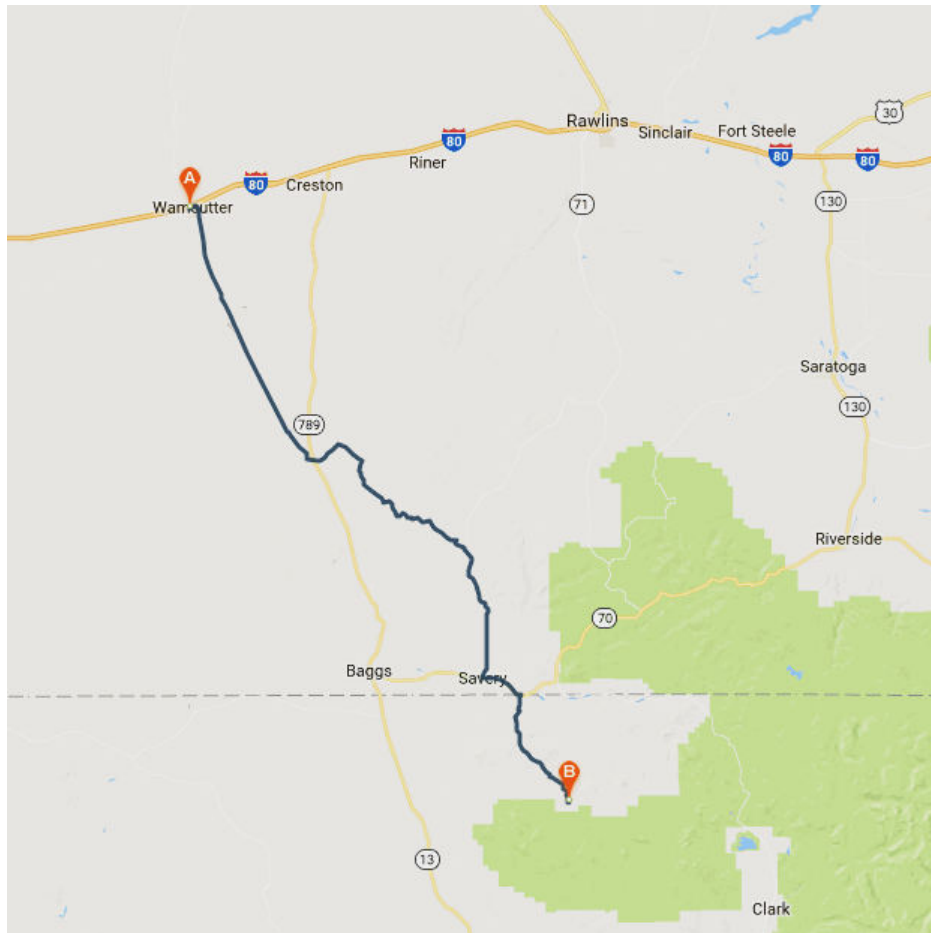


Day 17 25th June 2017
Warmutter to Brush Mountain Lodge

130.9k / 81.4miles

1591m / 5219ft (1312m / 4304ft descent)
43.3%↑ 35.7%↓ 21%→ 16.7% max

If it was easy they would call it football



I awoke to find that, contrary to my hopes, my tyre had gone down overnight.

This was not a good thing! The only possible course of action was to drain the sealant, while attempting to keep as much for possible future use, and insert an inner tube. Obviously 29" inner tubes are not designed to fit 27.5" tyres but needs must as I had no other option.

The others had all left with sentiments of 'Oh dear well good luck 'etc and I was on my own literally. Think what the 'Top gear Presenters' do when one of their party breaks down – they leave the unfortunate victim to their own resources. Same thing happened here.

I was not entirely sure exactly what I was going to do if plan b (the 29" option) turned out not to be successful. This provoked an identical feeling to that which I had experienced when I had to replace a broken spoke in the middle of Spain in early March, about 5 years ago. That

'if this does not work we really do have a MAJOR problem here'
feeling.

