

March 98 Odyssey 2000[®] Rider Memo

Date: March 31, 1998
To: Odyssey 2000[®] Registered Riders
From: Tim Kneeland & Associates, Inc.
Re: Update on Odyssey 2000[®]

Time's evaporating

So far 1998 has flown by rapidly and time seems to be speeding up exponentially every month. It must have something to do with Odyssey being just 21 months away and that many decisions about routing, transportation, food, sanitation, country liaisons, etc. are still being made.

As promised

Here is the first Rider Memo for 1998. We wish we had time to write more but it simply isn't possible at this time. Hopefully, you'll find this information useful, useable, enjoyable and capable of keeping your excitement level piqued.

Since we are getting a better handle on who will actually be participating on Odyssey, this memo will be pretty extensive and address several of the questions we have received.

TK&A's Odyssey 2000[®] concept

TK&A has worked hard to create and design a yearlong, 6 continent, 50 country, 34 staff, several vehicle, around-the-world bicycle tour for 250 adventurers. We have always worked toward the goal of making it easy for Odyssey participants to simply get on their bikes and pedal to the next night's destination with as little hassle as possible. Though still evolving, we are designing support systems with an eye to helping you enjoy the routes, the people you will meet and the adventures you will have each and every day of the trip.

To help reach these goals and to ease the challenges of international travel in foreign countries, early on TK&A decided to provide the following during Odyssey: route planning, Daily Route Guides (DRGs), transportation from country to country, overnight facilities (40% beds/60% camping), dinners, breakfasts, gear hauling, sanitation facilities and potable water at camp. We also chose to provide a standardized Odyssey bike to minimize "van riding time" waiting for parts to be shipped halfway around the world.

We also understand everyone's need for personal time and "space" while traveling as a member of a large community for 366 days. In this spirit, each participant is free to come and go as he or she chooses during Odyssey. However, if you do go "off route" for a few hours, a few days, a week, a month or even longer, all we ask is that you let us know before you take off. We will gladly hold your slot until you catch up with us again. Participants are responsible for their own expenses while off-route.

From time to time folks ask us about providing different (often more) services. We have received comments around several issues: more Memos, more hotel nights, private rooms (when possible, TK&A figures 3 beds in a hotel room) adding more countries to the itinerary, more miles per day, fewer miles per day, "door to door" baggage handling, providing laundry service, putting up people's tents, battery charging services, phones, computer use, currency exchange, postal services, carrying extra gear such as personal computers, loaning our vehicles to riders, offering shuttles to recreational services, providing email, access to the web, free Olympic Games tickets, etc. You can see how it goes.

Even though we would love to provide any level of service people might request, we simply don't have the money, time or resources. We have always figured if we do it for one, we should extend the same offer to everyone. We also are quite confident everyone participating in Odyssey is resourceful and creative enough to locate and utilize local services to get the job done.

On the other hand, TK&A will often provide quite a bit of information about local laundry facilities, access to food, car rental places, access to local phones, and other resources available in overnight communities. Much more info here as we get closer to 1/1/2000.

The current Odyssey numbers

As you know, we have over registered literally dozens of people to account for the expected attrition between now and 2000. Here are the current stats:

1. We have registered a total of 528 people for Odyssey.
2. Last August we closed the USA and Canadian registrations at the 375-registration level. We figured 375 would give us enough of a buffer to account for the expected attrition.
3. Between August, 97 and the end of February, 98 (after the completion of January's payment cycle), our numbers dropped to 277 people. Needless to say, a 56% total attrition rate for Odyssey is even a little greater than TK&A expected. But, life is complicated and circumstances are bound to change for many of us, especially when planning several years down the road.
4. In early March, we invited the 37 "wait list" people to register for Odyssey.
5. As of March 29, eight have taken advantage of the opportunity and have signed on.
6. We currently have a solid 285 registered for Odyssey.
7. Each of the 285 folks has paid a minimum of \$6000 to reserve their spot on Odyssey.
8. The demographics of our group remain pretty much the same as always.

