

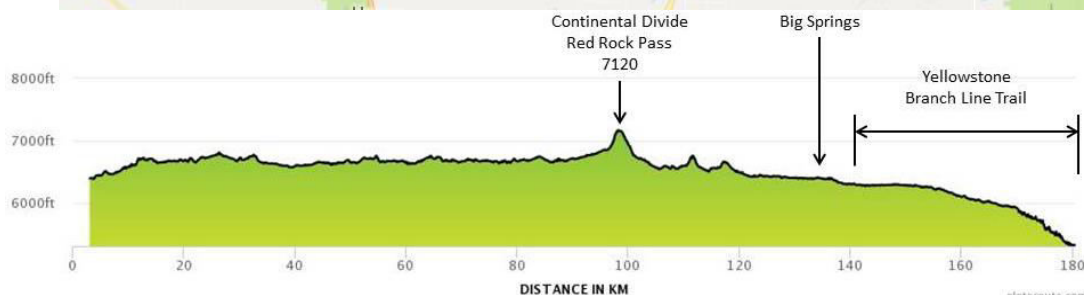
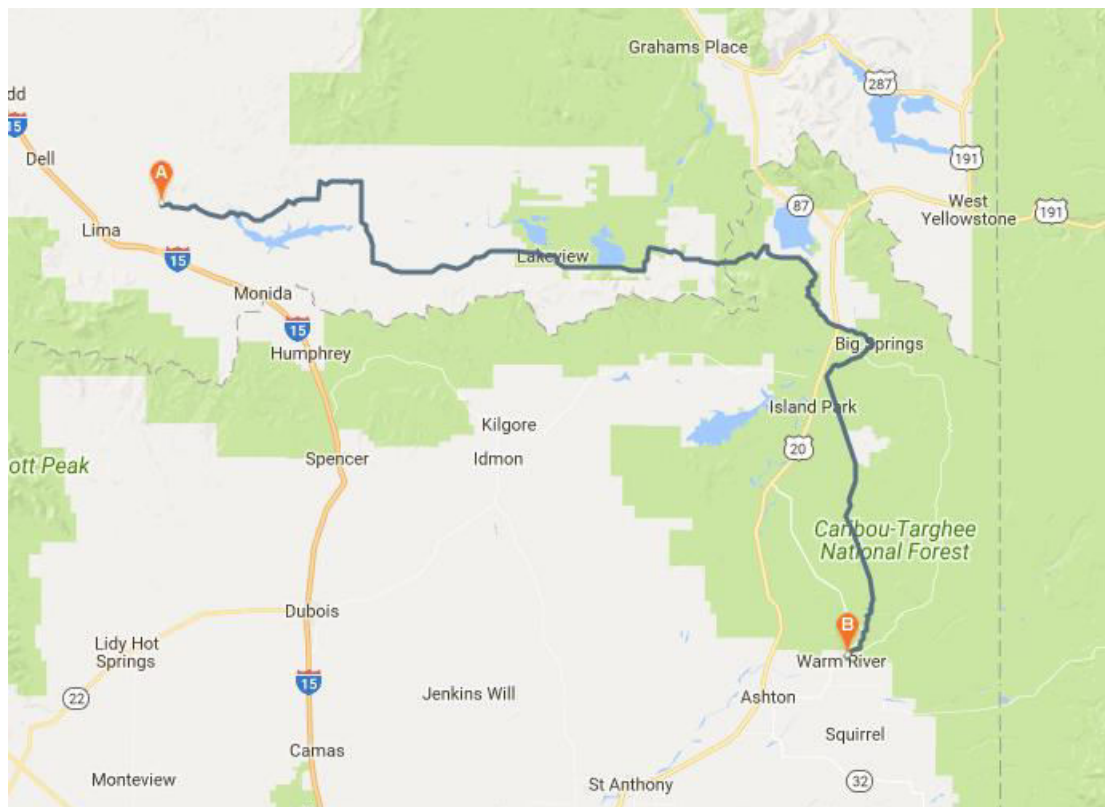
Day 12 **20th June 2017**
Past Lima to Warm River Campsite

180.5k / 112.2miles

1591m / 5219ft (1907m / 6256ft descent)
36.6%↑ 42.7%↓ 20.7%→ 13.3% max

"If everything seems under control, you're just not going fast enough."

