

# Solo bikepacking adventure

From Utrecht to Faro on a Cross Lite

by Philine Hols



Cycling through countless sunflower fields in France, climbing steep hills in Asturias, eating the best octopus in Galicia and surfing great waves in Ericeira. It was an amazing trip of 2,5 months in which I cycled 3830 kilometers in 44 days from Utrecht to Faro.

***“My navigation sent me to very challenging steep or deep sandy roads, making me step off my bike and pushing it.”***

## About me

My name is Philine, a 27-year old cycling enthusiast. In the summer I like to take my road bike for a spin and last summer I've rented a mountain bike to cross around Leersum. The forest, gravel paths and other “forbidden” road cycling roads, gave me a lot of pleasure and made me think about buying a gravel bike, being able doing both. When a friend of mine introduced me to the concept of traveling by bicycle - what I always thought to





be a dull activity for elderly people - I now thought of it as something nice to explore. In combination with the hopeless COVID-19 situation the past time, where I spent a lot of time indoors, I had an enormous craving for being outdoors, adventure and new experiences. This made me decide to buy a Santos Cross Lite, apply for a three month sabbatical from work and plan my first bikepacking trip!

### **Preparation of my first bikepacking trip**

As it was something entirely new for me, I felt the need to read into everything. I looked up various websites, blogs and Instagram accounts, reading peoples experience and travel tips for routes and packing lists. I've experienced that, next to the basic information, not every blog gave tips that worked for me. For example, some people find it very important to bring small camping chairs and many spare parts for the bike. I rather sit on the ground and in case I'd need a new outer tire I will try to buy this somewhere on the road. But I do make other decisions that doesn't make sense for them. Like choosing to cycle with SPD pedals, making me bring an extra pair of shoes, and a pocket knife with a wine opener (get your priorities straight..). So I find it very personal and it helped me to first identify if the person had a same cycling/travelling style as I thought I would have, for it had value for me. With the gathered information I invested in my own tent and lightweight camping gear, next to other items for my bike and clothing. To see if it would all fit on my bike, I went on a weekend trip in The Netherlands to test my gear and my bike.





### Planning my route from The Netherlands to Portugal

In the beginning I struggled with the right search criteria to find nice cycling routes. I learned that I needed to combine different existing routes, as a basis for building my own journey. Searching on the internet I found the "Camino de Santiago" & "St. Jacobs" routes with GPX files to transfer to my Garmin. In first instance I didn't want to bring my Garmin (because of the weight and something extra to charge), but I'm very happy that I did, as it's easy to follow the route on and my phone battery would last longer during the day.

***“ I really loved the sense of freedom, living in the moment***

I travelled with around 15 kilograms of luggage, for some people this is light, for some it's heavy. For me it was heavy enough to decide to skip the Pyrenees, going directly to San Sebastian instead. After a culinary rest day in this very nice Basque city, I picked up the "Camino del Norte", one of the camino routes leading to Santiago de Compostela via the north of Spain. A beautiful, hilly (and some days wet) route along the Costa Verde, which I believe is less touristy than the popular "Camino Frances", the more inland route. I surprised myself that till Santiago de Compostela I cycled on average 100 kilometers per day, already arriving at the cathedral at day 25. From there I cycled part of the "Camino Portuguese Coastal" route to Porto, where I stayed a few days enjoying the beautiful city, the Portuguese food and the port wines.



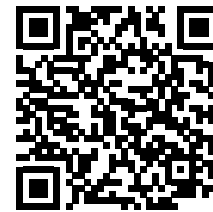
The rest of Portugal I navigated myself with the help of the "Komoot" application on my phone. I prefer to use this app over Google Maps (which doesn't even have the bike functionality in Portugal), but both have sent me a few times to very challenging steep or deep sandy roads, making me step off my bike and pushing it, or making me go back to find a detour. Of course there were situations that I was wondering; why am I doing this again? Like being on a never ending steep, rocky road, climbing up with 5 km/h, in the burning sun, surrounded with flies on my face. Or when I had a flat rear tire, fixed it myself, tried to pump it with my mini hand pump, but then accidentally damaged the valve, making me go find a bike shop after all. But often the hardest tracks also have the most beautiful views/surroundings and the struggles are making the highlights even better. My tip is just to use your common sense while cycling with the navigation apps, making an educated guess before entering a (fun) adventurous path.

### Freedom, cycling & surfing

My goal was to cycle to my happy place Ericeira, somewhat north of Lisbon, where my friends were going to meet me. This is a very nice, little surf town where I took a break from the cycling, to carry out my other hobby; wave surfing. According to my initial planning, I was supposed to stay there for a week, but I enjoyed it so much that I stayed three weeks in total. I really loved this sense of freedom, being able to do what I felt like in the moment. What I also loved was the cycling, so I decided to cycle some more via the coast to Faro, the final stop of my trip. Arriving there I didn't had the time to cycle back home anymore, this also wasn't my plan from the beginning, so I put my bike in a carton box and flew it back home.

Next to the freedom I felt, I really enjoyed cycling from A to B, instead of cycling the same loops many times back home. In this way every day was an adventure, not knowing what the route was going to bring, exploring new surroundings, seeing beautiful landscapes and the chance of meeting new people along the way. Although there are always many reasons not to do something, I'm so glad that I went ahead with my plans and can definitely recommend you going on your own (solo) trip!

Bekijk de Santos Cross lite op onze website



Neem contact op met Santos Bikes



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