Now comes the big question for TK&A, how much attrition can we still expect between now and Jan. 31, 1999? This is a very critical issue for us. As mentioned in past Memos, the last place TK&A should invest its energy in 1999 is recruiting additional riders to get us back to the 250 mark.

Since next January is the final (and rather hefty) payment, and life is anything but simple, we expect to still lose some of you. Therefore, we are again opening Odyssey to US and Canadian registrations until we reach 315 paid registrants. Foreign riders are, of course, still welcome to register.

Not sure about next year?

If you have any doubts about your ability or willingness to make next year's payment and/or participate in Odyssey, please let us know ASAP. By telling us now, we will be able to make more accurate estimates of what might happen next year. Even though you alert us to a potential problem, your spot is still secure until you formally drop or miss your 1999 payment. Any insight will be greatly appreciated.

Final payment

I blew it in the last newsletter and scared a number of folks. I inadvertently over-stated your final payment by \$6000. Sorry. Here is a chart for determining your final payment:

| <u>Reg. yr.</u> | <u>O2 org. cost</u> | <u>Your disc.</u> | <u>Your total cost</u> | <u>Yearly Payment</u> | <u>Final Payment</u> |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1993 | \$36,000 | \$7,000 | \$29,000 | \$1,100 | \$23,000 |
| 1994 | 36,000 | 6,000 | 30,000 | 1,375 | 24,000 |
| 1995 | 36,000 | 5,000 | 31,000 | 1,833 | 25,000 |
| 1996 | 36,000 | 4,000 | 32,000 | 2,750 | 26,000 |
| 1997 | 36,000 | 3,000 | 33,000 | 5,500 | 27,000 |
| 1998 | 36,000 | 2,000 | 34,000 | 6,000 | 28,000 |
| 1999 | 36,000 | 0 | 36,000 | 0 | 36,000 |

Receipts

If you need a receipt for any of your past payments, please let us know and we will send a copy of your check with our date stamp or other markings to prove we received your payment. However, unless we have made a math error, each person receiving this newsletter has paid TK&A at least \$6000. Questions about your account? Give us a call.

Fuel surcharge

If you review the information sheet or the Odyssey brochure you received when you first inquired about Odyssey, you will note that under the "cost" section, we stated that "These fees are subject to adjustment if transportation and fuel expenses increase beyond reasonable inflation levels." We are happy to note that this doesn't appear to be an issue, and hopefully, fuel prices will remain relatively low.

Odyssey contract

Over the years several riders have asked if we are planning to supply a formal Odyssey 2000[®] contract. Even though we don't like too much legal formality, we are in the process of preparing a simple contract. It will list what we have already promised to deliver and what is expected of an Odyssey rider (riding protocol, conduct, etc.) No surprises!

In all of our work with legal counsel and others involved in Odyssey planning, TK&A has stressed that we never want to surprise anyone by changing the basic rules as Odyssey evolves. Karen-Ann and I pride ourselves in that what we promised in 1993 still stands today.

TK&A's right to refuse participation in Odyssey

Just as you are choosing to participate in Odyssey, TK&A reserves the right to refuse participation by anyone whom, in our opinion, might be detrimental to the health, welfare or successful implementation of Odyssey 2000[®]. We can't think of too many reasons why we wouldn't let a person participate, but some folks are extra creative. We feel we have a responsibility to the group and our own sanity to avoid high maintenance and/or thoughtless and/or obnoxious people.

Getting questions answered

Whenever possible, we invite you to pick up the phone and call our Seattle office at 1-800-433-0528 for answers to your questions. Email is great for quick stuff, but the longer, more complex issues are often better discussed on the phone for interaction and clarity. Please remember that some questions can only be answered by Karen-Ann or me, so please be patient when we are traveling.

Questions pool

Feel free to email, write or call with any questions we might answer in an upcoming newsletter. Several folks have done this already. We'll keep track of the questions and address them when we have the answers.

Please keep in mind that until we finish our initial explorations by the end 1998, we won't be able to offer specific information about travel dates, miles, facilities, local resources, etc.

Itinerary enclosed

Checkout the latest Odyssey 2000[®] Itinerary. It reflects TK&A's current thoughts on where we are going to be when. Still subject to change, of course.

