

GET 2017 Trail Journal Index

Grand Enchantment Trail, Phoenix AZ to Albuquerque NM



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First Water

GET 2017 Day 1, March 18, Saturday.

Start First Water Trailhead, section 1 mile 0.

End near Upper Black Top Mesa Pass, section 1 mile 5.

Miles walked: 5

The east-bound start of the Grand Enchantment Trail (GET) begins at First Water Trailhead, near Apache Junction on the eastern edge of the Phoenix metro area. The start is only a few miles from the Arizona Renaissance Festival, so it seemed like a good idea (at the time) to spend a day at the Ren-Fair before starting the hike late in the day.



The “Pleasure Feast”, a six-course meal with entertainment and merriment, is a splendid way to build up fuel reserves before a long hike.



We enjoyed watching live shows with jugglers, circus arts, singers, and musicians.



Finally at 4:30 I bade farewell to Better Half and started hiking in 92F weather.



The land is green and thick with vegetation, with several varieties of cactii, including saguaro, and palo verde, and long grasses.



The trail crosses creeks with clear running water in several places.



The trail gradually climbs up canyons, with views of more Superstition Mountains ahead.



At 7PM walking must end, as dusk approaches. I am used to long summer days for long walks, so shorter March days will be a challenge.

Difficulty Level

GET 2017 Day 2, March 19, Sunday.

Start near Upper Black Top Mesa Pass, section 1 mile 5.

End near Angel Basin, section 1 mile 25.9.

Miles walked: 20.9

The route continues on Dutchmen Trail, with easy grades, often near creeks.



Finally leaving Dutchmen, the route goes on Red Tanks Trail, Hoolie Bacon Trail, JF Trail, and Rogers Canyon Trail, often more difficult grades, narrow, sometimes hard to find, frequently climbing out of box canyons.



Someone had come along and placed small cairns just where was needed to find the trail at each puzzling turn. It's good that yesterday's trail was so easy, and that the path eases into the higher difficulty level presented today. Challenge accepted.

[finished audiobook [Picadilly Jim](#), by P G Wodehouse]

Trails Merge

GET 2017 Day 3, March 20, Monday.

Start near Angel Basin, section 1 mile 25.9.

End near Superior, section 2 mile 16.2

Miles walked: 20.6

In Roger's Canyon, cliff dwellings guard the entrance.



The canyon is also notable for the change of plant life. Gone are all succulents, replaced by actual trees. The high walls and narrow canyon trap air cooled by rushing water, making for a pleasant morning walk that corkscrews through the passage.



Our way joins the official Arizona Trail (AZT), which we share for several days, almost until Monument. We continue following Roger's Canyon and exit Tonto Wilderness.



I meet four northbound AZT hikers, two section hiking and two thru-hiking. Each tells of meeting several GET hikers going in the opposite direction, just a day or few ahead of me.

Going up Montana Mountain (ahem) on a forest road provides views from the top of the Tonto I just crossed.



A bewildering number of switchbacks descends to Reavis Canyon, with tricking water available off and on. The canyon begins too high for any saguaros or other cacti, but gradually descends to altitudes where saguaro thrive.

A huge saguaro is down along the trail.



Looking at a cross-section of one of the broken arms shows the internal structure, with woody stems arranged in a circle, perhaps for structural support or for circulation.



Later, in Whitford Canyon, a saguaro is intertwined with mesquite.



A hillside is covered with yellow flowers and saguaro.



This is what the yellow flowers look like up close, produced by a small shrub.



The trail descends down to US60, about five miles from Superior. I have a supply box coming, but it is late in the day and the post office is closed. I walk closer to town and stealth camp on public land, hoping to make a quick entrance and exit in the morning.

Here Be Monsters

GET 2017 Day 4, March 21, Tuesday.

Start near Superior, segment 2 mile 16.2, then walk into town.

End near boundary of Tonto National Forest, segment 3 mile 11.7, off GET to follow new AZT trail alignment for a few miles.

Trail miles walked: 14

Striking stealth camp a couple of miles from Superior, I hike along US60, dodging massive construction. Getting on Main Street (starts at Buckhorn Tavern) I walk to historic downtown district to use the library and post office. Downtown is struggling, but some effort is being made to refurbish old buildings.



WIFI at the library was non-functioning, and also slow or broken at any open wifi point. Was a key internet link into town down today? No blog posts can transmit until another town.

I got my supply box at the post office right after it opened at 8:30. An AZT hiker was in line after me, who was staying in town another day.

On the walk out of town I stopped at the arboretum, to become more familiar with the Sonoran eco-zone plants I am seeing on this hike.



The shrub with yellow flowers I was wondering about yesterday is called Brittlebush

A fuzzy pink flower I see often is named Fairy dusters.



Any Fairies reading this might try growing this plant.

At the trailhead I chatted with a hiker just finishing a day hike. This is a popular starting point, with several bikers and hikers in the first few miles.

The trail winds around several slopes, not often following creeks at the bottom.



Pools of seasonal water can still be found in a few creek-bed crossings.

A colorful fat lizard, about half a meter long, flicks a tongue at me and slowly steps off the trail with dignity.



This is my first Gila monster encounter in the wild.

I departed the official GET route for a few miles, on new AZT alignment that has better markings, at the cost of about 5 extra miles, more walking along the Gila River tomorrow. Stopping for the night just down from a pass in a sheltered area, expect a scenic descent down to the Gila River in the morning.

Gila

GET 2017 Day 5, March 22, Wednesday.

Start near boundary of Tonto National Forest, segment 3 mile 11.7 of 30.8, off GET to follow new AZT trail alignment for a few miles.

End just past village of Kelvin, segment 4 mile 1.5

GET Trail miles walked: 20.6

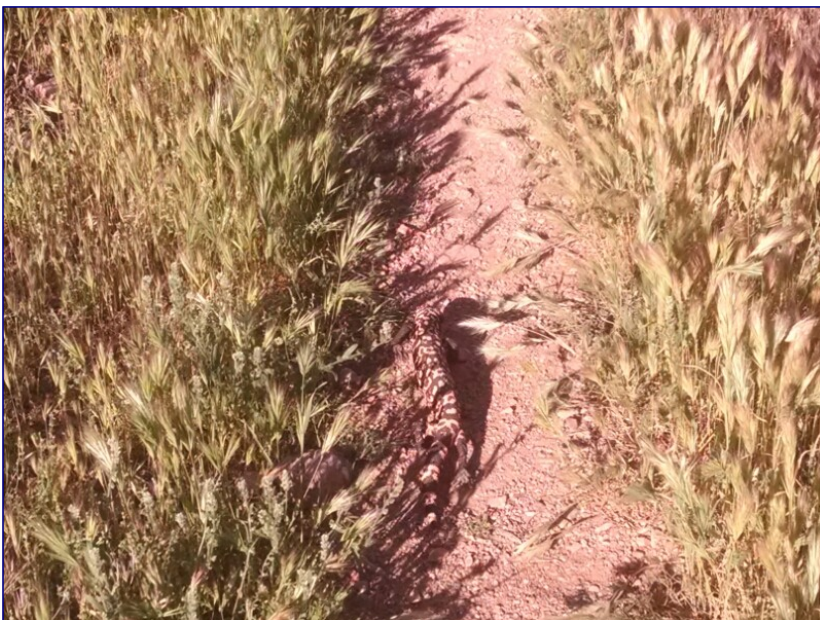
Going down Red Mountain in early morning, I head towards the Gila River.



While still high up, the river channel can be seen in the distance.



Another monster blocks the path, until the sound of trekking poles knocked together encourages it to leave.



Finally down to the river, the path keeps its distance, often 100 feet high on the nearby slope to stay well out of the flood plain.



The river is surrounded by thick vegetation, mesquite and willow, typically too thick for a human to get close to the water's edge. But sometimes you can find a spot where the river meanders close to the trail, and a dry tributary feeds into the river, and you can walk this sandy path to the water.

On the CDT alternate in New Mexico, the Gila water was clear, cold, and you could walk through it, crossing the stream two dozen times in a day. Here the water is muddy, deep, and fast moving, not something you would try to walk through.

Here is a view of river from above.



With no other water sources past a seep at Red Mountain until the end of the day, I had to get water a couple of times from the Gila. Once after unsuccessfully trying to find a clear route to the water, I heard ATVs nearby and followed their path. The dirt from the river clogged my filter, so I had to back-flush at the end of the day.

A copper mine dominates the landscape near the village of Kelvin



Somehow my pants got a large rip, and I don't know how it happened.



I met four AZT hikers today. The heat makes it hard to stop and chat for long.

Near the end of the day I reach Kelvin, where a road maintenance depot offers a faucet for hikers. Then across a one-lane bridge across the Gila, and the trail leads south for a while.

Rain Magic

GET 2017 Day 6, March 23, Thursday.

Start just past village of Kelvin, segment 4 mile 1.5

End Freeman Road Trailhead, segment 4 mile 27.6

Miles walked: 26.1

Light rain started at 3AM, sometimes becoming heavy. Rain continued as I broke camp. Temperatures drop in a major way from the heat wave of the past several days, and clouds suggest an all-day rain.

The trail ascends to a series of gravelly ridges with views.



Rains do finally subside, but clouds threaten most of the day, and brief showers mean putting back on the rain jacket. Later the land becomes low rolling hills with frequent washes



Saguaro becomes scarce. Plenty of yucca and mesquite grow here, with a few grasses and cacti. A few scattered cattle graze.



A cluster of large boulders seems put out here to make us ask how they got here.



I meet three AZT thru-hiker, and one tells me about a trail angel ahead. At the trailhead Sequoia is spending several days in a camper meeting hikers.



In the real world Sequoia runs an expedition company. Out here, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, he gets good 4G signal and can tend to business.

Kikipu and Backup keep him company.



Mammoth

GET 2017 Day 7, March 24, Friday.

Start Freeman Road Trailhead, segment 5 mile 0, then to mile 13.8 to segment 6 alt.

End town of Mammoth on Aravaipa bypass route segment 6 alt mile 9.5

Miles walked: 23.3

The path tends to be on top of long low ridges, dipping down to arroyos (washes here) and back up.



Saguaro is nearly gone, preferring steep rocky areas. Antelope Peak stands out taller than the surrounding rolling hills



At mid-morning the GET splits off from the AZT and continues eastward in Putnam Wash, which grows wide. Water is running, possibly from Putnam Spring, and eventually goes underground.



The wash sides are steep, and saguaro return.



The wash goes all the way to the San Pedro River, a wide deep dry riverbed. The main GET crosses and heads east to Aravaipa Canyon, but you need a permit to hike there, restricted to 30 people a day. The canyon has become popular, and spots are snapped up instantly online.

