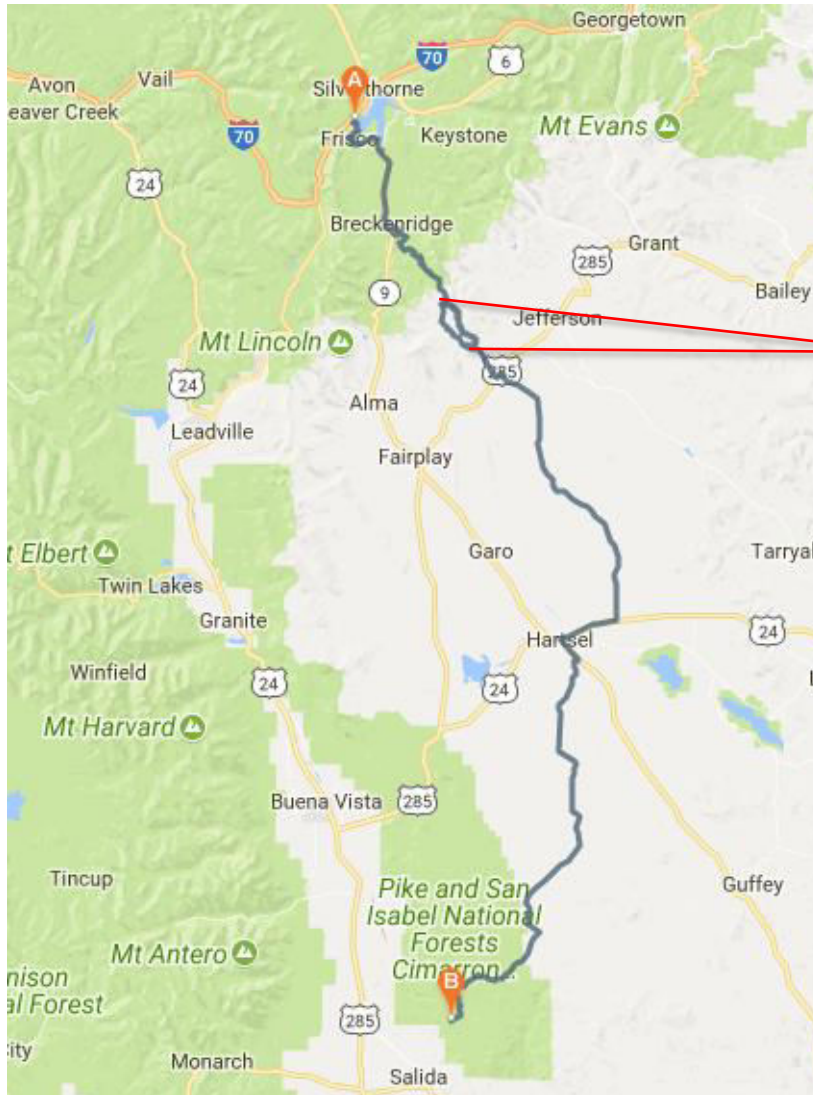


Day 20 **28th June 2017**
Dillon Reservoir to rough camp above Salida

184.5k / 114.6miles **2714m / 8904ft (2805m / 9202ft descent)**
42.1%↑ 43.9%↓ 14%→ 21.1% max

And here's a rule for you....if the paved road goes downhill and you are zooming along and see a dirt road on the left or right ...that sucker's your course. Mikel¹



An interesting day, and one which will live in my memory for a long long time.

1 Reply #134 Comment made on bikepacking forum by MIKEI
<http://www.bikepacking.net/forum/ultra-racing/tour-divide-2017-race-discussion-thread/120/>

The reason why will shortly become apparent, suffice it to say that today perfectly encapsulates the essence of this whole undertaking: the inanity of the whole project and how, in order to succeed, you have to suck up all that the trail throws at you and carry on regardless.

The comments in my letter of intent:

I realise that I shall be severely tested both physically and mentally and hope that I prove up to the challenge.

I believe that the whole experience will, at the very least, provide me with suitable material for ripping yarns in years to come.

proved very apposite.

Today certainly provided material for a ripping yarn....

I slept well overnight and, after the large amount of food I had eaten the evening before, I was not quite as ravenously hungry as usual.

I packed up and managed to pop back onto the official trail from my illicit bivi site without being spotted. It was a cold start.

