

Biking Central America - Guatemala-El Salvador-Honduras-Nicaragua 2013

Day 1, Friday, November 22, 2013

After worked I biked home and finished packing for my trip to Guatemala. Then I walked over to the max station and took the max to the airport. I felt stressed trying to get to the airport on time, I had plenty of time and it's not stressful getting home. The problem is on the flight out if anything goes wrong, I could miss my flight, on the return flight it is not stressful getting home because if I am late, I just have trouble returning to work on time. Once at the airport I sent my first e-mail of my trip using my iPad from the airport Wifi. I had lots of time at PDX and walked all around the airport, probably walked at least 3 miles. The flight to Houston was uncomfortable, the guy next to me kept falling asleep on my shoulder. Wow that was annoying! (Walked about 3 miles)

Day 2, Saturday, November 23, 2013

When I arrived in Houston I had about 3 hours so I walked through ever part of the airport I could access without going through security. I had not been able to get my frequent flyer miles determined in Portland and was able to get a frequent flyer mile account in Houston. I never use my frequent flyer miles and think I may have lost my miles from previous years. I can probably just start over with United Airlines. I also exchanged some US money for Guatemala money (about \$150 US), Honduras money (about \$75 US) and Nicaragua (about \$150 US). El Salvador uses US money, so no need to exchange money for El Salvador. The flight to Guatemala City went fine. Once at the airport I had trouble asking how to get the shuttle to the motel since I speak almost no Spanish. The man near the exit of the airport security area pointed where to go, I went that direction and once outside the airport he was trying to point out my spot I needed to wait. A man with a cell phone was trying to help me, but I think he was more annoying than helpful. He dialed the number from my paper, handed me his cell phone and left me. I could not understand how to use his phone, he redialed, same problem, then he called again and said something, I saw the shuttle coming and gave him a dollar for his attempted help. I really would have been better off without his help. The shuttle took me to the motel, I checked into my room and walked all around Guatemala City, did not find anything that interesting. But I was able to get my bearing using my GPS. I noticed men peeing on the side of the road and there were some very modest restrooms near some bus stops. They smelled like pee and you could see the flow and legs of the people peeing. I had dinner at the McDonald near the motel. Since I could not find drinking water, I ended out using my purifying pills with 2 liters of water from the hotel. The motel water is probably fine, but better safe than sorry. I asked for the Wifi pass word and was told me the Wifi

was not included with my room. There was an additional \$10.00 charge for Wifi, that seemed way too high, so I did without Wi-Fi. (Estimated walked about 13 miles)

Day 3, Sunday, November 24, 2013

I woke up later than I wanted to and ate breakfast. I checked out of the hotel and started riding to Antigua. The ride was mostly uphill and took a long time. At one point a man and his wife stopped to find out about my trip, he was a local cyclist. We took photos of each other and I continued biking. Lots of cyclists past me going up the hill, it was a training ride for them, to me it was a tough start to my bike trip.

Although the biking miles to Antigua were short (only about 24 miles). Once in town I found a motel and left my bike there while they got my room ready. They said 2 hours, so I walked all around town and found a tour I could take to climb Volcano Pacaya. I also bought a couple of souvenirs. Then I went back to the motel and my room was still not ready. I tried explaining that I needed to settle in and go for my hike. Since my Spanish is limited, I am not sure they understood me. I told them I would wait until my room was ready, I think that speed up the process. They said another 15 minutes. After the 15 minutes I asked again they had me wait, they could not find the person that pre-paired the room, but told me it was OK to put my stuff in the room. The original time they said to get my room ready was 2 hours, it actually took more like 2.5 hours. I was told to show up for my guided hike a little before the departure time of 2:00 PM. I was there about 10 minutes early and waited. The tour agent was not concerned with my tour and indicated it was still on schedule. Another person going on my tour showed up around 2:10 PM, so I felt more comfortable that I would not miss the hike. At around 2:15 PM they picked us up for the hike. The large van already had 8 people in the tour, after they picked us (3 of us at my spot) up they picked up 2 more people. The tour had 13 people and a few locals with horses to carry people that could not do the hike. One lady from California took the horse from the start, another lady took a second horse after about ½ of the uphill part of the hike was complete. It was a very slow hiking/ nature trip. I was expecting a hike to summit the volcano. There was a French man that was also expecting the hike to be a summit climb. He told me he was always hiking and that he was currently working in Hong Kong. He suggested we ditch the group and summit the mountain. I agree as we started to ditch the group, I noticed the guide shaking his head no to me. I stopped the French man he went to see if he could get support from his friends. He was with 2 other people, they wanted to keep it safe and stay with the group. I did not want to get in trouble and agreed. After a few minutes the French guy went faster and I caught up to him and mentioned we should not ditch the group. He was going to continue without me and I was very interested in continuing so I figured why not, how much trouble could we get into and it would be an adventure trying to figure out how to get back to Antigua if our group left us on the mountain. We came to a fence the French man went under the fence and I went through the gate on the fence. Then we came to

the Lava store where we could see another group, so we caught up to that group. I asked if that group was going to the top and they said it was not allowed. The volcano was supposedly active (it did not look active) and dangerous at the crater. The French man wanted to continue so I followed. The authorities at the Lava store and our guide could see us and yelled to get us to come back. The French man finally decided we should turn around. I was going to do whatever he did, so I also turned around. Before turning around, I had the French man take my photo using my IPAD, that night I used the WiFi at the motel to load the photo onto my Facebook photo page. I was glad I had the IPAD when I found WiFi at motels, for research, e-mail and to upload photos to Facebook. We were only about 500 vertical feet from the top, what a shame we had to turn back. Our tour guide and the authorities at the Lava store seemed very mad at us. They gave me bad looks and scolded the French man. Since I do not understand French or Spanish, I was able to mostly get away with a blank look. After that the guide kept asking where is the Cravono when he could not see the French man. Everyone would laugh when the guide asked where is the Cravone, not sure what that means. We spent some time at about 1000 feet below the summit where we watched the sunset and a couple of people roasted marshmallows in the heat vents of the Volcano. Once back in Antigua I started walking back to my motel. I was using my GPS and did not recognize the motel. The main doors were closed and it looked different. If I had not marked the location with my GPS, I would not have found it. I was right in front of it with my GPS and it did not look right, but the name on the outside of the motel was correct. I did not see bottled water all day, but did see some just before the motel. However, I did not buy any and after having them open the main door to let me in I decided not to leave the motel again. I was thinking about purifying more water, but decided not to chance it and figure out what to do in the morning. (Daily Bike 24.52 miles; odometer total bike miles 2341.7; GPS total miles 39.15 miles – include walking in Guatemala City and Volcano Hike (after this day I left GPS off when walking in towns); bike odometer trip total miles 24.52; estimated walked 10 miles)