So I have to take the Aravaipa bypass route, walking 9 miles south to the town of Mammoth along the western bank of the San Pedro River channel on a dirt road, hot with no available shade. I did not take photos to help forget that walk.

Violet gives me a room at the Lodge, the only motel in town. She does hiker laundry for a small charge, and offers to contact a friend at the BLM to try and get me a permit for Aravaipa, but no joy.

Shower, laundry, snacks, ... what else? Oh yeah, a burger.



Canyon Rim

GET 2017 Day 8, March 25, Saturday.

Start town of Mammoth on Aravaipa bypass route segment 6 alt mile 9.5

End at rim of Turkey Creek Canyon, near segment 6 alt mile 30.

Miles walked: 20.5

Cowboy Miller Road heads east several miles toward a tall mountain ridge. Looking back at Mammoth...



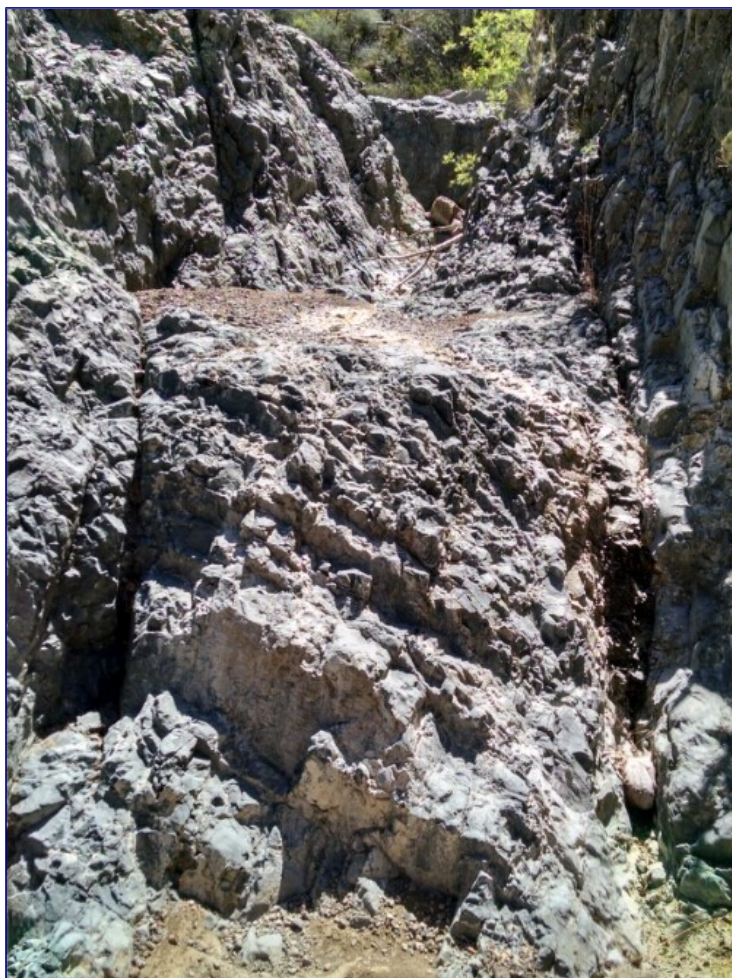
Here are the mountains getting closer.



Heading towards low spot on mountain



Cross-country up arroyo with rock scramble.



Little Table Mountain ahead



Tough jeep road terrain



Cool mining ruins



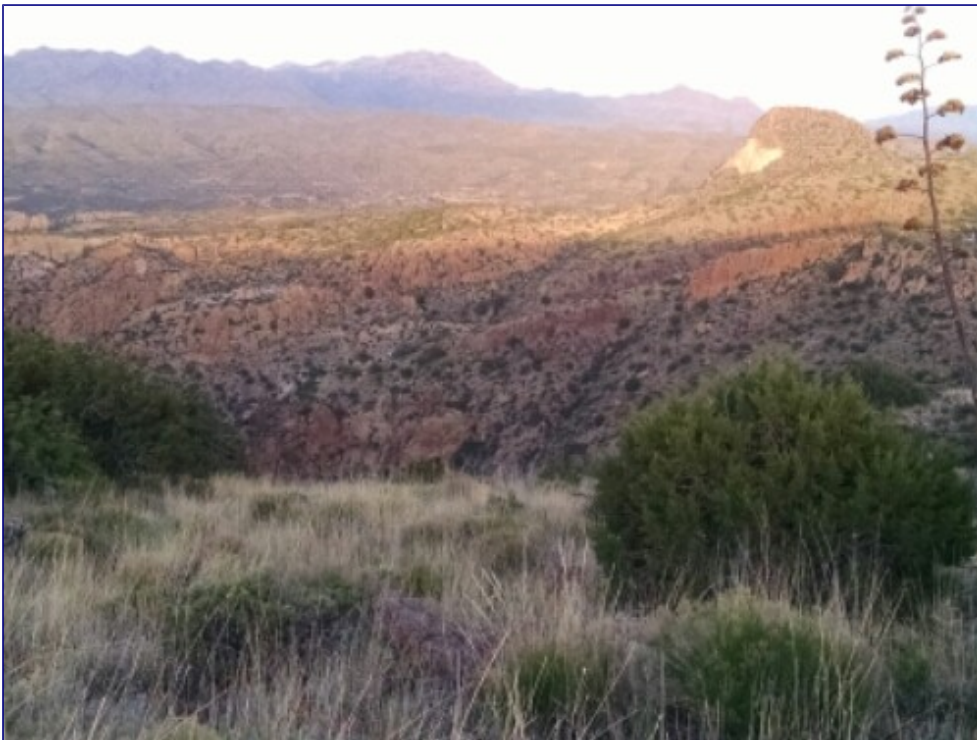


Nearing rim of deep canyon at sunset, several memorable rock formations





More



I find a little ledge protected from the wind just down from Turkey Creek Canyon rim, and set up camp with inspiring views.



Aravaipa

GET 2017 Day 9, March 26, Sunday.

Start at rim of Turkey Creek Canyon, near segment 6 alt mile 30.

End Blackrock Canyon trail, 3 miles from intersection with Holdout Canyon Trail

Miles walked: ???

The trail descends down to the bottom of Turkey Creek Canyon.



Trees with peeling bark that look like sycamores are at the bottom, growing where you would expect cottonwoods.



A mostly intact cliff dwelling is here.



Several groups of ATVs and 4WDs are camped in the canyon, and I chat with people that wonder what a hiker is doing here.



Turkey Creek Canyon joins up to Aravaipa Canyon, and I am allowed to walk this part out to the trailhead without a permit.

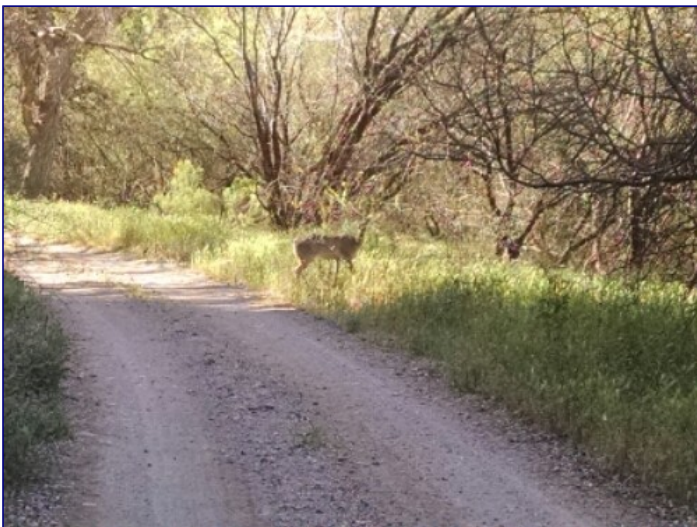
The mixing of light and shadow in a deep canyon makes photography a challenge.



Mountain cottonwoods are here in Aravaipa. This view gives an idea how tall and vertical the canyon wall can be.



A deer grazes near the road.



Good-bye Aravaipa with one last image.



Heading up a rocky jeep trail toward rocky mountains, we leave cool canyon air and start some challenging trail.



Well, I say trail, but trail all but fades away. A few cairns are visible, but I have a lot of trouble finding my way. With overgrown mesquite and yucca, it is impractical to go cross-country to the next GPS coordinate.



Since Holdout Tower is marked on the map as “vague”, I divert onto Blackrock Canyon jeep trail alternate, then have trouble navigating. I follow a creek drainage for several miles that will eventually join up with the main trail. Looking ahead at the map, tomorrow may be even harder to find my way.

Segment 8

GET 2017 Day 10, March 27, Monday.

Start Black Rock Canyon trail, 3 miles from intersection with Holdout Canyon Trail at segment 8 mile 16

End on route to summit of Cottonwood Mountain, segment 8 mile 28

Miles walked: 15

I start the day following a creek drainage for several miles. A small fall at one of several drop-offs gurgles onward.



Continuing along drainage of Black Rock Canyon designated Trail 292, I start to see footprints as the trail merges with the main GET route.



Suddenly I am startled by a warning growl. An animal is near the water's edge, partially in shadow, and warns me to stay clear.



I do not get closer for a better photo to save the animal any distress. This appears to be a badger, but it is in trouble. It cannot move its back legs, and struggles to drag itself along. It cannot survive long in this condition. Could a trap do this, or disease, or a fight?

The map refers to “Advanced Cross-country”, where visible paths wink in and out briefly on unusually rocky and steep terrain with wicked stabbing yucca and clinging mesquite. The path jogs back and forth frequently to avoid crossing private lands.



The way is difficult to find and follow, and progress is slow. This will be a low-mileage day even with great effort.

Finally we merge onto a real visible trail that can be followed by mere mortals, Trail 66, with many switchbacks climbing up to Cottonwood Mountain.

Sometimes you see something strange and unexplained on the trail, like a big pile of concrete blocks.



As we go higher, actual deciduous forest grows along Trail 66



The view from the heights is worth the struggle.



This was the toughest trail segment so far. Since I couldn't make the miles, I am forced to camp at high elevation near the peak of the mountain, and try to find a spot just down from the ridge sheltered from wind and weather to pitch camp.

