

Biking Ecuador and Colombia 2016

Day -2, Friday, November 11, 2016

Nancy and I went to the Dr. Strange Movie at Lloyd Center. I was very tired and did not stay awake for most of the movie. After the Movie, we went to my place and I quickly fell asleep.

Day -1, Saturday, November 12, 2016

In the morning, Nancy and I walked to the Night Hawk restaurant to get breakfast and then back to my place. I did a bunch of last-minute trip preparation. I was very stressed out. It may have been partially due to the shock that Donald Trump was elected president and he seemed to downplay minorities. I believe Colombia does not find that choice great and that makes me nervous about going there. Earlier in the year the Colombia government voted down a peace treaty with Farc, that also makes me feel nervous about my vacation plans. When I checked in for my flight, they would only give me my first boarding pass. I had to get the others at Salt Lake City, it all work out. That night I slept on benches at the Salt Lake City airport. My flight had arrived in Salt Lake around 7:30 PM and the flight to Atlanta was not due to leave until 7:20 AM the next day. The reason I had the overnight layover was because I did not look close at my travel times when I originally bought my airfare, I think that is something I need to improve on.

Day 0, Sunday, November 13, 2016

I slept fair in the B wing lower level of Salt Lake City airport, also slept some on the plane from Salt Lake City to Atlanta and the one from Atlanta to Quito. I walked around a lot at the Atlanta Airport, bought lunch, a liter of water and exchanged \$40.00 USD for Colombian Peso. That was all the Colombian Pesos they had at the airport money exchange booth, I had also tried getting Colombian Pesos at the Salt Lake City Airport and they did not have any Colombian Pesos. I took the flight to Quito and the lady next to me was from California (Lora) and her husband (Roger) was a few seats away. She told me how she could make free phone calls with WhatsApp.com. She also told me how she was going to try Ayahuasca. She told me it was a spiritual experience and not a drug. Latter I read up on it and found it was a hallucinogenic. She said they were planning on staying at a Ayahuasca compound for a week. It did not seem like something I was interested in doing. The hotel (air B and B) she was staying at in Quito was near the one I was staying at and she suggested sharing a ride, so when we arrived at the airport, they tried finding the ride that they had arrange to get them to the hotel they were staying at. It took about 20 minutes for them to find their ride. Once they found the ride, I could also get a ride and I was driven to my hotel for \$10.00. It would have been quicker for both of us if I would have taken my own cab, however they were very friendly people and it was nice

talking to them. I arrived at my hotel a little after midnight. (Current elevation 7777 ft.)

Day 1, Monday, November 14, 2016

I slowly packed up and got my bike ready. I left the hotel about 8:00 AM and thought I knew which way to go, my GPS kept recalculating. I stopped and looked at the GPS for a while and thought I was getting further from my destination. I turned around and asked someone how to get to Lbarra, they pointed in the direction I started. By the time I got back to the turn off to the hotel, I had gone almost 4 extra miles. I continued toward Lbarra and was way behind schedule. The biking was hard a lot of uphill sections. I was worn out and my GPS showed a few hotels ahead, I took the closest one. It was very nice and more expensive than usual, I decided to stay. It was right on the lake and very quiet (Nice place). No stores nearby I cycled towards a town and found a gas station with a market, not a very good selection. I saw a sign for hotels in the nearby town, it seems like a lot of the hotels are not on my GPS I wished I had not already paid and left my stuff at the other hotel. I cycled back to the hotel and had a slim dinner of Doritos and soda. My legs were tired, they usually do not do that. (Bike odometer 53.20 (total 5376.1) GPS miles about ~65 did not record this oops (total ~8900.23) (Current elevation 8747 (accumulative gain 2801), highest elevation 10,200 ft.)

Day 2, Tuesday, November 15, 2016

I left the hotel around 6:30 AM lots of downhill followed by a very large uphill. I pushed uphill for miles. Then a man in a truck used for highway road work gave me a ride, he was not supposed to have passengers and had me lay down in the back seat. Then when he dropped me off, he had me get out quickly, a man was nearby in a truck like his, I think it was someone he worked with and he did not want to get caught giving me a ride. I biked until I came to a weird motel, looked like a nice room so I took it, I did not want to have trouble finding lodging. I was locked in and they piped in music. It was a cupid motel. I think it was intended to be used by someone that had a girlfriend for a fun time. There were globe lights, mirrors and a strange padded table/ device in the room. They locked me in the gated carport and the exit door was to the main lobby (living space of motel owner) was locked; there was a box with a door so you could give the motel lady my money and request stuff for your room. I wanted to get them to turn off the music, but the office phone did not work and they would not respond to me pounding on the walls. Finally, about 10:00 PM, they turned off the music (I had no way to control the sound) (Bike odometer 111.03 (total 5433,9) GPS miles 122 (total 8965.23) (Current elevation 9206 (accumulative gain 6961 about 1000 feet during ride))