Day 4, Monday, November 25, 2013

I wanted to bypass San Salvador and deviated from my original plan of taking the Pan American highway (before leaving for my trip I read that the best bike route would be the Pan American highway since it was maintained better than the other highways in Central America). I decided to use the costal route through El Salvador and took a less traveled route to the boarder. The road was very good, but the route had a lot of long uphill sections that made for a slow day. My GPS maps helped a lot getting through the Cities, but it was very important to keep a close watch on the turns. It was hard to tell from the GPS exactly when to turn if several roads were very close. If you missed a turn or the roads where not on the GPS map it would repeatedly recalculate. This made it tough to get through cities, but without the GPS it would have been almost

impossible. At one point there was a 3.8-mile uphill ride where I needed to take the Pan American highway for a short distance. Once on the Pan American highway there was another tough 3.8-mile uphill ride. The Pan American highway was only slightly better than my secondary highway and had way more traffic. I think picking the right secondary highway was a better choice (although I did not always pick the best road). My GPS showed a motel in the town of San Carlos so I decided to go to the motel. There was really nothing before that motel and the town was really a very small village with a very nice motel near the river with a nice swimming pool. When I asked how much they said 260 GTQ, I tried to talk them down, but there was no bargaining. I think they noticed I did not have much money and seemed poor, since I got out my almost empty wallet and came up with just barely enough for the room. After I settled in the guy decided to give me 110 GTQ back, so I took the money. Then he came back with a note saying he undercharged me and requested 40 GTQ back. His note was in broken English since I do not understand Spanish and he did not know English. From the note I thought the cost of the room was supposed to be 150 GTQ, but now it was 190 GTQ. It really did not matter, there was no place else for me to stay without camping on the side of the road. I walked around the town of San Carlos. It was a very small village with no tourist attractions. There was a small church in the middle of town, people loitering in front of the church watched me as I walked around. It was not an inviting town. I wanted to take a photo of the village, but did not feel comfortable getting out my camera. I felt people would not want me to photograph their quaint town and that it may attract unwanted attention towards me. I then made my way back across the highway bridge to my motel. The motel was far enough from the village to feel safe. Back at the nice motel I found they did not have Wifi and I ended up getting a nice dinner at the motel. The meal consisted of chicken, rice, tortillas and a beer. Had water in my camel back, but for some unknown reason it leaked out in my day pack. Things in the pack were wet and I lost precious water, I quit using the camel back for the rest of the trip. (Daily Bike 64.31 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 88.83; GPS total trip miles 103.16 miles; estimated walked 1 mile; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 9202 ft)

Day 5, Tuesday, November 26, 2013

I woke around 5:45 AM and got ready to leave the motel. As I biked, I found the small town are mostly friendly, people smile and wave. Some people shout at me, not sure if they are friendly, angry or want something. When I arrived at the El Salvador border a group of kids circled me trying to get my passport to help me through the boarder. I said no and tried to get through the boarder on my own. They insisted that this one guy was the boarder man. Since I do not speak Spanish, I really do not know what they were saying. I finally gave the one guy my passport and they insisted it was \$20.00 for the boarder. I knew there was a tourist card required for El Salvador, so I gave him the \$20.00 and he got my passport ready to leave Guatemala. They asked

about the bike and I said I brought it from the USA. I recall reading something suggesting that you get proof that a bike is yours when you enter some countries so they do not charge you tax for the purchase. Luckily, I was not harassed any more about the bike and they let me go to the El Salvador side of the boarder. The same guys were still helping me and wanted another \$20.00 I resisted, but they all insisted that it required another \$20.00 for tourist papers. I finally gave in and gave him another \$20.00 then he got me the required stamp so I could enter El Salvador. After that they wanted money for helping me, I relentlessly gave 2 of the guys \$1.00 each and complained about the costs. The other finally left (about another 6 or 7 guys who probably also wanted money). There was also a man that wanted to exchange money for me, he gave me a very bad rate and I said no. They insisted the amount was correct and showed me how they calculated the exchange. I went for it without thinking. They gave me \$17 US dollars for 220 GTQ (the amount I should have received is more like \$28.00 US = 220 GTQ/ 7.8435). The whole boarder experience was bad and cost way more than it should have, but they did get me through quickly without huge boarder hassles. I never had to leave my bike and wonder if someone was stealing stuff from it. So even though it cost way more than it should have, I was done and they probably needed the money more than I do. The biggest mistake was exchanging the Guatemala money for about ½ of what it was worth, but I did need the money later in my trip. I think it would have been a lot easier crossing the border on the Pan American Highway, the border where I crossed was not a main border crossing. There was a lot of uphill and I walked my bike up most of the hills. People are often collecting pieces of wood about 3 feet long and 3 inches in diameter. I think they use the wood for cooking. You see trucks loaded with wood, biked with wood and piles of wood in front of homes. On this day a few times I was people pulling homemade carts up hills. I also saw people riding the home-made cards down the highway after they loaded the carts with wood. The carts did not seem that well designed, the wheels where small rubber wheels and they had rubber foot pedals they would drag on the road to use as brakes. I found a motel that was up a dirt road, I did not like the location and they wanted \$40.00 per night. I tried to talk them down in price and they would not bargain. It was already getting dark, but I continued anyways. I found a nicer motel and the location was much better with respect to the highway. They wanted \$70.00 per night and I ended up getting them down to \$59.00 a night. That still seemed too expensive to me, so I decided to continue cycling. I went up hill a lot and it was getting darker. I was leaving the town and nothing was in the near distance per my GPS. I really did not want to camp out, so I decided to go back down the hill and pay the \$59.00 for the nicer motel. As I was crossing the road to the motel a motor scooter honked at me, I was not paying enough attention and cut him off, luckily, I was not run over! His lights were not very bright, but mine are not so bright either! I did not want to go further back and save money by staying at the cheaper motel, so I stayed at the nice. I think I was the only person staying at the motel, you would think they

would have been more willing to bargain on the price. (Daily Bike 56.98 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 145.81; GPS total trip miles 159.46 miles; estimated walked 0.25 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 13052 feet; daily accumulative elevation gain was 3849 feet)

Day 6, Wednesday, November 27, 2013

The day started out with wind and lots of downhill. I had some trouble navigating through the town of Sonsonate. Once out of town I looked at my map and realized I was headed towards San Salvador, which was a city I wanted to avoid. I had my GPS set for La Libertad and was expecting the route to take me along the coast. Once I realized I was headed to San Salvador I changed my destination to Acajutla. I was glad when that my GPS found a route that bypassed going back through Sonsonate, I did not want to go back through that town. I think this route actually bypassed the worst parts of Sonsonate. I stopped to get food at a gas station, the pictures of their food looked good, but the actual food looked old and not safe to eat. So instead of getting the prepared food I just bought packaged snacks. There was a lot more downhill than uphill that day, but I was surprised at how much accumulative gain I had for the day. When I left Sonsonate, I had plenty of water, I did not see any place after that town to get more water. I had to ration my water before arriving at a motel near a beach town. At the town I found a reasonable motel, they wanted \$50.00 a night if I was using a credit card or \$30.00 if I used cash. So, I paid cash for the room, they gave me a medium bottle of water for free. The room was a private room, but the bathroom was shared. The motel had an armed guard, but you had to go through a dark empty building to get to the beach. It was a surfer beach and there were several surfers staying at the motel. I walked down to the beach to check out the sunset. Then I had dinner at the motel and went back down to the beach. This time I walked to the small nearby town and decided to go back along the highway. The part of town away from the beach seemed a little scarier, poorer people. But since it was dark, they could not really see me to tell I was a gringo. Basically, I went unnoticed back to my motel. (Daily Bike 75.07 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 220.87; GPS total trip miles 242.89 miles; estimated walked 5 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 15377 feet; daily accumulative elevation gain 2326 feet)

