

# **Biking Mexico and Guatemala 2017**

## **Day 0, Saturday, November 11, 2017**

Marty gave me a ride to the airport at around 3:00 AM and I arrived at Portland international airport (PDX) at about 3:15 AM. The line to check in for my flight was very long. It did not take long to get through the line. When I went through security, they let me go through Pre-check. My boarding pass was stamped for pre-check and this seems to happen to me often in the past few years (not sure why). I was concerned about catching my connecting flight in Houston, they only had scheduled 55 minutes between flight and the flight out of Houston was an international flight to Mexico. It turned out the plane arrived early in Houston and I did not have to go to a different terminal. I was expecting to go to an international gate and having to go through security. However, it was not like that, it was very easy. I left my gate and walked to a gate in a nearby airport wing and it was very close. Even my luggage arrived in time when I arrive in Acapulco, Mexico. I had no trouble going through the security/customs at Acapulco International Airport (ACA). The stamp on my passport did not look clear, I hoped that will not be a problem at the Guatemala boarder (at the Guatemala boarder they had trouble finding the stamp, I had to show it to them). I took a cab from ACA airport to the Ocean Breeze hotel where I had reservation, but the hotel was closed. The taxi driver found someone to ask and found I was being put up in a nearby hotel owned by the same company that owed the Ocean breeze hotel. Since I had prepaid for the Ocean Breeze hotel, they ended up having me stay at the Mayan Palace, very nice high-rise hotel for the same price I had paid. I walked the beach, bought groceries and found an ATM. I could not get my USAA debit card to work in the ATM. I ended up exchanging 200 USD for Mexican money at the hotel. I hoped I could get money next time I try the ATM card (The USAA debit card never worked on this trip, but my Chase debit card did work). Not sure if I had enough money without getting money from an ATM. (daily bike miles 0 miles; total bike miles 0 miles)

## **Day 1, Sunday, November 12, 2017**

At about 3:00 AM I could hear an alarm going off, I thought it was my new alarm clock. It turned out that my new camera was still connected to my PC (I connected it to upload a phot to Facebook) and was not in changing mode, therefore the battery was low and casing an alarm on the camera. In the morning before leaving the hotel I found an e-mail from USAA about my debit card, they wanted me to call, but I have no phone. I also do not have my USAA password, so I cannot e-mail them. There was a collect number I could call on the e-mail and I should have had the hotel help me with that, but I wanted to get going and did not want the hassle. The ride out of Acapulco was a great road for about 17 miles, I took the road near the airport. A previous trip to Acapulco I remembered a big hill to get out of the city, the route near

the airport did not require a big hill climb. There was a little hill climb after the flat 17 miles, but not that bad. The not so bad hill ride was after the really good road. The part of the road with the hill climb had no shoulder, so it did not feel like a safe road. Once on Mex 200 the road had an on and off shoulder and lots of traffic. Not great for biking. I cycled to Cruz Grande and got a hotel. I was there by 3:00 PM and I was bushed, I took a nap and then walked around the town. Not very exciting town. (Daily bike miles 59.79 miles; total bike miles 59.79 miles)

### **Day 2, Monday, November 13, 2017**

I left the hotel at about 6:30 AM and cycled hard for a while. Not much exciting happened all day. The road had no shoulder all day, not great for cycling. The traffic was fairly consistent. Most of the people wait to pass on blind curves, but some come very close to me to avoid losing momentum. The hotel I stayed at that night was one of my best hotels on this trip and was very cheap. (Daily bike miles 63.21 miles; total bike miles 123.0 miles) (new trip highest altitude 766 Ft.)

### **Day 3, Tuesday, November 14, 2017**

It was a hilly and hot day. Not much happened that day and nothing worth talk about. The hotel that night was not so great, it had low quality air conditioning, but was still way too hot. They did not allow me to put my bike in the room. I locked it in the garage area of the Motel and the guy said he would watch it. Not much of a town and they locked the hotel gate at nights. Most of the other hotels allowed me to put my bike in my room. (Daily bike miles 51.94 miles; total bike miles 174.94 miles) (new trip highest altitude 1493 ft.)

### **Day 4, Wednesday, November 15, 2017**

From my hotel to the peak of town was a little more uphill. Then I started cycling a long downhill, I lost almost all my gained altitude from the previous day in a few miles, the first 10 miles of the day was mostly downhill, then it flattened out, a few small hill, but mostly good flat riding. The traffic was heavier and the road still had no shoulder, seems like a bad place to cycle. Once in Puerto Escondida I cycled to where I expected a hotel, but no hotels were there. Then I used my GPS and found more hotel. The first one I checked had no rooms, then I checked another hotel and found a cheap room. I wanted something better. I was under the impression Puerto Escondida was a tourist distinction with fancy hotel. It seems like a low-end tourist destination. I could not get the Wi-Fi to work in my room, I think it was the accented e in the password. I walked into the town and wished I would have made my way down there to find a hotel, that area looked more enjoyable than where I was staying. The other hotels may have all been full like the first hotel I checked. Nice town area by the ocean front. (Daily bike miles 70.81 miles; total bike miles 245.75 miles) (new trip highest altitude 1581 ft.)