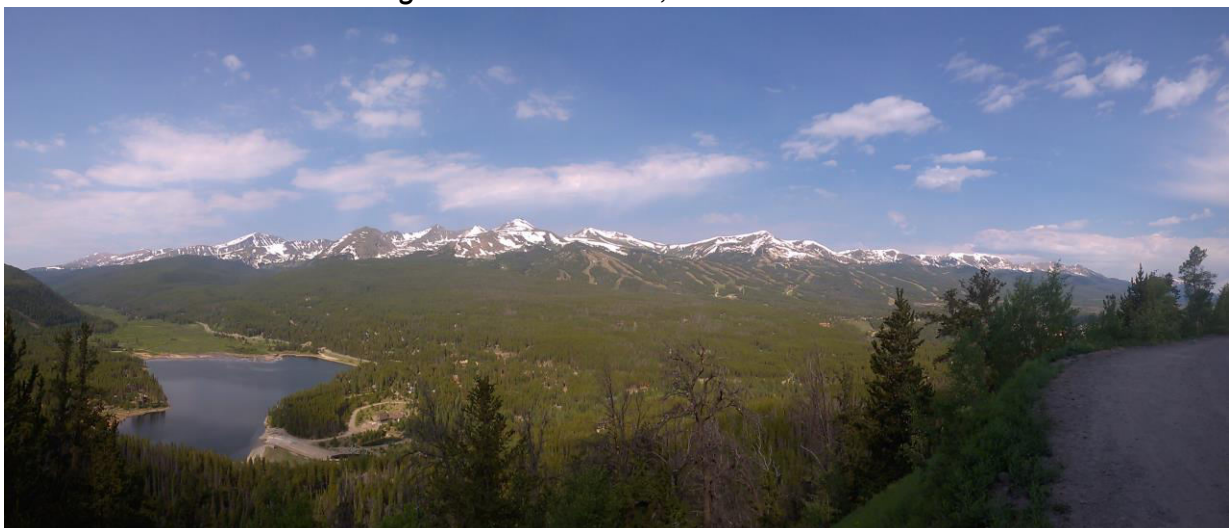
I rode along the banks of the lake into Frisco to find it was closed – too early. Never mind Breckenridge beckoned 18k up the valley and the bike trail was good. As I got nearer to Breckenridge the bike/hike path became populated by a curious mix of nerdy stick thing ultra focused runners, usually with peaked caps, cyclists on carbon fibre mega expensive rubidium encrusted light weight thoroughbreds and smelly old me.

Breckenridge oozes expense. High end shops etc etc. I selected a bohemian café for breakfast – so cool it didn't have WiFi.

I got talking to a lady who had done the Trans America Ride – took her 100 days. Her son worked in Breckenridge. She confirmed that the houses in the area are indeed exorbitantly expensive.

I set off for the Boreas Pass in bright sunshine. The trail follows the track of the Denver, South Park and Pacific Narrow Gauge Railroad.

View while climbing the Boreas Pass, Goose Pasture Tarn on the left



The route was busy with cyclists and I caught up with a large group of teenagers who varied in their ability.

Looking back towards Breckenridge

I stopped at the famous Bakers Tank. A restored water tank. A remnant of the railway. This tank was restored in 1958.

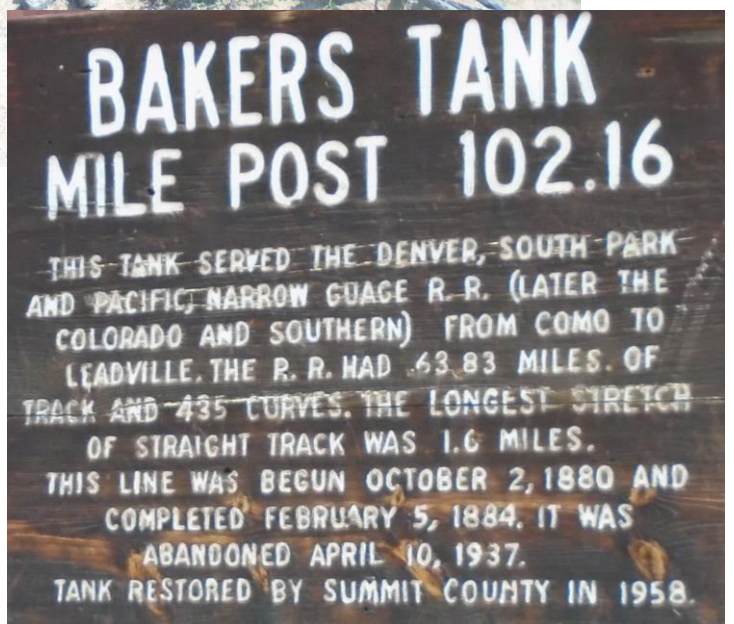


Interestingly reading the board on the Tank I spotted the two errors. Can you see them? (Answer below). I'm a sad man!!

