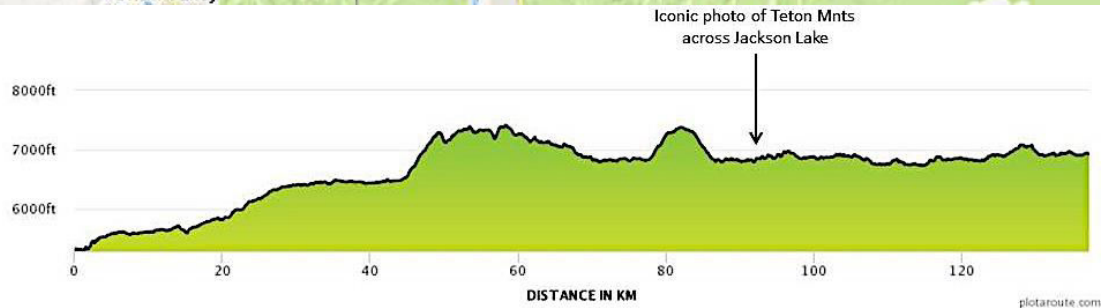
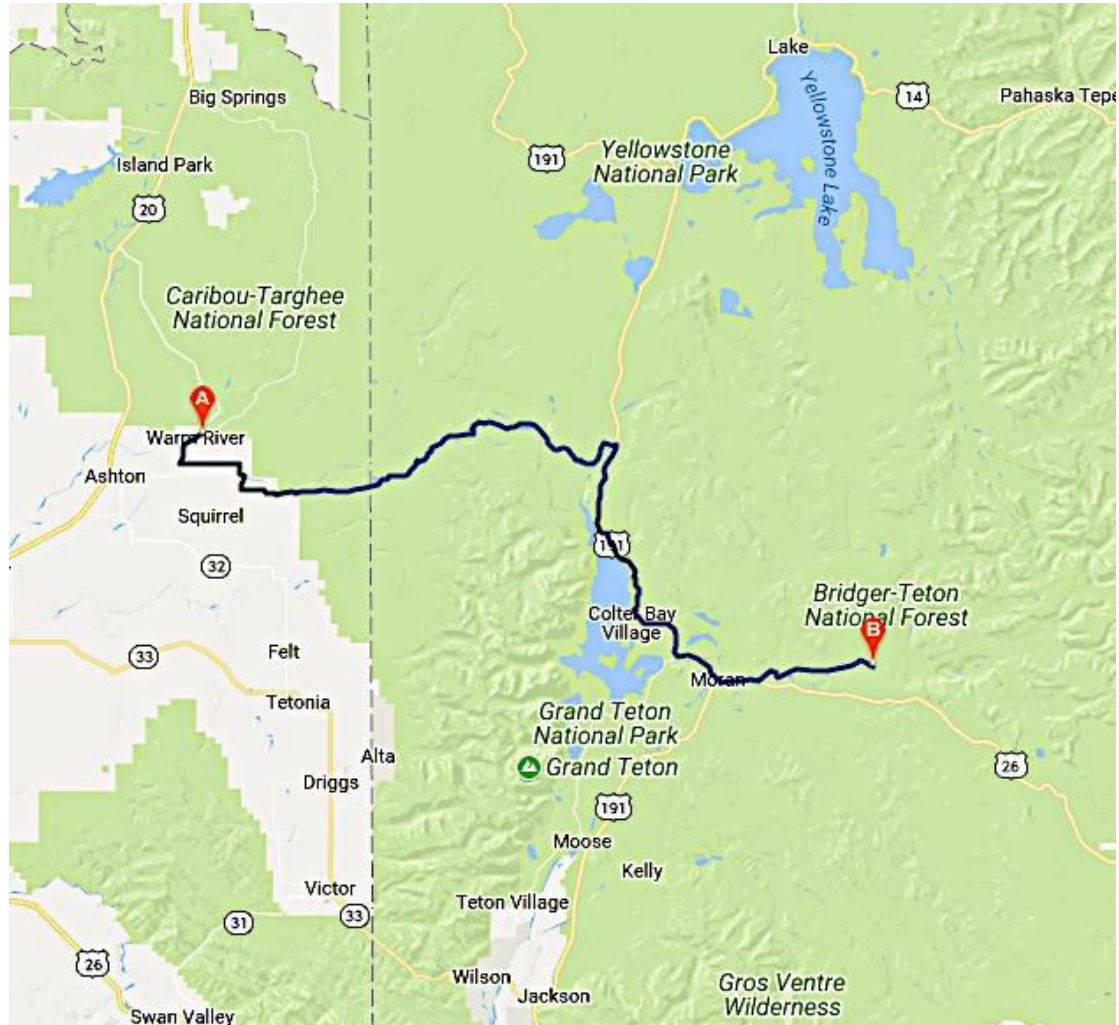