Mario Andretti



The entries in my rough note diary are relatively sparse for today. It is surprising how you live in the moment on long trips like this.

Lack of all the distractions of civilisation, emails, phone calls and work related problems etc. means one can become focussed simply on cycling, to the virtual exclusion of all other things. So much so I discovered I had to purposefully take time out to record, for 'prosperity', the day's events; telling myself that I would never remember it all without some prompts.

Fortunately I took regularly photos which helps with recollections too, at least it did until I lost the photos on my phone when I dropped it down the loo!!

As I said in yesterday's log I woke periodically overnight and enjoyed the celestial spectacle – (get my linguistic turn of phrase there!). I was very pleased indeed that I had elected to camp out without the fly sheet.



*View from my bivi taken first thing in the morning
(taken while I was putting my socks on)*

When I got up there was a not insignificant degree of dew on my bivi, nowhere near the drenching the tent has in the UK in October but enough to mean that I would need to air and dry the tent sometime later today.



The ride today would prove to be very variable, not hilly but that certainly didn't imply easy.

Lima reservoir

The weather was lovely; initially cold but it very soon warmed up and continue to get hotter.

Having reached the dam and pump house at the head of the Lima reservoir, I was passed at speed by a tall French chap who rapidly zoomed off into the distance never to be seen again.

I wondered, if he was so fast, how come he had been behind me for 11+ days all very odd.

Views looking east along Red Rock valley and the south across the valley, en route to Lakeview



During the morning I caught up with Ko (he of the self-made bamboo bike).



He seemed in a bad way, exacerbated by having run low on water.

We cycled the last 5 miles together to Lakeview where he hoped to get sustenance.

Lakeview, proved to be a motley collection of buildings and Ko peeled off to the National Wildlife Refuge HQ in search of water. I carried on and stopped with some other TD riders amongst some cabins which constituted Lakeview 'proper'.

Here we experienced the only toxic local residents of the whole trip. A group of blokes were congregated on a cabin decking. They denied any local water availability (it transpired from Ko that there was some only 100yds back at the HQ), accused one of our party of trespassing on Montana University land when he put his bike on the fence, and were generally obnoxious.

The Americans in the cycling group gave them what for and as an impartial observer it was really enjoyable watching it actually.

View of dramatic blue sky photo bombed by passing cyclist they get everywhere!



Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935 to protect waterfowl and migratory birds. It is located in the extreme SE of Montana, adjacent to Idaho. The refuge has one of the most naturally diverse areas in the region and boasts the largest wetland complex within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem as well as expansive tracts of grassland, sagebrush, steppe habitats and forested areas.

It is reputed to host large numbers of trumpeter swans but they must have 'swanned off' because, despite looking, I didn't see any.

However I did see multiple single (and the occasional herd) of deer/pronghorns. I must admit one deer looks just like another to me.

After Lakeview the miles trundled by, one notable event being my passing a wild bohemian looking Continental Divide Trail hiker walking in the opposite direction. It was hot cycling in the sun and sun cream was a must. The valley was not hilly but Red Rock Pass - the Continental Divide crossing point into Idaho - was easily visible many miles ahead to the East.

*Amalgamated photo with Red Rock Pass some 12km away
Centennial Mountain Range to the right (south)*



Immediately before the push up and over Red Rock Pass I stopped to air the tent, have a bite to eat and generally give myself a breather before the climb. I found myself ahead of the cyclists seen at Lakeview at this point.



*Montana / Idaho border - Red Rock Pass
Rich, JS, Philippe and Massimo (Ko behind the lens)*

They passed me while my kit was airing but I met up with them again at the top of the pass. I don't know why but, despite it only being 7,120', I found this Continental Divide crossing particularly strenuous and I was glad to have the excuse to stop and have my picture taken at the Montana/Idaho border.

