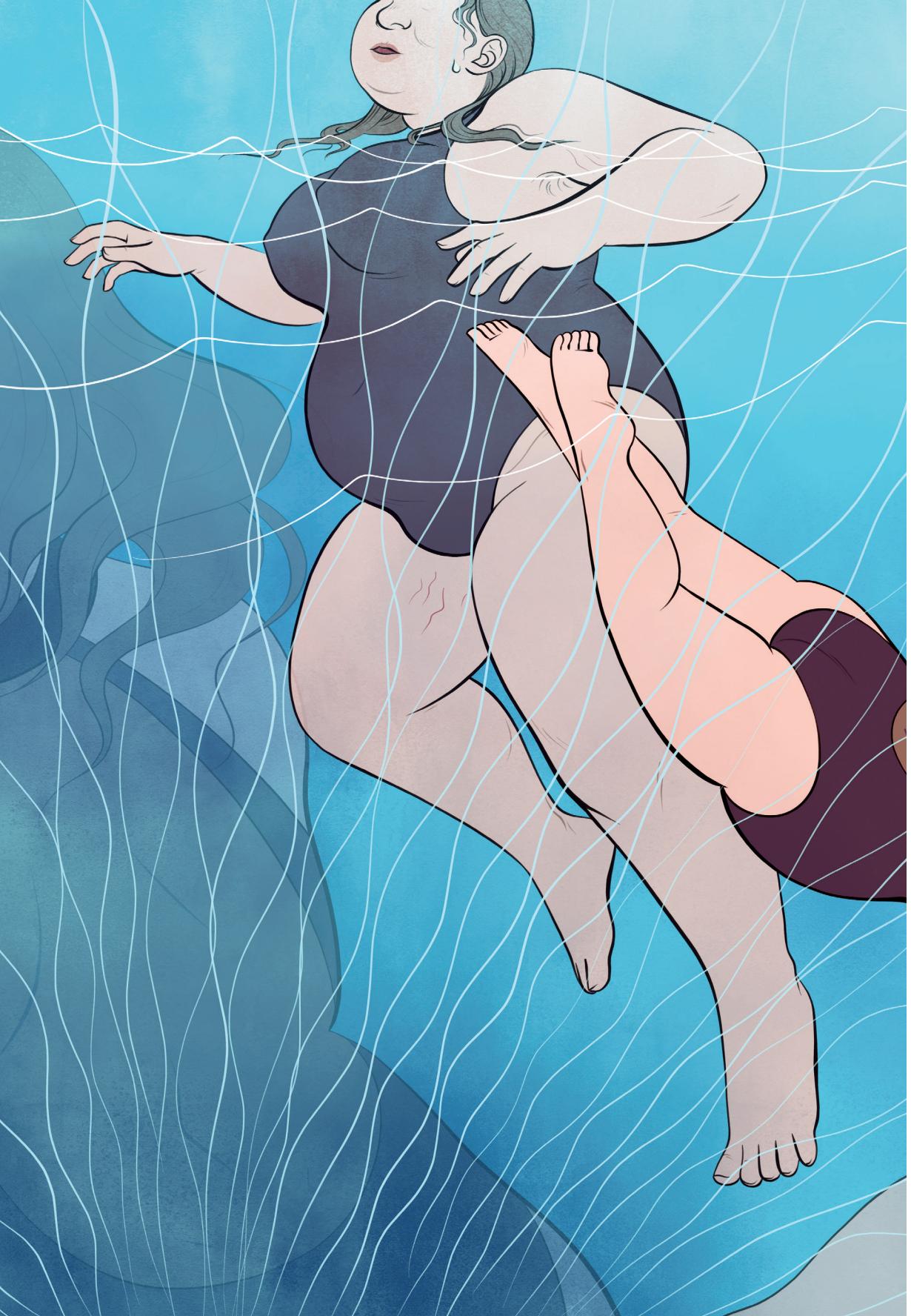
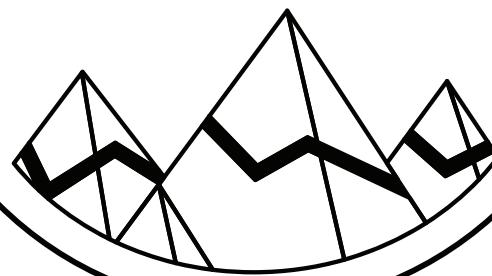