Day 7, Thursday, November 28, 2013

I found a full grocery store to buy supplies at, it may have been the first complete grocery store since I arrived in Central America. Most of the stores previously were small convenience stores with minimal supplies to choose from. At one gas station I had a nice chicken meal, the meal gave me an upset stomach that night, but it looked like good food. I was going strong all day and at one point in the day I noticed my water bottle cage was very loose and tightened the screw. I also figured I should check my trailer screws and verify that they were tight, but that was more difficult so I did

not check those screws. As I was crossing a bridge my trailer fell off my bike, the screw fell off and I could not find it. I checked all my spare screws and none were long enough. I should have tightened the screw earlier that day. I walked the bridge looking for the screw, but could not find it. I was trying to figure out what to do. I did not even know if I could walk to the next place or how I would ask for the parts. Or in I made it to a town if I would find a place that sells screws. I thought about trying to hitch a ride, I sort of felt like my trip might end with respect to cycling at that point. Then a man in a three wheeled vehicle pulled up to see what was wrong I showed him and he tried putting the short screw in the trailer (I had a replacement screw but it was not long enough). Once he realized the screw was too short, he took the screw and went back to the nearby town and found me 3 perfect screws for my trailer, he fixed my trailer, gave me the 2 extra screws and I paid him \$2.00. I think he would have helped me for free, at first, he refused my money and then he finally took the \$2.00. I was back on the road about 15 minutes after losing the screw. As I was biking towards the next town a man in a van pulled up next to me to see where I was from, I thought he was a local man. It turned out he spoke English and was from Nebraska (he had Nebraska License plates on the van, but he and his lady definitely looked Latin American). I arrived in the town of Usulután and had trouble finding a place to stay. I finally found a place with high walls, barbed wire on top of the wall and an armed guard (typical motel). The motel had a pool, but it was a bit run down. After settling into my room, I walked around looking for a grocery store. I found 2 other motels, one was only \$6.00 a night and was comparable to the one I was staying in at \$21.00 a night. The other motel looked nicer and probably would have been the one I would have selected if I had found it sooner. Walking around the town seemed scary, it was getting dark and several people gave me glaring, unfriendly looks. I have notice in Central America people give you a dirty look and when you wave and smile, they normally wave and smile back. Also, in Central America it's common to see people loaded in the back of a truck as transportation. It is also common to see people walking along the highway carrying machetes, the machetes always made me nervous since I read about people being robbed on bikes by men carrying machetes. I did notice they always carried the machetes with the blades down or in a cloth sheath. I often saw long strips of corn kernels on plastic on the shoulder of the highway. People were dragging their feet through the corn kernels, but I am not sure why they do this. I could not find a store so I walked back towards the motel and went in the other direction for a while and found a Texaco gas station with a nice store. I bought supplies at the store. Behind the gas station was a very nice hotel and that one would have definitely been my choice if I was not already settled into the first motel. But that motel may not have allowed the bike in the room and the run-down motel allowed my bike in the room. It was thanksgiving and I ended out having a great meal of smashed (in pack all day) tuna sandwiches. When I left my motel there were not very many cars around, when I returned from my hike it was crowded and there was some

sort of a buffet party. It looked like maybe a wedding party. (Daily Bike 75.04 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 295.91; GPS total trip miles 315.99 miles; estimated walked 4 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 16735 feet; daily accumulative elevation gain 1358 feet)

Day 8, Friday, November 29, 2013

When I work up in the morning most of the cars were gone. One truck that was left had backed up to my motel door room and I was not able to roll my bike and suitcase out the door. I had to lift them over the height of the truck bed to get them out of my room. I cycled to San Miguel on a back highway. It was a long uphill with a nice view of Volcano San Miguel. The hill climb was about 2500 vertical feet of gain in 10 miles, biggest uphill since Guatemala. At a small town I was not paying close enough attention to my GPS and ended on a dirt road, I then backtracked to the town. The town seemed a little seedy in this area and a man asked me something, he may have wanted money. Since I really did not understand him, I was able to mostly ignore him and continue biking through the small town. At the top of the 10-mile hill I came to 6-mile 2400 vertical feet downhill. I hate losing all the elevation; a gradual downhill would have been preferred. The ride from San Miguel to Santa Rosa de Lima was on a highway with small hills and more traffic. I was looking for a nice motel in Santa Rosa, but ended out seeing a lot of sleazy one. I saw one run down one for \$10.00/night. It was not an appealing area to me, so I continued until I got out of the major town area. Then I found a motel with walls and not too close to the rift raft for \$25.00/ night and stayed there. The motel was a little run down, but OK for me. I think I was the only one that stayed at the motel on that night. (Daily Bike 54.78 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 350.69; GPS total trip miles 369.97 miles; estimated walked .25 mile; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 19433 feet; daily accumulative elevation gain 2698 feet)

Day 9, Saturday, November 30, 2013

In the morning I cycle to the boarder of Honduras and like entering El Salvador I was approached to get help with custom. This time it was only one person and somehow, I figured out it was \$3.00 for the Tourist card and \$3.00 for his help. He pushed his way to the front of the line with my passport and had me ready to enter within 10 minutes. Also, he did not try for more money once he had my passport stamped, he politely left me alone and went back towards the border. It was much better, easier and helpful than the people at the El Salvador / Guatemala boarder. I was very thankful for his help. The line did not look pleasant for me. I did notice a lot of Freightliner trucks, cool! The roads seemed very good at first and there was some neat straw rain deer for sale in Honduras. Since I was on the Pan American Highway the traffic was a lot heavier than in El Salvador. The shoulder went away and the road no longer seemed pleasant. I noticed the diesel trucks were generally very courteous and normally gave

me plenty of room. However, the busses were always in a hurry and gave me little room and normally honked their horns when they zoom up from behind me. Another part of cycling and walking in Central America is you need to watch out for deep unmarked holes in the road and on sidewalks. It appears that people probably steal the man whole covers and grates. When I was walking in Choluteca, I noticed a hole in the middle of the sidewalk that was about 3 feet wide by about 5 feet long by about 6 feet deep. That might be another good reason not to go out at night (also theft and murder at night is high in El Salvador and Honduras), you would get hurt if you fell in that hole! The hotel I found in Choluteca, Honduras, the "Paradise Hotel" was the first hotel with hot water in 4 days and first motel with Wi-Fi since Antigua, Guatemala. Each night I would read up on things coming up, that night I read up on Nicaragua and decided to go towards Leon. Originally, I was thinking about staying on the Pan American highway, but the new route seemed more interesting. Maybe even shorter. That night I found that my Spanish/ English phrase book was soaked and ruined, so I left it at the motel. Maybe they could figure out how to dry it up and use it. (Daily Bike 63.67 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 414.36; GPS total trip miles 432.98 miles; estimated walked 3 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 20975 feet; daily accumulative elevation gain 1542 feet)

