

Biking Estes Park, CO to Albuquerque, NM 1990

The third summer as a full time UNM student I rode my bike from Estes Park, Colorado to my house in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The total trip was 548 miles and that was the shortest summer of bike touring since I started UNM.

Day 0, Friday, August 10, 1990

On August 10, 1990 I took the 11:30 A.M. bus to Denver, Colorado from Albuquerque, New Mexico. I arrived in Denver at 9:45 P.M. to find that my brother, Jay, had not arrived at the bus terminal. Jay lived in Fort Collins, Colorado and was supposed to arrive in Denver at 8:45 P.M. from Boston, Massachusetts. He left a message at the Greyhound desk that his flight was delayed and not due in until 1:00 AM. I decided to un-box my bicycle and assemble it while I was waiting. I rode around downtown Denver and then went back to the bus station. Jay arrived at about 1:00 A.M. and we went to his house in Fort Collins to sleep for the night.

Day 1, Saturday, August 11, 1990

In the morning, we drove to Estes Park, Colorado to start our trip. The ride from Estes Park (elevation 7,000 ft.) to the top of Trail Ridge Road (elevation 12,183 ft.) in Rocky Mountain National Park is a tough 20-mile climb. It took about 5 hours to reach the top with our camping gear loaded bikes. The ride starts in a beautiful pine forest and ascends to a tundra ecosystem that is above the tree line. The ride goes through beautiful flowery meadows and past glaciers. We stopped for lunch at, Alpine Visitor Center (elevation 11,796 ft.), the top of the ridge. The ride down the backside of the mountain follows the Colorado River from its headwaters. This part of the Colorado River is only a small stream that gets larger as one descends down the mountain. It rained on and off all day, but it was a beautiful day. When we stopped for dinner in Grand Lake, Colorado it rained like crazy. After the rain quit, we continued until we arrived at a bridge near Pine Beach. We camped under this bridge next to the Colorado River. (Daily bike miles 53.1 miles; Total Miles 53.1)

Day 2, Sunday, August 11, 1990

In the morning, we rode for 12 miles and then split up in Granby, Colorado. Jay went towards Rollins pass and then back to Estes Park, Colorado. I followed the Colorado River and then took the highway to Dillon, Colorado. Going towards Breckenridge, Colorado I followed bike trails around Lake Dillon and then another bike trail that followed a stream to Breckenridge. I started the ride to Hoosier Pass (elevation 11,541 ft.) in a steady rain and ended up camping on the side of the road about 3 miles short of the summit. (Daily bike miles 104.2 miles; Total Miles 157.3)

Day 3, Monday, August 13, 1990

The next day, I went over Hoosier Pass (elevation 11,541), Trout Creek Pass (elevation 9,346 ft.) and Poncha Pass (elevation 9,010 ft.). Trout Creek Pass was only a small climb with a lot of downhill on the backside. Poncha Pass was a tougher climb and had a longer descent that ended up on a very flat long stretch. It rained very hard for about a mile. Before it starting raining, I could see a wall of rain all the way around me, so I had time to put on all my rain gear. Then I rode like crazy through the mile wall of rain and then it stopped raining again. A man in a truck stopped and said he could barely see me (it was getting dark and I was not using my headlights yet) and offered me a ride to the next town. I have a pride in making these trips without rides and refused. But I do not like to take chances, so I found a place to camp in the sagebrush. Something in the bushes irritated me and my fingers and lips swelled in the night. I did not sleep well. (Daily bike miles 110.7 miles; Total Miles 268.0)

Day 4, Tuesday, August 14, 1990

In the morning, I rode the 40 flat miles to Alamosa, Colorado and ate breakfast. In Antonito, Colorado a man (Chris an attorney) on a bicycle from Albuquerque rode with me for about 10 miles. He was visiting his parents in Antonito and was just going for a short ride. In Tres Piedras, New Mexico a lightning bolt went over my head and I could feel the electricity; scary feeling! Then I made it to a gas station and it started raining like hell. When I was outside the store eating a microwave burrito, a drunk drove up in his pickup truck to get some gas. He started talking to me and I did not want to be on the road when he was driving (he was so drunk that he could hardly walk). After the drunk left and the rain quit, I rode towards Espanola, New Mexico. That night, I camped in the Carson National Forest 38 miles north of Espanola. When I rolled out my sleeping bag, I noticed a lot of ants. I think that maybe this is why I became swollen the previous night. I flicked away the ants and sprayed bug spray on my sleeping bag. I had no more ants all night. (Daily bike miles 125.2 miles; Total Miles 393.2)

Day 5, Wednesday, August 15, 1990

The ride to Espanola was mostly downhill with several ranches that had unleashed dogs. I was chased by at least 20 dogs. In town, I ate breakfast at Burger King and then biked uphill until I reached Los Alamos, New Mexico. In Los Alamos, I ate chicken nuggets at Kentucky Fried Chicken. I paid for 9 nuggets and only received 6. The ride from Los Alamos to the Jemez was very steep and I had to walk my bike a couple of times. At Jemez Junction store a man asked me why I rode my bike so far. A lot of people ask me this question and I do not really know how to answer that question. I stopped at Jemez Hot springs and a naked woman asked me if I was the one that she had seen earlier riding up the road from Los Alamos. I said yes, and then we started talking about cycling. I then rode down to San Ysidro and ate a microwave

burrito at Circle K. It was getting dark and I used my light to try and get home. As I was riding down the highway, I saw a desert dog in the moonlight. When I went back to try and take a picture a diesel truck and a car stopped and shined their lights at me. I guess they wanted to see if I was OK. I was really tired of biking (I was barley moving) at about midnight and a mile before reaching Rio Rancho, I put on my sweat suit (sweat shirt and sweat pants) and went to sleep on the side of the road. (Daily bike miles 133.4 miles; Total Miles 526.6)

Day 6, Thursday, August 16, 1990

I woke up at about 3:00 A.M. and started riding home. I was really dragging and about a mile before I reached my house, I decided to turn off my generator light. As I continued, I still heard a dragging, so I stopped and found out the dragging was due to having my spare tire lodged between my bike rack and rear wheel. It was like having my rear brake on. Apparently, the tire was lodged in there for about 50 miles, because the new tire had a large hole wore in it. After removing the tire, it was an easy ride home. (Daily bike miles 21.4 miles; Total Miles 548.0)

This trip I had my longest consecutive day on a loaded mountain bike to date. I left Estes Park, Colorado on August 10, 1990 and arrived in Albuquerque, New Mexico on August 16, 1990 after riding 548 miles.