Trip cancellation and health insurance

Complex and complicated issues. Since 1994, TK&A has discussed both "individual trip cancellation" and "health" insurance with several agents and companies. Now that Odyssey is on the horizon, insurance companies are in a better position to offer solutions to our unique insurance needs.

Dan McKay, TK&A's bicycle friendly and resourceful insurance agent, has been writing special event coverage for many years. Dan's experience has made it possible for underwriters to get a handle on the concept of Odyssey. Here are the products Dan recommends:

Trip Cancellation/Interruption Insurance. Review Dan's letter and Carefree Travel's brochure outlining the benefits, costs and limitations of this type of insurance. For \$825 (\$55 per thousand), you can receive up to \$15,000 of coverage. From our limited knowledge, this appears to be an excellent, inexpensive policy, underwritten by a well-respected company. As with any discretionary purchase, please read the enclosed material carefully. If you are interested, please contact Dan directly at 1-800-942-0283.

Accident & Sickness Medical Expense Insurance. This is a biggie and is an absolute necessity for participation on Odyssey. TK&A has been told (on several occasions) that a yearlong health insurance policy with worldwide coverage would cost about \$2000. Well, Dan did it again. He approached Lloyd's of London and they have agreed to the enclosed proposal. Please review Dan's letter carefully and call him with any questions. Also feel free to discuss this plan (and other options) with your own insurance agent.

The price will be less than \$500 per person for the entire year and, according to Dan, includes medical evacuation coverage. Each rider must complete a health profile and pay TK&A directly, probably in early 1999. TK&A will then write one check to Lloyd's for the entire policy.

In order for us to offer the insurance policy at such a low rate, Lloyd's is requiring nearly 100% participation of Odyssey's **approximately** 285 riders and staff. To lock in our rates, TK&A must secure the policy within the next 30 days. TK&A is willing to front the required initial deposit as long as 99% of Odyssey riders are interested in participating.

So.....if you don't think you will buy the policy next year, please call, email or write us before April 20, 1998. If a dozen decide against it, we probably won't be able to offer it.

Bike update

Nothing to report, except that we are as concerned about fit and functionality as you might be. We are receiving lots of good information and ideas as our research continues. See next issue.

Rose Bowl Parade (actually the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade)

On February 13, 1998 we received a telephone call from the management of the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade inviting us to be an official part of the parade on 1/1/2000. Even though we have not negotiated the particulars, we will be involved in the parade. We still don't know about 1/1/2001 yet, so stay tuned.

Pasadena is packed and expensive this time of year, so we will likely stay in a different, less hectic, LA suburb.

Odyssey2000.com

We have purchased Odyssey2000.com for use as Odyssey draws near and while on the road. We expect to do a lot with this web address, including posting future Odyssey Memos, so watch for details.

Odyssey Memos from the road

TK&A just picked up a Kodak Digital Camera to accompany our travels. Perhaps the June, 1998 Newsletter will actually come from the road via email (we will mail to those who don't have email, of course). And as our Odyssey travels and **Odyssey** Memo schedule increases, email **Odyssey** Memos might be a neat way to track our travels. Stay tuned for details.

Please email your email address to TK&A (timtka@aol.com) in the near future if you are interested in this approach. Don't have email? Please consider getting it before 1999. You won't be sorry.

Visas

We had several questions and comments about obtaining visas after the last Memo. Until we finalize the route, don't put too much concern into this area. We will attempt to work with countries to make it easier for Odyssey riders to get visas, but it's too early to begin the process. Some Nation's Visa "timing" requirements may necessitate a group visit to their local Consulate while in another Odyssey country.

Odyssey baggage

Please review your rider handbook for details. Each Odyssey participant will be allowed a space a little larger than an Army duffel bag and up to about 60 pounds of weight. Though this area might appear small, you really don't need to bring a lot of stuff, even for a year of travel.

How TK&A is designing the route

Karen-Ann and I have been reconnoitering routes in various countries since 1995. So far we've visited New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, Southern California, the Blue Ridge Parkway and other east coast areas, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, England, Wales, Scotland, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, France, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Italy, Rome, Greece, South Africa, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. These visits have been extremely productive and have resulted in great potential routes.