### **Day 5, Thursday, November 16, 2017**

It was not too hard to get out of the locked gated hotel, I was on my way by sunrise. At one point I was taking a rest on the side of the unfinished highway and meet an Australian couple on lightly loaded bikes. They had most of their stuff at a hotel in Puerto Escondido and they were just on a day ride. They had previously traveled on bikes in Malaysia and then Cuba. I think they said they drove from Acapulco to Puerto Escondido. They asked if the roads were safe and said the roads looked dangerous when they drove to Puerto Escondido. I told them I did not like the roads and did not recommend riding them. When I meet them, they were cycling on the closed highway, which was the safest best cycling of this trip. They were planning on flying to Bogota, Colombia to bike next and I told them I liked cycling in Colombia. They told me they were half way through a 2-year bike/ travel adventure. I continued cycling to the turn off to Puerto Angel, then I stopped at the corner store and read my travel book on Puerto Angel and the book said the beaches west of town were better than the beach at Puerto Angel. So about 5 miles before arriving in Puerto Angle I saw a fun looking town with what looked like a turtle sanctuary. So, I found a room, it was expensive and the room did not have a private bath. They also did not take visa I decided to take it because they said the price was high due to a music festival and I wanted to check out the turtle sanction, it turned out to be more of a farm/ zoo and was not that interesting. The beach was very nice (I even saw a couple of fine-looking topless ladies. One was with a guy. The other one was laying sunny side up with nice firm breasts. I tried not to look, but could not help it.) and the town was quaint and worth the stay. I wanted money and 2 of the three ATMs in town did not work. I was told all three of the ATMs did not work the previous day. My USAA debit card was denied again, but my Chase liquid card worked at the third ATM. The room had a fan and they said it was a mosquito netted room, but it was easy to see the netting was not complete and there were holes to the outside area. There was an additional netting over the bed, but it was not comfortable to sleep with that netting and one side had an opening. Good thing there were no mosquitoes. I felt like I was getting bytes, but not sure if they were mosquito bites (I did not see any mosquitoes and the bites went away easier than mosquito bites). The internet was working, but not great here (It kept dropping out). I probably should have continued to Puerto Angel. The music festival was loud until well after midnight and I was having a lot of trouble trying to sleep. Normally I can sleep through noise by sleeping on my good ear, but the music was just too loud that night. (Daily bike miles 41.24 miles; total bike miles 286.99 miles)

### **Day 6, Friday, November 17, 2017**

I woke up very early and got going. It was an easy day and I felt great most of the day, I decided to go the Tangolunda and stayed across from the Hotel Barcelo where Andrea once paid for us to stay (it was very nice and I would have considered it if not by myself). However, it is much too expensive for me being by myself and it is an all-

inclusive resort. If I stayed there in order to get my money's worth I would have eaten and drank too much to continue my trip. I ended up staying in the cheaper hotel (but, not cheap by Mexican standards) across from the Hotel Barcelo resort. I tried finding a way to walk to the beach and could not find a trail. I went back to my hotel and asked them how to get to the beach and they told me where there was a trail to the beach. I was not exactly sure where he told me to go, so I followed someone down an alley and ended up in an all-inclusive resort. I guess the alley got me past the first level of security and the security guard near one of the eating places stopped me and told me to wait there, he kept looking back to make sure I did not go while he got backup. The security guard came back with another person and the other person told the security guard he could walk me through the resort to the beach. The security guard walked me to the beach and kept watching me as I tried to walk the beach. The security guard was not friendly and would not let me look at anything near his resort and he wanted me away from his hotel as quick as possible. He pointed me towards the end of the beach with the trail and he wanted me to go that way. He finally let me walk towards the other end of the beach, I wanted to see if the Hotel Barcelo was the one Andrea took me to (it looked right, but I was not sure until I confirmed it with my web site notes). The resorts do not own the beach, just the hotels to get to the beach. I walked as far as I could to that end of the beach and found no way to leave the beach without going through one of the all-inclusive hotels. Then I walked to the other end of the beach and saw people going down a trail, but it looked scary. So, I continued to the other end of the beach, the scary trail was the only way off the beach without going through a hotel. I took the trail and it was not that bad. It was a little rough, sand bags and 2X6 wood ramps over swamp land. I saw a few locals walking the trail, but they pretty much ignored me. Then I walked back to my hotel. The hotel does not have hot water (normal for Latin American countries), the air conditioning did not work, the TV remotes had dead batteries and the elevator did not work. My room was on the third floor. My stuff is heavy to get to the third floor. They did let me put my bike in my room. I walked around the block near my hotel and I found 2 more lower end hotels (I thought I had the only low-end hotel in the area), I wished I would have picked one of them. My hotel room was way too big for me, with a kitchen and separate room and bathroom. One of the other hotels had a nice-looking swimming pool, but I guess I did not need that. A couple of hotels I went to earlier in the trip had a swimming pool and I never used them. (Daily bike miles 43.1 miles; total bike miles 330.09 miles)

### **Day 7, Saturday, November 18, 2017**

I woke up around 6:00 AM and slowly got ready for the day. I was only planning on cycling about 7 miles, I checked the internet and found I would need to either go about 90 miles or take a rest day and only proceed about 6.8 miles to the last hotel I can find on the internet before Salina Cruz. I went for a ride without pulling the trailer

to the nearby town of Santa Cruz Huatulco and a little beyond before checking out of the hotel. It was much more pleasant and easy biking without pulling the trailer. The town of Santa Cruz was neat and was having a motorcycle rally. I saw lot of large motorcycle the previous day and on this day, they must have been going to the motorcycle rally. I took my time leaving the hotel, I left around 11:30 AM and slowly cycled to the town where I would stay. I did not want to get to the hotel before check-in time. As I was resting several times, I noticed motor cycled going by. Then I started thinking I better hurry to the next town to get a hotel. I started thinking the hotel in Santa Cruz would probably fill up with people at the motorcycle rally and then motorcycle may start going to the hotel in my destination town (Barra Copalita). I arrived in Barra Copalita around 1:00 PM and noticed a not so nice motel and a sign for a hotel 1 km down the road. I tried to find the hotel 1 km down the road and had no luck. I may have been close, but it did not look like a good area to stay. I went back to the first motel and got a room. It was actually quite nice. It had air conditioning and hot water showers. The TV only had one channel and there was no WIFI in the area. I walked around the small town and it did not seem like a great place for me. I bought groceries and went back to my motel. I still had about 6 hours to sunset, so I started working on my journal for this trip's web site update. (Daily bike miles 21.01 miles; total bike miles 351.1 miles)

