBS & Fox News (Phoenix, AZ)
Dec 9, '11:	KPHO CBS News (Phoenix, AZ)
Mar 21, '12	KPHO CBS TV News (Phoenix, AZ)
Apr 24, '12:	Adventurer (US)
May 6, '12:	Bio Bio Chile (Rancagua, Chile)
May 9, '12:	El Rancaguino (Rancagua, Chile)
May 11, '12:	Rodadas (Santiago, Chile)
May 13, '12:	Cooperativa (Santiago, Chile)
May 14, '12:	La Cuarta (Santiago, Chile)
May 14, '12:	La Tercera (Santiago, Chile)
May 15, '12:	Channel 13 TV News (Santiago, Chile)
May 16, '12:	KPHO CBS TV News (Phoenix, Arizona)
May 30, '12:	Radio Lujan (Lujan, Argentina)
Jun 1, '12:	El Mercurio newspaper (Santiago, Chile)
Jun 2, '12:	Channel 7 TV News (Mendoza, Argentina)
Jun 25, '12:	Outdoor Magazine (Brazil)
Jul 1, '12:	La Gaceta (Tucuman, Argentina)
Jul 3, '12:	Channel 11 TV News (Salta, Argentina)
Jul 4, '12:	Local newspaper (Salta, Argentina)



Figure 5 La Gaceta in Tucuman interviews us.

## Other Media

We use other methods to spread our word. We continue to utilize social media as a means for getting the word out about our project. Most of our communication occurs via Facebook, where we have 996 Likes (Aug 3, 2012). We also use Twitter to announce updates to our website and YouTube to post videos we make along the way.

Our website continues to be the engine behind our awareness campaign. We make regular updates with stories, photos and videos of our trip progress.



Figure 6 Social Media links on our website.

## The Green Cane in Argentina

In Argentina, there is a distinction made between people who are completely blind and people with low vision. The white cane is used for those who are completely blind while a green



Figure 7 Two partial-sighted men with green canes.

cane is used for those who have limited vision. This is a great idea because, for example, in the United States where there is only the white cane, people get confused when a partial sighted person using a white cane boards a bus and takes out a book and starts reading. In general, people assume those with white canes are completely blind; whereas, in using a green cane, people can know the difference between limited vision and no vision.



# Ride Summary

Stage 2 started in Santiago, Chile and passed over the Andes Mountains to Mendoza, Argentina. We continued northeast through the desert to Salta and then swung back northwesterly and started the ascent to the altiplano of Bolivia at roughly 3800 m (~12,000 ft).



Figure 9 On the Salar de Uyuni on Bolivia's altiplano.

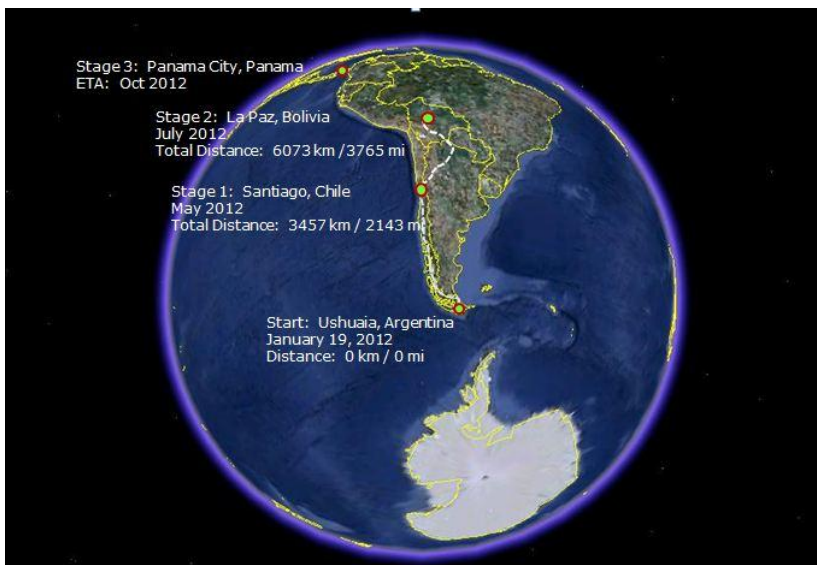


Figure 8 Stages 1, 2 and 3 as seen on Google Earth.

## Ride Statistics

Start: Santiago, Chile (May 21, 2012)  
End: La Paz, Bolivia (Aug 4, 2012)  
Countries: Chile, Argentina & Bolivia  
Duration: ~2 ½ months  
Distance: 2616 km, 1622 miles  
Distance to Date: 6073 km / 3765 mi  
Flats to Date: 9  
Broken Spokes to Date: 4  
Crashes to Date: 5

## Police Escorts

On the Argentinian side of the Andes, we received a police escort arranged by Sean of Welcome

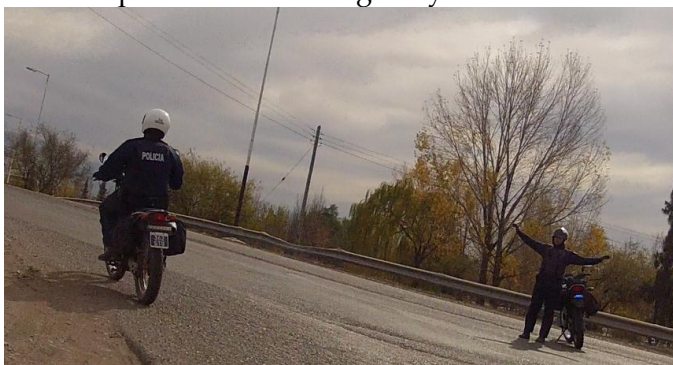


Figure 11 One officer stops traffic while another leads us into Lujan.