Day 3, Wednesday, November 16, 2016

It was easier to get out of the hotel than I thought, I bandaged on the interior door a

few minutes before 7:00 AM and started cycling at about 7:15 AM. The hotel ended out being the right choice. When I cycled through San Gabriel, I did not see any hotel, I imagine there was a hotel, but I am glad I did not need to look for it the previous night. This day's ride was hilly some down and a large up that took me over 10,000 ft. when I arrived at the border, I passed all the check points and never had my passport stamp. I thought that was strange so I went back and asked. The Colombia guy would not stamp my passport, until I got my export stamp from Ecuador. I cycled back to Ecuador and waited in a long line to get my export stamp on my passport. Then I went back to the Colombia side and got my Colombia entry stamp on my passport. At that point I was not sure what would have happened if I did not go back to get my passport stamped (a couple of time while in Colombia that entry stamp was confirmed by hotels and/or official. Good thing I went back). I cycled to the town of Ipailles and got a hotel room. I walked around a lot and tried using the ATM, but could not figure out the Spanish. I ended up buying water, the problem is they either sell very small bottles or a 6-liter bags. I bought the 6-liter bag of water and had to distribute it into my empty bottles, should have saved a couple more bottles only have 5 liters of bottles. (Bike odometer 146.9 (total 5469.8) GPS miles 159 (total 9002.04) (Current elevation 9574 (accumulative gain 8813) Max elevation 10889 ft)

Day 4, Thursday, November 17, 2016

I got a little too much sun the previous day, so I looked for my sunscreen and had no luck. I went downhill for a long way, until I reached a river that may have been a FARC area or some sort of military check point. Did not seem like a normal military stop, due to all the sandbag fortresses, the guys were very young and had on military fatigues and they were checking cars, they just gave me a dirty look and let me go without searching me. At that point I had been going downhill for about 4,000 vertical feet, then started the uphill, I saw another long-distance bike traveler. He seemed like a local, I actually passed him and did not see him again. I tried talking to him, but my Spanish is too limited. I saw some people at an SOS stop (small cement pad with an emergency phone) having a celebration, I tried talking to them and my bike fell over. Then I started cycling and it seemed harder, after a couple hard miles I noticed the wheel had turned when the bike fell and it caused the brakes to rub. One guy was trying to tell me how much hill climbing I had left. I think he was saying 25 km. I walked and cycled up 4,000 vertical feet it was a slow trip and it started raining. A truck stop and gave me a ride the rest of the way to Pasto, I had another 700 vertical feet and a long downhill. I would not have made it before sunset without the ride. When we got close the Pasto the traffic was very slow, the guy that gave me a ride decided to take a different route, he got off the main highway with all the traffic and took dirt roads to town, not sure if his way was quicker, the traffic was very bad, but his route seemed longer. Once in town they unloaded stuff and then gave me a ride to a hotel. I offered the guy \$5.00 for the ride, but he would not take it. He dropped me

at a hotel, so I decided to stay there, not what I would have selected, but since he gave me a ride there I stayed there. There were ladies on the couch and the guy checking me in ask if I wanted chickos. I think he wanted to rent me the lady, but I said no. The hotel was cheap, but no windows to the outside and an open condom wrapper in the closet. It was good enough for one night's stay. (Bike odometer 189.06 (total 5512) GPS miles 215 (total 9057.62) (Current elevation 8506) (accumulative gain 12360)

Day 5, Friday, November 18, 2016

I left the hotel at about 6:30 AM and cycled into the traffic of Pasto, I found an ATM machine and it worked with my liquid card, it was confusing then it asked about English, I pressed English and was able to complete the transaction. The ride started with a hard uphill, a man on a mountain bike rode next to me and told me there was a town in about 90 Kilometers and the ride to the town was 70 percent downhill. He thought I should be able to get there in a few hours. The ride started with a 2,000 vertical foot gain and then a 6 thousand vertical foot decline, then another 2-thousand-foot gain, I figured that a 6,000-foot gain was coming up and I did not want to do that, so I took a bus. The first 50 miles on the bus was close to the flattest I had seen in Colombia, some rolling hills. Then there was more gain then downhill to Popayan. The bus driver seemed a little crazy when it came to passing, but I guess that is how they do it. I arrived in Popayan at around 9:00 PM, asked about a hotel and they pointed across the road from the bus station. The first hotel I went to, I asked about bringing in my bike and he said no bikes. The guy at the hotel next door was listening and said I could take the bike into the lobby and lock it behind the stairs. It did not seem that secure, but it seemed good enough since I could lock it up. When I was checking into his hotel, I told the guy I was from Canada (I kept seeing negative stuff about Donald Trump on TV and did not want people to think I was from the USA). Then I had to give the guy my passport, so then I told him I was from estados unidos (United State). There were military people out the door and they asked where I was from and I told then estados unidos. The hotel was fine (Bike odometer 243.7 (total 5566.6) GPS miles 373 (total 9215.17) (Current elevation 4888) (accumulative gain 25,617)

Day 6, Saturday, November 19, 2016

It was a rainy morning, I put on my rain gear at the beginning of the morning and had it off about an hour later. I decided to do my daily average (17 miles) cycling for the day before catching a bus out of town. I asked the man about time to check out of hotel and he said 1:00 PM, then he said 2:00 PM would be OK. Either way that was more time than I would have expected. I started cycling around the city of Popayan, I found a straight less busy road and cycled it until it turned into a dirt road then I went back to looping the city. I found an ATM and decided to get more money to keep myself from worrying about running out, it makes me more worried since Chase said