Day 10, Sunday, December 1, 2013

I got an early start, I left the hotel around 6:15 AM. As I was biking there were some kids with adults that had some large Iguanas tied up, not sure if they were selling them or getting ready to eat them. I stopped to get photos of the lizards. They let me get photos, but turned their heads so I did not get their faces, I think maybe it may not be legal to hunt the lizards. Later that day I saw one of the big lizards running across a field, the running lizard was probably going about 30 MPH. It was fast! In the same area I was cycling and then I noticed a snake that was about 6 feet long next to the road, by the time I saw the snake it was very close to my foot. We startled each other and the snake darted into the ditch. It seemed a little scary, but it was not in attacking mode. It was scared of me too. Not sure what kind of snake it was. Shew! I wish the dogs would go the other way! Lots of farmers in El Salvador, saw lots of pigs on the side of road, as well as cows, chickens, turkeys, etc. People use machetes to get through the jungles, lots of people walk along the highway with machetes, some on bike, some on trucks, but they don't seem to use them so much as weapons, just to cut through grass and vegetation. But since there have been reported armed robberies with machetes, they made me nervous. I stopped at one gas station and people were very interested in my trip, so I took their photo. Throughout Honduras I saw people taxing other people on 3 wheeled bikes. When I arrived at the Nicaragua border, I found that I was able to go through the customs without anyone helping me. Since I do not speak Spanish, it was tough to tell them where I was going. I tried telling them I was going to Leon, but they did not understand me. A man listening said Managua and I agreed.

They ended up giving me a tourist card and I was no my way. Easy boarder, once out I had to ask where next. I think it would have been easy to bypass the border, however I was stopped shortly after leaving the border by police and asked to show my tourist card. Good thing I picked up the tourist card. There were more nice people driving 3-wheel bicycle taxis in Nicaragua. Some very small steel homes with hammocks. As I was cycling a boy on a motorcycle stopped to find out about my trip. He kept repeating stuff in Spanish, I wish I could have understood him. He seemed very friendly and had a very nice motorcycle. We exchanged e-mail, I gave him a gobikeride.com card and we took photos of each other. If I remember right, he said he was 15 years old and was planning on taking a trip to the USA. A lot of people when I told them I was from the USA they seemed interested and often people said they once worked in the USA. More scenic volcanoes seen as I cycle through Nicaragua. There are lots of Volcanos all over Central America. I found a nice hotel in Chinandega, but a bit expensive I tried talking them down in price, but then they told me where to look for cheaper motels. I wanted to stay in a nice place so I paid the price. The motels are funny in Central America, no hot water at this nice Hotel. About 3/4 of the motels have no hot water. I did a little walking around the road and then back to my hotel. The hotel was very nice and comfortable. I watched TV and use my IPAD to surf the web, I was glad I bought my IPAD it made it so I could surf the Web, I also used it to upload photos to my Facebook account. That night I used it to reserve a motel room in Leon for the next night and another motel nears the Managua airport for my last night. I was getting low on money, I needed to do something and pre-paying the motels on Orbitz.com was probably enough for me to complete my trip. (Daily Bike 77.64 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 492.0; GPS total trip miles 509.60 miles; estimated walked 4 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 21894 feet; daily accumulative Elevation gain 919 feet)

Day 11, Monday, December 2, 2013

The hotel included breakfast, I had trouble explaining what I wanted since they did not have a menu and I speak very little Spanish. Breakfast took a long time. I should have skipped it. The electric in the nice hotel went out for a second time, a little dark in the room the first time when it went out in the evening. The toilet at the hotel did not work great, it seems like all the hotels even the good ones have issues. The ride to Leon was short and easy, it was a planned short day and I was hoping to add in a Volcano climb. Once in Leon I had trouble finding my hotel. The traffic was very busy in the downtown area. Everyone inching towards each other, at one point I heard a clunk. A taxi driver got too close to me and hit my trailer. He bent the trailer axle, but I was able to straighter it out at the hotel that night. After the bent wheel and before I found the hotel, I ended out getting a flat on the other trailer wheel. That was the only flat of this bike trip. I was not able to put the address to the hotel into my GPS, the previous night (when I reserved the room) I could not find anything on the

internet that gave the address of the best Western hotel. I only had a written description of the location that I had hand copied from the Orbitz web site. I had the street name, but could not find the name on the street signs. I knew I was close and asked some young tourists if they knew where the Best Western was located. I figured it was a big hotel, they found it on their tourist map and told me how to get there. Once at the hotel I was there too early and my room was not ready. They let me store my bike in a back room and I then went walking around Leon. When I walked out of the hotel, I marked my location on the GPS before walking around, so I could find my way back if I got lost. The Best Western in Leon is expensive, but has no pool, no restaurant, no lounge (or bar), no windows in my room to outside and the hot water did not work. I walked around town and took photos of all the old buildings and churches. Then I tried to see about getting a guided hike up the nearby Volcano Cerro Negro. They hike up and snow board down on the gravel. I was very interested, but there were no tours going on that afternoon. I could have seen about getting a private tour, but figured it would be too expensive. I wish I would have asked about the price. I think it may not have been too much for a private guide. I went back to the hotel and my room was ready, I moved my stuff upstairs and cleaned up a bit. I continued to walk around town and it got boring after a while. There were some interested murals in town. I think they may have been related to the Contra War, one mural had people being shot by military on the street, another look like a war hero, etc. I bought some groceries and ate in my hotel room. (Daily Bike 25.08 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 517.08; GPS total trip miles 524.18 miles; estimated walked 10 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 21990 feet; daily accumulative Elevation gain 96 feet)

Day 12, Tuesday, December 3, 2013

To this point in my trip the roads have been very good, normally even had shoulders. A man came out of his shack near the highway to see where I was headed. When I told him he pointed in the opposite direction and I said something about traffic. I had just passed the other road to Managua that route followed the water and I expected more traffic that way. I decided to take the route that was a little inland and about the same distance as the lake front way towards Managua. I think the man in the shack was trying to tell me to go the lake front route due to road construction ahead on the road I decided to take. Since I do not understand Spanish, I continued the direction I wanted to go. Not far from where I saw the man in the shack, I saw road construction ahead. It ended out being about 14 miles of mostly torn up roads, a very unpleasant ride with hills. The traffic was light this route, but I would have preferred better roads at the cost of more traffic. The dirt road was also a slight continuous uphill, I gained about 1600 vertical feet on the road construction section. I always saw lots of colorful butterflies in Central America, on this day I saw one of the blue Morpho butterflies flying in the wild. Lots of uphill and it was getting dark. Per my GPS I knew there

should be a motel. When I got to where I thought the motel was, I asked people if it was further down the road than expected. It was the only motel I had seen since I left the turn off to Managua, it was not a nice-looking place and they would not let me put the bike in the room. They let me put the bike in a corner of the restaurant. It seemed expensive and I could not bargain on the price, I went for it since I did not want to stay out for the night. The motel had no air conditioning or fan, no TV, no bikes in room and the window was next to the noisy highway traffic. Not a great place to stay. A distance before the motel I did see a place they may have worked out for camping. I brought my camping gear on this trip, but never used it. I might not bring the camping gear on my next trip. The motel was at an elevation of 2922 feet. When I was marking my location to the motel on my GPS, I noticed the tracking function was not turned on in the GPS from the entire day's bike ride. When I was in Leon, I turned off the track so I would not get tracking miles while walking around town looking for my way back to the hotel and to find groceries. What a bummer I never turned the GPS tracking back on in Leon and did not track this day's bike route. However, the Altitude gain and miles were being tracked in the trip data screen of the GPS. I know the route I took from the map. (Daily Bike 63.63 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 580.71; GPS total trip miles 596.44 miles; estimated walked 0.1 mile; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 24964 feet; daily accumulative elevation gain 2974 feet)

