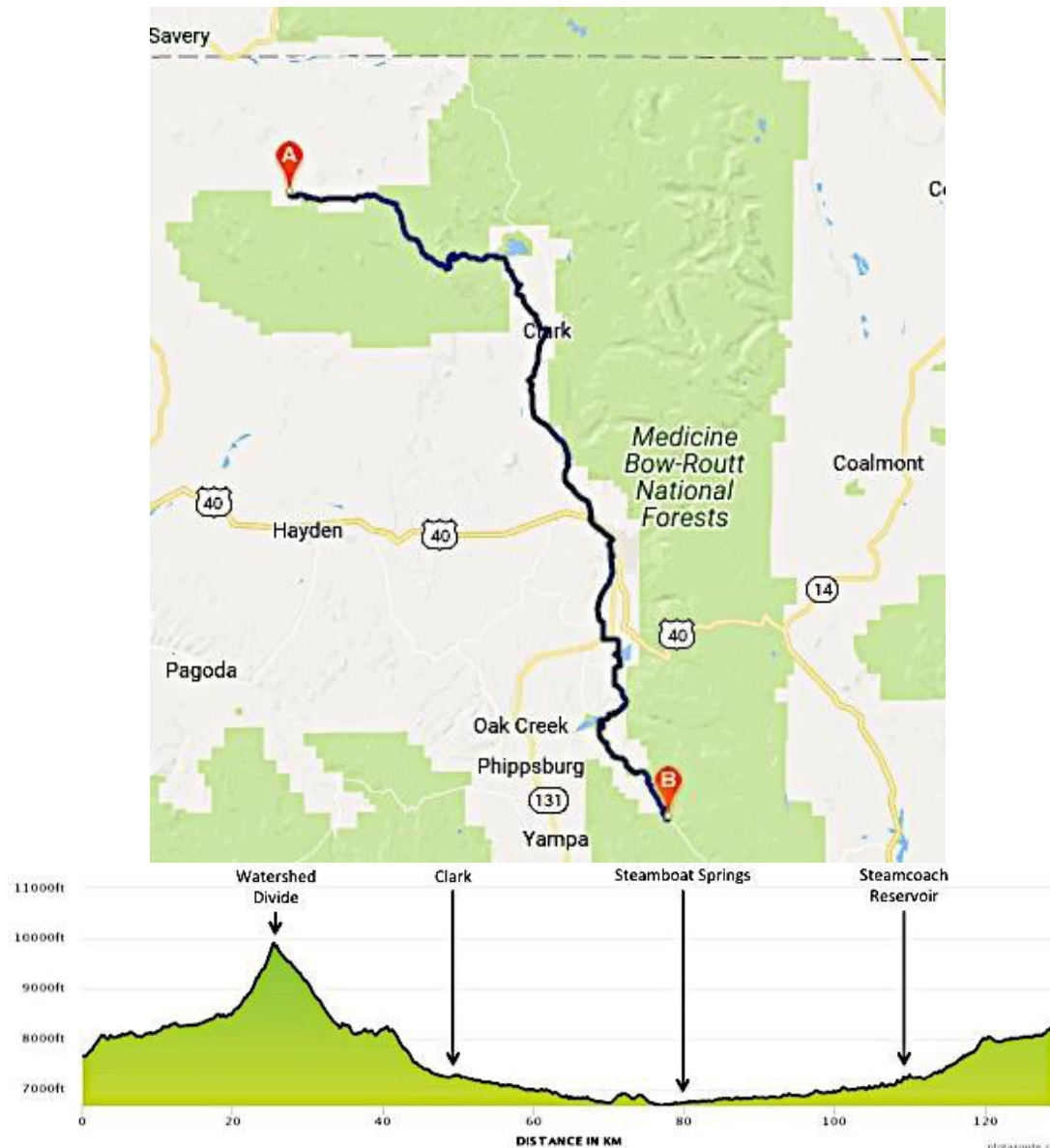


Day 18 26th June 2017
Brush Mountain Lodge to rough camp below Lynx Pass

129.3k / 80.3miles 2259m / 7411ft (2078m / 6817ft descent)
44.4%↑ 42.6%↓ 13%→ 16.7% max

If your Etrex GPS breaks..... does your life loose direction?



