

# Get On the Trail

Posted on [June 16, 2015](#)

Day 0, Tuesday, June 16, 2015

Trail start Rabbit Ears Pass, mile 1454.3

End 41-032WT near Dumont Lake, mile 1457.5

Southwest flight from Albuquerque to Denver, leaving at 6:30, arriving at 7:45, arrives late.

Go to main terminal west, level 5, island 5, and catch the 8:20 express bus to the Greyhound station arriving at 9:13. Denver airport is so large I make it to the bus stop with only a few minutes to spare, and would have been late if I had checked baggage.

My bus to Steamboat Springs leaves at 9:35, arriving at 2. Then I take the Free Bus to the post office and get a box I mailed myself so I would not have checked luggage. Then another bus to the grocery for more food to pack, and a quick last town meal, then another bus to the east end of town where I can start hitching, at around 5PM -and it looks like rain soon.

Droplets start falling and I am almost ready to give up after a half hour of holding up my "Hiker To Trail" sign when someone gives me a lift- the least talkative hitch I ever had. The dog, Luna, was cute, though.



I am dropped off at Rabbit Ears Pass in a full downpour, and take shelter under a tree to waterproof my gear, and finally start hiking when the rain eases.

The unmarked trail goes up near the “rabbit ear” rock formation the pass is named for, then past a campground and Dumont Lake.



Soon after I see my first on-trail snow for this trip– that did not take long!



Soon I am in an area of snow melt and large areas of snow, and lose the trail as darkness nears. I head uphill to find a dry area to camp and discover the trail again.

Finally set up camp at after 8:30. Such a different world from how I started the day!



# Snow Good

Posted on [June 17, 2015](#)

Day 1, Wednesday June 17, 2015

Start 41-032WT near Dumont Lake, mile 1457.5

End Buffalo Pass, Summit Lake Campground, mile 1469.7

Occasional patches of snow turned to frequent patches, then turned to mostly snow with bits of ground sticking out along the trail.



Snow underneath the trail seems to melt first, so I can often make out the path from the tiny bits sticking out from the snow. Frequently I lose the trail altogether and must navigate by gps waypoints. Speed is cut way down from the normal two miles per hour to one mile/hour, which is worrying, because I do not mind the tough physical hike but would really not want to run out of food.



By dinner time I wonder if I need to bail from the trail and start again later, or skip up to Rawlins, where the elevation is lower and the snow is all gone. I could walk 13 miles along a forest road and get back to Steamboat. But if I can hike the next couple of days with even higher elevation, the rest of this section should be mostly snow-free, hopefully. I will sleep on it.



# Go For It

Posted on [June 18, 2015](#)

Day 2, Thursday June 18, 2015

Start near Buffalo Pass, Summit Lake Campground, mile 1469.7

End 042-155XL start of trail to North Lake, mile 1490.5

I have decided to keep on hiking though the snow. My plan is to hike for a day and see if I can make sixteen miles. If not, then return to Buffalo Pass and hike the 13 mile forest road straight to Steamboat Springs, and restart the trip some other time.

The weather looks good, probably no rain for a couple of days. I will be hiking at high elevation today, 12500, and do not want to deal with rain and snow at the same time.



The day is a series of peaks and passes of increasing elevation. The snow is fine to walk on in the morning, with a good crust to support my weight. However even as early as 8AM I get some post-holing, where the snow suddenly breaks through and my leg sinks to mid-thigh. Post-holing becomes much worse in the afternoon, slowing my hiking speed to only one mile per hour.

The high point of the day is passing near near Lost Ranger Peak, with good views of nearby mountains.



An added bonus was that the peak had less snow, making hiking easier. Then a quick climb down to a wide valley at elevation 10700, not low enough for the snow to be gone. I could have hiked another mile or two, but needed to stop here to work out a navigation issue you will learn about in the next post. Looking forward to lower elevations tomorrow.

[Finished audiobook [Stickeen](#) by John Muir]



# Turn the Corner

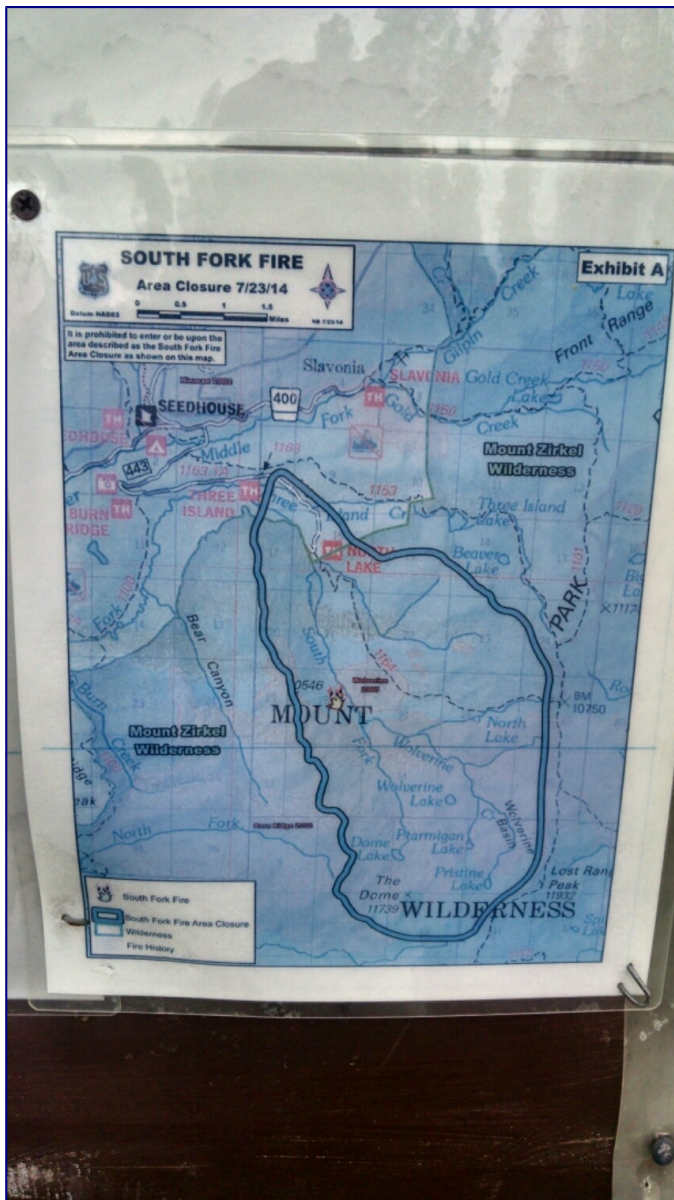
Posted on [June 19, 2015](#)

Day 3, Friday, June 19, 2015

Start 42-155XL upper terminus of Lost Lake Trail, mile 1490.5

End 43-163WT, creek near Wyoming border, mile 1507.0

Way back at the Dumont Lake trailhead was a notice, dated 2014, of the closure of Lost Lake Trail because of fire.



The notice was old and no longer in effect, and some ranger forgot to take it down. On the other hand, the regular trail might be rough going due to fallen trees or standing snags near the trail. Just in case I will try the alternate route suggested on the fire notice.

The CDT has numerous alternate routes, but I typically stay on the choices that have published GPS

waypoints, which does include a few major alternates, but just a few. Luckily I had downloaded the alternate route map for Three Islands Lake Trail on my GPS app, and the trail was actually shown on the map, not always a certain thing.



The trail follows a mountain stream for a couple thousand feet elevation change, and the map showed accurately where the trail crosses the stream, helpful since the first quarter of trail was completely hidden under several feet of snow.

Around 8AM the first glimpses of trail appear, and soon after the trail is easy to follow. Soon the trail was totally dry, so welcome after an intense couple of days trudging through snow.

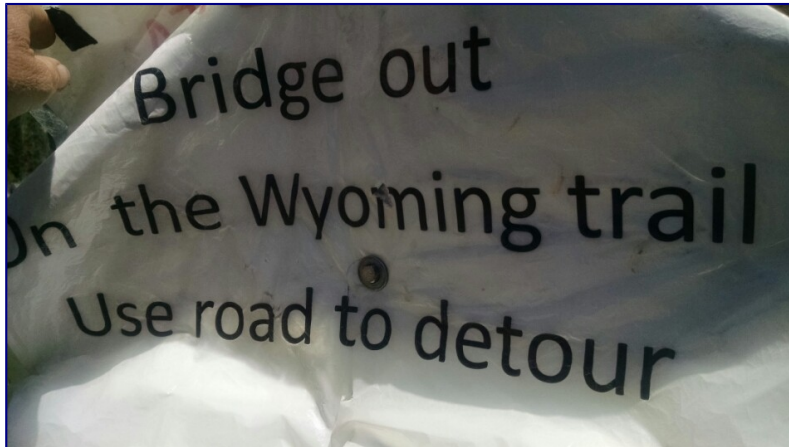




Just past Three Island Lake I meet two women with a dog coming the other way, day-hiking. Later, near Seedhouse Campground, I met a man next to an RV who was supporting a group of hikers doing a south-bound section. I must have missed them by taking a different route. They brought snowshoes to do the part of trail I just completed.

The man mentioned they had a lot of rain, and had to do a couple of wet-foot crossings through streams swollen with snow melt, in the section I was just starting.

I saw a sign for a bridge out, recommending a detour.



I followed the likely dirt road, which came to another wet-foot crossing.



But looking at my map, I saw a nearby disused dirt road, closed and nearly hidden by weeds. But the map showed a bridge over the river on that old road, and sure enough it was still there.

I started climbing a 4WD track past a burned area of beetle-killed trees, so shade was non-existent. By 2PM I was sooooo hot– oh yeah, this is why I wanted to start the hiking too early.



The rest of the day was on jeep/atv road, welcome for being dry and snow-free. Eventually the road climbs to 10k feet, and a few patches of snow and wet trail appear, pretty easy after the past days. I camp near a water source, because I do not see certain water on the map for several miles. Perhaps because of snow melt we will find seasonal water sources. Let us hike and find out!



