

## BAINBRIDGE ISLANDER

# Meet Mike. He's running across Washington just for kicks.



**Nathan Pilling**

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Passing through the Snoqualmie Tunnel, Mike Cyger ran with mace in one hand and his iPhone, its flashlight reaching out into absolute darkness, in the other. The unlit crossing through an abandoned railroad tunnel is a little over two miles long, and as he ran, visions of zombies and other unsavory characters looming at him out of the darkness crossed his mind.

He swung his light back and forth, checking every crevice and alcove for danger.

"I would never do that again by myself," he said, safely out of the tunnel.

Welcome to Cyger's world in recent days. He's running, unsupported, across Washington, beginning in Seattle, aimed at Spokane. The 49-year-old Bainbridge Island man began running in Seattle on Sept. 22 and hopes to arrive in Spokane the first week in October.



Bainbridge Islander Mike Cyger running on a leg of his journey from Seattle to Spokane. Contributed Photo / Mike Cyger

It's a grind: Cyger estimates his route, which is taking him up forest roads, trails and highways, roughly following Interstate 90 and Highway 2 across the state, will take him about 330 miles. He'll average running a marathon every day for 13 days.

"When you're in a car you're passing something in 10 to 15 seconds or on a bike in a couple minutes, but when you're on foot you have a good few minutes to take in your surroundings and experience it," he said. "That's something special I don't think a lot of people have the opportunity to take advantage of."

Each day he rises before dawn, gets breakfast and whatever food he might need for the day and hits the road. After putting in his miles for the day, he finds a hotel, washes his clothes, dries them with a hairdryer and gets off his feet to rest up for the next day.

He's on his own, so he packs light, carrying everything he needs in a running vest: "It's just me and what's on my back and my credit card," he said, reached Friday for an interview by phone on the side of a roadway midway between Ellensburg and the Columbia River.

He passes the miles by listening to podcasts, music or an audiobook, talks on the phone, puts on music when he really needs an extra push. He posts photos on Instagram and gets encouragement from those following his journey.



A photo of an entrance to the Snoqualmie Tunnel from during Mike Cyger's run from Seattle to Spokane. Contributed Photo / Mike Cyger

The obvious question: *Why?*

"Every year I just try and do something to challenge myself, meet a goal, do something differently," he said.

A couple of years ago, he took five months to learn how to walk on his hands. Last year, he committed to reading more. For this year's big goal, he considered running across the country ... for about five minutes, realizing how long and difficult of a journey that'd be. So what about running across Washington? He'd never been east of Ellensburg and wanted to see the rest of the state.

He began ramping up his running about three months back, mapped out his route and locked in the logistics. Last Sunday, he stepped off the ferry and began running the first leg of his journey, from downtown Seattle out to Issaquah.

Since then he's been confronted by aggressive dogs, run through a swarm of dragonflies and been greeted by waves from truck drivers, neighs from horses and stares from cows. And there's the miles and miles of windy, open roads.



Bainbridge Islander Mike Cyger before he heads out on the leg of his journey that ran from Snoqualmie Pass to Clallam. Contributed Photo / Mike Cyger

When Mike mentioned the idea of running across the state to his wife, Erin, "I thought he was kind of crazy, but I wasn't surprised," she said. "That's sort of his nature, to set a goal for himself, to set a plan to meet it and he just does it. He likes to challenge himself physically."

For now, she chats with him on the phone, watches for Instagram updates and checks up on his progress via his phone's location.

"It is such a big undertaking and everyone's pretty excited for him," she said. "I think he's inspiring people near and far."

Later Friday afternoon Cyger posted that he'd reached the Columbia River: the rough halfway point on his run. To follow his journey, visit [mike.run](https://www.instagram.com/mikedotrunk) or head to [Instagram.com/mikedotrunk](https://www.instagram.com/mikedotrunk).