I left Brush Mountain Lodge after a filling breakfast, in the middle of the pack of TD cyclists who had stayed overnight.

However once I had started I saw no other riders until Steamboat Springs, some 80k further down the trail. The initial 25k was uphill, towards Meaden Peak Pass, 9,850'

Climbing towards Meaden Peak Pass



The Pass separates Slater Creek, which I had been following for some 45k, from Mill Creek, which drains towards Steamboat Lake.

After entering Routt National Forest (2.9 million acres) with its ubiquitous aspens, the trail deteriorated rapidly and several rough steep sections have to be negotiated to reach the top.

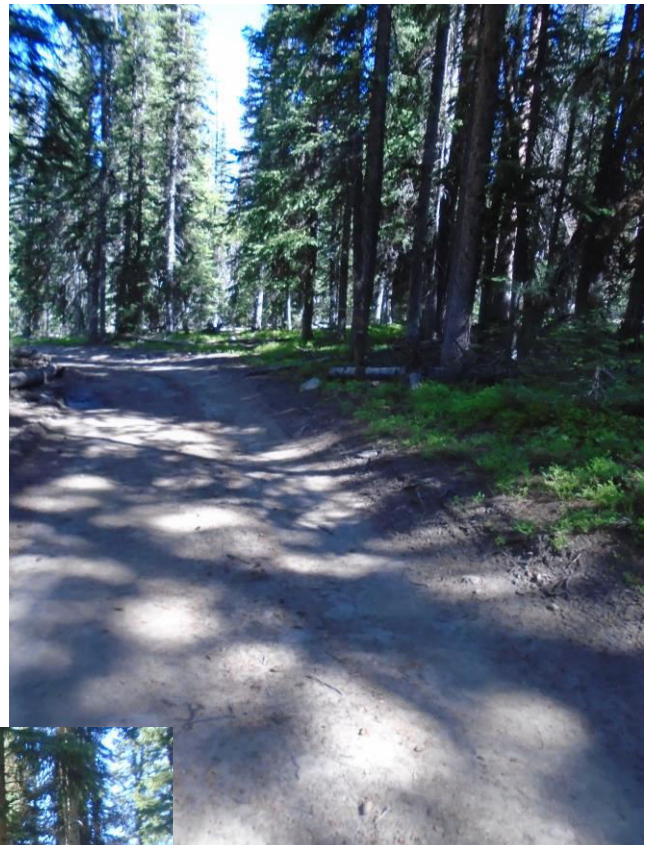
The ACA map refers to it as being: *extremely rocky a 1.5 mile up hill pusher* – they were not wrong.



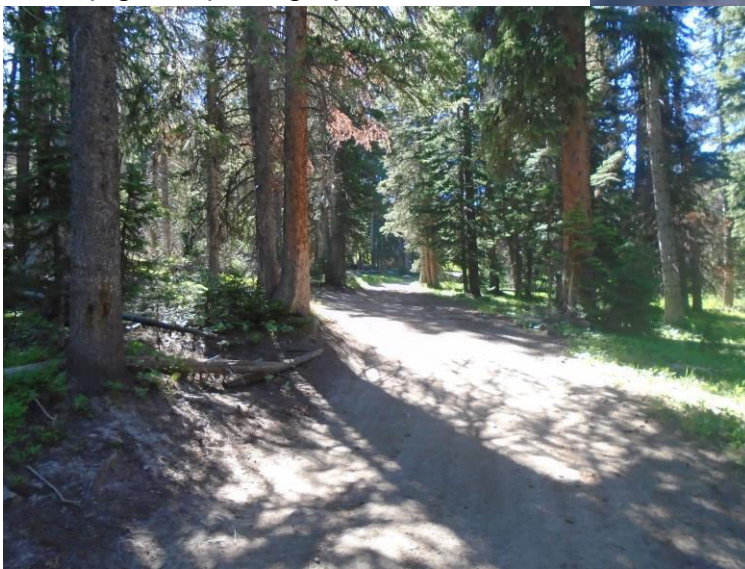
Routt National Forest Sign

One memorable aspect of this part of the trip was the prestigious number of butterflies I encountered.