they could not give me an out-of-town notification for going to Colombia. After that I was carrying too much cash and was then concerned about getting robbed. I found another straight road and followed it up hill for about 950 vertical feet. The hill was so much easier without pulling the trailer with about 50 pounds of stuff (I pulled the trailer when I was traveling with all my stuff). I was running out of energy and water, but would have liked to continue. I should have stopped at a store to get water before going up the hill (other cyclist passed me on the uphill and I saw cyclist going downhill— a popular cycling road). It turned out the bus I took out of town took that road and it was too far to the top for my morning ride, so it was a good time to turn around anyways. After cycling up the hill I checked out the city center the cycling was interesting tons of cars and motorcyclist. Then I went back to the hotel and decided to put my bike in the suitcase so I could take a bus to San Agustin. I got in trouble for having my key by the lady at the hotel. The guy that ran the hotel got mad at me for disassembling my bike and loading it into my suitcase in the hotel lobby, he was blaming me for scratching his floor. To calm the guy down I gave him money (10.000 Paso ~ 3.14 USD), it sort of makes me angry that he thought I damaged his floor, although I did make the floor dirty and mostly cleaned it up before he saw the mess. I guess I should have put the bike in the suit case outside the hotel, I just don't like people watching me assemble my bike. The scratches on the floor were probably created by dropping a very heavy sharp item on the floor (There were chips out of the hard ceramic floor, about the size of a dime. It was totally absurd that he thought I could have done that!). I then went to the bus station and found a 2:00 PM bus to San Agustin. The bus (It was actually a Mercedes Sprinter Van) followed the road I started on earlier, but continued for about 80 miles. The road was up and down jungle roads with militant people in the woods and stopping vehicles. They stopped our tour van and had everyone get out and they frisker each one of us. They did not go through all our luggage, seemed funny. I am not sure what they wanted. It made me nervous due to the amount of cash I had in my possession. I wonder if they would have taken part or all of my money, if they found it. They frisked me and asked for my passport, then they let us go. I felt very nervous about the whole occurrence. I am not sure why I have had similar instances in Mexico and other Latin American countries. The picture of the bus when I bought my ticket showed a very nice vehicle, the Mercedes sprinter van that took me to San Agustin had very uncomfortable seats and no air-conditioning, the window was open and as we travel it got too cold. The bus company photos where very misleading. The 80-mile van trip from Popayan to San Agustin took over 4 hours on the mostly paved windy roads. I know complain, complaint! Once in San Agustin I was worried about finding a hotel and a man where I got dropped off by the van said his hotel was 30,000 Pesos a night and showed me a picture and his shirt had the name of the hotel imbordered on it with his name imbordered on the shirt. I decided to go with him and was glade. He caught a cheap cab with me and we went to his hotel. Then he set me up for a tour on the following

day. Then I got settled in and was given a motor cycle ride into town for dinner by his son. This was my first restaurant eaten dinner of my trip, I did not leave a tip (Did not see other people leaving tips, not sure what is customary). Then the son came back to give me a ride back to the hotel, very nice hard-working people. (Bike odometer 266,52 (total 5589.4) GPS miles 440 (total 9282.7) (Current elevation 5672) (accumulative gain 34753)

Day 7, Sunday, November 20, 2016

I woke up around 7:00 AM took a shower and got ready for my jeep tour. I received my hotel included breakfast of eggs, smashed bananas and coffee (I found when I checked out it was not included – had to pay extra for breakfast at checkout). The jeep tour guide showed up promptly at 9:00 AM at my hotel. There was 8 (6 others on the tour and the driver) of us altogether in a Mitsubishi jeep, I was given shotgun, the best seat. I was the last one they picked up and that was the way it turned out. Our first stop was at a view point looking down on the river from next to the road and we tasted the fruit of a wild tree (someone shook the tree and the fruit fell to the ground). Then we went to an area with art booths and walk down to the Magdalena River. Then we went to a very small town to go to Obando Archeologic Park with small pits you could climb down into, maybe places to sleep. Our next archeological park was Alto de Los Ídolos. One of the people on our tour bought us some juice made with fresh squeezed sugar cane, they let me put some of the sugar cane into the machine that squeezes it. We ordered lunch and then walked around the park. The park had neat tombs and rock carved statues. One of the statues is 17 feet tall. When we went to get the lunches, we order, it turned out that only 3 of us ordered lunch in the tour. I thought everyone was ordering lunch, I am glad I was not the only one that ordered lunch. After that we stopped in a small town and most of us (if not everyone except the driver) pitched in to buy a couple of 375 ml bottles of Aguardiente Doble Anis (they called it tequila like, it tasted more like Jägermeister) in the town of Isnos. For the rest of the jeep tour we were taking shots of Aguardiente. Then we went to the highest uninterrupted water fall in Colombia, La Chorrera Falls (They claim the second highest in south America). Then we went to another archeological park, Alto De Las Piedras, with more tombs and rock status. After that our final stop was Salto Del Motorino waterfall near San Agustin. That waterfall cost to enter the land and had an interesting platform several hundred feet in the air to view the falls from. It looked very safe, but a couple of the guys in our group were joking and jumping up and down on it. Seemed like a dumb thing to do. At one previous stop (Alto de Los Ídolos) these guys jumped over a small guardrail near some of the rock statues to get photos, but where yelled at by security. Too bad for the security, I wanted to do the same picture with me in it! The previous night I think I was the only one staying at the hotel (Cabanas Camping Colinas de San Diego) in San Agustin. On this second night in that hotel, there was a couple of guys on motorcycles that had started from Sacramento

California and were headed to Tierra del Fuego. They had crossed the Darin Gap on a boat that took 4 days a few days prior, they made it sound easy and worth the effort. One of guys had previously drove his motorcycle to Deadhorse Alaska. Therefore, when he completed his current journey he will have travel from the Arctic Ocean to the Antarctic Ocean through the Americas – my dream. There was also another person on a motorcycle, I think he was from Colombia and was not with the other guys. He was very nice and wanted to talk about his journey, I am now a Facebook friend with him. He has traveled the length of South America two times on his motorcycle. He was starting another long-distance Motorcycle journey. (Bike miles and elevation, same as previous day – no biking, same hotel)

