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Fabien Maurice and Valerie LeFranc prepare to e-mail a report home.

France to here, and the world

By Louise Wynn
• Special to the Easterner

Fabien Maurice and Valerie LeFranc recently passed through Loudoun County on their bicycle tour of the world.

They left Paris in April, flying to Quebec City in Canada, and bicycling down the Appalachian Trail through the northeastern United States before arriving in Loudoun County on June 8 for a week-long stay in Sterling. They plan to continue through Tennessee, cross the Mississippi River, and see the agricultural center of the United States.

Valerie explained, "Our biggest sponsor is a sixth grade class in a middle school in France, and we've promised to report to them on American agriculture and the great national parks. When we get to Asia, we'll report on various cultural aspects of the countries and people there."

Valerie asked her company in Paris, a shipping firm with ties to DHL International, for a one-year leave of absence. The company was delighted to give it to her, she said, and even offered to help sponsor the trip.

Fabien, on the other hand, was told by his company, a frozen food supplier in Paris, that he was welcome to leave for a year—and was dismissed on the spot.

"But my boss told me the day I left, 'Come on in when you get back, and I'll find a job for you,'" Fabien was happy to report.

"We won't ride our bikes all the way across the United States," he added. "At some point in the Midwest, we'll take a bus to Denver, and then we'll ride the bikes over the Rocky Mountains."

"The purpose of the trip of not an endurance test, not to get bigger leg muscles, but to see as much of the world and its people as we can."

"From Denver we will ride to the Grand Canyon and Bryce Canyon, and then go on to San Francisco. We'll stay in the Bay Area for several weeks, resting and taking the day trips up and down the West Coast. Then we'll fly to Japan, and continue on land for rest of our tour. We'll go through Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma and India on our way back to France."

The obvious question—"and everybody asks us this one," says Valerie—is why.

"We want to discover people and the planet where we are living, to discover the mosaic of culture and countryside. We want to do it now, while we have no children, no loans, and no house to pay. We sold our car so we could travel and make our dream work. We gave up our home and family and jobs for a year."

"And already we know it's worth it."

New look...

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Tentative agendas can be obtained from the County Administrator's Office the Friday before a scheduled board meeting. Subscriptions are available. The agenda is also posted on the Loudoun County Web Site: www.state.va.us/loudoun.

Disclaimer: These are my tentative perceptions of how the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors conducts its meetings. All perceptions are subject to change—all in favor, say "aye."



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