Day 13 21st June 2017
Warm River Campsite to Turpin Meadow Campground

137.1k / 85.2miles

2006m / 6581ft (1510m / 4954ft descent)
46.6%↑ 47.3%↓ 16.1%→ 20% max

Vengeance is mine, I will repay Romans 12:19–21



I was first of the TD riders up today.

Once my fellow riders were awake and sorting themselves out I discovered that oddly, despite my best efforts, my packing up was 'inexplicably' significantly less quiet than usual. Really don't know why.....

I fear that unfortunately this may well have had the highly regrettable side effect of rousing other campers, quite possibly those very same people who had come into camp late the previous evening and who had inconsiderately woken we fellow campers who happened to be already asleep – oops so sorry about that.

Inexplicably I also found I was extremely clumsy this morning frequently 'tripping' over several guy ropes. I did make sure I apologised profusely to the tent occupants – I do hope they heard me. I wouldn't want them to think I was rude!!

Puerile; I fully accept but it did mean I left the campsite in remarkably good humour. A good kicking is best delivered without the use of a boot.

As I had run out of significant food supplies overnight, the main priority this morning was finding somewhere to eat breakfast.

There was a significant steady climb out of the Warm River valley which helped keep me relatively warm as it was the surprisingly cold first thing.

As I cycled along the Cave Falls Road the climb spat me out onto open farmland. I stopped at the Squirrel Creek Guest Lodge, and, after finding a chap out the back of the establishment, was treated to the standard 'frambled' egg breakfast which I ate as the rest of the motley TD crew rolled up over the next 40 minutes.



*Squirrel Creek Lodge's
bike friendly sign*

Leaving the lodge and progressing east up Squirrel Creek, I passed into my 3rd US state; Wyoming. This was not marked, unlike the Montana Idaho border yesterday

I was to discover that today was to bring the best scenery so far on the trip. As I moved through the Caribou Targhee National Forest, Grand Teton

National Park, skirted the northern extremities of the Jedediah Smith Wilderness and passed just south of the Yellowstone National Park, I was afforded beautiful views in all directions.



My route today would take me round the northern limit of the Tetons mountain range and down their iconic western side. However before I got here I would have to traverse some 80k of off road trails to Flagg Ranch.



*The dramatic Teton Range,
from the north west*

Once again I was blessed with fine weather and it soon warmed up as the sun rapidly dried the dew.

The route passed several lily covered lakes which apparently are home to loons (birds), unlike the trail this is home to loonies otherwise known as cyclists.

Saw no loons but talking of cyclists I came across two NoBos and we stopped chatted and took our mutual photos



They do come up with some interesting names over here; I was currently cycling through the Winegar Hole Wilderness.

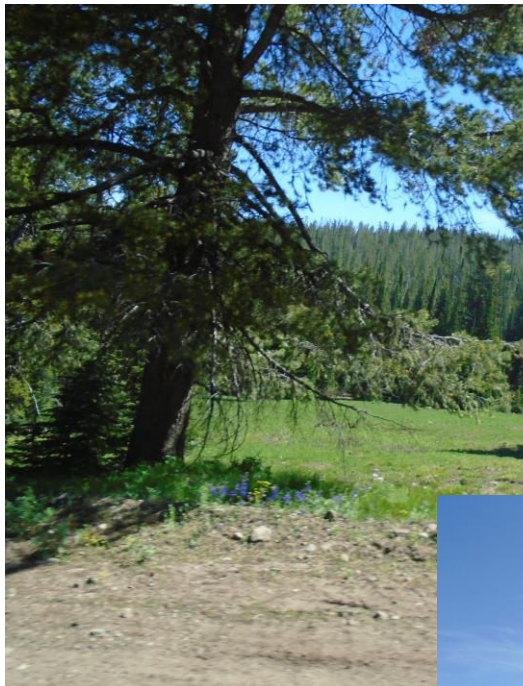


I climbed steadily, on a relatively rough track with occasional remnants of snow, which would rapidly melt over the next few days in the temperature.