# Whoop Wyoming

Posted on [June 20, 2015](#)

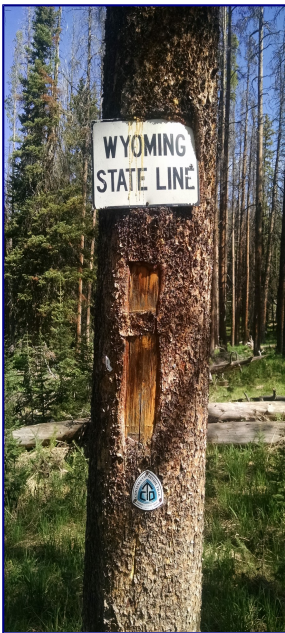
Day 4, Saturday June 20 , 2015

Start 43-163WT, creek near the Wyoming-Colorado border, mile 1507

End 01-128WT creek on Stock Driveway, mile 1528.4

The journey continues up and down a 4WD road, named Wyoming Trail, surrounded by forest on all sides without views.

In a few miles is the Wyoming border sign. A notation on my map reports that it is traditional to let out a WHOOP when reaching the border, and I yelled loud in celebration.



The map shows the trail is following “Stock Driveway”. Those must have been some tough cattle, for the trail is rugged here. Grassy areas on the top of ridges and peaks provide good views of surrounding peaks.



Tread disappears, and one must follow cairns with posts the rest of the day.



It is a game of hide-and-seek, spotting the next cairn, and the cairn usually wins. In places the cairnage was terrible to behold, pun intended. Slowing down or stopping to locate the next cairn really slowed down my average speed.



The trail goes over several rocky peaks in the Huston Wilderness. Some are over 10k and have snow on top, but no post-holing as in Colorado.



I camp near a creek at high elevation on a bit of bare ground surrounded by snow, but the night is strangely warm.

Tomorrow, Encampment.

[Finished audiobook [Agatha H. and the Voice of the Castle](#) by Phil and Kaja Foglio]

# Burger Not

Posted on [June 21, 2015](#)

Day 5, Sunday June 21, 2015

Start 01-128WT creek on Stock Driveway, mile 1528.4

End Battle Pass 01-212TH, mile 1536.8

My hiking plan showed the first trail town, Encampment, as optional. It is only three days away from the next trail town, and I do not like to space them too close together. For one thing, hikers overeat in towns to make up for lost calories, and too much town food makes a hiker bloated and sluggish when stating the trail again.

So Encampment was optional, if my food supply could stretch all the way to Rawlins, which might happen if I was able to hike several days of twenty-plus miles. But the trail had other ideas...

Also, Encampment is known as a tough hitch. I like to avoid those.

But I do not have enough food to last to Rawlins, so Encampment here I come. Besides, a hamburger would be mighty fine after six days of hiking.

The descent down to Battle Pass was wet with snow melt, making the trail a creek. No mind, I've gotten rather used to wet-foot hiking these past days. My new shoes dry out quickly when the path is dry again— just hike for a couple of hours and the wet sensation is gone. And wool socks have kept my feet warm enough though miles of slushy snow.





So here I was, minding my own business, walking on grass soaked with snow-melt, when suddenly this happened.



Perhaps it is hard to see from the angle of the photo, but the leg is muddy up to mid-thigh. The ground had suddenly collapsed and my leg went all the way in.



So naturally I tried pushing on my trekking pole to free the leg, and the trekking pole goes all the way in.



It is like post-holing in dirt, or sod-sand instead of quicksand. I am about to hitch in an hour, so this will not do. I strip off shoe, gaiter, sock, and pants, and rinse everything in a nearby pool of water.



At windy Battle Pass, near the sign for the CDT, I hitch by holding up my “Hiker to Town” sign. One hour, no joy. Sometimes 15 minutes go by without a car passing in my direction. I am about to give up and take a break when a car stops, and a kind couple give me a ride to Riverside, one mile from Encampment where the convenience store and more lodging opportunities exist. The couple live outside Riverside, and warn me a big Woodcutters Jamboree brought a lot of people into town. They also let me know the convenience store is about to close in ten minutes, so they drop me off there directly to get my town food snacks for the evening. The store also rents cabins, so I take care of lodging at the same time. Jane is very friendly and makes sure the cabin has been cleaned from after the Jamboree.

I get cleaned up and walk across the street to the Mangy Moose for a burger, since Jane had let me know the other restaurant in town was closed for a special event. The sign posted on the Moose said “The Kitchen is Closed” to recover from the Jamboree and they would not be open again until Tuesday. A sign on the other restaurant let me know they would not be open until Tuesday as well. So I go back to my cabin and prepare my sad little dinner of ... trail food ;-(

# Snow Long

Posted on [June 22, 2015](#)

Day 6 , Monday June 22, 2015

Start Battle Pass 01-212TH, mile 1536.8

End 02-135XR, mile 1550.3

At the convenience store, buying food to last until Rawlins, I met thru-hiker Day-Glo.



He was with a group that hiked north until Chama, then skipped up to Wyoming and are hiking south-bound. They spent three days in Riverside for the Jamboree.



Later I met another hiker in that group, Giggles.



They are returning to the trail today.

I hung around the store for an hour to see if anyone was headed over the pass and might give me a ride. Then I started walking on the road to find a spot to hitch, and someone stopped. Jeff was going to meet a friend in that direction and said he could give me a ride part-way. As we got to talking, he changed his mind and decided to take me all the way up to Battle Pass.

He mentioned the beetle kill is stopped in this area, because a few years ago the temperature got really cold for several nights in a row.

On the trail by 10, and meeting snow soon after.



I walked on wet snow until 4, and as snow disappeared the trail descended along the side of a mountain. Looking at elevations, this may be last snow for a while.



[Finished audiobook Damsel in Distress, by P.G. Wodehouse Wodehouse]



# Home On the Range

Posted on [June 23, 2015](#)

Day 7, Tuesday, June 23, 2015

Start 02-135XR, mile 1550.3

End near 04-029RX McCarty Canyon Road, mile 1571

A few minutes on the trail, the forest parts, and a mountain meadow comes in view, with wildflowers and small round cacti.



No path is worn through the grass, so cairns mark the trail.





The trail alternates several times between meadow in the heights and forest in the low areas.





Ahead we can see a transition to a vast area of rolling grassland in a great basin. My camera can only capture a tiny bit.



Grassland with sagebrush is the order of the day, with a few scrub trees in low areas, and infrequent creeks.





Antelope stay in the distance, too far for my camera to capture well.



The path is two-track dirt road most of the day. This horned toad likes the dirt.



The CDT delights once again with a rather sharp transition to a different ecosystem.

[Finished audiobook [The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde](#) by Robert Louis Stevenson]



# Strays

Posted on [June 24, 2015](#)

Day 8, Wednesday June 24, 2015

Start near 04-029RX McCarty Canyon Road, mile 1571

End 04-300M along Bridger Pass Road, mile 1596

The day starts on improved dirt road with gravel, and stays on that surface. I am near enough to Rawlins to arrive tomorrow, but I have been intending to keep miles/day low for several days, so my body gets in condition for long road-walks.

I meet a rancher on an ATV with two helpers.



He shows me where his BLM allotment is, and says he is coming back later on horseback, because his neighbor's herd is getting close, and he does not want them to mix. He has seen over 10 hikers on this road during the current year.

Farther along the road, sagebrush starts to be more common than grass, and hillsides start to have sandy bare spots.



In early afternoon I meet another rancher on horseback, who spent several minutes talking because he was waiting for a horse trailer to arrive.



He was rounding up a stray because one of his fences got cut. He suspects antler hunters, because the



state tried an antler shed season on public lands this year.

He has several chunks of land between here and Colorado. I asked how BLM allotted parcels, and how they charged for them. We talked about water quality on upcoming trail, and some history. The Overland Stage Coach used to come by here.





And ruins of Spring Station rest beside a dry spring, unfortunately for me.



Several man-made dirt ponds, known as “tanks”, are on this route, similar to New Mexico. However, tanks here seem to be spring-fed, and in New Mexico they are often filled by water truck, since springs are rare. But it is dry here, and many water sources have dried up that I might use in late afternoon. Finally I find a wet tank at 04-265M. Someone got there before me.



The water tastes alkali, so I add a bit of lemonade powder. It helps with taste, but does fake lemonade have acidity the neutralizes the alkali? Leave a comment if you know.



Since I needed to walk longer than planned to get water, I decide to keep going so that I can choose tomorrow when to arrive in Rawlins. The plan is to walk slow today, and not wear out body parts on a long road walk.

The road goes up Bridger Pass.



Surely there are other Bridger Passes elsewhere?

The view towards Rawlins.



Rawlins is an on-trail town, so no hitching is necessary.

And they might have burgers.

[Finished audio play adaptation of Don Quixote de la Mancha by Cervantes]

# Range to Town

Posted on [June 25, 2015](#)

Day 9, Thursday June 25, 2015

Start 04-300M along Bridger Pass Road, mile 1596

End Rawlins Wyoming, mile 1619.5

Hiking continues on dirt road most of the day. Ridges are nearby on either side.

A herd of wild horses watches me closely and then gallops off.



At Little Sage Reservoir I get plenty of water to last until town.





The shape of the land is gradually changing from the last two days, less rolling, more regular.



Two lakes in a recreation area have bright white rims from evaporation.





Making good time, I can glimpse traces of the town ahead.



In town, I see an unusual sign for a gun store.



Rawlins is big, with a lively downtown. Motels are way off in the outskirts, so most hikers will not get to explore the town's charms.

[Finished audiobook Dracula by Bram Stoker]



# Zero

Posted on [June 26, 2015](#)

Day 10, Friday June 26, 2015

Start Rawlins Wyoming, mile 1619.5

End Rawlins Wyoming, mile 1619.5

When a long distance hiker lingers in town for a day and hikes no trail miles, that is a “zero” day, or taking a “zero”. Don’t judge me.

Downtown Rawlins is vintage and lively.



As zeroing tourist, I took a guided tour of the Wyoming Territorial Prison, now a museum and historic site.



Cell block A.





Cell accommodations.



Guard tower.



Gas chamber, infrequently used.



Tomorrow, , back on the trail, starting a section so arid the Oregon Trail routed around it.



# Endorheic Basin

Posted on [June 27, 2015](#)

Day 11, Saturday June 27, 2015

Start Rawlins Wyoming, mile 1619.5

End 06-184AP, near crossing with paved county road 63, mile 1640.6

The trail roughly parallels highway 287, where snow fences stand guard.



