

PCT 2018 Trail Journal Table of Contents



California

- [Hero's Journey](#) *April 23*
- [Momentum Mori](#)
- [Long View](#) April 25
- [Water Under the Bridge](#)
- [Warner](#)
- [Mary's Place](#)
- [Spitler](#)
- [Idyllwild Nero](#) April 30
- [San Jacinto](#) May 1
- [Farming Wind](#)
- [Trail Change](#)
- [Big Bear Lake and Hostel](#)
- [Westward Turn](#) May 5
- [Follow Water](#)
- [Cajon Mac](#)
- [The Wrightwood Hour](#)
- [Ridge Cuke Frog](#)
- [Rambling](#) May 10
- [Dulce](#)
- [First Zero Hiker Heaven](#)
- [Cloud Walking](#)
- [Go Long](#)
- [Low Desert Crossing](#) May 15
- [Tehachapi](#)
- [Out of Tehachapi](#)
- [Serene Pine](#)
- [Angel Food](#)

- [Up Down Up Down](#) May 20
- [Kennedy Meadows](#) **May 21**
- [Kennedy Nero](#)
- [Olancha Pass](#)
- [Cottonwood Pass](#)
- [Almost Forester Pass](#) May 25
- [Kearsarge Pass](#)
- [Zero Independence](#)
- [Glen Pass](#)
- [Pinchot Pass](#)
- [Mather Pass](#) May 30
- [Muir Pass](#)
- [Selden Pass](#) June 1
- [Silver Pass](#)
- [Mammoth Lakes Zero](#)
- [Warm Spell](#)
- [Island and Donahue Passes](#) June 5
- [Enter Yosemite](#)
- [Tough Love](#)
- [Exit Yosemite](#)
- [Sonora Pass](#)
- [Bridgeport Nero](#) June 10
- [Still Snow](#)
- [Badlands Woodlands Lakes](#)
- [Brief South Lake Tahoe](#)
- [Lakes Lakes](#)
- [Ski Boundary](#) June 15
- [Donner](#)
- [Rain Finally](#)
- [Sierra City](#)
- [Rocky Tops](#)
- [Elevator](#) June 20
- [Belden](#)
- [Lassen Forest](#)
- [Halfway!](#)
- [Lassen Boundary](#)

- [Lassen Park](#) June 25
- [Rim](#)
- [Burney Falls](#)
- [Timber](#)
- [Smoulder](#)
- [Castle Crags and Dunsmuir](#) June 30
- [Highland Reverie](#) July 1
- [Alpine Reverie](#)
- [Etna](#)
- [Etna Zero](#)
- [Marble Mountain Wilderness](#) July 5
- [Seiad Valley](#)

Oregon

- [Fire Jump](#)
- [Brown Mountain](#)
- [Skeeters and Rocks](#)
- [Crater Lake](#) July 10
- [Mount Thielsen](#)
- [Shelter Cove](#)
- [So Many Lakes](#)
- [Elk Lake](#)
- [Lava](#) July 15
- [Mount Jefferson](#)
- [Olallie](#)
- [Mount Hood](#)
- [Timberline Lodge](#)
- [Cascade Locks](#) July 20
- [Bruce and Beth Zero](#)

Washington

- [Enter Washington](#)
- [Green Tunnel Vision](#)
- [Trout Lake](#)
- [Goat Rocks Wilderness](#) July 25
- [White Pass](#)

- [Urich Cabin](#)
- [A Day of Gear](#)
- [Snoqualmie Pass](#) July 30
- [Alpine Lakes Wilderness](#)
- [Bonus Alpine Lakes](#) August 1
- [Stevens Pass](#)
- [Glacier Peak Wilderness](#)
- [Alpine Challenge](#)
- [Bannock Lake Fire Detour](#) August 5
[Holden Village and Stehekin](#)
- [Rainy Pass](#)
- [Harts Pass](#)
- [Manning Park](#) **August 9**



Hero's Journey

PCT 2018 Day 1, April 23, Monday.

Start Mexican Border near Campo, California, mile 0

End mile 20 Lake Morena Campground Miles walked: 20

My brilliant number one best daughter drove me to the airport last week, and I fly to San Diego and visit brilliant number one best son for a few days, playing tourist. Leaving the apartment in early morning, I make my way via two buses and one trolley to the small community of Campo and the start of the Pacific Crest Trail. On the last bus I meet 4 other hikers of varied backgrounds, Uncle David, Bryan, RJ, Pippin, Bryan.



We walk a short distance to the border and start of the trail.



Fools gold specks sparkle in the dirt of the pathway. The terrain is rounded granite boulders with a thick planting of shrubs and a few scattered trees. The temperature is a challenge, and I pass many scattered clumps of hikers taking a break from the heat of the afternoon, taking refuge in shady nooks along the side of a mountain. Water sources are infrequent, so I press on to Morena Lake campground, with faucets and even a shower. I overhear several hikers who ran short of water and had trouble with the heat.

Joseph Campbell talks about the standard story template we know from myths and movies in [The Hero with a Thousand Faces](#). He describes 17 steps to the story cycle where a person begins a quest, undergoes challenge, struggles, and returns home changed. So how will I be changed by journey's end? Not that I am a hero, merely a protagonist in my own tale.

Momentum Mori

PCT 2018 Day 2, April 24, Tuesday.

Start mile 20 Lake Morena Campground

End Burnt Ranch Campground, mile 41.5

Miles walked: 21.5

Challenging long climbs today, now at 6000 feet.



Boulders thinning out, shrubs thick and thriving, and now in forest at the campground. In this area within the Laguna Mountain Recreation Area, camping must be in a campground. No sites are reserved for PCT, but groups of up to 8 people rent sites together. I ended walking just past 4PM because the next campground was a few miles away. I did try taking a break today around 1PM to escape the sun. Starting back again, my body had stiffened up.

Finished audiobook [Fatal Flight– The True Story of Britain’s Last Great Airship](#) by Bill Hammack.

Long View

PCT 2018 Day 3, April 25, Wednesday.

Start Burnt Ranch Campground, mile 41.5

End mile 72, a few miles to a water cache

Miles walked: 30.5

After an early start, a mountain vista appears while walking on Mount Laguna.



The trail will end up going over many of these peaks by end of day. The pathway uses a old roadbed for a while, level or slight grade descending, with views every step. A trail angel left oranges and grapefruit as a refreshing treat.



I keep moving while others take a break from the sun. Water sources are becoming infrequent, so it seems better to press on and get closer to the next source. The mountains ahead suddenly look dry.



Spoiler alert: they are.

In a few hours I am among them, shrubs thinning out, with grasses in between, some bare ground, and also cacti.

My cell phone is confused, and cannot connect to any tower. A similar thing happened on the CDT. Perhaps I can fix it with a wifi connection. I am hiking a long couple of days to get to the next resupply, that might have internet.

Water Under the Bridge

PCT 2018 Day 4, April 26, Thursday.

Start mile 72, a few miles to a water cache

End Barrel Spring Campsites, mile 101

Miles walked: 29

A few miles from camp, the trail descends into a broad valley, and crosses two highways at narrow angles to each other, Scissor Junction. Underneath a highway bridge is a cache of water, and a rooster.



The path goes back up a mountain on the other side of the valley, up at 3300 feet from 2200 feet, and stays up there most of the day. Cacti and yucca outnumber bushes on the south side.



Another water cache is down a trail with shady vegetation, where many hikers hide from the heat. Finally coming down the mountain, we reach the 100 mile point.



Nearby is a piped spring and campsites, where I get to chat with several hikers, including SmokeBreak, Julian, and a father-son team heading south because they were not able to get a permit. They tell us news of the stop ahead.

Warner

PCT 2018 Day 5, April 27, Friday.

Start Barrel Spring Campsites, mile 101

End mile 117 tiny campsite on mountainside trail

Miles walked: 16

On the way to Warner Springs is grassland rolling like waves.



After a ten mile walk in the cool quiet morning, the Warner Springs PCT Welcome Center offers hikers a chance to rest and renew.



Run by super-nice volunteers, the center offers amenities to hikers at low cost and thoughtful economy. Home Depot buckets filled from an outdoor sink and a privacy stall built on a deck serve to make a free shower. A three bucket system is offered to hand-wash your clothes: an initial rinse bucket to reduce the dirt, a soapy bucket, and a final rinse bucket. Clotheslines are provided. You can donate your extra food and equipment to other hikers by way of hiker boxes. Snacks and supplies are sold, and rides given to the nearby post office, convenient store, and grill. Another building is dedicated as a hiker lounge, with couch, chairs, and pool table. Camping out back is free. And more services, to fifty to a hundred hikers during the season.



And free wifi allowed me to remedy my cell phone problem. Huzzah.

After clean-up, eats, and several hours of relaxation, the trail calls. Up a mountain with more trees, until I give out and find a tiny spot, joined later by three other hikers.

Trail names to learn today: Happy, Puma, Beehive, Luco, Sharpshooter, and 2Pack.

Mary's Place

PCT 2018 Day 6, April 28, Saturday.

Start mile 117 tiny campsite on mountainside trail

End mile 145, Mary's Place

Miles walked: 28

The path climbs gradually, until mid-morning water resupply at a big water tank at Mike's Place. I did not go down to talk to trail angel Mike Herrera, but he is known for making pizza daily for hikers.



The elevation is getting high enough that heat is easing a bit. Terrain is back to plenty of rocks, but with more color, and reminds me of an Arizona hike. Smoke Break, Beehive, Puma, and Taco pass at different times, and we all end up at Mary's Place, a campsite set up by a trail angel.



Several other hikers are there, including Emily and Vesuvius. Conversation and laughter ensue. Mary brings her dog to visit.



About 25 hikers stayed the night in tents or cowboy-camping.



Spitler

PCT 2018 Day 7, April 29, Sunday.

Start mile 145, Mary's Place, to mile 168.5 Spitler Peak

End mile 4.7 of Idyllwild Alternate at Spitler Trailhead

Miles walked: 28.2

A cold wind blew all night, and the day seems 20 degrees colder than yesterday. The expected fast hikers Puma, Smokebreak, Beehive, and Taco pass me on their way to Paradise Cafe for breakfast, but I just had town food and wanted to hike. Most of the day involved gradually climbing.



After going from 5000 at the road up to 7000 on the ridges overlooking the town of Idyllwild, the wind is fierce, blowing me back and forth at times. And after days of clear sky, suddenly dark clouds start blowing over the ridge.



The regular PCT is closed at mile 168.6 because of a past fire, which all of us hikers had been warned about, so I proceed down the alternate trail fairly late in the day to escape any weather, and camp at the trailhead parking area, joined by a couple of others.

Idyllwild Nero

PCT 2018 Day 8, April 30, Monday.

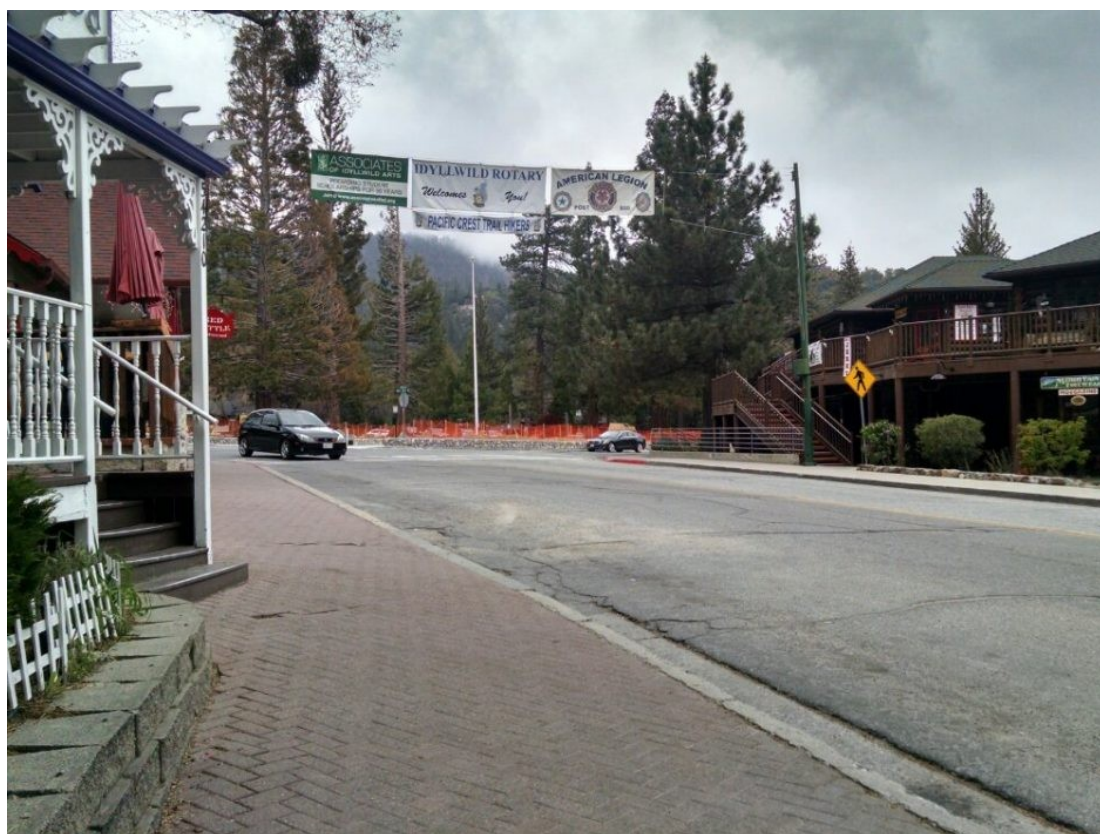
Start mile 4.7 of Idyllwild Alternate at Spitler Trailhead

End mile 6.7 of Alternate, then get ride and later hitch to Idyllwild.

Miles walked: 2

Starting down the first roadwalk of the alternate route in the morning, someone comes by and offers a ride part-way. I gladly accept. He drops me off 4 miles to town, near a cafe, which he recommends as maybe the best in the area. I have a pleasant breakfast, discover that highway 238 has no shoulders in places, so is unwalkable. However, hitching was easy, and I get a ride in seconds.

In town, I see Smokebreak and the rest of the group already in town! They had taken an alternate, shorter route down the ridge. Now they warned that rain and snow were forecast for Tuesday and Wednesday, and they were heading up already! Wow, but my body was telling me that a day of rest was imperative.



I get a spot at the campground, not being able to get a call through to an actual person at the nearest hotel, then do the routine of shower, laundry, and so on, and try to actually rest.



The town is small enough that everything is close together, great for a hiker. The car traffic from tourists is high, though, and this is only a Monday in April.

It rains most of the night.

San Jacinto

PCT 2018 Day 9, May 1, Tuesday.

Start Idyllwild, walk Ernie Maxwell trail 2.6 miles, then the 2.6 mile Devil's Slide Trail to PCT mile 179.4, just past the fire closure

End mile 195.4, small campsite

Miles walked: 21.2

Weather is coming, in the form of rain and likely snow, and I will be stuck here in town for another day, or likely two, if I do not move fast. The Ernie Maxwell Trail starts as side-streets through Idyllwild, then a trail, and only one set of footprints is there before mine. This trail climbs from 5.5k to 6.5k elevation. The Devil's Slide Trail climbs to 8.1k. There is no rain yet, foggy, and little wind. Rejoining the PCT, the climb is to 9k elevation, above the clouds, still little wind.



An alternate trail goes to the San Jacinto peak at 10.5k and stunning views most days, but I stay on main trail to be ahead of the weather. At a creek I stop for water, and two other hikers are there, all of us silent, enjoying the peace and water sounds. These are the only hikers seen until 1PM. The trail goes through San Jacinto State Wilderness, and some old-growth trees, their tops beginning to fade in the fog.



The route goes from 9k elevation to 2k elevation and very dry and warm desert. This is the biggest elevation drop on the PCT, and will take longer than today to finish. As the trail descends into the fog, some ice is blowing around and accumulates on trees.



Donning cold-weather gear, I hike in blowing snow down to 5k elevation, where the snow turns to showers and mostly stops. The campsite is exposed to the wind, and my tent is buffeted by gusts through the night.

Farming Wind

PCT 2018 Day 10, May 2, Wednesday.

Start mile 195.4, small campsite

End campsites on Mission Creek, mile 226.1

Miles walked: 30.7

Zig-zagging down the mountain took another 4 hours, down to elevation 2k. Then a few miles through loose sand, and a highway underpass, where trail angel Mama Bear was waiting to give out hugs and food.



Hot dogs are in the cooler.



The trail goes by the Mesa Wind Farm, which we could see while coming down the mountain.



Their maintenance shed welcomes hikers, but was closing just as I got there. The San Geronio Wilderness had miles of steep canyons and grand views.





The first designated campsite within the wilderness was too early, so I pressed on to get to their next site. Nonetheless, I met and chatted with several people at camp: Rattlesnake from the UK, Donna, Dana, Todd, Spooked, Ms Frizzle, Cathy, Skinny Santa.

Trail Change

PCT 2018 Day 11, May 3, Thursday.

Start campsites on Mission Creek, mile 226.1

End campsites at mile 253.1

Miles walked: 27

The trail exits the San Gorgonio Wilderness in a few miles, and starts climbing steeply into an old burn area. This is now the San Bernardino National Forest. On the CDT national forest boundaries are sometimes aligned with a sudden change in the design of the pathway. Perhaps this is the same on the PCT. Expect steep grades now. The climb is from 3.5k to 8k. Past the burn area fresh snow is present, possibly from the same weather system that caused me to make a quick exit from Idyllwild.



Few water sources are available, but trail angels have left water in a couple of spots. Near my final stop angels had left a mini-dumpster filled with sodas and bananas. Strange but welcome.



Other hikers at the campsite are Seth and T-Bone.

Big Bear Lake and Hostel

PCT 2018 Day 12, May 4, Friday.

Start campsites at mile 253.1

End 266.1 road crossing and exit to Big Bear Lake and Big Bear Hostel

Miles walked: 13

Last night I reserved a bunk at the nearby hostel using their website. Now a quick hike out to the road junction to get to the town of Big Bear Lake, where a researcher is asking hikers to fill out a questionnaire on app use on the trail. A trail angel comes up and asks if anyone needs a ride to town— wow, that was easy. Jan (pronounced yan) and Bob (both Germany), and Marie (France) also ride to the hostel with me.

Sarge and Crocs introduce us to the hostel resources, and I grab a shower and do laundry. Jan and Bob invite me to lunch, and we try nearby Teddy's for burgers with Lella (Hungary, pronounced leela).





Later I walk a mile to the grocery and prepare my food bag. The trail calls for the morning.

Westward Turn

PCT 2018 Day 13, May 5, Saturday.

Start 266.1 road crossing and exit to Big Bear Lake and Big Bear Hostel

End 291.5 near a small creek

Miles walked: 25.4

The hostel provides several of us rides back to the trail |or a modest fee– Jan and Bob, Metric Ton with his giant new pack, Violet (from the UK), and myself in an enormous old station wagon with luggage rack on top for packs.



Jan, Bob and I walk together for a few miles, navigating around a short a mile fire closure using a route on forest roads posted on the pcta.org web site. The trail had not been signed with the alternate route, so it was good we did our homework. Here is a Joshua Tree that was caught in the burn.



Jan and Bob were ready for a break, and I wanted to keep hiking, so we said our goodbyes. Nice people— hope to meet them down the trail. The route turns westward for several days on a narrow strip of mountain range, with the vast Mojave Desert to the north. Later, when the mountains turn north again, we will short-cut the turn by hiking briefly in the desert. Terrain in mixed conifer and broken limestone, gradually descending in altitude through the day from 6.8k to 5.3k.



The temperature goes quite high in the afternoon. And another large burn area is by Holcomb Creek.



I stop at a small creek late in the day, not visibly running but with pools of water cool and clear, gratefully accepted

Follow Water

PCT 2018 Day 14, May 6, Sunday.

Start 291.5 near a small creek

End 319.9 at small campsite

Miles walked: 28.4

The trail follows Holcomb Creek for a couple of miles, then follows Deep Creek, but up the canyon wall a couple hundred feet, for much of the day.



At mile 308 is the hot springs at Deep Creek. The Forest Service warns of high Fecal Coliform counts and primary amoebic meningoencephalitis, so of course I did not go in.



The hot springs area is quite the water park, with a maze of springs, pools, and streams. Back on the trail, I hike over the Mojave River Forks Reservoir Spillway.



The reservoir is dry, as it is most years. A few more miles of not following water, and a tiny campsite is a welcome sight. I have seen no hikers today after the hot springs.

Cajon Mac

PCT 2018 Day 15, May 7, Monday.

Start 319.9 small campsite before Mojave Siphon

End 349.0 campsite on ridge climbing up from Swarthout Canyon Road

Miles walked: 29.1

A few miles and the trail passes Mojave Siphon. No explanatory signs, so this is a reminder for me to research it.

I meet Rodeo, who has an official trail angel patch and slack-packs in the opposite direction of her husband for the day. The path goes along Silverwood Lake for some miles.



The lake has a twisty shape, so is much larger than any single picture from shore. Cleghorn Picnic Area provided a faucet and rest stop. After several more miles, the trail

opens up to a grand vista, showing Cajon Pass and beyond some peaks we would climb.



When walking to town I walk a bit faster. Today, the destination is not actually a town, but an Interstate crossing with a McDonalds only 0.4 miles from the PCT. Most of the booths were filled with hiker trash.



This is not my favorite eating place, but I got something so I could say I did.



They had free wifi and let you fill up water bottles from their soda fountain, so kudos to this place. People were sitting in all the booths when I got my double with bacon. Normal me might timidly ask if they could share a table. On-trail Sagebrush persona calls out, “Who wants a new friend?”, and hikers laugh and wave me over. Rodeo is in the crowd, and offers me a ride to Subway, and gives several others a ride to Wrightwood, the next town.

Back on the trail, after a couple of ridges the traffic and train noise subsides, and I climb a few miles and stop at a campsite with Hussein and Holly, with SkinnyDip pausing to eat dinner and hike on. Hussein tells us about the start of the Serbian War when he was a child, and how he came to America. Several groups pass our tent late, practicing night-hiking.

The Wrightwood Hour

PCT 2018 Day 16, May 8, Tuesday.

Start mile 349.0, campsite on ridge climbing up from Swarthout Canyon Road

End mile 375.8, campsite near Lamel Spring

Miles walked: 26.8

After miles of steady climb, under a fierce sun, little shade, with no nearby water sources, I cross a road just at the top of a ridge, and Rodeo is there giving out lemonade poured over ice, with orange slices as garnish.



She also offered anyone water, apples, and sports drink. Wow. Now I am able to survive through the afternoon.

Terrain is desert shrub or recent burn, neither offering shade.



At a highway crossing is the next town, Wrightwood, a hiker favorite. It has not been that many hours since I had town food, so my plan is to go into town, look around, and resupply as needed, and return in one hour. Almost immediately a van stops and gives me and two other hikers a ride, where 3 large dogs are excited to meet us.



In town, the grocery store has shaded tables in front, useful for hikers packaging meals.



Inside, so many hiker favorites for meals are on store shelves. Down a couple of buildings is the hardware store, which keeps a hiker box and list of trail angels. Some angels offer rooms for the night, and others offer rides to and from the trail. A modest amount of traffic on main street is a welcome change from some previous towns. Shops are close together, easily walkable on foot. After an hour I have snacked and gotten any necessary supplies. Hitching was a little slow, so I was getting ready to call trail angels, when angel Sue arrives to give another hiker a home for the night, and offers me a ride up to the trail. She stops to pick up another hiker hitching, Shindig, who I had been talking with at the grocery. Back on trail, I hike a few more hours of steady climb in forest, to a water source and flat spot big enough for one small tent for one weary traveler.

Kudos to Wrightwood.

Ridge Cuke Frog

PCT 2018 Day 17, May 9, Wednesday.

Start mile 375.8, campsite near Lamel Spring

End mile 400

Miles walked: 24.2

Steep switchbacks lead to the summit of Mount Baden Powell, 9399 feet, named for the founder of the Boy Scouts.



The route stays near the top of ridge and saddle for several miles, rewarding with views.

Going down a trail I meet at least 40 people coming the other way, a group from Korea Town in Los Angeles out for a day hike. One person tells me that someone further back in line will give me cucumbers, and, yes, someone gives me a bag even though I try to take just one, then another person later down the line also tries to give me cukes but I show my bag.



These baby cukes do taste like they were picked this morning. I am guessing that members of the club knew they would meet PCT hikers and decided to bring gifts. Later I see the group again taking a picnic after their hike.



Four other hikers were talking with them, Tortoise, First Bird, Irish, and GPSy (pronounced gypsy).

Mile 390 to mile 394 of the trail is closed to protect an endangered species, the Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog. A couple of routes around the closure are available. My choice involved a 2 mile road-walk. At Buckhorn Campground, on the closure route, I meet the group of four hikers again, taking an afternoon break. I sit and chat a while, then move on. Later I see a couple of them again, and we are walking near each other, but they somehow disappeared at one point.

Steep switchbacks late in the day are draining my energy, so the 400 point marked in pine cones seems like a good place to stop.



Finished audiobook [Captain Blood](#), by Rafael Sabatini

Rambling

PCT 2018 Day 18, May 10, Thursday.

Start mile 400

End mile 429.2, under a tall pine

Miles walked: 29.2

Here is a cone from Coulter Pine.



The path is white sandy soil, like crushed limestone. The ecozone keeps switching, starting as tall mixed conifer, going to low oak, to high desert shrubs, to old burn, to pines spaced far apart, then randomly alternating each mile.



From the small spring near where I camped, the next sure water source is 18 miles away at a faucet at Mill Creek Fire Station, and a line of hikers wait their turn to fill up.



Up high on ridges, now around 5.5k elevation, one can make out how the coastal range shifts directions.



Dulce

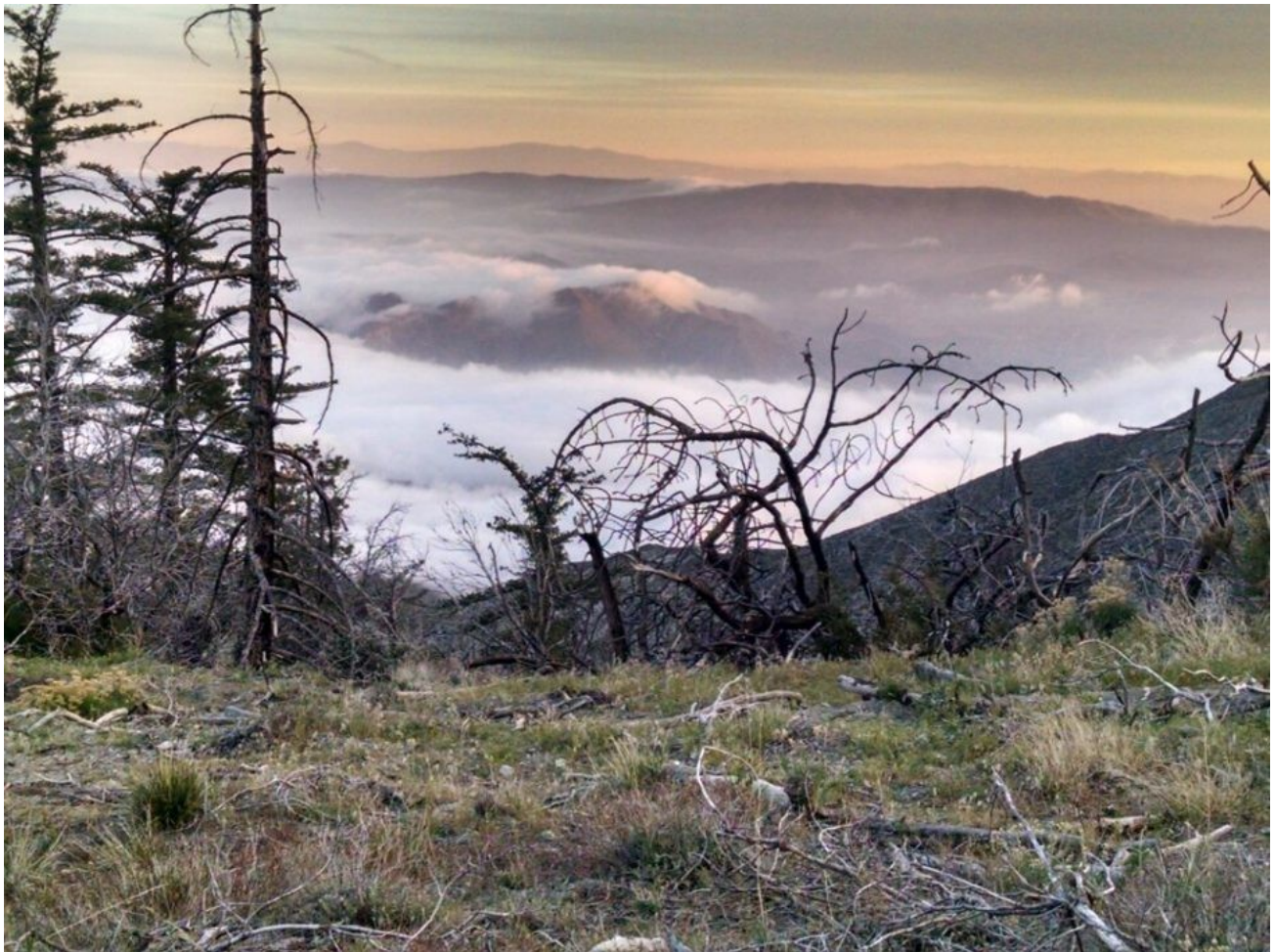
PCT 2018 Day 19, May 11, Friday.

Start mile 429.2, under a tall pine

End mile 454.5, Agua Dulce, then shuttle to Hiker Heaven.

Miles walked: 25.3

Starting at elevation 5.5k, a mist has appeared below.



Descending into the fog at Messenger Flats campground, an important water stop, the air is much cooler, and the sun shaded to gentleness.

Below the cloud, the day remains cool and shaded, compared to fierce heat of previous days.



Just past the highway to the Acton KOA, the terrain changes suddenly to sandstone with red tints, low enough altitude for grasses to reappear, and though washed out in photos by cloud cover, much resembling the hills near Socorro NM.



Past a tunnel under a freeway is Velasquez Rocks, a canyon with rock formations much like San Lorenzo Canyon on the Grand Enchantment Trail.



Down to the town of Agua Dulce, I start walking the mile or so to Hiker Heaven, when the truck shuttle picks me up.



I am given the tour. The Saufleys have for several years turned over their spacious yard and garage and guest house over to the use of hikers. Helpers organize food drop packages and do hiker laundry in the garage. An outdoor shower has a signup list. Wifi is available, and a computer. A shuttle truck runs to town every hour and a half or so each day, announced by megaphone.



Some other features make the experience unique. Chickens freely roam among the tents, and will come inside if you do not zip your door.



Dogs also roam. Horses are just pass the tents.



I go into town and get supplies to hike to the next town, then go to a Mexican restaurant and find other hikers at a table and they graciously allow me to join. Codex, Miguel, and Tiana.

Tent neighbors include Fish Tank, Little John, and Tic Tac.

First Zero Hiker Heaven

PCT 2018 Day 20, May 12, Saturday.

Start mile 454.5, Agua Dulce, Hiker Heaven.

End mile 454.5, Agua Dulce, Hiker Heaven.

Miles walked: 0

Rested as much as possible.





Chatted with Rob, Bolo. Tortoise,
First Bird, Irish, and GPSy arrived later.

Cloud Walking

PCT 2018 Day 21, May 13, Sunday.

Start mile 454.5, Agua Dulce, Hiker Heaven.

End 483.3

Miles walked: 28.8

The weather conditions of a couple of days ago are still in effect: low cloud cover and cool, quite cold in the cloud layer.