*Indian Lake
loon negative*

Passing from the Targhee National Forest into the J D Rockefeller Jr Memorial Parkway (another couple of catchy names there), burnt trees bore witness to a relatively recent fire having devastated the area.



The following photos were taken en route to Flagg Ranch.



Grassy Lake Reservoir



On the final approach to Flagg Ranch the trail gave way to tarmac.

I was looking forward to stopping for some sustenance. However, just about 800m from the Ranch, off to my left through the trees in a swampy part of the woods, I noted movement.

I stopped and saw that it was a large female moose (no antlers).

Closer inspection showed a nearby calf in attendance. It was quite surprising just how well these large animals blend in so well with their environment.



Forest fire damage

Fire damaged woodland



When they saw me stopped and staring intently at something off the road, several other road users stopped to see what was going on.

The moose looked up at me/us, then carried on muching away. The very young calf wobbled up to mum before they both wandered off further into the wood.¹



1. Since the 1990s, moose populations have declined dramatically over large parts of temperate North America. The exact cause has not been determined, but most documented mortality events are due to wolf predation, bacterial infection secondary to predator injuries, liver flukes, brain worms and winter tick parasitic infestations from whitetail deer to which moose have not developed a natural defence. In addition recent milder winters have provided favourable conditions for ticks, parasites and other invasive species to flourish within the southern range of moose habitat.



Immediately before reaching Flagg Ranch, Bobby (who had caught up with me as I was looking at the moose) and I were involved in a slightly farcical episode.

We could see the Ranch the other side of a copse - it could easily be reached by keeping on the road; however the GPS inexplicably suggested we should follow a none existent route down a steep bank and through the intervening trees.

Because of our abject fear of being deemed to have deviated from the prescribed route, both Bobby and I chose the 'GPS option'. Consequently we finally arrived at the Ranch somewhat battered, scratched and muddy. This episode nicely encapsulated the essence of whole trip - completely bonkers but satisfying at the same time.



Bobby et al enjoying an ice cream in the shade at Flagg Ranch

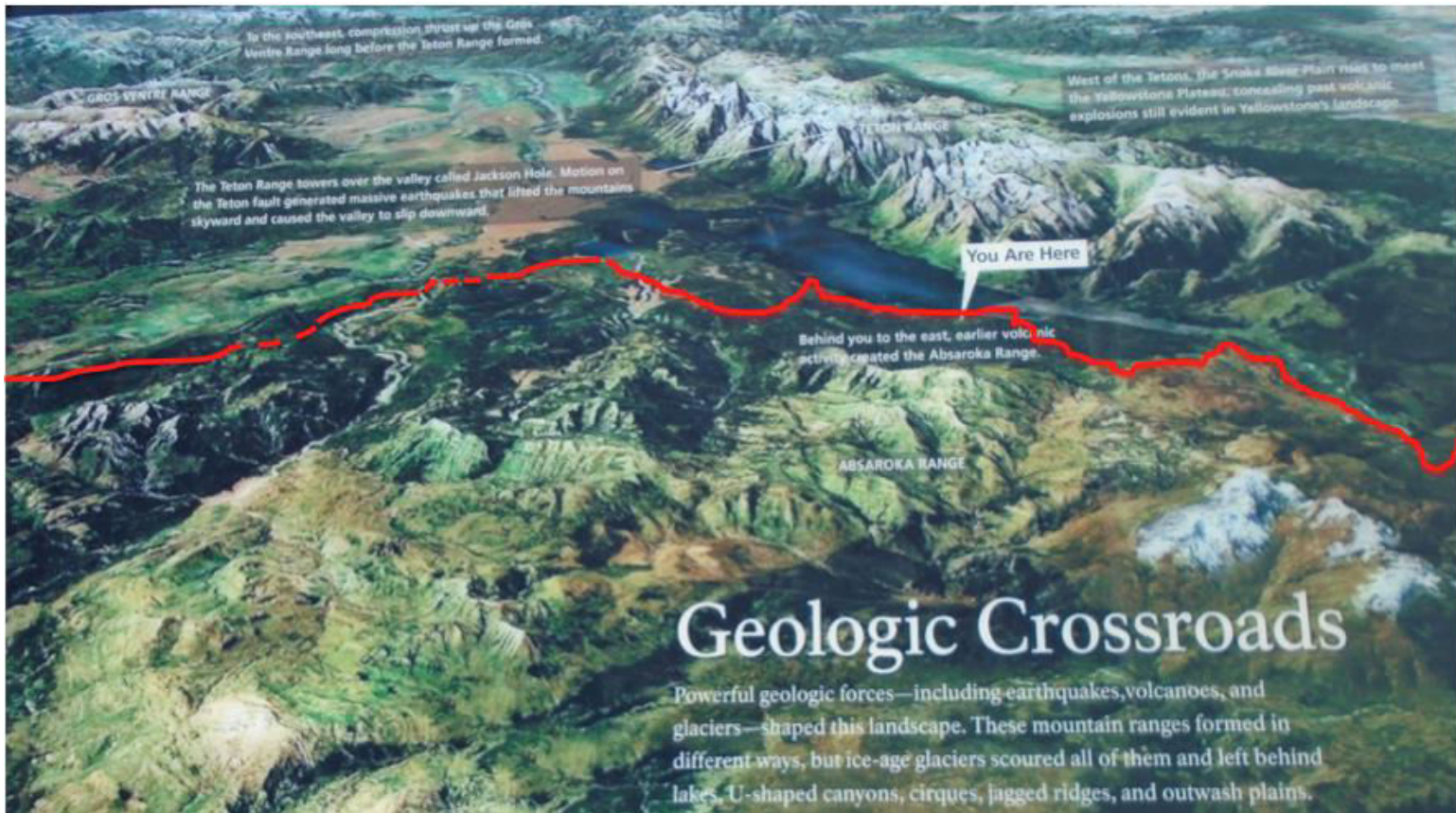
Located as it is on Highway 89, so close to the Yellowstone National Park, Flagg 'Ranch' proved to be popular with an amalgam of passing car/SUV drivers, truckers, motorbike riders and multiple cyclists, some of whom were TD participants. It had a distinct motorway service station feel to it, with motorway service station prices to match. Consequently I did not linger too long.