A lone trail-runner zooms past.





You know you are in for a rough winter when your ranch house has its own snow fence.



As the sun beats down, I grow thirsty.





After 13 miles of hiking, the first and only water source for the day comes into view.



On a short road-walk along 287, I meet Jeff, on a bike trip between Alaska and Miami, Florida!



In the continental United States he is following the Transamerica Trail. In Canada, he did not follow the CalCan much, preferring a more complex route. He is zooming, doing 100-plus mile days. The trail descends into a flat plane surrounded by ridges. This I take to be the real start of the Great Divide Basin, an endorheic basin, a land formation where what little water precipitates can flow neither to the Pacific or Atlantic. This means salt and sediment are not rinsed from the soil, so expect water quality issues.



No grass is in sight, only scrub brush and some bare ground.





Some horses graze on meager fare, and would not tell me where their water source is hidden.



Some places are pretty bare.



Still, someone put up barb wire fence, thinking to raise livestock here.



Tomorrow, after hiking eight miles, I should be able to find more water. If any of these water sources are dry or cannot be found, this hiker will take it personally.



# Chasing Cloud

Posted on [June 28, 2015](#)

Day 12, Sunday June 28, 2015

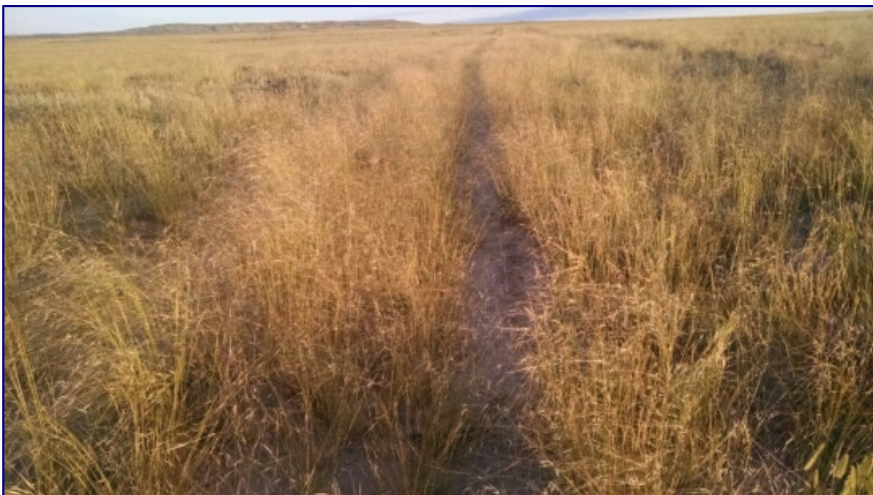
Start 06-184AP, near crossing with paved county road 63, mile 1640.6

End Just past 08-001WT A&M Reservoir, mile 1662.5

I start early to take advantage of cool temperatures.



As the trail ascends, grass starts appearing mixed with the scrub, especially a variety that sinks darts into my clothes.



The basin is more than the flat plain hiked yesterday. Hills, mesas, rock outcroppings, and arroyos add variety.



Does BLM know how quickly their route markers break?





Time to go for water.



At Bull Springs is a solar well, where I meet Sterling, a thru-hiker, part of Warrior Hike.



He hiked north as far as Wolf Creek Pass, using an alternate forest road route on that last part, then flipped up to Atlantic City and going south for a while.

It probably does not show in the photo, but in the afternoon clouds were remarkably stationary, so the same piece of land could be in shade for hours.



Finding shade under a tree just will not work. No trees. Can be found for miles and miles. So I hike to one of those cloud shadows and stretch out for a siesta.

In the evening I reach a second water source for the day, A&M Reservoir.



A few camper shells and one bike camper are around the lake. I fill and filter water, and hike down the trail a bit to set up camp.



# First Tree

Posted on [June 29, 2015](#)

Day 13, Monday June 29, 2015

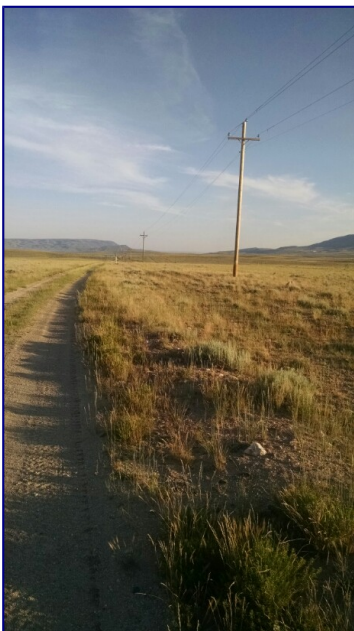
Start Just past 08-001WT A&M Reservoir, mile 1662.5

End near 08-234WT farm tank (pond), mile 1685.9

Most of the day is on pipeline road, that is, road to support a buried pipeline. Most pipelines are rather hidden, and do not have above-ground parts like this new natural gas pipeline.



A few power poles appear in places, then fade away.



The trail points toward this ridge that we will climb.



In places the pipeline road becomes loose sand, awkward to hike on.



Gradually I climb, not steep but long, only 1200 feet elevation gain.



Finally the first tree near the trail appears, the first tree in days.



In celebration, I take a long siesta under First Tree.

At higher elevation are more cattle, and some creeks and tanks do not look like good water sources in their presence, until I have to dramatically lower my standards.

On a ridge are signs of hydrocarbon drilling.



At the end of the day I fill and filter at this tank. Luckily the cows are hanging out at an adjacent tank, so I do not intrude on their meeting.





At the tank one can see more low basin below, previously hidden by ridges.



More basin tomorrow.

# Critters

Posted on [June 30, 2015](#)

Day 14, Tuesday June 30, 2015

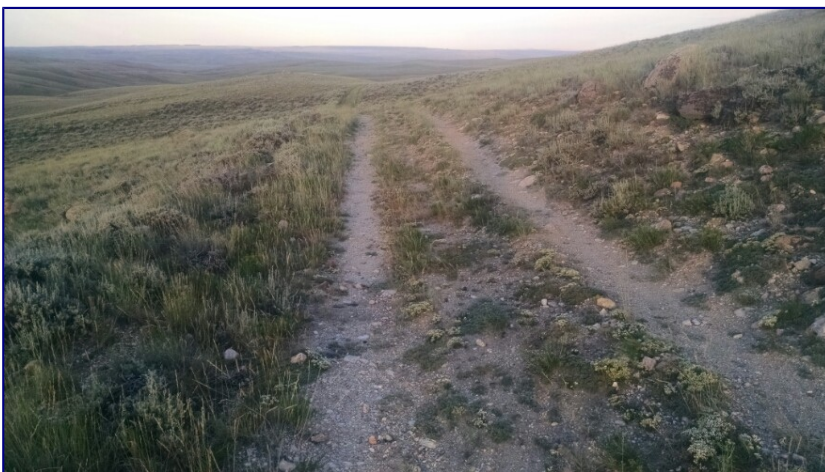
Start near 08-234WT farm tank (pond), mile 1685.9

End 09-106WT Weasel Spring, mile 1708.4

At first light I got more water at the tank, since the next sure water was not for another twelve miles.



The path took a different direction than I anticipated, gradually descending for hours along a narrow ridge that afford views on both sides.





Around 8AM, Tigerlily and Downhill meet me on the trail and chat.



They are thru-hikers who made it as far as Pagosa Springs, flipped all the way up to West Yellowstone, and are continuing to hike south for a while. We exchanged information about water sources, trail conditions, and so forth.

Downhill said, “Do you have a mosquito net?”

Tigerlily nodded, “Yeah, mosquitoes in the Winds (my next section) are so thick you will inhale them when you breathe.”

I must have turned several shades paler after hearing that. Yikes.

The trail continues to pass interesting landforms. The morning is mostly cloudy for once, offering welcome shade.



I see sheep for the first time this trip, that may be hard to make out in the distance.





I also see an odd furry lump on the trail ahead, realize the situation, and immediately detour off the trail.



But not far enough, as the sheepdog comes over to warn me. He also tells a nearby dog, and I can see a third in the distance.

Soon I am at my next water source. It is a good thing the flock was not already here.



Uh oh, the flock comes while I am filtering water. The dogs are likely in the rear, so I move on down the trail before they discover me.





At a BLM kiosk at a nearby road, I use the shade of the structure to finish filtering water. Trees and their shade are long gone.

I do a quick tick check since I have shade, and find six on my socks and one grabbing on to lining of my shoe. I do not normally do mid-day tick checks, and never found so many ever. I have mostly stayed on road all day except for the sheepdog incident.

Rain starts suddenly at 2PM, or rather hail, and is over in a few minutes, time enough for a thorough soaking.

The trail gradually descends down to rolling grassland.



So on my nightly tick check, how many did I find?

...

You can't handle the truth!

[Finished audiobook [The Innocence of Father Brown](#) by G.K. Chesterton]



# Out of Basin

Posted on [July 1, 2015](#)

Day 15, Wednesday July 1, 2015

Start 09-106WT Weasel Spring, mile 1708.4

End near 10-135WT along Willow Creek, mile 1737.0

The trail passes more rock outcroppings.



I do not really know where the Great Divide Basin finishes on the CDT, based on water flow. Perhaps it really happened yesterday. Certainly sometime before the first river that I reach by noon today.

These markers are for the Oregon Trail and California Trail, Saratoga Cutoff.





The first river in many days is the Sweetwater, twisty and turny, with trees growing alongside.



The water did taste pretty good.

After a long walk cross-country on rolling grassland with gradual ascent, the trail climbs along a ridge with spiky rocks.





From up here one can gaze down on the grassland crossed to get this far.



Getting close to South Pass City, the trail goes along Willow Creek. I intend to get water, but see this.



Beaver are active in the creek. I go upstream and find a watering spot before the engineering works.



Finding a hidden spot near the creek to pitch my tent, sleep comes with the gentle susurrations of the water, on its own long journey.



[Yes, I used the word “susurrations” last year. Such a good word needs a repeat performance.]

[Finished audiobook [The Intrusion of Jimmy](#) by P.G. Wodehouse]



# South Pass City

Posted on [July 2, 2015](#)

Day 16, Thursday July 2, 2015

Start near 10-135WT along Willow Creek, mile 1737.0

End 11-185M, approx mile 1754

I camped barely a mile from South Pass City, a state historic site that has restored 20-odd buildings dating from the town's gold rush boom and bust between 1868 and 1872.