### **Day 8, Sunday, November 19, 2017**

I woke up around 5:20 AM and started cycling at about 6:30 AM. Lots of motorcycle traffic and still no shoulder roads. I really do not like the riding here, seems dangerous, but the car and trucks normally give me plenty of room and wait when require. Although sometimes they do dumb moves, like passing me (them in the on coming traffic lane) with plenty of room on a blind hill or corner. Luckily nothing bad ever happened. Also, dogs often chase me, I don't think any dogs chased me on this day, I am sure some dogs barked at me as I cycled passed. It is funny most dogs do nothing or run, lots of dogs just sleep on the very low traffic roads. I arrived in the town of Santiago Astata a little after noon. I tried finding out the story on the motorcycles, by talking to a group of them at a restaurant stop in Santiago Astata. Since I do not speak Spanish and they did not speak English I was unable to determine the story. It sounded like a one-night event in Sant Cruz. I walked around the town for a while, at one point a drunk man and his friend tried talking to me. The drunk seemed annoying and his friend seemed friendly. I had to force my way away from them as friendly as possible. I did not like that interaction and avoided that part of town for the rest of the day. The town had a cracked church and I saw a nice building with cracks and fat sticks holding up the balcony. I wondered if they may have had an earthquake recently. There was also a knocked down cement building. The town was having some sort of used clothing give away. Lots of people lined up to get free cloths, seemed very interesting. My saddles sores on my butt cheeks were really bad on this

trip. I have tried wide Band-Aids, but they do not stick. I need something better, but cannot find anything. Supplies are limited here. I tried to lower the air condition temperature in my hotel room by a few degrees C and blew the fuse in the room. I had to get the hotel guy to reset the fuse and when it started working again, I decided to leave the temperature at 21 C, it was cool enough after a while. The air conditioners are very nice when they are working. (Daily bike miles 35.35 miles; total bike miles 386.45 miles)

### **Day 9, Monday, November 20, 2017**

I woke up around 5:00 AM and took a 2-flush dump. The first flush worked, the second one did not. The water was off in the hotel. At about 6:30 AM I woke up the lady at the hotel to get the water turned on in the room. I guess they turn it off at night, it runs very slow when it is on. My guess is since the area is so hot and dry, water must need to be saved. The ride to Salina Cruz was the normal bad cycling roads and uneventful. There were some very nice coastal views on the ride. The last 8 miles to Salina Cruz had a great road. About 3 miles before town, I noticed signs warning about a tunnel. From past experience I know they never let bikes in tunnels, so I noticed a road over the tunnel and took that road. Once in Salina Cruz I had a lot of trouble finding the bus station. My travel book tells me where it is, but I cannot find it on my GPS and there is no map in the travel book. Not a great travel book (footprint). I found a bus company, but they did not have routes to Tapachula. They told me where the main bus station was and I got close and found another bus company. That guy at that bus company had no idea what I wanted he gave me direction to ride to Tapachula. Some guys overheard me talking to the man attending the bus station and waved me over. They knew some English and told me how to get to the main bus station, seemed like the same place the first lady told me. When I found it, I thought it was still three more blocks down the road, I really need to learn Spanish. I started packing my bike up and this guy came over to ask about my trip. He was Mexican and spoke very good English, his name was Carlos (I never did get the other two guys names). Carlos told me he had been living in California for the past 30 years. Carlos has 3 kids born and raised in the USA. The oldest some was 27 years old. Carlos did not look very old, it turned out he was 19 when he had his first child, therefore he was now 46 years old. I thought Carlos was under 40 years old. The other 2 people he was traveling with lived in Mexico. One of them spoke very good English and had lived in the USA at one time. He told me that he pays 800 Pesos/ Month (about \$43/ month) to rent an apartment in Mexico. Carlos had met the second English speaking guy in California in the 90s. These guys asked me if I wanted to go out and get a bite to eat and at first, I said no I had to pack my stuff. Then I thought about it and went outside and told them I would go with them to get a bite to eat. They ended out getting a taxi to the port. The taxi went through the tunnel and I did not see any signs saying no bikes or pedestrians. As we were exiting the tunnel a lady was jogging into the tunnel.

I guess I could have biked through the tunnel, instead of over the hill on top of the tunnel. The taxi took us all over and then we stopped at a seaside restaurant. I wanted to pay the taxi bill, but the other guys paid first and insisted that I not worry about the cost. Then I had a great shrimp dinner and when the bill came, they insisted that they paid. I could not allow that, but they insisted and they said I could buy them breakfast in the morning. So, I agreed and I got the runs at the restaurant bathroom after dinner and took an anti-diarrhea pill. I was concerned about the bus trip, but the runs never came back. We took the taxi back to the bus station and they paid for that too. Then back at the bus station they bought me a diet Pepsi and a hot sandwich (it was very good). I did not want them to keep buying me stuff. Once on the bus, I found someone had my seat. Someone else had their seats and was asleep in the window. I had a window seat and was bummed that it was in use. (Daily bike miles 49.5 miles; total bike miles 435.95 miles)

### **Day 10, Tuesday, November 21, 2017**

I fell asleep and the guy sitting at the window seat woke me up and he went to use the restroom and then he returned to the window seat. He did that a second time and then gave up his window seat, so I took the window seat. From the time I was in the window seat until about 6:00 AM I slept very well. I had taken a sleeping pill earlier that evening. At about 6:00 AM I could hear an alarm and I assumed it was not mine, but it did not stop. I picked up my backpack and the alarm noise did come from my backpack. Oops it was me waking everyone up in the bus. Previously in this trip I tried setting the alarm, but I could not figure out how to get it to work. This was the first time it had worked and it was turned on correctly, but I thought it was off. After that I learned how to use the alarm clock. I think I annoyed a lot of people sleeping on the bus with my alarm, good thing the alarm was not that loud and muffled a bit in my backpack. Once we arrived at Tapachula we looked into taking the bus to Guatemala (would have been the easy way, but we would have had to wait until the next morning). Carlos (the Mexican man from California that I had met in Salina Cruz) decided to take a taxi to the Guatemala border, so I went with him and the other two guys that I had met in Salina Cruz. On the way to the Guatemala border our taxi was stopped at a police block in Mexico and everyone (except me) was individually taken from the taxi and searched (even the taxi driver was interrogated by the police). The police searched our luggage, even mine. The funny thing is the Police never searched me and they never asked to see my passport (I told them I was from the USA and that was enough). Two of the Mexican guys did not have IDs (Carlos had his Mexican Passport, the other 2 guys had no IDs) and told the police they were from Guatemala, it took a long time to be interrogated by the police, but everything worked out. The taxi dropped us off near the Guatemala border, then Carlos and I took a Tutu to the border/ bridge. I had a lot of luggage (my suit cased bike and duffle bag of gear), I think the other 2 guys I was traveling with walked to the bridge (Mexico/ Guatemala