Day 8, Monday, November 21, 2016

I woke up around 6:30 AM and had my breakfast (It's not included like I thought). Then I had the hotel guy give me a motorcycle ride to the Archeological Park near town. I walked around the park and it was much larger than expected. I went to buy a souvenir in town and a lady taking care of a shop did not know how much to charge, so I bought my souvenir elsewhere. Then I walked back to the hotel and quickly got ready before the noon checkout. I took a taxi to town and when I went to buy my bus ticket, the guy asked for my passport, when I got it out, I had some big Colombian bills showing. Oops, never did that before. I always have a wallet with only a small amount of money and make sure that is all people see, this time for some reason I had the Money pocket on my passport holder unzipped. He charged a lot for the bus. Then a guy explained how I would bus there and it made no sense. I thought for sure I would get robbed. The guy that spoke English from the previous day's jeep tour was also on the bus. The man that sold me the ticket was with me for the first leg, I told him they were my friends. He helped me along the way and ended out going back from this one stop. I think he may have just charged a lot to ensure that I received help with my stuff at the second bus stop. Or he changed his mind about robbing me when he found I had friends on the bus. He seemed like a nice guy with family in California and he cycled, my guess is he was just helping me. Then I took the bus to Popayan (not what I thought from the explanation the man gave me that went to my first stop and also not that the other guy I knew from the jeep tour on the bus thought) the bus broke down about 8 miles before Popayan, they kept fixing it and we finally made it to Popayan. Then we changed buses 2 times in Popayan (I was supposed to be on the same bus all the way to Cali), the guy that sold me tickets did not give me a ticket or baggage tickets. When I changed buses, they kept asking, but still let me on the buses. I arrive in Cali about 11:30 PM and got a hotel for the night. I should have continued north on the bus. I did not get to sleep until about 1:00 AM. (Bike miles and elevation, same as previous day)

Day 9, Tuesday, November 22, 2016

I woke up about 6:30 AM, and could not sleep. I decided to go for a walk, they said I needed to be back by 2:00 PM. I did not want to stay in Cali, from the bus when we arrived the previous night, I saw lots of homeless people. When I arrived, they were all around the bus station. I ended out walking all the way to the main part of downtown and also spent time looking at buses to Armenia. I found 2 buses that left for Armenia at 3:00 PM and one that left at 5:00 PM. I decided I would go with the express at 3:00 PM, when I explained I had a lot of luggage she shrugged, so before getting my ticket I went and checked out of the hotel and brought my stuff back to the bus station. I decided to read a little before getting my ticket, the Lonely Planet book did not have a lot to say about Armenia, but I still wanted to go. I decided to do one more walk around the bus terminal before getting my bus ticket, the pictures of the express bus did not look like a luxury bus. The Premium bus company had pictures that made their buses look better. The guy said his bus left at 5, I thought he meant 5:00 PM. I liked their buses so I decided to go with them they had me follow him to the bus and put my luggage directly in the bus and then he wanted me to get in the bus. I thought it was leaving at 5:00 PM, the driver said no in 5 minutes. I was the first one on the bus and was able to get a great seat, no one ended up sitting next to me and the bus had a lot of empty seats. All the other buses I traveled in prior to this bus were mostly full. I slept for about half of the bus trip. Once in Armenia I wanted to find a good hotel. There was a tourist info booth but someone was already talking to them, so I went into the main part of the terminal and walked around the outside looking at hotels, they all looked like sleazy hotels. Then I tried going back to the information area and the security would not let me go back. She points to a hotel and said it was very good. I tried getting in and no one answered. A man tried helping me, but he was really trying to get me to stay in his sleazy hotel. I said no and went back to the bus terminal. Then I had a taxi take me to a good hotel, he went passed one that looked very nice and I said something about the nice-looking hotel and he shook his head no. Then he took me to what looked like a sleazy hotel (probably belongs to one of his friends of the taxi driver), so I paid the taxi driver and when he left, I walked back to the hotel that looked good to me. I was glad I went back to that hotel. It was very nice with hot water and the clerk spoke fair English (better than my Spanish). He had family living in New Jersey and New York. They let me assemble my bike in a back room so I could go for a ride. I then cycled to the turnaround at Calarcá, I did not go into town due to the fact I had a long distance to go to get back and not very long before the sun set. I arrived back at my hotel a little after sunset. Then I stored my bike with my suitcase in the room where they let me assemble my bike. Next, I walked around Armenia looking for a grocery store. I found a road without car and lots of people walking and shopping. It was mostly cloths and stuff. I did find a grocery store. About 2 blocks after the walking section (a long ways from the hotel) and bought stuff. On the way back to the hotel I bought a piece of chicken and had a

great dinner in my hotel room. I took a shower in the nice hotel and the hot water never got hot. Lots of the hotels only have cold water knobs, so you know they only have cold water, but this hotel had a hot water knob, but no hot water. I watched Spanish TV and went to sleep around 11:00 PM. (Bike odometer 284.14 (total 5607) GPS miles 667 (total 9509.14) (Current elevation 4940) (accumulative gain 44,560)