The site is right on the CDT, and they accept and hold supply boxes from hikers, such as myself. Here is the smithy...



and this is the schoolroom.



The above two photos are an inside joke for my family. We used to drag the kids to many many historic sites, and always paid extra attention to the school and smithy at each place we visited. The town actually has a mine for you to go inside, but it never produced much.





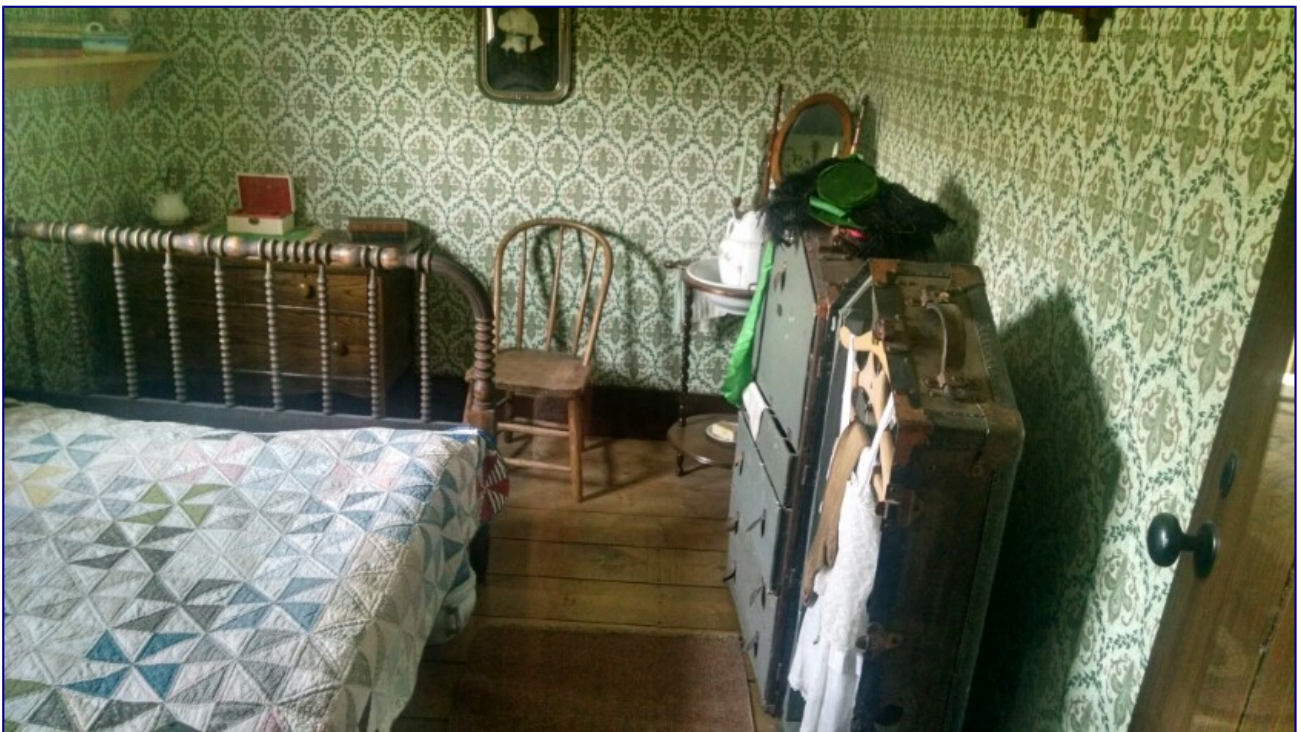
There is also a 1/5 replica of a stamp mill, which they run for special events.



The hotel was one of my favorite restored buildings.

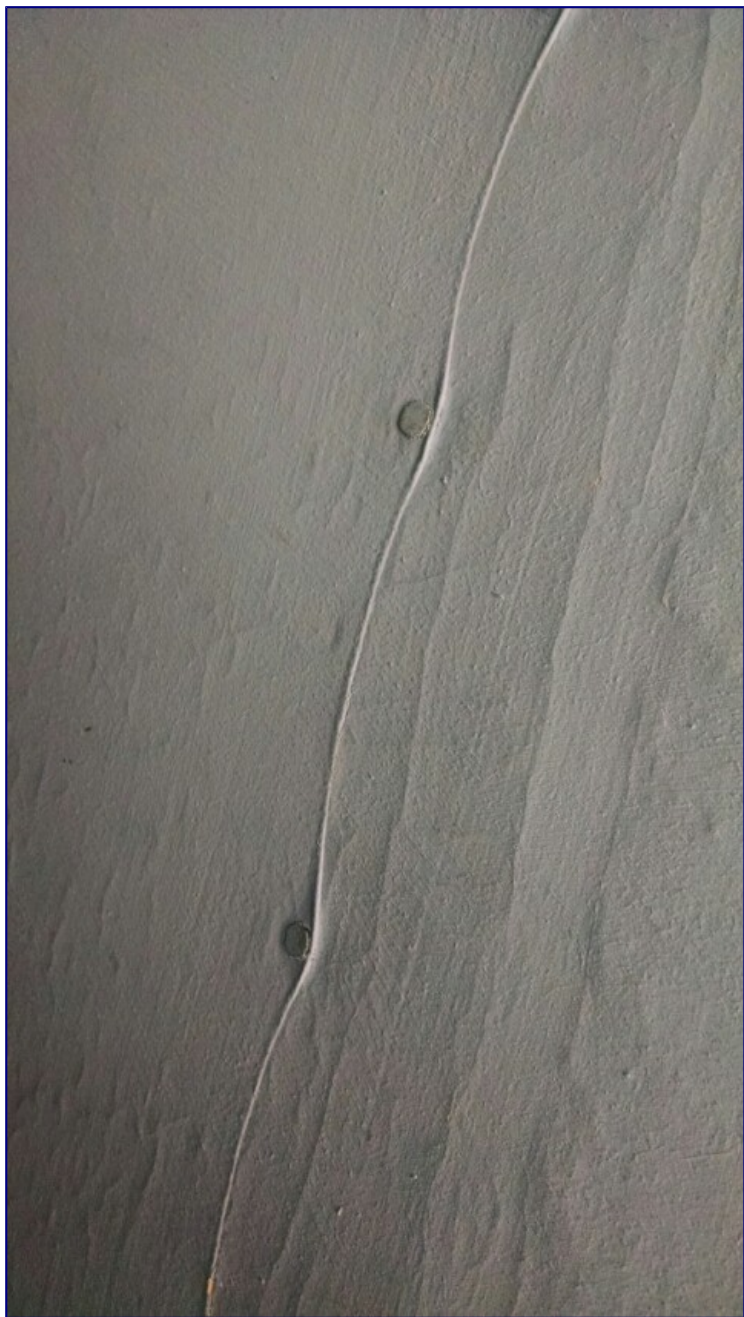


When they started to restore it, it was leaning at 45 degrees. So they had to disassemble everything and reuse as much material as possible. Several guest rooms are displayed.





They duplicated the style of wallpaper used then, fastened with little tacks.



A tour of the Clarissa Mine starts at 2PM. The Clarissa is a nearby deep-rock gold mine and processing facility in a huge multi-level building, that operated off and on until the 1940s or so. Here is a model of the processing.



Tempting, but the trail beckons.



After sorting my supply box and enjoying a few snacks available at the visitor center, I finally started hiking at 11AM. The trail began with a few final miles of BLM grassland.





Suddenly the trail goes to forest, and National Forest Service land soon after.



The terrain is rugged, with many rock outcroppings.





I came across a huge bird, that was scared of me and ran and hid. It did not seem to be able to fly, so I wonder how long it can survive.



It bugles just like the sandhill cranes that fly over my house. Later two more possible cranes are frightened by my presence and fly away.

The trail moves onto well-maintained tread. Kudos to the trail crew, especially for clearing large quantities of fallen trees.

Just a few miles into the South Winds, it is too early to form an impression. Let us see what the next couple of days will reveal.

## **‘Nuff Said**

Posted on [July 3, 2015](#)

Day 17, Friday July 3, 2015

Start 11-185M, approx mile 1754

End past creek 12-127WT, approx mile 1775

The trail heads for a rocky peak that looks fun.



And we get closer.





I meet someone with the forest service who said the good cleared trail was the work of a backcountry horsemen's group.

Look how many dead logs are piled on each other, yet the trail is clear.



Gradually the trail and I have been climbing, from 7700 feet at South Pass City to nearly 10000 at Little Sandy Lake.





Right after the lake, the condition of the trail changes to much more challenging to find and follow. I meet Buckeye and T-Minus, section hikers making their way towards Colorado. We trade notes on the difficulties of navigating the current section of trail.







I would give more details of path conditions here, but if you can't say anything nice...

# Independence

Posted on [July 4, 2015](#)

Day 18, Saturday July 4, 2015

Start past creek 12-127WT, approx mile 1775

End 13-119WT North Fork Silver Creek, mile 1795.4

Past the turn-off to Big Sandy Campground is a popular network of trails, heavily used today by backpackers and trail riders.



One couple out for a week backpacking is from Minnesota, so the skeeters here would be no big deal for them.

Lakes are everywhere. I do not bother taking photos of them anymore.





We start getting some really cool mountains visible



Another large group of riders go by with several packhorses, probably led by an outfitter



A steady breeze kept the insects grounded midday, and I am unusually tired, like having to adjust to high altitude again at 10k, so I take a siesta on a rock in the shade.

In early evening I am so tired I have to take another 30 minute siesta, which reviver me enough that I can walk several more miles.

The views of mountains today have been really rewarding.



I do hope tomorrow brings renewed energy.