Fatventure MAG





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MAG





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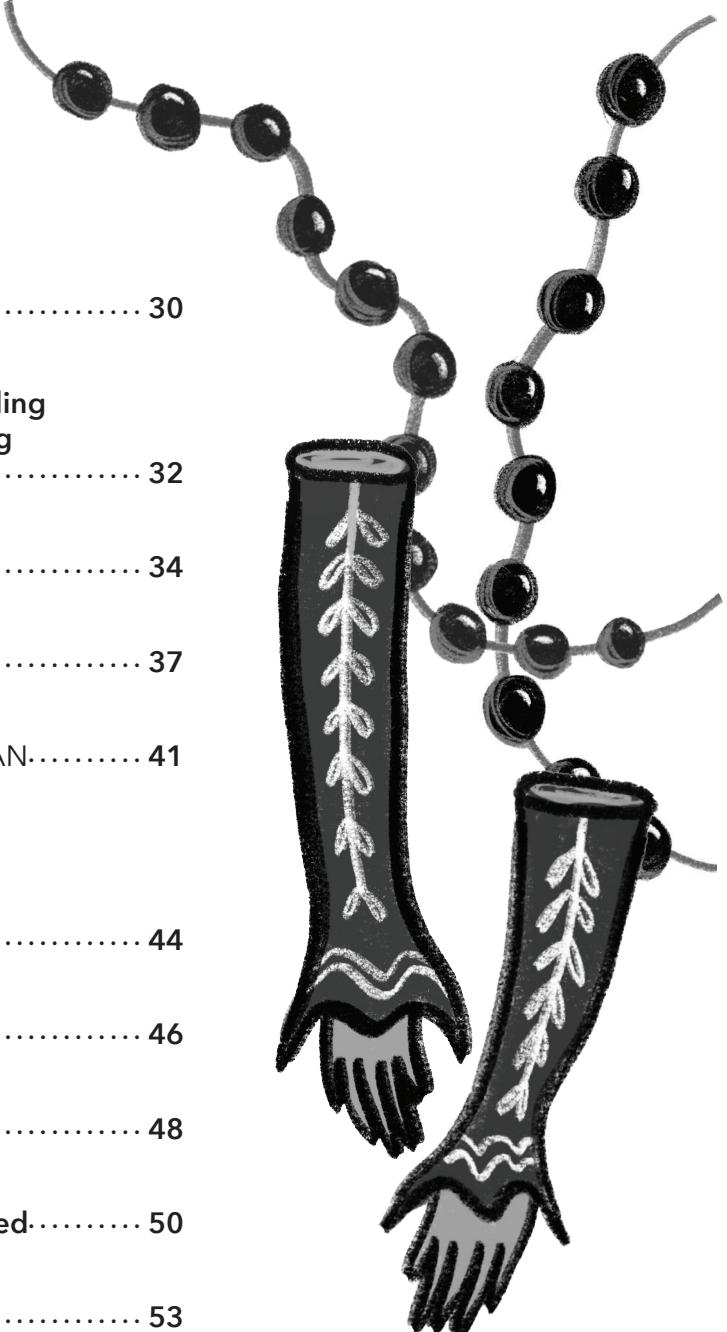
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3 TIPS FOR BEGINNER *Fat Cyclists*



BY ALLEY HECTOR

Bike touring can sound intimidating, especially when all of the images you see of cyclists are skinny and lycra-clad, but it doesn't have to be. This heavy body started on a cheap used bike for commuting and has now done rides on the Oregon Coast, Europe and more. A tour can be 2 days or 3 years, like some friends of mine did when they went from Paris to Cape Town. The most important thing is to have fun, so don't be afraid to take breaks and put your bike on public transportation if you want to make some miles without pedaling.