Incidentally, on reflection, I also felt the same when I was faced with the tachealis muscle 'unzipping' during a total pharyngolaryngectomy with stomach pull up, but perhaps you did want to know this last bit¹.

Adopting the by now well-worn THF I chose to ignore the possibility of failure and cracked on. It was here that my Pennine Bridleway experience of being unable to fit my 27.5" MTB tyre came in its own (see prologue). Had I not had the problem on my shakedown ride in Derbyshire I would not now have been able to promptly insert the oversized inner tube and start cautious inflation.

My initial fears proved unfounded as the jury rig solution² seemed to work OK, at least it appeared to do so in the short term. I set off with some trepidation through dispersed oil donkey pumping machines, taking care initially to find the most benign routes through the various pot holes.

It was here that I came across a large rattlesnake. Initially I thought it was a branch of a tree which was odd as there were no trees for miles. As I got closer I realised it was a snake. I suspected it was dead but this proved a misapprehension as it moved!! It did not rattle its tail and had I not known it I would have thought it quite benign. I stopped about 4' from the snake and took this photo keeping the bike between me and it.



Today's ride continued the 'Basin Bypass' and I was scheduled to rejoin the ACA map route in some 111k, at a post office which constitutes the community of Slater ie the post office is Slater. This must simplify mail delivery there!!

1. Just in case you were wondering...it worked out OK in the end; I used spare omentum from the stomach's greater curvature to plug the defect in the back of the trachea – simples!!
2. Jury rigging (noun & verb) describes makeshift repairs made using just the tools and materials at hand. Originally when undertaken on dismantled sailing ships. Origin either a corruption of *joury* mast—a (temporary) mast for the day; from the French *jour* (day) or from the Latin *adjutare* (to aid) via old French *ajurie* (help or relief).

South of Wamsutter the density of oil wells increased along with a corresponding increase in oil related traffic; from one vehicle every 40 mins to one every 20 (so busy then). The occasional driver stopped for a quick chat but I suppose time is money even out here.



I saw several scattered pronghorns between the oil wells.

South of Wamsutter heading for Colorado

In stark contrast with the previous day I had lots of water but my food supply was somewhat restricted.

After about 3 hours, despite taking it steady because of the inner tube issue, I caught up with Marty, Mark, Bob & Rich on the top of a hill as we progressed towards Colorado.



It made a pleasant change cycling in the bright sunshine with fellow cyclists and they were pleased to see that my running repairs had been successful – although not as pleased as I was though!

Mark, Bob and Rich getting over the shock of my having caught them up!!

The group set off like the clappers.

In the pictures below you can just see their dots on the trail.





I kept up with them by simultaneously forgetting about my temporary rear wheel bodge!!

We soon came upon the beginning of the descent towards Savery.

The gang set off



*Top of the descent before Savery, Elkhead Mountains in the far distance.
Naturally my route will be going into and over them next!*

Quite simply the descent was amazing. Round the corner, in the picture above, there are a couple a huge straight descents which generated significant speeds.

Unfortunately at the bottom of each drop we found was a section of deep dry sand. I hit the first one at speed and nearly went straight over the handlebars. I just managed to avoid this by steering dead straight, leaning back and virtually lifting the front wheel out of the sand. Fortunately something had made me ease off ever so slightly half way down.

Unfortunately it transpired that Mark wasn't so lucky and he went over – twice.

Naturally we were widely scattered on the way down and the three of us up front were blissfully unaware of Mark's mishaps.



I say this because, after weaving my way up the 'wall' in the picture, when I stopped at the top to regroup I was only joined by two others. In the far distance we eventually saw Rich and Mark walking down the trail.

I surmised that something had gone amiss and suggested going back to see if they were OK but it was pointed out that they were walking, so were up and about and that I would not be able to do anything there that could not be done at the top of this hill.

Such is the hard logic of the bikepacking fraternity.

