

**Day 30a**                      **9th July 2017**  
**Hachita to Antelope Wells**

**73.5k / 45.6miles**

**388m / 1272ft (347m / 1138ft descent)**  
**34.4%↑ 30.6%↓ 35%→ 4.4% max**

*As long as I'm riding a bike I know I'm the luckiest man in the world*  
Mark Cavendish



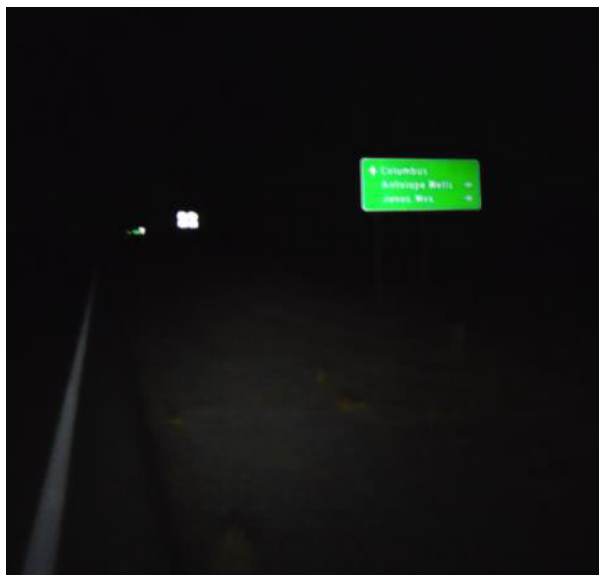
The last day!! Note the lack of climb compared with other days.

I slept fitfully in the Community Hall, principally because of the flies. I had planned to leave at about 04.15, with a view to arriving at Antelope Wells before Jeff Sharp's arrival, scheduled for about 10.30. This would allow me adequate opportunity for photos etc and at the same time satisfy the extensive PR commitments I had with CNN and Fox News (both channels were planning to screen the arrival live and my people, after talking to their people, had decided that ratings and advertising exposure would peak with a scheduled 09.45 (EST) arrival time).

However I was driven to distraction overnight by the flies and consequently I put the pedal to the metal and departed at 03.05, earlier than originally envisaged. I realised that it would mean significant loss of publicity and advertising revenue but I thought my 5 million Facebook followers would probably understand.

I subsequently learnt that the planned twitter feed of the event was blocked by the Department of Homeland Security citing border security issues.

I also thought that this early start would enable me to comfortably reach Antelope Wells within the 30 day nominal racing/touring cut off as designated by Trackleaders and thereby avoid the ignominy of my Trackleaders' lozenge changing from blue to white – a definite no no for serious TD aficionados!!



*Probably the least visually interesting but equally possibly the most evocative picture in the whole journal.*

*The sign located immediately after leaving Hachita indicates Antelope Wells is off to the right.*

It was pleasant cycling in the dark, warm not hot - essentially tee shirt temperature. A distinct improvement on the eyeball searing heat experienced during the daytime ride yesterday.

As I counted down the mile markers on the side of the road I think I saw one car in the first 15 miles. Then things got interesting.....

First off I was stopped by two gun toting police officers parked in a huge SUV by the side of the road. I think my bright front light coupled with the flashing light attached to the rear of my helmet might possibly have alerted them to my presence, but they may well have been utilising highly classified covert/stealth surveillance thermal imaging equipment.

It turned out they were in the Silver City Police Force, doing overtime, and consequently were not clued up about the whole TD concept and associated rash of participants passing along this route between June and September. For some reason they wanted to know what I was doing.

It took a little while to convince them that I was not mad and furthermore was neither drug running nor people smuggling . Personally I thought both these latter two possibilities would have been excluded by:

- a. The fact that I was lit up like a Christmas tree,
- b. I had no place to hide an immigrant and
- c. I was going in completely the wrong direction for either of these two aforementioned illicit actions to be a rational possibility
- d. I was travelling in plain sight along the road, rather than covertly through the bush

However, this was the good old 'US of A', after all and, given the fact that they had guns (big ones), I forbore to mention some or all of the above.

It would have been ironic if, for stating the bleeding obvious, I had been stopped by the long arm of the law so near the finish!!

ID was 'requested' so I gave them my passport, with visa attached. This was duly taken into the SUV cab and hooked up to the Department of Homeland Security, CIA, FIB and presumably numerous other government agency websites/databases. I was eventually deemed not a threat to US security.

Having convinced them I was not people or drug smuggling it took a little longer to convince them that I truly was not currently, and indeed had not been, mad when I started, and indeed now nearly completed, my TD ride.

Once I was considered 'OK' I did point out the irony that the last time I had visited the US; I arrived by parachute, armed to the teeth with a rifle, submachine gun and a pistol together with several pounds of pretend plastic explosive; possessing only my MOD 90 Forces ID card and at that time no one seemed bothered in the slightest.

This encounter lasted some 20 mins before I was able to proceed.

The next 'interesting event' took place about 5 miles further on when, in the distance, I saw the headlights of a car coming towards me. Hoping to preserve my now restored night vision I averted my gaze, expecting the car to zoom past. However it rapidly became apparent the car was intent on stopping in the middle of the road ahead of me.... two hombres got out.