The next 80k+ would be on tarmac, which initially was pleasant but the novelty soon wore off. However the scenery more than made up for this. I had turned south down Highway 9 and was approaching the Tetons from the north east.



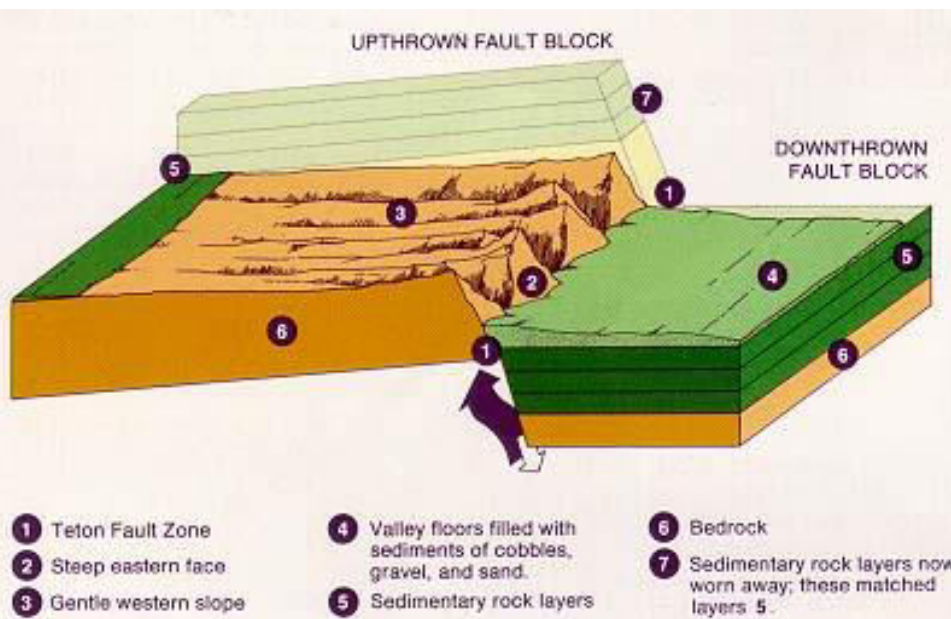
Looking south, down the Teton Range





Roadside storyboard of the area, showing the Tetons and Jackson Lake, viewed from the east by nor'east, with my route superimposed (running from right to left)

The Tetons range between 13,775' and 11,303' (4,199 & 3,445m) in height. The western side of the Range lacks significant foothills and the dramatic elevation profile of the eastern side, where it rises sharply 5,000' to 7,000' (1,500–2,100m) from the valley floor, is unobscured from this aspect. The escarpment has been caused by the 40 mile long Teton Fault at the base of the eastern slope. Only 9 million years old, the range is too young to have eroded into soft hills.