At lower elevations, 3.5k, grasses and shrubs grow thickly, and at higher altitude for the day of 5.5k the grasses are gone. On a hot day no trees would be available for shade, and water sources are limited. But today was cold enough that I hiked with windbreaker on nearly all day, sometimes in clouds, other times underneath.

Late in the day I cross a highway and trail angel Tall Paul, with dog Sonora, invites me to the Andersons, a popular host for hikers.



I had just zeroed at Hiker Heaven, and was not ready to stop again. He replied that was probably for the best, since the Andersons was getting crowded today and was a nexus difficult for hikers to escape and this was great hiking weather. Yep, that reverse psychology almost worked.

Back up the mountain I walk a few more miles, and make camp in solitude, as skies clear.

Go Long

PCT 2018 Day 22, May 14, Monday.

Start mile 483.3, tiny flat spot

End mile 519.2, stealth camp near aqueduct

Miles walked: 35.9

Cloud cover is gone, but the temperature seems still cooler than typical. The path goes along a ridge for a while, then down and up onto another ridge, repeat as needed. The ridges are mostly covered in high desert shrubs, with scattered stands of trees, oak or mixed conifer. One ridge seems to get more rain and is covered in trees, possibly because we are at the edge of this mountain range and out of a rain shadow.



Down below lowlands become visible, irrigated farmland and grassland, and mountains beyond.



The trail is gradually descending much of the day, an easy walk. Hiker hunger, where one suddenly needs to eat a lot more food each day, has kicked in. I decide to hike a couple of longer days to arrive a day early, and split that extra day's food to increase rations.

Down off the mountain, Hikertown is another angel-hosted facility for hikers.



I recently had a zero day, so do not feel the need for a bunk and shower and town food yet. I praise the angels willing to open their place to hikers, but respectfully hike onward.

Now at 3k elevation, the trail follows an aqueduct for a few miles.



Low Desert Crossing

PCT 2018 Day 23, May 15, Tuesday.

Start mile 519.2, stealth camp near aqueduct

End mile 553.9, campsite

Miles walked: 34.7

A cold morning begins walking along more open aqueduct, then turns direction and becomes aqueduct enclosed in a huge diameter metal pipe, partially exposed above ground.





Later, after several miles, the pipe is completely buried under a thin slab of concrete and continues across the valley floor up to mountains on the other side.



The air quickly warms as the sun gets higher, very hot indeed. Joshua Tree and creosote bush grow on bare sandy soil.



The trail passes by a wind farm, with larger wind turbines than we had seen before.





Reaching and climbing the mountains on the other side, some elevation brings temperature relief.



I resist making a dad joke about the PCT Association installing huge fans to cool hikers.

Looking back, beyond the ridge in the foreground, one can view the desert valley floor and mountains on the other side, to see how much Mojave Desert we crossed today.



I camp near others on a high ridge near more wind turbines, and can hear the soft whoosh when they start and stop during the night.



Chatted with hikers Big Sky, Nutella, and Mister Giggles today.

Finished audiobook [The Sea Hawk](#), by Rafael Sabatini.

Tehachapi

PCT 2018 Day 24, May 16, Wednesday.

Start mile 553.9, campsite

End 566.5 Highway 58, Cameron Road exit, then accept trail angel ride to Tehachapi.

Miles walked: 12.6



I walked down a ridge and past many wind turbines to a road crossing, Willow Springs Road, where one can hitch to the town of Tehachapi. The morning is cold, perhaps a bit too windy, but still good hiking temperature, so the walk continues towards the alternative road crossing to town, a few miles later. Now wind turbines are in even greater numbers, older models mixed with the new, and a strong wind exercises them well today.



Up and down ridges the trail goes, past wind machines almost all the way to the road exit. Trail angel Tripod comes by and gives me a ride to town. Tripod is a thru-hiker that has been off the trail several weeks, but my get back on soon. He takes me to Wit's End, the house of a trail angel coordinator, whose front room serves as a hiker hangout, where we can talk and share information.



Rachel, another trail angel, comes by, and offers a ride to the Albertsons, 1.5 miles away. The town is kind of spread out into 3 or more big clumps, but transport is not a problem if you are wearing your pack, since townsfolk are quick to stop and offer rides to hikers. Rachel comes back and gives me a ride to my cheap motel in the center of town.



The wifi turns out to be poor, so I return to Wit's End to use their Internet after cleaning up, and talk with more hikers, then return to my room for trip prep, and the first motel bed of the trip. New hiker names and faces to remember today include Mantis (from Vegas), Black Widow (from CT), Adam (from Poland!), Chance, starting a break to recover from injury, Chip, Heart and Soul, Birdie (Phx), Curdles and Level from back east, and Tripod, mentioned above.

Out of Tehachapi

PCT 2018 Day 25, May 17, Thursday.

Start mile 566.5 Highway 58, Cameron Road exit

End campsites at mile 592.9

Miles walked: 26.4

Chip, Voon, and I take the 6:15 intercity bus to Cameron Road exit of highway 58, and resume our hike. Chip and I hike together much of the morning, and I lag behind in the afternoon. The trail starts at 3.8k elevation, rising to 6k, heading generally north.



Cool and breezy, we hike a fast pace, and the climb seems easy, as we talk on the way up.

The first water source is at 18 miles, where we meet Hotdog and Pinto. We carry enough water to dry camp, for the next source is 25 miles away. Wind turbines are with us all day, as is the cold wind.



The camping area is popular, with over a dozen tent sites spread out, partially hidden.

Serene Pine

PCT 2018 Day 26, May 18, Friday.

Start campsites at mile 592.9

End mile 621.0, micro tent site near trail

Miles walked: 28.1

After walking a few miles, wind and wind turbines are gone. Vegetation becomes mixed conifer with oak, to be replaced in a few more miles with pleasant open pine forest with rye grass and scattered sagebrush.





The warm air in the afternoon is welcome after several cold windy nights. How pleasant to be walking on level trail among tall pines. No hikers are seen until near a water cache at a road crossing near mile 615, where several are clumped together.

Looking forward in the direction of trail, the ecozone suddenly changes to high desert.



I do not see nearby mountains causing a rain shadow, so am unsure what causes such a sudden transition. The first cows of the trip regard me sourly.



Thought for today: Does a wind turbine spin a cocoon and emerge a helicopter?

Angel Food

PCT 2018 Day 27, May 19, Saturday.

Start mile 621.0, micro tent site near trail

End Walker Pass Campground, mile 651

Miles walked: 30

Continuing in high desert, the trail descends to a dirt road at Bird Spring Pass with a water cache... and more.





A group of trail angels put out a lovely spread, and I graze on fresh cooked quesadillas, cold soda, brownie, celery stick with dip, Snickers for later, assorted muffins, chex mix, grapes, and— oh yeah— a couple liters of water. The route climbs from 5.5k elevation to 6.8k, fueled by trail angel brunch, easy climbing.



Later the path is on wide flat mountain-top, mostly level, before descending to Walker Pass and interesting looking snow-kissed peaks further north.



At Walker Pass Campground, another group of trail angels serve a massive slab of smoked beef brisket smothered in salsa with baked potato, rolls, and cold drinks. Some of these angels are out of Bakersfield, others from nearby Lake Isabella.





New hiker names today included Milkshake, Blazer, Dragon, Zeroman, and John.

Up Down Up Down

PCT 2018 Day 28, May 20, Sunday.

Start Walker Pass Campground, mile 651

End mile 680.9, Chimney Creek Campground

Miles walked: 29.9

Past the highway we climb from 5.2k to 6.5k elevation, where one can look over Walker Pass, pathway from the Great Basin to Interior of California.





The trail seems to go way up and way down several times during the day, as hikers grumble and are not totally convinced that the route requires such climbs. By afternoon I am dragging.





The BLM has another no-fee campsite just past a water source, where I am the only occupant, until some group arrives late and builds a fire.

Finished audiobook [Scaramouche](#) by Rafael Sabatini

Kennedy Meadows

PCT 2018 Day 29, May 21, Monday.

Start mile 680.9, Chimney Creek Campground

End Kennedy Meadows, mile 702.2, camp at Grumpy Bear restaurant tent sites

Miles walked: 21.3

Climbing up from the campground, a storm is visible in the distance, that appears to be small and local.



Though it appears the trail will go around the storm, the last three miles is in rain, a rarity for this trip so far.

I arrive at the Kennedy Meadows general store, and take a shuttle 2.5 miles to Grumpy Bears Resort and Restaurant.

I slouch at the bar, buy wifi, get a burger, later an indoor shower, but do not get laundry done today because the dryer is a clothesline, and rain comes intermittently. We can pitch tents outside for free, so I do.

The Grumpy is quite rustic, off-grid, with a generator going out back.



Kennedy Meadows starts the High Sierra section of the trip, with snow hiking, high mountain passes, and stunning landscapes. Time to study, talk to people, seek advice, for a most challenging few weeks.

Kennedy Nero

PCT 2018 Day 30, May 22, Tuesday.

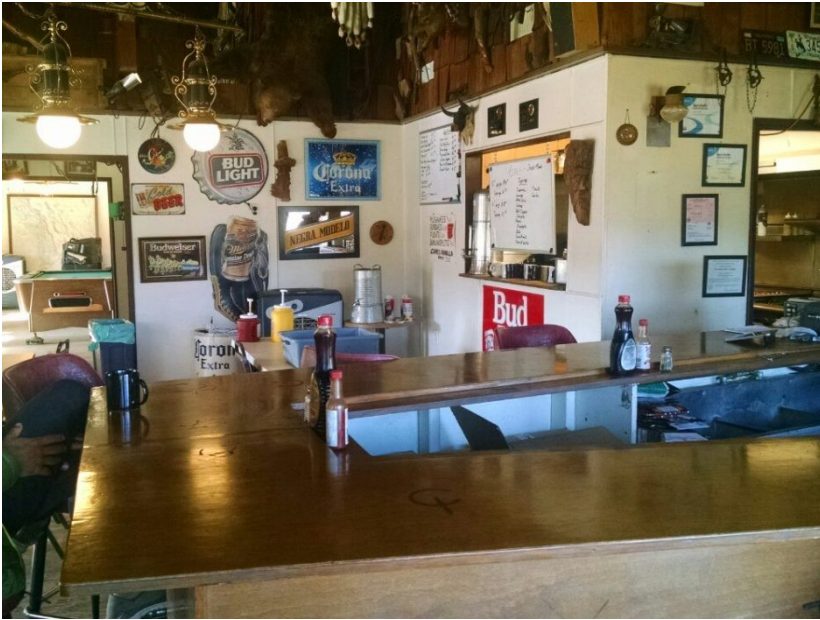
Start Kennedy Meadows, mile 702.2, camp at Grumpy Bear resort and restaurant

End mile 705.3, campsite near south fork of Kern River

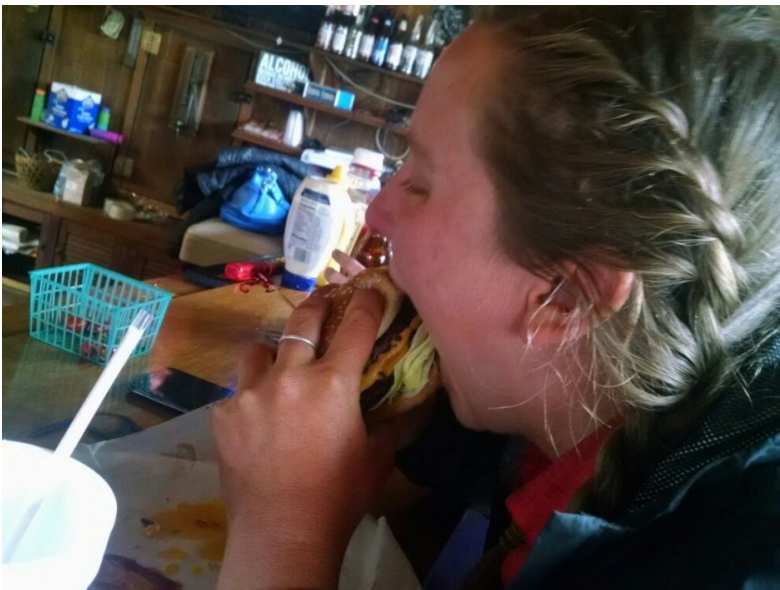
Miles walked: 3.1

The nearby Triple Crown Outfitter, a new store, had good prices and a decent selection of equipment and food. A pleasant day of studying the trail and trail ahead, doing laundry, restoring calories to the body, and other trip preparations as needed are completed.





Milkshake (Missouri), from the day of angel treats, arrives and finds her friends, including Dirt and Applejack, and we all hold court at Grumpy's bar.



Much conversation and laughter occur. Although the free tent sites by the restaurant was fine for one night, once my 24 hours of paid wifi was finished, I decided to move to the quieter Kennedy Meadows Campground on trail, for a strong start in the morning. Sean (former police officer) and I take the shuttle to the trailhead. At the campground, we discover that Kennedy Meadows Store now runs the campground, and that we were supposed to have paid for our sites at the store, a couple of miles back. We hike a couple of miles further and set up camp near the sound of the river.

Olancha Pass

PCT 2018 Day 31, May 23, Wednesday.

Start mile 705.3, campsite near south fork of Kern River

End mile 730.8, campsite at Death Canyon Creek

Miles walked: 25.5

Starting at elevation 6.2k, the path climbs to 10.5k, before descending to 9k to camp. The trail today has good controlled slope, so climbing is not any harder than it needs to be, and the temperature is pleasant, sunny skies, low wind. Climbing to Beck Meadow, one can see snow-kissed mountains in the distance.



Climbing higher, snow covered mountains grow nearer.



In old-growth forest, some wide white sandy patches appear near the destination campsite.



One full month on the PCT!

Cottonwood Pass

PCT 2018 Day 32, May 24, Thursday.

Start mile 730.8, campsite at Death Canyon Creek

End campsites at Rock Creek, mile 760.5

Miles walked: 29.7

Starting at 8.5k elevation, I climb to 11.1k at Cottonwood Pass.



At the pass, and throughout the day, one can see many impressive snow-covered peaks.



The pass has very little remaining snow, just a few places.



Near the end of the day we enter Sequoia National Park, which requires the use of bear canisters. Bear boxes are also distributed at many campsites. At my final campsite, back down at 9.5k, I fall off a log trying to cross a creek, and get wet feet. Several crossings in this area are tricky to cross, or are wet-foot crossings, as will be experienced tomorrow. A few other hikers are at this campsite, too weary to socialize.

Finished audiobook [Jill the Reckless](#), by P G Wodehouse

Almost Forester Pass

PCT 2018 Day 33, May 25, Friday.

Start campsites at Rock Creek, mile 760.5, elevation 9.5k

End mile 778.7, near campsites, less than one mile from Forester Pass, elevation 12.3k.

Miles walked: 18.2

The trail is often through boulder fields, taking on a rugged character.



The John Muir Trail joins the PCT. Also, a side trail leads to Mount Whitney, which many PCT hikers do as a day-hike, leaving much of their gear in a bear box. The water at Tyndal Creek ford was running fast. The water near the trail appeared more than waist deep, but going upstream a large flat rock creek-bed caused the water to run fast but shallow, a good crossing point.



Climbing steadily towards Forester Pass, more snow appears. Fewer footprints are visible than I expected.



Passing many high snowy peaks each day, I give thanks for the ones we bypass, as well as those we climb.



I reach the final mile ascent of Forester at 4PM, but this is not enough time to climb up and get back down, and snow conditions in late afternoon are not recommended for the climb. After the pass you would be post-holing (suddenly breaking through the surface of the snow) for miles before reaching a suitable campsite.

I find a flat boulder and pitch the tent. With low wind, and sun reflected off snow, the evening is surprisingly warm and pleasant, having dinner on my little island.



Later a few hikers pitch tents on snow a hundred yards away, all ready for the pass in the early morning.

Kearsarge Pass

PCT 2018 Day 34, May 26, Saturday.

Start mile 778.7, near campsites, less than one mile from Forester Pass, elevation 12.3k.

End mile 788.5, then take the Bullfrog Lake Trail and Kearsarge Trail 7.6 miles to Onion Valley Trailhead and hitch 11 miles to Independence

Miles walked: 17.4

Several people started up Forester Pass before me in the morning, even though I camped closest. One couple, camped 5 miles away, got up at 3:30AM to get to the pass while the snow was still hard. I was glad to follow some fresh footprints.





Going down Kings Canyon was several miles of snow, and post-holing started relatively early in some spots, even as early as 9AM, though breaking through the snow crust was rare, it did happen. Kings Canyon offered terrific views on descending.



Further down the canyon, past the snow, the need for food resupply required that I exit the PCT, and climb Kearsarge Trail from 10.8k elevation up to Kearsarge Pass at 11.8k.



Then an infinite set of switchbacks brings me down to Onion Valley Trailhead at 9.2k.





The trail was very popular with day-hikers. On the way down I met Groundhog and MouseTrap, and we decided to stay at bunkhouse at Courthouse Motel. I had called on the way down, and they had space for hikers on this busy Memorial Day weekend.

I got a ride down with Skidmark and Chief, with their parents, who had left the trail temporarily to stash food in a bear box at the trailhead, and then would return hiking at Kennedy Meadows. They quizzed me on trail conditions at each pass, all the way down to the town of Independence.





Finished audiobook [The Girl On the Boat](#), by P G Wodehouse

Zero Independence

PCT 2018 Day 35, May 27, Sunday.

Start town of Independence

End Independence

Miles walked: ZERO

While taking a rest day, I do the routine preparations like purchasing and preparing hiking meals using the two convenience stores in town (\$\$), eating lots of town food, and researching the trail ahead. And the Eastern California Museum a couple of blocks away had good exhibits, particularly the Manzanar internment camp of USA citizens of Japanese background.





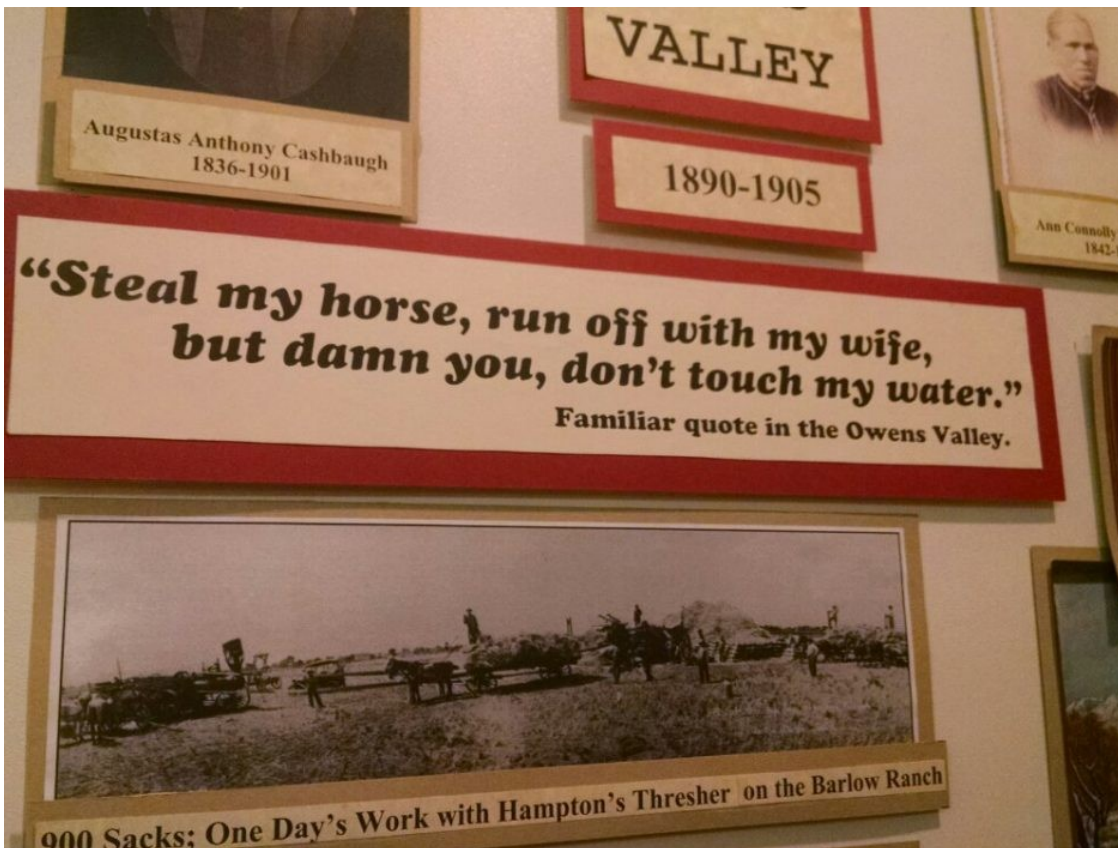
ONE OF EIGHT
SENTRY TOWERS -
SURROUNDING CAMP



A Native American basket exhibit was also worth seeing.



And details of the Owens Valley project to bring water all the way to Los Angeles, part of the plot of the movie Chinatown, should be seen.



Outdoor mechanical artifacts, including some used on the water project, are out back.



Later I took a self-guided walking tour of town. Some giant Sequoias grow here. This one is decorated with lights for the holiday season.



A row of sycamores gives shade to the road back to the trailhead,



Rows of trees along the road are so pleasant, don't you think?

Glen Pass

PCT 2018 Day 36, May 28, Monday.

Start town of Independence, hitch 11 miles to Onion Valley Trailhead, walk 7.6 mile Kearsarge Trail back to PCT mile 788.9

End mile 798 near creek

Miles walked: 16.7

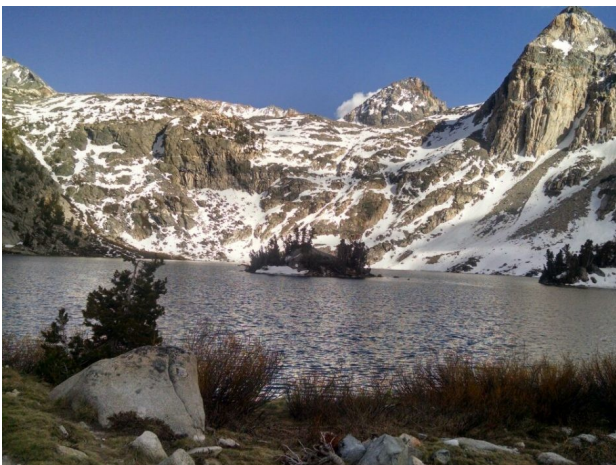
Groundhog arranged for us to get a ride back to the trailhead, but the earliest we could get was 10AM. I went out to Onion Valley Road and caught a ride up, to start the trail at 8AM. On the hike back up to Kearsarge Pass I met Karlie and Charlie, tent neighbors at Kennedy Meadows Grumpy Bear, and gave them info on Independence. Back to the PCT and then close to the approach to Glen Pass, I had to decide whether to climb the pass later in the day, or wait until tomorrow. A lot of hikers are trying to climb passes very early in the morning for firm snow and to avoid post-holing on the way down. Looking at the pass, little snow remained on the trail-south side, so I decided to climb.



Over the pass, more snow but mostly firm, not breaking through the crust.



Following footprints, previous hikers climbed straight down the snow instead of following the switchbacks of the trail. This was tricky to follow, requiring care not to fall. Further down, post-holing happened more frequently, but soon I was past the snow. The trail goes the rest of the day along a series of lakes, with many creek crossings.





I try to get close to Pinchot Pass for the next day, but run out of energy and must camp several miles short.

Pinchot Pass

PCT 2018 Day 37, May 29, Tuesday.

Start mile 798 near creek

End mile 813.3, near campsites

Miles walked: 15.3

Because I quit hiking early yesterday, I was eight or so miles from the next pass, so I did not reach the summit until noon.



Going up in soft snow was not too bad, but coming down was tough.



Much more snow remained on the far side of the pass compared to Glen Pass, and post-holing was frequent. Several miles passed before snow thinned out to small patches on the trail. Many creek and stream crossings were necessary today, often a torrent from snow melt, often a challenge to ford.



I camp closer to the next pass, and will start earlier tomorrow, in the hope of getting firmer snow.

I saw no other person all day!

Mather Pass

PCT 2018 Day 38, May 30, Wednesday.

Start mile 813.3, near campsites

End mile 834.8, campsites along Middle Fork Kings River

Miles walked: 21.5

Starting extra early at 5AM, I climb up to Mather Pass by 7:30.



Following footprints was useful, but the last set of switchbacks were ignored, in favor of rock scrambling, perhaps a little too exciting at a steep 12k elevation.



Summiting at nearly the same time are Nightingale and Hershey, and Lake and Frogger. I descend right away to get past snow before it is warm enough for post-holing. The path down is on a steep slope, treacherous.



Several miles were necessary to get below from the snow, and post-holing began as early as 9AM, so starting early did not help much. We just had to power through. Then we descend on well-engineered switchbacks deep into a pleasant canyon, and follow along a river for much of the afternoon. I meet Easy, who I had not seen since before Kennedy Meadows. He heads off-trail to Bishop Pass to get resupply.

My campsite is by a river at 10k elevation, just at the 50 percent snow line, to be close to Muir Pass for tomorrow morning. Several other tents are nearby, as others plan an early morning summit.

Muir Pass

PCT 2018 Day 39, May 31, Thursday.

Start mile 834.8, campsites along Middle Fork Kings River

End mile 862.4, campsite 3.2 miles from Selden Pass

Miles walked: 27.6

Frogger and Lake kindly let me follow them up, as they are better at finding glimpses of the trail between patches of snow.



The climb up is too hard, no sketchy scrambles on ice or rock.

Muir Cabin at the pass is dedicated to the memory of John Muir, built of local rock.



The charming chimney is bricked up. See the ceiling constructed of stone.



The cabin is surprisingly warm naturally, with one small window.



Descending...



About a mile of post-holing. I saw Hershey and Nightingale just after the last of the snow, planning to take an easy day since it was too far to the next pass. (I think to myself, “Challenge accepted!”) This lake with ice has a pleasing pattern.



Down a canyon and along a river and meadow...



I greeted Applejack, last seen at Grumpy Bears at Kennedy Meadows. My walk is fast and long to get close to Selden Pass, since early morning ascents and descents are much more pleasant. Success.

Finished audiobook [Something New](#) (A Blandings Castle novel), by P G Wodehouse

Selden Pass

PCT 2018 Day 40, June 1, Friday.

Start mile 862.4, campsite 3.2 miles from Selden Pass

End mile 882.9, campsite 2 miles from Silver Pass

Miles walked: 20.5

Climbing to the pass extra early, no traction devices on shoes were necessary going up. The night was cold and snow quite firm.



The way down was steeper, with footprints going straight down the slope in places.



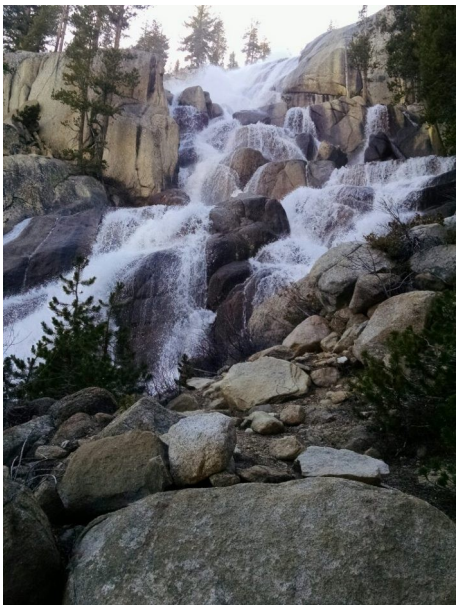
The transition from partial snow coverage to clear was reasonably quick, so perhaps only a mile or two of post-holing and seeking alternate routes parallel to snow-covered trail.

Near the trail for Vermillion Valley Resort I meet Sunshine and two other hikers that were getting ATT cell signal, but no others cell providers. They were heading into the resort, like most hikers I have been talking to for three days, but I am skipping and will hike a day or two more to the trail for Mammoth Lakes, a town with many more supply and food options. The hikers were able to tell me that the store near the route to Mammoth was not open yet, so the shuttle from the store to town was not stopping at the store. They verified the correct trail exit for me to take of three options.

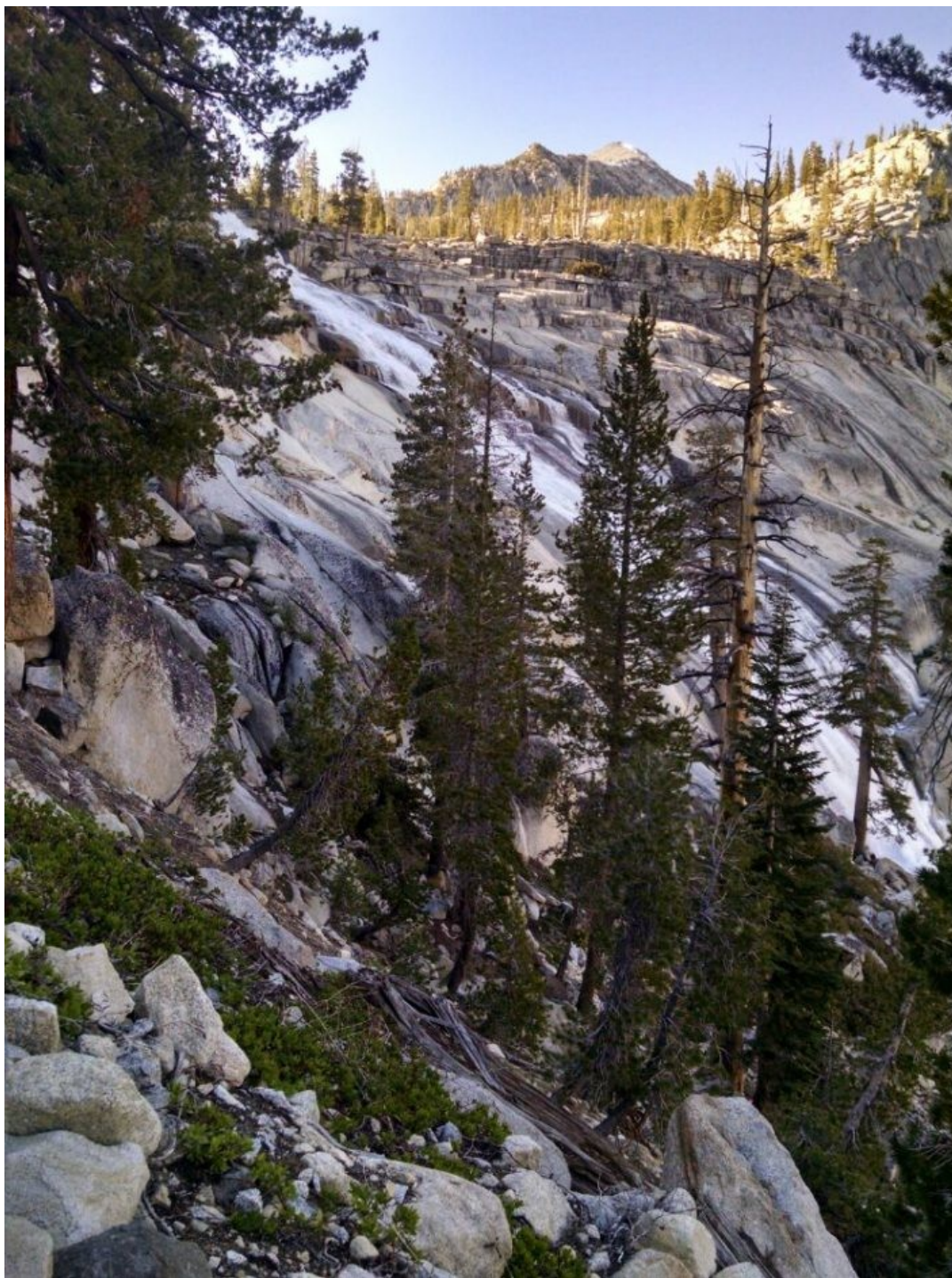
Down from the pass, let me say a word on lower altitudes. Water is omnipresent. Often the route is along a large stream, the roar of rapids a familiar presence. The trail is frequently soggy from snow-melt and swollen creeks, and much of the effort of the day is spent avoiding water hazards in the path by stepping on rocks, etc.