Day 13, Wednesday, December 4, 2013

Throughout the night I felt uncomfortable that my bike was not in my room, however I slept. In the morning my bike was still where I put it and was locked in the empty motel with me. A dog was barking at me and the man in the house behind the motel came down and unlocked the door of the motel so I could leave. I did not get a great night of sleep, too hot without an air conditioner. I was already cycling by about 6:00 AM. I saw 3 traveling cycling going north. They did not have very fancy equipment and looked Latin American. My guess is they were coming up from Panama or South America. I keep thinking I should be taking more photos. I have seen a lot of neat stuff. Mostly related to people and culture, but I don't feel comfortable taking photos of people at work or living in poverty. Sometimes when I stop and people gather to ask question, I request a photo and they always seem OK with that. Sometimes they smile and other times they give me a rough look. There always fun photos. Lots of fruit stands and fruit trucks in Central America. I cycled to San Jorge and took the ferry to Moyogalpa on Ometepe Island. The island is in Lake Nicaragua and is made up of 2 volcanos – Volcano Concision (1610 meters) and Volcano Maderas (1349 meters). On the way over to the island I took the local boat, takes no cars and cost ½ as much as the car ferry to the island. The previous night I researched the island and found that the bigger town was Moyogalpa and the other town had a ferry to Granada. My lonely planet book did not say anything about the town in the middle San Jose del

Sur. And the motel I stayed in the previous night did not have WiFi so I could not find out more about the island the previous night. Once off the boat a lady on a motor scooter recruited me to check out the hostel her family ran. They had a variety of rooms, a cheap shared room, a more expensive room with air conditioning and a shared bathroom. And then a medium-priced room with a fan and its own bathroom. I like having my own bathroom and the price seemed good enough. I decided to take the room before exploring, which was my original plan. They had told me that the other town with the ferry to Grenada was not the best way to get to Grenada. They said that the boat landed in Granada at 4:00 AM and that was not a safe time to arrive. My Lonely Planet book said the boat would arrive at 4:00 PM in Granada, but it was an old outdated book. I probably would have continued to the other town if they did not tell me that. They convinced me the bus from San Jorge to Granada would be OK and much faster. They also told me they could line up a guided hike to the top of Volcano Concepcion. After settling into the motel, I walked around town and back to the dock where the lady recruited me for her hostel. At the dock there was a map of the island, on the map I could see the town that looked like the most fun was San Jose del Sol. But I do think the town I was in may have been the better place to start the hike and the room was good enough. I did a bike ride part way around the island I thought I was going in the direction that was not recommended. I think I may have made it to the town with the beaches, but I did not go far enough to see the beaches before turning back to my town. I did not want to get back after dark. Back in town I looked for the guy at the hostel that said he could set up a volcano Concepcion hike and he was not there. Then I went to the tourist tour reservation place in town and found out I could get a private guide for a volcano Concepcion climb for \$35.00, I was going to get the guide set up and found that I did not have enough cash with me. I told them I needed to go back to my motel to get more money. When I arrived back at the hostel the man that said he could set up a guide to climb volcano Concepcion was there, I told him I was arranging to climb the mountain with a guide for \$35.00 and he said he knew someone that could do it for \$30.00. I told him if that was possible, why not. He called up his friend and arranged the hike for the next day. I was told I needed food, at least 2 liters of water, sunscreen and good shoes for the hike. I had everything, but my shoes are very bald on the bottom and the next day I realized they were not adequate for the climb. I walked around town again and by the tourist tour place where I almost scheduled my climb. I stayed on the opposite side of the road so they did not try to recruit me again. They looked at me like I was coming over to set up the tour; I pretended like I did not notice and continued down the road. They seemed like nice people and I did not want to tell them I found a better price. I felt a little nervous about taking the bus to Guanacaste the next day and in an e-mail to Michele I mentioned all the things that happened and how I was afraid of the bus. Her reply was that she could not believe I was afraid of a bus and not things like snakes and dogs. I was nervous of the bus because I have been watching how they load things on the roof

of the buses and then when they drop people off, they quickly get their gear and then the bus zooms off. I was worried both about my bike getting damage or them zooming off before I got my bike and gear. I was also not sure how they secured things on the bus and wondered if it could fall off as they drive. The guy at the hostel told me I should not worry the people running the busses are very good at what they do and know how to get it right. He also said that I need to make sure to remind them of my stop and make sure they know they need to unload my gear before exiting the bus. That evening when I was walking around, I saw a lot of people lined up getting ready to march near the church. They had some sort of doll figure they seemed to worship and one man was occasionally launching small exploding rockets into the sky. Later that evening back at the hostel a group marched by, I think it was at the same group of people I saw lined up by the church. I think the march has to do with some sort of festivals that had been going on all week. (Daily Bike 69.36 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 650.07; GPS total trip miles 664.58 miles; estimated walked 3 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 25466 feet; daily accumulative Elevation gain 502 feet)

Day 14, Thursday, December 5, 2013

The previous night I requested a wakeup in the morning, at 4:30 AM the security guard woke me up and I made sure I had my stuff ready. At 5:00 AM my hike guide showed up and we walked to catch the bus to the hike starting point. When we arrived at the trail head my guide and I immediately started hiking. About 15 minutes into our hike some other guys from the bus caught up to us. I have a fast pace. I am always surprised when people pass me on a hike. We hiked together with the other group for a while. The other group had 3 men from Canada that had already climbed 4 other volcanos in Nicaragua. They work as forest fire fighters in the Canadian Rockies. These guys hiked for a living and were in extremely good hiking shape, no wonder they could pass me. They eventually left me in their dust. We also ran into a group of 2 people. One was the lady from the tour guide that I originally tried booking the hike with and did not have the money. The lady was friendly and I explained to her that I found a cheaper deal at my hostel, she said no problem. Her hike was with one person for a nature walk and not to climb to the summit. However, she was planning on arranging a guide for me to the summit the previous day. After about an hour we caught up to the Canadians as they took a rest. We all ended up leaving the rest spot at about the same time. Throughout the climb I kept catching them. Once we got out of the woods and started climbing the loose gravel we grouped up with the Canadians and two other people joined our group. The other 2 people were from a 3rd group that had people that did not want to summit. These 2 people wanted to summit and were given to my guide by another guide. The clouds above the tree line were very thick and we could only see about 50 feet. One of the guys that joined our group was from Czechoslovakia and he was taking about how he wanted it to stay cloudy so he could