Cache Miss

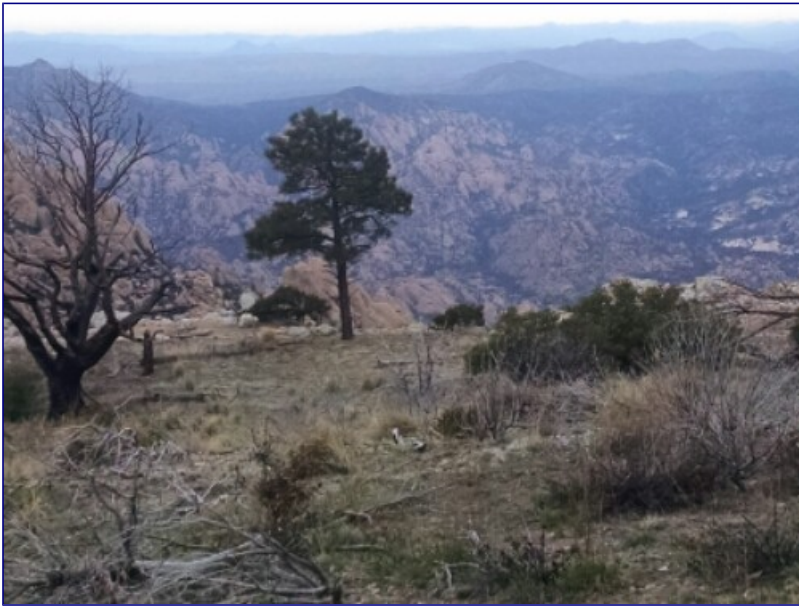
GET 2017 Day 11, March 28, Tuesday.

Start on route to summit of Cottonwood Mountain, segment 8 mile 28 of 36.

End Klondyke Road, mile 1.9 of segment 9.

Miles walked: 9.9

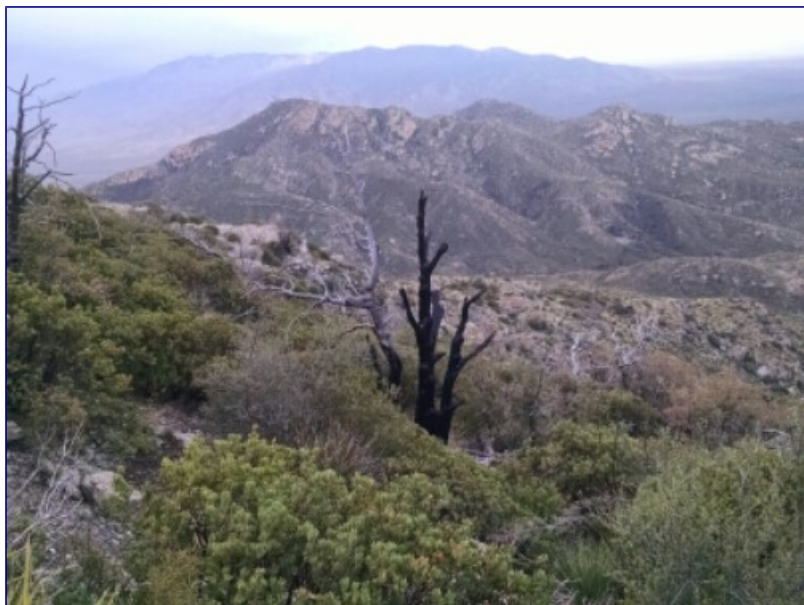
The view coming down Cottonwood Mountain in the early morning is a good start to the day.



I heard snow pellets hit the tent last night, but it was melted in the morning. Here is proof, as snow pellets piled up in spots along the trail.



The trail uses FR 677, a 4WD track nearly invisible in places from neglect.



Finally I get to Klondyke Road, which I will follow for a couple of miles before heading toward the Pinaleno Mountains, capped with snow.

A couple of weeks before starting my hike, I cached food in three places, including Klondyke Road. (Since I live in the general area, in New Mexico, I could bury all three caches and return home in one day. Other hikers mail packages to themselves to a now-closed country store a few miles away in the ghost town of Klondyke, where the owner puts the packages in a locker in back. Since I was traveling nearby burying caches anyway, my way seemed better. The other caches were to avoid hitchhiking.)



The last couple of days have been hard hiking, so I am looking forward to food treats included in the food cache I buried along this road.

I am stunned when I get to the location of the cache. Someone has taken my food!



They left the hole unfilled where I had buried a metal ammo box, a few dozen feet away from the road, near the base of a utility pole. There are no digging or drag marks, as from an animal—this was human action. A couple of water containers I had left nearby remained untouched. In hind-sight, I realized that not burying the water was an error, that lead the culprit to investigate the area and notice a couple of rocks that looked suspicious and find my treasure. I searched in a spiral pattern to see if the cache had been hidden nearby as a joke, but no luck. Some faint boot prints nearby likely belonged to the perp.

What a quandary. It is sixteen miles along a dirt to the main highway, and another several miles to a town with groceries. Would I have to hike the whole way, or would a ride come by? Could I somehow resupply and make it back here? My family lived four and a half hours away, so I could get picked up and restart the hike later. Back home some developments were in progress where they really needed my assistance for several days. I never planned to hike the GET through in one go, but to break it up in three or four sections, still in one calendar year to count as a thru-hike. But it would really be sweet to have completed the hot Arizona portion and come back later starting in New Mexico.

Wayne, an area rancher, stops to tell me I missed the turn-off on Klondyke Road, and I explain my predicament. He offers me a ride to the nearest town. He is quite familiar with the geography of the nearby GET, from talking to several other hikers, and asks perceptive details about the route out of Superior.

In town I find a Safeway with Wifi, and call family for a pick-up. Because of issues at home this turned out to be the right decision. While waiting I continue walking to keep warm, all the way to Safford. The weather has turned cold and windy, quite a change from the heat wave of a few days before. While waiting I have plenty of time to meditate on the malevolence of the person who took my supplies. What motivates such an act?

I make it home to sleep in my own bed— not how I imagined this day would end.

But before resuming the Grand Enchantment Trail, I have a little surprise hike planned. Just you wait and see!

Restart Klondyke

GET 2017 Day 12, May 7, Sunday.

Start Klondyke Road, mile 1.9 of segment 9.

End Segment 9 mile 8.1, near Two Troughs.

Miles walked: 6.2

Papa (father-in-law) and Mary just happened to be taking the Bucket (RV) from New Mexico to Arizona, and would be going past my home and Safford, so they agreed to give me a ride to Klondyke Road so I could restart my hike.





I get on the trail mid-afternoon, with conditions windy, cold, and scattered showers. After so many weeks off the trail, I had dreaded hot temperatures, so cool weather is a pleasant surprise.

A dirt road rises into rolling foothills of the Pinaleno Mountains, in mesquite and juniper.



After a few miles the way is cross-country up a ridge.



The light fails at 7PM on a short hiking day. Good to be back.

Pinaleno Climb

GET 2017 Day 13, May 8, Monday.

Start Segment 9 mile 8.1 of 9.8, near Two Troughs.

End Segment 10 mile 16.1 at Chesley Flat

Miles walked: 17.8

The trail descends down cross-country and cattle path to a 4WD forest road. The road turns into Johns Canyon Trail 313, which follows and gradually climbs out of Bellows Canyon and crosses over to follow Johns Canyon Ridge. The trail is badly overgrown.



Often the path disappears, and blue tape tied to trees is the only sign of trail. Pushing past branches makes for slow going.

I finally reach West Peak at 8600 feet around noon, greeted with intermittent hail and pellet snow.



View from West Peak



I descend down to Taylor Pass at 7100 feet on Clark Peak Trail 301, a well-maintained path with vegetation cut well back. This is a bit of good luck, so my clothes do not get drenched from a light drizzle of sleet coming down at times.

Clark Peak at 9000 feet seemed to take ages to ascend.



I am low on water at this point, as all “seasonal” water sources seem to be dry, but I know that Riggs Lake will have water if nothing else does.

View of Gila and farmland plain to the north.



Coming down from Clark a grove of quaking aspens thrives.



I follow level forest road 803 and find water just before the lake, and my spirits improve. Already at 9272 feet elevation, the day ends early at Chesley Flat to avoid the climb to Webb Peak until tomorrow. At this altitude, the night will be a cold one, with rain or snow likely.

Almost Safford

GET 2017 Day 14, May 9, Tuesday.

Start Segment 10 mile 16.1 of 25.9 at Chesley Flat

End stealth camp near Frye Mesa Road just beyond edge of town, Segment 11 mile 8.5

Miles walked: 18.3

Snow! A quarter-inch to half-inch layer of powder covers everything.



Chesley Flat Trail 311 is wide and well-maintained, so following path covered with snow is not a problem.



The lookout tower at Webb Peak (10,029 feet) will offer no views this morning, with clouds hiding the plain below.



I have to climb part-way up the tower anyway, just for the LOLs.



Webb Peak Trail 345 is also easy to follow with gentle grade and no wind– a pleasure to hike.



Ash Creek Trail 307 is steep even with many switchbacks because there is so much altitude to loose. I am glad to be going down, but meet some hikers going up. Several superb views reward the walk.









After following a dirt road, I must climb a mesa and follow along one edge, weaving past mesquite and boulders, slow going.



Past a few jeep tracks the path is along Frye Mesa Road (FR 103), long and straight for several miles. I stop just before getting into Thatcher/Safford, a large community along the Gila River with much agricultural activity.

(Well, actually I go into town a couple of miles for snacks, then return to the outskirts to stealth-camp among the creosote bush, at a balmy 3200 feet altitude.)

Solomon Pass

GET 2017 Day 15, May 10, Wednesday.

Start stealth camp near Frye Mesa Road just beyond edge of town of Safford, Segment 11 mile 8.5 of 12.8

End Salt Trap Road just after intersection with Solomon Pass Road, Segment 12 mile 14.8

Miles walked: 19.1

Walking into Safford, I quickly resupplied at Safeway, repackaging while eating Hagen Daz and bananas, then walked to the library found a secluded corner to plug in and recharge and upload trail journal and caught up on email. All these tasks take some time, and I got back on the trail at 11.

The route goes along vast flat agricultural irrigated fields.



So what are they growing? The edge of one field gives a clue.



Must be cotton.

Turning away from fields, we cross a bridge over the Gila River.



The bridge has to be much longer than the river is wide, due to shifting river beds.

Then the route goes up a dry wash, a “braided wash” because several paths keep splitting and rejoining.



Following a power line road through creosote, Solomon Pass becomes visible in the distance.



After walking up a road and path, here is the view from Solomon Pass.



And another view...



And on other side.



Creosote has given way to grassland, and cattle graze near my camp.

Safford-Morenci Trail

GET 2017 Day 16, May 11, Thursday.

Start Salt Trap Road just after intersection with Solomon Pass Road, Segment 12 mile 14.8 of 21.9

End Segment 13 mile 12.9, down from the Bellmeyer Saddle

Miles walked: 20

The route goes up a “braided wash” for a few miles.



Then up a road...



...And down the other side.



The trailhead is pretty lonely.



The route that follows is a mixture of trail, wash, and dirt road.



I enjoy a narrow slot canyon. Watch out for that rock.



Cool formations on the way up Turtle Mountain reward the climb.