Day 10, Wednesday, November 23, 2016

I had my included breakfast and did not leave the hotel until about 8:00 AM. The day started with a gradual 20 miles gradual 2100-foot ascent. It was not that bad. I walked less of it than usual. Then I started going mostly downhill for about 30 miles and then it flattened out a bit. I was not sure how to get to Medellin, my GPS was showing me a way different way than the signs, but the signs often did not seem correct. At one point I was going south when I knew I should be going North. Then I backtracked a short distance to where my GPS had indicated a different direction from the signs and then I followed the GPS route from there. From what the kids I had asked for directions from earlier that day tried telling me, I think I was going a different route. But their route sounded like a lot of uphill and my route was probably just a little further. I kept seeing hotel, so I was not too worried and when it got to about 2:30 PM and I had already completed 50 miles I found a gas station with no store and it claimed to have a hotel. There was some building, but just before getting to the gas station I saw a sign that indicated a fancy eco hotel in another 4 KM. So, I decided to continue I went a long distance without seeing any hotels and it was getting closer to sunset. Then I found a hotel, it required crossing a small bridge and was in a village with probably about 100 inhabitants. The hotel was big, but it looks like it had not been used much for a long time. They gave me a cheap room and the hotel seemed nice, but way run down. I am not sure how a place like that can survive, I spend about \$15 USD including the room, stuff to eat and drink. I looked to see if any Wi-Fi was available in the area before asking and there was no Wi-Fis at all in the vicinity of the hotel, so I did not ask. The hotel was nice next to a big river with some cool birds that would fly by and a nice clean large swimming pool. Lots of kids in the small village, a nice experience. No hot water like usual and there were missing ceiling tiles, so you could see the inside of the roof. The room was large and private, with 3 cot beds (not very comfortable) (Bike odometer 347.62 (total 5670.5) GPS miles 730 (total 9572.74) (Current elevation 3406) (accumulative gain 47,006)

Day 11, Thursday, November 24, 2016

I had a great night sleep and left the hotel by about 6:30 AM. It was a nice day and I was feeling strong, I cycled up hill and the hill never seemed to end. Lots of dogs chased me, one bit my pants leg, but not my leg. Mostly if I ignored the dogs, they leave me alone. After about 20 miles of uphill I had accumulated 3800 vertical feet. I did cycle most of it, but was getting tired and walked the bike a few short distances to

give my rear a break. Then I had a stretch where I was staying at about 7,000 feet above sea level going up and down gradual hills. Then the downhill began, I lost all my gain and then some. I lost a total of about 4,700 vertical feet. I was afraid the uphill would start and I might not be able to find a hotel. I decided to stay at this hotel next to a gas station. I figured I would have a store and restaurant. The restaurant was not appealing and there was no store. I was able to buy a couple bottled ice teas from the restaurant. When I showed up, I was the only one at the hotel. It was a large no thrill hotel with a huge parking lot next to the gas station. As the night went on the parking lot filled up with semi-trucks and they were mostly staying in the hotel. It was cheap and most semi-trucks in Colombia do not have sleeper cabs. (Bike odometer 395.42 (total 5718.3) GPS miles 778 (total 9620.32) (Current elevation 2414) (accumulative gain 49,825)

Day 12, Friday, November 25, 2016

I woke up around 5:41 AM, wanted to get up at 5:00 AM. I got ready and started cycling by 6:21 AM. The ride started by following the Cauca River downstream for 30 miles. The grade was a gradual downhill. Then the uphill started I got about 2,000 vertical feet up the hill and a truck stopped with a kid that was going to eat his lunch. I thought he was going to offer me a ride, but I think he was just stopping for lunch. I asked about a ride and he looked funny at my bike, I removed the trailer and he seemed Ok with it. He took a couple of chairs out of the back of his truck and we ate lunch. He gave me a small drink and a piece of his chicken. I did not think he was going to give me a ride. He spoke some English and wanted to practice his English. He did end up giving me a ride to the top of the hill (another 3,700 vertical feet). Since he wanted to practice his English, we tried talking a lot. He was 28 years old, lives in Medellin with his parents and wife. He has no kids. He is on his 3rd term of English, there are 5 terms total at the college. He wanted to become an English teacher. He does not like Donald Trump or politicians. He thought everyone in the USA was rich and lives in a huge house. He had never been to the ocean and never been out of Colombia. The only sport he played was soccer. He does not like most music. He was a salesman of some sort. These are most of the things I learned about him. He learned similar things about me. When he dropped me off at the top of the hill the elevation was about 7,800 Feet above sea level. I started biking down, there was a bottle neck where the road was not wide enough for trucks to make it around hairpin turns. I passed him on that section and he passed me a few miles later. It was a lot of downhill to Medellin and then about 6 miles of thick traffic. At one point a dog chasing me and bit on my trailer, good thing it was not my leg. The traffic was not fun. After arriving in town, I was looking for a hotel and this lady was holding her young boy as he peed into the street, the pee may have hit my tire, at any rate I was almost peed on by a small child (probably about 5 years old). I arrived in the downtown area and mostly saw unacceptable hotels. I was looking for the Embassy

suit using my GPS and found the hotel is now the Hotel Nutibata. Probably the nicest hotel in downtown Medellin. I ended up getting a room and they let me put my bike in the room. It was the first room that had hot water, maybe since I left Equator. Once in the Hotel I walked around town, tons of people and long blocks closed to traffic for shopping. I was having trouble getting money from the ATM, all my cards did not seem to work. I was a little worried about money, then I noticed the one from USAA was a debit card so I went back and tried again. This time I answered debit card and checking account and was able to get money. Good thing I opened that account. (Bike odometer 460.10 (total 5783) GPS miles 1037 (total 9879.83) (Current elevation 5014 – 7th floor of hotel) (accumulative gain 56750)

