

Day 28 6th July 2017
Pie Town to Beaverhead Lodge site

158.4k / 98.4miles

1783m / 5849ft (2074m / 6804ft descent)
38.9%↑ 45.8%↓ 15.3%→ 11.1% max

Black cabs are far more dangerous than grizzly bears



I left the Toaster House' a little later than intended; Marty had gone out looking for the renowned pie shops but unsurprisingly, as it was still early, they were closed. However he had met one of the proprietors who was bringing left over pie to the Toaster House and he returned with her contribution.

I therefore had cold pie for breakfast!! Unfortunately they only do sweet pies such as apple, pecan etc. not savoury but beggars cannot be choosers.

I made some cheese sandwiches and included some green pickle for flavour. I also found some nut brittle and had a couple of handfuls of this too.



Interior of the Toaster House (Jill at the table in the distance)

I commenced on a new map today (the 7th and final one), and given that I had been without a map for the last 284 miles, this was something of a novelty.

The weather continued hot and got hotter - there was not even the faintest prospect of rain, with the associated threat of quagmire. However the trail was not good with lots of washboarding.



*Heading south
towards
the Plains of
San Augustin*



After crossing the Continental Divide three times, over the next 47k I descended onto the vast hot sun-baked Plains of San Agustin.

Further views of the trail heading south

Several million years ago this area had been a lake and apparently has yielded mammoth fossils and sabre-toothed tiger and giant sloth remains.

Clovis man, who is believed to have migrated onto the American continent from Asia over the Beringia land bridge during the last glacial maximum, is thought to have hunted these mammals with spears perhaps as recently as 10,000 years ago. T



In stark contrast: the ultrahigh tech Very Large (radio telescope) Array is also situated on the San Agustin plains, albeit 50 miles away.

I was able to obtain water from a tap on the outside of one of the building of a church complex, where my route crossed Highway 12 (no cars whatsoever). However I was more concerned with the fact that it I appeared I was not going to have enough food before the next resupply point.

The cheese with pickle sandwich had proven to be disastrous experiment. The pickle had melted into the sandwich creating a green amorphous foul tasting congealed lump which, even in my increasingly hungry state, was completely inedible.

I discarded it and watched it slowly burn it's way down through the desert sand, with a hissing noise and the production of vast clouds of steam/fumes. No it didn't - but it should have, given its colour.

The nut brittle had long gone and I was left with some brown (as opposed to white) covered raisins. I was pleased to see that the brown 'chocolate' covering still managed to contain my old friend Titanium Oxide TiO_2 . At least I wasn't going to die of that old bikepacker curse - hypotitaniuamaemia¹



The afternoon was a bit of a struggle. Heat, lack of food and distance all combined to slow me down.

*Views across
the Plains of San Augustin*



I was to cross the hills visible in the far distance



After leaving the Plains I climbed and passed over 3 more Divides making 6 in all for the day



*6th Continental crossing today
75 miles 121k*

1. Hypotitaniuamaemia –lack of titanium in the blood (normal values <10ng/mL)



*Heading east
along the
O-Bar-O Canyon,
shortly before
being joined by Jill*

Late in the
afternoon Jill,
going strongly,
caught me up and
we agreed to press
on to Wall Lake at
located 172k.

I must admit thinking I would be pleased to arrive.

Unfortunately 15 mins after we started cycling together I came a bit of a cropper. One minute I was up on the pedals, the next I was chewing dust. I honestly don't know how it happened, all very odd.

I was a bit shaken up initially, with some scratches from the hardy desert flora, but overall I was OK, as was the bike, apart from some trauma to the front brake which required me to loosen off the brake cable to get the wheel rotating freely again.

Gila National Forest

Jill was most
concerned but I
assured I was
OK and urged
her to carry on
as I felt the need
to take it slower.

She kept on
stopping ahead
of me on several occasions to check but I finally managed to assure I was OK.



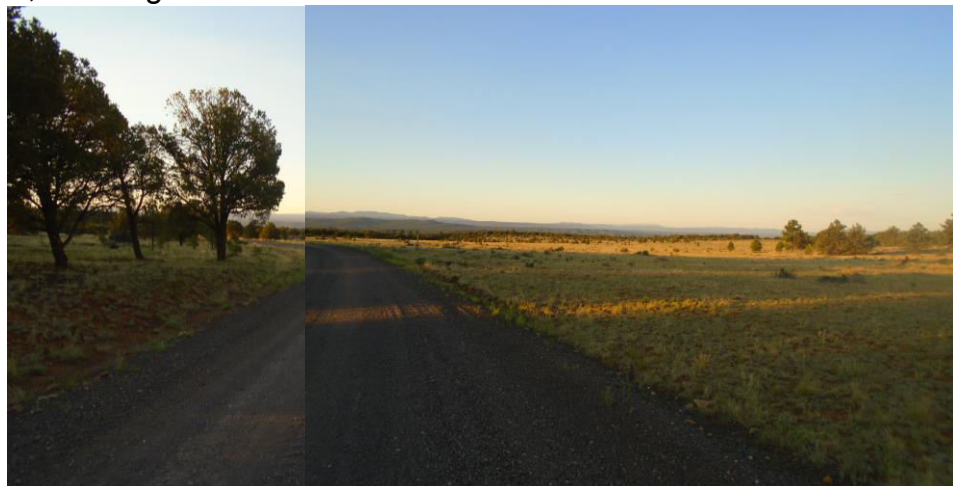


*Typical dispersed
trees and
grassland in this
part of the Gila*



Having skirted with the border of the Gila National Forest for 150k, I finally entered it properly and would be cycling across it for the next 130k. At 3.3 million acres, it's a big forest.

*Shortly before
the Work
Station*



I made it to the Beaverhead Work station, which had a soft drinks machine. Unfortunately it was not working so no chance of sugary drinks. Ho joy

I was surreptitiously looking round for a place to crash out and had selected the outhouse (cf Upper Dome Reservoir) when I was approached by a park warden. He asked if I was thinking of camping in the area.

I assured him I was not –

*never thought of it
wouldn't dream of it Guv.*

He said good, because they were having major problems with a troublesome bear in the vicinity and he advocated not camping in the area.

I assured him I was headed for Wall Lake some 13k away; this placated him. I set off feeling knackered and virtually fell off the bike some 3k later, at the foot of a hill. I was not going up there. I dumped my rucksack about 75 yds away in the open and crawled under an overturned sign and crashed out. Bugger the bears!

Marty creaked passed and stopped. He said he was pressing on although he was tired too. I watched as his light progressed slowly up the hill and drifted off.

A hard hard day.