The trail crosses onto a tiny sliver of San Carlos Apache reservation at the saddle. Here is the view.



On the way down is the traditional breaking of the trekking pole during a fall. I seem to break one every long trip.



The trails today have often been faint and hard to follow, and overgrown with shrubs like mesquite. After a few days of faint trails, my “Trail Eyes” kick in, and finding a faint path becomes automatic and does not require my entire concentration.

Painted Bluff

GET 2017 Day 17, May 12, Friday.

Start Segment 13 mile 12.9 of 15.8, down from the Bellmeyer Saddle

End near Curve Spring, Segment 14 mile 17.6 on Painted Bluff Trail

Miles walked: 20.5

Here is a photo of the first of several dozen wet-foot crossings on Eagle Creek, fast water coming up to knees but rarely higher.



High walls, narrow, shifting dirt road.



The road is hard to find at times, crossing and landing way upstream or curving back to the same side. You really do not want to loose the trail and attempt to bushwhack, as thick growths of salt cedar, willow, and mesquite make an imposing barrier.

Cattle along this riparian area were ubiquitous, the highest density I have noticed on public lands.

A variety of colored paints seemed to have been used to construct these bluffs







After several miles of this, trail departs water and follows a dry wash for miles, with cattle paths braiding into faint trail. Sometimes you just have to go with the flow.





Finally, after winding around hillsides for a while, it is time to look for a flat spot to pitch a tent in the failing light.

Morenci

GET 2017 Day 18, May 13, Saturday.

Start near Curve Spring, Segment 14 mile 17.6 of 23.9 on Painted Bluff Trail

End forest road 475 Segment 16 mile 1.6, after 11.7 miles on Segment 15

Miles walked: 19.6

Can hear Morenci Mine earthmovers while walking the ridge for a view.



Got my food cache, which was an ammo box container buried at the picnic grounds next to Granville Campground.



The cache allowed me to skip hitchhiking to Morenci. The highway through town, US191, is gnarly and exceptionally twisty, however, so if you get a chance to explore the area be sure to do so.

Spent a couple of hours at a shady picnic table doing repairs like a regular town stop, mostly sewing jobs. Those thorny plants are hard on clothes.

The trails followed today seem built with a wider corridor of cleared vegetation, so they are easier to push through in places where they do get overgrown. Also, the altitude is high enough, or some other factor might be involved, where almost no mesquite is present today, and that was a particularly opportunistic thorny hazard that likes to lean into the space over trails. The wider corridor also made the pathway easier to find in places that got overgrown with shrubs.

Granville Trail 572. Views, but a hazy day



HC Canyon Trail 11 seems mainly a “connector trail” with few views, except purple bluffs near the end of the part I hiked.



Departing pathway the GET goes along a low ridge following a game trail. Rock formations in the distance hint at what might be coming ahead.



FR475 road walk to finish the day with a good fast stride.



Not feeling well. Stomach cramps. Digestive tract issue? Cannot eat. Someone who hikes all day should not miss dinner.

Slickrock

GET 2017 Day 19, May 14, Sunday.

Start forest road 475 Segment 16 mile 1.6 of 13

End Segment 17 mile 8, on way to Maple Peak

Miles walked: 19.4

Whatever digestive problem I had last night went away without any eruptions. I managed to eat first dinner at midnight.

Going past some ranch houses, this was posted near the road.



I cannot do much about the “Living” part to comply with their demands.

There are some mighty fine rock formations on FR475, but just wait and see what appears later.





The trail goes along a creek-bed. I saw a bear that did NOT run away.



This poor fellow still looks fierce, like he struggled to the bitter end.

Climbing up a ledge on the creek, these rocks are just showing off.



Then I get to climb on these rocks and explore.

The area is called “slickrock wonderland” on my map.



The rocks have a smooth rolling undulating property, like the world’s largest skate park, but with trees included.





Here is what this “slickrock” looks like up close.



All good things must end, so taking a forest road to the trailhead for Wild Bunch Trail #7.



I never saw the movie— any version. Now I will need to watch and find out if the trail has any connections.



This trail connects with Horse Canyon Trail, but we will divert before getting to any canyon. Instead we continue to climb.

Looking east, perhaps that is New Mexico.



The day ends up high near a peak at elevation 7940 feet, and with the last couple of hot days the cool night should be welcome.

Viva NM

GET 2017 Day 20, May 15, Monday.

Start Segment 17 mile 8 of 13.7, on way to Maple Peak

End Section 18 mile 9.7 community of Alma, then walked off-trail 4.5 miles to Glenwood for motel and for mail tomorrow

Miles walked: 15.4

This stretch really does not have many water sources. This seasonal earthen tank looked OK until you got up close, then you knew it would clog your filter.



After following so many “ghost trails” on previous days, it was nice to get on a forest road with soft unpacked dirt and really stretch the legs on a fast walk for several miles without worrying about navigating.

Here is the view to the east just after crossing the barb-wire fence that indicated the state border.



Notice how grassy the terrain has become on this side of the border, with few cacti and mesquite.

Not very many miles from town, a deep canyon had some stagnant pools of water left. This was better than the earthen tank, even with little minnows swimming around, so I switched water.



Looking over the village, I can make out buildings on the main road, US180. The country store is my first destination.



A couple of dogs wandered over on the shady porch of the store. Good benches, so I hang out.



A motel in Glenwood, the next town over, sometimes offers hikers a shuttle, but no one returns my calls. Eventually I walk the highway, which has a safe shoulder on the 4.5 mile march.

Oh no! The town Trading Post (convenience store) is closed! In fact, several motels are closed, and a remaining restaurant has limited days open, not including today.



Am I somehow using an out-of-date version of the Town Guide for this trail, so my info on Glenwood is out of date?

Finally I get to Los Olmos Lodge, and the proprietor is extra nice, and I get my choice of microwave and soda to make up for me not realizing the store was closed and no restaurants open today.



My cabin is built with local lava rock, built around the 1940s.

No laundry in town, but hand-washing in a sink gets the job done.

The motel owner wants to take over the Trading Post and open it within a year, but it needs a lot of work.

He offers me a shuttle back up to Alma tomorrow. I am now a happy customer.

I had considered exploring the famous “cat-walk” trail tomorrow before resuming my hike, but the trailhead is five miles out of town.



That will have to wait for another day– a good reason to come back some day.

Mineral Creek

GET 2017 Day 21, May 16, Tuesday.

Start get shuttle from Glenwood back to village of Alma, Section 19 mile zero of 5.6.

End Silver Creek Divide on Bursum Road, Section 20 mile 12

Miles walked: 17.6

Got breakfast at Alma's Diner while listening to the ranchers at nearby tables.

Going up Mineral Creek Road, a plaque recognizes the tomb of James C Cooney, who discovered a mineral deposit near here while in the army but kept it secret until he mustered out and started a gold and silver mine.



Several fragments of mining artifacts can be seen along the route.







What did all this stuff do?

And these can be found in the narrow Cooney Canyon with the creek running and the path crossing water many times.





Rain and sleet started mid-way up the canyon, and stopped at about the end of the canyon. I guess if you are already splashing through creeks then rain shouldn't matter.

After going over a mountain on another trail, the route follows Bursum Road the rest of the day, gradually climbing, mostly going straight east high on the mountains

The pine and aspen trees here were so tall! And so close together! I could not frame a good shot with my camera. This photo does not do it justice.



It seemed like Manhattan of forests.

Bursum seemed very high-end for a forest road— a lot of engineering must go into dealing with erosion from steep mountainsides and from fires.



As the day ends, the road has risen to over 9000 feet altitude. With the weather change and rains, this means a cold night. But tomorrow altitudes will be even higher, and I need to go as far as possible today so I am not stuck at an even higher location tomorrow night.

Mogollon Crest Trail

GET 2017 Day 22, May 17, Wednesday.

Start Silver Creek Divide on Bursum Road, Section 20 mile 12

End terminus of Trail 152 at junction with Trail 151, Section 20 mile 34.6

Miles walked: 22.6

At the start of the Crest Trail one must cross a number of deadfalls.



All day the trail tends to go near the tops of ridges with gentle slopes on well-constructed pathway.

The ground scrunches under feet, wet from yesterday's rain and then frozen overnight.

The frozen ground gives way to fresh snow as the trail climbs higher, over 10k feet elevation.



In places, fresh snow covers old snow banks.



As Mogollon Baldy nears, we get dramatic views of mountains below.



Baldy on the ascent



Cabin locked.



And lookout tower off-limits



Elevation sign on porch of cabin, 10728 feet.



Views from atop Mogollon Baldy. Vistas in every direction.









Easy gradual descending trail for miles and thousands of feet in altitude.

Near the end is a large area of meadow (park), with bunch grass, and ponderosa pine in low density so the ground is mainly covered in grass instead of pine needles. How did this come to grow this way?



Gila Splash

GET 2017 Day 23, May 18, Thursday.

Start terminus of Trail 152 at junction with Trail 151, Section 20 mile 34.6 of 36.6

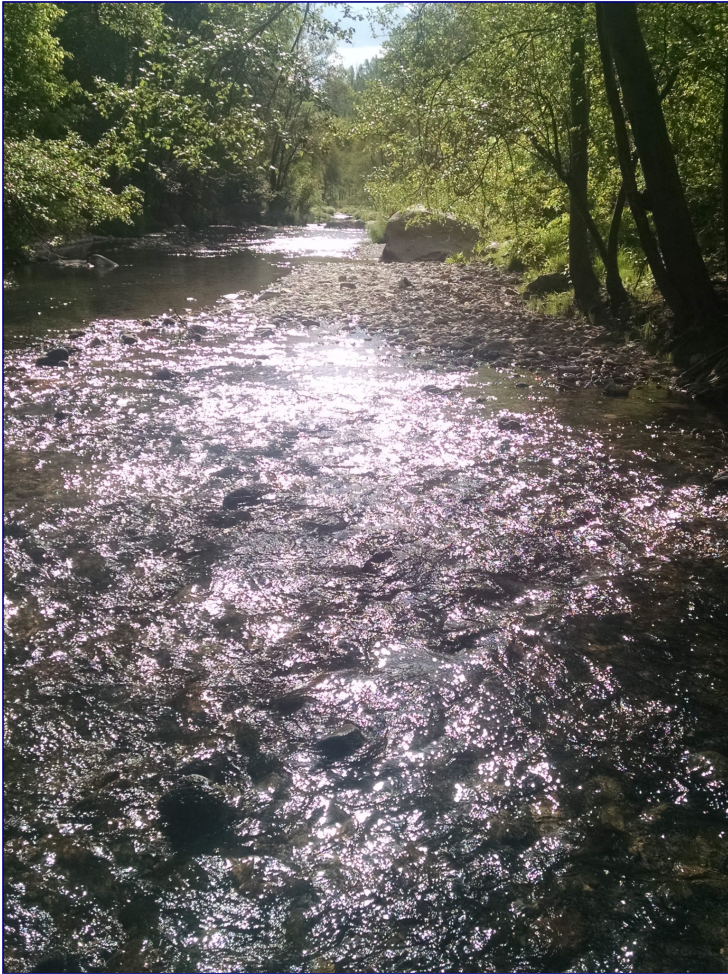
End Lower Scorpion Campground at Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, Section 21 mile 17.2

Miles walked: 19.2

As Trail 151 descends down to the Gila, one already sees cliffs that are a preview of the day.