Day 13, Saturday, November 26, 2016

The ride out of Medellin took about 1.5 hours, not sure my GPS took me the right way and I missed a couple turns. I am pretty sure one of my missed turns was a one-way street in the wrong direction (I would not go that way safely anyways). To get out of the city there was a big hill, then a tunnel that did not allow bikes. I tried stopping buses and hitch hiking. Finally, a man gave me a ride through the tunnel and then down a big hill. I sort of wish he would have just dropped me off on the other side of the tunnel. There were a lot of easy miles spent in his truck. We tried talking one thing I figured out like the kid that was practicing his English on a previous ride, this guy also did not like Donald Trump. The ride did get me to Santa Fe sooner. I arrived in Santa Fe about 2:30 PM, I cycled into town looking for a hotel, but decided I wanted to stay at the expensive looking place just out of town. The hotel was very nice, but did not have hot water and the internet only worked from outside my room on the deck. Once settled into my hotel I walked into town and checked out all the streets. After a while I was bored of walking around town and went back to the hotel. I needed to research the remaining miles to Turbo and save my GPS Track. I had already used up about 90% of my GPS track memory, so I saved it and cleared out the track so I could continue receiving my GPS track data. (Bike odometer 484.48 (total 5807.4) GPS miles 1077 (total 9919,56) (Current elevation 1875) (accumulative gain 58889)

Day 14, Sunday, November 27, 2016

The ride out of Santa Fe was a long uphill incline, it was hot and I was dripping in sweat. A man on a bike cycled up next to me and semi-talked for a while. Since he only spoke Spanish and my Spanish is very limited the conversation was weak. At one point he agreed to ride my bike and let me ride his bike. So, we traded for a while, his bike was much easier since he was not pulling 50 lbs. in a trailer. He tired out quickly and we traded bikes back. After a while he turned back and informed me there was still a lot of uphill. I continued and it started lightly raining, I was getting pretty wet, then it started raining very hard. I thought I was ready for rain. My stuff did get very

wet, my pants and my passport were the worst. I found a tunnel to wait out the rain, it did not seem like it would end. I had already climbed 1500 vertical feet and I was obviously not at the top. I started thinking I had already taken several rides and buses and decided there was no shame in taking another bus. I then cycled back to Santa Fe to take a bus. The rain stopped and I kept thinking I should have continued. I had already cycled down 1000 vertical feet and decided to stick with the bus plan. I got to Santa Fe and put my bike in the suit case and then tried getting a bus to Turbo. The first one I still had too much gear. There were several buses that were not going all the way to Turbo. Finally, a bus took me. After they put my gear in the bus I got on and there were no empty seats. They had an old man move to sit on the stairs and had me take his seat. I would have sat on the stairs. The bus ride indicated a lot of hills and several parts of the road were not paved. I was glad I went with the bus. The bus was a nice one, but the seats are normally tight on the Colombian buses. I think they have an extra row of seats in their buses. I was not sure what to expect when I arrive in Turbo, would I find a hotel? Well, when the bus finally terminated, I was near a hotel and got a room. I walked around a little and since it was dark and lots of people drinking at bars. I found food and walked back to my hotel to hide. I repacked everything for the bus ride the next day. It is hard carrying all the gear and getting on buses. (Bike odometer 495.79 (total 5818.7) GPS miles 1262 (total 10105.04) (Current elevation 93 – 5th floor of hotel) (accumulative gain 72,670)

Day 15, Monday, November 28, 2016

I started the day by walking around Turbo. Not much to see, lots of boats and transient people. Overall, does not seem like a bad place. When I checked out of the hotel, they tried to charge me for a water. I said I did not drink one and then she did not charge me. Then I decided to catch a bus to Cartagena. The first minivan took me to Monteria and I was considering staying there. There was no hotel near the bus terminal and I did not want to take a taxi to town. I think I should have taken a taxi to town. I noticed bike trails in the town as we were leaving for Cartagena. I probably would have stayed, but one of the terminal ladies helped me quickly get a bus to Cartagena. I wish she would not have helped me. I should have stayed. On the minivan to Cartagena, I read my traveler's guide on Cartagena and realized I really did not want to spend 5 nights there. I considered Santa Marta for a couple of days. I stayed at the hotel next to the bus terminal in Cartagena, very noisy place until about 11:00 PM (Bus and cars honking near my window and music blaring). (Bike odometer 495.79 (total 5818.7) GPS miles 1520 (total 10,362.23) (Current elevation 79) (accumulative gain 77874)

Day 16, Tuesday, November 29, 2016

The noise started again about 5:00 AM, I did not get a great night of sleep. It was a good hotel for what I needed, although the internet barely worked and no hot water like usual. I was not motivated to go out and get started. I finally left the hotel about