Many creek and stream crossings are necessary, and several are fords, wet-foot crossings. One of the last fords of the day was next to a waterfall, the mist spraying on hikers.



I could not zoom out for you to see how long the falls were. Here is another view.



Silver Pass

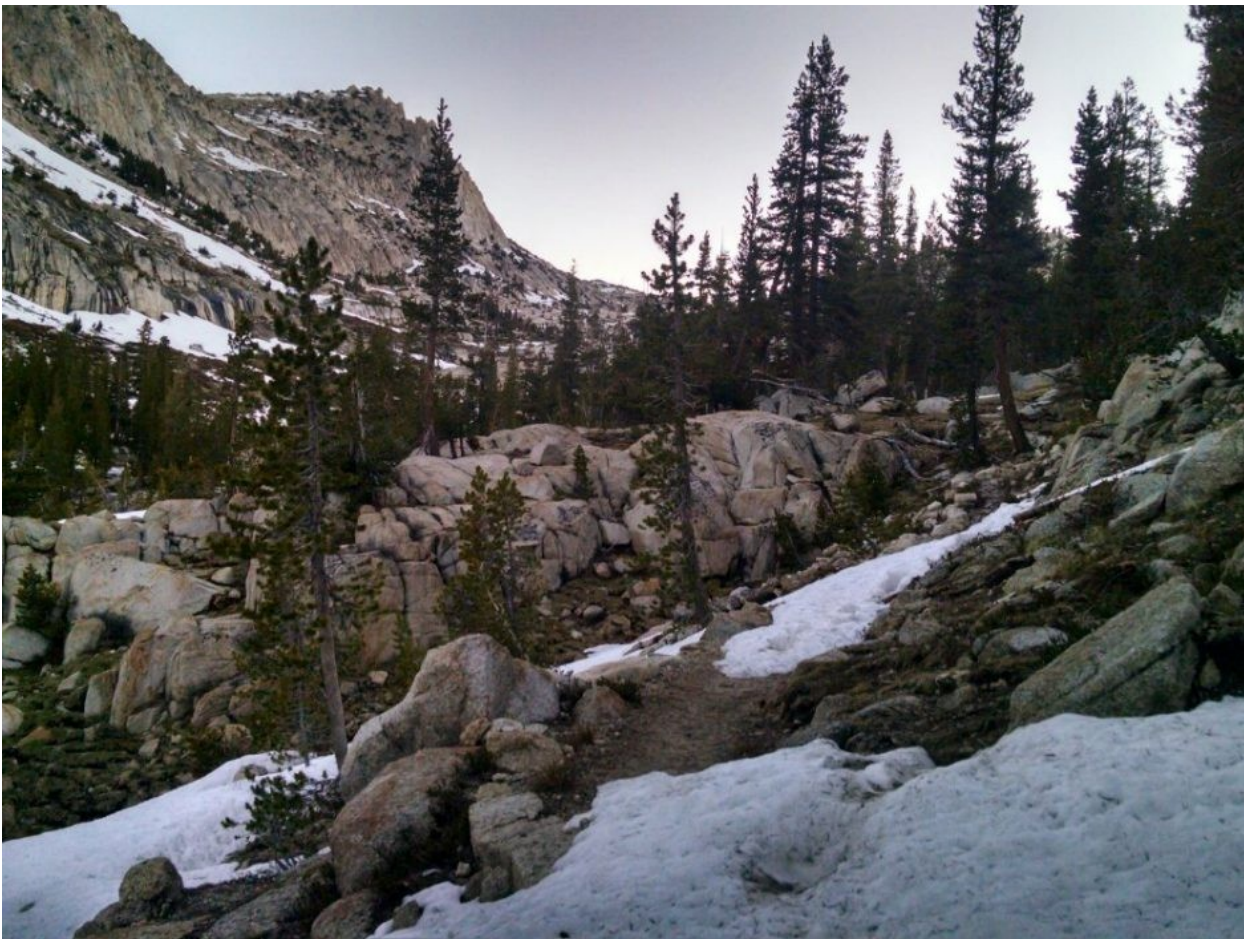
PCT 2018 Day 41, June 2, Saturday.

Start mile 882.9, campsite 2 miles from Silver Pass

End mile 903.9, then walk 3.2 miles on the Mammoth Pass Trail and Horseshoe Lake Trail to trailhead, and ask for a ride into town, Mammoth Lakes

Miles walked: 24.2

The walk up Silver Pass from my campsite went well in the early morning.



Coming down, the path along footprints was steep in places, requiring traction devices.



The snow on the trail-north side goes on for a good while, then appears to start to clear. Silver Pass is known for frequently having a lot of snow.

Suddenly snow reappears on the trail, playing hide-and-seek with small bits of trail showing all the way down a deep canyon, soft snow with post-holing.



Looking back after climbing the very dry opposite wall of the canyon, one can see the snow coverage, and make out the pass on the far right.



The orientation of the slope face, plus the deep and narrow canyon restricting sunlight, may contribute to the depth of snow.

Further along the route, after miles of clear pathway, snow again covers trail at Purple Lake. Could lake effect contribute?

After clear paths for a while, the snow starts up yet again.

Finally, the route goes along the summit of a flat-ish ridge for a number of miles, and one can really stretch the legs with fast walking.

I take a route to the trailhead, and quickly (30 seconds) get a ride with Kevin around 6:30PM, when most cars are clearing out of the parking lot. He says the large die-off of trees near the trailhead is due to CO₂.

I get a bunk at a hostel, one of two in town, and shower and get food. The rest will wait on the morrow.

Mammoth Lakes Zero

PCT 2018 Day 42, June 3, Sunday.

Start town of Mammoth Lakes

End town of Mammoth Lakes

Miles walked: ZERO

Got food at Von's and packaged for bear cannister.



Did all the tasks required in town, and ate, and saw a movie, and talked to new friends around the hostel kitchen table. I had talks with Bible, a PCT hiker who ran into major trouble on the trail, caught in a snowstorm. It took him several extra days to hike out, so long that he was reported missing in local news stations. [Read his own blog](#) to find out what happened.

Warm Spell

PCT 2018 Day 43, June 4, Monday.

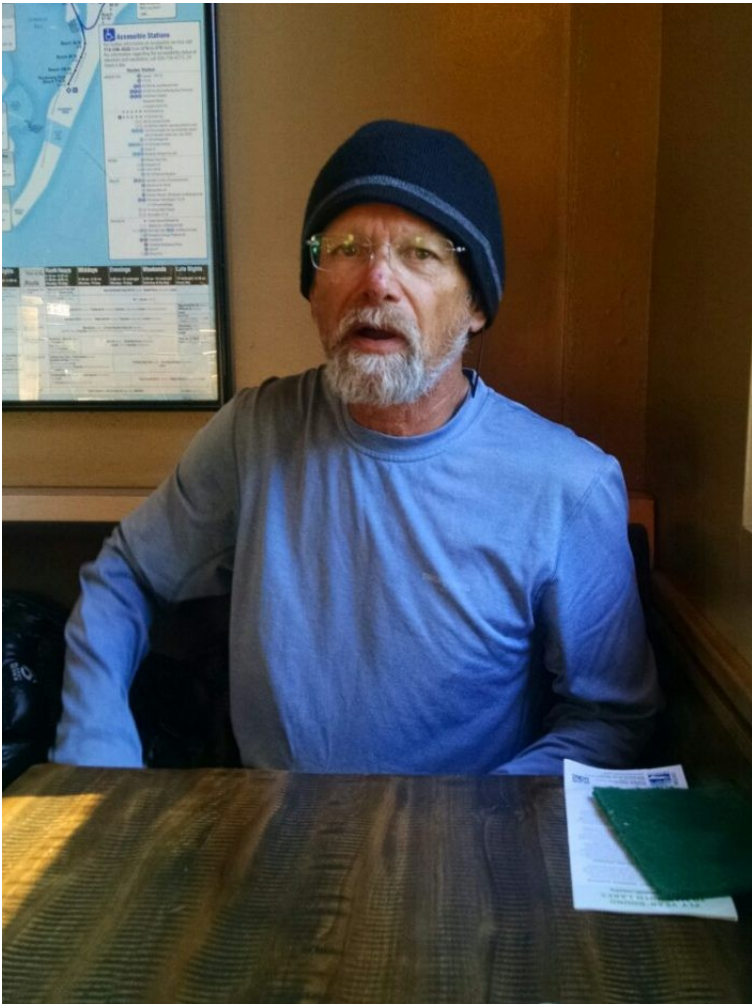
Start town of Mammoth Lakes, and take a free bus to Horseshoe Lake trailhead, then hike 3.2 miles to PCT mile 903.2

End campsite at mile 915.9, 8.7 miles from Island Pass

Miles walked: 15.9

Bible joins me for breakfast in the “Village”, a ski resort area of town.

We take the earliest shuttle up to Horseshoe Lake, arriving at 9:30AM.



Bible is not leaving today, just making a practice run.

The day is very warm and sunny, with mosquitos and gnats present in places, and many deer wandering around. How different from the cold snowy trail of two days ago. The Devil's Postpile shows an unusual geologic formation that looks like a huge pile of wooden posts.



The trail goes as low as 7.4k elevation, climbing to 8.8k on the way to the next pass tomorrow at 10.2k.

Island and Donohue Passes

PCT 2018 Day 44, June 5, Tuesday.

Start campsite at mile 915.9, 8.7 miles from Island Pass

End mile 933.6 at campsite

Miles walked: 17.7

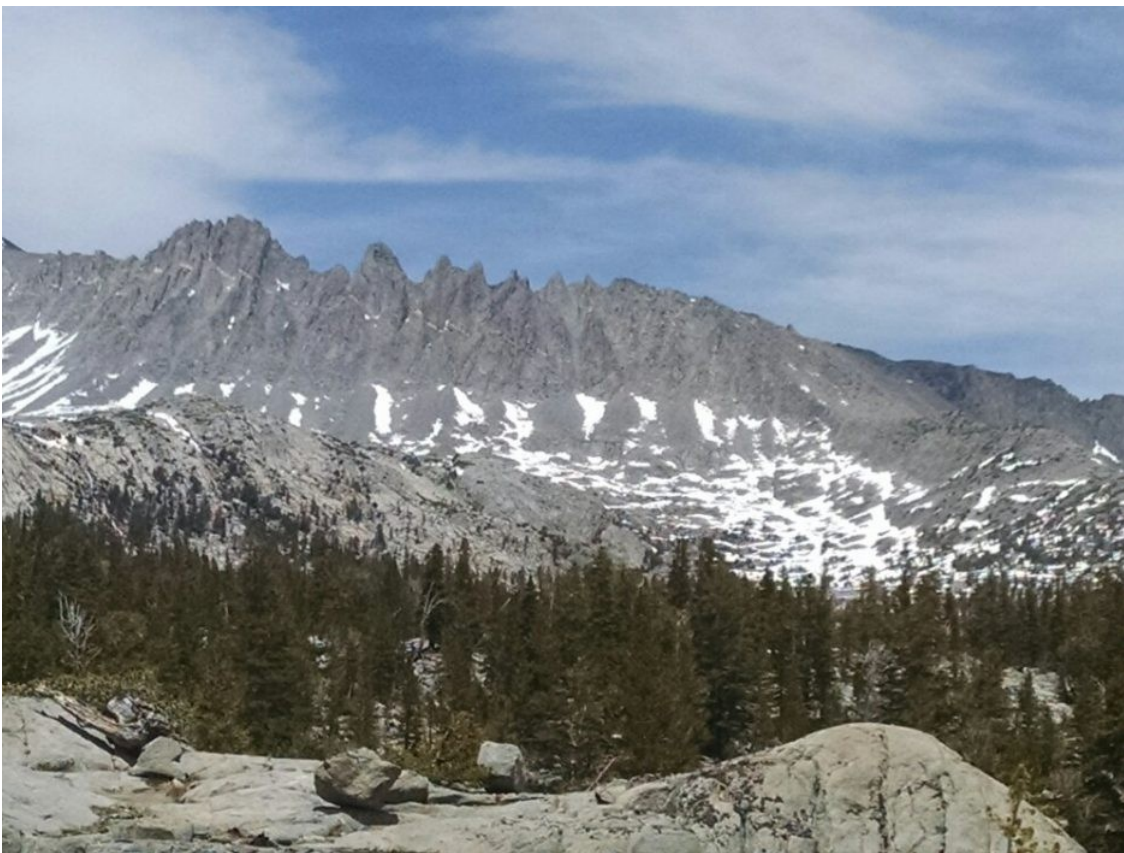
I was not able to camp very close to Island Pass (10.2k), so a mid-morning climb would mean soft snow and post-holing. The ascent was not too bad, with enough land exposed that you could find bits of trail and walk around snow often.



Same situation coming down.



In the afternoon, near Donohue Pass, this ridge reminded me of a Ginsu knife.



Donohue Pass (11.1k) had much more snow on the trail-south side compared to previous passes.



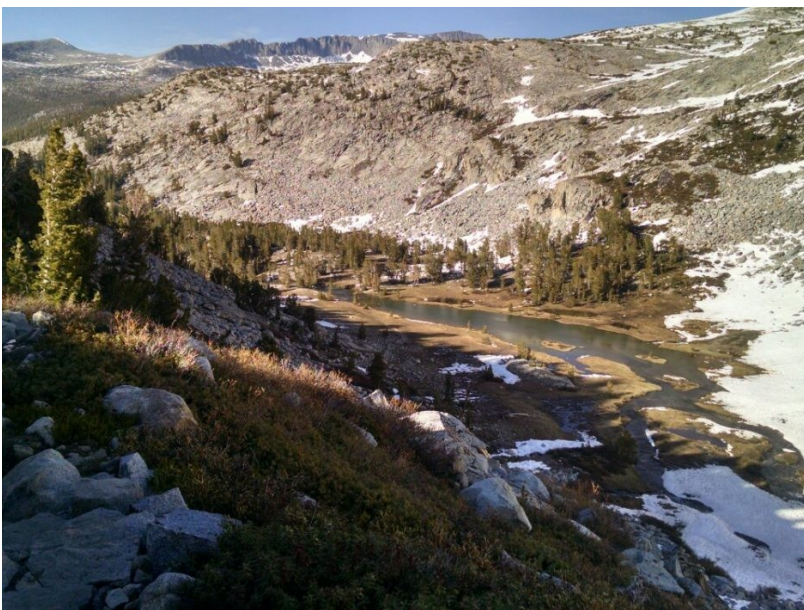
Near the summit of other passes is often clear of snow, but not this pass.



Coming down meant even more snow and post-holing.



Finally past the snow, the path lowers to a lovely meadow at 8.9k.



I did not see PCT hikers all day, but did see a group of south-bound section hikers after the last pass.

Enter Yosemite

PCT 2018 Day 45, June 6, Wednesday.

Start mile 933.6 at campsite

End 960.5, bivy site

Miles walked: 26.9

The day begins along a series of meadows along Lyell Canyon.



Entering Yosemite National Park, Lembert Dome is a good example of the mountains of solid rock, favored by climbers.



A sign explains how glaciers smoothed over the rock, except the very highest peaks, such as Cathedral Peak.



(Tuolumne campground store is closed, due to open in a couple of days.) A park ranger hikes by and does check my permit and asks about my recent hike. After a waterfall, the trail gradually climbs.



I camp among 50% snow cover at 9.5k elevation, about six miles from Benson Pass, 10.1k.

Finished audiobook [The Laughing Cavalier](#) (Ancestor of the Scarlet Pimpernel), by Baroness Orczy.

Tough Love

PCT 2018 Day 46, June 7, Thursday.

Start mile 960.5, bivy site

End mile 980.0, campsites after stream crossing

Miles walked: 19.5

Climbing to Benson Pass, snow starts at 50% coverage, goes to 80%. Unlike many recent passes, no bare rock is at the top of the pass..



Going down



Though the trail seems extra rugged today, the vistas are inspiring.





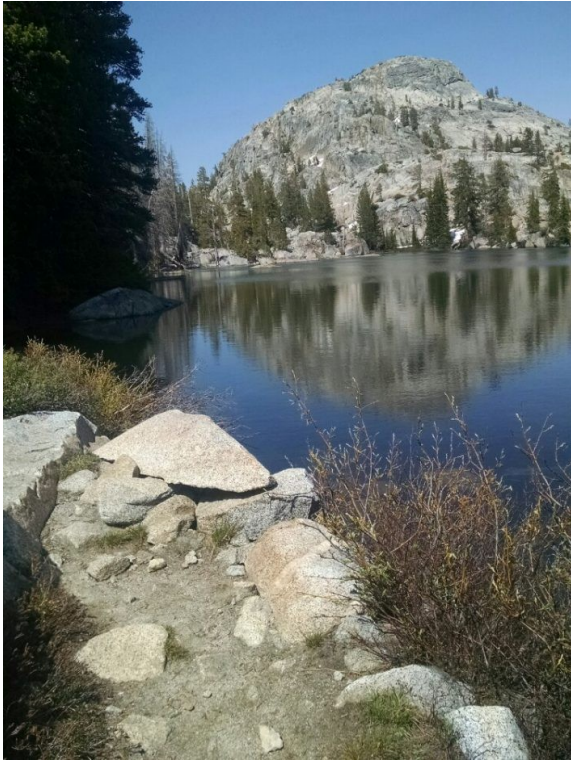
The trail climbs up again to 9k elevation, so more hide-and-seek with snow and trail.



I break a trekking pole on the steep way down, but do a field repair to get me a few more days of use, perhaps until a replacement arrives. Usually by this point in a long hike, I have already broken a pole. Sigh. Down to Benson Lake and old growth forest.



And small lake.



Yet again to 9k and snow.



At Kerrick Canyon is a particularly challenging spot, where the trail is buried underneath steep slanted crusty snow, between rock cliff and whitewater, and no footprints.



I met no PCT hikers today, but did see three backpackers where I camped.
Finished audiobook [The Master of Ballantrae](#), by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Exit Yosemite

PCT 2018 Day 47, June 8, Friday.

Start mile 980.0, campsites after stream crossing

End mile 1005.9 at campsite

Miles walked: 25.9

First over a small granite mountain, then up and over another at 9k elevation with some snow at top.



Then for several miles the path parallels a river with steady uphill, passing by several lakes.



The day has several fords, and much water on the trail from snow melt.





All afternoon the way climbs, to snow near lakes, and we leave Yosemite.



Late in the day is some gentle downhill, to prepare for a big steady climb tomorrow. I meet no PCT hikers, and only see one other person in the afternoon, a backpacker out for a week, as we ford a stream in opposite directions at the same time.

Finished audiobook [Eastern Standard Tribe](#), by Cory Doctorow.

Sonora Pass

PCT 2018 Day 48, June 9, Saturday.

Start mile 1005.9 at campsite

End mile 1016.9, Sonora Pass (9.6k) and Highway 108, and accept ride to North Kennedy Meadows resort 10 miles away

Miles walked: 11

Start climbing over snow, icy and slick in the morning. Is this how the day goes?



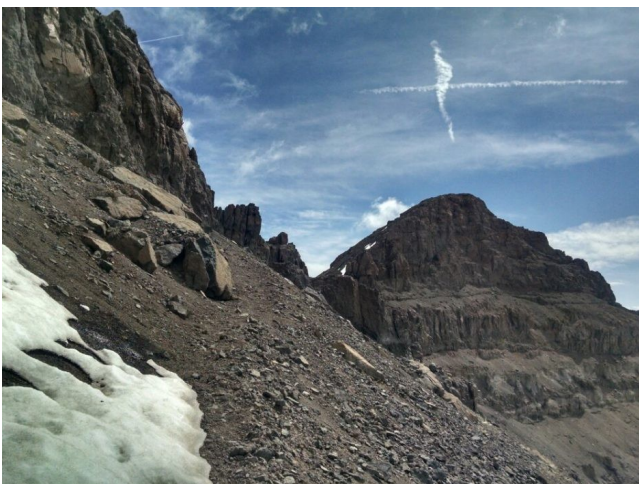
The trail goes high on the side of a ridge with a series of peaks. No more granite, the rock is dark, and crumbles like shale.



The snow fields are now perhaps 10 or 20% covering the trail, but so high and steep as to be more exciting than I want. The trail gusts suddenly in any direction, strong enough to move me and my backpack. The extreme conditions feel like 13k elevation, not 11k.



The path goes over the ridge summit and goes along the other side, repeating several times. The views are extraordinary.



Abruptly the path plunges down to the road and Sonora Pass.



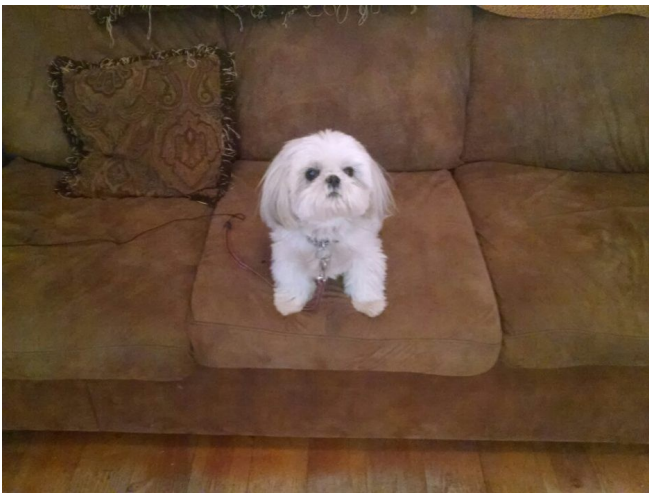
Waiting at the highway is trail angel Chipmunk, who is giving rides to hikers in either direction, North Kennedy Resort or Bridgeport. He picked up 11 hikers today, and says we are early and the big surge will come in a couple of weeks. The resort has a nice package deal for hikers, but unfortunately does not have wifi. Chipmunk, who is also at the resort, says this year most hikers go to Bridgeport, but last year most went to Kennedy.



I am tickled by the bear looming over check-in. I am alone in my room of five beds.



Hiker roommates could share valuable intelligence, but alas... The resort caters mostly to trail rides, and dogs are in abundance.



Chipmunk and I share dinner and trade stories. He has hiked several sections of the PCT, and gives me some idea of what is to come.

Bridgeport Nero

PCT 2018 Day 49, June 10, Sunday.

Start North Kennedy Meadows, nearest trail mile 1016.9,

End mile 1021.9, small campsite

Miles walked: 5

Chipmunk and I had breakfast together in the lodge dining room, then he took me to Bridgeport while checking for hikers at the pass and that town.



My plan is to get wifi and cell phone service and plenty of town food. Bridgeport is a cute little tourist town with several good places to eat for hiker appetites. The library had wifi, and I complete most of my town checklist. I return to Sonora Pass with Chipmunk during his last hiker check of the day, usually around 4PM, before he returns his home. He saw around 11 hikers today, and those that wanted rides went to North Kennedy and not Bridgeport. He drops me off at the trailhead, and I hike just a few miles, far enough to get to a campsite. Will I encounter snow, you ask?



Still Snow

PCT 2018 Day 50, June 11, Monday.

Start mile 1021.9, small campsite

End mile 1046.8, campsites

Miles walked: 24.5

Many snow crossings and finding buried trail throughout the day, in mixed conifer forest, with a few miles of clear trail.



At the end of the day, approaching Ebbetts Pass, are many switchbacks, rock formations, and steep ravines.



Two couples and one lone hiker were seen several times today as we kept passing each other.

Badlands Woodlands Lakes

PCT 2018 Day 51, June 12, Tuesday.

Start mile 1046.8, campsites

End campsites at mile 1073.2

Miles walked: 26.4

After Ebbitts Pass, snow clears, and many rock outcroppings appear, like a sandstone badlands above a forest.



More rock outcroppings



Lowlands are in the distance. For many days only mountains, no lowlands have been visible.



We see many lakes in late afternoon, sort of a lake district.



Snow finally reappears and stays the rest of the day.



I see Tootsie Roll and one of the couples from yesterday, but not the other.

Finished audiobook [Riders of the Purple Sage](#), by Zane Grey.

Brief South Lake Tahoe

PCT 2018 Day 52, June 13, Wednesday.

Start campsites at mile 1073.2, go to 1090.6, accept a ride to South Lake Tahoe, resupply and eat a meal, get a ride back up

End mile 1091.5, tent-sized flat spot

Miles walked: 18.3

Climbing over the Elephant's Back meant traversing more snow fields early in the morning.



Tootsie Roll passes, planning on getting to South Lake Tahoe today.



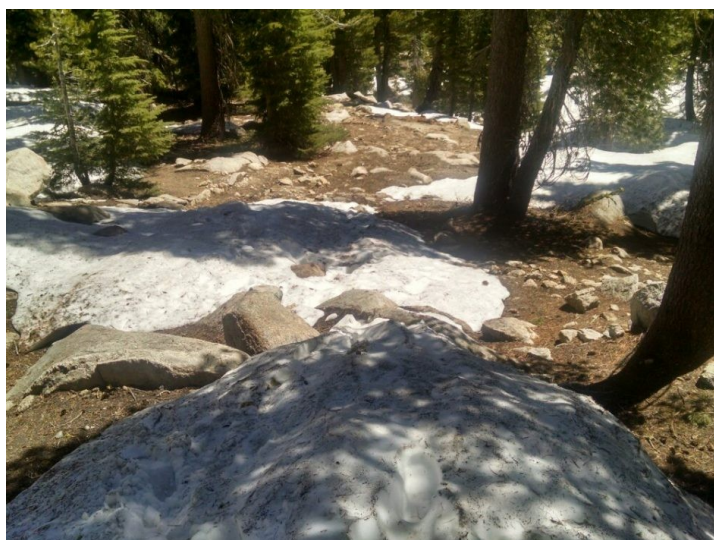
Other hikers I met are headed to the same place. I only just resupplied 3 or 4 days ago, so I do not feel the need for a hostel stay yet, but I do need a grocery for 5 days of food. Assuming I get to the road to get to town early enough that I can get back before dark and camp. For a while the way is along high meadow, flat or gently descending.



In the distance I can just see Lake Tahoe, I think.



Then snow and more snow. You must be tired of snow photos by now.



The climb down to Echo Summit has plenty of snow, but also cool lichen-accented mountain-side.



I meet FlipFlop, Enigma, and one other on the way down. I do get to town, get groceries at Raleys (free wifi) and make meals, then have breakfast food at Dennys (free wifi), take the bus back to the “Y” intersection, and return to the trail, all in just a few short hours.

Lakes Lakes

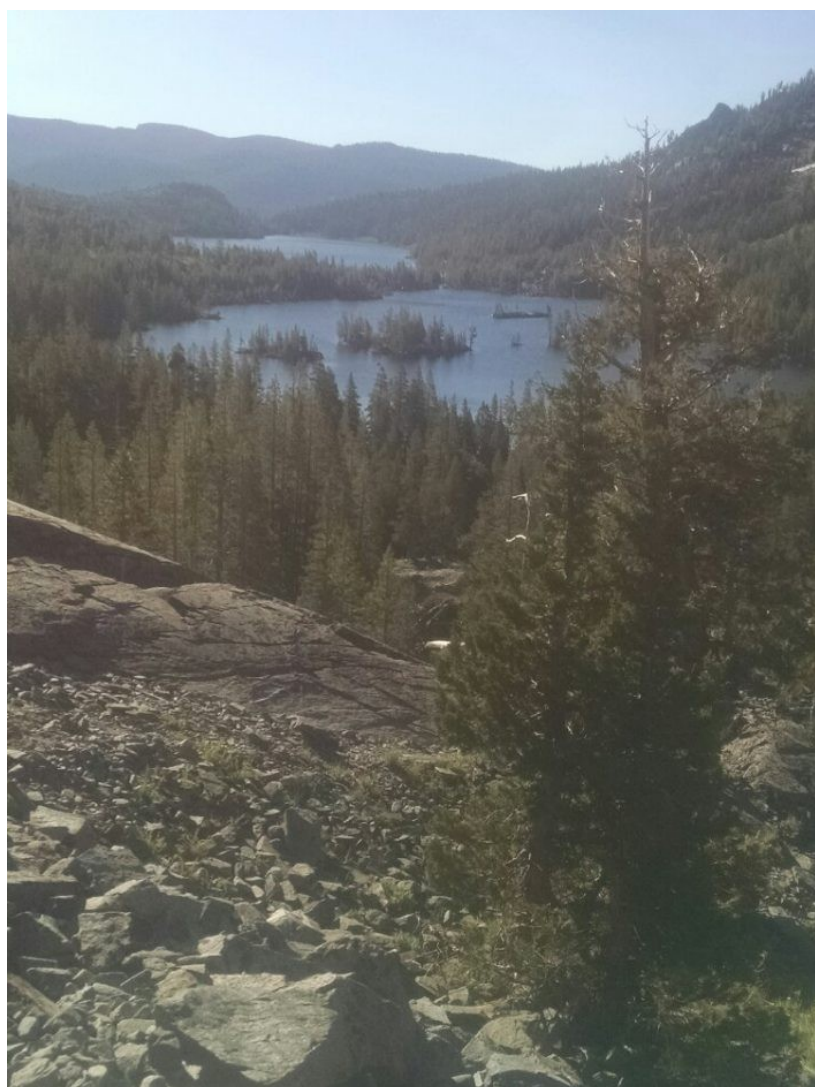
PCT 2018 Day 53, June 14, Thursday.

Start mile 1091.5, tent-sized flat spot

End mile 1112.6, campsites at Phipps Creek

Miles walked: 21.1

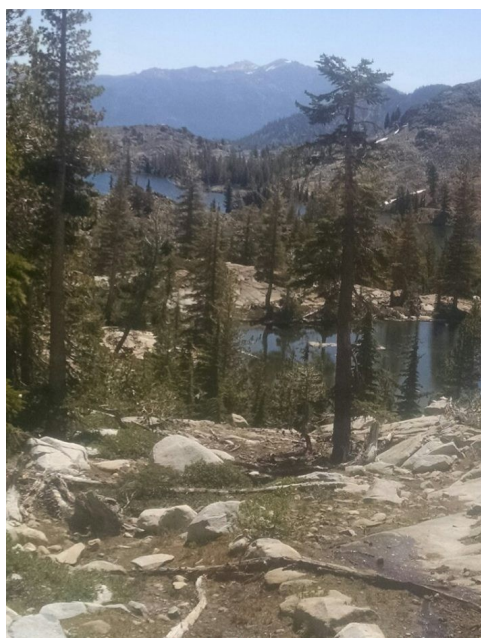
Walking out of the woods, I went past Echo Lake, with several summer cabins.



Climbing up a ridge, the next water is Aloha Lake.

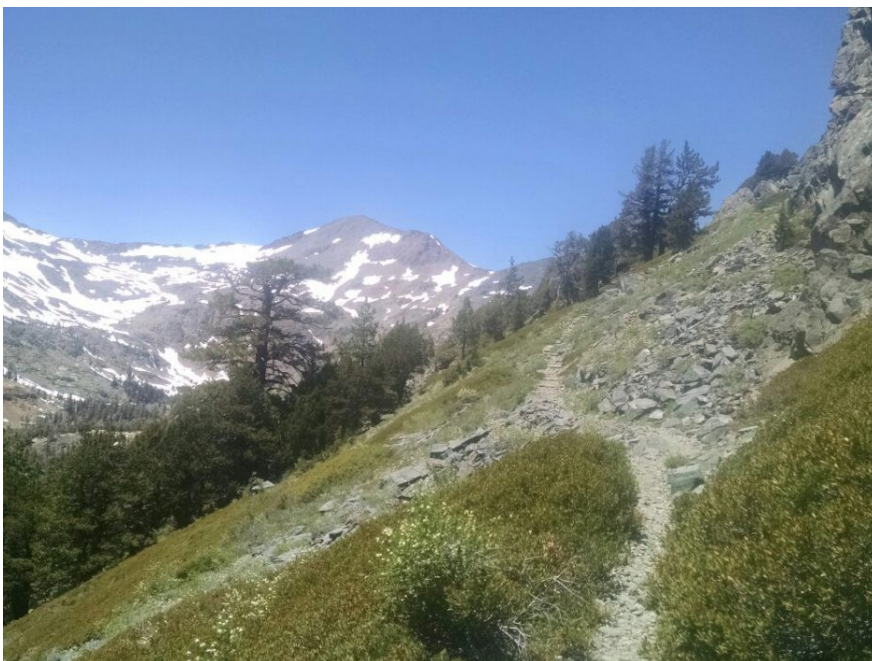


Climbing up another ridge, more lakes.