boarder). Then we walked across the bridge to Guatemala, a lot of people following us trying to get tips for helping us. One of the Mexican guys I was with gave them a tip, then they asked me for a tip and I gave them a tip, but they wanted more money. They really did not help at all, I wished I would not have given the guy a tip. It kind of made me mad when he wanted more money for doing nothing. Border crossings to me are very annoying. Once on the Guatemala side of the bridge we all sat down for breakfast and I paid for the meal. After that we had to take a taxi to the next small town to catch the bus to Quetzaltenango. Once in the next town we found the main terminal did not have an option for a bus to Quetzaltenango. They told us about another bus station in town. Carlos and I took a Tutu to the other station to confirm there was a bus to Quetzaltenango. We found that it was possible from that bus company and it was a two-bus process to go the 50 miles to Quetzaltenango. Then we went back to the first bus station to get our gear and the other two guys. It was hard getting my bike suitcase into the Tutu and when we got to the other bus station the suit case was stuck between the seat and the back seat of the Tutu frame. I had to force the suitcase out of the Tutu and the forcing broke off a piece on the suitcase handle. The first bus was very nice with lots of room. The trip on the first bus took us slightly south west of Quetzaltenango. The second bus was a local fancy painted old blue bird school bus and was very crowded as the trip got closer to Quetzaltenango. Once in Quetzaltenango we quickly found a hotel. There was internet and I found that my Facebook password was used in Washington state, so they forced me to change my password before I could use it. But my passwords are kept on my home computer. I did have some password hints on a piece of paper and used them to figure out my Facebook password, so I was able to reset my password. Good thing I spent time before leaving home studying my password hints. The town was interesting and I was originally planning on cycling from there to Antigua, but while taking the bus I noticed the roads were horrible. I had decided after the road in Mexico I did not want to risk my life with the traffic. The next day the bus had a lot of uphill and I was glad I did not bike that road. That night I went out to dinner with the other 3 guys and paid for their dinner, they helped me a lot since I do not speak Spanish. I feel I really owe them for all there help and all the things they bought me. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; total bike miles 435.95 miles)

### **Day 11, Wednesday, November 22, 2017**

I woke up around 6:00 AM and finished packing. Then I walked around the market in Quetzaltenango and looked to see if I could find a place that advertised shuttles to Panajachel. No luck, I tried to figure out the bus, however each person told me a bus with more explanation than a direct bus would require. Carlos and the other guys were leaving the hotel for a walk at around 8:50 AM, they just got started for the day. I talked Carlos into helping me find a direct bus to Panajachel. Carlos had to ask several people and then he walked me around until we found a bus labeled PANA that was



the direct bus to Panajachel. Then he found out that the bus left at noon. Since I still had about 3 hours, I decided to have breakfast with the other guys. Carlos had asked me for my phone number so I gave him one of my gobikeride.com cards, he may come to Portland to visit someday. Then we went back to the hotel, since I was already packed, I left after using the restroom. I got to the bus a little before 10:00 AM and gave them my luggage, they loaded my luggage on top of the bus. It was too early to get on the bus and the bus was not in the loading area, so I kept walking around and periodically checking to make sure the bus was still there. At about 11:00 AM I found a place to take a long bathroom break. At about 11:20 AM I went back to the bus and it was gone, my luggage was still on top of the bus. I assumed they would move and at that time I would follow them to where they would pick up people. But they moved while I was in the bathroom, I panicked a little. The bus was originally in a waiting lot. Then I searched the parking lot with all the buses getting ready to leave Quetzaltenango and found my bus. Then I got on the bus and it left at noon. The trip to Panajachel went smoothly. It took about 3 hours to go 60 miles in the bus, normal for that part of the world. Once in Panajachel I asked an Anglo kid if he knew where there were any good hotels and he snobbishly said no. Maybe he thought I was local, but that makes no sense, I was pushing my suitcase and lugging a duffle bag and asked him in English. I think the kid was just a jerk. Other people pointed me to hotels that did not look that appealing. I found one I liked so I got a room for two nights. Then I assembled my bike and cycled around. There were better hotels down the road, but the one I took was probably best for me with my bike. I wanted to find the lake ferry, but I had no luck. I might have found it, but there was no schedule or place to buy tickets. Might be hard to figure out, will probably cycle the next day. I believe the views of the lake might be better from Lake side road. I thought I might figure out the boat the next day, but never did. (Daily bike miles 6.92 miles; total bike miles 442.87 miles)