# To Pole Creek

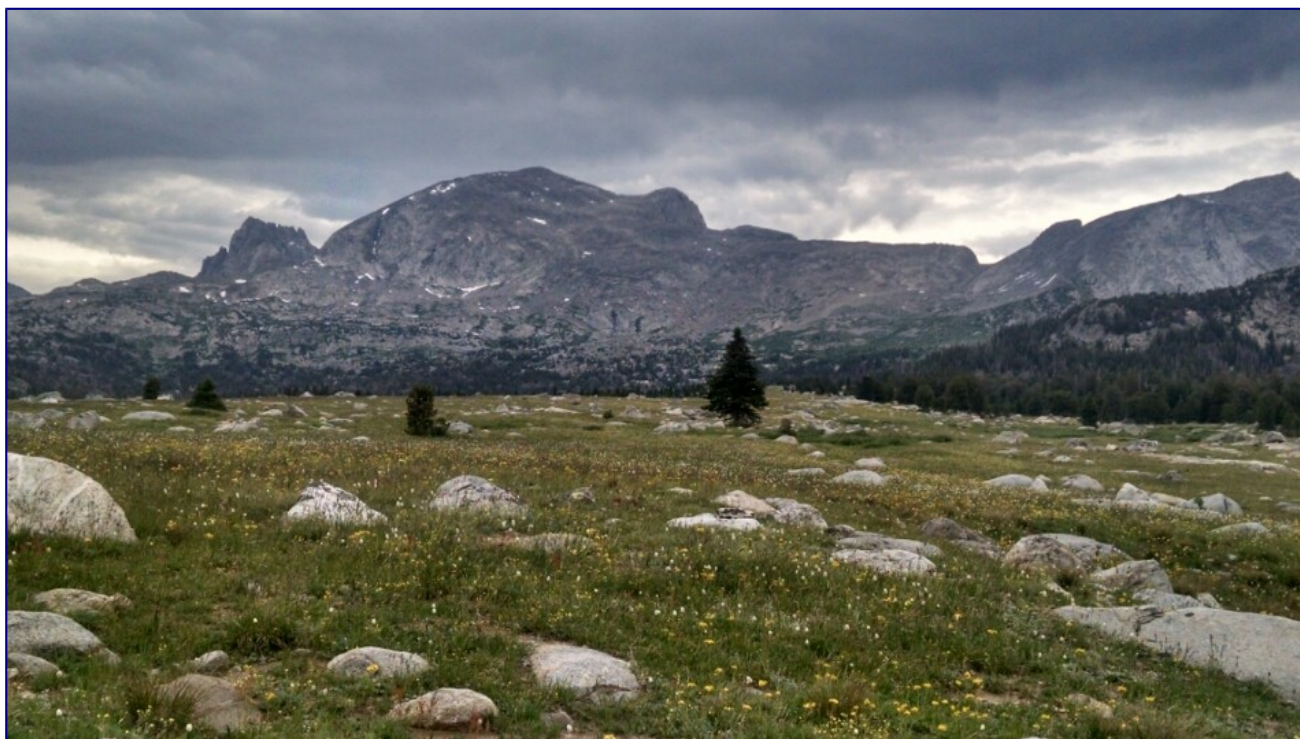
Posted on [July 5, 2015](#)

Day 19, Sunday July 5, 2015

Start 13-119WT North Fork Silver Creek, mile 1795.4

End 14-085WT, mile 1818.0

The day starts overcast and cold.



Mountain meadow filled with lakes and bounded by rocky peaks is the pattern for the day.





Around 10AM a light rain starts and continues for several hours.  
I go through five wet-foot stream crossings during the day.  
In late afternoon the trail goes over a series of three mountain passes.



A bit of snow is found on each pass.



Mosquitoes get really fierce and swarming around my face, so I must use my headnet. The rain does not ground these skeeters.





Then the trail goes down to more lakes and meadow, and the sun getting low, I search for a flat dry spot to pitch my tent.



My goal for today was to get as close to Pole Creek Trail intersection as possible, and I am only one mile shy of that, pretty good considering weather conditions today. The reason for my goal is that tomorrow I have to go off the CDT on a side trail for 12 miles, half a day's hiking, to get to a popular trailhead, and getting a hitch to town should be easiest in early to mid-afternoon — I think.

In a few hundred yards I hear a group of hikers has a camp, and the glint of a campfire can be seen in the dark.

The views are amazing, but my body desires rest and recuperation in town.

[Finished audiobook *With a Little Help* by Cory Doctorow I am in bear country now, and stopped listening to audio until I became good at automatically scanning the trail ahead for creatures.]

# Pinedale Bound

Posted on [July 6, 2015](#)

Day 20, Monday July 6, 2015

Start 14-085WT, mile 1818.0

End 14-100XR, mile 1819.6, then 12 miles on Pole Creek Trail and Elkhart Trail to trailhead, then hitch 13 miles down to Pinedale WY

The day starts with a wet-foot crossing across a really fast and deep current. It rained several hours last night, and streams are swollen.

Mid-morning I see three backpackers in camp and chat with Jacob.



He is an instructor with NOLS, a wilderness education school. He said the campfire I saw last night was likely from his main group. They are currently carrying 50 pound packs ( ! ) but do have some ultralight courses. He advises me on the access trail down to Elkhart Trailhead, since I do not have gps waypoints or complete maps for this part.



The day is cool, with an hour or two of light rain in morning. I need a jacket or rain jacket on for the entire hike.



Two riders lead a large group of horses.



Close to my destination I start seeing large numbers of backpackers and day-hikers going the other way, a number packing fishing rods. Several see my bedraggled look and guess I am going a long distance, and ask my story.

I finally get to the trailhead around 2PM. The parking lot is massive, mostly full, with a nearby campground with more outdoor lovers. I barely get my “Hiker to Trail” sign out before catching a ride. A nice couple of people who live several miles away in a different town arrived too early for a clinic appointment, and went up to the trailhead for a nap, and were heading down now for the appointed time.



Pienedale is nice and compact, cute, touristy, friendly, expensive.

Instead of pedestrian signals with traffic-slowing traffic lights, they have crosswalks everywhere, and enforce stopping for pedestrians seriously.



I found a comfortable cute motel that gave a good rate, so I will take a zero day tomorrow.



Several chores to do, then rest, rest, and rest. Rest.

# Pinedale Zero

Posted on [July 7, 2015](#)

Day 21, Tuesday July 7, 2015

Rest. Rest. Rest. Rest. Rest.

Rest.



# Seneca Lake

Posted on [July 8, 2015](#)

Day 22, Wednesday July 8, 2015

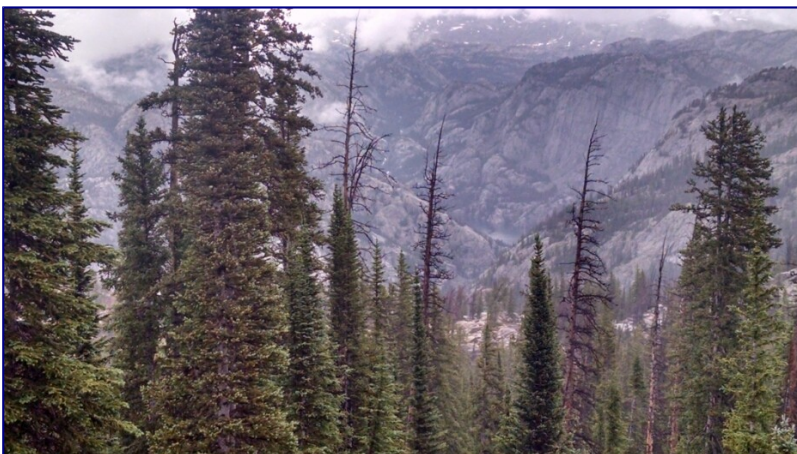
Start hitch from Pinedale to Elkhart Trailhead, hike about 14 miles on Elkhart Trail and Seneca Lake Trail until 14-154WT, mile 1824.9

End 14-173WT Fremont Crossinge mile 1826.6

Checking out of the motel at 9:30, I walked over to Fremont Drive and gat a hitch in seconds. We stopped at Fremont Lake Overlook on our way up.

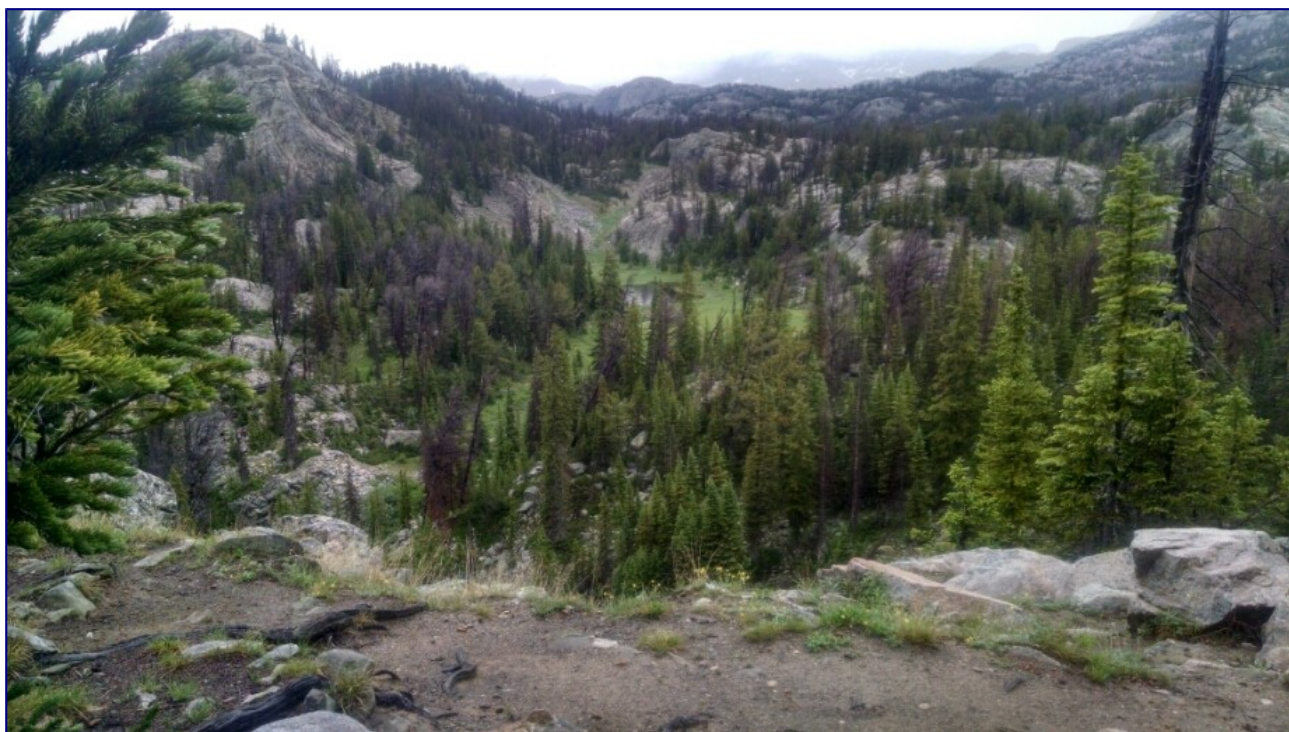


On the trail at 10, rain started within 20 minutes. Will it rain all day, or all day and all night?