Gentle route through aspens before the rock steep sections below



- As always the pictures I took do not fully represent the steepness or the 'gnarliness' of the trail. Two reasons:
1. On the very steep bits I didn't take any photos as I was preoccupied and
 2. The camera is only a robust 'point and shoot' thing not designed for top grade photographs.



Nevertheless you get the idea.

Incidentally I think gnarly is a very descriptive word.



*Selfie taken at the top of the Meaden Park Pass,
not for prosperity, more so I could have a rest and catch my breath!!*

The views and quality of the trail on the downhill were much better and the run down to Clark was great.

*Descending from
Meaden Peak Pass*



*Looking back north from
whence I have just come*
(Photo T Tower's CGOAB journal)





Looking south while progressing to Clark

I stopped at a café which acts as a store, post office, library and general meeting place combo in Clark. It gets very good write ups and certainly seems to deserve them. It would have been nice to stop longer but I had to get to the cycle shop in Steamboat Springs for a definitive fix for my rear tyre. That having been said it had withstood all that I had had to throw at it over the last 300k. Nevertheless I wanted to be able to rely on it, and of course get a 27.5" inner tube!!

The 30k route into Steamboat Springs from Clarke is a relatively narrow but fast tarmac road. I sprinted along it, not wanting to be squashed by a passing SUV pantehnicon.

Once in town the excellent cycle route, winding as it does along the Tampa River, completely isolates you from the cars. Consequently I could not really tell you too much about the place. I was more intent on finding the bike shop.

I managed to find the Orange Peel Cycle shop just as my Etrex screen went black.

That's Black as in kaput - not working - no response to button pressing - nothing - zippo - zilch - t'was dead and buried - no re starting if the batteries are removed and replaced. I think you get the picture.

Now this was a potential major setback – not terminal certainly but nevertheless severe and definitely not one of those things I could ignore.

The bike shop was heaving and, as I was in a stacking orbit awaiting my turn, I asked if I could use their computer to see if I could ascertain what had happened especially as they claimed to be a Garmin distributor.

Once on the computer I accessed the Garmin help desk, or at least I thought I had. I actually ended up on a lookalike 'pay for advice site' which was useless.

Eventually I ended chatting with a genuine Garmin operative who said it was due to a faulty 'micro disc', used to increase the minimal loaded GPS memory.

Given the fact that this disc had been fine for the last 2000k¹ and furthermore worked seamlessly in the UK I could not see how that would explain the situation. In addition, when I attached the device without batteries to the computer I was able to read the contents of said disc no problem.

It transpired that, after about 30 mins worrying and fiddling on the computer, when I serendipitously replaced the batteries and turned the device back on I discovered that it worked fine! It was if it had never had any problems. I think the device had simply overheated and that those 30 mins had allowed it to cool down sufficiently to allow it to work normally again.

Looking on one of the forum sites I noticed it says:

'Keep out of direct sunlight and hot environments such as car boots'.

Now car boots are fine; I was not planning on running into any of those in the near future - done that, been there and got the tee shirt (and a broken bike, amnesia, concussion and a nearly broken neck) but keeping it out of direct sunlight as I am heading south into the deserts of New Mexico?? Er no, that isn't going to happen is it.....?

Having successfully resuscitated my GPS I decided that the only thing to do was to adopt the THM of ignoring the potential problem and see how it went.

While all this was going on the usual suspects were inhabiting the cycle shop – we were all politely fighting for our place in the queue.

We took the opportunity to have a group photo outside the shop.

When it came to my turn the (slightly condescending) bike mechanic confirmed that the tyre's sidewalls were shot. I said that the tyre was new at the start with 2k² on the clock (see below just to see if you are taking this all in). He rolled his eyes and said that all the mud crud etc. had rubbed the sidewalls.

I was not then, and still am now, too sure about this explanation but hey ho I needed a new tyre so the 'explanation' was largely irrelevant.

Said bike guy went round the back and produced a new identical tyre for 'only' 3x what it costs on the internet.

'Yes *that's fine*' I said though gritted teeth and he went away and fitted it. Beggars cannot be choosers can they?