Many more lakes– I won't show them all.
Climbing up to Dicks Pass at 9k from the start of the day at 7.5k, a good deal of snow must be crossed, with views of more lakes.





The day ends back at 7.6k elevation. Many backpackers pass by today, doing parts of the Tahoe Rim Trail.

Ski Boundary

PCT 2018 Day 54, June 15, Friday.

Start mile 1112.6, campsites at Phipps Creek

End mile 1137.9 campsite

Miles walked: 25.3

Rotting in forest



Bright green lichen.



Climbing up, I can see Lake Tahoe in the distance, better than my camera can.



Looking at jagged peaks in distance, likely where I am headed.



The path departs from the Tahoe Rim Trail, so I see fewer hikers. The trail does climb up on a high steep ridge. The wind is fierce, making the altitude seem higher than 9k.





The ridge is part of a ski area boundary.



I meet some PCT hikers going the other way, flip-flopping to give the Sierras time to thaw.

Finished audiobook [Tess of the Durbervilles](#), by Thomas Hardy,

Donner

PCT 2018 Day 55, June 16, Saturday.

Start mile 1137.9 campsite

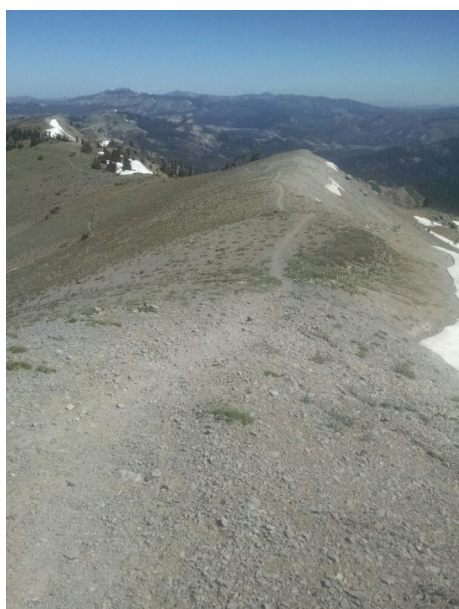
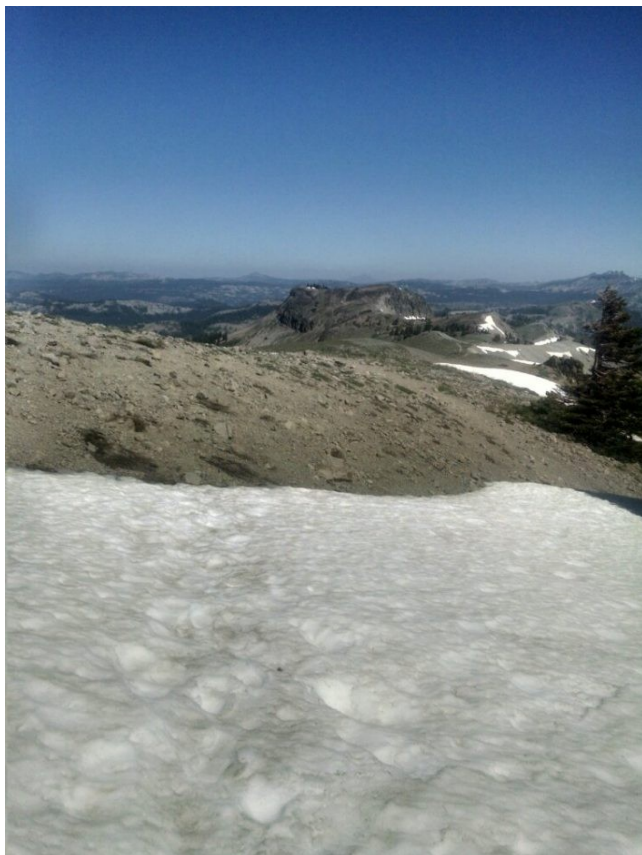
End mile 1160.8, Peter Grubb Hut

Miles walked: 22.9

Climb up, then down, then up again to nearly 9k elevation at Tinkers Knob.



Then the path goes atop a high exposed ridge for several miles in brisk wind, higher than any nearby peaks so that you feel touching the ceiling of the world.



I meet a few flip-floppers during the day, and they believe their group is huge, often starting from the town of Dunsmuir. Approaching historic Donner Pass, I meet many many day hikers, as we descend on rock switchbacks.



Donner Snow Ranch offers shower and laundry to hikers at a low price. Real nice people.



I stop for a couple of hours and enjoy their food and wifi.



Afterwards I meet Mantis and Oats, northbounders like me, and tell them about the pie a la mode, so they head that direction.

A little beyond Castle Pass is Grubb Hut, a cabin open to hikers. Note the outhouse with two stories. You use the top one when the snow is high.



The cabin itself is also built with second story access in case of snow.



The lower floor is a dining area, with sleeping quarters above.



I am the only tenant this night. The upper story is naturally warm and cozy, so I only need my sleeping bag liner. The cabin shuts out the frog croaking of the flooded meadow outside, and all other animal sounds, leaving a profound quiet inside.

Rain Finally

PCT 2018 Day 56, June 17, Sunday.

Start mile 1160.8, Peter Grubb Hut

End at second crossing of Milton Creek, mile 1191.5

Miles walked: 30.7

The morning sky is overcast and dark, and with a sudden crash of thunder showers begin.



As I climb, rain turns to pellet snow and covers the path.



Later I climb down lower in altitude, and rain showers resume. With no sun for most of the day, the temperature is cold, and I must wear down vest, windbreaker, raincoat, and gloves for warmth, though keeping walking all day is the main way to keep warm.



Toward the end of the day many switchbacks bring me down to 5k elevation, and I camp just a few miles from town, with rain against the tent until I fall asleep.

I meet Boogie, nobo starting at Donner, already thru-hiked a few years ago, wanting to do Oregon and Washington this year. I also met a couple of southbound flip-floppers going too fast to talk.

Finished audiobook [The Tavern Knight](#), by Rafael Sabatini.

Sierra City

PCT 2018 Day 57, June 18, Monday.

Start at second crossing of Milton Creek, mile 1191.5

End mile 1206.2, flat spot

Miles walked: 14.7

After a brief walk, the small town of Sierra City appears.



I meet BoyscoutsWheelChair and SunriseChardonnay, southbound, at the small church that provides free camping. They say I am **done** with snow!

Later I meet Saunter, northbound, at the general store. The store has free wifi, and I get my supply box and buy supplemental food there, and get lunch from their grill, and leave town in the early afternoon.

From 4.6k elevation at the highway, I climb on controlled-slope switchbacks all afternoon to 7.4k, bloated from town food and with a pack heavy with food supplies I find long skinny pine cones, not the huge Coulter Pine variety, but something different.



After several hours of dense forest cover, suddenly the trail gets above trees for a few miles.



The trail gains a broad ridge with views, and follows for a time.



Rocky Tops

PCT 2018 Day 58, June 19, Tuesday.

Start mile 1206.2, flat spot

End campsite at 1231.4

Miles walked: 25.2

Yesterday I forgot to say that a new PCT re-route for a few miles was in place, but I stuck to the old route because my gps and maps had that path. The new route moved to the east side of some lakes, and encouraged motorized vehicles on the west side.



Saunter passes me, grumbling about the new route, which he took. He was moving fast, not sauntering.



The area here is characterized by many large rock outcroppings of crumbling rock, tall trees and thick forest, and fewer water sources. The water sources are now once every few miles, like a normal trail, not the insane concentration of once every 200 feet like in the Sierras.



The day has a couple of 1k climbs, but is mostly gentle downhill or level.



Where are all the southbound hikers we were rumoured to meet? Not one today. Aside from Saunter, it is only me out there.

Finished audiobook [The Tragedy of Puddinhead Wilson](#), by Mark Twain.

Elevator

PCT 2018 Day 59, June 20, Wednesday.

Start campsite at 1231.4

End 1261.7

Miles walked: 30.3

The forest floor is littered with sticks in this area.



Logs appear to decay normally, but sticks apparently go slower. Why?

The rock outcroppings from yesterday fade away, and now we have tall and deep ridges, covered thick with trees, and not much for views.



Starting at the campsite at 7k elevation, the trail descends by switchbacks to the Target River, at 3k.



Then the trail climbs back again from 3k to 5.5k. Tomorrow the trail plunges even deeper to arrive at the tiny town/resort of Belden.

Today I saw 10 sobos (southbounders), in ones and twos, and no northbound, and four trail maintenance crew.

Finished audiobook [Lady Molly of Scotland Yard](#), by Baroness Orczy.

Belden

PCT 2018 Day 60, June 21, Thursday.

Start mile 1261.7 flat spot

End mile 1284.7, just past trailhead, cowboy camp under power line tower

Miles walked: 23.0

Before climbing Bucks Summit, a history sign tells us that others had a more difficult time.



I did not need to empty my pack to get up, and did not have any loose mules nearby, but have been called mule-headed, so that might serve.

From 7k elevation the trail drops to a stunning 2.2k, on switchbacks that go for hours and miles.



On this mountain the switchbacks are in shade, but on the next mountain over, you can just make out the switchbacks for tomorrow, exposed to the sun.



Amazingly, a cargo plane zooms by in the deep canyon, below me, on some practice maneuver.



Finally at the town/resort of Belden, I can get a shower, laundry, and a meal.



Atom, an artist-in-residence, has a tiny home he built himself and asks me to look over.



Belden hosts half a dozen music festivals each year, with thousands coming to camp out and listen.





“Atom, the World’s Fastest Artist”, gives a demonstration to me and a couple staying at the resort of his painting technique using cans of spray paint.



He paints and moves to music, with flashy painting tricks, like a street performer. Cool. The staff of the resort are kind, with infinite free refills of my Dr Pepper as I charge devices and use their wifi. Saunter arrives later, and will take a room to rest a hurt knee.



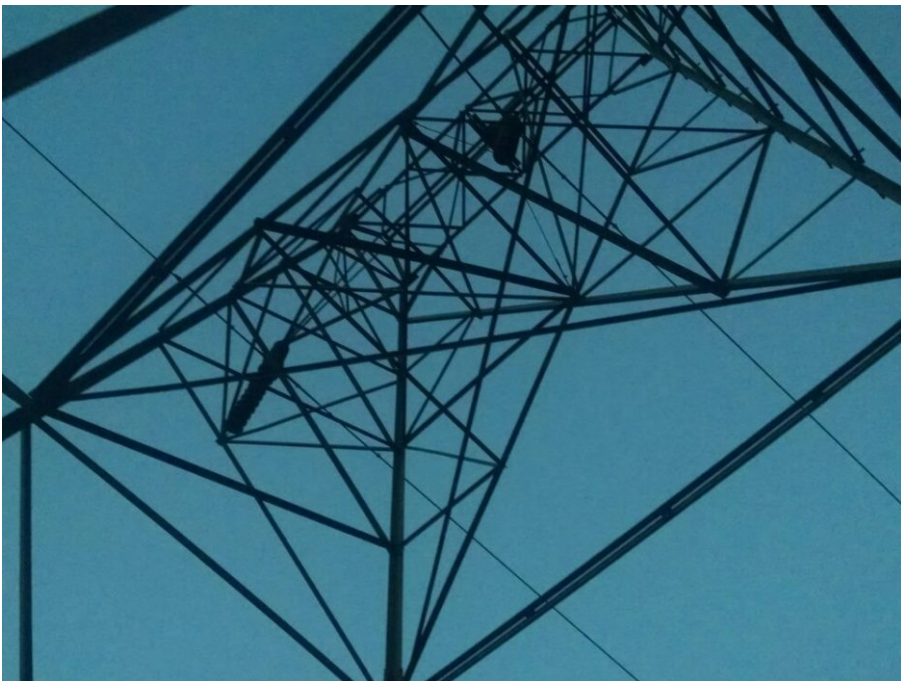
The resort charges for tent sites, but national forest land is near, so I start hiking out. A camper at the resort sees I am a PCT hiker, and offers me dinner, salad topped with steak, which would be impolite to refuse!



Craig's buddies did not arrive today, so he had extra food. He shared some personal life experiences.



Now close to dark, I hike across the river and past the trailhead to a tiny flat spot next to the trail underneath an electric power line metal tower. In the dusk I almost get too close to poison oak, which is common from here to the next state border. I cowboy camp, and will start out early tomorrow to get past exposed switchbacks in the cool morning.



Lassen Forest

PCT 2018 Day 61, June 22, Friday.

Start mile 1284.7, just past trailhead, cowboy camp under power line tower

End campsite at mile 1312.8

Miles walked: 28.1

A bear was walking on PCT path coming towards me, 100 feet away walking on skree, and I saw it before it saw me. Clacking my trekking poles together was enough to cause it to turn and run away.

Climbing from 2.5k to 7k elevation took much of the day. Now in the Lassen national forest, one can see volcanic Eagle Rocks, perhaps a preview of what is to come at Lassen National Park in a couple of days.





Today I saw 8 sobos, several flipping from Ashland.

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

Halfway!

PCT 2018 Day 62, June 23, Saturday.

Start campsite at mile 1312.8

End mile 1328.8, highway 36, then get a ride to Chester 7.5 miles away

Miles walked: 16.0

More volcanic rock formations decorate the landscape.



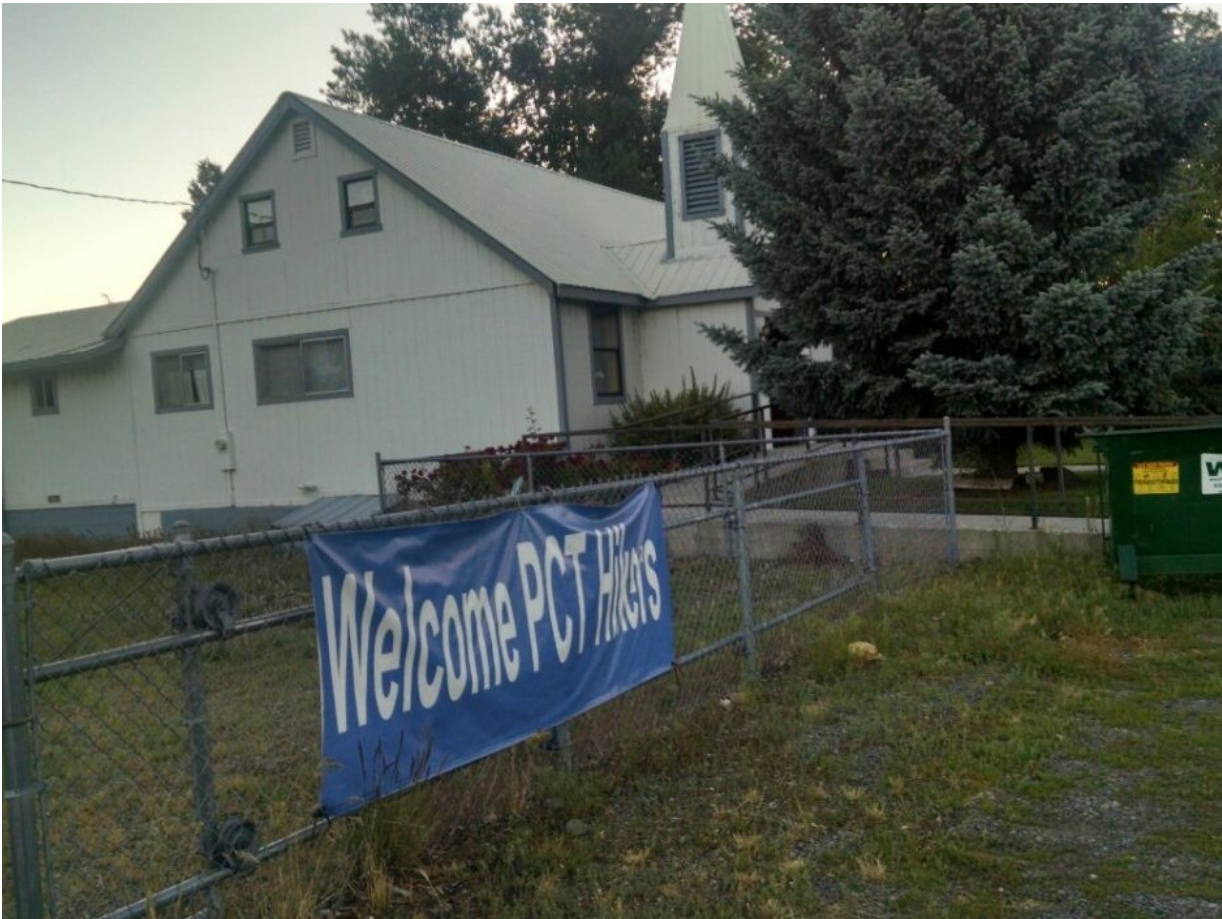
Mid-morning I reach the marker for the midpoint of the trail.



At Hwy 36 Lizzie and her owner give me a ride into the the town of Chester. Lizzie just came from the vet, and is feeling fragile, so gets to ride (drive) up front.



A couple of affordable motels in town are closed, so it is impractical to zero. Instead, I camp at the Lutheran church backyard for free, and resupply and snack, and will head back on the trail tomorrow after breakfast.



Other hikers at the church are Celtic, Redbeard, Woodchuck, and a couple more, mostly sobo.

Lassen Park

PCT 2018 Day 64, June 25, Monday.

Start mile 1343.8, campsite near Boundary Spring

End mile 1374.8, visitor's center

Miles walked: 31.0

The trail goes through an active geothermal area. Terminal Geyser belches continuous steam.



This brown bear was exploring stumps for grubs and insects.



It was reluctant to move for me, and only went a few feet off the trail for me to pass.

Boiling Spring Lake gave off a lot of steam in the morning.



Several hot springs were near Drakesbad Resort, where I did not stop. They have a pool heated from the hot springs.





The PCT apparently misses many volcanic features, only skirting the edge of the park, but what I do see is pretty hot stuff.

Next to this lake, Lower Twin Lake, I see another brown bear on the trail, and this one was quick to retreat when I made noise.



I exit the park, so no backcountry camping in the park, which requires a bear canister. Wifey (Canada) and I pass each other several times today, but we both end up at the Fill-up convenience store in the tiny town of Old Station and camp at the nearby forest service visitors center. We hang out for a while at a picnic table, eating dinner, and having a good chat. He will try to make it to Burney Resort (not state park, that is later) because they have a special package deal for hikers. That is 32 miles away, a challenge to get in early enough for a shower and laundry. Hmmm.

Finished audiobook [Not George Washington](#), by P G Wodehouse.

Lassen Boundary

PCT 2018 Day 63, June 24, Sunday.

Start town of Chester, then get a ride 7.5 miles to PCT mile 1328.8

End mile 1343.8, campsite near Boundary Spring

Miles walked: 15.0

I have been missing a good diner breakfast for a while, because I often need to leave a town early to walk during cool temperatures. Today I do not need to walk many miles, so first I went to the Kopper Kettle in Chester.



Yes, chicken-fried steak breakfast, Cairn.

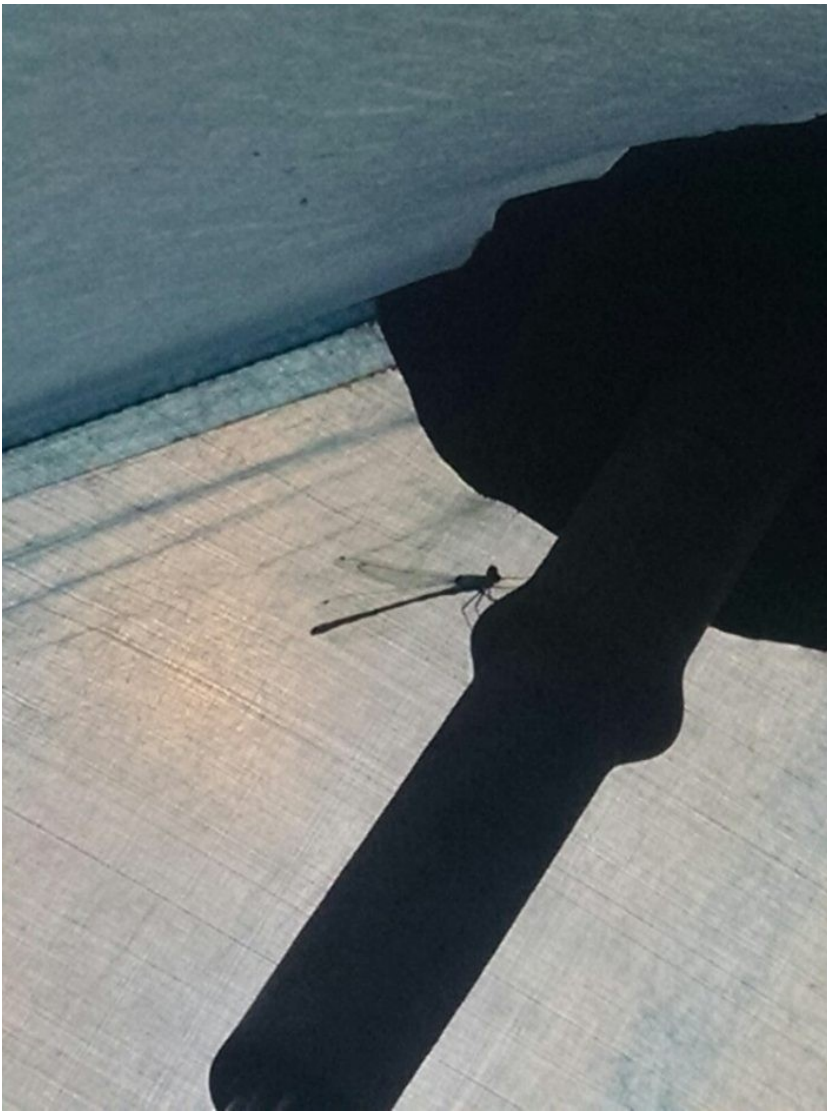
Afterwards I got a ride from the highway patrol back to the trail.



Yesterday some other hikers said that police gave them a ride down from the trail, so I was not too surprised. The officer was quite knowledgeable about the PCT, and does trail running in his spare time.

My plan is to walk to the boundary to the Lassen National Park and camp, and then walk across to the exit boundary tomorrow. Lassen requires a bear canister to camp I park backcountry, and like most PCT hikers I sent mine home already. Some hikers argue you could camp at the for-pay campsite, which has bear boxes, and that rangers do not bother PCT hikers, but I will use my plan.

The day is quite hot, and I am glad to camp early. I was passed by two nobos, which had not happened in many days. I spent extra time in the tent, taking refuge from mosquitos and other flying critters, to do some equipment repair. How did a dragonfly get inside my tent?



Finished audiobook [The Kipling Reader](#), by Rudyard Kipling.

Rim

PCT 2018 Day 65, June 26, Tuesday.

Start mile 1374.8, visitor's center

End mile 1407.3, then off-trail 0.4 miles to Burney Mountain Guest Ranch.

Miles walked: 32.5

The trail rises to Hat Creek Rim, overlooking lava flow below, and follows this narrow flat ridge for many miles, most of the day really, with fine views. Is this the old rim of an immense volcano, or the edge of a vast lava flow?





Wifey and I pass each other a few times today, and meet a few south-bound hikers.



In the distance Mount Shasta seems to float in the air. We will be able to see this peak for several weeks of hiking.



Most of the lava rock on the rim seems old, weathered, and oxidized, but the path descends into jagged lava flow that more resembles what I am used to in New Mexico.



Past the lava, the trail goes by meadow and park at 3k elevation, with grass full of seed heads. This is like suddenly shooting forward in the growing season.



The path goes by a fish hatchery, covered with netting to prevent bird predation.



The last several miles I zoom down to get to Burney Mountain Guest Ranch by 7PM, in time for shower and laundry and pitching tent and updating wifi. A package deal for PCT hikers offers all these amenities at a reasonable price, breakfast included.

Finished audiobook [Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself](#), by Frederick Douglass.

Burney Falls

PCT 2018 Day 66, June 27, Wednesday.

Start mile 1407.3, then off-trail 0.4 miles to Burney Mountain Guest Ranch.

End mile 1432.1 exposed campsite

Miles walked: 24.8

Duke, playing next to my pack, is a six-month-old puppy.



I stop at Burney Falls state park to pick up two equipment packages mailed to me, and to enjoy snacks. Wifey, JP, Salty, Foodie, and other hikers gathered at a picnic table to rest from the heat.



A pontoon boat is on Lake Britton.



You cannot see in the photo, but a group of Lutheran ministers are standing around a charcoal grill.

Wifey and I arrive at Britton Lake Dam at the same time, and marvel that the trail shows such unexpected items each day.





After an afternoon of climbing gradually from 3k elevation to 5.5k, through some sections of overgrown trail needing a trim, I stop at group of campsites at an exposed campsite with a view of Mount Shasta, where four other hikers were already camped, including Salty and JP.



Timber

PCT 2018 Day 67, June 28, Thursday.

Start mile 1432.1 exposed campsite

End mile 1464.6, campsite near creek

Miles walked: 32.5

Walk a few miles, cross a road. Walk a few miles, cross a road. At one road a logging truck zoomed by, loaded up with immense logs, so watch those road crossings.



You may be able to make out clear-cutting patches in the photo. The elevation stayed fairly level at 5k most of the day, dropping to 3k at the end. Not many views today, except Mount Shasta grows ever larger. Wifey arrives at the campsite soon after me, and we discuss strategy for the next resupply.

Smoulder

PCT 2018 Day 68, June 29, Friday.

Start mile 1464.6, campsite near creek

End mile 1496.1, last campsite before interstate crossing

Miles walked: 31.5

The walk begins with a few miles along steep slopes following Trough Creek, with a crossing at a bridge.



Then the trail uses a repurposed abandoned road. I was hoping for more of this— a pleasure to walk.



Then more steep slopes along Squaw Valley Creek, with another crossing.



The bridge had deep pools of water at the bottom— so tempting to jump in. I later learn that Salty did jump in here!

I come across the big surprise for the day, a one foot diameter patch of smouldering pine needles along the trail, with a cigarette filter, with a gentle breeze to keep it growing, near plenty of kindling.



I try to put it out with all my remaining water, but the fire is stubborn (like burning old horse manure back home). You keep stirring it around looking for hot spots, and another one appears that you had missed.

The next water was six miles away.

I get a view of Castle Crag, an impressive rock formation we will get closer to tomorrow, at a state park.



Here is an example of clear-cutting right up against the PCT. I did not think they would get this close.



The slopes for this logging are *really* steep, which must be a challenge for loggers.



I see Salty at the next to last campsite to the interstate, and we try to coordinate contacting the same trail angel to get a ride into town in the morning. He did not see Wifey, and I have not seen him today since breaking camp. Puzzled.

Castle Crags and Dunsmuir

PCT 2018 Day 69, June 30, Saturday.

Start mile 1496.1, last campsite before interstate crossing

End mile 1514.4, campsite

Miles walked: 18.3

Walking down to Interstate 5, I got a ride into Dunsmuir, a small tourist town about five miles away.



I met Salty and Wifey, who had found a ride together, and we had breakfast together. My omelet had Hatch green chile, and several servings of hot tea helped make up for going no-cook on the trail.

Afterwards, each of us go to the grocery store to resupply, and by now each of us have our own system to estimate the right amount of food and repackage for the trail without wasting too much time. Later I go to the library for wifi, but cannot update blogs because their system is too slow, but I find a business with open wifi and finish the task. Wifey leaves town quickly after packing a sandwich, but Salty and I stay for separate lunches and return together.

With full packs, our task is to climb from 2.2k elevation to around 6k, starting in the heat of the day. Smokey pulls ahead, doing well on uphill. The rock formations of Castle Crag state park are impressive, visible for the rest of the day as I climb ever higher on the ridge.





Highland Reverie

PCT 2018 Day 70, July 1, Sunday.

Start mile 1514.4, campsite

End mile 1549.4, campsites

Miles walked: 35.0

Rocky highlands and lakes, along mostly level exposed ridges, made for a splendid day of waking. Here are some scenes.









I ended the day camping with Salty, and saw Wifey, Good News, St Bernard, and Stretch during the day.

Alpine Reverie

PCT 2018 Day 71, July 2, Monday.

Start mile 1549.4, campsites

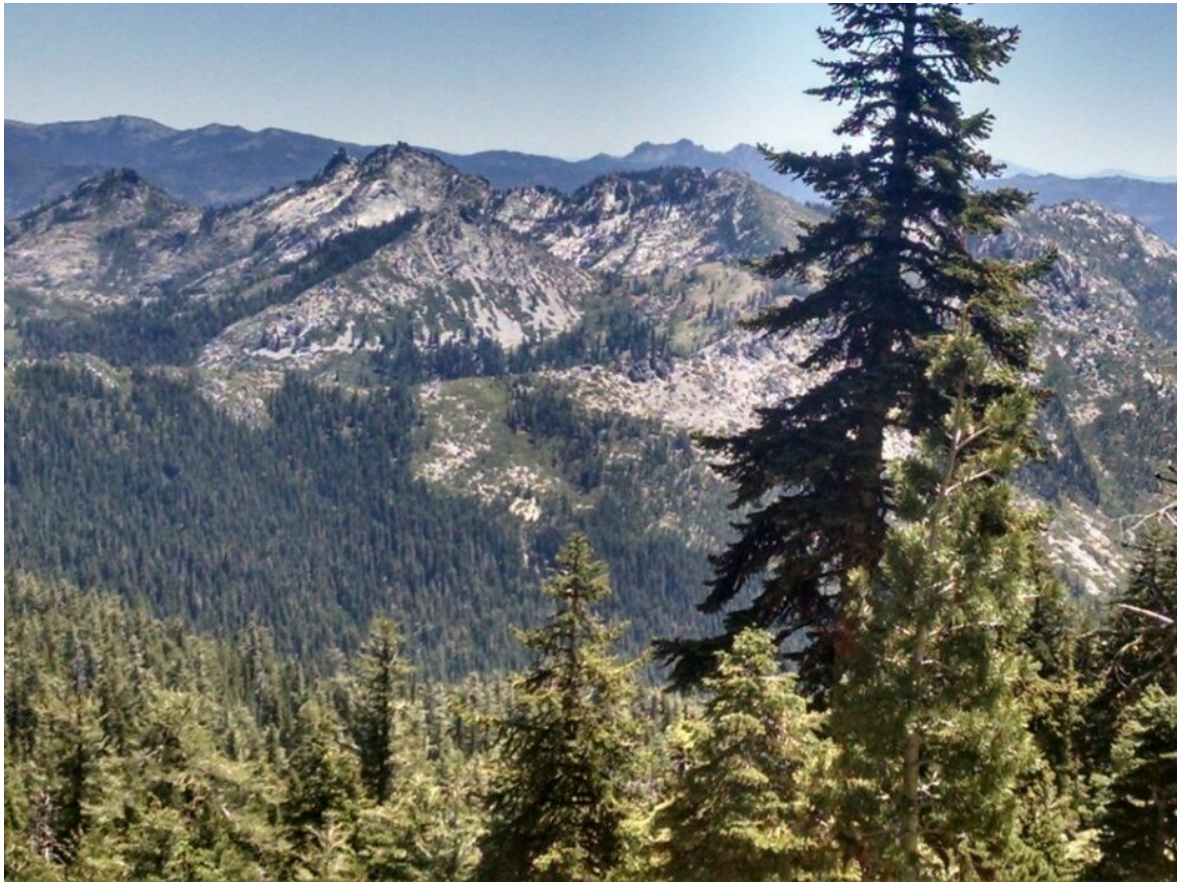
End 1582.7, tent site near spring

Miles walked: 33.3

I continue to walk among rocky peaks, near 7k elevation, with more up-and-down compared to yesterday.