not see how high he was in the mountain. He was afraid of the heights. I was thinking he should not continue, however as it got steeper I kept slipping and was glad he was there since most of the other people were getting out of my site and my guide was staying with us. I was also getting scared I was having trouble keeping on my feet and kept falling on my butt. My shoes were very bald on the bottom and were not adequate for the climb on loose ground. Everyone except the man from Czechoslovakia was hoping the mountain would clear up so we could get a view, but it never did, in fact the visibility was getting worse as we continued. When we only had about another 50 feet to the top my guide wanted me and the man from Czechoslovakia to wait on this flatter spot thinking it was too dangerous for us to continue. Our guide was still going and I continued to follow him to the top. The man from Czechoslovakia did not go the last stretch to the summit. He should have gone, although his fear of heights may have been a problem since there was a big cliff that we could not see over that was quite dangerous according to my guide. We stayed at the top for about 20 minutes hoping the clouds would clear so we could get a view. No such luck, you could not even see part way into the crater. There were lots of sulfuric fumes as you looked down into the clouded crater. They say you should not stay at the top for more than 5 minutes due to toxic fumes. However, the fumes were nonexistent if you stayed away from the area where you looked into the thick clouded crater. The area at the top is only big enough for our group. When we started down the Canadians and other 3 men just hiked out without a problem. My shoes were very slick and I was going down the top part on all 4. Near the top my guide did not want to go down the way the others went and the direction that looked easier to me. His comment was that there are big cliffs in the clouded area that was very dangerous and lots of people fall off the cliff and die. He was too nervous to go down that way and I went first, but slowly and on my hands and knees. He ended up going the way that looked more difficult to me. I think the way I went was the right way for me to go, the other way may have been hard for me with my shoes. I made it to where my guide left his pack before he was there. From that point on my guide was much faster than me and I kept slipping and falling on my butt. He would ask if I was OK after falling and I was fine. I will admit that gravel was getting ground into my hand and I wished I would have brought gloves. However, there was no blood and I felt no pain from my falling later. But my legs were sore for a few days after the climb. As I was climbing up, I was thinking I wished I did not go, that's how scary it seemed to me. I think if I would have had better hiking shoes it would have been easier. When I was down on stable ground it seemed like an easy climb. Once at the tree line a group of about 20 young girls and a couple adults' guides from Australia were hiking up. One of the adults asked me about the climb and I said it was not too bad, but very steep and hard to stay standing on the gravel. I do not think that group would have been right for the hike, but they may have tried. The hike was advertised to be a 10-12 hour round trip and we completed the hike in 6.5 hours. When we got off the bus in town the guide

was leaving, I did not need to tip him. But I stopped him and gave him 2 dollars. I think I did not give him a big enough tip, he seemed disappointed. He was a very good guide I should have given him at least \$5.00. He was young and has a couple of children, I'm sure money does not come easy for him. Back in town I walk around, bought groceries, ate and then decided to rent a motor cycle. The man at the hostel said they rent motorcycles at their shop and told me where the shop was. He suggested that I rent a motor scooter instead of a motorcycle since it did not require changing gears. He suggested that since I told him I had not ridden motor cycles in a long time. I could not find the shop he told me they had and went back to the hostel. The lady took me to the shop, I had been thinking about the distance I wanted to go and I know motorcycles have more power so I decided to rent the motor cycle instead of the motor scooter. I ended up taking the motorcycle to the other big town, Altagarcia. I wanted to find out about the ferry to Granada, but I did not see any sign of a ferry. I figured the man at my hostel was probably right about the late departure and I also heard that from someone else on the island. So instead of wasting time looking for the Ferry I decided to check out the other part of the island with Volcano Maderas. That part of the island looked like a nice place, but I did not spend much time there because I needed to get the motorcycle back by 5:00 PM. On the way back I thought about checking out Venecia beach, but thought I should get back, so I would not be late. I should have checked it out I ended up getting back around 4:30 PM, I had enough time to check out more stuff. I wish I would have picked up the motorcycle sooner and checked out more. The motorcycle tour was more like a 3-hour world wind ride without really seeing or doing much. The motorcycle I rented was a little worn out, not in great shape. A man Carlos near the boat had a motorcycle he would have rented me for the same price that looked like it was in a lot better shape. After the ride I talked with Carlos and he gave me the details. He claimed it would not matter if I was a little late. (Daily Bike 0 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 650.07; GPS total trip miles 672.60 miles; estimated walked 11 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 30702 feet; daily accumulative Elevation gain 5242 feet (5159 feet from volcano climb)) This is the e-mail I send Michele, "I am actually a wimp, today I climbed volcano Concepcion and I was afraid of falling off the mountain. The first 4000 vertical feet are not too bad, but the last 1000 vertical feet the guide said was 45 degrees. It was like climbing mount saint Helen's, but steeper. At the top it was cloudy and windy, I'm such a wimp that I was afraid to get my iPad out for a photo, but I was able to get out my camera (can't send photos from camera). At the top I noticed my guide was a little nervous about the edge that we could not see due to thick cloud. He said people fall off that edge and die all the time. So not only am I scared of the bus, but also of a short 8-mile volcano hike. I did see a couple of big blue butter fly and a howler monkey in the distance during the hike. You could hear the howler monkeys in the trees, I think there were a lot of them at the lower elevation. The attached photo was taken after we came down 1000 vertical feet and I

felt safe again. I also rented a motorcycle today after the hike. I am on the island for one more night, before the scary bus ride. Wow, sounds cold I'm glad I turned off my water, just not sure I drained the pipes enough. The heat is on low, hopefully that's enough. 5000 vertical foot hike today, very steep, a little scary to me. I guess I am wimp, it was too cloudy to get a photo at the top. My guide seemed scared because we could not see over the edge that people often fall off and die. I hope all is going well, I am mostly done with my trip."

Day 15, Friday, December 6, 2013

I got to boat dock a little after 7:00 AM, I thought there was a boat leaving at 7:30 AM. It turned out that a boat had left around 6:30 AM and the next boat was not until 9:00 AM. I should have gotten up earlier. While I was waiting for the boat a lady came up to me to ask about my bike. She told me that she had biked there from Northern Alaska and was going to bike all the way to Tierra Del Fuego. The trip I want to piece together. She was taking her time meeting people and working here and there. She said she had already been on the road for 2 years and had spent time working in Guatemala. She was headed toward Brazil to work another job. She said my bike was very unique and she had not seen one like it yet. The boat I took back to San Jorge was the bigger ferry type boat. It was very crowded and had cars. It was easier to get the bike on, but they charged more for the boat than the local boat (previous days boat to island) and additional for the bike. The local boat I took to the island the bike had to be lifted on to the boat and there was no additional charge for the bike. The bigger boat I could bike onto it, it had more room to walk around, it was more crowded (some bike groups got on the boat) and the boat was only slightly faster than the local boat. When I got off the boat there was a bus waiting to pick people up headed to Managua. I was nervous about the bus, because I thought either I would not know where to get off or my bike might get damaged or left of the bus before I got it. I showed the bus driver a piece of paper with Guanacosta (the place the man at the hostel told me I should get off in order to get to Grenada) written on it and he nodded yes. I tried to tell him to make sure I get off there, but since I do not speak Spanish, I do not think he knew what I was trying to tell him. They handed my bike and suitcase to the man on the roof of the bus and then put it into the roof rack. I was not sure how they got things to stay on the roof, but it seems like it works. I never saw things fall off the roofs of busses in Central America and they normally had a lot of stuff on the roofs. When I got on the bus there was a lady in the front seat with her bag sitting next to her. I should have seen if she would have let me sit there so I would have felt better about being able to get off the bus with my gear. Instead, I went towards the back of the bus where there was a pair of empty seats. I sat near the window and a few stops later a man sat next to me and fell asleep. I was keeping track of where I was headed with my GPS, the previous night I had marked Guanacosta with a wave point on my GPS. I had the GPS on and tracked the route. When I was very close to Guanacosta I