Before (and as) we explore a potential route, we try to determine what cycling activity is already going on in each country. We also look for other helpful resources and attempt to arrange meetings with cycling folks, government agencies and potential logistic wizards. We have already built up a very extensive set of maps, atlases, thick commercial guides written for the adventuring traveler, cycling books (we probably have most of the bicycling books recently printed for the areas we plan to explore) and other relevant information. Our research and maps, coupled with our time constraints and the need to take a relatively direct route on lesser traveled roads, gives us a feel for what we are going to checkout when we arrive in a country.

When we finally get there, we collect all the relevant information we can lay our hands on-detailed maps, cycling info, campground and hotel directories, caterers, tourist bureaus, etc. Then, as we travel, we use our Mac PowerBook 3400c running Microsoft Excel to capture every left and right turn, set of tracks, city entrance (when we understand the language-Thailand and China were tough), and nearly every service station, store, restaurant, bathroom and point of interest along the potential route.

Reduction in flights

As the new itinerary suggests, we have eliminated several of the original air flights. Some are replaced with ferries and others are due to new routing ideas, i.e. China and Vietnam. This move is expected to help us maximize the use of our vehicles in each geographic region of the world and ease the travel burdens of air flight.

Some of TK&A's favorite sources of information

We have found excellent material on the web, at map stores, large bookstores (especially at universities), Adventure Cycling Association's "The Cyclists' Yellow Pages" (call them at 1-800-755-2453 for info on membership, maps, trips, products, etc.) and via the very complete Adventure Traveler Bookstore in Vermont (1-800-282-3963 or www.adventuroustraveler.com-tell them you're riding Odyssey). Another helpful source has come directly from Odyssey riders. If you have anything you think might be helpful in our planning, please let us know.

What's left to explore?

Our goal is to visit every Odyssey country by the end of 1998. To this end, Karen-Ann and I have three trips planned before December. The first occurs immediately after the Southern Cross and explores a possible USA route from Atlanta to Niagara Falls. From here we cross the frontier into Canada and design a route along the north shore of Lake Ontario, then up the St Lawrence Seaway to Quebec's beautiful Quebec City. Some of the Canadian route is already documented from the Sony Cycle Classic, a ride from Halifax to Toronto we designed and produced for a Canadian charity in 1991.

Our second trip begins in early July and includes Japan, China (Beijing to Shanghai), Italy, Rome, Monaco, Spain, France, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Germany, Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, and Denmark.

In October, we begin our longest trip of the year which will complete the initial exploration of Odyssey countries. We plan to start with Mexico (Baja), Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Chile, Argentina (Patagonia), South Africa (additions to route), Tanzania, Kenya, Israel and Egypt.

The route finalization phase

Considering the world's potential for political change, El Nino's ability to complicate normal weather patterns, and other, yet to be discovered circumstances, Odyssey 2000®'s "final" route will likely evolve even after we leave Los Angeles on 1/1/2000.

However, by early December, we will have most of the information necessary to begin assembling our giant Odyssey "logistics puzzle". Once we determine the actual countries (we expect they will be relatively close to the enclosed itinerary) everything else will start falling into place. We can then allocate the number of miles and days spent in each country, select probable routes through each area, and begin initiating serious negotiations with hotels, campsites, food suppliers, facilitators, transportation services, governments, and other potential Odyssey resources.

TK&A will spend most of 1999 working the logistics of food, water, accommodations, showers, toilets, baggage handling, transportation issues, communications, vehicles, staff, and a billion other details.

Odyssey2000.com will be up and running then and will likely be the main vehicle for communicating our ongoing decisions. Stay tuned....

Troubled countries

Since announcing Odyssey in late 1993, we have watched the world's complicated political climate evolve, sometimes in a not so positive direction for Odyssey 2000®. Of special concern are Kenya and Tanzania, Egypt and Israel, Northern Ireland and Guatemala. Though we haven't yet eliminated these countries from the enclosed itinerary, we are exploring alternate routes. Extending our route along South Africa's coastline and including some time in their famous National Park areas seem like promising alternatives. It'd also be a blast to add Cuba to Odyssey's itinerary.