When Rich and Mark eventually made it up the wall we learnt of Mark's two falls. He is a big lad - 6'8". His handlebars easily reach up to my mid chest so he had fallen quite some way and the second fall had been the worst.



*Looking north, back down the wall from whence we had just come.
Waiting for Mark and Rich to appear*

We limped into Savery (pop 25 elevation 6,463') and stopped at the small museum with a trail angel bar (food, soft drinks) for hikers and TD participants.

Mark, who was touring rather than doing the whole Divide, decided he was withdrawing due to his injuries. A rather portly 'paramedic' appeared and gave him the once over – not impressed with her history taking, examination and diagnosis but I kept out of it.

On the way out, as I was leaving, given his complaint of loin pain, I said to Mark that he should ignore her reassurance and if he developed haematuria he was to seek definitive medical advice. He said thanks.¹



A reduced group therefore left Savery and headed for Slater.

Just before the post office we crossed the border from Wyoming into Colorado.

This left only 2 states to traverse.

*Arriving at the
Wyoming / Colorado
border*

The climb from Slater, up to Brush Mountain Lodge was long, hot and steep.

Given my climbing ability I was soon on my own.

However I was tired and the 20k to the Lodge seemed to take an age to get there. It felt like it would never come.



1. As it turned out Mark did develop haematuria and was ultimately admitted for observation. He was diagnosed with a fractured ribs and a bruised kidney. More of Mark later in this journal.

Eventually, after a left hand bend, Brush Mountain Lodge appeared. Several people on the porch let out a cheer. A bell was rung loudly as I crossed the line, got off my bike kissed the ground and walked onto the hallowed turf!!

The reception was almost overwhelming. I had a beer thrust into my hand and I was immediately asked what type of pizza I would like from the large pizza oven on the decking.

In actual fact all I really wanted to do was sit down and gather my thoughts. The unexpected instantaneous transit from the long distance cyclist's cocoon, habituated as one is to long periods of isolation, introspection and effort in a generally hostile environment, into a gregarious, inquisitive and benign setting, with the imminent prospect of rest and food, was really quite surreal and took a little getting used to. On reflection it is perhaps not that surprising.

I ended up chilling out, absorbing the atmosphere, having a couple of beers and generally grazing on the steady production of pizza, which were coming out of the pizza oven. Supplied by the famous trail angel Kirsten Henricksen, who runs Brush Mountain Lodge.

I made my number with her and told her about how I had come to be here, and after reading about her on the Web, how much I had been looking forward to finally meeting her. She seemed a genuinely nice lady.

My meeting with Kirsten

It was nice being in an environment of like-minded individuals all of whom appreciated the effort expended getting here. A local ranch owner, sitting on the porch, was initially sceptical as to my sighting of a mountain lion until he showed him the image on my camera.

Slowly my fellow cyclist rolled into the compound. All TD cyclists were greeted with cheers and the bell ringing ceremony.

It was pleasing to see the universal happy, but somewhat nonplussed response, from the arrivees who, like me, were also pleasantly surprised at the reception.



Brush Mountain Lodge is situated almost exactly at the midway point of the TD. The actual point where the NoBo and SoBO riders meet each year said to be where the Golden Spoke lies. This is analogous with the Golden Spike used to mark the 1869 completion of the first transcontinental railway across the US.

While at the Lodge I learned of the distinct possibility of there being a fire reroute further south. In anticipation I was able to upload the GPS track onto my Etrex and get the spot where we might have to leave the ACA map route firmly in my brain.



Photo taken in the increasing gloom of the three flags at Brush Mountain Lodge Canadian (Start), USA and Mexican (Finish)

I took the opportunity to give the rest of the bike a quick once over. I was mightily pleased the tyre was holding up.

Kirsten announced she was doing a group clothing wash so I submitted my contribution and, after having sorted out a bed and electronic charging issues, crashed early.

Slept surprisingly fitfully.