After descending 27k from the pass I reached Highway 20 and was able to stock up at Robin's Roost grocery store. I felt time was pressing so didn't dally too long. I did notice that you could buy not only ice here but also solid CO₂ 'dry ice'. Presumably for keeping food frozen in the multiple huge camper trucks - I hesitate to call them vans as it seems too small a word to describe these monstrous edifices which roll along the highway.

I also grabbed a 12" Tuna Sub to go – these were to become my stock food at fast food joints. Subways and most fast food emporia invariably have a help yourself soft drink dispenser which provides cold water on tap, with ice if required, alongside the serried ranks of Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Mountain Dew, Irn Bru (no not Irn Bru I made that last one up).

Then commenced the cinder nightmare that is the Yellowstone Branch Line Trail.....

Conventionally the words *railway* and *trail* usually mean virtually flat, sometimes relatively monotonous, cycling often with pedestrians, dogs and families with small children wobbling on little bikes providing added interest as they act as moveable obstructions.

No so here; a combination of 4WD buggies and a deep sprinkling of cinder ballast has resulted in 51k of virtually unrideable, massively wash boarded soft deep black sand - think 3' high ridges every 10 – 12'. It is very easy to get your front wheel embedded in the stuff and find yourself rapidly departing the bike over the handlebars if you weren't careful. Fortunately I managed to avoid this pleasure.

I was forewarned about the 'peculiarities' of this part of the trip but not just how difficult it would prove to be. For added mental torture there is an easier 'off route/out of bounds' track very close by which parallels the route.

Empirically I found standing on the pedals, doing 6 or 7 strokes and then coasting was the optimum mode of propulsion. Going any faster and you risked embedding in the sand at speed and coming off spectacularly (see above); any slower and you lost the ability to stay upright. Repeating this routine became really rather soporific and in an odd way relaxing.

Naturally letting the tyre pressure right down helps, but this does increase rolling resistance. Basically there was nothing to do other than suck it up and just get on with it.

*Illustrative view of the 'tyre eating' cinder, from T Tower's article in CGOAB¹.
Shrewdly he bailed after 16k and used the 'sensible' parallel non cinder track.
I stayed on the route to purgatory!*



The trip was livened up by 4 other riders, who I now know were Mark, Rich, Massimo and Philippe (see Red Rock Pass photo earlier).

Having left the Robin's Roost food store earlier they were initially ahead of me but between them they all came a cropper at one time or another (some several times). Fortunately I stayed on the bike but did come to an abrupt halt several times. Consequently I regained *Terra Firma* at the end of this section first.

For our further entertainment and delight Idaho threw in a thunderstorm which threatened to turn the already horrendous cycling conditions into a virtually impassable morass.

Consequently there was significant added incentive to finish this section as soon as possible.

1. GDMBR N-S 2016

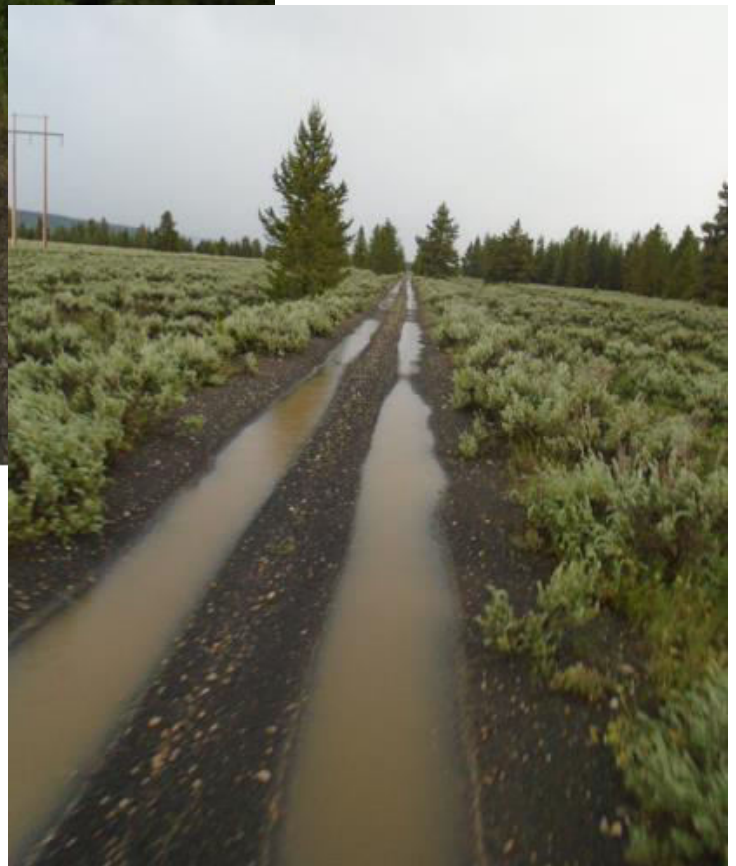
T Tower's journal in CrazyGuyonabike (CGOAB)

