

# SHAPE

## Scared into Shape: Training for a 545-Mile Bike Ride

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By [Cristina Goyanes](#) 



I love terrifying myself to improve my fitness—it's what I do to stay motivated and keep bad habits (like watching an entire season of *Girls* in one butt-numbing sitting) in check. I've been using this anti-sloth strategy since 2005 when I blindly signed up for my first-ever sprint triathlon without really knowing how to do any of the three disciplines (seriously, I learned how to swim, bike, and run just for it).

It worked! I did about 10 triathlons between then and 2008, and by the end, I felt skinny (a size 2), strong (one ab was completely visible), and so confident that I quit my staff job to pursue my dream career as a freelance writer, which I've been doing for five years now.

It's no coincidence that my physical triumphs have led to bigger, better, and more satisfying experiences in my life. Last July, I challenged myself to bike in Colorado's [Rocky Mountain](#) National Park, specifically Trail Ridge Road, the highest continuously paved road in North America, with [Tour de NoCo](#). It was so difficult and exhilarating to pedal straight skyward that I cried twice: once at the bottom (some 8,000 feet) and then again at the heavenly top of the 12,183-foot-tall highway.

That daring feat then led to the [Tour de Pink](#) in Southern California that October. This time, I cried from being so touched by my fellow riders, the bravest breast cancer survivors I had ever met.

**RELATED:** Check out [photos and inspiring advice from the Tour de Pink](#).

All of these nerve-wracking adventures—and a few others in between—have brought me to this holy-cow-what-have-I-just-signed-up-for point: I've been eyeballing the famous [AIDS LifeCycle Ride](#) from San Francisco to Los Angeles since I first learned

about it three years ago. Now in its twelfth year, the fully supported, 545-mile, seven-day [bike ride](#) is the world's most successful HIV/AIDS fundraiser, having raised \$12.8 million for the cause last year alone.

As someone who covers health and wellness for a living, I was surprised to learn how much HIV/AIDS is still very much a problem (from a media standpoint, we just don't hear about it anymore). While working on a recent story for *Men's Fitness* about [five must-do health tests for men under 40](#), I was shocked to hear that a top NYC doctor wanted to include an [HIV test](#) among those five. Fact is, 1.2 million Americans are currently living with HIV/AIDS and an estimated one-fifth don't know it.

Once it was on my radar, this ride quickly became a ballsy bucket-list item. Somehow, after completing the three-day ride with [Tour](#) de Pink, I had a gusty thought that maybe, just maybe, I could do the AIDS Ride sooner rather than later. So I convinced my super-supportive Shape.com editor to let me write about it—and she said yes. In that moment, I think I may have even peed my pants a little.

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To really add fuel to my fitness fire, I'm facing a few challenges with this epic new experience:

- 1) I haven't really started training yet for the June event, with the exception of few [SoulCycle classes](#) here and a 40-mile ride there.
- 2) I will be doing the seven-day ride alone (meaning I'll be making plenty of new friends on the road!).
- 3) I haven't quite secured a coach yet. (I thought I found someone last week, but I might have scared her off.)
- 4) I've agreed to raise \$3,000 (!) for the cause in less than three months (the last thing I wanna do is ask friends and family for money, so this should be interesting).
- 5) Did I mention we're [camping](#) outside for six nights (God help me) during the ride?

Between training, fundraising, and juggling everything else in my life—handsome boyfriend, fun friends, aging parents, needy cat, and cool clients—this should be one helluva adventure. I'm looking forward to getting scared fit again, educating people about [HIV/AIDS](#), and hopefully encouraging you to step outside your comfort zone, too, along the way.

For daily updates on my training, follow me on Twitter [@CDGoyanes](#).