The water of the Gila runs clear and cool, with wet-foot crossings typically coming up to knees, but sometimes mid-thigh.



“Wet-foot crossing” means crossing water with shoes and socks and pants getting wet. After the first time you don’t worry about it.



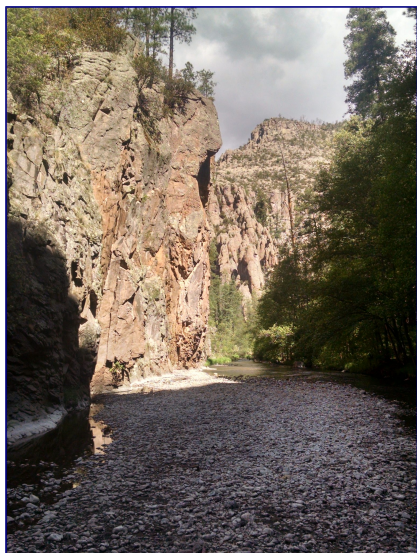
The map suggest I did sixty or so water crossings today. The idea is that water-proof boots eventually leak and would take a long time to dry, and light-weight trail shoes will be dry the next morning.

Notice how clear the water is. I could see larger fish quite easily.

The cliffs tended to be in the form of spires, towering several stories above the river.



More spires.







Here is Lone Spire.



Did its neighbors fall away?

Crossing the river, the trail might cross again in a hundred feet, or go a thousand feet and high above the water before coming back to the river.



Another smaller cliff dwelling is marked on the map. It may be this one.



That is located not far from the Monument. When I arrived it was already closed at 4:30PM. And opens again at 9AM, and I plan to go back then.

Doc Campbell's, a country store a few miles away that holds shipments for CDT and GET hikers, was already closed as well. I started walking there to at least use wi-fi and charge devices, but looked better at my maps and turned around, realizing it would be dark when I got back to the campgrounds. So that must wait until tomorrow as well.

While walking on the road I met CDT hiker Shaun...



... and CDT hikers Rob and Kendra and MOOSE.



Cliff Dwelling

GET 2017 Day 24, May 19, Friday.

Start Lower Scorpion Campground at Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, Section 22 mile zero

End just past only ford of East Fork of Gila River, Section 22 mile 9.1

Miles walked: 9.1

This morning I was the first civilian to enter the Gila Cliff Dwelling after its 9AM opening.(I had toured in previous years with family, and always enjoy the experience.) You wind along a wooded path near a creek and cliff face, with birds chirping and lizards watching. Suddenly you walk out to see several rooms built of stone and mortar built into a huge overhang of a cliff.



These dwellings were built around 1280AD, about the same time as other cliff dwellings in the southwest USA. This structure was only occupied for a generation. Why? There are theories, but the answer is not settled.

In this series of photos, look at craftsmanship, and details such as steps, windows, and vigas.







CDT hikers Rob and Kendra toured the rooms when I did, while Moose waited in a kennel provided by monument staff.

Doc Campbell's store, a 3 mile roadwalk off-trail, has my food box.



I had visited the store before on my CDT hike. They have a pleasant back porch with picnic tables for hikers to organize their stuff, with charging strip and wifi and water. I can recommend the lemon berry homemade ice cream.

I met and chatted with two CDT hikers, Butterfingers...

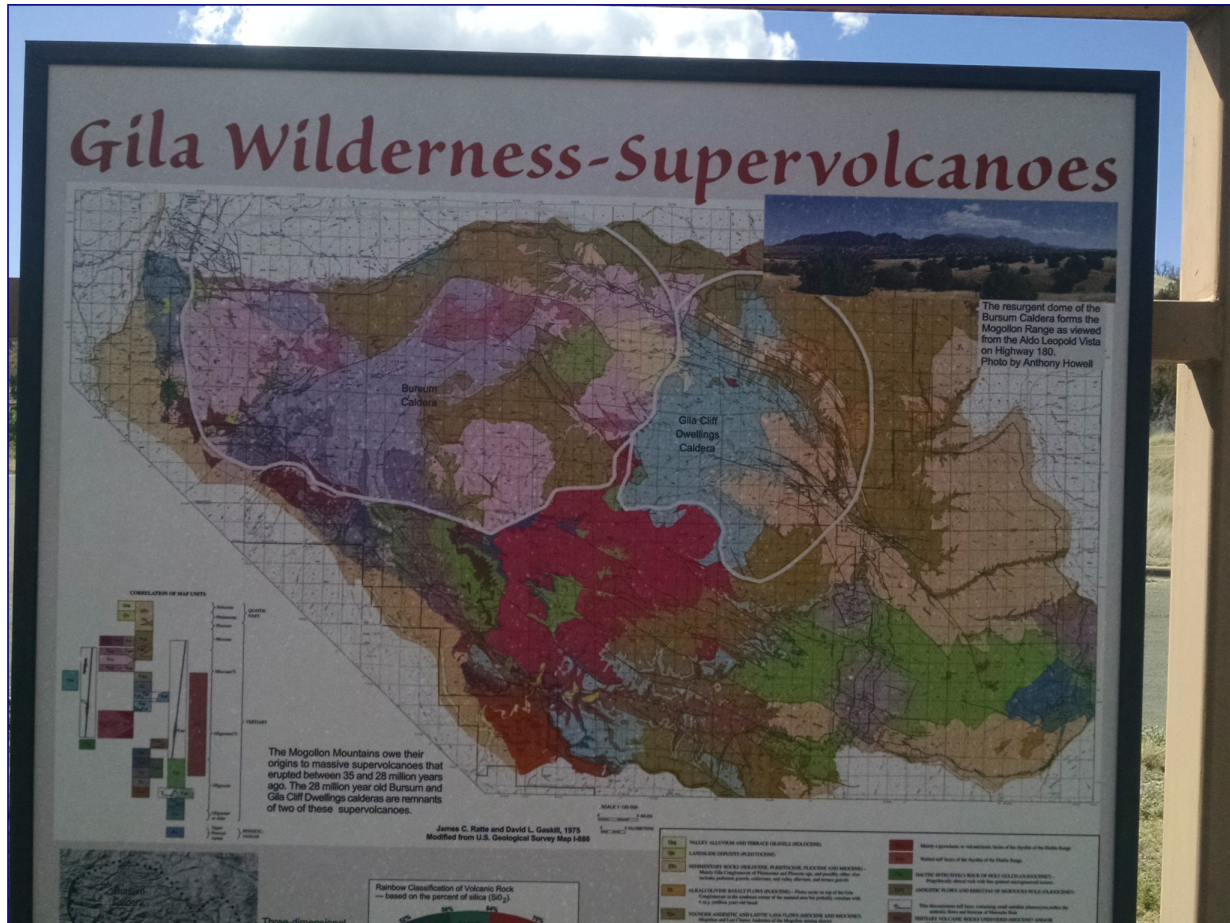


... and Hot Rod.



What with uploading blog posts and downloading podcasts and doing email and snacking, I did not leave the store until after 3PM. This would be a short hiking day indeed. Another 3 mile roadwalk back to the Cliff Dwelling Visitor Center, and I am back on trail.

A sign explains Super Volcanoes in the Gila.



The trail crosses the Middle Fork of the Gila River a half-dozen times.



Then I am up on nice flat mesa for several miles. How do you tell you are on a mesa when you are not at the edge? In New Mexico, if you do not see mountains at the horizon, that is a clue.



Off the mesa, there is only one crossing of the East Fork fork of the Gila River.



Farewell Gila.

Diamond and South Diamond

GET 2017 Day 25, May 20, Saturday.

Start just past only ford of East Fork of Gila River, Segment 22 mile 9.1 of 24.8

End Burnt Canyon, Segment 23 mile 8.6

Miles walked: 23.3

Diamond Creek runs fast, deep, and narrow, with grassy banks and few rocks in the creek bed.



Many elk hoof-prints are around, so the meadow may be a seasonal grazing area for herds.

In a brisk cold morning I manage forty wet-foot crossings across the creek as it winds in its narrow canyon. Water comes up to knee level, sometimes higher.



After the creek the route goes along Tom Moore Canyon for miles, on meadow with scattered ponderosa.

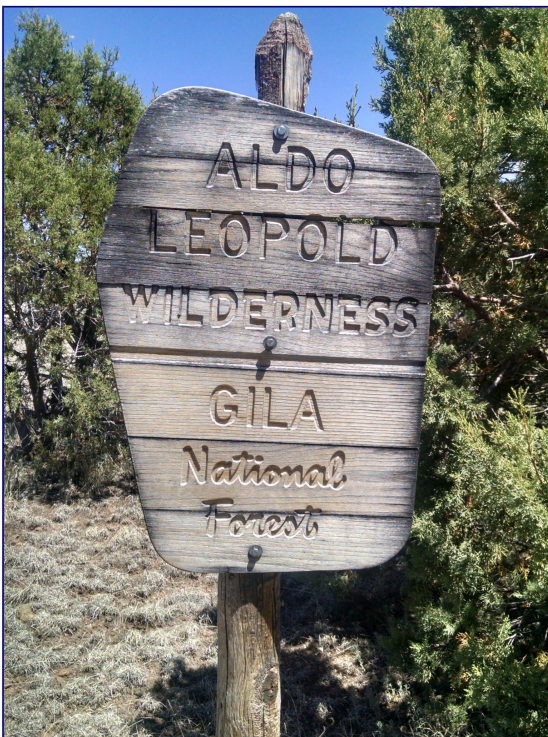


A narrow strip of national forest separates Gila Wilderness from Aldous Wilderness. Me Own Work Center is a cluster of buildings, not in use.



Reminder to myself: find out the story behind the naming of Me Own Trail.

Enter the Aldo Leopold Wilderness.



Along South Diamond Creek a wilder meadow grows, with more shrubs and denser trees. The creek has normal creek banks, and large rocks in the bed for hopping across with dry feet. The water is less than the earlier creek, often gone in sections.



I do about forty dry-foot crossings of this creek.

The trail enters narrow Burnt Canyon. I am a little puzzled by the name— with all the burned forests in the southwest, is it not risky to name a single canyon Burnt?