Recent checkout trip

We are back! We had a great, though tiring trip. The world is full of beauty, challenge and politics and we experienced much of it. Here is a short summary and the results of our experience.

South America

In late November we flew to Argentina to begin the process of exploring a 2300-mile route from Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro. Since rental vehicles can't be taken across many developing countries' borders, we decided to hire a driver and vehicle for the weeklong trip. As with all of our travels, we documented every route and turn taken.

Many parts of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil are extremely beautiful and would be excellent for cycling. However, a number of the drivers we encountered subscribe to an entirely different road standard than most of us are accustomed too. Passing protocols, speed, swerving and other common practices would tend to make the trip unpleasant, or even dangerous, for most of us. So, even after a few hundred miles into our trip, we determined this section of the route wouldn't work for Odyssey.

What's the South American alternative?

This November we plan to check out a route from Santiago, Chile south to Osorno into the heart of the Patagonia region of South America. The route will cross the Andes (over a relatively low pass) and enter the famous lake country of San Carlos de Bariloche in the "Swiss Alps" region of Argentina.

South Africa

South Africa is a wonderful country to visit and has the potential of offering much more than we explored. When we arrived in Cape Town (a modern city in a gorgeous setting), we instantly felt at home. After meeting with a potential Odyssey rider, we drove around their gorgeous cape and then turned east to follow the coast to East London. Rumor has it many government officials spend as much time as possible in this extremely popular part of Africa.

South Africa, of course, is still climbing out of the terrible remnants of apartheid, though very little was visible during our travels. Everyone we met was extremely friendly and very polite.

Greece

We flew into Athens, one of the oldest and most historic cities in Europe. Along with its incredible history and ruins, it has the largest collection of careless motorcyclists in the world. From Athens, we designed a beautiful coastal route around the hilly Peloponnese, the southern portion of Greece. We visited Sparta and Olympia, home of the first Olympic Games. The route is quite demanding, but rewards cyclists with some incredible “earned” views. It was quite cold and even snowed on our way over the mountains.

Reading Greek street signs and directions sheds insight into the origin of the saying, “it’s all Greek to me.”

Italy

Talk about history! We flew into Rome and drove south to Brindisi, a major port of entry from Greece, located on the Adriatic Sea at the upper end of the “heel” of the “boot”. From Brindisi, we drove south, circled the “heel”, and selected a more or less direct route towards Napoli. Italy is a very beautiful country with villages clinging to the very tops of steep mountains. Though the terrain will often be challenging, the rewards of travel through Italy’s villages, cities and historic sights will build cherished memories for everyone on Odyssey.

Thailand

After a relaxed Christmas in Australia, we flew to Bangkok to begin our Southeast Asian leg of our tour. We had a super first day exploring Bangkok with 2 Odyssey riders who live and work in Thailand. The next day we rented a car and headed south. However, before we had even traveled 1 kilometer, a cop (they often wear masks because of the heavy pollution in Bangkok) stopped us for a supposed “traffic” violation and wanted us to settle up on the spot. After a little negotiating, we handed the policeman a few Thai Baht and drove away. Needless to say, the experience left us with a soared taste.

We feel Bangkok is too hectic and polluted to design a satisfactory cycling route. So, during Odyssey, we will probably take a train to Hua Hin, a resort area 200 kilometers south of Bangkok. From here we explored a route along the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula, crossing over to the west coast somewhere north of Phuket, one of Thailand’s most famous resort communities. From here, we will return to the West Coast of Thailand before entering Malaysia on the Gulf of Thailand.

Once again, we were not able to take our Avis car across the frontier (border). Avis graciously agreed to take us to the Malaysia border. Then we took a cab to Alor Setar to pick up another rental car. As you approach Malaysia, Buddhism changes to Muslim. Though there are lots of services in Thailand, the signs are in Thai and impossible to read or understand.

Overall, Thailand has plenty of resources and is filled with very friendly folks. The route we are exploring should be exciting and covers much of this beautiful country.