### **Day 12, Thursday, November 23, 2017**

I woke up around 6:00 AM and got ready to bike. I started by cycling the road to Santa Catarina and then to San Antonio Palopó. I tried to continue to cycle but it turned into a really bad dirt road, so I headed back to Panajachel. When I arrived in Santa Catarina the traffic was stopped in both directions due to trucks and cars trying to get through the narrow roads. The towns on the lake have roads that are too narrow for bi-directional traffic, this type of traffic jam must happen a lot. The vehicles were backing up and more were coming behind them. I was able to cycle around the stuck traffic. It must have taken a long time to unwind the cars and trucks. Then I biked through town and then I headed on the road toward Antigua. At one point I took a break and saw a couple loaded with their travel gear headed towards Panajachel. These were the first (and only ones on this trip) loaded touring cyclist I had seen on this trip (In Mexico I met a couple from Australia, but their bikes were not loaded when I met them). Leaving Panajachel was a lot of uphill for several miles, I cycled

for about 6 miles and then turned back towards Panajachel. I reached an altitude of about 6784 feet (5162 Feet in Panajachel – over 1600 feet of gain) before heading back to Panajachel. It took forever for me to get there and no time at all to get back to Panajachel. I wanted to reach 486 trip miles by the end of the day and had to do some retracing my routes to get more miles. Then I bought groceries and went back to the hotel. The day started out very clear with great views of the volcanoes in the lake background. The end of the day it was lightly sprinkling. I think that is the normal weather pattern in Panajachel at this time of year. I arranged a shuttle to Antigua for the next day. (Daily bike miles 43.29 miles; total bike miles 486.16 miles)

### **Day 13, Friday, November 24, 2017**

I woke up around 6:00 AM and started cycling around 6:45 AM. I cycled up the hill to the waterfall, then cycled to near Santa Catarina. Then I cycled all the roads of Panajachel to get more miles for the day. Then I went to my hotel to finish packing. I got to the hotel around 10:00 AM and it took me forever to get packed. I left the hotel at about 11:00 AM and went to where I was to catch my shuttle to Antigua. The shuttle was not crowded I had my own seat, but it was not a comfortable shuttle. When we arrived in Antigua the shuttle driver asked where I wanted off and I tried telling him. A lady on the shuttle spoke good English and I showed her the name and address of my hotel. She explained it to the shuttle driver and he gave me a ride to my hotel. I told the lady when I returned to the shuttle place in Panajachel and she wrote down the hotel name. I do not know why the shuttle driver did not know. It was written on my ticket that I had given him in Panajachel. Thankfully that girl explained it to him. I arrive at my hotel in Antigua at 3:00 PM and my room was not ready. I left my bags and walked around for about an hour and then I was able to get into my room. Then I walked around town looking for bike shops to see about getting maps. I found a bike shop that had bike tours, but they had no maps. I ended out buying a bus ticket that night for Tikal to depart Antigua on the upcoming Sunday. (Daily bike miles 17.01 miles; total bike miles 503.17 miles)

### **Day 14, Saturday, November 25, 2017**

I woke up around 6:07 AM, by my alarm. No windows in hotel. This was the first time I used my new alarm. I had to read the instructions on how to set the alarm the previous night. I started cycling a little after 7:00 AM. I did a little in Antigua, but it is impossible to make miles with their roads. All cobble stone type roads and not very smooth. Once I found normal pavement I started cycling in a random direction. The roads are OK, except lots of potholes, no shoulder and too much traffic. The cars did give you room and respect as much as possible. After cycling up a big hill I was on highway CA-1 (I think that is the same as the Pan American Highway). Then it was a two-lane high and normally had a great shoulder. I took a secondary road that paralleled CA-1 until I arrived in the town of Chimaltenango. This town had a lot

going on, even a big wedding at the church. It may have been more than one wedding, lots of people. I took a video while I was cycling through the town of Chimaltenango and uploaded it on Facebook that night (took forever to upload). Then I cycled a different way back to Antigua. Several interesting towns, once back in Antigua I started checking out the sites, then I found another good road, so I decided to investigate it for the next morning's miles. That turned into a great road after a few miles. I then cycled back to Antigua and continues checking out the sites. At about sunset, there were great views of the volcanoes that could be seen from town. I took several photos and returned to my hotel a little after sunset. (Daily bike miles 51.02 miles (used GPS miles my bike odometer was not connected correctly for about 1.08 miles; total bike miles 553.11 miles + 1.08 miles)

### **Day 15, Sunday, November 26, 2017**

I woke up around 6:07 AM and started cycling at about 6:40 AM. A great volcano view day. One of the volcanos was periodically sending ash into the sky. I cycled to the good road and went one direction until it was a lot of downhill and then I turned back and went the other direction. At the top of one hill there was a great place to take a photo, except a person was sitting there on his cell phone. He did take my photo and he got a great photo of me and my bike, but not the volcanoes in the background. I wanted to set my tripod up where he was sitting. When I reached my desired miles, I turned back. When I returned to that great spot for a photo that guy was still sitting on the bench talking on his cell phone. I decided to continue, at the bottom of the hill I found another great spot to get a photo of me with the volcano in the background. I set up my tripod with my camera mounted on it and got some great photos. I got a really bad knee cramp when taking the photos. The knee cramp was very slight that night and gone the next day. I returned to the hotel at about 9:00 AM, packed my bike and worked on my journal and researched sites in Antigua to make sure I see everything before my 6:30 PM shuttle to Guatemala City. The lady told me to be there by 6:00 PM for the 6:30 PM shuttle and I was there by 5:45 PM, the shuttle took off at about 6:05 PM (normally they are late, I was surprised the shuttle left early). Good thing I was there! Once in Guatemala City they dropped me off at the bus station and not long after that I was on an all-night bus to Santa Elena (Florence). Someone was in my seat and when I first told him, he did not want to move. Then another person said yes it was my seat and the guy finally moved to the seat next to me (I had the window seat and he was now in the aisle seat) I really wanted the window seat so I could sleep. Later that guy moved and a new person moved into that seat. I think he was still in the wrong seat. (Daily bike miles 18.13 miles; total bike miles 571.24 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 16, Monday, November 27, 2017**