Also, what happens when the canyon recovers and one cannot see burned trees? Well, it probably burns again soon.

CDT tomorrow?

Black Range Crest

GET 2017 Day 26, May 21, Sunday.

Start Burnt Canyon, Segment 23 mile 8.6 of 11.5

End Segment 25 mile 5, on CDT Trail 74, after 16.5 miles of Segment 24

Miles walked: 24.4

The water bottles were partially frozen in the cold night. Fortunately, the water filter was detached from a water bottle and hidden under bedding to keep warm— freezing would destroy it.

The route climbs out of Burnt Canyon.



A grove of aspens has a caterpillar problem, with nearly every tree with one of these tents. I saw a mountainside in Colorado near Chama undergoing the same thing, to the point that the aspens were not leafing out in the spring and seemed dead.



Regard these views from Diamond Peak.







The trail follows near the top of ridges and mountain of the Black Range for a number of miles, with views all morning.

The Continental Divide Trail, CDT, splits into two options after Silver City, the Gila River Route and Black Range Route. When I hiked, I chose the Gila Route for the fun wet-foot crossings. My trail today joins the Black Range route of the CDT, and will stay on for a couple of days.



Fisherman's Bluff is a distinctive rock formation the trail circles around.



Just before the bluff I met three trail workers hiking with huge backpacks loaded with supplies and tools. They said they had been working on my path all the way to the Aldo Wilderness line. When I walked on, it was to discover some really fine trail work. Thorny plants line the trail after a burn, and most trail people lop them off, only to have them regrow each year. On this trail it was done the right way but hard way— thorns dug and chopped out completely. Impressive.

After the crest trail and a forest road, the route goes on Trail 74 for the rest of the day. Not much for views, just good trail near tops of ridges through ponderosa and mixed conifer forests.



We are now out of wilderness areas, which we had mostly been on since leaving Alma. But more wilderness areas come soon.

Fencelines

GET 2017 Day 27, May 22, Monday.

Start Segment 25 mile 5 of 11.5, on CDT Trail 74

End at terminus of Segment 26, mile 19.3, at eastern edge of Gila National Forest

Miles walked: 25.8

At Kline Mtn a small bear (but older than a cub) ran away from me. He ran in the direction of a barbed-wire fence, which got me to wondering: how does a bear cross the many wire fences found in our national forests?

Trail 74 turns into follow-the-fenceline-on-2-track. For most of the day we follow some kind of boundary fence on the dirt road that runs along the fence.



The route still tended to stay near the tops of ridges, but usually any views were of more forest. Later, near Dolan Peak, I got to appreciate some panoramas.





Rain came in the afternoon in brief showers from ominous clouds, enough rainfall to make you rearrange gear for a storm but then stop, several times, like some weather head-fake.

In late afternoon GET splits off from CDT trail #74 , going on trail #60 headed east, starting at an intersection marked only by this cairn– no sign.



Our new trail follows fenceline the whole way, though on footpath instead of dirt road.

We get grand views from near Wahoo Peak





I camp at the edge of national forest, about to enter tomorrow into BLM land and quite different ecozone.

Not Box

GET 2017 Day 28, May 23, Tuesday.

Start at origin of Segment 27, mile zero, at eastern edge of Gila National Forest

End Kelly Canyon bottom, Segment 27 mile 21.9

Miles walked: 21.9

So long, forest. The route enters BLM rolling grassland, zig-zagging to avoid private holdings.



Antelope play just out of camera range. A herd of elk pass by. (My camera app needs a better cropping tool. Fix it in post.)



Just before reaching NM52, the route goes by a fancy corral made with irrigation pipe. Here I met my first live rattlesnake, hiding in a shadowed corner. (Crop. Fix it in post.)



My food cache was buried along NM52, allowing me to skip hitching on a dirt road to Winston, 18 miles away. Got the cache, no problem, but then where to find a shady spot to sort everything? Eventually a large bush was found after a half-mile search.



The road to Monticello Box is closed and locked.



My map says it is OK to enter to take the side trail. My family got to enjoy the Box once before access was closed by ranchers. You walk along a lovely narrow slot canyon, stepping through water heated by a warm spring. Big dog loved it– spare dog need a lift a few times over the deeper water.

Here is the Monticello Box entrance.



One can still turn left and take a side trail to see the source of the water. A spring-fed creek comes sluicing down.





Eventually you reach the spring, Ojo Caliente. The water is flowing fast today. In the bottom of the spring the sand bubbles up as more water percolates out. One rarely sees such a bountiful spring.



Past the spring we continue up arroyos along Spring Canyon and Wild Bull Canyon, slogging through loose sand and small gravel.



See this nest in an abandoned wind mill. Cool, huh?



Purple flowers are in force.

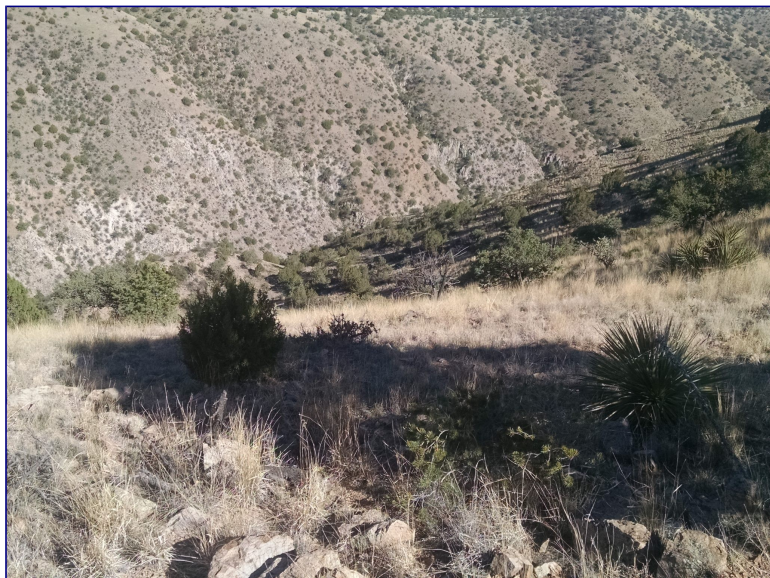


Mountains beckon ahead.



Kelly Canyon looks steep. We need to cross, but walk for several miles along the top ridge, enjoying the view, to get to a safe crossing spot.





I meet GET hikers, a rare treat! Ross and Kathy are yoyo-ing the GET which means they started in Phoenix, already walked to Albuquerque, and immediately turned around and are walking back to Phoenix, all in one hike.



Nice folks, and we spent some time chatting. They expect to be the first to yoyo the GET, after being the first to yoyo the AZT (Arizona Trail). They have imposed an additional constraint on their trip to only do foot travel, so no buses or trams in Albuquerque, and no hitching. They live in Washington state, and Ross once did a no-resupply hike of the Washington portion of the PCT, by starting with 25 pounds of food. Good and interesting people.

The route finds a way down along this protrusion on this side of the canyon.



Here is the view on way down, as the sun sets.



Finally I make it safely down and pitch camp. Climbing up can wait until the morning.

Cabin at Lookout

GET 2017 Day 29, May 24, Wednesday.

Start Kelly Canyon bottom, Segment 27 mile 21.9 of 29.5

End inside cabin at San Mateo Peak and Lookout, elevation 10,139 , on a side trail along Apache Kid Trail 43, Segment 28 mile 7.5

Miles walked: 15.1

Walking on dirt road in early morning, I see three small dark shapes ahead about the size of bear cubs. They do not respond to me making noise. Creeping closer, they reveal their true nature, javelinas– wild pigs.

Burma Road, FR377, goes along a high ridge, drops down into a deep canyon, and climbs out again, bringing me to Shipman Trailhead after several miles walk.



I have been here before, doing my practice GET hike last year, from here to close to trail end, Tijeras. No doubt some of my comments and photos will be similar to previous blog posts.



The Shipman Trail starts on private land, the way marked by cairns.



The route makes a big climb up near San Mateo Mountain (not San Mateo Peak or the San Mateo Mountain Range, mentioned later).



Shipman Trail is tricky to follow, lightly maintained, with few visitors. That is a shame, because the environment is really a gem, with diverse plants and animals and geology.

We get good views going up, too.





The route crosses a talus field, hidden from below.



Meyers Cabin ruin is at the top, really two structures with differing joint technique. I really should research some of these artifacts and place names found alongside the trail.



Once on top, the trail goes down and up and around, until you start getting views of mountain rocky outcroppings.



We get to Apache Kid Trail, well built and easy to follow.

More views.



San Mateo Spring is dry. I seem to remember it was running last year, and of good quality.



The map informs me that there is a cabin at a scenic overlook that is free and open to hikers. Well, it really is close enough to end of day to take advantage— why not?



Here is the vantage from up in the old lookout tower, peering down.



Gazing up higher at the tower, one notices pieces missing. Maybe this is high enough.



Vegetation has been allowed to regrow at the peak, so some views are blocked.



Strangely, today at the summit is quiet, not windy, with moderate temperatures. The cabin is at 10,139 feet, so weather could get extreme up here on most days.

I try going down to Cowboy Spring, located on the trail back to Apache Kid, but find no water.

The cabin is in reasonable shape, with four bunks and a wood stove, fairly dark inside since the larger window is boarded up. Time to rest up and contemplate the trail ahead.

[finished audiobook [A Short History of Scotland](#), by Andrew Lang]

From Lookout to Lookout

GET 2017 Day 30, May 25, Thursday.

Start at cabin at San Mateo Peak and Lookout, elevation 10,139 , on a side trail along Apache Kid Trail 43, Segment 28 mile 7.5 of 20.3

End Section 29 mile 7.4, on FR138 on high ridge of the San Mateo Mountains

Miles walked: 20.2

Goodbye tower.



Goodbye inside cabin.



Goodbye sunrise.



The woods along the Apache Kid Trail in the Cibola National Forest is quite different from my sampling of the Gila National Forest: thickly growing, fewer burns, many dead trees on the ground, and enough moisture for actual rotting of logs.



Did I mention many fallen logs?



Sometimes the trail follows a narrow corridor through aspens, new growth after a recent burn.



A bear was near the trail at the Apache Kid Wilderness boundary. Oh, if I could amble up a steep slope as easily as that critter.

These guys not shy.



After considerable switchbacks down and up during the day, along with a disappearing Apache Kid Trail following tree marks, one finally arrives at Grassy Lookout Tower.



A plaque commemorates the historic nature of the lookout.



Enjoy the views...





The tower is locked, so this is the only view I could capture— not very high.



FR138 goes along a high ridge in or near the Withington Wilderness— a pleasure to walk with views peeking out of both sides.



