

Days 1 - 4 Post TD

10th – 13th July 2017

Chilling (navvying) in Tucson and ultimately travel back to the UK

Given all the vagaries regarding timings accidents weather etc I had deliberately left my plans, regarding how I was ultimately getting to Tucson, vague.

After discussion with fellow TD cyclists on the way down the consensus recommendation was firmly against my continuing south, crossing into Mexico and then cycling west just the other side of the border and returning to the US via Aqua Prieta/Douglas. Having experienced the brain sapping daytime heat a couple of days previously, en route from Separ to Hachita, cycling illegally across ranch land to reach the Geronimo trail did not really appeal either. Thus Mark's very kind offer of a lift had been manna from heaven.

However it did mean that I was faced with the fortunate predicament of having reached Tucson some 10 days before my scheduled return flight and I was presented with the pleasant problem of either rearranging my flight at a cost of \$195 or staying in Tucson.

Mark was happy to accommodate Rich and me until we arranged our respective flights but I did not want to overstay my welcome. I did not have good internet access so Jackie kindly liaised with STA Travel, through whom I had booked my original flights, and she managed to bring forward my return flight by a week.

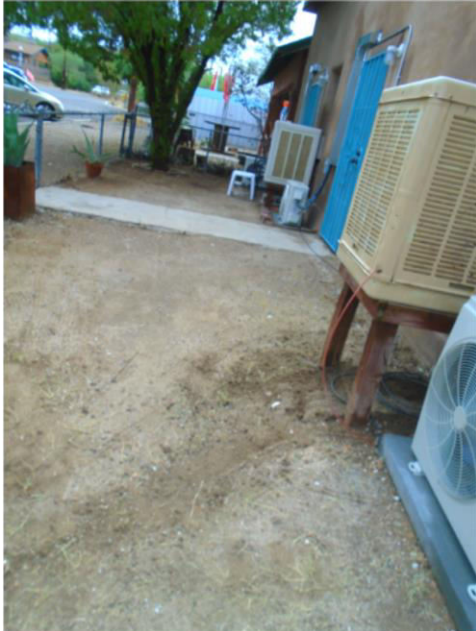
Mark was in the process of converting his recently purchased adobe property into 3 separate flats, two of which he was intending to put to use for air bnbs.



*Outside of Mark's adobe apartments
before the distribution of the bark*

As part of the renovation he was intending to cover the outside rough sand shingle with tree bark and he'd calculated some 18 cubic yards of the stuff was required to achieve this. The bark was due to arrive the next day.

Given the fact that Mark was still suffering with his broken ribs I said I would be delighted to 'earn my keep' by being actively involved in the distribution of the bark while awaiting for re-arranged flight. Rich naturally also offered to help although he had managed to arrange a much earlier flight.



Before and after views of the side of the property



It turns out that 18 cubic yards is really quite a significant volume and distributing this stuff was not the only task required as it proved necessary to dig out some of the hard tamped earth to permit the gate opening once the bark top dressing had been applied



Bark dressing arriving

Half way through bark distribution



While distributing the bark I also accompanied Mark as he drove around town ordering stuff necessary for furnishing his soon to be finished abodes.



*Back yard,
after bark distribution*

We had several Mexican orientated meals in local hostleries and I set to putting my weight back on. I decided 9st 3lbs was a little too low. I was 22lbs and 16% lighter than when I had set off.

Mark and his wife Griff had studied in Tucson as undergraduates and Mark had set up and run a newspaper immediately after graduating.

He described one episode when he was very close to an American Air force plane crash (1978) in Tucson which killed a car driver.

Typical Mexican/Tucson meal



While in Tucson I walked to the nearest post office (hot and very sweaty) and posted my trusty SPOT back to an address I had obtained from the TD Facebook website. Oddly when I had picked up the device no forwarding address had been provided but use of the bikepacking forum resulted in an address being provided.

The day came for my departure. Mark very kindly took me to the airport. Once again very many thanks for all your hospitality and friendship; really most appreciated.

As detailed at the beginning of this journal; careful review of British Airways' website showed that they have a baggage policy which allows transport of a bike within the personal baggage allowance. This situation seemed almost too good to be true and naturally, being the cynic that I am, I was concerned about the practicality and local applicability of this policy so I had brought a copy of the policy with me.

As we know processing via the BA desk in the UK proceeded seamlessly. However I was fearful that this would not be the case in Tucson when I was to be handled via the American Airlines desk. I say this because the AA website details a mandatory \$190 tariff for bikes which I naturally wanted to avoid. While looking at the BA baggage issue I had fortunately noted a passing reference to 'codesharing' which means that baggage allowances is determined by the 'dominant' airline providing your flight(s).

https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/baggage-essentials/checked-baggage-allowances

Page feedback

Did you find the information you were looking for on this page?

Yes
 Partially
 No

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[> Increasing your checked baggage allowance](#) show +

[> Items you cannot take with you](#) show +

Travelling on other airlines

If your journey includes a flight with an airline other than British Airways, your checked baggage allowance may be different:

- If every flight in your journey has a **BA code** (e.g. BA1234) you will get British Airways' checked baggage allowance, even if some or all of the flights are operated by other airlines (so-called 'codeshare' flights).
- If every flight in your journey has **another airline's code**, you will get that airline's baggage allowance.
- If your journey includes a **mix of BA and other airline codes** (e.g. AA1122 or IB3210) you will get the allowance of the most significant carrier – usually the airline operating the longest part of the journey.