I slept fair on the bus and when I arrive in Santa Elena, I had to get the guy next to me

to wake up so I could get off the bus. He was continuing to another town. Once off the bus a van took us to a travel agency and hooked me up with transportation to Tikal, then a private shuttle back to Santa Elena in the morning of my departure, he also lined up a bus to Rio Dulce when I returned. I should have stopped there, but I also had him line up a bus to Guatemala City on my next to last day. On the shuttle to Tikal National Park, I was the only one that had all my luggage. Almost everyone else was just going to Tikal for the day and staying in Santa Elena. There was one couple that only had daypacks and they were also staying at a hotel in the national park. The hotel Tikal Inn was primitive. When I first check in I got talked into paying for a package which included a dinner, breakfast and a guided Tikal park sunset tour. The hotel only turns on the electric from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM and 6:00 AM to 9:00 AM. The rest of the day there is no electric in the rooms, however they did have rechargeable LED bedside light at night. I used the light for about an hour at nights and it had several LEDs to provide good room light. I am not sure how long the charge worked if you left the LED lights on. The hotel WIFI was satellite based and not good enough to book rooms on Orbitz. When the electric was off the Wi-Fi only worked in the hotel lobby. The hotel toilet did not work well, had to hold handle down until all the water was gone from the bowl, else nothing much happened (The park had a similar toilet – must be water saver). It seems like it would have been more fun staying in Santa Elena and much better cycling. I cycled down a dirt road until it turned to mud. At one point there was a sign that I think warned about crocodiles. Then the road got muddy and I was surrounded by mosquitoes. I was almost always putting on mosquito repellent, for some reason I did not before my bike ride in the jungle that day. I hoped none of my bites were from sick mosquitoes. I then went back to my hotel and quickly went for a swim hoping it would prevent mosquito issues. I never felt sick from the mosquito bites, I was taking malaria pills on this trip. Then I biked down the main road for about 7 miles and then back to the hotel. It was a nice ride on a not real busy road in the jungle. I think it would have been more interesting biking around Sant Elena. Then I went back to my hotel and took my guided sunset tour. The ruins at Tikal are amazing. I was the only person on the tour, the guide was very nice. We saw monkeys, turkey, pheasant like birds, a toucan (I just noticed a black bird fly by, the guide said it was a Toucan), coati and a Agouti. We watched the sunset and then came out of the jungle as it was getting dark, the guide used his cell phone light to brighten the trail. Then I went back to my hotel and had a good chicken dinner. (Daily bike miles 17.15 miles; total bike miles 588.39 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 17, Tuesday, November 28, 2017**

My alarm clock went off at 5:27 AM and I quickly woke. I went to the rest room and the toilet did not flush. The handle was stuck down and the water trickles all night (I thought I heard dripping. I thought it was rain and at one point I went outside and saw

stars, seemed strange). A very slow filling toilet. I then quickly got ready to hike and went to the park to see if I could get in a little before 6:00 AM (my guide the previous day suggested that I tried getting in the park at 5:50 AM – he thought they might let me in). I was at the entrance at 5:55 AM and they said I would need to wait until 6:00 AM. They let me in shortly before 6:00 AM. I tried to quickly get to Temple 4, but could not find it. I ended up watching the sunrise from the east facing temple in the Gran Plaza. It was not that spectacular. From that point I could see temple 4 and hiked to it and up to the top. My guide Caesar from the previous day was coming down, I told him I saw the sun rise from the other temple. Then I walked through a lot of the park quickly before getting back to the hotel for breakfast. After breakfast I cycled down the road towards the park entrance for about 8.5 miles and then back toward my hotel. I saw a dirt road before getting to the park entrance and cycled down it. The road was more meant for mountain bikes or 4-wheel drives than my bike Friday. However, it was a neat jungle road and I cycled it until it ended near a swamp. I looked to see if there were any crocodiles, but I did not see any. The road through the jungle had lots of mosquitoes, I had sprayed myself well with DET and only got a few mosquito bites. I thought I would not get any bites. Then I cycled back to my hotel and was there by about noon. I packed my bike in the suit case and went over to the historic park a little before 1:00 PM and checked out all the ruins and took several timed photos of myself with pyramids and ruins in the back ground. I went to the area where they sold souvenir and bought a lot of stuff. There was a pond near the gift shops where I saw a crocodile and some neat birds. Then I went back to the hotel and worked on this journal. (Daily bike miles 19.65 miles; total bike miles 608.04 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 18, Wednesday, November 29, 2017**

I woke up around 4:30 AM and made sure I was packed and then went to wait for my shuttle. I noticed other people walking to the main parking lot, I thought I was getting picked up at the hotel. At about 5:45 AM I started walking to the main lot and then I was directed to a waiting spot. There were 2 other people waiting for the same shuttle. It turns out their shuttle ticket said to wait at a specific sign (that was where they were waiting so I also waited there), my shuttle ticket just said one way (no waiting location on my ticket). When the shuttle arrived, I had to explain who I was and show them my ticket. The guy that way overcharged me at the travel agency in Santa Elena the previous day, did not explain how to get my pre-paid expensive shuttle back to Santa Elena. Then the shuttle took me to the bus station in Santa Elena and the guy at the ticket office in the bus station had trouble confirming my reservation (he made a couple phone calls) and told me I was OK to get on the bus with the written receipt. They let me on the bus and when the bus stopped at a town, they wanted to see my ticket. But the guy when I got on the bus already took my receipt. The new person wanted more money, but finally let me be. I think the guy from the travel agent that

picked us up at the bus drop off and took us to his travel agency was a bit dishonest. I should have only paid for the shuttle to/from Tikal with that guy. But I bought my ticket to Rio Dulce and then one to Guatemala City. I was not sure which day I wanted to return to Guatemala City and bought a non-refundable ticket to return on December 1, but now I want to return on December 2. I will just eat the cost of the expensive bus ticket from the travel agent. He charged me at least 2 times the normal price, I was just not thinking and thought it would be easier to use him. Once in Rio Dulce I suddenly changed my plans and decided to go directly to Livingston and stay there for the night. The boat ride to Livingston was very nice, sort of reminds me of the San Blas Islands. I should have probably waited until the next day and made it a day trip and stored my stuff at a hotel in Rio Dulce, I was getting tired of lugging around all my stuff. Livingston is definitely a Caribbean environment, totally different than the other parts of Guatemala that I have visited so far. Not all Latinos, darker skinned Caribbean types. (The bike stuff is a lot of excess stuff). In the long run I was glad I spent the night in Livingston. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; total bike miles 608.04 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 19, Thursday, November 30, 2017**