7:30 AM and went to the bus stations. I was able to quickly get on a low coast bus to Santa Marta. It was comfortable at first and then a lady sat next to me and it was more cramped for most of the trip. Once at the Santa Marta bus terminal I asked the information booth guy about hotels and he said to take a taxi to town. He said to pay 6,000 COP for the taxi. I took a taxi and he took me to a hotel that was perfect for me. I handed him a 10,000 COP and he did not offer any change. I could have complained and possibly got some money back, but it was only slightly over a US dollar over the expected taxi cost. Then I walked around and checked out all the sights in Santa Marta. I went back to the hotel and there was a tour guide that wanted to take me to the beaches the next day. It was all day at the beaches and I thought I would just assume cycle. Then she came up with another tour that took me to the town on Minca and that sounded more interesting to me. So, I signed up for that tour. (Bike odometer 495.79 (total 5818.7) GPS miles 1686 (total 10529.12) (Current elevation -6) (accumulative gain 81,395)

Day 17, Wednesday, November 30, 2016

I woke up around 5:40 AM and tried to sleep more, I did not think I fell back to sleep. The next time I looked at the clock it was already 7:40 AM, I fell asleep solid and didn't know it. I rarely ever do that. I wanted to get up at 6:00 AM and walk around for a short time, then have breakfast at 7:00 AM and possible walk a little more before my Minca tour. Well since I overslept, I just ate breakfast, got ready for my tour and waited in the lobby for my ride. A taxi picked me up, they already had 2 people in the taxi. Then they took us all the Minca. When we arrived, we were greeted by our tour guide Joe, he spoke very good English. He gave us our agenda and said something about swimming. I completely forgot to bring swim trunks, the lady that signed me up for the tour told me we would go swimming. Oops, forgot she said that when I got ready for the tour, thus I forgot to get my swimming trunks. I told Joe and mentioned I had underwear, he said no one would mind. I also thought how the lady said it was cold in Minca and ignored the fact that the weather suggests 80 F for a high. Well I had my long pants, fleece coat and rain gear. I decided against my shorts that morning. I should have brought the shorts instead of the long pants, but the long pants were good for going through the plant lined trail. However other people wore shorts and they seemed to be fine. Even the guide's daughter and her friend had shorts. I should have worn my shorts. When we arrived at the swimming hole we first had to wade across a stream. At that point I realized I would have to strip go down to my underwear, I felt a little silly, my underwear is the brief size and a little raggedy. But it did seem like no one cared. Out of 7 people I was the only one that had forgot my swimsuit. The other man about my age had a speedo swimsuit and it seemed about the size of my underwear so that seemed to make me feel a little better off. I was sweaty on the trail to the swimming hole and the water was cool and felt good. After going to 2 swimming holes, we hiked back to the guide's house and had a great lunch. His

house was very nice and overlooked the city of Santa Marta. Then he showed us his Bamboo house, it was very nice. Then we spent about an hour having him tell us about bamboo homes in Columbia working with a German company. He gave us a lot of statics, stuff like Columbia is the seconds highest tourism country (after Canada), seems hard to believe. He said Colombia is the second most diverse environmental country, after Brazil. He also talked about the number of types of Bamboo and said Colombia has 74 species of Bamboo. He seemed to have a lot of statics where Colombia was 2 or 3rd in the world. Then he took us back to his porch (where we had lunch) and he showed us chocolate pods. He let up talk the drink he made from the cholate seeds and squeezed sugar cane. He cut open a chocolate pod and took out a chocolate seed. It was white and wet looking. He said first it needs to be fermented for 21 days then baked. He had samples of each phase. Then he handed each of us a baked chocolate seed and we broke off the shells and tried them. They tasted like 100% chocolate, not like sweeten Hershey bars. Then we went on a hike to a coffee farm. And checked out all the things they were farming. Next, we checked out an indigenes home and he told us about all the different indigenes villages in Colombia. I think he said 10% of Colombia lives in indigenes communities with separate languages. Very interesting tour then we took our cab back to Santa Marta. I bought souvenirs that night, very cheap stuff. (Bike odometer 495.79 (total 5818.7) GPS about it (miles 1702 – I forgot to turn on GPS when left Minca (probably about 12 miles short for the day) (total 10544.14) (Current elevation -6) (accumulative gain 83417)

Day 18, Thursday, December 1, 2016

I woke up around 5:45 AM and went out walking around Santa Marta around 6:00 AM. I noticed fishermen going to the waters and saw what looked like a funeral near the main town church. Then I had my included breakfast at 7:00 AM. I noticed a lot of people sleeping on sidewalks, there seems to be a lot of homeless in Colombia. From what people say a lot of their people may have once lived in the countryside, but were driven to the city when the violence got too bad in the country during the 90s. Our guide in Minca said something like there were once 6 million people living in the country and now there are only about 600,000 people in the country, the other moved to the city to avoid the violence. After breakfast I got out my bike and started trying to find the ritual site I had seen from town on top of the hill. I could not find it and found a sign to Taganga, so I cycled there. It seemed like a very relaxing place to visit. Taganga is a very small quite fishing village with a very nice beach and plenty of activities (Dive shops, shopping, nice beaches, etc.). Then I cycled back to my hotel in Santa Marta and loaded my bike in the suit case. Then I checked out of the hotel and took a taxi to the bus terminal. I was able to quickly find a bus to Cartagena and the bus was leaving Santa Marta by 11:45 AM. This was the most comfortable bus I had been on in Colombia. The people from Belgium the previous day on the Minca tour

said they always had comfortable buses and was told that the Bolivarian was the best (That was the bus company they always used). That company was not available to Cartagena, but I had noticed the Brasilia seemed nice and used that bus company. The Brasilia was a much nicer bus than previous buses I had traveled on. I think some of the other buses I took added an extra row of seats in their buses and it made it tough to squeeze into the seats. To make things even better when we left Santa Marta the guy in the seat next to me moved and I had an empty seat next to me to place my pack on and stretch out. When we stopped to Barranquilla, I received a new seat mate. Right before the bus took off, she changes seats and I ended up with an empty seat next to me the rest of the bus ride to Cartagena. That was my most comfortable bus ride in Colombia by far. Once at the Cartagena bus terminal I found a taxi and made sure to get a rate before we left and I think I got a much better deal that way. I had him write the rate down, since I would not have understood what he told me (Since I do not understand Spanish). He was able to find my hotel and I checked in immediately and walked around for a short time before calling it a night. Seems like a whole different world here in Bocagrande. Much less poverty than the other parts of Colombia I had visited. (Bike odometer 507.12 (total 5830) GPS miles 1870 (total 10712.12) (Current elevation 38 – 6th floor of hotel) (accumulative gain 87,354)