The Snake River flows southward through the valley before turning to the west and entering Idaho.

Unsurprisingly the area was very popular and the frequent laybys were well used by passing cars.

I stopped by the side of Jackson Lake and took the the obligatory photo of the bike, with the Tetons in the background.



Just then Ko cycled up. He suggested we take one of each other cycling with the Tetons as the backdrop. After juggling with passing traffic this is my photo.



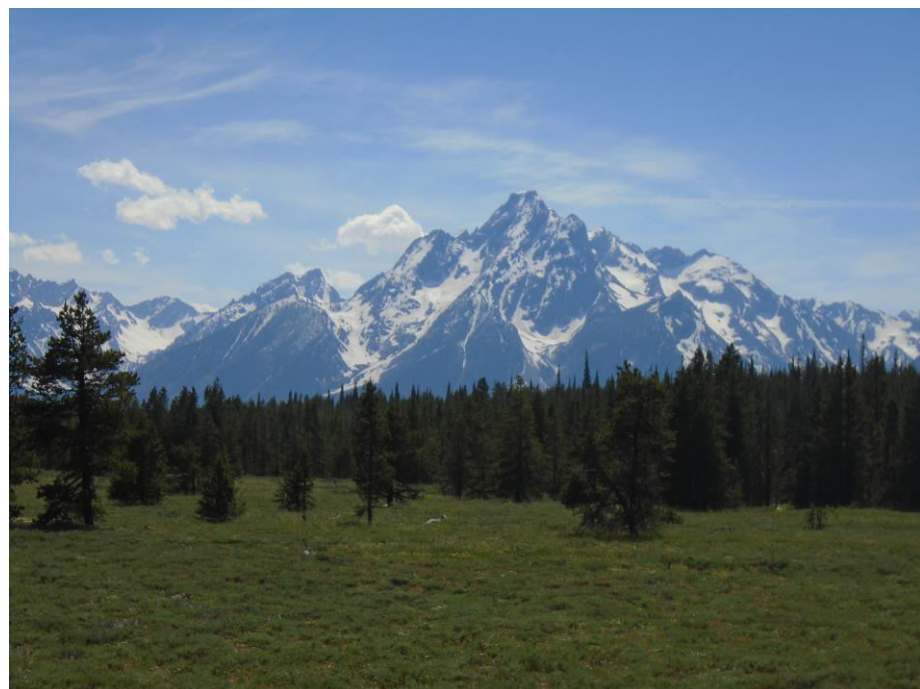
I Watts Apped the photo and think it is probably one of the most evocative pictures of the trip. I secretly wondered if my photo at Antelope Wells would be as impressive!!

After the photo session I elected to push on, skirting the lower border of the Yellowstone National Park, rather than detour to Coulter Bay Village, which I surmised would be positively heaving with RV based tourists.



Final views of the Tetons, as I turned towards Moran

It was bright and warm in the sunshine when, at Moran, I turned east, off the main road and followed the Buffalo Fork of the Snake River.



Snake River

I was now faced with a bit of a dilemma - ideally I wanted to camp at Books Lake, some 60k further on but this meant I would have to cross the Togwotee Pass (9,658').



However, despite the road surface being good, I was starting to feel today's distance. More importantly however was the fact that I distinctly recollected, from my preparatory reading, mention of local campsites frequently being closed to soft sided vehicles and tents because of bear activity in the area. I was reinforced in this concern by coming across the electronic road sign which was flashing *"Be Alert Bears W/cubs crossing for the next 6 miles"*.

I thought that that certainly beats the mundane signs back home warning of road works etc.

Be Alert Bears w/cubs sign

Mindful of these potential and actual bear problems I didn't want end up in bear territory, benighted on the forthcoming steep hill.

I caught up again with Bobby who tried multiple times (whenever we had signal) to get the Togwotee Lodge to answer his phone calls (all we got was prolonged hold music).