I met Ruffles today, and saw Salty and Wifey. We will all go into town tomorrow.
Finished audiobook [Underwood and Flinch](#), by Mike Bennet.

Etna

PCT 2018 Day 72, July 3, Tuesday.

Start mile 1582.7, tent site near spring

End mile 1597.2, and get ride to town of Etna.

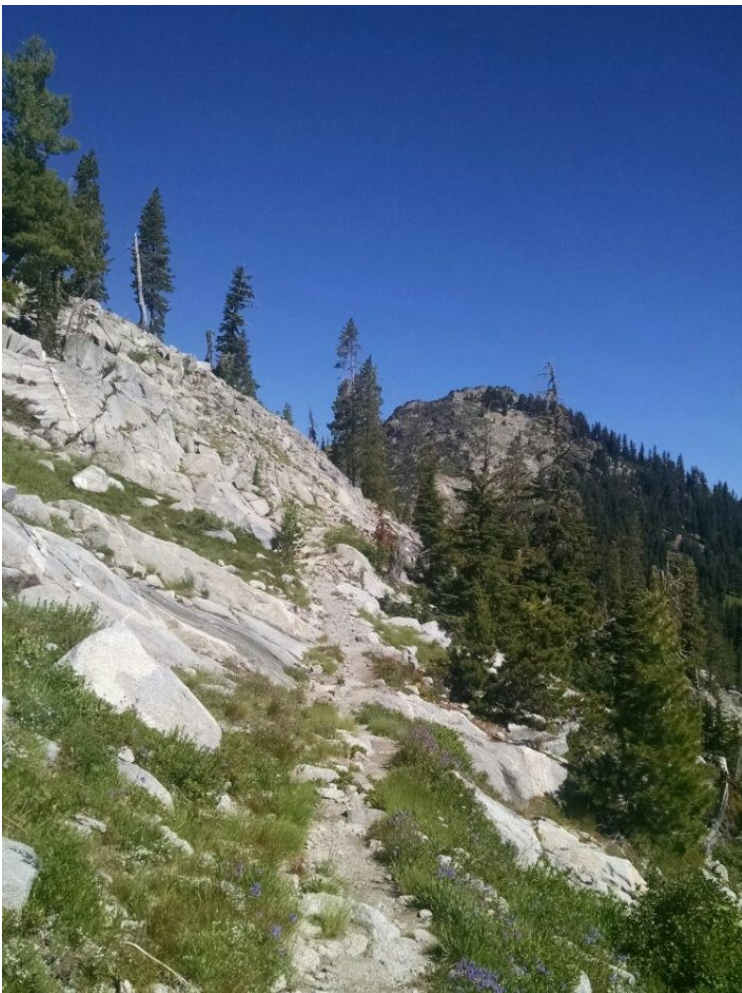
Miles walked: 14.5

I met Salty shortly after starting, though he surged ahead on the uphill.





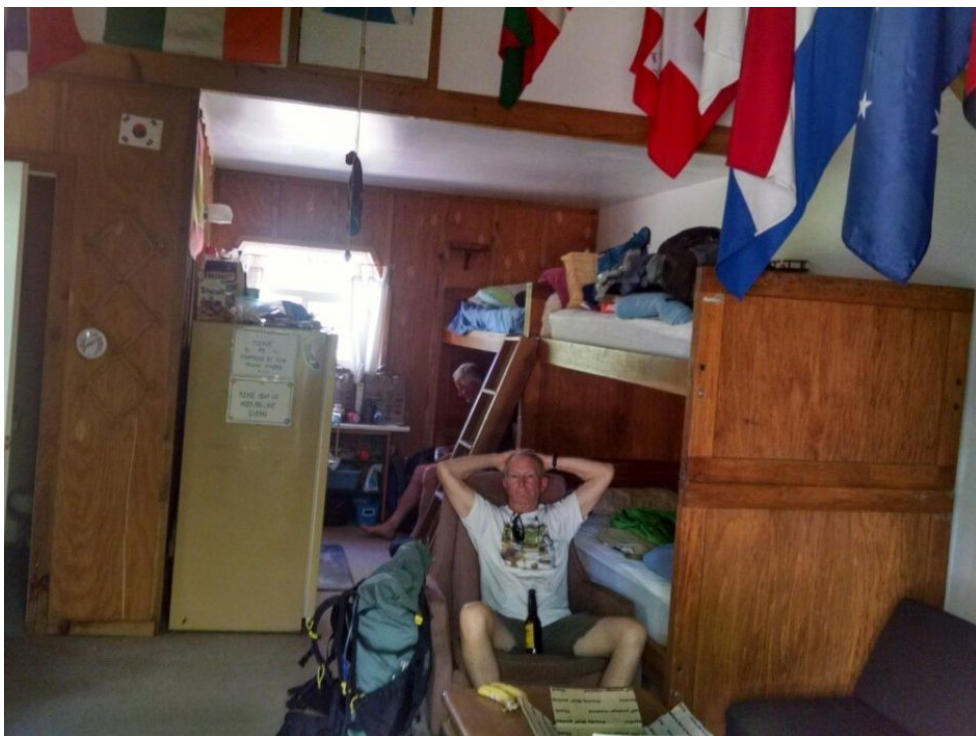
The Russian Wilderness Area continues the theme of steep rocky goodness.







I get a ride down to Etna, and a bunk at Hiker Hut, joined by Restart, Ruffles, and St Bernard (South Africa) tenting nearby.





I get my town tasks done so that I can take a zero tomorrow and Not Do Anything.

Etna Zero

PCT 2018 Day 73, July 4, Wednesday.

Start Etna

End Etna

Miles walked: ZERO

When was the last time I did a zero?

Ruffles gets a cinnamon bun after breakfast at Bob's.



Our hostel hosts pause for a photo.



The local history museum displays baskets.



Hostel hosts treat us to burgers for 4th of July. Pictured are Ruffles, Vlad (Slovakia), Stretch (PA), and Bernard (South America)



Corgi tries cuteness begging.



Marble Mountain Wilderness

PCT 2018 Day 74, July 5, Thursday.

Start town of Etna, then back to trail at mile 1597.2

End flat spot at mile 1625.4

Miles walked: 28.2

Dave from the hostel drops off Ruffles, Bernard, and me at the trail at 9AM. They quickly outdistance me on uphills. The day is hazy, the rocky peaks familiar from the past two days of trail.







A small patch of snow remains on the trail to remind us of the Sierras.



I hike late, almost to darkness, and the temperature falls, requiring gloves and windbreaker at 6.5k elevation. Ruffles stops at a campsite just before mine, and Wifey, Bernard, and Good News are likely at a lake campsite just beyond mine, as we all strive to get to Seiad Valley tomorrow.

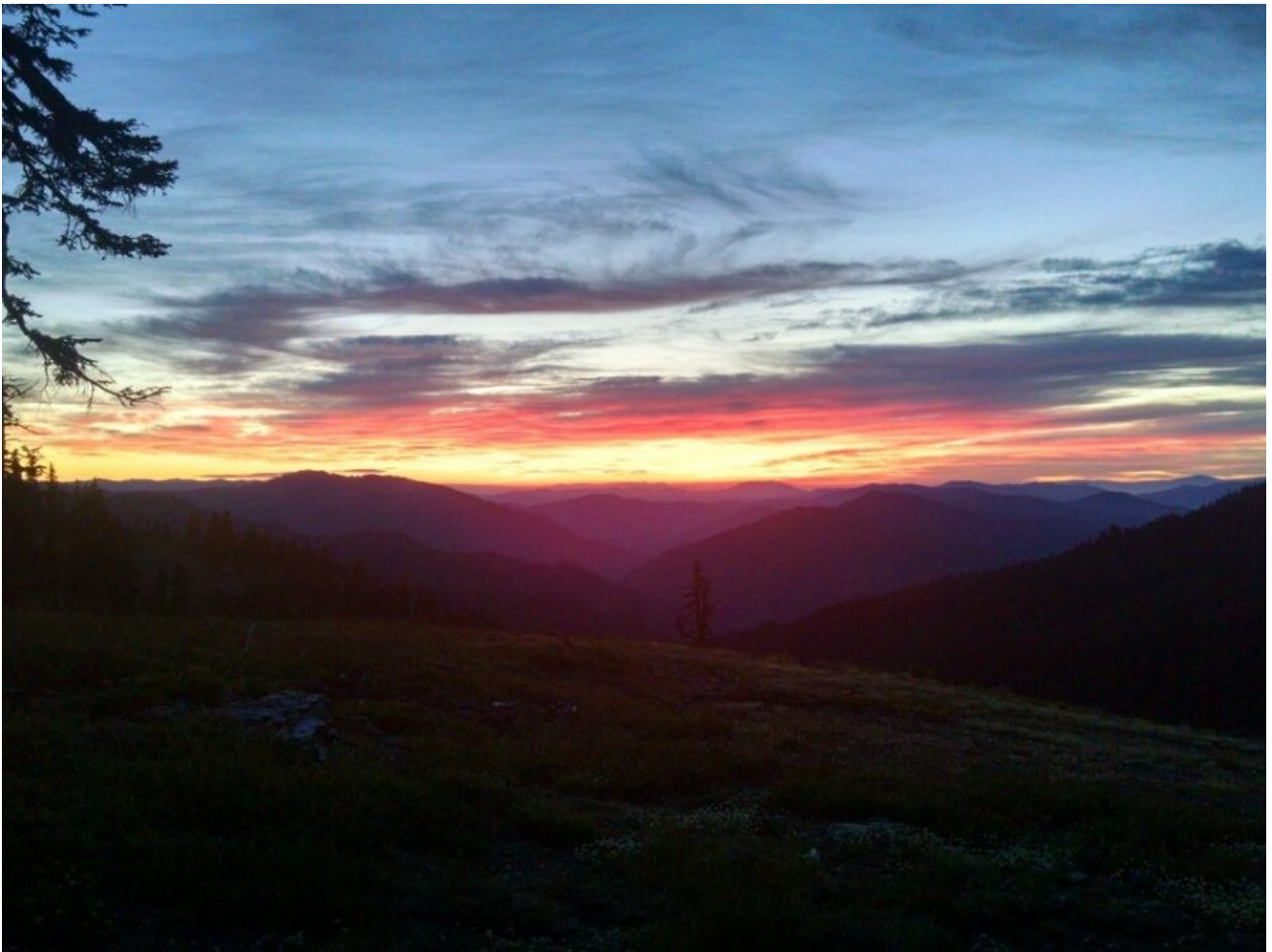
Seiad Valley

PCT 2018 Day 75, July 6, Friday.

Start flat spot at mile 1625.4

End Seiad Valley, RV park, mile 1653.4

Miles walked: 28.0



The trail descends all morning from 6.5k elevation to a low 1.3k, along switchbacks and following creeks and a final 6 mile road walk, without many views.





At the convenience store, I get wifi and check trail closures on the PCT web site, and discover the Klamathon Fire is only 3 miles from the PCT. I was just about to continue on the trail, but now wait for Wifey, Good News, and Ruffles to arrive and tell them the news. After searching for information with our smartphones, we decide to stay the night at the RV park, and look for news updates tomorrow.



Other hikers include Cowboy, Mitch and Gem, and FarWalker, and Bernard.

Fire Jump

PCT 2018 Day 76, July 7, Saturday.

Start Seiad Valley, RV park, mile 1653.4, but skip to mile 1733.1, state highway 66 at Green Springs Mountain Summit

End mile 1747.6, flat spot near Klum Landing Park

Miles walked: 14.5

After breakfast at the diner, six of us hire someone at the RV park to drive us to Ashland in his Explorer: Wifey, FarWalker, Cowboy, Ruffles, Bernard, and myself. Mitch and Gem would follow on another trip.



The PCTA website still does not show the trail as closed due to fire, but some details are updated. The devastation of the fire along Interstate is something to remember.



The ground is still smoking in places. Some level ground is spared, where hillsides are likely to be charred.



We can see where the fire has jumped across the interstate in places. Incident response areas are full of firetrucks and equipment. We are dropped off at an Ashland hostel, and

the other hikers decide to enjoy one of the coolest towns on the trail. The Ashland Shakespeare Festival is going, and many restaurants, museums, and shops beckon. Just kidding— they are probably headed to a brewpub or three.

We learn that the PCT was officially closed during our road trip. I determine to resupply and hike on. On my way, Wifey texts me that the PCT is now closed further than we expected, so we need to hitch on highway 66 instead of Interstate 5. A trail angel, Fireweed, stops me on my walk to the grocery store, and makes sure I know about the closure, and offers a ride after my shopping, so I get her number. Yay. After Albertson's, I am about to get some lunch but meet hikers Bloody Smooch and Boston Scrambler, and skip the meal and we call the angel. Onwards to the trail.



The path starts easy, with no big climbs, and the air is hazy with smoke at first.



A trail angel stops on a forest road to offer pizza, which helps make up for the meal I skipped.

The water fountain on the trail near Hyatt Lake Campground was not functioning. Hiking to the campground, all faucets were turned off. Later I diverted cross-country down to the lake for water, but it was muddy and tasted disgusting after filtering. This section of the trail has few water sources. I press on to Klum Landing campground, arriving by headlamp after dark, and refill water at the restroom and camp back near the trail.

Finished audiobook [The Crown Conspiracy](#) by Michael J Sullivan.

Brown Mountain

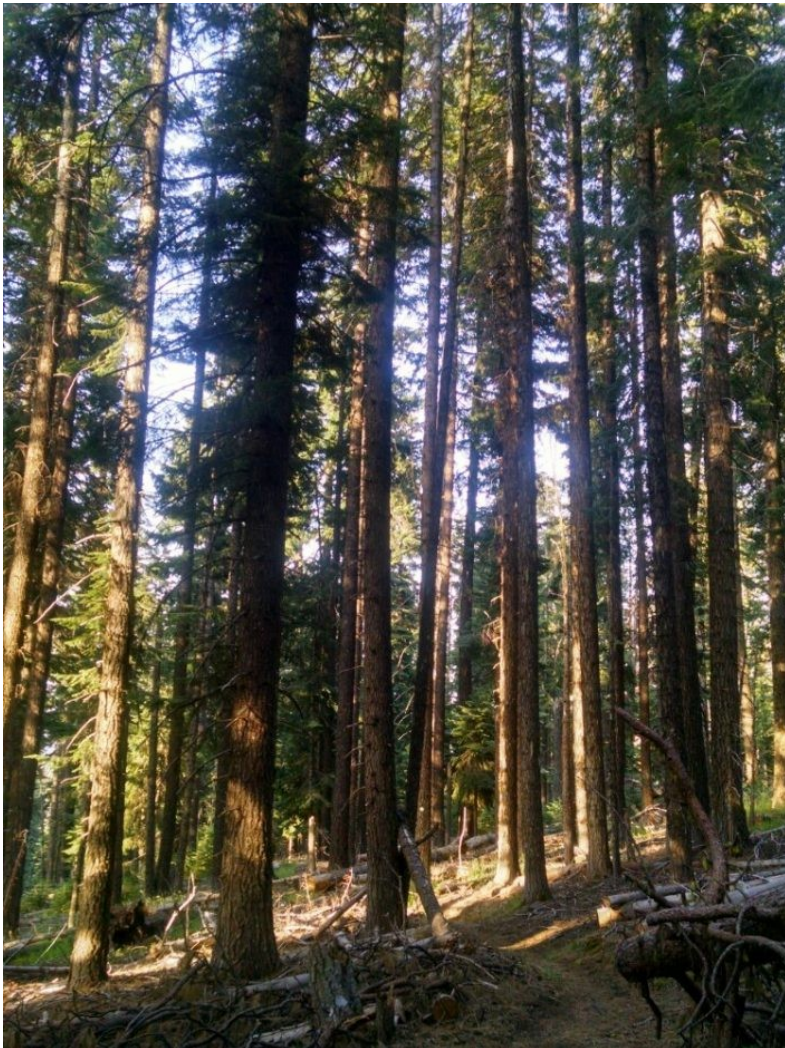
PCT 2018 Day 77, July 8, Sunday

Start mile 1747.6, flat spot near Klum Landing Park

End mile 1778.0, tent site

Miles walked: 30.4

The forest here in southern Oregon has tall trees, some so skinny I wonder if they are lodgepole pine.



The understory is grass and fern, and a large variety of low-light plants unfamiliar to me. The bright-green moss on trees is not as common now as a pale-green beard-like moss, that quite covers some old trees.



The slopes of mountains are gentle in this region, and the rocky cliffs of northern California are gone. Water tastes funny, like silt, so perhaps my filter needs additional cleaning. In the afternoon I get to Brown Mountain, and a series of crossings of lava rock talus, on path that is packed dirt over stone, easy to walk on.



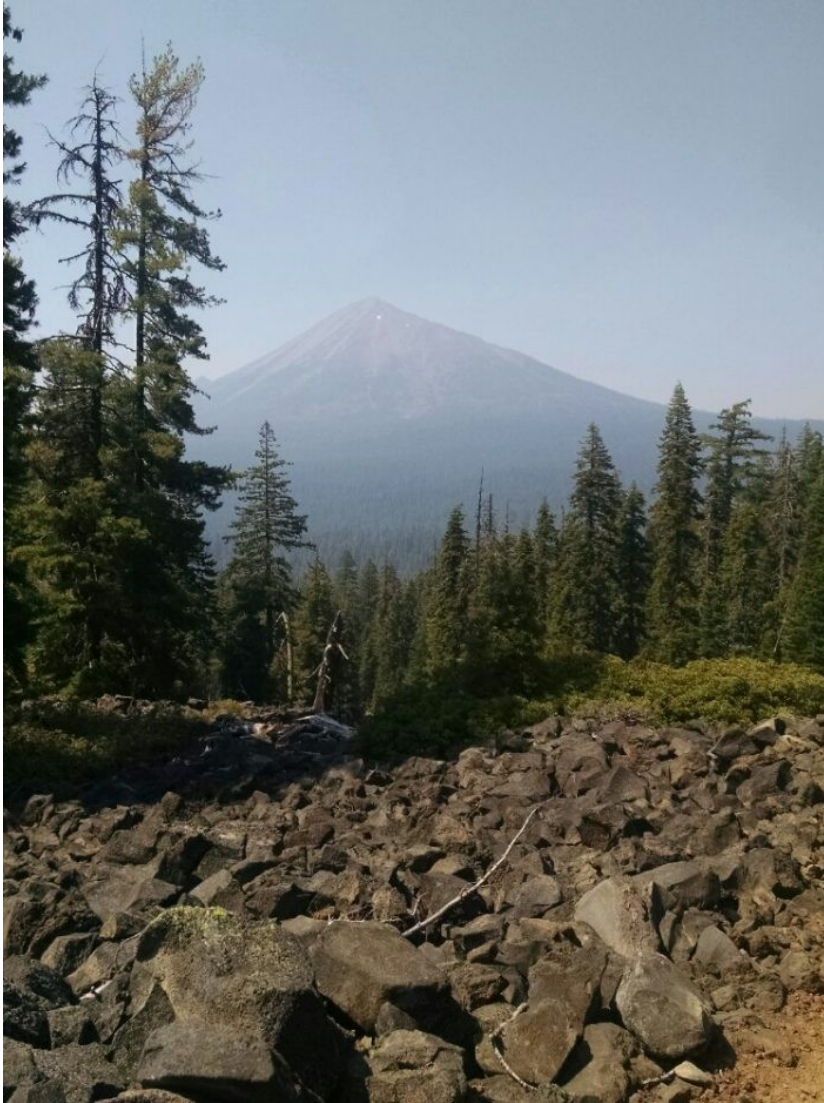
Several dozen of these short talus crossings to the next stand of trees make for an interesting walk.



Here is a tree with three different kinds of moss mixed together.



Smoke, and sometimes the smell of wood-smoke, are still here to remind us of the wildfire to the south.



The mosquitos are fierce by 6PM. This is a dry area with few water sources, so why so many of these hungry critters? A look at the map gives the answer. The trail may have much water close at hand, but several lakes, large and small, are nearby.

Finished audiobook [Shadowmagic](#), by John Lenahan.

Skeeters and Rocks

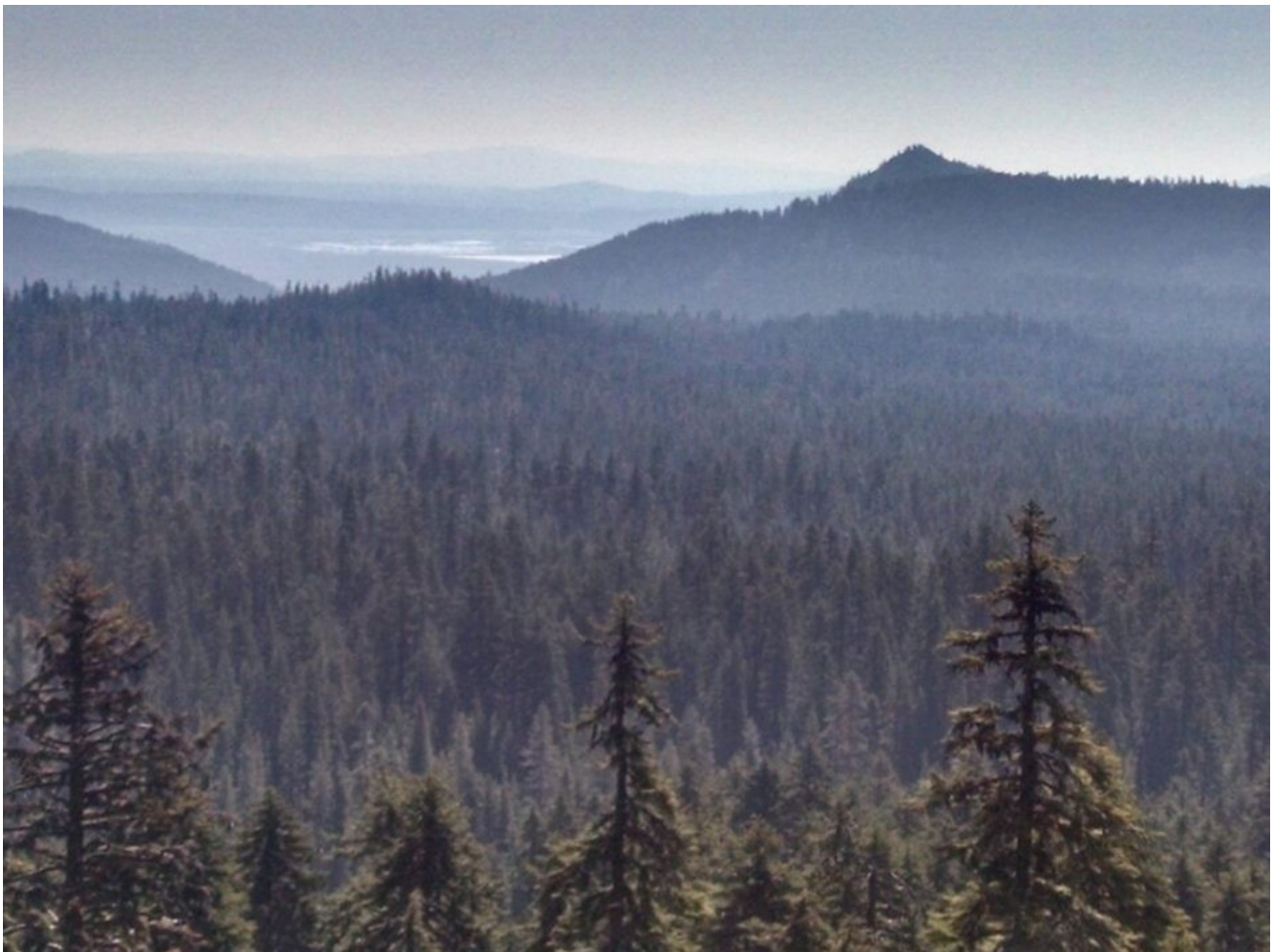
PCT 2018 Day 78, July 9, Monday

Start mile 1778.0, tent site

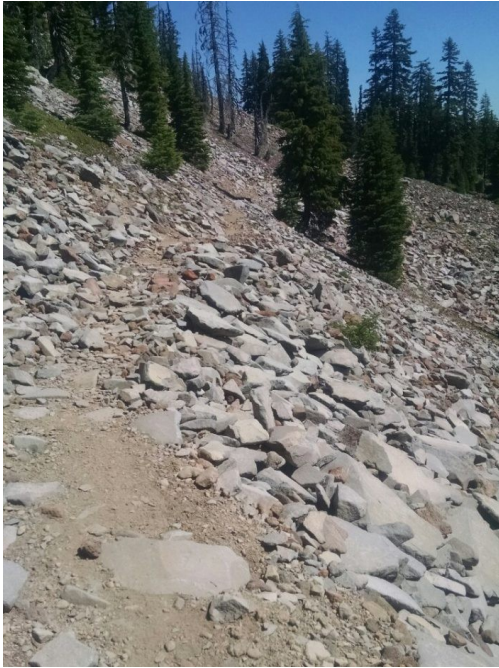
End mile 1810.2, campsites

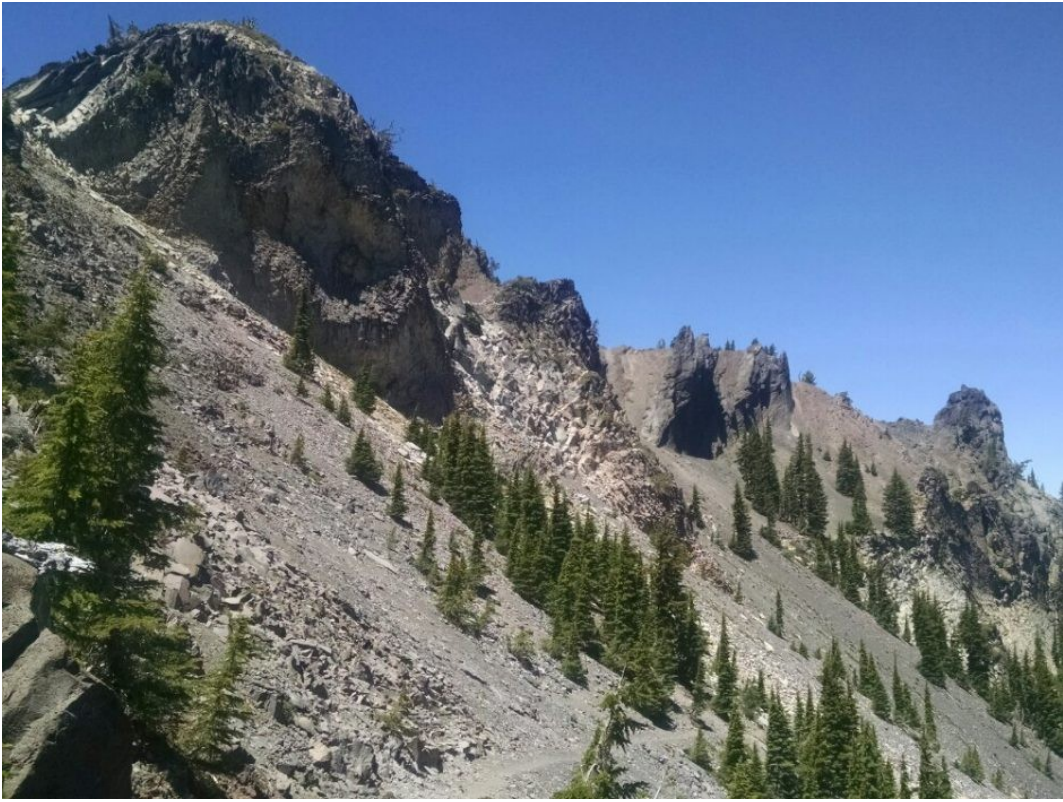
Miles walked: 32.2

Skeeters are hungry in the morning, as they were last evening. I am a pint low. Haze from a forest fire and the faint smell of woodsmoke is still here, lessening later in the day.



In the afternoon the trail crosses talus fields of loose flat rocks, and the forest cover opens for some views.





I meet Foodie, who was last seen at Burney Falls. We walked and chatted for a while along a large burn.



Also seen today is Magic Bean, Viking, and Nicki. Foodie and Nicki and I are at the same exposed windy campsite, where skeeters do not dare to fly.

Finished audiobook [Prince of Hazel and Oak](#), by John Lenahan.

Crater Lake

PCT 2018 Day 79, July 10, Tuesday

Start mile 1810.2, campsites

End mile 1837.2, campsites

Miles walked: 27.0

I walk quickly to Mazama Village and arrive at 8:30AM to pick up my food box, but the staff says I need to wait until 9, so I go over to the restaurant for a well-deserved breakfast. But there is a line waiting, and breakfast takes a while, too late to do laundry and hike to my campsite after seeing Crater Lake. See, the park service restricts where hikers can camp within the park, and I looked ahead to the few camping sites available.

Back to the camp store I get my food box and repack to my food bag. Magic Bean, Viking, Phelps, Spacejam, and I hang out at the Mazama picnic tables, snacking and doing prep.

I struggled with Xanterra's paid wifi, so slow that I could barely download any podcasts. (Xanterra is the concessionaire for most of the large national parks.)

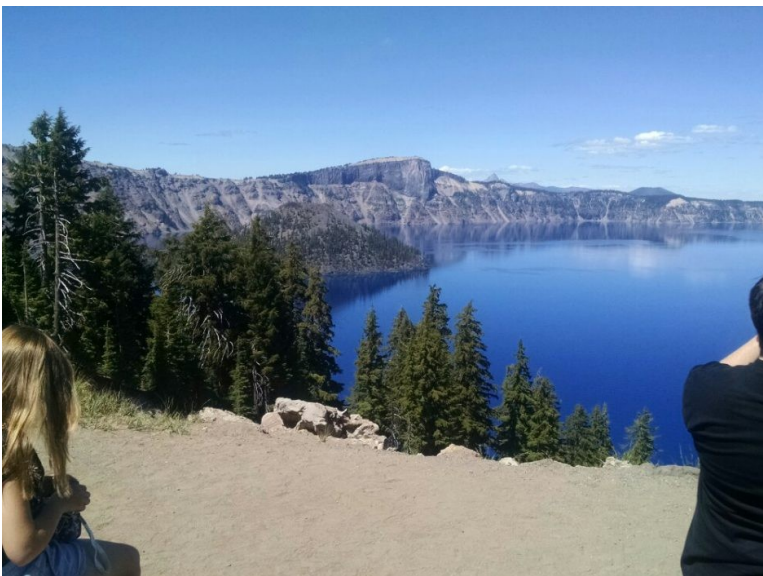
Viking shows off his 40 pound pack.