I noted that both elements of my return journey had BA prefixes; BA1692 (Tucson to Chicago) and BA1518 (Chicago to London). Consequently I reasoned that I would be able to utilise the BA baggage allowance and thereby avoid the AA tariff (which incidentally was almost exactly the same as the rearrangement fee associated with advancing the flight). Consequently I ensured that I printed off this portion of the website too.

I had therefore transported, and what's more preserved in good order, both these pieces of paper over 2,800miles.

Armed with the above knowledge and my 2 pieces of paper I advanced to the AA desk. All was progressing well until I loaded my bike box onto the scales (I had weighed it in Mark's flat on some cheap scales I had purchased so I knew it was within the weight allowance). The following conversation then ensued (*subtext in italics*):

Lady operative That will cost you \$190
(*sucker*)

Me Ah..... no I am afraid it won't; Essentially because I am flying using BA's baggage allowance
(*15:love*)

Lady No. You are flying on a codeshare agreement flight
(*got you there matey*)

Me Yes I know and that is precisely why I don't need to pay this charge; as will be readily apparent from reading the relevant entries on the BA website - showing her the printout
(*40:15 - got you back*)

Lady Where did you get this from?
(*buzzer*)

Me The BA website
(*as I have just told you*).

Lady How do we know that it came from that website

Me Look at the printout you can see the web page address.
Furthermore if you don't believe me look it up yourself.

Lady We are not allowed to go on other airline websites!

Me Ah I think you are, but even if you cannot you can see the printout
(*please don't lie to me*) Cue incredulous face

Lady How do we know you have not just made it up?

Me You don't really mean that do you??
(*eat shit and die*)

Lady Anyway it says you can take larger items for an additional charge
Triumphantly after re reading the second printout
(*Got you smartarse. That'll teach you to try challenging the might of American Airlines!!!!*)

Me Yes I know, but if you read the very next sentence you will see it says -
but currently we waive this charge so you do not pay it
(*eat shit and die but do it slowly and in great agony*
I am afraid I've just trumped your ace love)

Cue Lots of huffing and puffing

Lady I will have to show this to my supervisor
(*and figure out were we are with this limey and his codesharing*)

Me Fine I will wait here then shall I?
(*I am not going anywhere anyway*)

5 mins later one sour faced lady returns

Lady On this one occasion we are prepared to let you travel on BA allowance
as a good will gesture but we shall keep this paper

Me Fine – as I say it’s on the web site for all to see
(*Tumte tumte tumte dum*)

Lady No-one has ever said this about codeshare flights before

Me Perhaps it’s because no-one has ever read the small print.

Lady Handing me my tickets – Have a nice day
(*Bastard!!!!*)

Me Thank you I will
(*Yes I know I’m a bastard but I’m also a smug bastard!!*)

I think she tried to get her own back by putting me at the back by the window in a small seat but given my small size (now even smaller post TD) I fitted in no problem and even got free food (usually have to pay on the flight) because the hostess forgot the back row and the passenger next to me kicked off big style.

<https://www.britishairways.com/en-gb/information/baggage-essentials/sporting-goods-and-musical-instruments>

page: [Double basses](#) show

Yes
 Partially
 No

Submit

Sporting goods on British Airways

You can take many types of sports equipment as part of (but not in addition to) your free checked baggage allowance:

- All sporting equipment has to be packed appropriately to avoid damage and meet the [size and weight restrictions of your allowance](#).
- You can take larger items of up to 190 x 75 x 65cm (75 x 29.5 x 25.5in) for an additional charge. (Currently, we waive this charge so you do not pay it.) Any items larger than this require [shipping as cargo](#).
- Items over 23kg may incur an [overweight baggage charge](#).
- If required, you can [pay to take more checked bags](#) than your allowance. This also applies if you're travelling on a hand baggage only (Basic) fare.
- There are specific [safety and security restrictions](#) for some items and you might need to contact us to get approval first.
- If you are checking in a large piece of sports equipment, please allow an additional 15 minutes so that the item can be safely and securely handed over to the Baggage staff.

If your equipment isn't listed below or you have any questions, please [contact us](#).

Show all | Hide all

Bikes hide

You can take non-motorised bicycles of up to 190cm (75in) in length as part of your checked baggage, provided they are packed in a recognised bicycle bag. Please ensure that you:

- pack the bike in a protective case or bag
- remove the pedals or fix them inwards
- fix the handlebars sideways
- deflate the tyres to reduce the risk of damage

The flight back from Chicago was your usual scenario of sit in your seat, eat, have a couple of glasses of cheap wine and fail to sleep so watch movies instead – one of which was 'The Reverant'.

Given the bear attack in this film, and my apprehension regarding bears, I was very pleased indeed I did not see this on the way out.

*Bear attack.
Best viewed outside bear inhabited areas*



I landed at Heathrow and went through passport control.

I thought, given the beard I had better not use the electronic automatic exit and the officer confirmed my suspicion that, if the facial appearance has changed, they compare person's ears with the photo.

My ears apparently passed muster as I was let through and found myself back in to the UK.

I picked bike up my bike and cardboard box of clothes.

The bike box had been opened by US customs but obviously no nefarious substances had been found. It was a good job I had discarded the fermenting humus, the inedible chilli bean spread and the toxic green pickle contaminated cheese sandwiches before I got to Antelope Wells.

Once in the concourse Jackie was there to greet me, which was really lovely.

She said I looked gaunt. I cannot for the life of me understand why.

Arrived back safe and sound



So ends my trip not with a bang (or even a whimper); miscellaneous thoughts, musings and other trivia in the epilogue if you really want to read it; otherwise thanks for getting this far.