ended up having to wake the guy next to me up so I could make my way to the front of the bus. Once at Guanacosta I was the only one getting off there. I had to remind the bus driver I had stuff on the roof and they did get my bike and gear off the roof of the bus before the bus zoomed off. I was glad to be off that bus with my bike, gear and bike trailer. The bike made the trip fine, a man in a 3 wheeled vehicle came over and told me it was a hilly 24km ride to Granada. He wanted to taxi me to Granada, but I did not care I was planning on biking there. The ride was actually a very easy 11 km downhill ride. On the way to town, I saw a man on a bike with a backpack tied to a rack on the back of the bike. He looked European, so I asked if he spoke English. He spoke some English and told me he was from Germany. I kept seeing that man in Granada. A little before arriving in downtown I found a neat Cemetery to check out, some of the gravestones were over 6-foot-tall statues and some graves had building the size of a one-bedroom house. It was a very interesting cemetery. When I arrived in Granada it was still early, so I had plenty of time to look around to find a nice motel. Some hotels were run down and other too expensive. As I was biking, I checked out the shore of Lake Nicaragua and saw cows walking along the beach. The water looked very dirty, no place to swim. I also saw a place that looked like some sort of park with an arched building entry, I thought there might be a charge to enter the place, but I did not see anyone stopping to pay the people near the arched building entry. I think those people may have been there to sell stuff not to collect money. I found a medium grade motel and stayed there. I tried paying with traveler's checks, but they did not take them. I've had the traveler's checks for years they are not easy to use any more. Traveler's checks used to be the way to go, but now people use ATMs. The hotel was nice for me, it had WiFi, a TV, breakfast included and air conditioning, but no hot water like most hotels in Central America. By that time, I had gotten used to tap water temperature shower, not that cold and they felt good on a hot day. It was really not that hot, about 85 F and low humidity. After settling in and walking around I found a hotel that seemed slightly better with a swimming pool. Oh well I probably would not have gone swimming anyways. I walked around town looking for a grocery store, but could not find one. I finally found a vender on the square selling water. Since I do not understand Spanish, I could not understand how much it cost for the 2-liter water and a small Gatorade. She put up 10 fingers, so I figured it was 10 NIO. I gave her 10 NIO and she wanted more. I handed her another 20 NIO and she still was looking for more. I turned out she wanted 100 NIO, not 10 NIO. She did get my money, it seemed like it was way too expensive. I finally found a store that had water and it was only 26 NIO for 2 liters of water there. I felt the lady in the square was not honest on her pricing and decided I should not buy from street vendors again. I went back to the hotel and then returned to the square. I saw a vender that had his earnings priced. I asked him about the others and he had grouped prices for the earrings. His prices were good and I understood the prices, so I felt he was honest. I decided this vender was OK to buy from and bought some nice ear rings for Michele. I then went back to the motel and

relaxed for a while. Then I walked around some more and found a festival at the end of the road. It was a lot of people with music and a statue to worship. There had been some sort of celebrations going on all week in Nicaragua. I tried to find a bank to trade in Traveler's checks. I needed more money and had not withdrawn money or used my credit card. I was told by my bank in Portland that fraud was very high in Central America and that I should not use my credit card or ATM card. I found a bank and waited in a very long line to cash my traveler's check. Once at the bank attendant she told me I was in the wrong line. She pointed to another place with a bunch of people waiting in chairs to be called on by people in desks. I went over there and found I would need to pick up a number and wait till they called my number. I figured it would take at least another hour to get the travelers checks exchanged. There was an ATM on the outside porch of the bank, so I decided to risk it and try for ATM money. I was able to get money and my account has still not been touched. I actually had a pre-paid card that I got before leaving Portland to reduce the risk of having someone get into my bank account. That is what I used to get money from the ATM, I guess I was way too paranoid due to what the banked in Portland had told me. After getting money I started looking for a place to get a nice meal. As I was walking in town a firecracker blew up near my feet. My good ear was ringing for about an hour, I hate those firecrackers. When I was walking to the water front I saw what looked like a flea market. I went over to check it out and all the booths were selling fireworks. I found a nice place to eat and got a seat outside. Immediately a man came over to try selling me something, I was not interested and thought it was going to be annoying eating there. Then when I decided to order a beer, they told me I could only drink inside the restaurant and not at the tables outside. So, I went inside to eat at the bar, the people viewing was not as interesting inside, but it was nice not have people bugging me. I decided to go with the lobster dinner and a beer. As I was eating a parade went by with the first person carrying a lady figure on a pole. This was the third time I had seen a parade like that since I arrived in Nicaragua. Very interesting! The other similar parades where in Leon and Moyogalpa. In looking things up, I believe the parades may have been related to the "immaculate Concepcion" festival leading up to December 7th. As I was eating a man entered the bar and sat a few seats down. He asked where I was from, moved down a couple of seats closer to me and then started telling me his life story. He had moved from Virginia and had been living in Granada, Nicaragua for 3 weeks. He was talking about how he never wanted to move back to the USA and felt he could save a lot by not paying USA taxes and since the cost of living was cheaper in Nicaragua. He was planning on staying in Granada until April and then he would go somewhere else for a short time. Then return, I think he said you could avoid the extended stay visa by leaving the country for a short time and then returning. He told me about ladies he met from Australia that wanted him to travel with them. He also told me stories of when he was an air traffic man and how he swears that he says UFOs one night. I feel uncertain about UFOs, but I have met

people that are very intelligent that are totally convinced they have seen UFOs. I definitely believe people saw things, but my belief is they are some sort of secret military aircrafts or something. The man was a big talker, he talked for more than 2 hours and I hardly said anything. He was living in Nicaragua and did not speak Spanish. My guess is that he was happy to find someone that spoke fluent English. It was not hard in Granada finding people that spoke a small amount of English. He bought me a couple of beers, so I would stick around. At one point, I knocked my hand into my beer and knocked it down. The beer ended up getting my journal notebook and Central America books wet. They did finally dry OK. I had to be back at my motel before 2:00 AM, that was what they told me was one of their rules before they rented me a room. I had plenty of time, but I kept thinking that guy may never stop talking. So finally, I told him I was thinking about heading back to my hotel. We ended out walking the touristy area for a while, he knew a lot of people. We went by the square and it was dark, he said I could walk around the park, but he was not interested. He told me about people getting robbed and I think that was why he did not want to walk around the dark park. I decided not to walk around the park, probably would have if the man did not suggest he did not want to chance it. I went back to the motel and went to sleep. It ended up getting very cold in my room and I had to turn down the air conditioning in the middle of the night. (Daily Bike 15.36 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 663.43; GPS total trip miles 726.08 miles (with 38.59 of these miles on the bus); estimated walked 7 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 31,712 feet (with 941 of the feet during the bus ride); daily accumulative Elevation gain 69 feet on bike and 941 on bus) I used my GPS briefly a couple of time to look for things in town, mostly to find a grocery store and I never did find one. I only put 0.43 miles on GPS with 2 feet elevation gain. (End GPS miles 726.51 miles/ 31714 feet). I did a lot of walking without the GPS, just did not want to mess up track with unnecessary track data.