We wanted to ascertain if there was any legitimate camping up the hill, and if not, the cost of accommodation at the Lodge.

Because of our failure to get through, when we reached the Buffalo Fork bridge at the base of the hill we agreed to explore the feasibility of staying at the Red Turpin Lodge. The non-negotiable charge of \$191 a night, with no reduction for an early start (before breakfast), was duly declined.

Buffalo Fork of the Snake River. The Togwotee hills, which I would be climbing are in the distance on the right.

Bobby was seriously considering carrying on.

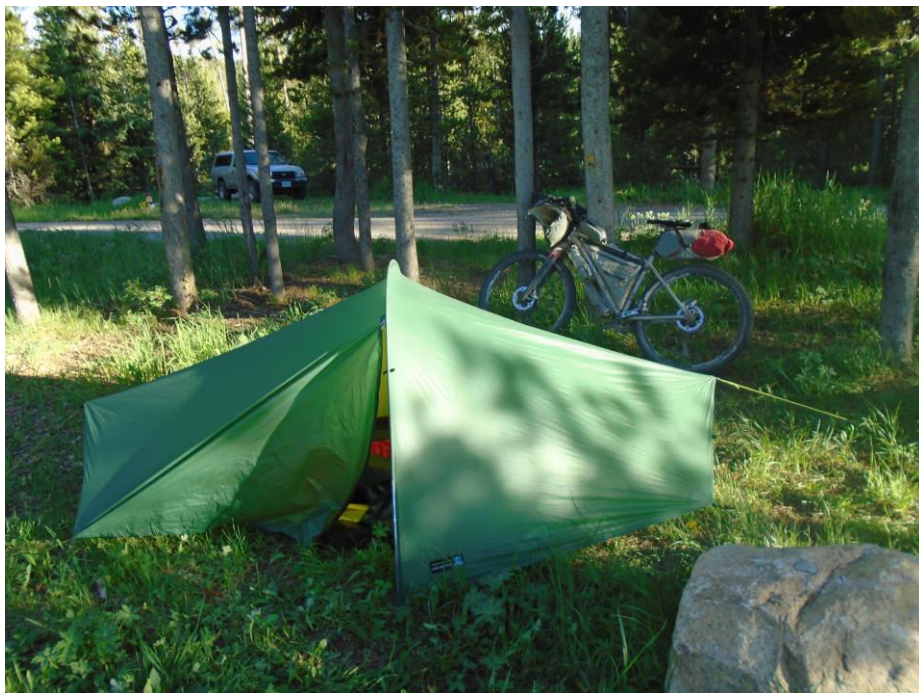
However I elected to cut my losses and instead headed off to the adjacent Turpin Meadow campground

which had the advantage of being both open and at the same time some \$181 a night cheaper.



It also had bear-proof food boxes; not that I had much food!!

I had a cold wash at a standpipe and took the opportunity to wash the cycling tops I was wearing – unfortunately the sun was starting to set and I had to wear the damp togs in an endeavour to dry them out.



While doing so I was serendipitously invited by a friendly couple to finish their pulled pork burger meal. They had noticed I was alone and were intrigued as to why I only had a bike and no car. I proceeded to earn my supper detailing my adventures to date and the rest of the route to be faced as I finished off two burgers and a beer – it's a tough life as a bikepacker!!

I was in my sleeping bag by 20.30 and attempted to catch up with my journal before the light finally went.

Bear proof food container

No bear activity overnight but I was woken by the peculiar sound of cow bells and the stamping of multiple feet.

It turned out to be a herd of horses all wearing bells round their necks - presumably to frighten the bears.



It was very reminiscent of the evocative cow bells I had heard on a still night in the Italian Alps, while running past a herd of cows grazing on the high pastures, when I was attempting the North Face Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc (UTMB) many years ago¹. Although in those days I was a lot younger and fitter, but probably no less foolish!

I was reminded of the fact that that adventure had ended in failure, in Courmayeur, secondary to a long standing ankle injury.

With that happy thought I drifted back off to sleep.

1. The UTMB follows the Tour du Mont Blanc route round the mountain, through France, Italy and Switzerland. It has a distance of approximately 166k (103 miles), and a total elevation gain of around 9,600m. It is widely regarded as one of the most difficult foot races in the world, and one of the largest with more than 2,000 starters.