

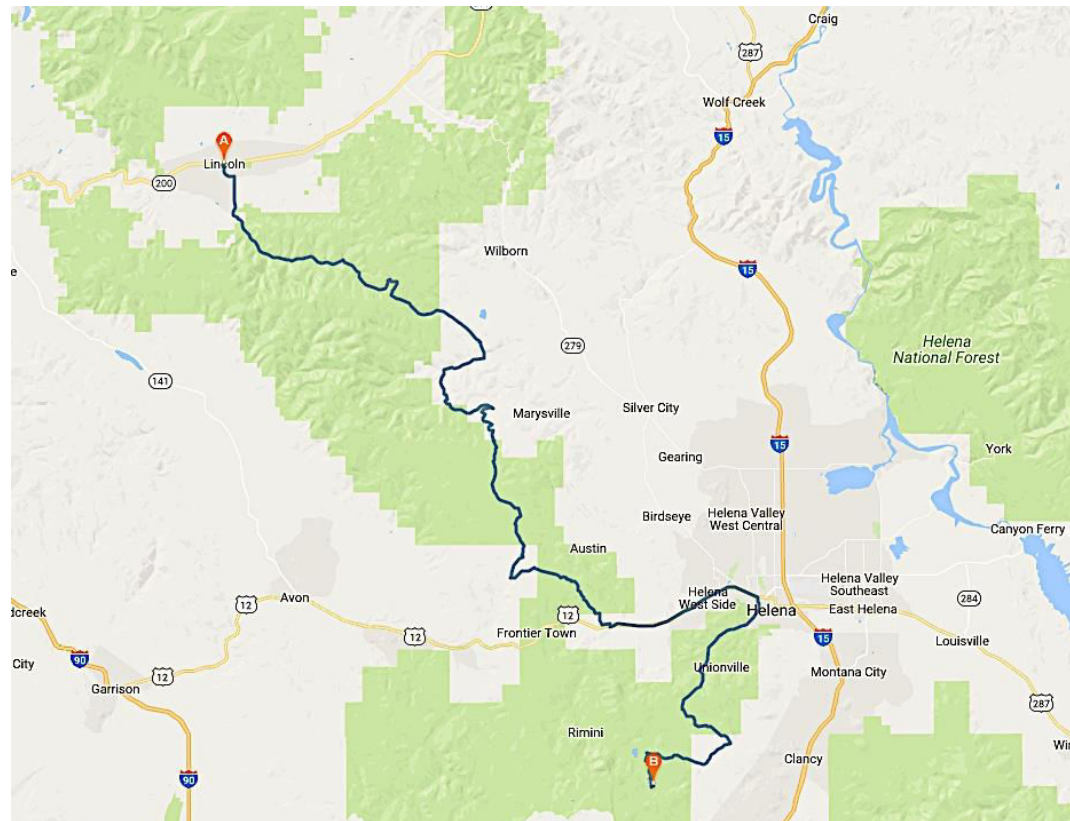
**Day 8      16<sup>th</sup> June 2017**  
**Lincoln to Park Lake campsite**

**132.6k / 82.4miles**

**3241m / 10633ft (2677m / 8782ft descent)**  
**49.9%↑ 40.8%↓ 9.3%→      23.3% max**

*The best things in life are unexpected*

Eli Khamarov



The night in the motel shower and dry kit improved general wellbeing and morale tremendously. This was good because today's route included 3 Continental divide passes and proved hard. Although I suppose any day with over 10,000' climb will, by definition, naturally be tough.

I awoke to find that I had developed an unusual bike related physical problem: My gas tank bag had developed a tendency to flop to either side of the top tube. So whenever I was standing in the pedals, my inner thighs, just above the knee, had been rubbing against it with each pedal stroke. This was not initially painful but the gradual accumulation of 1,000s of pedal strokes had rubbed off the superficial layers of skin and I discovered two substantial raw areas.

In an attempt to keep my lower inner thighs apart I was now adopting a curious gait, a bit like a bow legged cowboy – Howdy Partner!!