I reached the top of the Boreas Pass, 11,482' in good fettle. The railway grade having helped make the climb less daunting than feared.

Answers There is an error in the spelling of gauge (second line).

Also why have a 102.16 milepost when the railroad was only 63.83 miles long?





Top of the Pass

Massimo and Philippe were sitting at the top, when I arrived in bright sunshine.

There was an old boxcar at the top, venerating the railway which used to run over the 11,482' Pass, the highest I had ever cycled on a bike at that time.

I took a short rest in the sunshine and had a bite to eat.



Life was good. The weather was fine. I had found the climb surprisingly benign and there was a forthcoming 11k downhill section to relish.

I set off south heading for Como in god spirits.....



Looking north from the top of the Pass



Expansive view south towards Como

The ACA route pummelled straight down FR33 and I zoomed down the 11k to a T junction. During those 11k I reckoned I probably peddled for a maximum of 50m - marvellous.

Within 1k of the summit I passed a small sign pointing to the right for the 'Gold Dust Trail'. A little track. Nice name I tonight as I whizzed past.

At the T junction the ACA route had me turning left. I activated on my Etrex to check. I had not used it on the way down as there were no junctions, and I wanted to save the batteries.

Much to my consternation I saw that the GPS route had me arriving at this junction from the right, NOT from the bottom of the T. Something was seriously amiss.

I reduced the scale on the Etrex screen and identified that the 'official' TD and ACA routes diverged 1k south of the Pass summit and only reunited lower down the valley; precisely where I was now at this T junction. It transpired that I should have turned right and gone down the Gold Dust Trail I had noticed in passing on my way down¹.

I then proceeded to visit a very dark place!! Essentially I had two options:

- Turn left and carry on to Como, on the ACA route or
- Suck it up turn round, cycle the 11k (and 1,417') back up to the origin of the Gold Dust Trail and follow this back down and end up in exactly the same place I was currently standing, some 2 hour hence.

Carrying on would mean I had '*deviated from the official route*' and my Trackleaders lozenge would be changed from blue to orange. Turning back obviously involved significantly additional effort.



View as I cycled UP the Boreas Pass from the southern aspect!!

In reality I only had one option - having my lozenge change from blue to orange would be an anathema almost worse than having it change white!!

I was joined by Massimo who had also made the same error. He took a little persuading that we had made a mistake error. I said I was going back – it was up to him if he did too. He eventually followed me back up!!

