

Beth Underhill

Trek Location: Spain

Age during trek and when letter written: 43

Name of the Tailsman: Cree en ti mismo – “Believe in yourself”

When I left for Spain, I was so nervous, thinking I hadn't trained hard enough and doubting that I could actually complete the trek. I only trained for one week with my trailer, so that made me even more nervous. There were so many obstacles demanding my time and attention. It was a real challenge. Of course I trained and I made it a priority, but I never thought it was enough for me to finish.

After we started the trek, I found my confidence increasing. It was amazing to let go of all the things that pulled for my attention at home, and to have more focus and clarity. Many days I felt so connected to my bike that it felt odd to get off of it. Teammates laughed because I kept forgetting to remove my helmet when I didn't need it on. Don't get me wrong, there were times and days that I was miserable and was glaring at the trailer behind me, but I kept reminding myself that I had already made it through training and portions of the trek.

On the last day of the trek, we were headed to the final destination of Tarifa, the southern most tip of Europe. This day was by far my least favorite. I mostly disliked the day because the roads were busy, the towns weren't quite as enchanting, weather wasn't great, and I think I was a little sad the trek was coming to an end. But when I realized how close I was to Tarifa, my heart finally felt flutters of excitement.

When I was six miles from Tarifa, my rear brake made a loud popping sound. I was on a steep downhill and my rear brake was no longer working! Thank God I was able to stop and pull off on a driveway. That driveway was a big deal because it provided me with shelter from the busy roadway, and there hadn't been many of pull offs that day. I felt so devastated that I would have to get a ride to complete my trek. How could I finish with only a front brake on these steep mountains? I had worked so hard, and now all I could visualize was me and my bike riding in an UBER to Tarifa! One of my teammates, Mike, found me and said he could probably fix it. After taking a look at the problem, he confirmed that it could be fixed, but needle nose pliers were needed. Layne (who had also stopped) said he never carries them, but he had a feeling he needed them for this trek and brought them along. Unbelievable! Mike and Layne were able to fix my brake well enough for me to get to Tarifa, which was nothing short of a miracle and a blessing.

With my bike repaired, I cautiously made my way down several miles to an overlook where I could see Tarifa. From there, I could see the beautiful white town with the shimmering Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean wrapped around it. What a glorious sight! I decided to record a video to show my family what it looked like, and as I was recording I began to cry. I never expected to cry—I'm not a crier—but tears were flowing as I kept saying over and over again, “I did it!” I couldn't believe this moment. It's hard to describe what it felt like, because

words I use don't really give it the same value. To say I was overjoyed would be an understatement.

Truth be told, I never realized how little I believed in myself until I went through all of this. I needed for this to be really hard. I needed to see clearly that I didn't believe in me. During my training my lack of belief in myself was revealed, but I needed to feel that emotional rush at the lookout to really understand how deep it was. I wondered for a few days why I just kept saying, "I did it!" I had to say it and I needed to hear it. My belief in myself is so much stronger now. It's incredible how this journey, from training to completion, unveiled so many truths about who I was, and then helped me heal so many places in my heart.

I hoped that I would find a Talisman in Tarifa, because it was such a powerful place for me. Unfortunately, I missed all the shopping hours. Your Talisman came from Morocco, a trip we took the next day. Asilah is the town we visited and where I found this unlikely gift in a market. It was a beautiful day of seeing new things, refreshment, and of what felt like a new beginning. I can't wait for you to discover your own new beginning on your trek, and hope this can inspire you in some small way.

Good luck to you!

Advice: Allow yourself to be vulnerable. You will get a lot more out of this journey if you do.