Here is one of the views at day's close.



Camp is high, at nearly 10k feet, with winds whipping the higher trees. Seeking a windbreak among shrubs just off the ridge, I bundle up for a cold night.

[finished audiobook [The Man Who Would Be King](#), by Rudyard Kipling.]

[finished audio story [2BR02B](#), by Kurt Vonnegut.]

Potato

GET 2017 Day 31, May 26, Friday.

Start Segment 29 mile 7.4 of 19.8, on FR138 on high ridge of the San Mateo Mountains

End Segment 30 mile 12.1 near stock pond in Milligan Hills near national forest boundary

Miles walked: 24.5

My nice forest road is eroded due to a very recent burn. This was smooth road last year during my practice hike.



A side trip adds another lookout tower.



Ho! The lookout tower is occupied!



Joe invites me in to chat, and peppers me with questions about my journey.



Splendid morning views from Withington Peak are well worth the detour.





Returning to begin Potato Trail, I run into a burn that happened last year, after my practice hike.



The recent burn caused much erosion on a steep slope with already narrow switchbacks. A few heavy rainstorms could really wipe out the trail here.

Potato Canyon is greatly changed from last year, with wide gravel floor in many spots from heavy storm flow.



Sulfur-stinking red stained water is running further down the canyon– not good to drink.



The Potato Trail routes around pour-offs where the canyon narrows, but I find it easier to scramble down, rather than find the detour trail.

Past the pour-offs a boulder field runs right down to water channel, contributing some huge rocks to decorate the creek.



Down lower where last year was plenty of shade— now not so much. The foul red water has disappeared, and further down good clear water runs for a distance in the canyon.



Distinctive ridges signal the end of the canyon trail.



On a long road-walk towards the Milligan Hills, a truck stops and asks me if I was at Withington Peak the morning. Joe was describing my journey to visitors.



Now one can start seeing Milligan Hills in the distance, foothills to the Magdalena ridge.



Hello little buddy. You are pretty slow to move out of the arroyo.



Tough cross-country up and beyond drains takes a different route than last year.



Finally the trail gets to water at a stock pond, near my camp for the night. A barb-wire fence splits the pond.



[Finished audiobook [Space Kasey](#), by Christiana Ellis.]

[Finished audiobook [Just So Stories](#), by Rudyard Kipling, read by Kara Shallenberg.]

Magdalena

GET 2017 Day 32, May 27, Saturday.

Start Segment 30 mile 12.1 of 16.3, near stock pond in Milligan Hills near national forest boundary

End Magdalena Segment 31 mile 16.9

Miles walked: 24.5

The route on this section of trail has certainly changed from my practice hike last year, apparently due to a landowner shutting off access through a forest road that goes through private property. The new route includes difficult cross-country zig-zags to finish Milligan Hills.

On dirt road on the back side of Magdalena Mountains, I saw a bear that acted different, not running off like most black bears.



Later a cub came down the mountainside, saw me, and dashed back up. Momma bear gave me a stern look, paused a long while, then walked up after the cub.

Further on, I came to a cabin at Mill Valley trailhead, with a slow-flowing spring.



The cabin was open, with no signs prohibiting campers, but the map did not include a note saying camping was allowed here.

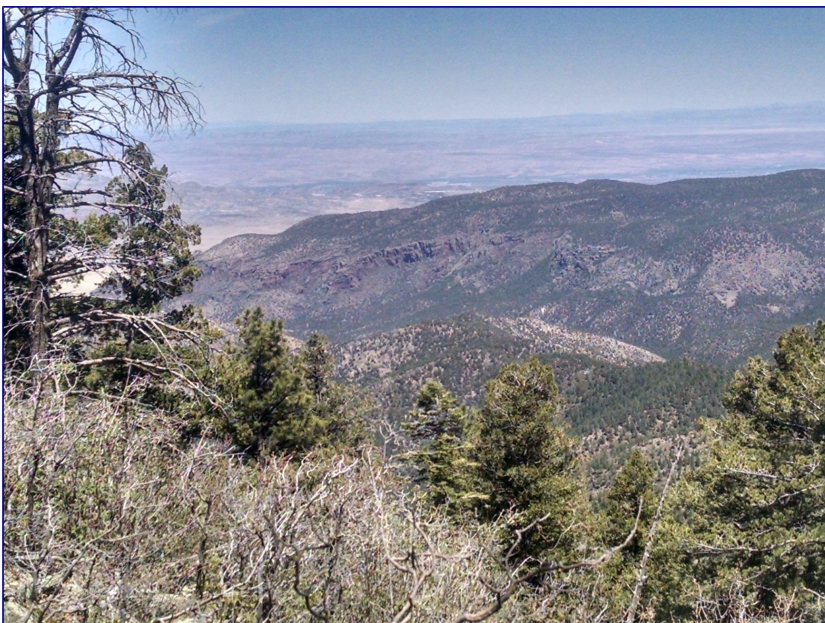


At the cabin I take a selfie, where my clothes may be the dirtiest and most ripped and repaired on any hike yet.



As part of recent route changes, the GET no longer goes to South Baldy, but you can go there as part of the new Socorro alternate trail, which I have not tried yet.

Climbing up North Baldy Trail reveals views, including possibly near my home in Lemitar.



...



Approaching North Baldy







Views from North Baldy







Steep 4WD rocky road on way down.



Pass by old former mining community of Kelly



Mining ruins in the distance apparently may be explored with a permit for sale in Magdalena.



Here is Kelly's church.



My family picks me up on Kelly Road just as I enter Magdalena. I will take a few days off from trail before racing to the finish.

[finished audiobook [Space Kasey 2](#), by Kristiana Ellis]

San Lorenzo

GET 2017 Day 33, June 2, Friday.

Start Magdalena Segment 32 mile 0

End San Lorenzo Canyon Segment 32 mile 23.4

Miles walked: 23.4

Having taken a few days to rest and recover, KK drops me off at Magdalena. I hike out of town on dirt road.



The trail goes by small foothills before reaching a wide plain.



Past the hills the terrain is sagebrush and grass, with Polvadera Mountain in the distance.



After several miles the mountain seems closer.



The route joins an arroyo on the back (west) side of the mountain.



Continuing in the arroyo brings us to San Lorenzo Canyon.



Water is running at the spring, then disappears and reappears several times.



Since my home is just a few miles away, our family makes San Lorenzo Canyon our playground. KK rides horses out here twice a week. We hike and walk dogs out here often, when rattlesnakes are not active.



I see five people on a high sandstone bluff.



They are part of a group of seismology interns from New Mexico Tech in Socorro, visiting the canyon.



Lorenzo has more views.





Our family named this rock formation Frothy Hippo, marking the entrance to a narrow slot canyon. We often hike it as a loop, going back down a different slot canyon.



I hike to evening until the canyon widens, then find high ground in case of rain in the night and make camp.

Highwater

GET 2017 Day 34, June 3, Saturday.

Start San Lorenzo Canyon Segment 32 mile 23.4 of 27.6

End after 15.3 miles of Highwater Bypass Route Alt 33A, then miles 9.6 to 15.1 of Segment 33, near Stapleton Ranch ruin

Miles walked: 25

Here is Polvadera Peak in the morning from the front (east) side.



My daughter has friends from out of town, and she is taking them for a hike in the canyon. The dogs will stay on leashes to help protect from snakes.



KK has a trail ride with the Backcountry Horsemen somewhere near the canyon.



As the drainage meets the Rio Grande, you pass by agricultural fields in the village of Polvadera.



The river is way too high to ford, so I divert to the alternate Highwater Bypass Route, taking me south 6.8 miles past the villages of Polvadera and Lemitar to a bridge near Escondida Lake. The route is along a levee road with not much shade.



This critter gets nervous when I pass.



Further south one can see Polvadera Peak and M Mountain, with Lemitar fields in the foreground.



Escondida Lake, near the bridge, has fishing, camping, and a community park.



The Rio Grande at the bridge is fast moving and deep, almost whitewater speed in places.



The route heads east up Johnson Hill Road, a favorite destination for local ATVs.





Amid scattered showers the route rejoins the main GET and passes several photogenic hills.





Stapleton Ranch is an old ranch-house ruin with a working wind-mill pumping fresh cold water.



The main house was constructed from stone with mud mortar, and is mostly still standing. Other buildings are not as well preserved.



Someone put goldfish in the water tank fed by the windmill.



[finished audiobook [Kim](#), by Rudyard Kipling]

[finished audio story [The Variable Man](#), by Philip K Dick]

Around Sevilleta

GET 2017 Day 35, June 4, Sunday.

Start mile 15.1 of Segment 33 near Stapleton Ranch ruins

End Segment 33 mile 40.9, along CR115 a couple of miles from US60

Miles walked: 25.8

The day starts with a climb up an arroyo for a couple of miles, with pour-offs.



The trail is now on former Sevilleta Land Grant where ranching still is practiced, not currently part of the nearby wildlife refuge,

The arroyo continues and narrows.



After joining a dirt road, hills adorn the route.



What is this device? I keep seeing them at water sources in this area, but do not have a clue what they do. A Google image search turned up no matches.



More hills and ridges along the road provide views.



The route reaches the Sevilleta Wildlife Refuge boundary, where no camping or hiking is allowed. The refuge is huge, at 230,000 acres, but is mostly to the west and not visible from this trail.



The route turns and follows cross-country fence-line for miles, straight up and down hills.



After some cross country and roads, the trail pass a ranch house with unusual insignia.



After several cross-country zigs and zags to avoid private land, the route meanders among juniper and low grasses.



Camp is along a forest road, a couple of miles from US60 and my last food cache.

[finished audiobook [Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep](#), by Philip K Dick]

[finished audio story [The Sky Is Falling](#), by Lester del Rey]

Start Manzanos

GET 2017 Day 36, June 5, Monday.

Start Segment 33 mile 40.9 of 42.5, along CR115 a couple of miles from US60

End Segment 35 mile 3.9, after 15.6 miles on Segment 34, approaching Manzano Peak

Miles walked: 21.1

My cache buried near US60 was unearthed without problems. A few snacks included in the box start the morning right.



After crossing the highway, I begin down an arroyo, for almost 5 miles.





The arroyo merges with a larger drainage, and continues under train trestles.



After diverting to a dirt road, the route quickly starts climbing past southernmost Manzanos.



The morning continues with several miles of climbing dirt roads.

As the route passes through juniper and pinon, I start looking for high mountains, since the trail will rise towards one of the highest peaks by end of day.



Pine Shadow Trail, near trailhead, begins near a picnic area with running spring. Since water sources will be scarce on the crest, I fill up with as much water as can be carried.