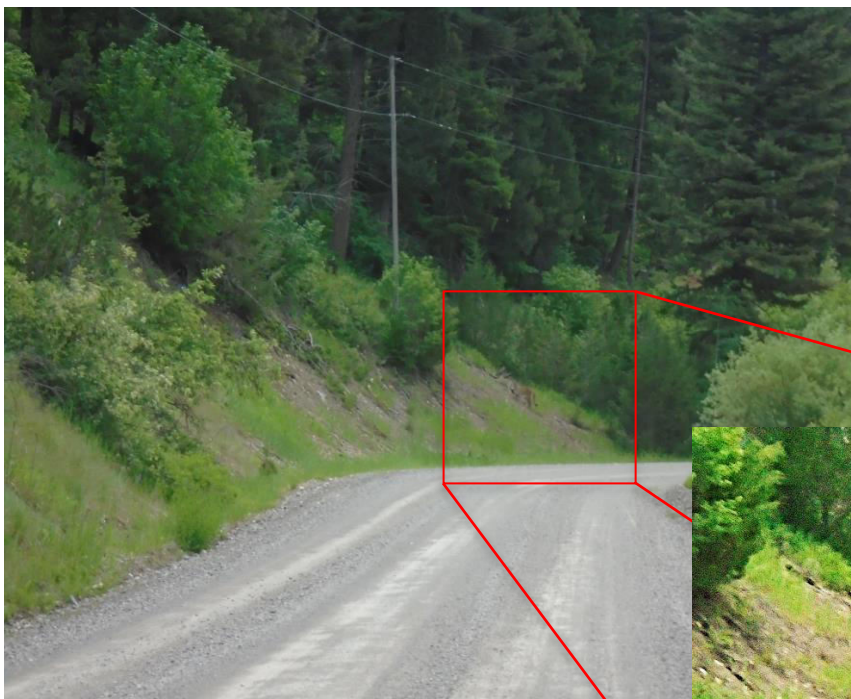
Weight loss was beginning now in earnest and this also helped minimise the two areas touching. I also fixed the bag more securely.

I left Lincoln in light drizzle. There were intermittent showers throughout the morning, just light enough not to require full rain togs but heavy enough to ensure your normal clothes got wet and demanded you work hard to keep warm/dry. Fortunately, with the initial climb of over 2,000' in the first 25k, this was easily achieved.

The undoubted highlight of today was my sighting of a mountain lion. With a male density of one per 100 square miles and a female density of one per 50 square miles lion sightings are much less frequent than bear sightings and I consider myself very lucky in this regard. I took the fact that the encounter occurred at almost exactly the 1,000k mark as a good omen.....

I was just rounding a bend on my climb when about 100m away, climbing up a bank on the side of the trail, I saw the said lion. It stopped looked at me for quite some time, long enough for me to realise just what it was, stop, reach down and manoeuvre my camera out of its protective handlebar container, switch it on and snap 2 albeit rather blurry pictures.

I realise that this is not going to win the National Geographic animal portrait of the year prize... Indeed you might well legitimately ask; where is it?



To help identify it I have both sharpened the image and blown it up so you might actually be able to convince yourself that it was indeed a mountain lion!



Overall the encounter lasted some 45secs before it turned back and disappeared uphill into the bushes.



Given that mountain lions hunt by pouncing from above and behind their prey and thereby breaking their neck, I thought it best if I waited a couple of minutes before I passed the spot as I didn't want to give him the opportunity!!

*Progressing towards Helena under gloomy skies*



Before the second Continental Divide today I came across the abandoned Empire mine which suffered a terminal fire in 1993.

I later heard that Marty, who had eaten lunch at the same time as me in Ovando at the Stray Bullet, left his backpack here.

Fortunately it was picked up by a TD rider and carried towards Helena and he was reacquainted with it later in the day!!

TD riders seems have a predilection for leaving their backpacks.

First Glen then Marty!!





### *Top of Priest Pass*

The ride from Priests Pass was a blast. On the way down I hit at least 60.4k. On a fully loaded bike this is really rather fast and indeed is my personal speed record for any bike (road or mountain). I realise in the scheme of things it's not THAT fast but I have a wife, a mortgage and 4 kids to support. Well at least I did in the past; nowadays I suppose I only have a wife to support as the mortgage and the children have gone – such is the lot of us retirees.

Anyway I was going so fast that my brakes were unable to stop in

time and I overran the right turn leading to Helena.

I stopped in Helena for food and water

I had discovered that the ubiquitous fizzy drink dispensers in fast food joints also deliver water and ice. This proved invaluable when it came to filling my platypus water bladder, as the wide filling port easily accepts the ice and provided cool water long after I had left 'civilisation'.



I met up again with Glen and 'Chamois Buttr' Bob at the fast food 'restaurant'. Glen and I started off together, out of Helena, up Grizzly Gulch Drive. We passed the above 'Good Luck Mexico or Bust' sign – I was disappointed to note that the crush barriers and expected crowds were not in evidence.

I had decided to carry on because tomorrow would otherwise involve some 12,000' of climb. I estimated I was some ½ to ¾ day behind the nominal 30 day schedule I wanted to achieve but I was feeling relatively good, much better than I had a few days earlier and confidence in the belief that if I continued in this vein I might just be OK, was starting to build in earnest.



I must own to the fact that I felt decidedly less confident when I finally left the TD route and made my way to Park Lake Campground. The 4,000' in the last 20 miles had taken their toll!

Glen finally caught up with me and we wandered round the fully occupied site, looking for somewhere to camp. We eventually ended up camping on lot used by a couple and their child. They had an RV and did not need to use the designated additional camp space. This resulted in us having a free overnight pitch.



*Park Lake*

*(picture from Facebook as mine did not come out very well)*

It was surprisingly cold overnight. I was tired but pleased with recent progress.

The raw areas on my thighs played up overnight because, when you sleep in a sleeping bag, your legs are forced into close proximity thereby placing the excoriated areas in contact ..... Oh joy!!

I just hoped the exposed areas were not going to get infected.