

Day 30 8th July 2017
Silver City to Hachita

127.9k / 79.5miles

1052m / 3451ft (1515m / 4970ft descent)
33.1%↑ 46.3%↓ 20.6%→ 10% max

Being in the desert was brilliant and it was hard

Toni Collette



I was up early, having successfully avoided being bitten during the night by any infamous, potentially fatal bark scorpions. On reflection I think scorpions sting rather than bite, but anyway you get the gist. Suffice it to say I was pleasingly symptom free on the morn.

I had got up a couple of times in the night to go to the loo, but before getting out of bed, after switching on the light I had banged the floor several times with one of my maps in the hope of scaring off the alleged scorpions.

Once up I fixed my front brake – the cable had excessive travel, presumably due to the brake pad wear; so I replaced it, said goodbye to the dogs and backtracked to where I had left the TD route the day before.

I ‘breakfasted’ in a local supermarket and then set off south.

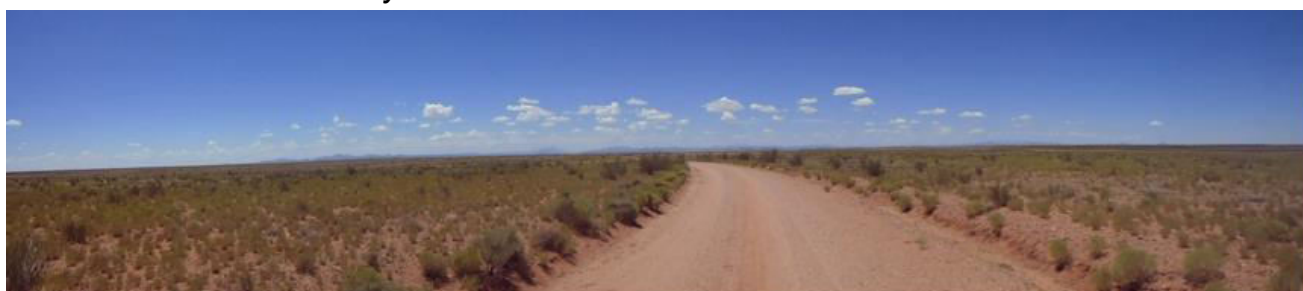
Just south of Atlantic City I came across a family group of peccaries. They crossed the road up ahead and scuttled around in the undergrowth, wary of my presence as I cycled past.

A peccary, also called a javelin or skunk pig, a medium-sized hoofed mammal of the family Tayassuidae (New World pigs).



As the morning progressed, the temperature started to rise inexorably. It was going to be a hot one...so nothing new there then.

*Wide angle shot of the route
Taken shortly before the camera lens melted in the heat!!*



I made steady progress along the undulating road before turning off onto the dirt track towards Separ. Once off the road on the dirt track I was completely alone. I saw no-one until I reached the Separ trading post. While the route was much better defined than when I was crossing the Basin the feeling of isolation and the absolute need to avoid any mishap returned with a vengeance.

I came across multiple yucca plants today. In 1927 the Yucca was designated the official state flower of New Mexico, although it was not did not specify which of the 40 – 50 sub species was to be used. Only a small proportion of the plants had a tall flowering stalk. Interestingly each species of Yucca plant is pollinated by a different species of yucca moth uniquely suited to collect pollen from its Yucca plant. The moths roll the pollen into a ball and drop it into the stigma of a different Yucca plant of the same species. At the same time, the moth lays an egg in the flower. There, it grows and emerges, while being protected, feeding itself by eating some of the Yucca’s developing seeds - and here endeth today’s botany lesson!



*I think this is a Yucca Constricta
also known as a Buckley's
yucca but apparently this grows
in central and eastern Texas,
and also in Coahuila, Mexico
perhaps no one told it was in
the wrong pacer*

The need to temper enthusiasm with a degree of caution was well illustrated shortly before I arrived at the Separ trading post.

I was able to see the huge flag flying at the trading post location, way off in the far distance and the prospect of some much needed shade, air conditioning and fluid spurred me on.



Had I not been careful I could very well have gone a real cropper in the unexpected sand which was sneakily lurking amongst the heavily wash boarded surface. Fortunately I survived this section without mishap and I crossed the railway track and arrive hot, dehydrated but happy at the trading post.



*Looking back North: I crossed those hills in the far distance the day before.
Part of today's route can just be made out below the central volcanic mount
and in the near distance above the right hand central bush*



*The railway crossing, immediately before the trading post.
An allegory for my ride Parallel lines proceed into the distance
destined to meet at infinity - also known as 4400k*

While the trading post was cold and had the obligatory drink station it was full of the most incredible and really rather expensive tat. I am amazed that I have managed to survive so long without all the essential stuff that was on sale.

Despite this it seemed to be doing a brisk business from car occupants who had pulled off from the freeway.

I had a bite and topped up my fluids+++ . The till operative expressed sincere concern for my welfare going out in the heat (which reassure me greatly!!) and warned me not to get sunstroke.



The sun tanned but happy wild man of New Mexico, just about to set off for Hachita from Separ.

I cycled on the frontage road alongside the I-10, with the railway running parallel on the other side of the freeway. It was very hot, very very hot, with no shade whatsoever. I took to a wetting a towel and putting it on my head under my helmet.

The towel dried out within 10 mins.

Sun tan cream was applied in prestigious proportions.

I passed some 2k of goods trucks on the parked railway track. I gave up counting after 120.

I took a few minutes sheltering in a shade afforded by a bridge which ran to the freeway.