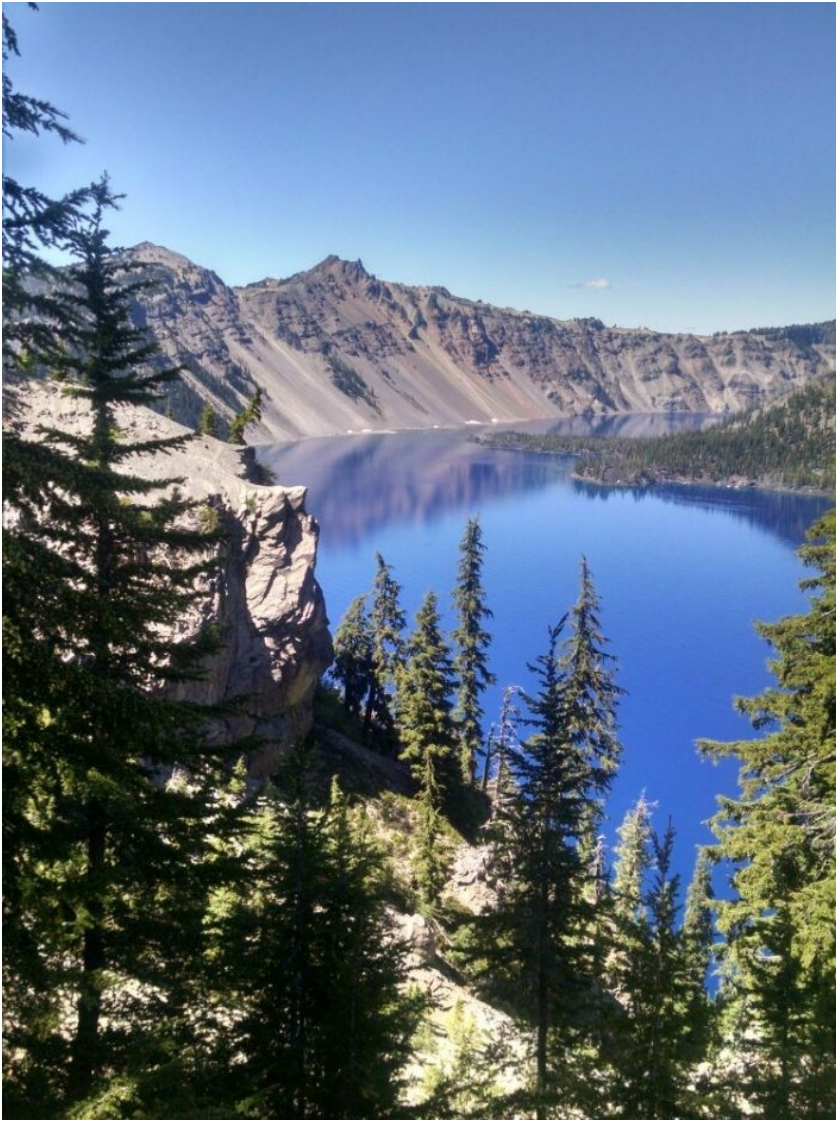


After a few more miles of steep climb up to the rim trail, the view makes the minor hassles of the morning irrelevant.

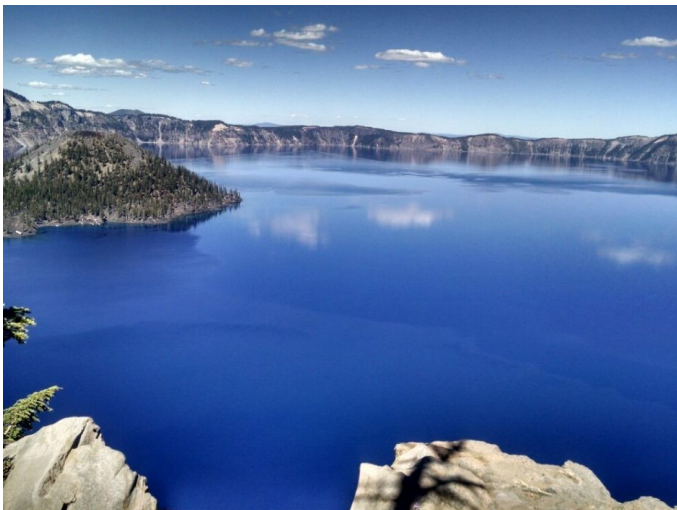


Crater Lake is in a caldera, an old exploded and collapsed volcano. The stunning blue is real, not merely an artifact of photography. The water clarity is 143 feet, said to be a world record. The maximum distance across the lake is 6 miles.





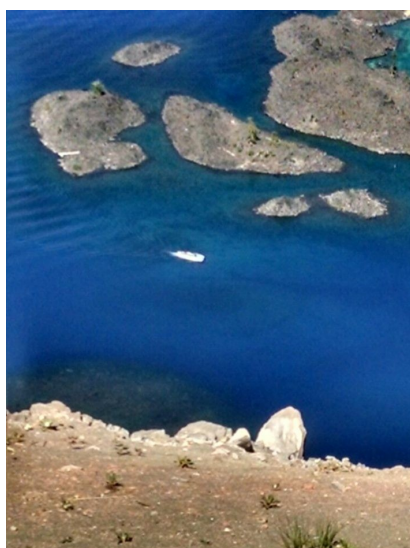
You can see reflections of clouds in the water.



Wizard's Island is a cinder cone within the caldera.



Down below, a tourist boat moves past. We are really up high on the rim.



Magic Bean and I stop at a campsite 8 miles within the park boundary, with mosquitoes getting too bad to enjoy walking further. Viking and several section hikers are already there. Magic Bean models her long netting poncho, which she uses for cowboy camping.



Mount Thielsen

PCT 2018 Day 80, July 11, Wednesday

Start mile 1837.2, campsites

End mile 1875.8, water cache

Miles walked: 38.6 (oops!)

We are starting to see some snow-kissed mountains nearby.



The trail climbs a bit to Mount Thielsen, not climbing to the top, but getting midway for good views.





In the distance one can see flat areas, hinting at the edge of the mountain range.



I meet Savage and Matador, who hiked the AT last year and are section hiking Oregon. We walk together talking for several miles, and the distance slips by easily and quickly with good conversation. They stop at one of the rare water sources, and I press on to a water cache in six miles.

Magic Beans is camped there. She had not passed me, but somehow got off the trail and took an alternate route. We are both headed to Shelter Cove resort tomorrow, hence the extra miles today to get closer.

Finished audiobook [The Stories of J G Ballard](#), adapted from short stories by the author.

Finished audio short story [Auggie Wren's Christmas](#), by Paul Auster, read by author.

Shelter Cove

PCT 2018 Day 81, July 12, Thursday

Start Oregon Skyline Trail mile zero, water cache

End Oregon Skyline Trail mile 20.6, then Shelter Cove Trail

Miles walked: 20.6

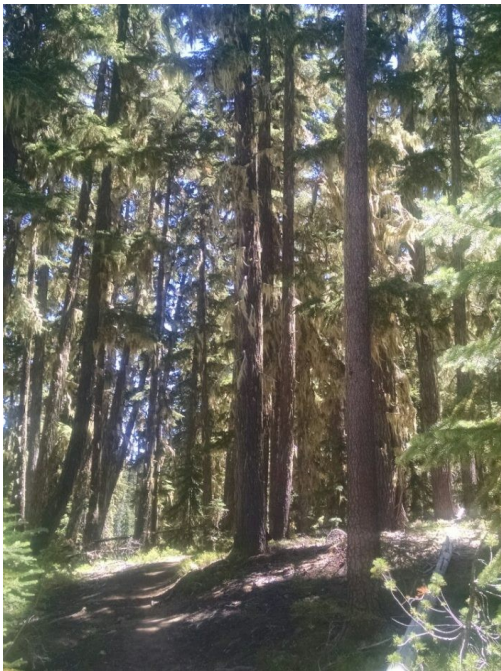
Magic Beans and I had decided to walk the alternate route to Shelter Cove resort, the Oregon Skyline Trail, slightly shorter with more water sources. With a name like Skyline you expect walking on high exposed ridges, right?



No, just more green tunnel. Why the name? The path does go by a number of lakes and ponds.



Closer to the end, the forest looks different. Can you spot the change?



Answer: Much more moss on the trees. I do not have a theory for the change.

I arrive at the resort in early afternoon. Magic Beans was already here, with several section and thru-hikers hanging out at the picnic tables.



Magic Beans does not stay, but I have planned to get a tent site and shower and do laundry. But my supply box has not arrived. Luckily, it comes at the 6PM UPS delivery. Wifi is slow, yet again, so almost no podcasts can be downloaded even with hours of attempts and multiple timeouts. The Cove does have a hiker tent nearby with good hiker boxes of free stuff, and a microwave, which I use to heat water for meals and tea. Spacejam arrives later in the afternoon, and I meet Jake, Socrates, Allison, Bryan, Scrappy, Nalgene, and TwoSpeed.

So Many Lakes

PCT 2018 Day 82, July 13, Friday

Start mile 1904.1, trail junction with Shelter Cove Trail

End mile 1935.8, campsite near small lake

Miles walked: 31.7

Many lakes and ponds today.



Mosquitoes were so relentless that I needed to wear a headnet nearly all day.



A flotilla of ducklings go out on a lake.



A nordic ski hut gives temporary refuge from skeeters.





A burn area with new growth makes patterns for the eyes with snags and downed trees.



For the last several miles of the day, I passed several lakes and ponds, with mosquitoes getting aggressive. Eventually I need to put on a windbreaker for extra bite protection, and did end the day a little early just to retreat inside a tent with good insect netting.

Finished audiobook [The Age of Innocence](#), by Edith Wharton, read by Brenda Dayne.

Elk Lake

PCT 2018 Day 83, July 14, Saturday

Start mile 1935.8, campsite near small lake

End mile 1966.5, tentsite

Miles walked: 30.7

The trail goes by many lakes, ponds, and **mosquitoes** in the morning.



Fog rises from the surface of some lakes in early morning.



Elk Lake Resort has many visitors today.



A hamburger selfie...



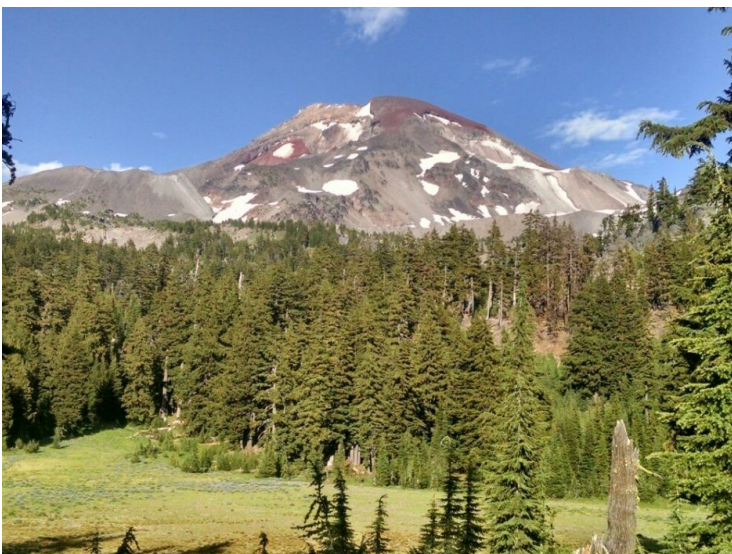
The resort does not offer wifi, so there is no reason to linger. I grab an ice cream cone on my way out and return to the trail. The next two photos go together.



In the Three Sisters Wilderness, some peaks rise suddenly above mountain meadow. Le Conte Crater is an old volcano.



Then comes the Three Sisters, starting with South Sister.



Behold Middle Sister.



North Sister must wait until tomorrow.

Finished audiobook [A Farewell to Arms](#), by Ernest Hemingway.

Lava

PCT 2018 Day 84, July 15, Sunday

Start mile 1966.5, tentsite

End mile 1996.5, pond

Miles walked: 30

North Sister comes into view in the morning.



An Obsidian Limited Entry Area requires a permit for non-PCT hikers for a two mile segment of trail. Bits of obsidian are in the trail, and larger fist-size specimens are nearby.



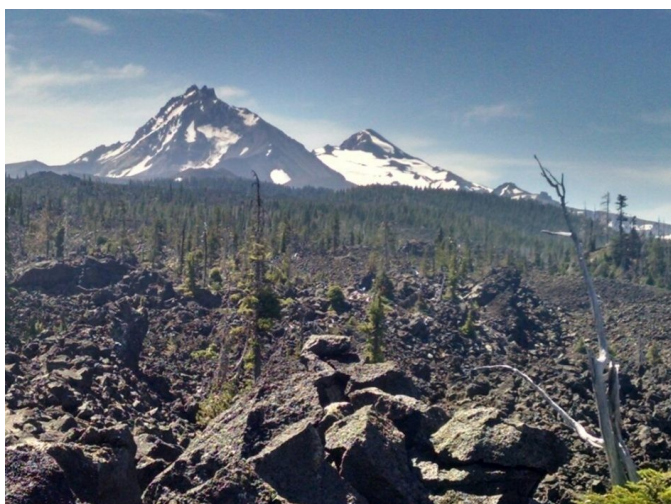
The trail goes over an area of lava rock. Unlike lava flows in New Mexico, where rock is melted together, these are separate lava rocks. Was the lava broken up by a glacier? Several named glaciers are nearby, not visible from the trail. Or did the lava get deposited by an explosion similar to Mount St Helens, instead of a liquid flow? Or was there some other mechanism?



Later I do see some lava melted together, not separate rocks.



Looking back, one can see the Three Sisters together.



You might think you are done walking across lava fields, then the trail routes you over some more. Near Highway 242, to Sisters, the route does a fun twisty maze with many turns.

Across the highway we climb Belknap Crater, all lava, a long section of several miles.



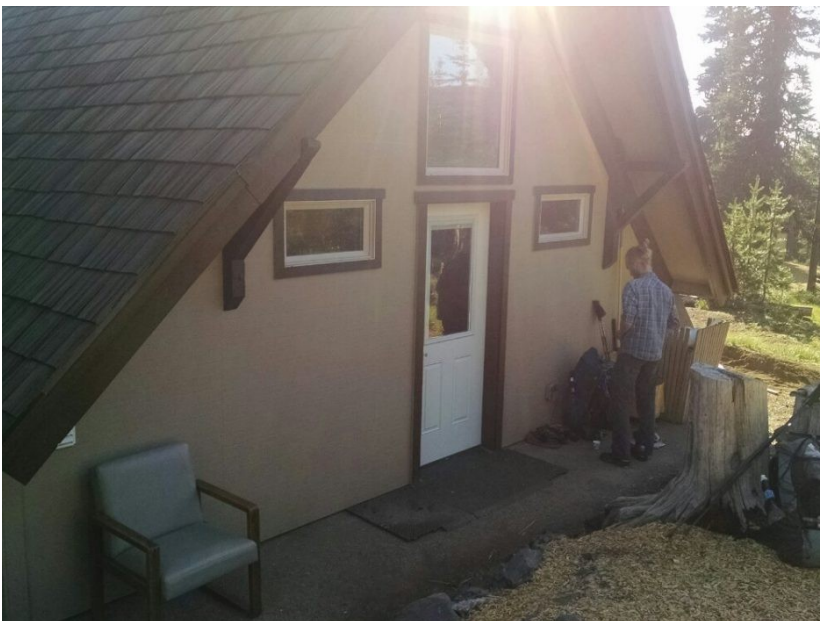
The day is hot, and walking on lava is hotter, and walking 12 miles between water sources is hottest.



Some trees try to grow on the lava fields, so it is especially sad to see a burned area here. I run into a hiker who says the burn and closure happened last year, and that she is back now to complete her trail.



I detour to a youth camp for water, and stay an hour or so to download podcasts on their wifi. They have a hiker welcome center, with kitchen, laundry, showers, and hiker box.



Hikers Josh, Ran (Israel), and Cache 22 are there, staying for a dinner. I skip dinner, and leave a donation for water and wifi on my way out.

I stop at a large pond to camp, the last water for thirteen miles.

Mount Jefferson

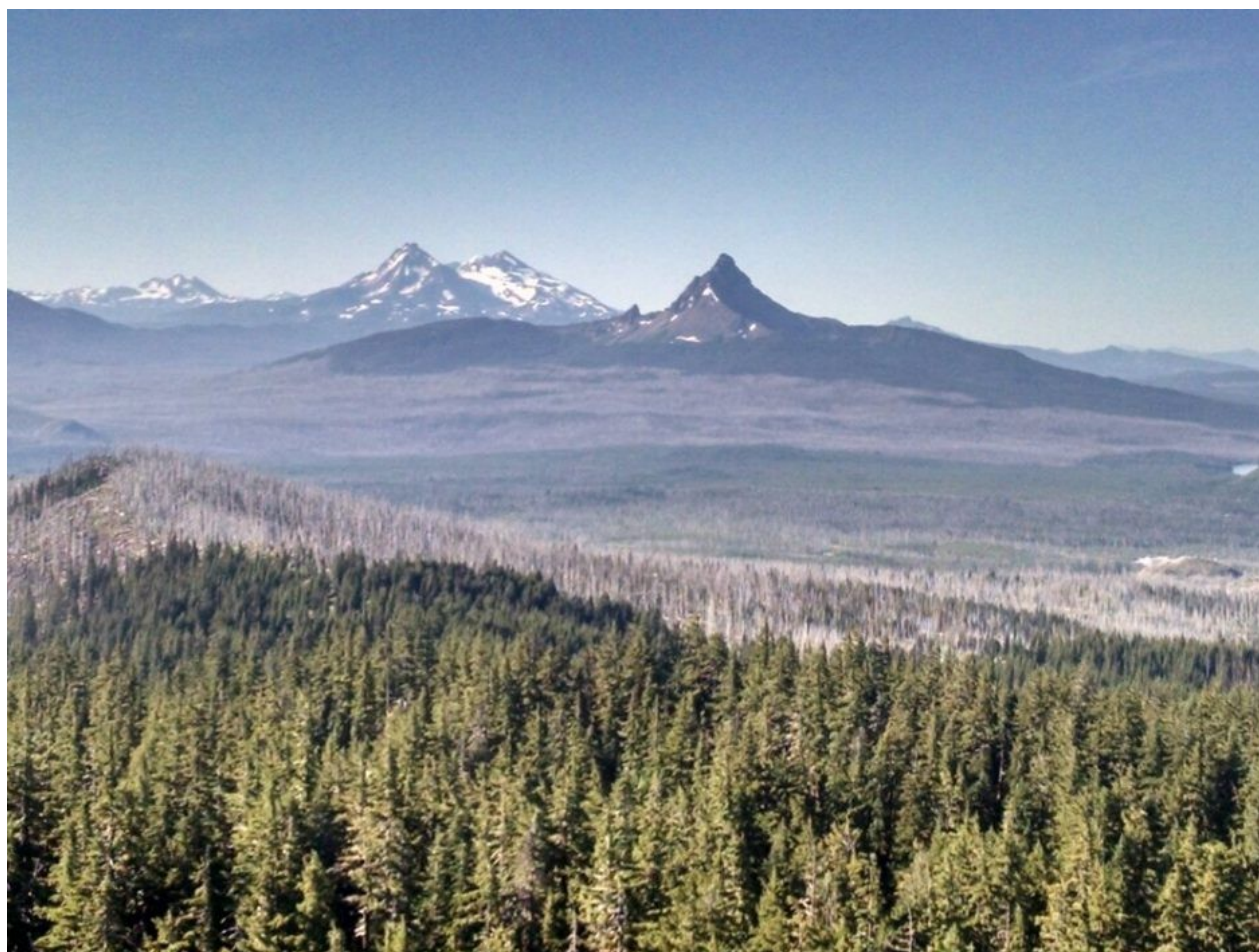
PCT 2018 Day 85, July 16, Monday

Start mile 1996.5, pond

End mile 2028.7, burn area

Miles walked: 32.2

Looking back, say farewell to Sisters and crater.



And mesas and other features.

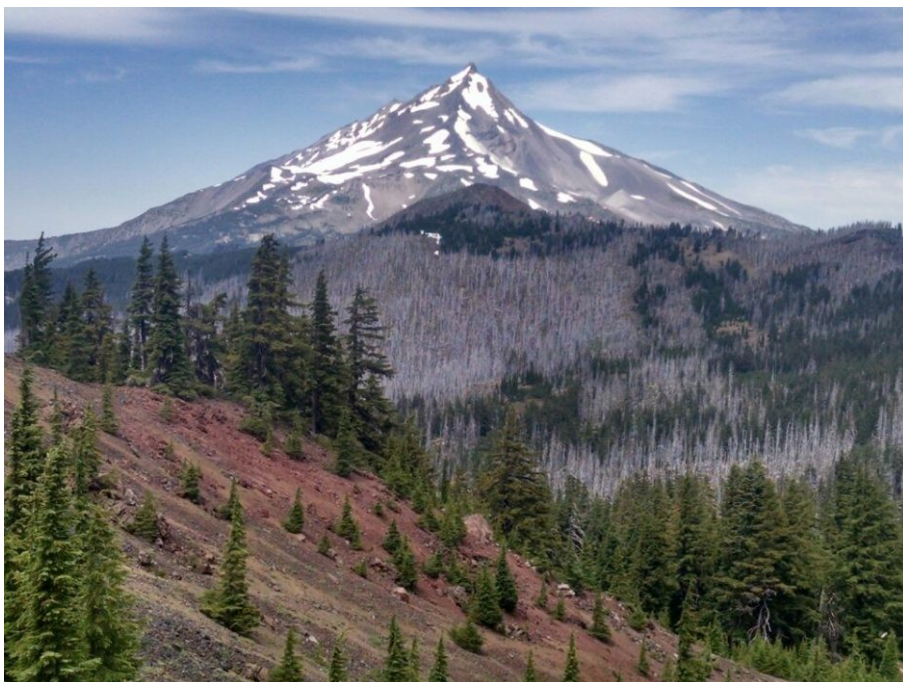


Three-Fingered Jack is the best name for a mountain ever.





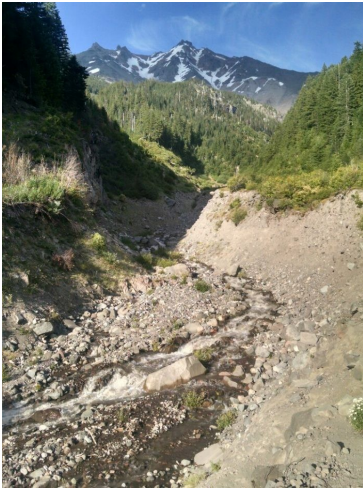
Mount Jefferson presides over all.



The trail goes up high on a ridge, with views of steep formations.



Milk Creek had big flow and erosion, tricky to cross.



Past the base of Mount Jefferson is a huge burn area.



I am hiking late, and am not able to get out of the burn area before the light fails. Camping among standing burned trees is not safe; random creaks and pops from tree trunks are heard through the night.

Finished audiobook [The Diary of Otto Kandinsky](#), by I G Hulme, a Heavenfield book.

Olallie

PCT 2018 Day 86, July 17, Tuesday

Start mile 2028.7

End 2062.1

Miles walked: 33.4

The trail climbs back up to a high ridge. Look back to admire Mt Jefferson.

From this high vantage point enjoy the variety of peaks.

In the distance is Mount Hood, surrounded in haze.



When I used to live near Portland, decades ago, Mount Hood was often hidden by clouds or haze, and would suddenly reappear on clear days.

Oh, we get snow crossings again.



Memories of the Sierras run through my mind.

The trail passes through a rugged alpine ecozone.



Descending low again, the trail passes several lakes, and on the Warm Springs reservation is Lake Olallie, with off-grid camp store and campground. Nate is doing trail magic, acting as a short-order cook on his propane griddle, making me banana pancakes, and later eggs.



Nate's dog supervises.



Also enjoying Nate's efforts are Uphill, Eric, and Ike. I recognize Uphill's distinctive logo on trail registers. I get a couple day's worth of food at the camp store. Uphill and I hike together for a while, in green tunnel without many views, finally camping with several other tents near a creek.

Mount Hood

PCT 2018 Day 87, July 18, Wednesday

Start mile 2062.1, campsite near a creek

End campsite near Timberline Lodge, mile 2094.4

Miles walked: 32.3

The plan is to camp near historic Timberline Lodge, ready for their breakfast buffet the next morning. I did not meet a long distance hiker where that was *not* the plan. The morning passes through more green tunnel, perhaps at lower altitude with more moisture, so moss grows over rotting logs.



Trees often grow tall in Oregon.



The route passes by large and popular Timothy Lake.

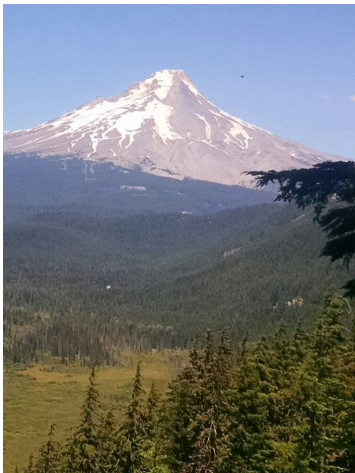


A small detour reveals Little Crater Lake, deep and blue.



Later I pass Amanita (mushroom) and Hun (likes putting honey on food, from Germany) pausing for lunch, and we chat.

After starting a long gradually climb, Mount Hood comes into prominent view, without the haze of yesterday.



Amanita had to leave for a music concert, but Hun and I hike together the rest of the day. She is quite fast, even though only starting hiking at Ashland. Horses come down the trail a couple of times.



Hun's friend Kodak has stopped on the trail to snack on cherries someone gave her, and offers us some. We get closer to the summit of Mount Hood, realizing it is mostly loose gray sand, not rock. Our path is on the same type of sand, tough to go uphill.



Hun and I go to the parking lot where a hiker shower is provided from a converted port-a-potty. The water is cold, and you have to hold the faucet on with one hand while soaping up with the other. Hun and I take turns, then go visit the lodge briefly as newly clean hikers.



While in the lodge, Hun greets Jocelyn and Braydon, who she met at Olallie. They have taken a room at the lodge.

On the way back we meet Kodak, who just showered. She allows me to take a reaction shot.



Kodak shows us a closer camping spot to the lodge, and we pitch tents to get ready for the morning feast.

Timberline Lodge

PCT 2018 Day 88, July 19, Thursday

Start campsite near Timberline Lodge, mile 2094.4

End mile 2116.2, Salvation Spring and campsite

Miles walked: 21.8

I go down to the lodge a little early, with pack because I will fill water and get a supply box shipment after breakfast.



I enjoy these historic lodges, and must include at least a couple of photos of the interior.



Hun and I get a larger table for the breakfast buffet in the Cascadia Room, so that other hikers can join us, and soon we meet Packing, Cans, and Boombox, with Kodak coming later.



Lively conversation and good food are a fine start to the day.

Afterwards I go down to the activity building and get my box and repack and organize. I do appreciate the fast wifi, and download my favorite podcasts.

Finally the trail resumes around 10AM. Skiers are on the glacier today.



Hun starts after me but catches up. We take the side trail to Ramona Falls. The sun is just at a good angle to illuminate the water.



Hun needs to stop for a rest, afflicted with heel blisters. She may need different shoes, requiring a trip into Portland. She may not hike far today, but hopes to catch up with me tomorrow.

Down from the mountain, the forest has thriving undergrowth, with moss and fern, starting to appear like a rainforest.





I thought I saw an Ewok, but was mistaken. Later, after a long climb up switchbacks, the air becomes quite cool. Has the weather changed suddenly? I get to my planned stopping place, not hiking very late today, and dress warmly for a cold night.

Cascade Locks

PCT 2018 Day 89, July 20, Friday

Start mile 2116.2, Salvation Spring and campsite

End mile 2144.2, Cascade Locks, camp at Marine Park Campground

Miles walked: 28

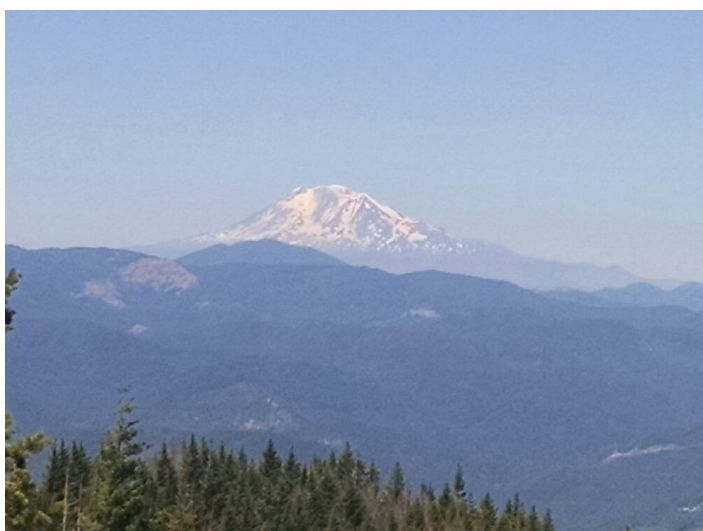
The morning opens cold, damp and foggy, a huge change from the previous evening.



I end up hiking wearing a windbreaker until noon, which means really cold indeed.
Artistic version of the morning.



Mount Adams can be seen to the north and east. The trail swings near the base of the peak.



On miles of switchbacks the trail goes from altitude 4k down to about 90 feet at Cascade Locks. Here is an early glimpse of Columbia Gorge.



I was planning on camping at The Swamp, run by trail troll Shrek. Upon going to his house I learn that he is no longer hosting hikers. Upon walking away, I realize that is just what Shrek in the movies would say, and that I should have persisted. :-)

I end up camping at Marine Park and Campground, absolutely lovely right along the river.



Good conversation with hikers First, Fabian (Austria), and Gust made a good finish for the day. I showered at the campground, and will do laundry in town tomorrow morning just before my friend picks me up for a visit.

Bruce and Beth Zero

PCT 2018 Day 90, July 21, Saturday

Start mile 2144.2, Cascade Locks, camp at Marine Park Campground

End Aloha, Oregon, visiting with old friends

Miles walked: ZERO

I have made plans to spend the day with Bruce and Beth, deareold friends from when I used to live in the Portland area back in the 1980s. Bruce picks me up at Cascade Locks, at the drive-in hamburger place. It has been so long, we hardly recognize each other. His spouse Beth has a function at the Guide Dogs for the Blind Oregon campus, so we go to meet her there.



Beth is raising Peaches (sorry if I get the name wrong), a candidate guide dog. Each dog is periodically evaluated for any disqualifying traits, and less than 50% successfully complete the program as a guide dog or breeder dog. The guide dog facility is as large as a small community college campus, and many other candidate dogs are there for a meet-and-greet. Beth is hoping to see some of Peach's litter mates, but none are there today. The function has a space theme, pretty cute.



Later we go to their home in a town west of Portland, which was still being built when I left Oregon around 1986. Beth presides over a huge garden, and Bruce has welded many ornamental pieces for it.





Here is their view from the house, quite excellent.



Much conversation ensues.





Good day.

Enter Washington

PCT 2018 Day 91, July 22, Sunday

Start mile 2144.2, Cascade Locks,

End mile 2166.5, flat corner at switchback

Miles walked: 22.3

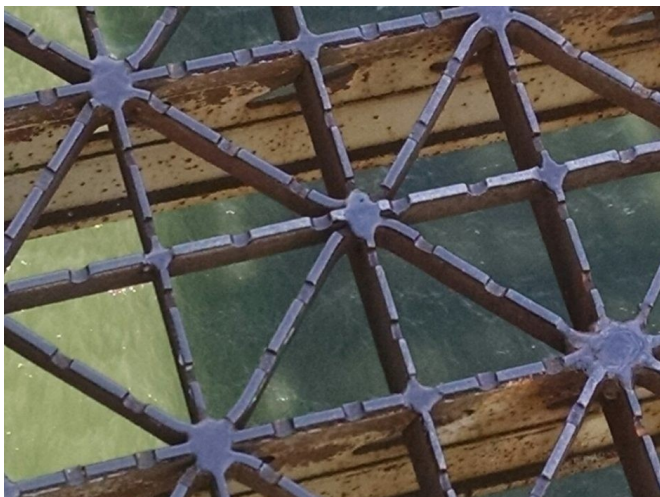
Bruce and Beth drop me off at Cascade Locks, and I get on trail around 10:30AM, crossing the Bridge of the Gods Bridge over the Columbia River.



The metal bridge does not really have a pedestrian walkway, like I had assumed.



Through the metal grate road surface one can view the river below.





On the other side, I am in Washington state!