1. Just realised that 2000k could be written 2kk (or even 2k²) but I digress (again).



*Self, Rich, Marty & Bobby outside Orange Peel Cyclery
Would you allow these fine specimens to enter your establishment?*

The above is a typical sampling of TD attire, with matching suntans and body shape.

Talking of body shape I had started to notice I was losing a considerable amount of weight. I was prompted in this realisation when I looked at my photo with Kirsten, taken the day before at Brush Mountain Lodge (see yesterday's journal photos).

I resolved to eat more (if that was possible).

On the subject of eating my stop at Steamboat Springs had eaten into the afternoon. I had hoped to crest Lynx Pass by the end of the day - there was a campsite there according to the ACA map but I didn't think that would now be realistic.

As it was I managed some 45k more before I called it a day.

On the way I increased my number of ski jump passed on the trip to a grand total of2.



Howelsen Hill – one of only 3 ski jumping facilities in the whole of the USA

I thought it unlikely that I would be increasing that number as I went further south. The last ski jump had been in Banff (aeons and light years distance ago).



I saw this novel mailbox, south of Steamboat on the I14.

I bet it looks even more effective when there is snow on the ground

I also saw an amusing (well it amused me) advertising sign which said:

*'use your head
when buying a
hat'*

After the tarmac stopped the next 150k would be off road.

*Start of the climb up to
Lynx Pass 8,937'*

It was slow going up Lynx Pass principally due to the heat.

I passed the Stagecoach Reservoir. The ACA Highlights from the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route video¹ features the Elk Trail Run, which runs along the east side of the Stagecoach . Watch it even if it's just for the music.



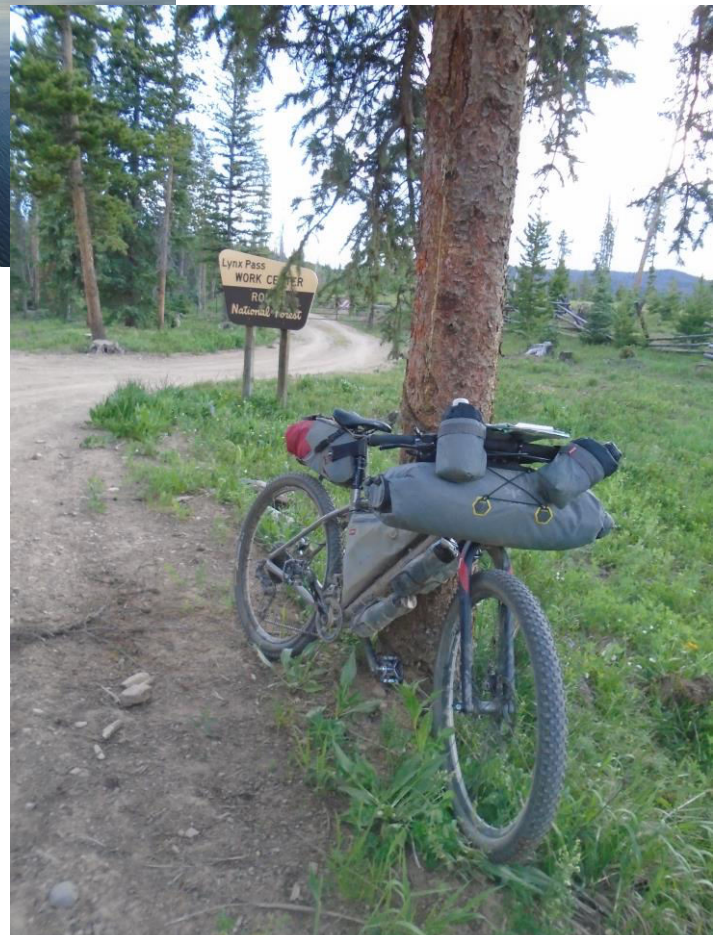
In this photo the Elk Trail Run is in the distance, just above the red boom in the photo.

Stagecoach Reservoir

I kept on going until it was nearly dark and camped out about 1,000' above the reservoir off the trail, behind some fallen trees.

A couple of cyclists passed me in the evening while I was bedded down.

I scribbled a few notes in the increasing gloom and drifted off, blissfully unaware of any bears.



1. ACA Great Divide Video is on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqCYE-Smqf4>