I woke up around 5:17 AM and got ready to cycle. I started cycling around 5:30 AM and cycled to the end of the pavement in Livingston a little past the Cemetery. Then I worked my way back towards my hotel. The sunrise was at 6:06 AM and I went to an ocean view area and did not see sunrise colors due to the cloud cover. I cycled passed the pier and then past my hotel to the other end of the pavement. Then I returned to my hotel and I packed my bike back into the suitcase and was ready to go by 7:30 AM. I then went to the hotel's restaurant and ate my included breakfast. I thought I would need to forfeit the breakfast, but I was quicker at cycling the paved roads than I expected. After breakfast I went back to my hotel room and finished packing and using the restroom. I was out of the hotel by about 8:30 AM and started walking towards the boat launch. I tutu asked if I needed a ride and since I was tired of lugging all my stuff, I took the ride to the launch. I had about a 40-minute wait for my boat, another guy tried to help me with my luggage, but I took it myself (it was only about 100 feet to the boat). The boat ride back to Rio Dulce was much better than the ride to Livingston. On the way to Livingston the boat was packed and I had a middle seat. On the ride back to Rio Dulce the boat was less than half full and I was able to get a full seat row, so I could take photos from both sides of the boat. One of the guys on the boat (John) was from Boston. He was the first person on this trip that I could really easily understand his English. I met other people that spoke good English and I could fully understand them, but normally they had a difficult accent. John was traveling with a guy named Andreas that was from I think Estonia (he said somewhere near Finland and Sweden – near Russia). John told me that he had been in a 5-day coma and almost died and then he snapped out of the comma and he was now fine. His

comma was caused by a negative drug reaction. Once back in Rio Dulce I found a nice hotel, but did not understand that I was getting a fan and could have gotten A/C for a little more. When I realized that some rooms had A/C I asked for an upgrade and paid the difference as well as a cleaning fee for the first room. I was glad I changed room. The upgraded room was a much nicer room with more space and a nicer TV. I assembled my bike and cycled to Castle de San Felipe. It was a nice fort where you could check it out thoroughly, it was very well restored. However, some places seemed like they could be considered dangerous in US standards. Some tunnels had no lights and low roofs. Overall, the fort was very cool. Then I cycled back to town and over the bridge. I then cycled for about 30 minutes and through a construction site. I did not go that direction again. On the way back to the hotel, the ride through the construction area seemed easier, no traffic was coming from the other direction. Then when I got to the bridge the traffic was completely stopped by police at the bridge. They started letting a few motorcycles at a time over the bridge. I was the only one on a bike and they let me cross. It was an uphill climb to the high point on the bridge and I huffed my way up the bridge, luckily, they were only allowing motorcycles over so it was not too bad. There was a very long line of trucks and cars stopped and they were not yet allowed to cross the bridge. Once on the other side of the bridge I could see the highway was closed for a parade going down the main street (the highway) in Rio Dulce. I cycled the back roads to the other end of town and was able to find a great spot to watch the parade. The parade was mostly marching bands and maybe 2 floats (one was Santa clause on his sleigh). Then I cycled back to the hotel and the parade circled town and ended out down the road from my hotel. It was a loud night. My room was to the side the highway and under the highway bridge. I could hear traffic and music until about 10:00 PM. Then I could hear traffic a lot all night, good thing I can only hear in one ear. The trucks like using their loud engine brakes when coming down the bridge hill (The bridge is very high in the middle to allow boats under the bridge). I sleep on my good ear and it blocks out most of the noise. (Daily bike miles 25.66 miles; total bike miles 633.7 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 20, Friday, December 1, 2017**

I woke up around 5:27 AM when my alarm went off. I then got ready and took off cycling at about 6:10 AM. I cycled towards El Estor. Once at the intersection that goes either to Castle de San Felipe or El Estor the road was not so great. After about 3 miles of bad road, the road changed to a great cement road with a reasonable shoulder. The best road for cycling since the first 17 miles of the road out of Acapulco. The road stayed great all the way to El Estor. El Estor was not that exciting of a town, a very long line at the bank (I notice this often in Latin American banks). The ATMs usually do not have lines, funny the banks have such long lines. When I was at the water front I saw some fisherman with some very big fish, they looked a lot like

Salmon. I only stayed in El Estor for about an hour and then cycled back to Rio Dulce. It was a nice ride through a couple small towns and farms with people in straw huts. There was a very large banana farm and other type of palm fruit trees. Great ride overall. Once back in Rio Dulce I decided I wanted to get to a total trip bike miles to over 700 miles and cycled out the highway in the direction I had not tried yet. It was not a bad route, but a lot more traffic and not as good of a shoulder as the ride to El Estor. I ended up getting ready to leave and hanging out at the hotel from about 6:00 PM through the night. (Daily bike miles 73.22 miles; total bike miles 706.92 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 21, Saturday, December 2, 2017**