Blackberries, and later raspberries, are growing along the trail. Later, higher in elevation, I see ripe huckleberries.



Bonneville Dam can be seen in the distance, with hydroelectric generators and fish ladders for salmon.



The trail passes below the summit of Table Mountain.





Some clear-cutting is visible late in the day.



I hike until dark, to offset my late start. Cans and Boombox, last seen at the Timberline Lodge breakfast, are camping nearby, and I see several southbound thru-hikers today.

Green Tunnel Vision

PCT 2018 Day 92, July 23, Monday

Start mile 2166.5, flat corner at switchback

End mile 2196.5, corner at switchback

Miles walked: 30.0

The trail is shaded in trees nearly all day today, with views of more ridges completely covered in trees. The only exception is the view of Mount Adams in the distance.



Towards the end of the day the path goes along a lava flow, with collapsed layers often creating caves.



And also, I see regulations posted about mushrooms, which I do not remember seeing in other forests.



I am starting to notice the shorter days, making it harder to complete my daily thirty. Best to finish soon...

Completed audiobook [Can You Forgive Her](#), by Anthony Trollope.

Trout Lake

PCT 2018 Day 93, July 24, Tuesday

Start mile 2196.5, corner at switchback

End mile 2226.3, road crossing with state route 23, then hitch to community of Trout Lake

Miles walked: 29.8

Today presents several lakes , including Blue Lake here, and therefore also mosquitoes.



The trail has several ups and downs, bouncing between 3k and 5k. We continue to approach Mount Adams.



With a light pack and motivation to enjoy town treats, I finish 30 miles relatively early in the day, reaching the road at 5PM. This road has little traffic, and the few cars going by were not inclined to stop. After an hour I walked down to a cell signal and started dialing trail angels, but a couple from Portland offer me a ride before I can find an angel who might be available.

On the way down I spot Magic Beans, hitching back to the trail.

The general store has my two packages waiting, including a repair for one of my trekking poles. How pleasant it will be to get back to two poles.



A large cat seems to be in charge of the store.



The store owner does not have any more rooms available, but offers me free space on her lawn next door. This saves me a fee at the nearby campground, but more importantly gives me access to store wifi.



The cat comes out to my tentsite for an inspection.



Mount Adams

PCT 2018 Day 94, July 25, Wednesday

Start mile 2226.3, road crossing with state route 23, then hitch to community of Trout Lake

End mile 2256.3, campsite near pond

Miles walked: 30

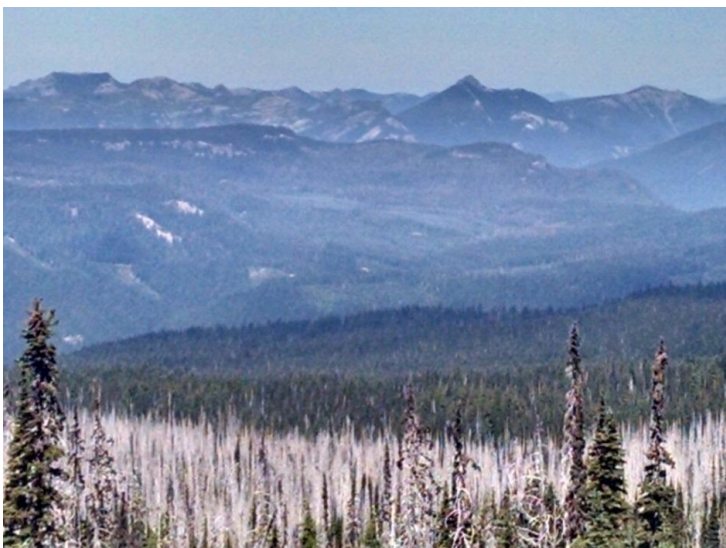
I walk to the north outskirts of Trout Lake in early morning, hoping to get a ride back to the trail. A trail angel stops with hiker Mama Bear to pick me up. Mount Adams looms closer as the trail climbs in elevation.



Off to the north and west is Mount Rainier.



And north of Rainier are a string of lower peaks that also have snow.



By mid-day the trail is on the base of Mount Adams, not far below the treeline. I would wish the route went just past the trees for a better view, and would take a side-trail further if I were to ever do this route again.

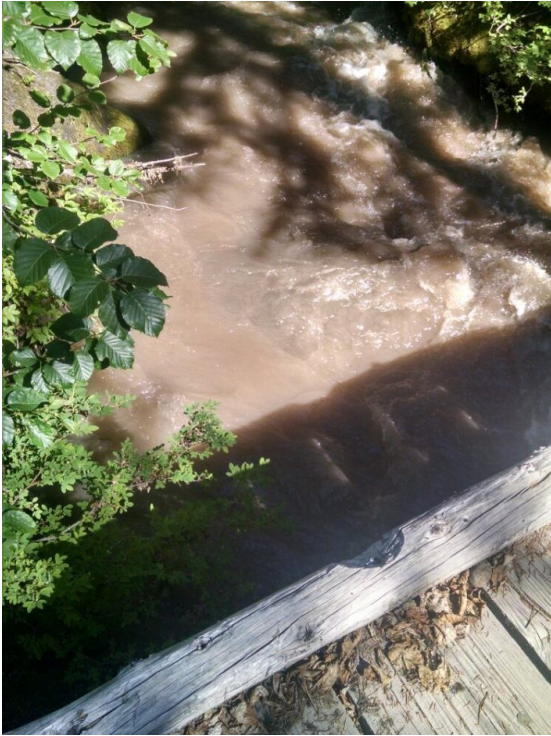
I meet thru-hiker Charlie Brown, about my age, also going north. Several hikers pass south-bound.



Later I go past a wide rock field, perhaps connected with mountain drainage or glacial action.



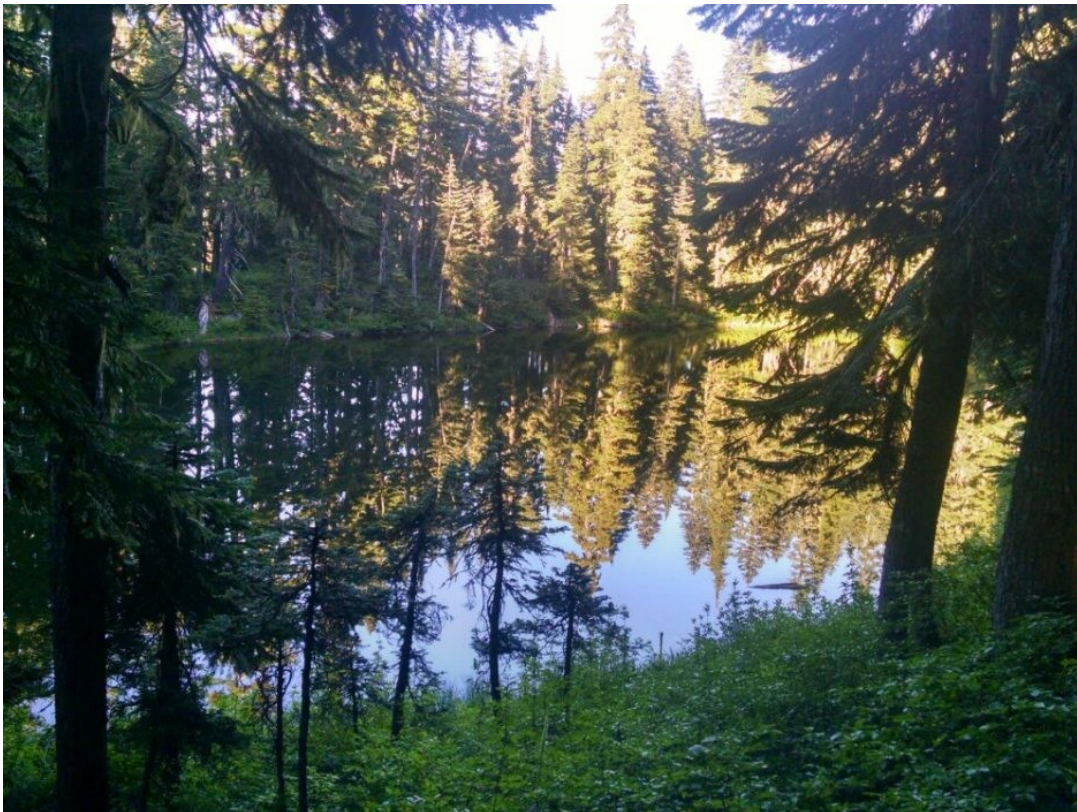
Often creeks and some ponds in this area are full of silt.



A boundary marker for the Yakama Nation is along the path.



I go by a series of ponds and lakes, and clouds of mosquitos. I do not mention it each day, but we are in an extended heat wave, according to locals. Flies buzz and land on any exposed skin.



Finally I set up camp at a site near a pond, quickly putting up a tent and jumping inside to escape skeeters.

Goat Rocks Wilderness

PCT 2018 Day 95, July 26, Thursday

Start mile 2256.3, campsite near pond

End mile 2287.1, campsite

Miles walked: 30.8

My little camera cannot adequately capture the glorious scenes today...

The trail climbs up to 6.5k, and later 7k, with the view of a tall and deep ridge beyond the marker to Yakima tribal lands.





At Crispus Pass, the trail crosses over to another steep ridge bowl.





The path goes along a narrow path of loose shale, and a snow crossing. Mountain goats can be seen playing on the snow fields below.



Later the trail follows on the top of a narrow winding ridge.



At least 20 southbound thru-hikers go by.

Heard by a southbounder: “I had a *really* bad morning, but rehydrated after the tears, and now I’m fine.”

I asked a southbounder, “Are there any days in Washington better than this?” “No, but there are good days.”

Finished audiobook [A Little Princess](#), by Frances Hodgson Burnett, read by [Kara Shallenberg](#).

White Pass

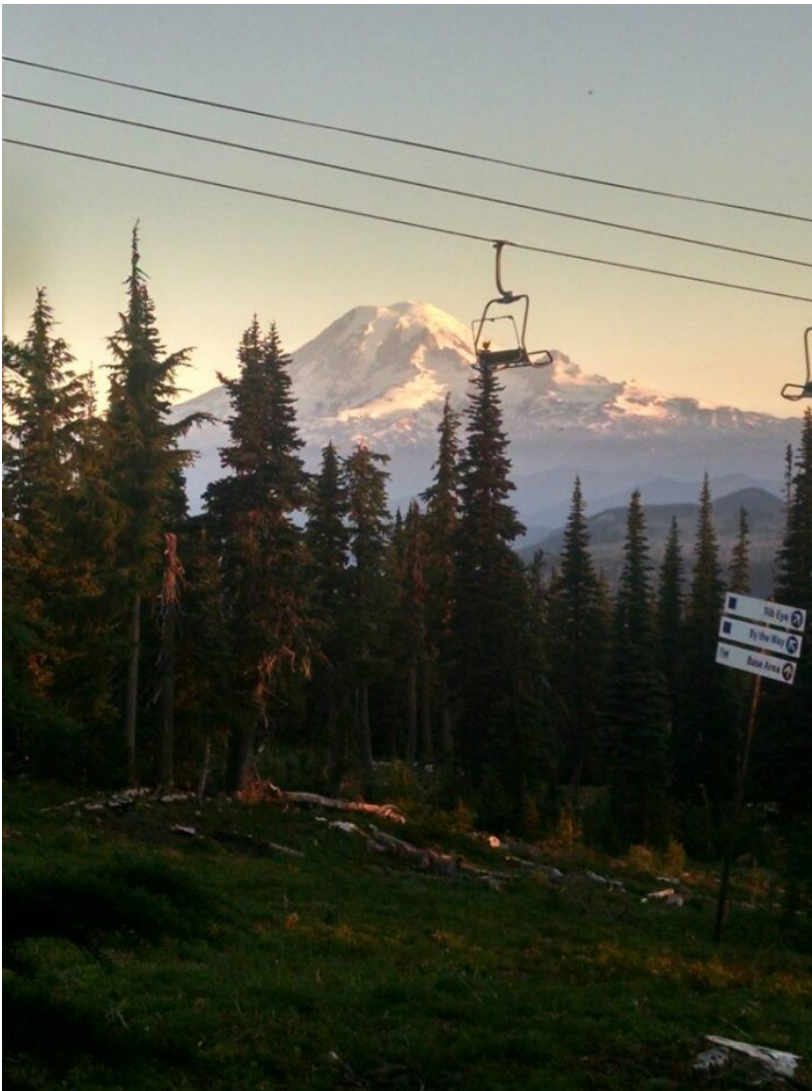
PCT 2018 Day 96, July 27, Friday

Start mile 2287.1, campsite

End mile 2315.6, viewpoint

Miles walked: 28.5

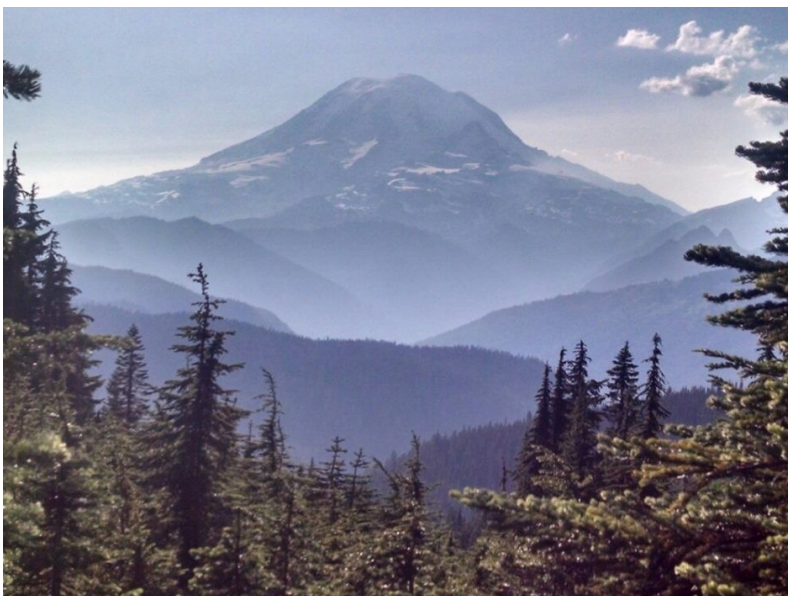
I walk about 5 miles to White Pass.



The little country store has my supply box, and wifi. After a couple of hours break, it is time to hike some miles. Dozens of lakes and ponds go by, so my headnet stays on for hours to protect from mosquitoes.



Haze envelopes Mount Rainier, as we approach closer.





Finally, inside the park boundary for Rainier, I find water and a place to pitch my tent.

Urich Cabin

PCT 2018 Day 97, July 28, Saturday

Start mile 2315.6, viewpoint

End mile 2344.5, campsite near cabin

Miles walked: 28.9

Today we get quite attractive views with spruce, spaced out and the shape of Christmas trees, and scree and rock and grass.



The Park Service foot bridge at Chinook Pass also serves as an entry sign, built of massive logs.



Past Chinook Pass and the nearby lake, the path leads along the side of a long steep ridge, mostly level, and goes for miles.



Here is more trail along steep ridge.



Up so high I can escape mosquitoes most of the day.



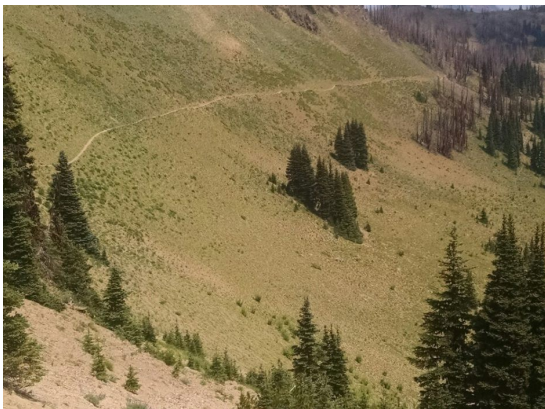
We get a view of Mount Rainier with clouds.



Across the basin one can see a ski area and mine.



Here is yet another view of path along steep ridge.



The trail passes underneath steep scree/talus, with a small rockfall just as I go by. How strange that such a steep slope can be stable



Later the path follows the top of a ridge along a burn area, with rare rainfall and lightning.

At Urich Cabin, Splash and Pizza cook hot dogs with onions and roasted jalepenos, and also provide cold drinks and snacks for trail magic.



Urich Cabin was built by a snowmobile group, and PCT hikers are allowed to use.



Thru-hikers Hot Sauce and Eleven (southbound) enjoy the magic. Section hiker Papa Sul arrives later. Good conversation ensues.
Hot Sauce enjoys a dog.



Finished audiobook [The Warden](#), by Anthony Trollope.

A Day of Gear

PCT 2018 Day 98, July 29, Sunday

Start mile 2344.5, campsite near cabin

End mile 2376.1, fire lane

Miles walked: 31.6

The path has many little ups and downs today, exhausting and not always necessary, and any views are obscured by haze from a fire. So I will chat about gear, and you are welcome to skip if not to your interest.

I wake up to an alarm from my phone. When summer days were longer I woke up to robins singing, but now I need a little more time to meet my self-imposed mileage goal.

I am not very tall, so I can sit up straight in the tent, a blue Zpacks Hexamid. This is not a dome tent, so requires several tent stakes, and the use of one trekking pole, but is wonderfully light-weight, about a pound.



My clothes bag is my mosquito headnet. At night, full of clothes not worn, it is a pillow when stuffed inside my hat. *Things at once!*



Reaching for the clothes bag, I pull out a long sleeve merino shirt, long nylon pants, wool socks, hat, and runners gaiters, which keep small rocks out of shoes. A bandana is hanging up to dry from my sponge-bath the night before, and is tied around my neck.

I put in the clothes bag my camp clothes: compression socks, a short sleeve merino shirt, and shorts, fleece hat, and neck gaiter which is used as sleep mask.

My down sleeping bag is stuffed into its own sack. My head-lamp next to my sleeping pad goes into my mesh tool bag.



My smaller mesh bag is for toiletries.

With my clothes on I start placing items in pockets. The cell phone and earbuds go into front left. The tent stake bag and tent stuff sack goes into the front right pocket, temporarily, along with sunglasses.

My sleeping pad is a torso-length foam pad that folds into thirds.



The sleeping pad doubles as signage.



My legs rest at night on my empty backpack, with shoes underneath. The pad goes into the backpack at my back, with the sleeping bag in the bottom, arranged with my wallet in a zip bag underneath so I can reach back anytime and check that it is there.

Now items are placed just outside the tent: water bottles, backpack, solar panel and charger and usb cable, food bag, tool bag, toiletries bag, and clothes bag.



Outside the tent myself, all tent stakes go immediately into the tent stake bag, careful not to lose any, and the stake bag is wedged in a special spot at the bottom of my backpack.



The tent is gathered and stuffed inside its sack, which now goes on top of the sleeping bag in the backpack.

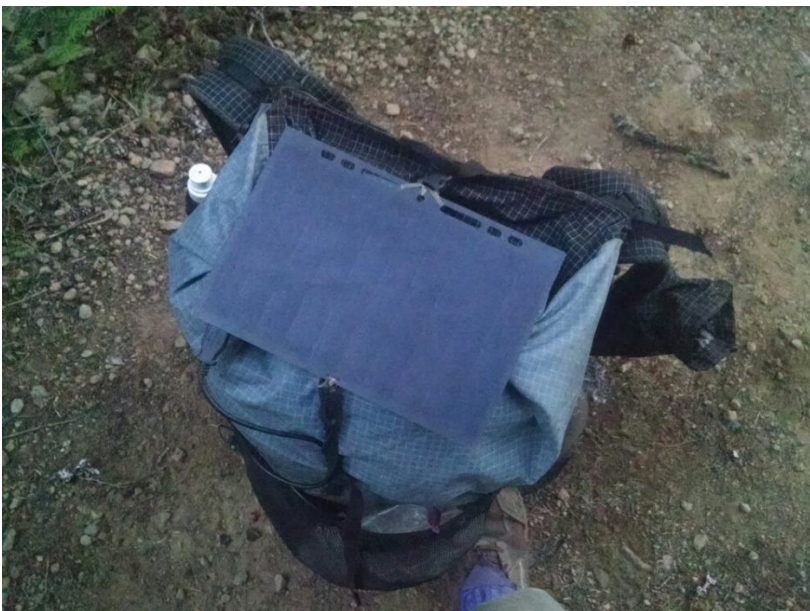
The food bag goes on top of the tent in my pack. Except today's snacks in a zip bag go in the pack outer pocket, with the first two snacks inside my pack strap pocket.



A separate zip bag holds items for tonight's dinner.

The clothes bag goes in my pack on top of the food bag, with tool bag, toiletries bag, and dinner bag on very top.

After closing the pack, the solar panel is clipped on top, with charger in the outer pocket.



Two one-liter water bottles go into pack side pockets, with a squeeze water filter screwed onto one water bottle. I can easily grab the bottles while wearing the pack.

The pack goes on, the cellphone goes into the pack strap pocket, I grab my carbon-fiber trekking poles, and time to hike!

My goal is to be on the trail within 30 minutes of waking.

In the evening, around 5PM, I start my first dinner soaking, since I am going no-cook and soaking might take a few hours. If using dehydrated cooked chicken or TVP cubes, I soak that separately. These go in double zip bags and in the pack outer pocket, to mitigate against leakage.

Issues

- My long sleeve merino shirt is not sturdy enough to resist abrasion from the pack. I am on my third shirt this trip. Next trip will try a nylon hiking shirt.
- Hiking in long sleeves is hot. I wanted protection from sun and bugs, but am ready to try shorts next trip, like the vast majority of hikers.
- My Altra shoes are letting in a lot of fine dirt, which easily passes through wool socks and sticks on my feet. A sponge bath is necessary every evening.
- Putting the day's snack food in the outer pack pocket is not optimum, because it shifts the center of gravity backwards.

Finished audiobook [A Room With a View](#), by E M Forster.

Snoqualmie Pass

PCT 2018 Day 99, July 30, Monday

Start mile 2376.1, fire lane

End mile 2390.6, Snoqualmie Pass

Miles walked: 14.5

Why do they call it Mirror Lake?





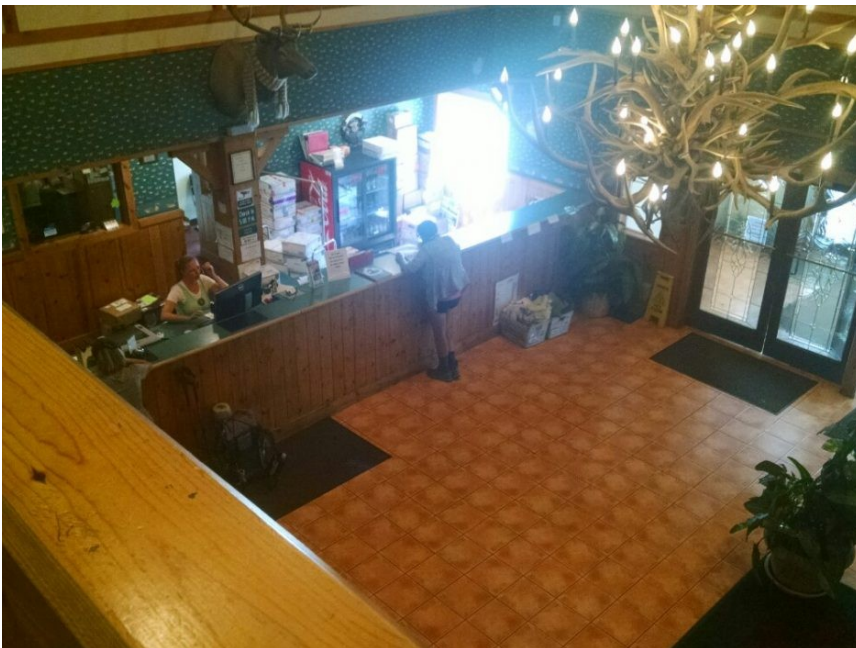
Water lilies.



Chair lifts near Snoqualmie Pass.



Hot Sauce and I arrive in town at about the same time, communicating by text. We were planning to share a room at the Summit Inn, but when we learn that PCT hiker room rates are quite affordable, we get separate rooms.



Many PCT hikers are at the motel. My room has an actual bathtub instead of a mere shower, and I soak pleasantly.

I had a supply box mailed to the Inn, and organize my food bag, and take a well-deserved rest in my room.

Alpine Lakes Wilderness

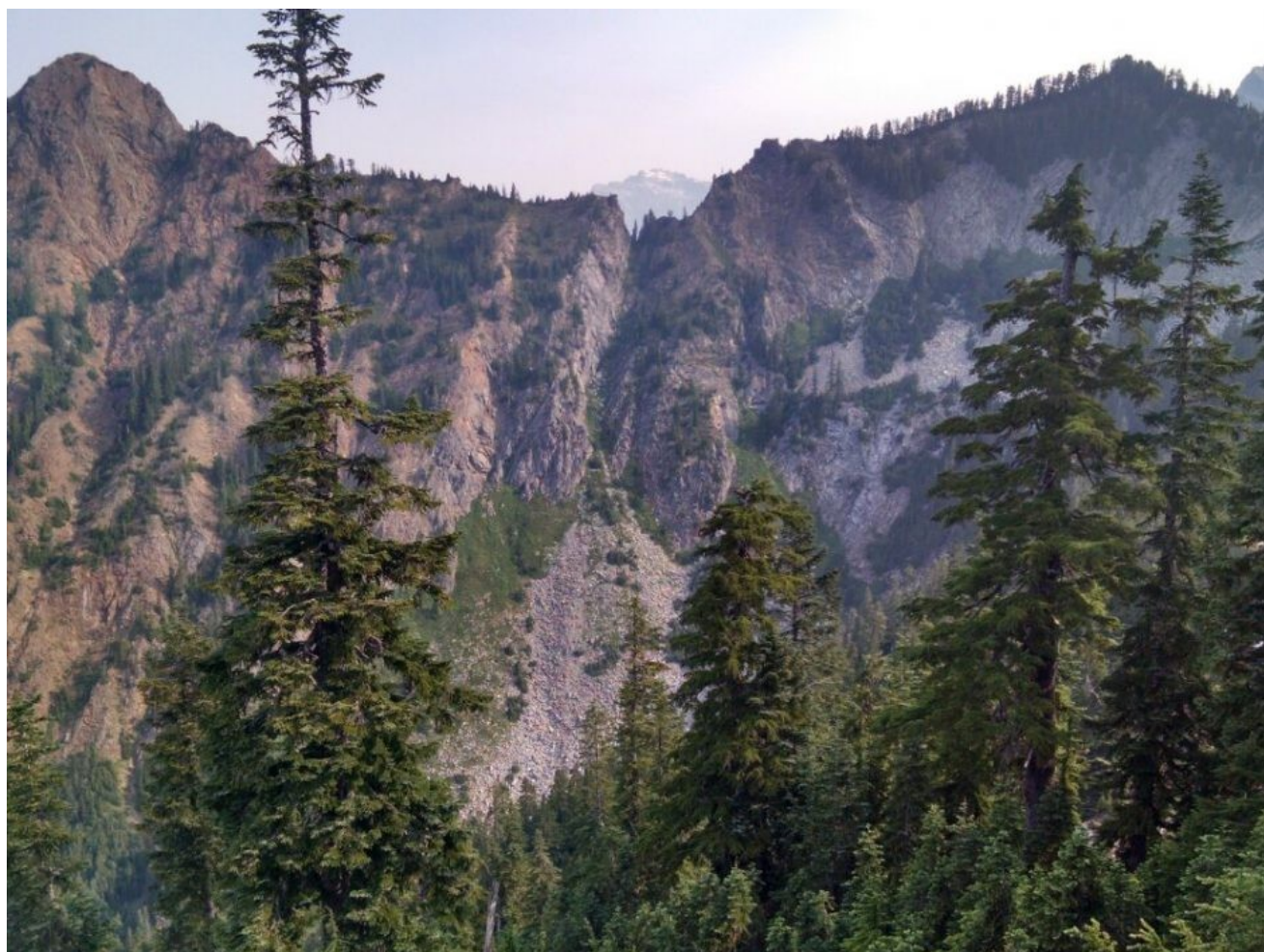
PCT 2018 Day 100, July 31, Tuesday

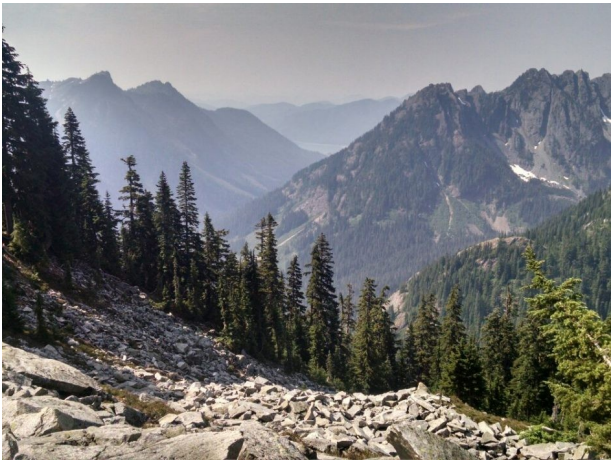
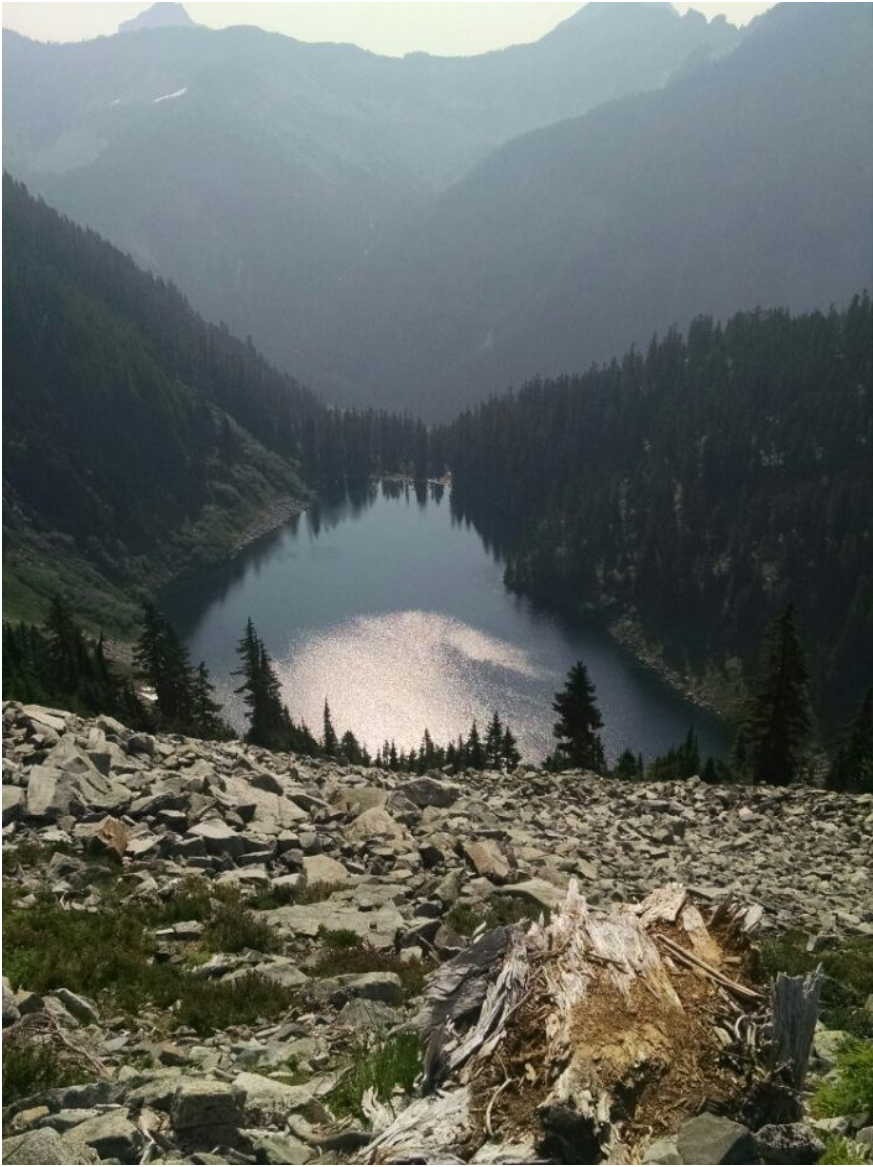
Start mile 2390.6, Snoqualmie Pass

End mile 2417.3, tentsite

Miles walked: 26.7

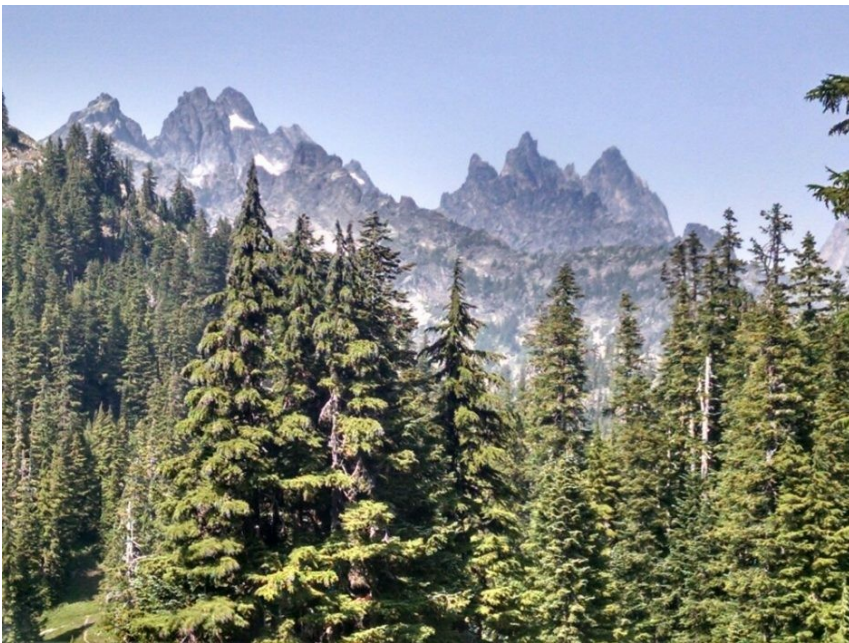
I leave the hotel early, taking advantage of cool morning hours to climb from 3k to 7k elevation. The views today are glorious.