Marvellous I thought; here I am, about to be mugged 5 miles away from two sleepy cops and some 15 + miles away from the end..... Happy Christmas.

The bodies were stood in the shadow behind the car headlights when, as confidently as I possibly could, I said,

*'Can I help you?'*

Now I accept that this is a daft thing to say but I am after all British and just what is one supposed to say when you are about to be mugged.

The response was completely unexpected. It was Ko who replied,

*'Where's Jerry?!!!'*

He had just finished and was being shipped back to civilisation by a relative. He had recognised me in the headlights and wanted to stop to wish me luck and say a last farewell. What a contrast to my expectation seconds earlier.

A good laugh was had by all when I explained I was expecting to be mugged.

A not dissimilar scenario was enacted 30 minutes later, 5 miles further on down the road, when again an oncoming car pulled up and two people got out. Either it was my unlucky night and I was to be 'mugged' twice or yes you guessed it another cyclist playing the *'Where's Jerry?'* game.

This time it was Massimo, the Italian cyclist who I had first met at Butts Cabin, then Warm River, after we had negotiated the Yellow cinder railway hell, the 'Mesa' campsite, and a fellow Boreas/Gold Dust Trail victim.

Again after wishes of *Good Luck* and *Arrivederci* I set off again.

The last few miles were peaceful on traffic free flat tarmac; coupled with no head wind and the ambient temperature it gave perfect cycling conditions and I thought a lovely end to the trip.

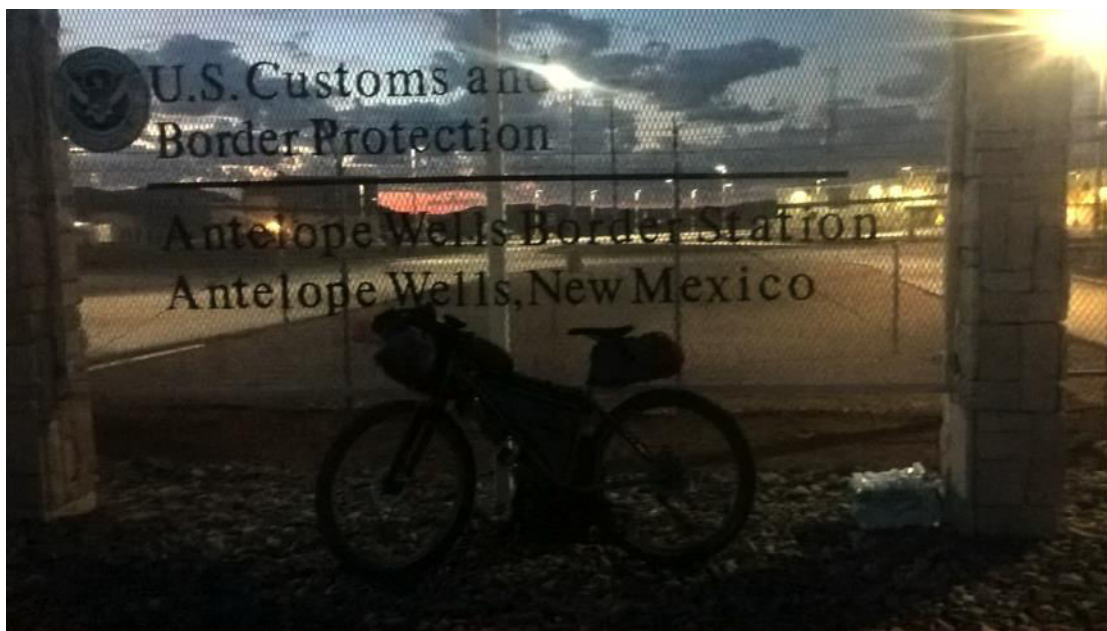
I pushed on over these last few miles intending to arrive before an arbitrary 05.30. I saw the Antelope Wells complex lights in the distance and realising I was going to achieve this time I was able to coast the last 500m serenely, savouring the end of the trip.

I arrived just as dawn was breaking. I touched the closed gate at the Border crossing at 05.24 and sat alone for a few happy minutes.

Official time apparently was 29:21:25 not bad considering I had stated an expected finish of 30 days.

I was pleased to note that this finish was tinged with none of the feeling of anticlimax I had experienced when I completed my Bob Graham Round many years ago.

I was also delighted to discover I had a phone signal so I then hit the phone and 'watts apped' the family, the Friday Gang, Keith, Ria and anyone else I could find in the phone contact menu!!



*Dawn.....*

On receiving my message both Jackie and Ems rang me and I was able to speak to them. A rather surreal experience in the quiet of the desert just as the sun was coming up.

Attempts at photos in the half light were not entirely successful (see above and below) so I waited until it was fully light, did a piece to camera - probably best left in obscurity - and then took some 'proper' photos.





*A leaner self then when I started!!*

Then there was essentially nothing much left to do but wait for the Custom post gates to open and walk across the cattle grid, into the border complex proper, with its roaming drug sniffer dogs. Having ascertained that this was OK I went to the actual border.