Mendoza down to the border. As we approached Lujan near Mendoza, we received another police escort because we knew riding in a city was not possible for us. In addition, when the officials of Mendoza learned that we were visually impaired cyclists, they insisted on providing us with police escorts for approximately 100 km north of the city to ensure our safety.

Two Blind to Ride thanks the folks of Mendoza for the police escorts!

## Back Pains

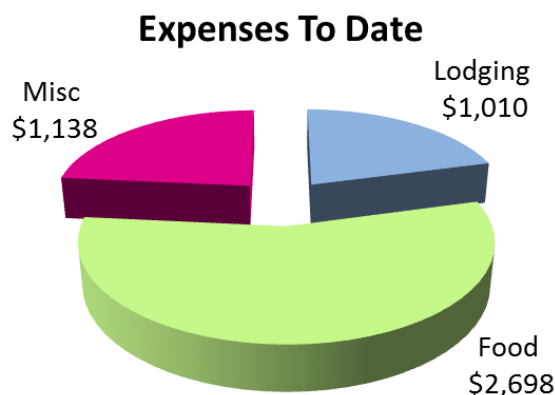
Christi had such severe back pain at the start of Stage 2 that she was not sure whether she could continue the ride or not. After three weeks of rest, we managed to ride 1,000 km before her back acted up again. We ended up in Monteros, 50 km south of Tucuman, for 10 days as Christi rested and received some chiropractic work and physical therapy.



Figure 10 Andrea provides physical therapy work on Christi.

# Expense Summary

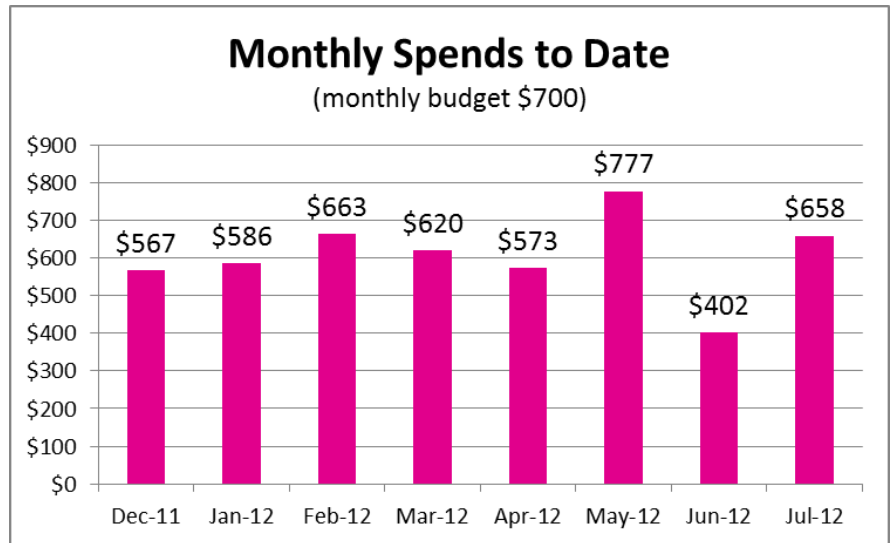
Since the start of our trip in December 2011, we have spent \$4846 for the two of us for food, lodging and miscellaneous. We budget \$700 per month for the both of us. Primarily, by camping most of the time and cooking our own meals in Argentina and Chile, we were able to keep costs low. Since being in Bolivia, we have been eating out for all of our meals because it is more economical. Meals in Bolivia's markets range from \$1 to \$3!



## Stage 2 Spends

For the two and a half months for Stage 2, we managed to stay under our \$700 per month budget. This includes everything from lodging to food to miscellaneous items like toiletries and non-food items.

In addition, other expenses were incurred that are not included in the Monthly Spends chart above. These "Extra-Ordinary" expenses for June and July were ~\$500. They include visas for Bolivia (\$270 for the two of us), replacement of the rear wheel, etc...



The pie chart to the left shows our total spends by category. Clearly the bulk of the expenses is food. This data is from December 10, 2011 to end-July 2012; therefore, it is roughly for 8 months for a total of \$4846. This averages out to ~\$337/mo for food, ~\$126/mo for lodging and ~\$142/mo for miscellaneous for the two of us.

Other expenses do occur, like visas, major bike repairs, etc... For the 8 months in consideration, these expenses have been approximately \$2000 related to this trip.



Figure 12 Christi dines on chicharones in the streets of Uyuni.

# Special Thanks

We want to extend a special thanks to the following people and businesses for supporting our project and for making it possible financially. Their contribution enables us to spread our message that everything is possible throughout both of the Americas and to the rest of the world.

THANK YOU!

## Thanks for your donation!

Scott Parsons  
Chris Chavez  
Garry & Tina Bruchok  
DiAnn Galm  
Bryan Johnson  
Dale Miller  
Raymond Landis  
Renee Defeo  
Dale Mallison  
Laurel Arendt  
Paul Wenz  
Dan Sharp  
Alex Biegel  
Marilyn Geninatti  
Georgina Gallagher  
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Heather Devine  
Doug Pace  
Carly Antus  
Christine Wallis  
Patti Kuluris  
Chris Lawson

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## Thanks to the Local Supporters for Stage 2

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