After climbing down to 3k to cross the Lemah River, the trail goes back up to 5.5k. I run out of daylight before reaching a lake, and stop at a nearby campsite.

Bonus Alpine Lakes

PCT 2018 Day 101, August 1, Wednesday

Start mile 2417.3, tentsite

End mile 2447.3, campsites near seasonal stream

Miles walked: 30

The morning was in trees with few views and hazy, but the afternoon had glorious views
A donkey goes by with a full load, and a hurt foot.

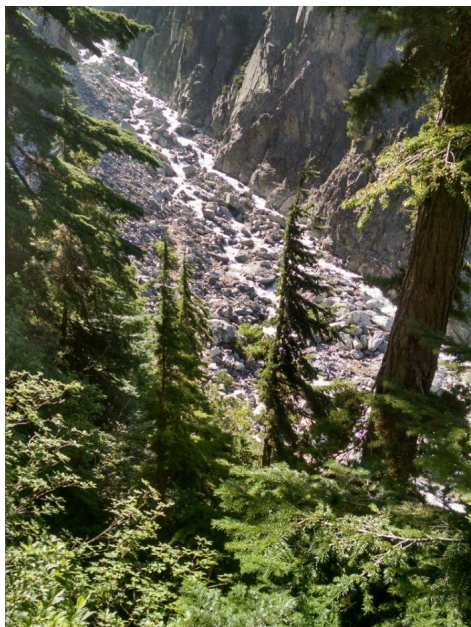




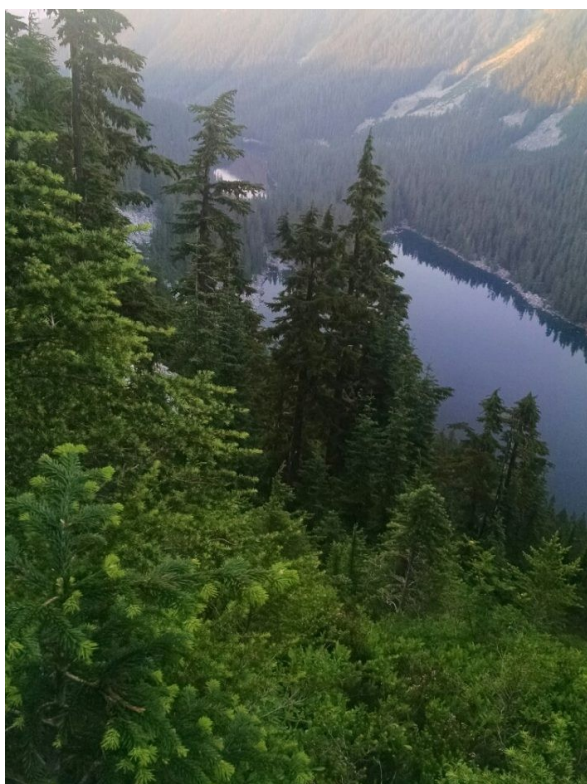




A challenging ford of a stream, wet feet for me.



Camp is at a creek near Glacier Lake and Surprise Lake.



Stevens Pass

PCT 2018 Day 102, August 2, Thursday

Start mile 2447.3, campsites near seasonal stream

End mile 2474.4, campsite

Miles walked: 27.1

The morning has changed to very cool, with fog. Fog plays on the surface of lakes, swirling and spinning.



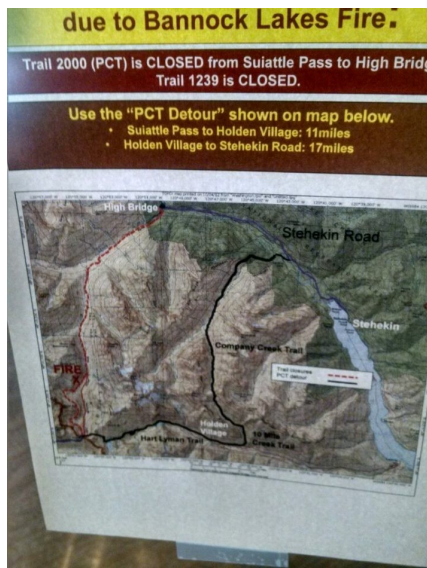
Eventually the trail leads to the ski lifts of Stevens Pass resort.



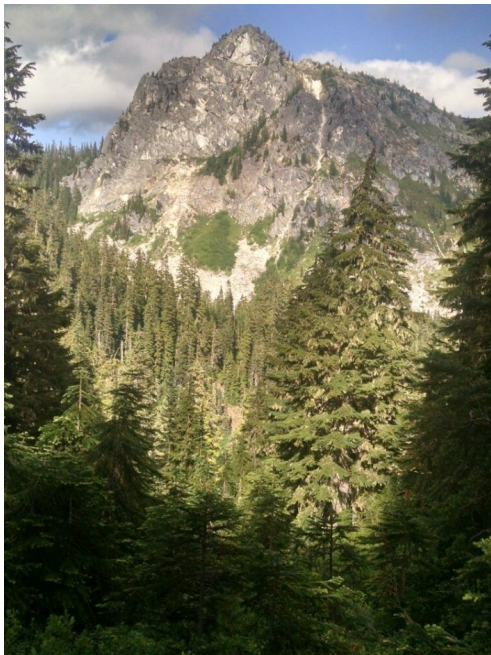
Granite Lodge has some snacks, slow wifi, and a hiker box, and I pick up a supply box mailed to me by Cairn.



Hot Sauce is there, too, and we learn of a new fire south of Stehekin, with a re-route. We already knew about another fire just north of Stehekin that also closed the trail.



Back on the trail after a couple hours break, the familiar pattern of lakes and ridges resumes, with unusually cool temperature, becoming overcast.



A steady rain patters against the tent all night long.

Finished audiobook [How to Disappear Completely, the Terrible Business of Salmon and Dusk](#), by Myke Bartlett.

Glacier Peak Wilderness

PCT 2018 Day 103, August 3, Friday

Start mile 2474.4, campsite

End mile 2502.2

Miles walked: 27.8

After raining the previous night, today is foggy, in clouds, sometimes with a fine mist rain. Midday the fog lifts and sun peeps through, but soon the fog returns. The day is cold, refreshing for hiking, and no mosquitoes are about. With so much fog, photos are not so good today.









At the end of the day I am climbing the side of a steep ridge, up to elevation 6.5k, in white-out conditions, racing to get down to 5.5k where it will not be such a cold night, and lose the light before reaching my planned campsite.

Finished audiobook [Heidi](#), by Johanna Spyri, read by [Kara](#) Shallenberg.

Alpine Challenge

PCT 2018 Day 104, August 4, Saturday

Start mile 2502.2

End mile 2527.4, creek near campsite

Miles walked: 25.2

Well now, which hiker broke the bridge?



We still use it to get across. The trail today seems to be an obstacle course, with sections of thick overgrown plants, huge logs to climb over or under, and wet trails. And the elevation goes from 5.5k down to 4k, up to 6.5k, down to 3.3k, and back finally to 6k.

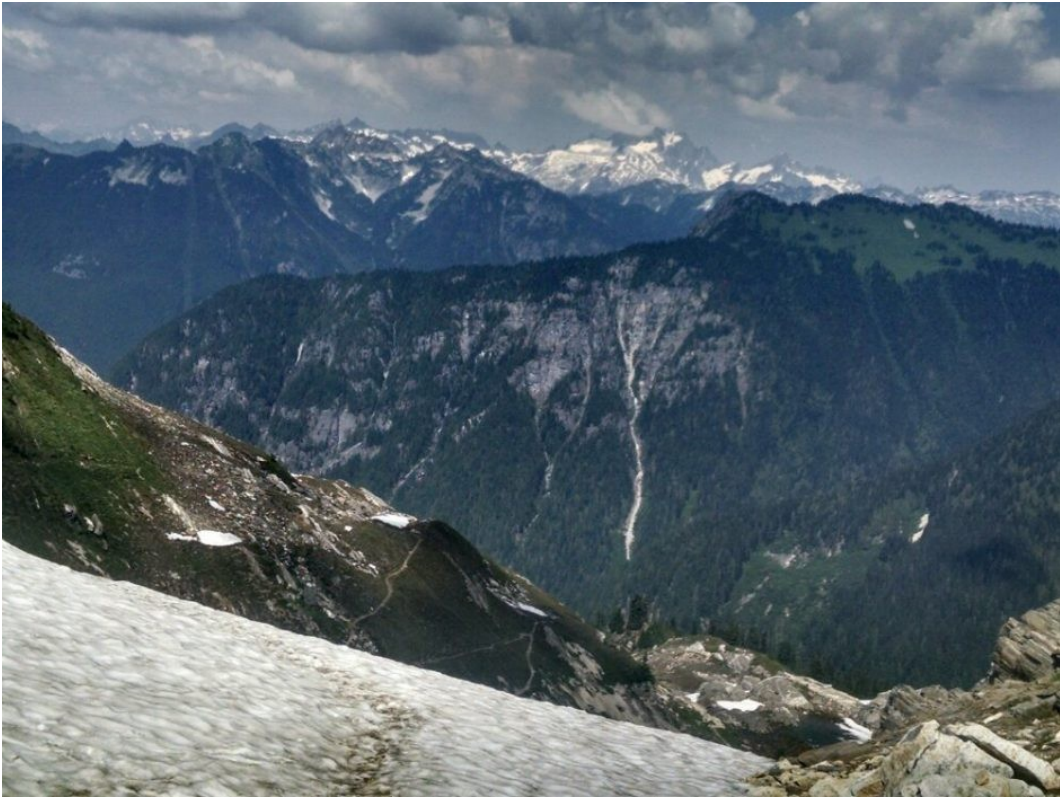


I forgot to mention the alpine ecosystem at high altitudes, seen for several days now, thick with wildflowers and plants unfamiliar to us lowlanders.



The views of green mountains and glacier mountains today rewards the long climbs.





Mica Lake is still partially iced over, but I saw some campers thinking about a swim.



After climbing way down to Milk Creek and way up again, I get water at a creek and stop at a nearby campsite, with a view of Kennedy Peak and its glaciers.



Camp is early because a thunderstorm threatens, with many flashes. The rain is mild, but will stay on the bushes and make tomorrow morning wet.

Today I struggled with an ingrown toenail, from a couple of days of wet-foot hikes and a stubbed toe. Finally, after several attempts, in early afternoon I managed to bandage the foot in such a way that it did not hurt every other step. That cost me some miles today.

For several mornings I have greeted Hot Sauce as he zooms by. He hikes faster, and is doing more miles each day, but we manage to overlap, and I start early and pass his tent, and then he catches up later, and we chat before he goes past. After today's low miles, I may not see him to discuss the possible re-route of the PCT that we hit tomorrow at Suiattle Pass, caused by the Bannock Lakes Fire.

Bannock Lake Fire Detour

PCT 2018 Day 105, August 5, Sunday

Start mile 2527.4, creek near campsite

End mile 2549.3, then mile 9 of 11 of Hart Lyman Trail

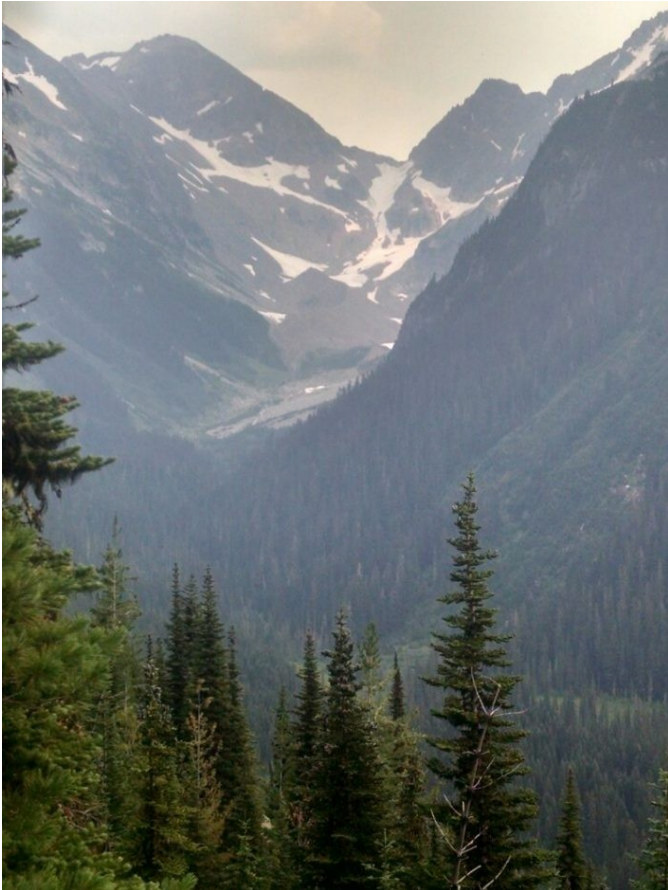
Miles walked: 30.9

Descending down to walk along the Suiattle River, I pass a grove of the largest trees on the PCT.





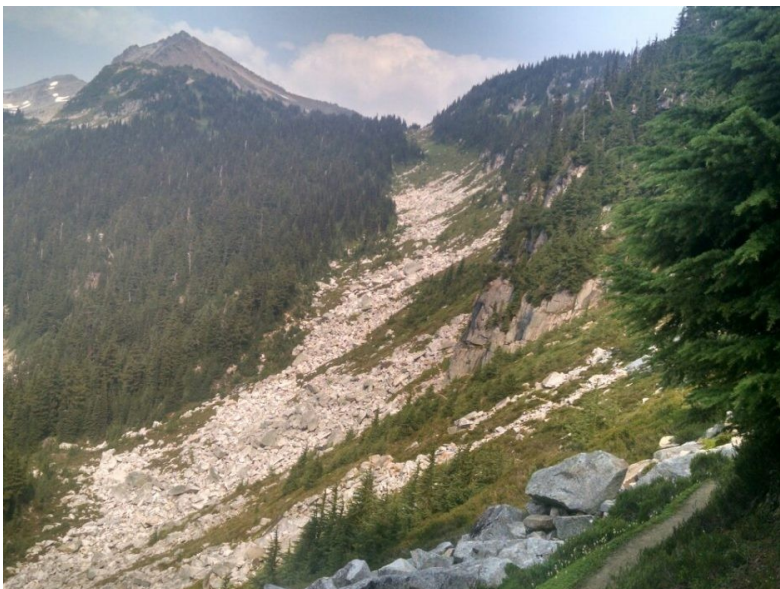
A climb from 2.5k to 6k brings Suiattle Pass, and views of more glaciers.



The trail diversion due to wildfire is well-marked. Southbounders tell me the route is clear and easy to follow.



The steep climb to Cloudy Pass reminds me that other trails are not built with the limited grade specifications of the PCT.







This is what toilet facilities look like at many of the recent lakes.



The trail goes by Lyman Lake and then Hart Lake, both with many campers.



Blueberries, or huckleberries, are at peak ripeness just beyond Hart Lake, and you can reach your hand out and grab several at a time while passing.



I walked until dark closer to Holden Village, a Lutheran Camp that southbounders tell me is a nice place to stop and have a meal, or perhaps more. Breakfast is from 7 to 9, and I would not like to be late.

Before today, approaching southbounders did not know much about fire diversions, having missed them. Now they offer advice. One that impressed me warned me that the next part of the Bannock Lake Fire detour, 11 Mile Creek Trail and Company Creek Trail, is 17 very hard miles, and that the final descent to Stehekin is treacherous, and that he would not hike it in the direction I am going. He suggests an alternative, that I will explore more at Holden.

Holden Village and Stehekin

PCT 2018 Day 106, August 6, Monday

Start mile 9 of 11 of Hart Lyman Trail, then skip to milepoint 2569.4, Highpoint ranger station

End Bridge Creek Camp, mile 2574.3

Miles walked: 6.9

On the way in to Holden I meet Avocado, camped with several hikers just out of town. He is not stopping at all in Holden, but going through to finish the fire detour trail into Stehekin.

A covered bridge leads to a small hydroelectric installation.



Holden Village is a Lutheran family camp with lodges, yurts, and... no cars.



They have been really kind to the PCT hikers that unexpectedly showed up due to trail closure. Hollywood, another northbounder, explained to me the amenities, like free showers, free laundry, low price meals in the cafeteria, free cereal anytime, a computer with internet in the library.

After continental breakfast, we check the internet and find that the PCT is still closed to the north of us at Rainey Pass due to the Cutthroat Fire. Both Hollywood and I decide to skip the 17 mile final part of the fire re-route into Stehekin, and take the ferry on Lake Chelan there instead. Several southbounders have said the trail is difficult, overgrown, and somewhat dangerous. Holden offers a shuttle to Lucerne to catch the ferry in late morning, for a modest charge. The ferry, Lady of the Lake II, allows purchase of tickets on board, at reasonable rates.



Some campsites can only be reached by ferry or other watercraft. I miss Lake George...



The ferry stops at Stehekin Landing. Shuttle buses can take us further up the road places we might want to visit, for a substantial ticket price.



Hollywood and I stop by the park service station at the Landing, and learn the happy news that the trail is now open! I get a camping permit to a camp location a few miles past High Point, while Hollywood decides to stay the night in Stehekin. I walk to the post office and get my last supply box! After organizing my food bag I go back to the general store to buy wifi, only to learn that they were out of vouchers, whatever that means. I take a free shuttle to the famous bakery, to spend a couple of hours recharging and grazing, until the final shuttle.



Avocado is at the bakers, and describes the hike I skipped. He decides to spend the night here and get his supply box in the morning.

When the Red Bus comes to tack me to High Bridge Ranger Station to resume the PCT, Hollywood is there, having changed his mind, along with Clutch. The young ranger chats with us for a while, eager to improve his knowledge of local trails. I hike to the campsite assigned on my permit, joined by Clutch at dark.

Finished audiobook [Your Days Are Numbered](#), by Myke Bartlett.

Rainy Pass

PCT 2018 Day 107, August 7, Tuesday

Start Bridge Creek Camp, mile 2574.3

End campsite at Methow River, 2604.1

Miles walked: 29.8

On the trail up to Rainy Pass I ate many blueberries, but I was not the only one.



I meet a lively group of people my age out for a section hike northbound, a group that has been together for many years.



We chat for several minutes. The hike up to Rainy Pass, 2,1k to 4.9k, was covered with trees, blocking views. At Highway 20 the mountains come into view.

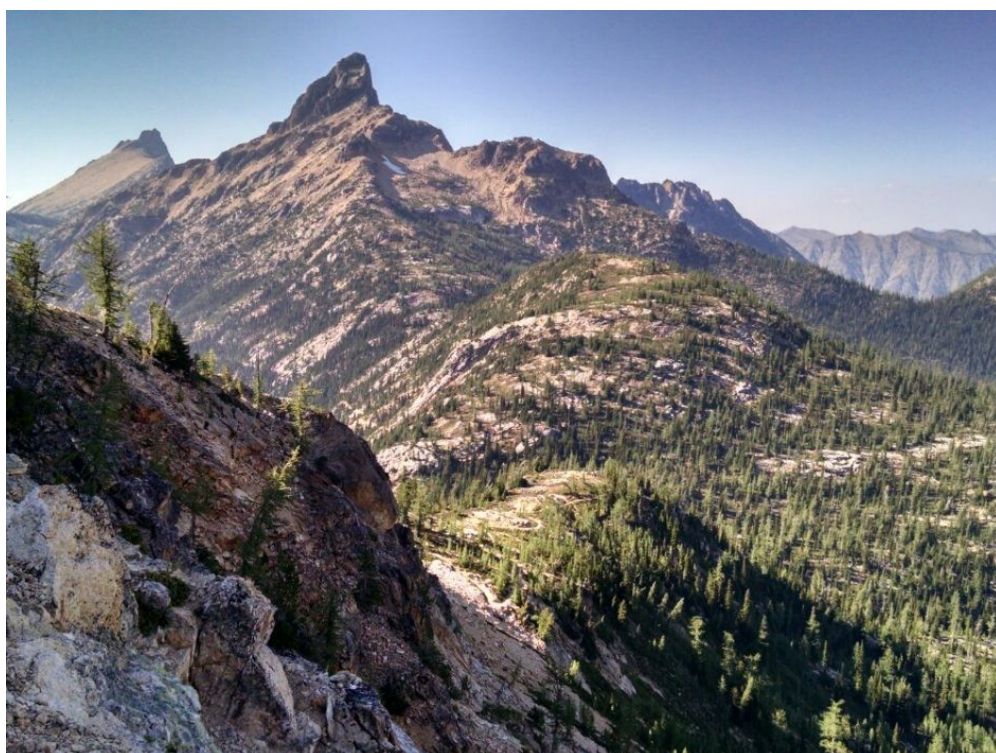
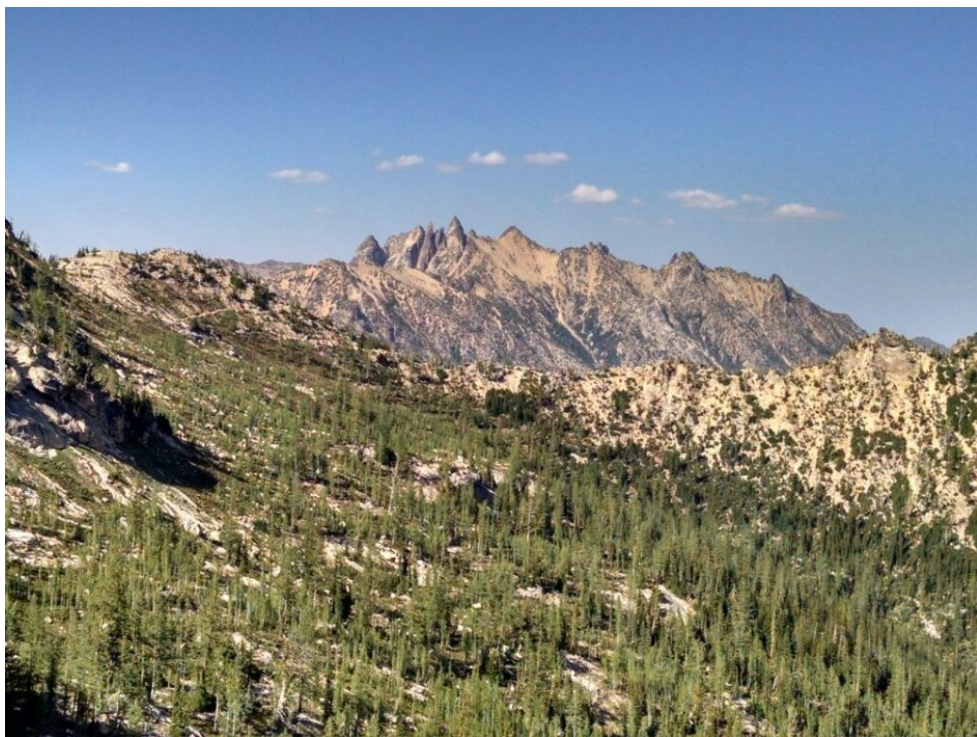


Up near Cutthroat Pass, 6.8k, unusually smoke cloud formation from an active forest fire dominates the view.



I am told this is not from the Cutthroat Fire, but a different fire that does not threaten the trail, and that fires change smoke appearance during the day in this area.

The trail stays on the side of exposed ridge for several miles, past Granite Pass, 6.8k, and the views are inspiring.







The trail descends to 4.4k. Just before dark I arrive at a campsite near a river, and Hollywood is already camped there.

Harts Pass

PCT 2018 Day 108, August 8, Wednesday

Start campsite at Methow River, 2604.1

End campsite near Rock Pass, mile 2635.4

Miles walked: 31.3

From 4.5k, the trail climbs up to Granite Pass, and then up to 7k. The trail stays up on high steep ridges for much of the day.



Haze blocks some views.



Harts Pass is a popular trailhead for section hikers.



Some thru-hikers, after finishing at the border, backtrack to Harts Pass instead of going in to Canada, and get rides from day hikers.



Two dogs enjoy a trickle of water after a long hike on a high ridge with no water.



Near Rock Pass and campsite



The campsite has at least eight tents, and Hollywood arrives shortly after me.

Also today I met Hot Pants and Belay.

Finished audiobook [Lady Susan](#), by Jane Austen.

Finished audiobook [Preferred Risk](#), by Frederik Pohl.

Manning Park

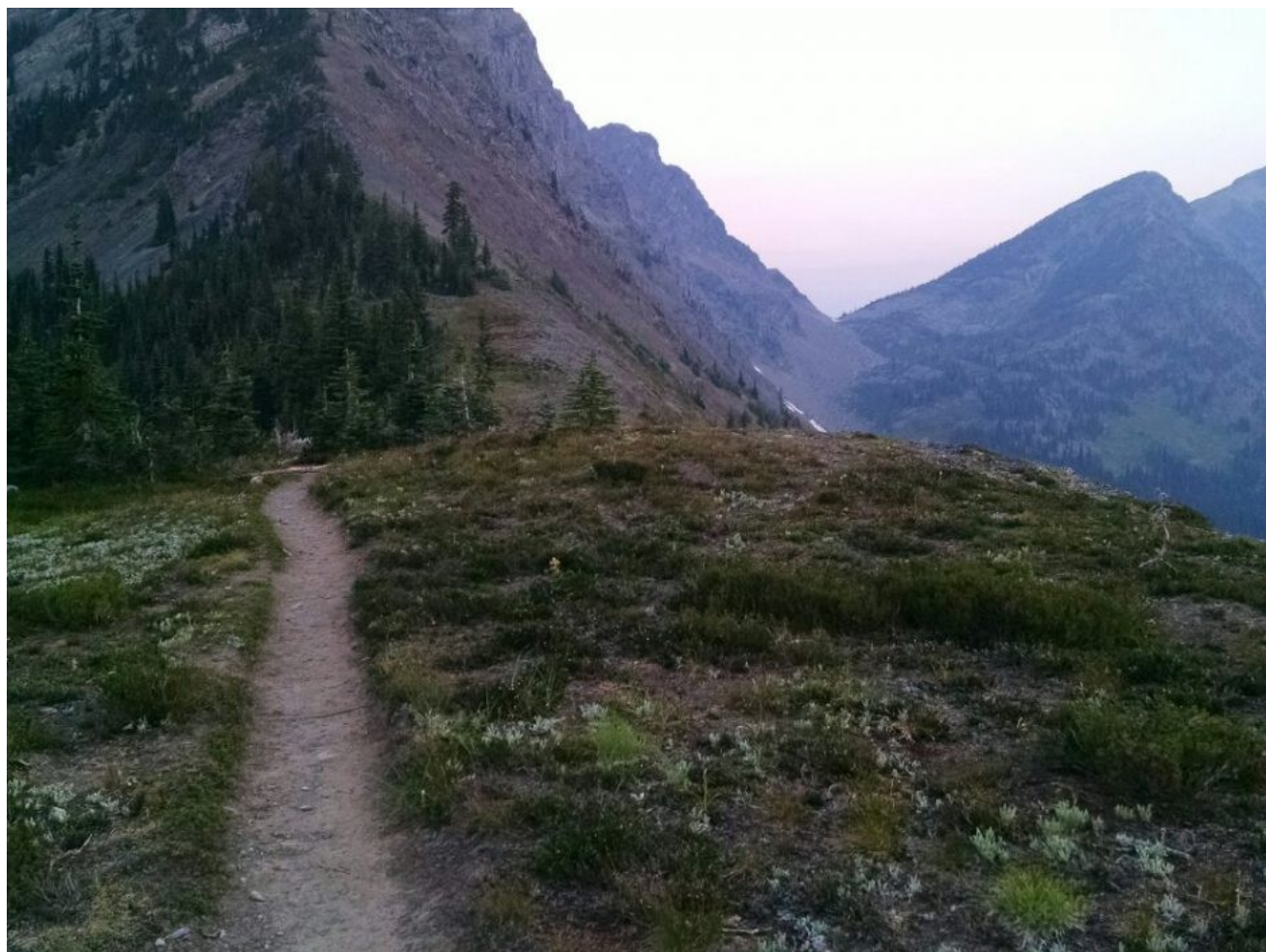
PCT 2018 Day 109, August 9, Thursday

Start campsite near Rock Pass, mile 2635.4

End Manning Park resort, mile 2658.9

Miles walked: 23.5

The trail goes to Rocky Pass, but with more switchbacks than appears here.



Haze obscures some views.



We have not shown a lake in a blog post for a while, so here you go.



Bible, the young guy and not the older gentleman already mentioned in this blog, was returning from the monument. He refers to the older Bible as the Old Testament.

Later I meet Goofy, who is flipping. I meet Brazil Nut. When I gave her my trail name, she remembered where in Montana we met before, what color shirt I was wearing, the fact that I was recording trail names of all southbounders, and that I told her about a water source. What a memory!



She reached the border, with a very fast hike, 66 days, not quite the women's record, and has now completed a triple crown. She is hiking back to Harts Pass to find a ride, instead of continuing on to Canada this year.

I reach the monument at the border with Canada around noon.



Finally...



Strider and NotYetNamed also show up, also headed for Manning Park.



I meet several trail runners, at Manning Park for a (now canceled) event, and ask them many questions about running gear.



At Manning Park Lodge I am able to get a hostel room at a good rate.



I meet the runners there, and we even have dinner together.



They will not let me pay. These are good people, excited as I am about finishing the PCT, and make me feel welcome at their table.



A family I met on the trail, who just hiked Washington together, offers to take me to the Greyhound station tomorrow.

I do not see the other hikers like Hollywood today, and need to ask their advice about transportation.