I woke up around 5:27 AM when my alarm went off. I then got ready and took off cycling at about 6:15 AM. I cycled north on CA13 for about 6 miles. At one point there was a boy with a flat tire that needed help, I did not want to spend the time helping him and said no. Then I showed him I had a tube and he said something like he had no money. I was trying to explain that my spare tube was not the correct size for his bike. I have 20-inch tires and he had 26-inch tires. I did not do a very good job of explaining the issue, I think he thought I was a jerk. I wish I would have tried harder to help him. I could have at least given him the small tube. I did not help because I was worried about if I get a flat without the spare tube and running out of time before my bus to Guatemala City. It turns out when I returned to the hotel and packed my stuff, I still had a couple hours before the bus. Even if I would have tried harder to help the guy with the flat tire, I do not think I could have helped him, he did not have quick release tires and I did not have the proper tools to remove the hex bolts for his bike tire rims. I did have a patch kit and wish I would have at least tried to explain my situation to him. Without me knowing Spanish it would have been hard to explain. I first saw him when I was heading north, I was hoping I would see him when I returned south and then I could have tried to be more helpful. Well, I did not see him, he must have found someone to help. Once back in town I still needed more miles to make my daily quota, so I cycled towards the fort and then to the water front to clean the dirt off my bike. There was a slight rain in the morning, so my bike got pretty muddy. The previous day started out the same way. This entire trip I never got very wet, except the last 3 days have all had misting in the morning or in the case of Livingston in the evening. I went back to my hotel and packed my bike. Then I took a shower and did some slight reorganizing. Then I worked on this journal. I went to the bus station at about 10:30 AM and waited for the bus which left at 12:30 PM. I probably should have stayed at the hotel longer, read my travel book. I moved my suitcase to ask about if there was a charge for the luggage and when I returned to my seat the suitcase was not standing correctly. The wheel had fallen off, I found it on the floor. The plastic was broken and the wheel would not reattach. Good thing it was the end of my trip, I was thinking the suitcase had it. I have really only used the suitcase



for 4 trips, probably pulling stuff for a little less than 3,000 miles. The bus seemed to make fair time until we reached about 45 miles to Guatemala City, then there was a long stretch of road construction with a huge backup of traffic. It took about an hour to get the next 5 miles. There were a lot of HOWO (OECC) dump trucks. I have never seen these trucks, I looked them up on internet that evening and found they are manufactured in China. Then the bus started moving OK again until about 10 miles before Guatemala City, then the traffic was very heavy and we crawled for several miles. Then they took us to a bus terminal outside town and had us get into smaller busses and loaded all our luggage on top of these smaller buses. We finally made it to the bus station in Guatemala City, it took over 8 hours to travel about 180 miles (from Rio Dulce to Guatemala City). The roads are bad and it always takes a long time, but I was thinking it should have only taken about 5 hours (that is what I had read). Once at the bus station I easily found a cab to my hotel. (Daily bike miles 19.08 miles; total bike miles 726 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 22, Sunday, December 3, 2017**

I woke up around 6:00 AM and got ready to walk around. I left the hotel around 6:30 AM and walked to a couple of the parks. One said a botanical park on my map, but all I saw was a locked university gate with fancy plants on the grounds. The other one looked more like an amusement park. There was one cool church to check out from the outside. I was staying in Guatemala City's zone 9 and there is not much to see there with respect to tourist attraction. I maybe should have stayed in Guatemala City's zone 1. It was a little further from the airport and that was why I choice to stay at zone 9. Zone 1 I believe has all the tourist attraction type historic buildings. After my boring walk I went back to the hotel and took a shower. Then I had my hotel included breakfast. I tried to asked for no onions or tomatoes in the scrambled eggs, but they put both in the eggs. They must not have understood my English and assumed I asked to have them include onions and tomatoes. Oh well I picked out some of the onions and ate the breakfast anyways. It was good. Then I finished packing and checked out of the hotel. The hotel clerk called me a taxi and it showed up shortly. The taxi driver was metering my taxi time and it cost a lot less than the shorted ride from the bus station the prior night (less than half the price). Once at the airport I quickly checked in for my flight and spent time buying souvenirs. Then I went through customs and they noticed I had a liter of water. They told me I would need to drink it first or leave it. I drank the liter of water and since I had a window seat, I was concerned about needing to go the rest room to much during the 3-hour flight to Houston. I was fine, got most of it out before the flight. I spending most of the rest of my Guatemala money buying souvenirs at the airport. Mostly I bought stuff before going through security, they had more vendors on that side of the airport security check. They had plenty of places on both sides of the security check. I had

over 2 hours to waste, I walked the airport and the time went very fast. There was an air show going on outside and I was able to watch it from the airport terminal windows. The flight was OK, the guy next to me had big arms and the kid behind me was kicking my seat back and yelling periodically (brat!) Also, the button to recline my plane seat was pressed in and I could not recline the seat at all. Actually, the guy next to me was not really on my side and the kid quit kicking the seat and the yelling slightly after take-off. At the start of the flight, they said the entertainment was not working. For about the first hour the TV screen said "Due to Normal Aircraft Movement Programming is Temperately Unavailable". After about an hour I noticed the warning went away and I was able to watch a free movie, not that good (no not remember what it was, the TV on the plane was poor quality). The flight was good, but would have been nice to recline the seat a little. The plane took off a few minutes early from Guatemala City and arrived about 15 minutes early in Houston, Texas. I easily went through customs and rechecked my luggage for Portland. My flight to Portland was delayed by about 20 minutes. That flight the speaker input for my seat was pressed in, I fixed it and was able to watch a free bad movie until the flight took off. Then they wanted me to swipe my credit card and pay \$7.99 for the movie. I did not want to pay that much, plus the quality and TV system seemed poor. I think United needs to better maintain their 727 fleet. One nice thing on the flight from Houston to Portland was that the middle seat did not have a passenger so I could lean into the middle. Much more comfortable and the seat did recline. That was one of the only empty seats in the plane, from where I was sitting, I could only see one other empty seat on the plane. Got back to Portland around 10:00 PM. Great flight to Portland and Marty was at the luggage pickup area waiting for me. Cool!! Then we went to my place and went to sleep about 11:00 PM. (daily bike miles 0 miles; total bike miles 726 miles + 1.08 miles (when bike odometer was not registering on 11/25/17))

### **Day 23, Monday, December 4, 2017**

I woke up around 6:55 AM, my alarm was supposed to go off at around 6:27 AM. When I noticed it was late, we quickly woke up and I was ready for work about 15 minutes early. Then I went to work and it was not too hard to catch up.