



# The Americas—

**My parents, Stella and Mario, are Argentinean, as is most of my family. I was born and raised in Barcelona, so I always felt distant from those roots. When I was younger, I visited family in Argentina but never really explored the country. In fact, Central and South America had always been completely unknown to me, and, sadly, so were my parents' Latin American cultural roots.**

**In planning for our trip, I was yearning to explore more of that part of my heritage. Because there is an entire connected landmass between Brooklyn, where I live, and the southern tip of South America, Ushuaia, it became obvious how I could explore that heritage.**

Planning an exact route was pointless. We'd spend too much time looking at a map of roads before we knew anything about the particular areas we'd be riding through. We didn't want to make wildly uninformed decisions ahead of time, so we simplified our plan. We asked friends and fellow travelers to recommend a few must-see spots—a village, a national park, a road, a beach—and then we marked them as stars in our Google Maps. Before we knew it, we had stars lighting up our entire map. We knew we wouldn't go to every corner of every country, but this gave us a few options when destiny steered us in the wrong directions—a closed road, a landslide, a flood. It's important to be spontaneous and provide some space for improvisation on a trip like this, so it's nice to have plenty of options.

Most of the information we gathered from friends came in the form of horror stories about the dangers of each country, but those stories often came from people who had never made the trip themselves by motorcycle. Our most valuable information came from people like Jeremy Ashkenas, who had already taken a very similar trip, and who lived in Brooklyn. As I excitedly zoomed in and out on a rough version of our route on Google Maps, pointing at the space between each star, Jeremy waited patiently for me to finish, then said, "Everything will take longer than you think." We learned later that looking at a tiny map and doing the actual mileage are two completely different things. He was spot on, and we took his advice with us all the way to Ushuaia.

The true character of a country lives in its people and in its native culture. To understand the nature of each place we'd ride through, we would have to expose ourselves to the native culture and unspoiled landscapes that exist outside the fast-paced cities. So, we planned to ride mostly on secondary roads in order to venture out into more isolated areas. These are roads that working men and women use each day to move through their land.

I know now that, if you're doing it right, you can never have complete control over your final route. The final route is built from a mix of dream places, coincidences, guesses, whims, intuition and improvisation. All you have to do is follow the stars.