I met at least two dozen backpackers. A couple recognized me from two days ago when we were both going in different directions..



At 4PM Seneca Lake appeared.





Afterwards the trail goes over a pass, and we see some extremely rugged rocks on an alternate trail.



Fremont Crossing comes into view. I sure hope for a bridge.





Yes, a bridge!



Rain starts hard just after the tent goes up. We are over 10k, so expect a cold night.



# Green River

Posted on [July 9, 2015](#)

Day 23, Thursday July 9, 2015

Start 14-173WT Fremont Crossing mile 1826.6

End 15-105M along Green River, mile 1847

Rain pounded the tent all night.



A bit of blue sky peaks out in the morning, hinting at a weather change, but soon clouds over and we get intermittent rain all morning and afternoon.





The trail is still at 10k elevation, and I get to enjoy a couple of snow crossings.



So many wet-foot crossings today, more than I can count.

I am still running into several hikers, many with fishing rods. Apparently several access points are nearby.

The trail reaches Summit Lake.





Afterwards the path follows the Green River down a big elevation change.  
Around 4PM the weather finally breaks.



The Green River really does look green.



Looking forward to a dry tomorrow.



# Green River Lakes

Posted on [July 10, 2015](#)

Day 24, Friday July 10 , 2015

Start 15-105M along Green River, mile 1847

End 15-292WT, mile 1865.4

The trail follows the Green River into a series of Green River Lakes, also noticeably green.







At the end of the last lake is a campground, and a few old buildings. Here is one with a sod roof.



Rain starts after passing the last lake. Sigh. Grass was already wet from yesterday's rain, and allowed to overhang the trail here. The climb upwards to Gunsight Pass commences.



As I climb the crest of a ridge on the approach to the pass, the wind picks up, rain blows horizontal, and I am freezing from wet and wind. I dash under a clump of trees, put up the tent underneath their protective branches, and crawl into my sleeping bag to warm up and wait out the rain.

After a couple of hours the rain stops, I break camp, and hike fast to the pass before it decides to rain again.

Here is the view backwards from the pass.





And here is the forward view.



Down from the pass and after several wet-foot crossings, rain clouds threaten again. The hiking day ends early as I pitch the tent under trees again for better rain protection, and hang up the sleeping bag and other items; to dry a bit before rain comes.

Diving ducks are in the lake near my tent, and they make a loud sudden “plop” upon diving.

# Break from Rain

Posted on [July 11, 2015](#)

Day 25, Saturday' June 11, 2015

Start 15-292WT, mile 1865.4

End 16-195M, a couple miles from Sheridan Pass, mile 1890

The trail passes through grassland mixed with bog.



I see a cow moose (or elk maybe) with calf, who move with deceptive speed to hid in woods.

One guy with two dogs is parked for about a month. He comes out with a rifle, concerned about reports of grizzly in tho area.





The path goes past lovely Lake of the Woods.



Afterwards, follow the trail marker game.





Threatening fast-moving clouds all day almost rain. Aside from a brief sprinkle, the day is finally dry.





The trail stays on flat ridge for several miles, a fun walk.



What an intriguing formation in the distance. Do we go near?



Good day without rain.



# Togwotee

Posted on [July 12, 2015](#)

Day 26, Sunday July 12 2015

Start 16-195M, a couple miles from Sheridan Pass, mile 1890

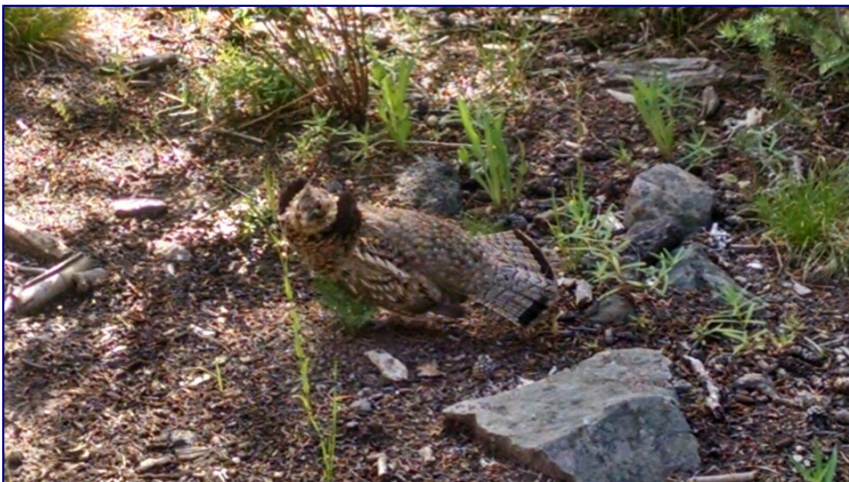
End 17-163RX US 287, mile 1907.7, then hitch 10 miles to Togwotee Mountain Lodge

The morning was on old fire breaks and decommissioned forest road.



I wanted to like this trail, but there was no visible path most of the time, frequent bogs, and I was often worried about taking a wrong turn.

This bird came at me aggressively with neck ruff fluffed.





Later, the path was improved dirt road for many miles, and I enjoyed the certainty.  
This remarkable formation comes closer in view.



Here is a beaver dam, which I have not seen for several days.





Overlooking the dam is the bones of an old yurt.

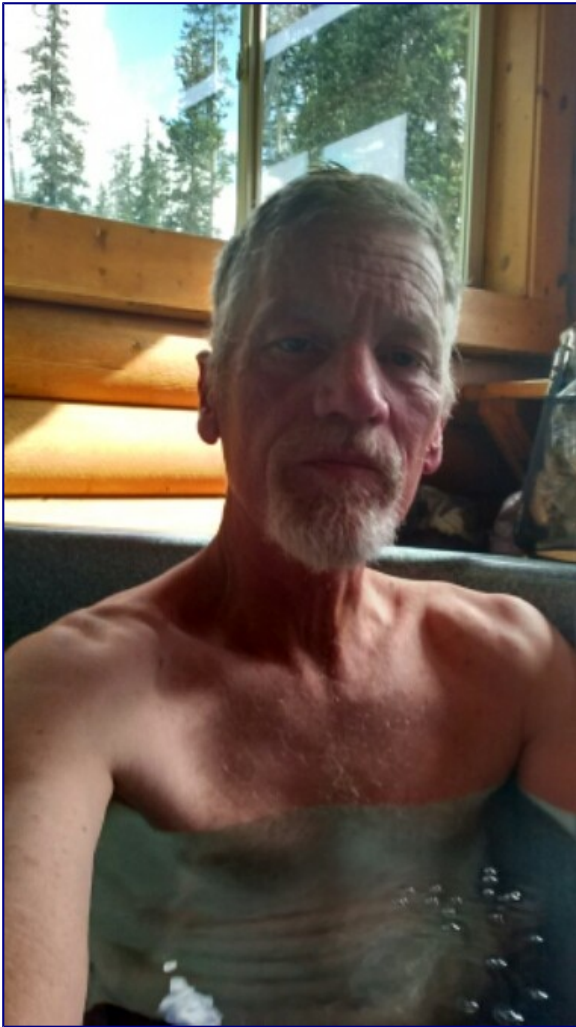


I get to the road at 3PM and take a half hour to cajole a ride 10 miles to Togwotee Mountain Lodge. It rains during the ride.



The staff are very helpful and friendly. Though I cannot afford to stay as a guest, a \$5 card gets me in to the hot tub and shower facility among the cabins.





A coin laundry in a cute little log cabin takes care of my clothes, and a convenience store provides valuable town snacks.

I camp across the road on national forest land, and will call the park backcountry office in the morning to finalize my schedule before getting back on trail.



Good day.

# Brooks Lake

Posted on [July 13, 2015](#)

Day 27, Monday July 13, 2015

Start by hitching 10 miles from Togwotee Mountain Lodge to 17-163RX US 287, mile 1907.7

End 18-055XX, mile 1916.3

I went back to the lodge for breakfast, steak and eggs.



After calling the park service backcountry office to finalize my assigned campsites for each night in the park, I lingered to charge up electronics, then started hitching. A cycling couple with child in back good-naturedly offered me a ride on their tandem.





After 50 minutes I got a ride with someone who moves mobile homes for a living, Steve. The trail starts from the road pathless, signless, cross-country, as before, then joins a road. Pinnacle Buttes comes closer.



At Brooks Lake Lodge, horses are being saddled for a trail ride.





A disturbing sign about bear country.



Pinnacle Buttes is trying to get into every picture, including this one of Brooks Lake.



The trail past the lake is heavily used by horses, but at least there is a trail.  
Rain at 5 makes it a short hiking day.



For the next several days, including through the park, miles hiked will be low. First to enjoy the park. Second to handle a case of shin splints, unusually this far into my trip. And third to allow time to meet my schedule with park service when something unexpected happens.

[finished audiobook [Wuthering Heights](#) by Emily Bronte]

# Bluffs

Posted on [July 14, 2015](#)

Day 28, Tuesday July 14, 2015

Start 18-055XX, mile 1916.3

End 19-033WT, mile 1937.4



The path continued to be heavily stressed by horses until mid-morning, where the trail split and the horses went right and I went left. The path stayed defined and easy to follow.

The mountains here are capped with rocky bluffs. The trail sometimes goes through the exposed rock cliffs, which appear to be limestone, heavily fractured into rectangular pieces.