https://www.crazyguyonabike.com/doc/page/?o=1mr&page_id=476278&v=Pt



Disused Yellowstone Branch Line trail, before and after the thunderstorm.

These photos were taken during the less undulating sections, as both hands are required when cycling the harder sections!!



Despite the jet black clouds and seeing lots of lightning, while there was some rain it did not throw it down as threatened.

However it was dark enough to require my bike light. The storm passed, initially to the west before then crossing the route ahead as steady southerly progress was made.

Looking up from concentrating on the route (self-preservation restricted the frequency), on a couple of occasions, I was surprised to see several relatively large, badger sized, red hairy doormat like creatures scuttle off the trail. They had quite a turn of speed. I was not sure what these were.

When I mentioned them to the campsite host at the end of the day he said they were 'red bellied marmosets' I subsequently identified them as Marmots also known as groundhogs - Marmosets are a type of Old World monkey, close but no cigar!!



A Marmot / Groundhog¹ (*Marmota monax*) a rodent of the family Sciuridae.

Towards the end of the disused railway trail we came upon a tunnel dug in 1915. This was barricaded off secondary to a rock slide which occurred in 2008.

The route round to obstruction afforded a good view of the Warm River quite some way below.

The Warm River near southern end of the Branch Line trail

Four of us arrived at Warm River Campsite, virtually together. We mutually agreed that this was the end of the day's cycling. I was glad to finally have arrived.

It was immediately apparent that the storm, which had fortunately only brushed past us earlier in the afternoon, had wrought significant havoc on lots of the campground tents. Carnage was in evidence!!

We made our number with the Camp host and, as TD riders, he let us all camp down near the river nominally utilising one slot, for \$5.



1. The marmot, a large ground squirrel, widely distributed in lowland North America, is common in Northeastern and Central US/Canada, unlike the yellow-bellied and hoary marmots, which live in rocky/mountainous areas. The groundhog is also called a chuck, woodchuck, wood-shock, groundpig, whistler, whistlepig, weenusk, moonack, red monk, Canada marmot or thickwood badger; a term which differentiates it from the prairie badger. The Native American name, Monax, means digger. Young marmots are called chucklings. (I chucked that last bit in for interest).



Yours truly (rather cold), Butt Buttr Bob, Rich, Marty 'Road Runner' Johnston, Phillepe, Mark and (part of) the Camp Host. (My tent is on the left) Massimo and Ko and possibly A N Other not in the shot

Despite the relative heat during the day I was getting cold as I put up my tent, even though I was wearing a jumper, my Rab insulated jacket and my balaclava. Very similar to how I used to feel when we camped in the evening at the end of day 1 of those 2 day mountain marathons.

The camp host visited us, sold us a bunch of firewood which I started going and he then went and caught 5 fresh trout which he grilled for us. Our numbers had by then swelled to some 7 or 8, as shown by the photo taken in the fading light around the camp fire.



Part of the freshly cooked fish supper

I was in my tent fast asleep when at some god-forsaken hour the owners of the damaged tents arrived back in camp and proceeded to thoughtlessly wake the whole campsite with their exclamations of displeasure, shouting and general rowdiness.

What a contrast to the previous night's campsite!!