The frontage road ran out and I then cycled on sand before reaching the junction between the 146 and I-10, some 12k from Separ. Then I was the back on tarmac, and indeed would now be until the finish.



At the junction I saw the first sign for the Antelope Wells Port of Entry.

It was good to know that, after all this time, I was still on the correct route. Once on the I46 I stopped and took the opportunity to take the photo overleaf:

The serenity of the picture belies the fact that the bike was precariously balanced using a random piece of wood I had found lying at the roadside. The wind gusts afforded the distinct possibility of the bike being blown over – potentially with disastrous results if this broke the rear gear hanger.

This explains why I did not position the bike exactly in the middle of the road. It was a case of jiggle the wood and bike till it stood up, rush off, take photo and rush back before the whole ensemble fell over.



An iconic photo illustrating just how busy it was on the road to Hachita

I could just imagine my texting the watts app group to say that unfortunately the bike ride was over, some 60 miles short of the finish, because the bike was unserviceable, as I had had an accident while stopped to take a photo.

I was keen to get to Hachita but noticed several dust devils either side of the road. Several crossed my path and I regulated my speed to avoid coming into close proximity with them. They looked quite violent.



A dust devil

I eventually arrived at Hachita at about 4.30 pm. I was surprised to find an open grocery store. A new resident had recently opened a shop catering for passing cyclists. There was not much there but beggars cannot be choosers.

They called Jeff up and he came over - a very ebullient chap full of witty repartee and rather vague about details. I was advised that there was overnight accommodation in the Community Centre (note not Center as depicted!!)



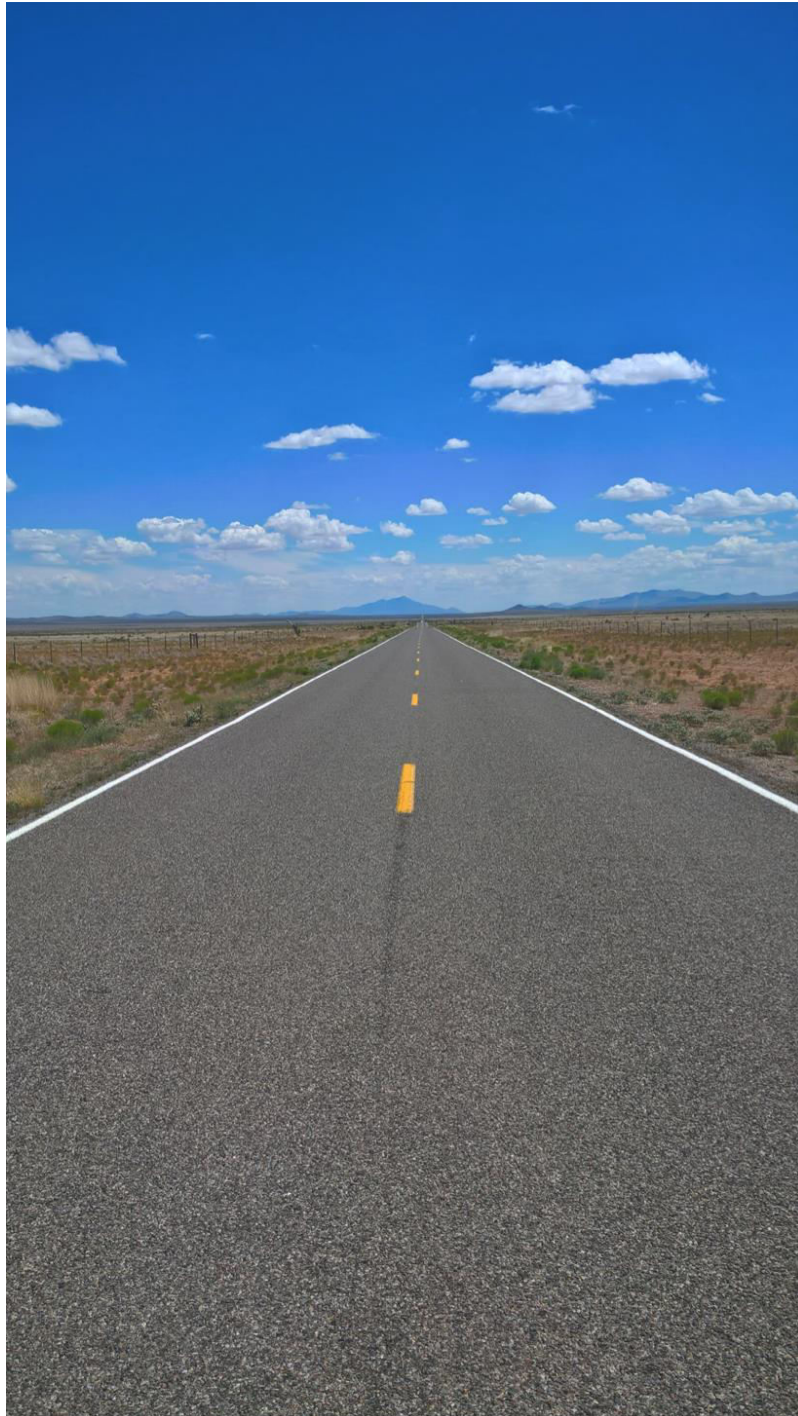
My 5 overnight accommodation*

We eventually agreed on him picking me up at the Border at 10.30 the following day.

It was a short pedal from the store to the Community Centre, with its

- memorial to a local chap killed in op Desert Storm,
- photos of the annual Hachita gathering for current and
- former residents, names of family members who had contributed to the building and
- unfortunately multiple resident flies.

I had a bite to eat and set up camp as far away from fly central as possible.



The end was metaphorically in sight