1. I had to laugh this was a definite high followed by a low!!

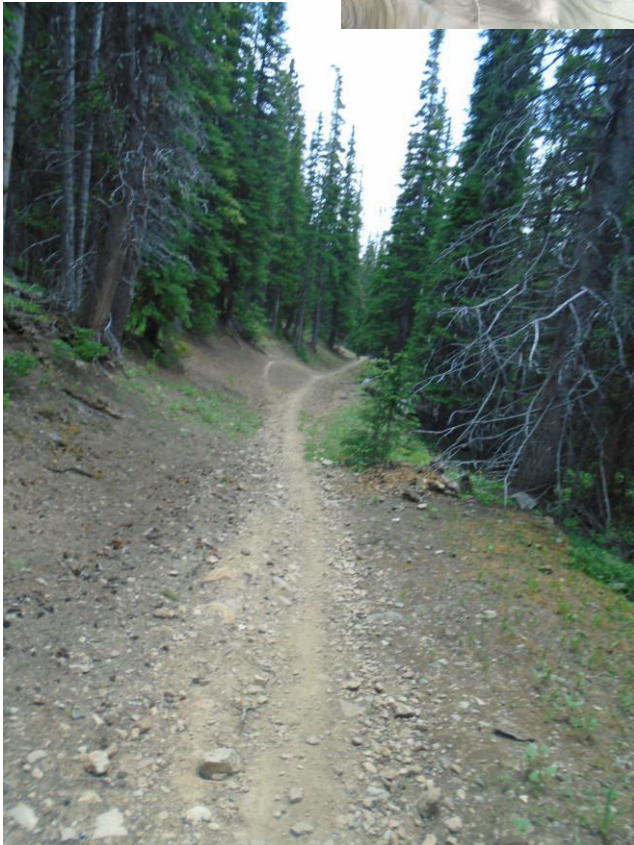
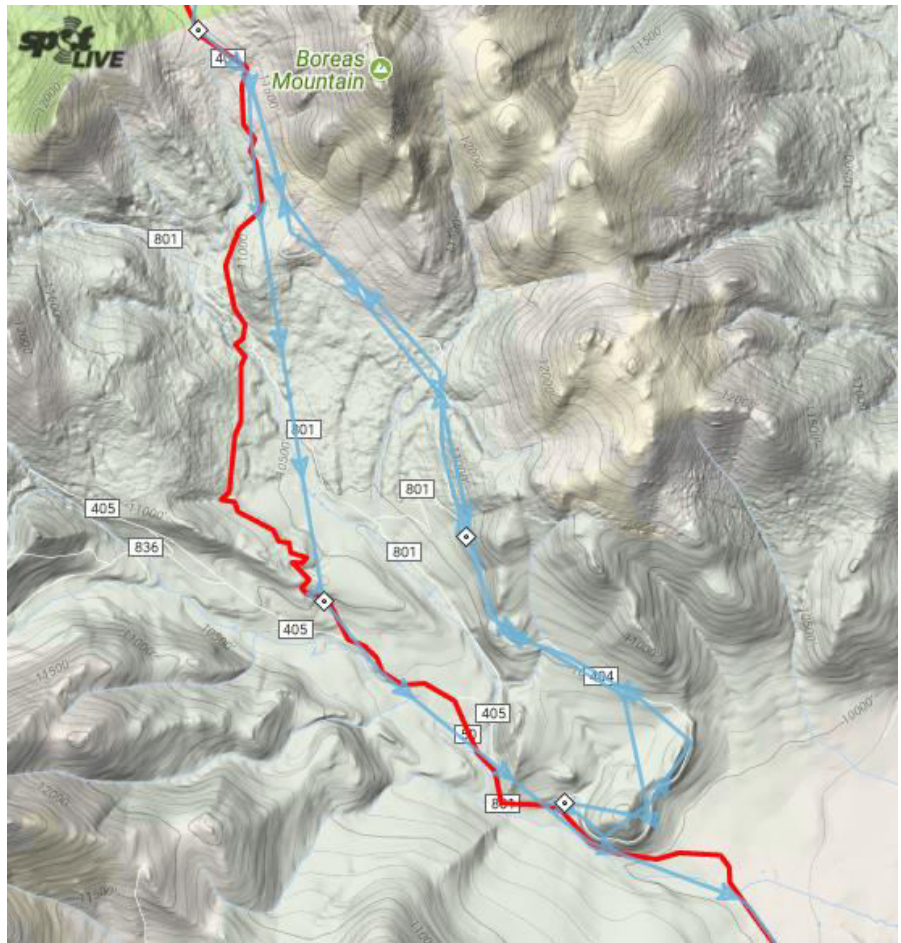
Just to prove that I did indeed retrace my steps I present my Trackleaders plot for this section:

You can see the duplicate plot on the right hand portion.

*'Cock up non Bypass'
Trackleaders plot*

Contrary to my expectations
The Gold Dust Trail
proved to be lovely.
A single track with
banked turns, almost
as if it had been
constructed for
downhill mountain
bikers.

Half way down I
caught up with Marty.
He kindly moved off
the trail, allowing me
to pass.



The track crosses a couple of firebreaks, which gave a brief view of the sky before plunging back into the forest.

Gold Dust Trail

I duly arrived back at the T junction, a somewhat chastened but philosophical TD rider. I thought, as per my letter of intent, at least I had been provided with:
'suitable material for ripping yarns in years to come'.

Due to Mum's illness I had not had the opportunity to do my usual map appreciation/recce of this part of the trail.