Here are 3 steps to starting out at any level, for any distance.

1. FIND THE RIGHT BIKE & FIT FOR YOU

Though there are bikes made specifically for touring you can ride almost anything. Make sure you can stand comfortably over the top bar with a few inches to spare. When the pedal is at its lowest your leg should be almost but not completely fully extended. It can be tempting to have a seat low enough to reach the ground but this will make it hard to push effectively and cause pain.

How high you want your handlebars is mostly a matter of preference but make sure you aren't overextending your reach to hang onto them (this mostly about frame size but some adjusting to the stem might help if it's close). I use drop bars a little higher than average as my belly gets in the way. It's worth a little squish to have a better angle though.

Seats are trial and error but don't just go for the widest and cushiest. I've found wide seats to get in the way of my thighs and I leave most of the padding to my shorts. I like the Aero Tech Women's Gel Touring Short because they are made for long rides and have huge mesh pockets when most shorts have none. But fit is most important and these are only available by mail so I would recommend trying some on in the store first, even if you ultimately order online.

2. GET COMFORTABLE AND PRACTICAL CLOTHING AND GEAR

Speaking of padded shorts, they are the most important thing! I used to self-consciously wear them under regular shorts and that's fine for short distances but you really don't want those extra seams, restriction or heat. So let them legs fly free. If you want a bit more coverage mountain biker shorts are looser and less revealing. Lots of people swear by bibs, which are shorts that extend up and have over the shoulder straps. They look kind of like a wrestling singlet and people like them because they eliminate the need for any elastic or cinching at the waist but I've never tried them. Maybe they'll change my life? Everyone needs chamois cream, which goes along any skin that touches your seat to eliminate friction and therefore chafing. It also usually has antibacterial and healing/soothing properties for any distress you do experience. It's just gonna make your bits feel nicer, especially as you get used to lots of seat contact.

ILLUSTRATION BY SONIA HUPFELD

Other technical clothes are less important. Bike jerseys will give you helpful additional pockets and anything that's not cotton is going to be better for sweat. Clipless pedals might help with tough hills but there's a bit of a learning curve. I've gotten my share of gnarly thigh bruises falling slowly sideways unable to unclip. So I use pedals that are flat on one side, clips on the other and shoes that have recessed clips and just look like regular sneakers on the outside. Additional clothing depends on the weather but investing in solidly waterproof garments is well worth it.

What kinds of repair items you might need depend on how far you'll wander from civilization. If you'll be able to reach a bike shop you can get away with very little, besides, you'll have to know how to use it. There are often repair workshops friendly to the LGBTQ community and you can meet people to ride with too. In Portland I like Gladys (I'm on their board) but feminist bike shops are popping up all over.

Unless you're taking a support vehicle you'll need to carry everything you need. Mountain bikers favor the ultralight frame bag, handlebar bag, and seat pack setup but that doesn't feel very newbie friendly to me and leaves zero room for luxury. Most tourers use

panniers either on the front, back or both. I went on quite a long ride with just two back panniers, a small handlebar bag and my tent strapped to the top of the rack. I found that more than sufficient.

For more guidance, my blog *Out & About* has a comprehensive post on clothes and gear.

3. PLAN YOUR ROUTE IN ADVANCE

If the place you want to cycle has established routes follow them! The much traveled Pacific Coast route or the Eurovelo system have official maps, lodging, distances and tips that make it easy and, in the summer months, you will meet lots of international travelers. Campsites sometimes have hiker/biker sites that cars can't use and you don't need to reserve. They're often much cheaper as well, at about \$5.

You can also use a route planning service, such as Ride With GPS and either create your own route or search routes others have created. You can buy or print paper maps. Front bags often have a sleeve where you can put a map and see it from a riding position.

If you've made your route on your own you might think more carefully about where you want to stay. Camping, even wild camping is still possible, check

with local laws. There are also services such as Warm Showers that put you in touch with hosts (usually cyclists themselves) who are happy to have a tourer crash with them for a night. I've had great experiences meeting locals this way and have encountered surprisingly nice accommodations.