Day 16, Saturday, December 7, 2013

In the morning, I felt hung over and wished that I would not have met and drank with that man the previous night. Before checking out of the motel I decided to do some biking. I first biked to a park that I had seen an old train, possible a museum the previous evening while walking around after sun down. Then I cycled to this place I saw near the water the previous day with the arched building entry. This time I entered the arched area and there was not a charge to enter. I needed to go to the restroom, but all the restrooms were locked shut. I ended up going to the restroom in the woods. I guess I could have just gone next to the road, I notice a lot of time men just whip it out and go in Central America. There were several restaurants and a park area near the lake shore, since it was too early all the restaurant had not opened yet. At the end of the road there was a bunch of tour boats to take you to the islands with homes near Granada. The tour was \$25 and that seemed too expensive so declined.

Then they went all the way down to \$12.00 for the tour and I accepted. As I was going to the boat some people offered me the trip for \$10.00, since I already committed, I paid for the \$12.00 tour. The boat trip was to a lot of small islands (I think there are about 500 of these small islands, if I remember right per boat operator). Lots of them were single family islands, some were not inhabited, one just had monkeys and some were hotels islands (maybe not hotels, homes with a few rooms for rent). I noticed one of the islands that was probably about 10,000 square feet with a home and swimming pool. One of the islands was set up as an old fort with cannons (Fortress of San Pablo) and we stopped to check it out, there was an additional charge to check out the island which had a building with stairs to the roof on to get a better view and some fresh water shark jaws, as well as shellacked fresh water sea turtle shells on display. Apparently, Lake Nicaragua has fresh water sharks and large sea turtles. There were some neat birds in the island area as well. We only checked out of few of the islands, so there is probably a lot more to be said about the islands. It was a very nice boat trip. I was glad I found it before leaving Granada. I went back to the motel packed everything up and then started biking towards the hotel I would stay at near the Managua Airport. The route was the back route so luckily, I did not have to go through the large city of Managua. It was mostly an eventless ride. However, I did get me first real rain storm of the trip (lasting about 15 minutes with periodic of light drizzle, so not too bad) and I did stop at a big grocery store, rare find in Central America. Considering I was down to one more night, I probably bought more supplies that I needed. As I was leaving the grocery store, the store guards were trying to find out more about my trip, since I do not speak Spanish, I tried to answer their questions and I think I accomplished that. Once at the Camino Real hotel near the airport where I was staying, they would not let me take my bike into my room. So, I had to pack it into my suitcase before going into my room. The baggage boy outside the hotel watched me and tried to help. It was actually annoying, then he helped me to my room (I did not need help), I think he was expecting a big tip. I did not have money available, since he was watching me so close. I do not like getting my stashed money out while people are watching. I never did end out tipping him, even though he seemed annoying to me I should have given him something for his effort. He could probably use a couple of dollars, more than I need it. I felt a little bad about not tipping him and after settling into my room I looked for him, but did not see him. Oh well! Once in my room I took the bike out of the suitcase and removed the wheels and trailer frame from the suitcase. I then cleaned up the bike and suitcase in the shower and got everything into the suit case, the bike and trailer parts. I could not get one of the trailer parts off the suitcase, I think it was damaged when the taxi hit me in Leon. I ended up leaving that part attached to the outside of the suitcase. It made for an annoyance, since the bar either drag on the ground or had to be tilted to one side making the suitcase too wide to get through doors. The whole process of getting the bike and suitcase ready for the flight home took over 2 hours. The Camino Real hotel

was the nicest hotel of my trip it had hot water, a swimming pool, a bar, a restaurant, a casino, Wi-Fi, cable TV and a nice ground to walk around, everything you need. After getting ready for my flight, I walked around the hotel, lots of neat sculptures, outside grounds were kept up very nice and they had a sauna area. I wanted to look into the Sauna room, but there was a do not disturb sign on the door to the sauna. My guess is a couple was using the sauna. One of the amenities at the hotel was a free drink at the bar, so I went to the bar to get my drink and also had dinner there. I had a very tasty meal, it was chicken and ham rolled in bacon with gravy, rice and vegetables. It was a very good meal, probably second best of the trip. The best meal being the lobster tails in Granada. The cost of the meal was slightly more than I thought I left a tip and then went back to my room. I noticed in the room that the tip was already included. Oh well I guess they got 2 tips from me. It was still a good price for a great meal. (Daily Bike 44.64 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 710.07; GPS total trip miles 770.12 miles; estimated walked 3 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 32252 feet (with 941 of the feet during the bus ride prior to arriving in Granada); daily accumulative Elevation gain 538 feet)

Day 17, Sunday, December 8, 2013

I woke up around 5:00 AM and caught the 5:30 AM free shuttle from the hotel to the airport. Good thing I caught the early shuttle the line to check in and get my boarding pass at United Airlines was very long and took a long time to get through. The security check point was easy to get through and did not take long. Had to go to the restroom and found there was no toilet seat. I had to take a dump so I hovered over the seat so I did not need to sit on the messy ring. I bought a number of souvenirs at the airport, over the years I have found that the airport normally has nice stuff, only slightly more expensive and no haggling. My first flight was from Managua international airport (MGA) to Houston international airport (IAH) and the time between flights was about 1.5 hours. The line to get from international to domestic US was very long and took forever. I was actually worried about catching my connecting flight. The security personal did not seem to care. Well, I made it on my connection flight, it was actually a few minutes late and I think I needed the extra time to get to the gate. My next layover was San Francisco and I had lots of time there, over 4 hours. It gave me time to really checkout the airport and wind down from my trip. Once back in Portland I took the max from the airport to the Rose Quarter. Then I took the max from the Rose Quarter to Rosa Park Road. Then I walk the last 0.4 miles to my house. Then I spent about an hour getting ready for the next day. I went to sleep around 1:00 AM and woke up around 7:30 AM to go back to work. (Daily Bike 0 miles; bike odometer trip total miles 710.07; GPS total trip miles 770.12 miles; estimated walked 7 miles; Total trips accumulative GPS Elevation gain 32252 feet (with 941 of the feet during the bus ride prior to arriving in Granada); daily accumulative elevation gain None)