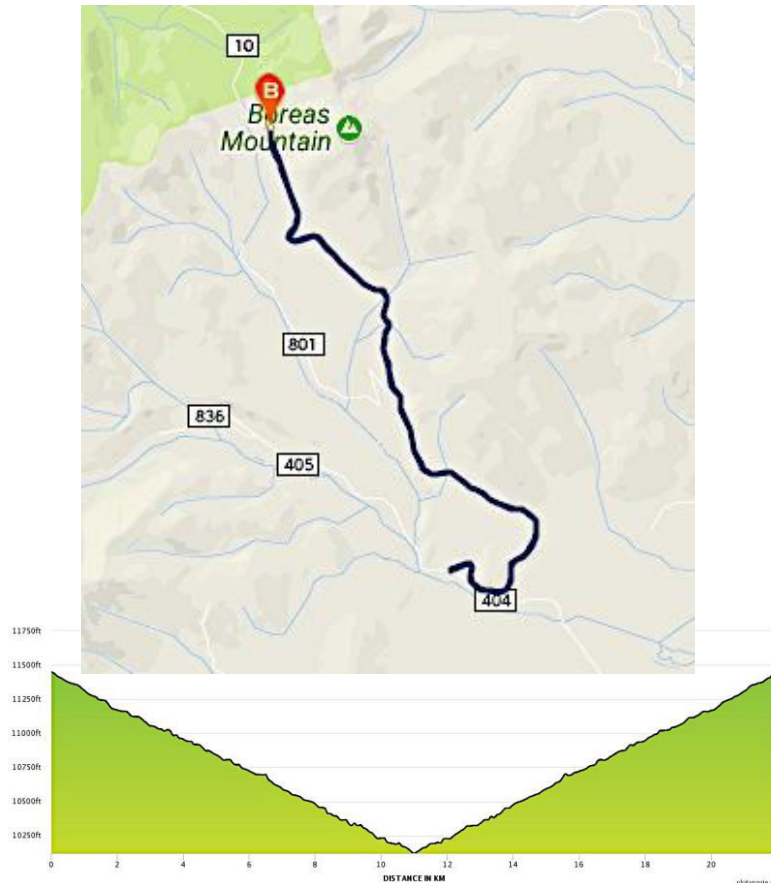
Thus exemplifying the saying:

'Time spent on reconnaissance is never wasted'

In the interests of completeness I present, in the usually format, the map and profile of this unnecessary excursion (and exertion!!)

22k / 13.7miles

430m / 1417ft (430m / 1417ft descent)
48%↑ 46.5%↓ 6.5%→ 10% max

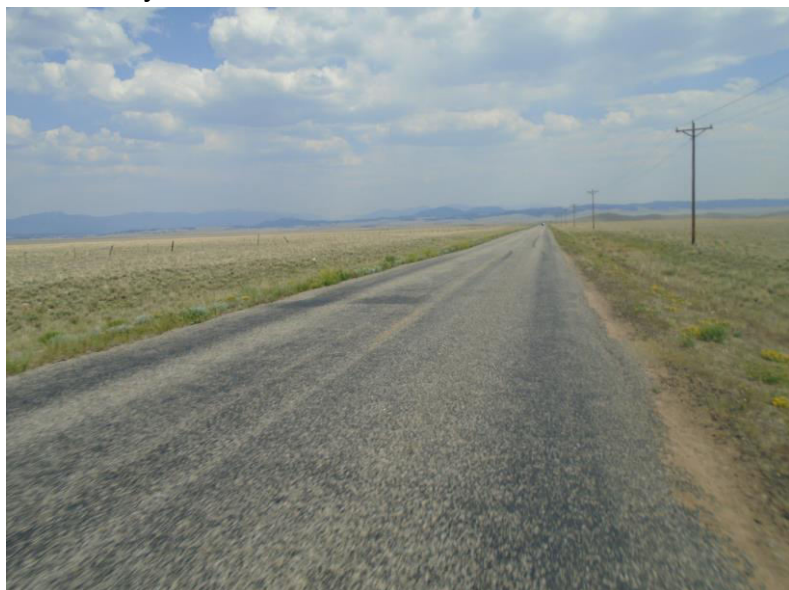


The route from Como (nothing much there, I didn't stop at the Man Mountain Museum) to Hartsell was wide open – very like Montana and it was dominated by the wind, especially the last 5 miles along the highway 24 into Hartsell. This section of the road had a very narrow shoulder.

Road to Hartsell

In Hartsell the Highlife Café and Saloon was a hive of TD rider activity. I saw Philippe Ko, Rich, and Massimo.

Massimo had told them about the Gold Dust Trail cock up. Apparently Philippe had called out to him but he had not heard the message he was going so fast!!



I was cycling over a 9,000' plateau towards the Cameron Mountain, 10,993'. The photos show the wide open nature of the terrain on this section



At the end of the day I found myself climbing, prior to a long descent into Salida.

I was now caught between two stools. If I pushed hard I would arrive in Salida in the dark and then have to find somewhere to sleep, with reduced time until the morning.

Alternatively I could back off and camp out above Salida, preferably somewhere on the descent. However I did not have an excess of water

I elected to camp. However there was a dearth of suitable slots. After several false starts I found a relatively flat slot and erected my tent.

A memorable day indeed as detailed.

While bedding down I noticed a significant odour. Surprisingly it was not me but the gently fermenting humous I had been carrying for the last couple of hundred kilometers!

I resolved to dispose of it in Salida.

Slept well.