Malaysia

After picking up another Avis car in Alor Setar on the West Coast of Malaysia, we drove for several hours over the mountains to begin our trip down the entire East Coast. We met some really great people and think Malaysia will be an excellent place to cycle. Though the country still faces censorship, the people are super and plenty of inexpensive facilities exist for hotels and camping.

As a general comment, we will probably hotel most nights in Asia. Camping has not yet become a big part of their culture.

Singapore

Great, busy and modern. We discovered a ferry from the southern tip of Malaysia that cuts out most of the hectic traffic one expects in Singapore.. Please remember not to spit, litter or become too boisterous while visiting this very strict nation.

Vietnam

Next, Vietnam. What a gorgeous country, filled with friendly, smiling and animated people. Vietnam will certainly present some major challenges, even for the most flexible. Loud honking (used to warn pedestrians, cyclists and animals as vehicles approach) is common - bring a left earplug. You will be sharing the road with hundreds of bikes, walkers, carts, scooters, old trucks, buses, mini-buses, a few cars, cows, ducks, caribou, and cattle carts.

Vietnam has plenty of services with lots of places to eat. Soft drinks, beer and bottled water are everywhere. And, when checking into a hotel, you will be asked to surrender your passport to hotel management so they can take it to the local police to register your whereabouts.

We were fortunate enough to see the completion of World Team Sports Vietnam Challenge. Eighty disabled and able-bodied cyclists pedaled from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City. It was very inspirational and received quite a bit of international press.

Hong Kong

Met some friends in Hong Kong and then decided to check out the limestone karst formations west of Canton. I first saw them in a slide show at Walt Disney World's Epcot Center many years ago and thought it would be a great place to explore.

Hong Kong is a super place to explore but has little cycling appeal. From Hong Kong it's possible to take ferries quite a distance into the heart of China via the famous Pearl River.

Macau

Just passed through this Portuguese Territory (will revert to China in 1999) on our way into China. It was a very long walk from the Macau border to the Chinese border crossing.

China

After leaving Macau, we arrived at the China border near Xiangzhou. From here we passed through Guangzhou (Canton), Foshan, Zhaoqing, Wuzhou, Yangshuo (a neat little town), Guilin, Liuzhou, Nanning, Chengzhong and then to the Vietnam Border. The return trip was more direct and included a ferry ride that cut about hundred driving miles off our return to Hong Kong.

Overall, we had quite a trip. And a cold one at that. Parts of China are extremely beautiful, especially in the limestone karst region near Guilin. China is full of surprises and not what we really expected. It is far more developed than anticipated and construction continues to change the face of China every single day. China actually has some relatively excellent roads, many with a detached bike paths in major cities. Driving is on the right side of the road in China.

China's enormous population seems to utilize every bit of available land. If it's not a rice paddy or small crop farm, then it must be a hill. Mining their red clay hillsides to make bricks for buildings is a very common practice. Much of China is deforested or has been leveled for agriculture. Even the majestic karsts are in danger of being altered.

The water quality is so poor, that even the Chinese treat (mostly boiling) their water before drinking it. Not to worry though, plenty of pure bottled water is readily available. There are plenty of towns with full services but a decent public rest room is hard to find outside a major hotel.

In Mao's time (in 1966 he launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution), China changed a lot. Sad to say, but much of China's history and culture has been completely obliterated. It's disheartening to see how oppressed (even though we met some great people) the Chinese are even today.

Karen-Ann just finished reading a book called Life and Death in Shanghai by Nien Cheng. It's an account of her time during the Mao years and the great injustice the Chinese people faced. The book is very, very enlightening.

For many reasons, China is a must see for all of us.

Japan

We only spent a few hours in this wonderful country and will be returning in July to explore a route from Tokyo south.

Hawaii

What can we say. This leg will be awesome!

Odyssey publicity

In addition to a number of newspaper articles checkout the January issue of Playboy, the 1998 World Almanac and the 1998 Wall Street Journal Almanac. Odyssey is mentioned in all three.

Keep training

Odyssey will be here before you know it. Keep getting in those butt miles! And good luck to each and everyone on you.