I was informed in no uncertain terms that there was no one available to take my obligatory border photo (interesting to compare and contrast this stance with the couldn't be more helpful attitude of the Roseville border operatives). I said I understood, forbearing to mention that obviously being the quietest land based crossing point for the whole the US I could see they were clearly run off their feet – so few vehicles pass the facility (3 – 12 cars a day) apparently the US immigration authorities do not publish annual traffic statistics. I noted incidentally that the US border opens 1 hour after the Mexican border so theoretically you could be left in limbo (neither in the US or out of Mexico) for 60 minutes - go figure.

Consequently I took several selfies at the Border before wandering back to the gate to wait for my 10.30 scheduled pick up by the said Mr Sharp.



*I couldn't resist taking this photo. I thought it would be sad if, at the end of the ride, while crossing the last cattle grid of the entire trip, I ended up ignominiously falling off my bike*





*Looking along the Border  
A picturesque ending to the trip*



*A failed attempt to get  
me, the bike and the border plaque in one selfie shot.  
I elected to get at least me in the frame*



*THE END*

My Etrex 30x device records me as having travelled  
4525 km - 2811.7 miles with  
55940m - 183,530.18ft of climb

With the travel time being 29 days 21hrs and 25 mins I had averaged  
145 km or 90.1 miles a day.

Unfortunately I have been unable to download the route I took from my Etrex but the daily maps and distances presented have been generated from Plotaroute, after I had altered each day's planned route to include diversions into towns etc., together with reroutes back onto the definitive track (Silver City and the Gold Dust Trail being prime examples).

Government SUVs left regularly at hourly intervals patrolling the road back to Hachita as I waited at the gate...and waited.....I lay down on the gravel, in the shadow of one of the concrete posts, periodically moving as the sun tracked across the sky, and waited.....and waited..

Eventually at 13.30, 3 hours later than planned good old reliable Mr Sharp, full of bonhomie, rolled up:

No mention of the delay..... odd

No apologies for said delay.....very odd.



I said nothing, had my photo taken before we loaded the bike into his car and started north. It was novel being in a car again.



*Photos taken in the early AFTERNOON sun  
before my departure from Antelope Wells*

During our trip back to Hachita I was informed of the travails of the last group of cyclists he had taken to Lordsburg, intending to get a Greyhound bus for onward travel with their boxed bikes. Despite having tickets they had been refused access. This I thought must be the reason why Jeff had been delayed – fair play.

But no it transpired that this tale concerned activities 24hrs earlier. When I raised this discrepancy and the inherent implausibly as a valid explanation for his late arrival the atmosphere cooled decidedly. I was asked if I was annoyed - with typical British understatement I simply said I was disappointed that I had waited 3 hrs in the sun.





It transpired Jeff had fallen asleep and only woken up 2 hrs after our agreed pick up time..... an apology would have been appreciated.

Now the observant reader – and incidentally thanks for getting this far - will readily appreciate that this trip has been characterised by a relentless rollercoaster of highs and low with a high being followed closely by a low and then immediately by another high.

This train of events was to continue because things than took MASSIVE turn for the better when Jeff casually announced that Rich (Aston) was planning to finish later this afternoon and Mark (he of the front handlebar forward flip fame) was en route to pick up him up from Jeff's house intending to take him to Tucson and he had said he could take me with Rich if I was interested..

Suffice it to say the Gods had smiled on me...

A bite a beer and a shower at Jeff's passed the time before Rich and Mark arrived. Cue the 'Where Jerry Game' before we had some celebratory cake Mark had brought with him,



*Two lean mean (with the emphasis on lean) hombres eating celebratory cake at Jeff's, prior to heading for Tucson*

We duly loaded our bikes onto the rented pick up, settled up with Jeff for his taxi service and set off for Tucson. It transpired that Mark had suffered a fractured rib, bruised kidney and mild concussion in his falls.

You may recollect my detailing that my last words to him were to seek medical attention if he had haematuria, having described what haematuria was.

Well it turned out had did indeed develop haematuria and therefore sought medical advice. He was admitted for observation and treated conservatively before being discharged after a couple of days. Once out of hospital he had followed our progress and very kindly offered to drive several hundred miles to come and pick up Mark, and as it happens, me too.

Extraordinarily generous thanks Mark most appreciated.

Another of Rich's friends also arrived having also driven a couple of hundred miles to congratulate him.

Mark was in the process of doing up an adobe condo with a view to accommodating his daughter and creating 2 air B&B flats. He said we could put us up there if we wanted!!

On arriving in Tucson we dropped off our stuff, hit a Walmart (heaven's they are big – I was informed that this was a small one!!) bought some random clothes and shoes for our respective trips home and crashed out on two air mattresses Mark bought at the Walmart.

*A fantastic end to a fantastic trip.*



Finally a quote from the ACA Highlights of the Great Divide Mountain Bike Ride video<sup>1</sup>

***There is nothing like the Great Divide.  
Its longer, higher, prettier, scarier, lonelier  
and far more rewarding than any other ride I've ever done.***

I agree - do it!

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqCYE-Smqf4>