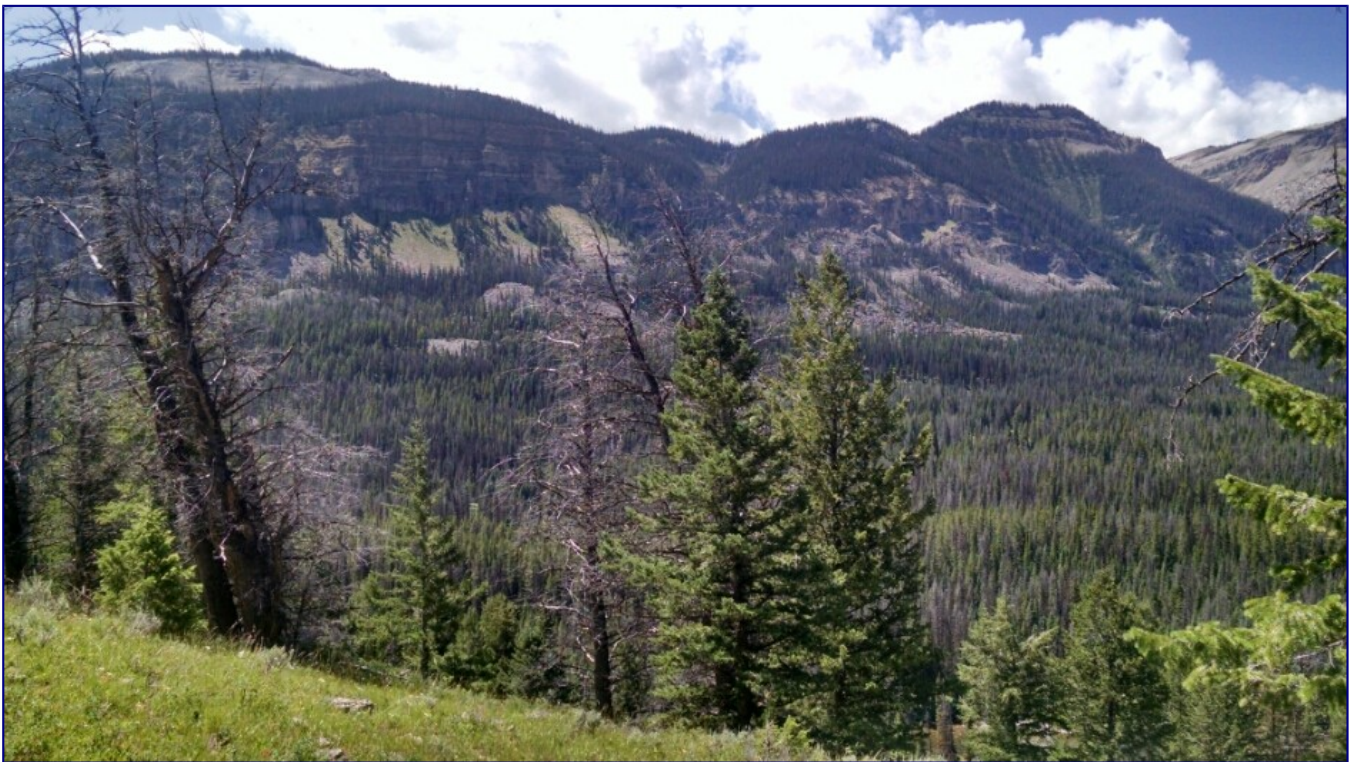




Crossing the Buffalo River.



The trail alternates between meadow and forest, with good views of rocky bluffs all day.



The path stayed out of wet boggy spots, for the most part.





For several hours I pass through an old burn.





Later, a forest service cabin comes into view.



I find a campsite often used by trail riders. A deer comes close, not afraid of humans here.



Rain falls a couple of times at night.

This is one of those days when no other human was in sight.



# Almost Park

Posted on [July 15, 2015](#)

Day 29, Wednesday July 15, 2015

Start 19-033WT, mile 1937.4

End 19-233AP just outside of park near Fox Park, mile 1957.4

The path shows the passing of horses. In places horses have been allowed to make parallel tracks.





The most tracks side by side is 10, a world record. Let me know if you find more.  
Curious items were left at a stream crossing.



Two guys came by on horses and we chatted.



The older gentleman is from South Pass City, and asked how I enjoyed the history.



Soon rain starts, and continues for a couple of hours.





The trail climbs a big ascent, almost 2k elevation gain to 10k.



This will be the last time on this trip to reach this elevation.  
Up at elevation the ridge broadens to wide grassy area.





On the way down I meet Matt, a thru-hiker in a complicated flip who thinks he may be about in front of this years hikers.



He mentioned several hikers I should have run into recently. We might have missed each other at towns.



I meet a group of horses (and mule) hanging out on the trail.



They belong to forest rangers working a cross-cut saw.



No motorized machines allowed in a wilderness area.



Rain threaten, so at 5PM I shelter under trees, cook dinner, and wait it out.  
Two elk are curious as I pass.



Finally I reach the park boundary and camp just on the national forest side. ‘



Now I am in position to make it to my first assigned campsite tomorrow.

[finished audiobook [Homeland](#), by Cory Doctorow]



# Snake and Heart

Posted on [July 16, 2015](#)

Day 30, Thursday July 16, 215

Start 19-233AP just outside of park near Fox Park, mile 1957.4

End campsite 8J4 20-146CG, mile 1972.0

Fox Park Cabin is just at the entrance to the Park. I assume it is unoccupied and did not try the door.



The Snake River becomes my traveling companion all morning.





Several places still have unmelted hail from the downpour yesterday.



Sometimes I follow the river down low, and sometimes from way up high.





The Red Mountains come into view, and give a good idea of my stopping point, since I depart from the Snake River and follow Heart River part way to Heart Lake, just in front of the mountain.



I come to my campsite, 8J4, at 3PM. Not a moment too soon, because shin splints are really acting up. Early camp will give me time to soak them in cold water, and do some repairs and planning.



The “bear pole” was unexpected, two logs chained high in trees for you to throw your bear line over.





Later, Taylor and Nick join the campsite, and I show them the amenities. One used to live in Gillette, WY, but now lives in Santa Barbara. They are tuckered from hiking, and hope to fish later.



Tomorrow will be a challenge. Twelve miles hiking, then another 7 miles on the road to Grants Village. I should not hike fast or it will worsen my shin issues. Hitching is not allowed in the park. The post office closes at 5PM, with NO Saturday hours if I arrive too late, and my food box is effectively gone. So the day might be really easy, or go very wrong. Stay tuned and find out.

# Grant Village

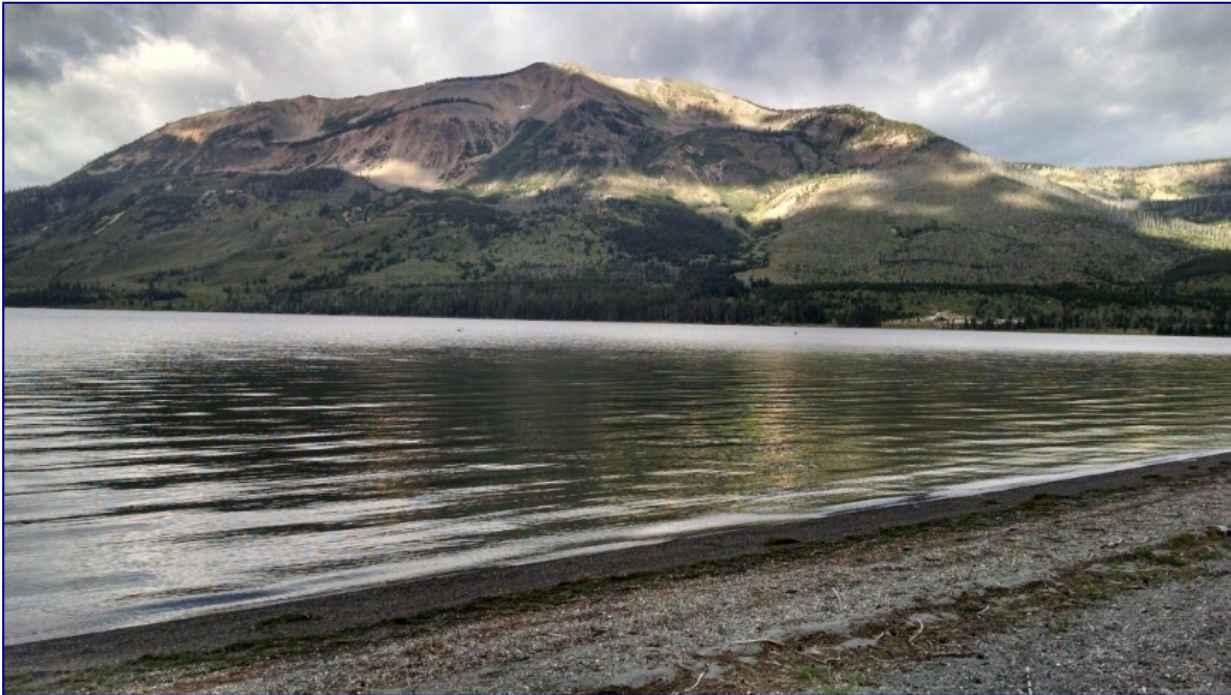
Posted on [July 17, 2015](#)

Day 31, Friday, July 17, 2015

Start campsite 8J4 20-146CG, mile 1972.0

End 20-271TH trailhead, mile 1984.5, then WALK 7 miles north on park road to Grant Village.

Heart Lake opens the morning, with Mount Sheridan in background.



The lake has a long sandy shore. No early fishermen were stirring.





Then following Witch Creek, going along the Lake Geyser Basin, we find dozens of hot springs, steaming and simmering, surrounded by mineral deposit and sometimes sulfur smell.



Some simmer, others go at a rolling boil. Regulations forbid soaking in a hot spring, if you could find one cool enough, but you are allowed to soak in a creek that a hot spring spills into.





In one dry area along the path, I could feel warmth on the face. Bending down, touching the trail, and it feels warm. No springs or steam vents are nearby, just warm ground.



Within a couple of miles of the trailhead other backpackers and day hikers pass the other direction. Few hikers compared to an earlier trailhead like in the Winds.

Reaching the trailhead.

I get to the trailhead at noon, and can find no one to beg a ride. I should have waited longer. The road to Grant Village is narrow, busy, with no shoulder at all. No one had room to pull over and offer a ride.

Seven miles later, with weary legs, Grant Village comes into view at 3PM.



I called during the walk to see if they could reserve a tent site at the campgrounds in the village, and was assured cyclists and hikers would not be turned away. I get my food supply box at the post office, register my tent site and put up my tent, get a shower, and do laundry.