Day 19, Friday, December 2, 2016

I woke up around 5:30 AM and got my bike ready to ride. Then at about 7:00 AM I went to the front desk to ask about the city tours, they said 2:00 PM, the previous day the guys said the city tour was at 1:30 PM. I then went back to my room and got my bike. I cycled first to the fort, Castillo de San Felipe. They would not let me bring my bike in and there did not seem to be a good place to lock it. The people selling stuff and security said behind this building, it did not look like a good place to leave my bike locked up. The people selling stuff pointed to this security guy behind the building in a cubby hole. I ended up locking it in front of him and it seemed like he kept an eye on it while I visit to the fort. Then in order to get some miles I cycled a little past the airport and then back to old town. I tried checking out the sites on my tourist map in old town, but it seemed too hard to follow the tourist map and too crowded in the old town area. So, I ended up cycling the fortified historic city center from both inside the walls and outside the walls. Then I went to the historic area within the walls area with road that were mostly closed to traffic and went up and down those roads looking at historic building and taking photos. Then I cycled to the end of Bocagrande (The Hilton hotel was at the turn around with lots of police and a semi closing road. Then I went back to my hotel and put my bike in the suit case, by that time it was almost 1:00 PM. So, I went back to the hotel lobby and found that the city tour did leave at 2:00 PM (it was posted on a board near the travel agent that was never there). I paid for my ticket and then I walked around Bocagrande for about an hour. I mostly checked out the beaches. Lots of people on the beaches and in the

water. Then I returned to the hotel and waited for the tour bus to show up. A man came up and asked if I was on the tour. I gave him my ticket and he told me something. Since I do not understand Spanish really good, it seemed like he said it would be a few minutes. He waited outside with my ticket. It was the only record I had that I paid. Then he finally got me and we walked across the street and waited about 5 more minutes before getting on the bus. I asked about getting my ticket back and he said not to worry (I think). Then he went away and the bus left and I had no ticket. Later I realized he was on the bus, not sure when he hopped on. I was the only one on the bus that did not speak Spanish and the interpreter kept saying Ok Latinos (when he spoke to the them). When he interpreted things in English, he would take me aside and explain what he said to the others to me in English. That was very helpful and made the tour way more valuable to me. The tour first took us to a shoe sculpture with vendors selling food and souvenirs. Then we went to the highest point in Cartagena at Convento de Santa Cruz de la Popa. Then we went to Castillo de San Felipe and this time I was with the group and he explained what I had already seen earlier that day. We also stopped and walked around the historic shopping area and a group of break-dancers entertained us. They were a very talented group. (Bike odometer 527.6 (total 5850.5) GPS miles 1890 (total 10732.78) (Current elevation 38 – 6th floor of hotel) (accumulative gain 87544))

Day 20, Saturday, December 3, 2016

I woke up around 6:00 AM and made sure everything was ready to fly. Then I walked around Bocagrande until about 10:00 AM. Then I took a shower and checked out of the hotel. Next, I took a taxi to the airport and was in line at Delta by about 11:00 AM. The line was short, but the problem was that there was no one at the Delta desks. About noon some people started helping us with self-check in and my luggage was checked by about 12:15 AM. Then I walked around the unsecure part of the airport, almost nothing there. Then I went through security to the international terminal and there were only a few shops. Not much of an airport, good thing I did my shopping before going to the airport. I was on the plane at about 2:30 PM and the plane was full and left a little early. When we arrived in Atlantic City, I had to get my luggage and recheck it. Then I called the hotel to see if they had a shuttle picking people up at the airport still. They had one coming in 15 minutes, but I had to figure out where to go. I was told the hotel pickup area was at the domestic terminal, so I had to take a shuttle to that part of the airport. That seemed to take a while, when we arrived at the domestic terminal, I was able to quickly find the Days Inn shuttle and it left shortly after I was loaded on to the shuttle. I watched a little TV and went to sleep. (Bike odometer 527.6 (total 5850.5))

Day 21, Sunday, December 4, 2016

I woke up around 5:30 AM and got my included breakfast at around 6:00 AM. Then I

got my stuff from my hotel room and caught the 6:30 AM shuttle back to the airport. I had about 3 hours until my flight left. So, I walked down almost every wing of the Atlanta airport. My flight went smooth, I thought we left early. However, when I arrived in Portland Nancy said my flight was a little late. Nancy gave me a ride home and I changed stuff and put my luggage in the house. Then we went to Tom's (ramble hike leader) Christmas party.

Day 22, Monday, December 5, 2016

I woke up around 6:45 AM and got ready for work. I cycled to work at around 7:30 AM. I started work at about 8:00 AM. A little bit of a tiring day.