

Alfred University alumna completes grueling Transcontinental Race, pedaling across Europe

10/27/17



Melissa Pritchard '01 during the 2017 Transcontinental Race

Melissa Pritchard '01 completed what is called the “toughest, self-supported” bike race across Europe this summer.

And she didn't just complete it she placed first among all women competitors and 28th overall in a field of 130 who actually crossed the finish. Less than half of the 280 bikers who started the 2,600-mile endurance event finished, and only 80, Melissa included, completed the race in the allotted 15 days.

The fifth edition of the Transcontinental Race began in Geraardsbergen, Belgium, on July 28, and ended in Meteora, Greece. Riders are left to choose their own routes, but are required to pass through four predetermined check points. The first was in Southern Germany at Schloss Lichtenstein; the second at Monte Grappa, Italy; the third at High Tatras Mountains in Slovakia and finally the Transfagarasan Highway in Romania.

And there's another twist to the requirements: riders had to carry all necessary gear on their bikes, and could not accept outside help.

Melissa led all the women riders throughout the race, averaging about 200 miles a day, and finished the course in 13 days, one hour and 29 minutes.

While this was her first endurance race, Melissa has proved her mettle on a bike before. She cycled solo around the world in 2013, from Barcelona, Spain, where she now makes her home, to Eugene, Oregon, where her family lives. The journey took her across four continents and through 24 countries for a total of 34,000 kilometers (21,127 miles).

Now back at work teaching at the GEMS World Academy in Barcelona, Melissa is biking 40 kilometers (25 miles) round-trip to and from work each day and planning her next adventure.