While doing laundry I chat with James, who did the PCT in 2011, and is one year off from my age.



He is hitching and hiking a week in the park, before returning home to do some house repairs for a friend needing to sell a house.

We keep running into each other in the village.



This is Hank the Cow Dog.



Hank and these two guys are hitching from Missouri, after which one of them will start freshman year in college.





Andrew just graduated from Perdue with a mechanical engineer degree. He is completing the Transamerica Bike Tour before his job starts.



Here is Bob, , Andrew's father. They are doing the bike tour together!!



There is something charming about a busy public campground in a cool location like a national park, where people are willing to open up and share their stories.

# Shoshone Lake

Posted on [July 18, 2015](#)

Day 32, Saturday July 18, 2015

Hitch 7 miles from Grant Village to 20-271TH trailhead, mile 1984.5

End Outlet Campsite 8S1, mile 1989.6

After rising early, while most in our group campsite were still sleeping, I silently packed up and got food out of the communal bear box.



My plan was to go to one of the lodges, purchase a few hours of wifi, and camp out and snack and charge most of the morning while uploading blog posts and downloading podcasts and an audiobook. After sending out postcards, I went to the ranger office to ask the location of 8S0, my campsite destination. Ranger Tony shuttled me over to the backcountry office, where a different ranger determined my itinerary had been lost in the system.





After a long while that got cleared up and he wrote me a new backcountry permit. Ranger Tony then took me out to the main South Entrance Road and informed me that hitchhiking actually was allowed in this park, and employees did it all the time. Good to know. A young fellow picked me up, even though his car was completely full of gear.



It turns out he is a larper (live-action role player) and headed to an event lasting several days. He showed me his spears, one made from carbon fiber.

The trail, Dogshead, was carefully groomed, six feet wide with fine gravel in the path. The park service does things different.



I met a thru-hiker who appears to be about my age, Race.





He warned me about some useless up-and-down in southern Montana, useful to know for next year. He is thinking of quitting the trail this year after Wyoming and doing Colorado next year. I get to the campsite and find the bear poles and fire ring by 4PM, a short day to allow injuries to heal.



Shoshone lake is quiet.



Too quiet.

Geysers tomorrow.



# Camp Hot Springs

Posted on [July 19, 2015](#)

Day 33, Sunday July 19, 2015

Start Outlet Campsite 8S1, mile 1989.6

End Upper Firehole Campsite 0A2 21-208WT, mile 2005.3

Rain last night means wet grasses and willow bushes means morning wet feet. Fog plays over Shoshone Lake.



The path climbs through lodgepole pine forest.



Rejoining Shoshone Lake on its far side, see how clear the water is near the shore.



We walk along the west beach of the lake.





Back in the woods, a mama grouse (or whatever) postures while the chicks run for cover.



At Shoshone Geyser Basin, you can see a series of steam plumes from geysers and hot springs.





This geyser stays low, but erratic and rapidly changing in height.



Further in, you can see more steam sources venting.





A geyser has the classic conical opening.



After more pine forest, I reach camp, near a smaller series of hot springs with characteristic mineral deposit on the earth.



I pitch my tent at the very edge of this field, out of sight, and will take care not to sleep-walk.



# Faithful

Posted on [July 20, 2015](#)

Day 34, Monday July 20, 2015

Start Upper Firehole Campsite 0A2 21-208WT, mile 2005.3

End Summit Lake Campsite OE1 22-112CG, mile 2019.7

Going down towards Old Faithful Village in the morning, the first thing to notice is how many steam plumes can be counted.



I had to stop by Old Faithful Inn, a historic and eccentric building my family visited many years ago.





I will have to edit this photo to show the post and beam construction.



See how bent branches are used as detail, giving the impression the building was grown, not built.



Old Faithful gave a show at 11:20AM.





I fooled around in the village sucking up wifi and snacking entirely too long, so this is a later eruption at 2:20PM.



A boardwalk allows us to tour the many geysers, pools, and hot springs.





Some geysers are erratic in timing and height.



Different colors in the chromatic pools are caused by cyanobacteria and other organisms.



Sapphire pool looks sapphire.



So many wonders are here to be discovered, one gets mentally overloaded.



Someone forgot a perfectly good stroller along the trail.



Tri Bhu is a thru-hiker who flipped up to Glacier and is headed south. He hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2012, my year, but we did not meet. He has already done the PCT.





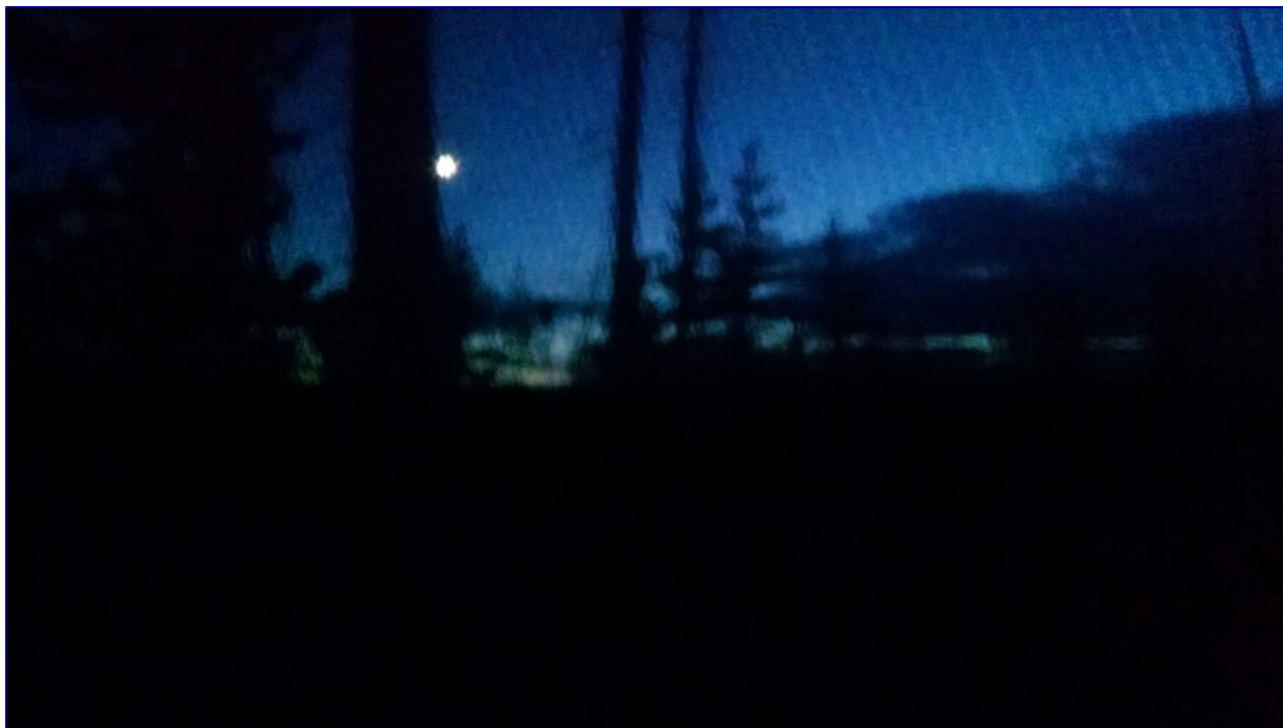
Later on I meet Buck-Thirty, who also flipped to Glacier and heads south.



He hiked the Appalachian Trail in 2012, same as me, but at an unusual start date so missed meeting people I know.



Taking a photo through the bug mesh of my tent at dusk, the moon peaks out over Summit Lake.



Tomorrow I leave the park.

# Exit Park

Posted on [July 21, 2015](#)

Day 35, Tuesday July 21, 2015

Start Summit Lake Campsite OE1 22-112CG, mile 2019.7

End near MI-090M, approx mile 2040.2

Everything is damp in the tent. Stepping out to see Summit Lake, one understands why.





Later the path is through a large burn area.



An informal sign signals passing out of Wyoming!





And soon we go beyond Yellowstone's park boundary. One might not be able to make out the photo because of shadows, but someone spelled out "YNP" in rocks.



I take the "Mack's Inn" alternate route, that gets me to a hitch point a little sooner. The trail is often on reclaimed dirt road, that is bermed repeatedly to prevent motor travel.





Latham Spring was difficult for me to find, but when I went beyond the place where my electronic map said it would be, cairn marked the location. This is the only water source for several miles, after Summit Lake and before Mack's Inn.



An evening thunderstorm can be seen ahead. I get dinner cooked before the rain starts, and finish eating while hiding under a tree. Rain beats down hard, perhaps the biggest downpour of the trip. After an hour the squall is spent and I can resume hiking. I could have walked a few more miles in late evening, but my maps show private land ahead.

# West Yellowstone

Posted on [July 22, 2015](#)

Day 36, Wednesday July 22, 2015

Start near MI-090M, approx mile 2040.2

End Macks Inn US20, approx mile 2046, then get a ride to West Yellowstone

The way continues on forest service road, past vacation homes.



Getting closer to Mack's Inn, I meet Max, who had stopped on the road last night to chat. He was doing road walk exercise. He offers me a ride to West Yellowstone(!), since I mentioned yesterday that was my destination to catch a bus. We agree to meet at the post office at 10.



I get to highway 20 and meet three thru-hikers who flipped to the border to hike south, Track Meat, Spark, and Carrot.



They had prepared to bring snow gear to hike out of Chama, but a storm blew in, so they flipped up to Glacier which had no snow. Seems like a fun group.

I get a hiker box at the post office that had been shipped before I decided to stop the hike here, then meet Max and family and they drive me to the Visitors Center at West Yellowstone, Montana.





The town is very busy and very touristy. Rooms are usually filled early.



My hole-in-the-wall hotel did not allow check-in until 4PM, no exceptions, so I find a laundry that also has showers, then go to the library to use a computer with printer to book my bus tickets. I might have been able to optimize my route back home a little better, but time on the computer was limited, so best get something printed and prepare to enjoy a looong ride. Greyhound does not serve Montana especially well, but the bus company Salt Lake Express is trying, so my trip involves two bus lines. The hotel lobby was locked until 4PM.



I never saw that before.

No more hiking on this trip, so you can stop reading. Next year: Montana!