**[KW West Vlaanderen](https://kw.be/weekend/zwitserse-zielsverwant/article-opinion-428705.html?cookie_check=1590149546" \o "https://kw.be/weekend/zwitserse-zielsverwant/article-opinion-428705.html?cookie_check=1590149546" \t "_blank)**

**(English translation by d-t-b)**

A soul mate. Understanding each other without words. We're all looking for it, but most of the time you'll find that person when you're not looking. That magic came to me when a yellow dot appeared somewhere in the heart of the North Island. Not much later a recumbent cyclist rode towards me. Behind his bicycle he dragged a solar panel along with him. After an enthusiastic first acquaintance, I learned that the driver of the special vehicle was a Swiss. He looked a bit like Forrest Gump.

A long brown-grey beard with braids hanging from his tawny face. That beard symbolized the duration of his trip: four years in the meantime he was on the road. For the second time in a short time, mindful of the Frenchman on his scooter, my cycling trip pale in comparison to listening to such a tour de force. I estimated we were about the same age, but David turned out to be forty-nine anyway. I can still understand that young men embark on such an adventure, but why in God's name did someone of forty-nine do something like that? Hesitantly David told me that he had been diagnosed with a disease that turned out to be incurable. He left neither wife nor children behind and had given up hope of finding the love of his life. He had jumped on his bicycle and left to make a journey through some forty countries: through the former Eastern Bloc, Iran, ~~India~~, in the direction of Australia and New Zealand.

  **My cycling trip paled when I heard of such a tour de force**.

Because I often get the question, I now asked someone who had been on the road for four years: "What did this four-year journey teach you?". "That the world is a better place than they sometimes make appear on the news," he summed up briefly. I agreed. "Actually, I want to encourage people to try and make their dreams come true. If it doesn't work, try it again. If you can't do it again, try something else." He said it with such conviction that I could do very little about it. I then put in another theme. "Why solar panels?" "They also have a practical function. You don't just ride up a mountain with a recumbent. Sometimes I call in the help of a small motor. But the solar panels also had to do with his climate message. "I've seen so much beautiful nature, but also so much nature that man destroyed. The end of the world sometimes seems closer than we think."

"How long do you want to be on the road?" I asked in conclusion. "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans," he said with a mischievous look. "Life can't be drawn, we'll see."

With an intense embrace I said goodbye to this brave man. I looked at him for a while. Slavingly he smashed his ingenious recumbent bike against the wind to the next destination. Though I'm pretty sure he detests arriving. He prefers to be on his way. I fully understand him.

Wouter Deboot