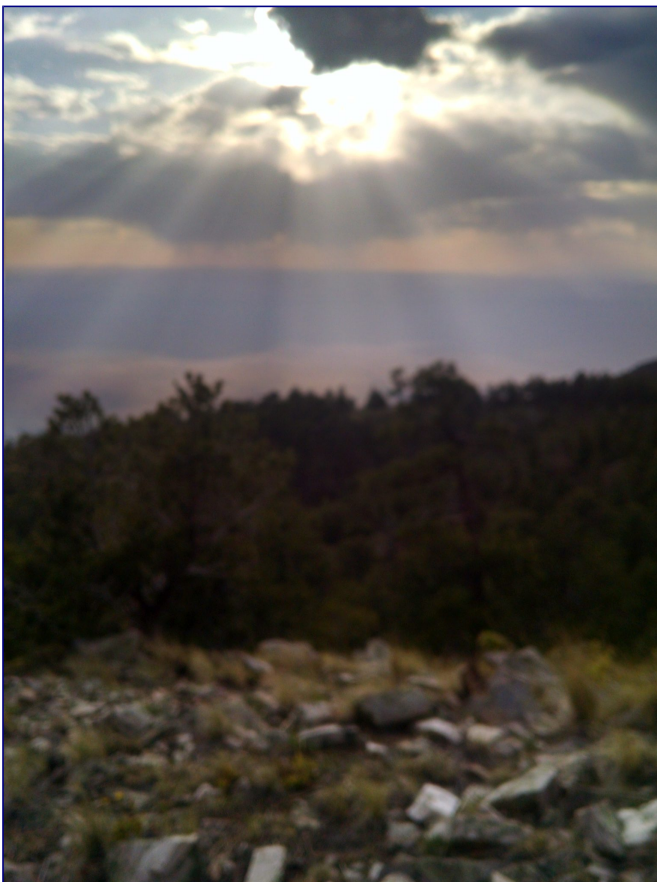
Crest Trail starts getting hard near a burn area, with many fallen logs to climb, and disappearing path in places.



Opportunistic thickets overgrow the path in spots, and slow down hiking.



Clouds make a sudden appearance, with thunderstorms and showers. A light show of electricity performs as I fall asleep on a high exposed ridge at 9500 feet.



Later in the night, as clouds disperse, lights from towns below become clear, from Socorro, Los Lunas, and even a vast sea of twinkling Albuquerque.

Manzano Crest Trail

GET 2017 Day 37, June 6, Tuesday.

Start Segment 35 mile 3.9, after 15.6 miles on Segment 34, approaching Manzano Peak

End 4th of July Campground, Segment 35 mile 27.1

Miles walked: 23.2

Continuing along the Manzano Crest Trail, good views grace the route most of the day.





The Trigo fire from a few years ago causes trail challenges: downed logs to climb, eroded trail, and thickets to fight through.





Going on a side trail for a mile to find a spring, a tiny seep is waiting instead. Since water is so scarce this high, I fill a small plastic bag 91 times and manage to get a liter of cold clear water.



How about more views from the crest?





The route reaches Capilla Peak, with antennas...



and Capilla Campgrounds.



Some sites have shelters



I climb up to Capilla Lookout, and Aaron invites me in. Dixie is not on duty, but he will pass on my greetings from Joe at Mount Withington.



Reef Rock at Comanche Pass shows a pleasing pattern of exposed rock.



The trail past Capilla Peak really becomes clogged with thicket, branches slapping at arms and legs.



The route becomes a labyrinth for several miles, with many false trails and thickets.

Maple leaves signal the vicinity of 4th of July Campground.



The story is that this is one of the few places in New Mexico that maple trees grow. Normally our trees turn yellow in autumn, so people come for miles around to enjoy the reds of the maples, bright like fireworks on the 4th of July.

And Upper 4th of July Spring is awesome, with clean cold water dripping from a pipe.



I arrive at the deserted campgrounds late and set up camp by moonlight, past 9PM. My goal was to get at least this far because the long road walk tomorrow has to all be done in one day, but thickets and tough trail today made it hard to arrive sooner.

For tomorrow, a cunning plan...

[finished audiobook [Other People's Heroes](#), by Blake M Petit]

Night Hike, Chilili

GET 2017 Day 37, June 7, Wednesday.

Start Segment 35 mile 3.9, after 15.6 miles on Segment 34, approaching Manzano Peak

Start 4th of July Campground, Segment 36 mile zero

End 1.9 miles on Mars Court Alternate to start of Drop In Trail, after 30.6 miles of Segment 36

Miles walked: 32.5

This next section is a challenge, because the official GET is on paved road for over 25 miles, since no route is available through public lands to the Sandias, and no trail has been negotiated with private landholders. With high temperatures probable, and few water sources available except a few country stores after the village of Chilili, this could be a tough day.

But I had a cunning idea. Hike at night. The moon was near full, and the road should be cool at night, with little traffic. I shouldn't even need a strong headlamp, since there is not much along the road to see. I would still be hiking plenty during daylight, but the night would give a good start, after sleeping a bit and heading out around 2AM.

Well, a thunderstorm was in progress at 2, so the hike did not start until 3:30AM. The moon is now getting low in the trees, and thin cloud cover blocks most stars, but I can see something as big as a road in front of me. The air is cool and I make good time.

The village Tajique appears an hour before the local Ray's country store opens, but I will have several snacking opportunities on the other side of Chilili.



What is Chilili? This is one of the few land grants that stayed intact after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, where the US promised to recognize land grants formed under Spanish rule. Other land grants passed into private ownership and were split up, due to various reasons, but this one stayed together, and the residents are still protective of their heritage.

The route moves onto NM337 and stay on it for most of the day.



I do not take many picture of of the village...



About four miles after Chilili is the country store 10 Point, a welcome water source and snack opportunity. In late afternoon is Morning Star Grocery for more water and snacks.

All day I have been passing "NO TRESSPASING" signs. Now, I can understand signs at Chilili, since land grants have a history of gringos taking their land, but I am passing plenty of places outside of the land grant with signs threatening dogs and video cameras and firearms. I ask a lady at one of the stores about this, and she says there have been problems, with NM337 being so close to Albuquerque, and people coming on to private land to pick piñon... and various other unwelcome activities that she would not specify.

Finally I get to public land, a network of trails south of Tijeras on national forest, heavily used by mountain bikes on day trips out of Albuquerque.

Trails here are short and closely networked together, like in ski areas, with 5-digit numbers and cute names, well maintained, through pine and meadow, with thinned trees for good visibility.



I took the “official” GET route of Turkey Trot Trail last year, which makes a large detour, and went for the shorter alternate choice today.

Due to my extremely early start “night hike”, I quit a couple of hours early, and might do a short day tomorrow to compensate for a long day.

Sandia Crest

GET 2017 Day 38, June 8, Thursday.

Start at Drop In Trail, Segment 37 mile 4.2 of 14.1

End Sandia Crest at trail end, Segment 38 mile 14, and take the tram down to Albuquerque

Miles walked: 23.9

Near Kirtland Air Force Base boundary, warning signs are posted.



Continuing on a network of trails south of Tijeras, the route passes through a culvert under NM337, the same highway traveled yesterday on the long road walk.



Continuing on 337, Sandia Ranger Station appears, and the village of Tijeras.



Entering Canyon Estates development leads to the trailhead for South Crest Trail 130.



Until now I was assuming a short hiking day and finishing tomorrow, but I made such good time in the morning that finishing today is entirely feasible. Today is warm, already in the 90s at 11AM when starting the crest trail. Several day-hikers are at the trailhead, just starting or finishing, and a large group of toddlers picnic in the shade near a falls.

After a little climbing, one can look back on Tijeras, and a little later get a first view of Albuquerque.



Up a little higher forest yields to meadow in places.



Scrub oak and other shrubs grow in thickets, but the trail is well maintained with a good corridor free of branches. A clear trail makes hiking easy.



Eventually one can see the final destination on a ridge ahead.



Albuquerque spreads out below.



Near the end, a lift for the small ski area stands ready.



I reach the tram and trail's end, near 6:30PM, and purchase a ticket to travel down to the city. The temperature here at the top is in the 80s, the warmest I ever experienced.

Quickly I dash into a restroom and wipe down and change clothes before the next tram starts in five minutes.



The tram is crowded, standing room only with 34 people. I can only take photos from my little spot, unlike previous trips where there was room to move around. Here are views from the window:





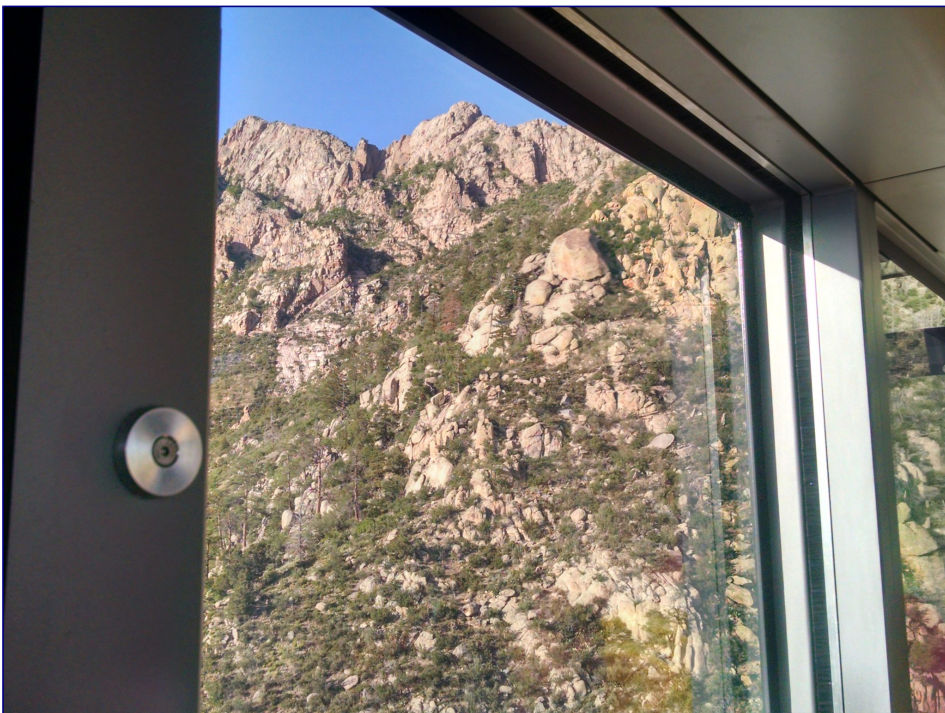
Looking straight down.







Near the bottom, large boulders decorate the mountainside.



My daughter appears at the parking lot and gives me a lift.

What an epic journey, and what a fine way to finish the trail!

[finished audiobook [Ivanhoe](#), by Sir Walter Scott]