

Day 1, Tuesday, August 06, 2024

I woke up around 4:50 AM, finished preparing for my trip, and left my house on my bike loaded with gear at 6:00 AM. I arrived at the train station just after 6:30 AM, only to find that a train to Seattle was about to depart at 6:45 AM. I inquired about boarding that train but was informed it was too late. I was told I could have caught the earlier train if I had arrived sooner. My scheduled train left Portland at 8:30 AM and reached Seattle a bit after noon, around 12:10 PM.

From Seattle, I biked to the Bremerton ferry to connect to a previous journey. I had some difficulty rejoining my route after leaving the ferry terminal, but once I figured it out, I encountered approximately 40 miles of paved bike trails. The terrain then changed to gravel trails, followed by a short distance on the highway, then more gravel, a hiking trail, and finally, a residential area in Snoqualmie.

I discovered a bike trail out of Snoqualmie just as the sun was setting and found a bridge near the Snoqualmie Valley Rail-Trail, a little east of Snoqualmie Falls, to sleep under for the night. My camera stopped working that day, and I couldn't download any photos directly from it. I went to sleep around 9:30 PM. (Daily bike miles: 64.99; Total trip bike miles: 64.99)

Day 2, Wednesday, August 07, 2024

I woke up around 6:00 AM after a very cold night on rough ground, which made for a restless sleep. Without a sleeping bag, I had worn all my clothes but still felt chilly. I didn't get out of my tent until about 6:45 AM, hoping the sun would warm things up. After packing up my gear, I was on my bike by around 7:30 AM. Still feeling cold, I kept my coats and long pants on at first, but it wasn't long before I was comfortable enough to shed them.

I spent the day cycling on rail trails, crossing impressive bridges and going through tunnels. I cycled to the scenic Rattlesnake Lake and reached the trailhead for the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, where I would be for the next five days. This trail included several tunnels and trestles, with the longest tunnel being the 2.3-mile Iron Horse Tunnel. Unfortunately, my rechargeable headlight, which had been weak, lost its charge right before the last tunnel. The light failed when left on for about 10 minutes between tunnels. Luckily I had another light source to navigate through the last tunnel.

By around 4:00 PM, it was quite hot, and my HCX GPS turned off briefly. Initially, I planned to stay at a hotel near the summit of Snoqualmie Pass. After cycling past Keechelus Lake I realizing I had gone beyond the summit and then I found myself in Cle Elum. With only 26 more miles to Ellensburg, I decided to continue there for the night.

In Ellensburg, I used Orbitz to find a hotel and found a good rate at the Best Western. The site required inputting all my information, but upon logging in, I discovered the room rate had dropped even further. I stayed at the Best Western, bought groceries, and had dinner at Wendy's. (Daily bike miles: 88.28; Total trip bike miles: 153.27)

Day 3, Thursday, August 08, 2024

I woke up around 5:50 AM and enjoyed the complimentary breakfast at the hotel. After unpacking previous night and repacking my gear, I didn't leave until 7:04 AM. The previous night I had created a

GPS route from my hotel in Ellensburg to Beverly, which worked flawlessly. The ride from Ellensburg to the I-90 bridge was smooth and easy. The I-90 bridge is an impressive trestle structure over interstate I-90, last used for rail traffic in 1980 before becoming part of the John Wayne Trail, now known as the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail.

After crossing the I-90 bridge, I registered and entered the U.S. Army Yakima Training Center. The trail here was reported as 20 miles of sand. It started with sand and a slight uphill incline. I met a cyclist named Sebastian, who had traveled from Ontario and was heading to Vancouver, BC. He has a YouTube channel called "Traveling with Seb" (check out Episode 47, [Episode 47, Rosalia to Ritzville on the Palouse to Cascades trail - YouTube](#)).

I first cycled to a closed tunnel along the trail and walked partway in, finding it seemed safe. However, upon seeing someone further inside, possibly an official, I decided to turn back. I had to go up a hill to detour around the closed tunnel, and the detour path was rocky and challenging to cycle, so I mostly pushed my bike through the rough terrain.

Once past the rocky section, the trail was mostly downhill for about 10 miles to the Columbia River, with a slight grade. The ride was relatively easy, with only a bit of sand. I left the U.S. Army Yakima Training Center just before reaching the Columbia River and crossed the Beverly Railroad Bridge, which now serves as a cool bike trail.

In Beverly, I used my phone to locate a store and got more water, having used a couple of liters during the military grounds ride. Returning to the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, I encountered sandy stretches that were difficult to ride for a few miles before it improved. The trail eventually turned onto private land, leading me to a paved road that also seemed to be private. I followed my GPS route on dirt roads for a few miles, struggling to find a camping spot due to private property and a lack of trees. I finally found a spot in a ditch down a hill, hidden from the road, and set up camp around 7 PM. With no trees around, it was challenging to stay out of view. I re-charged my GPS and phone with my Juicer that night. (Daily bike miles: 66.74; Total trip bike miles: 220.01)

Day 4, Friday, August 09, 2024

I woke up around 5:15 AM, packed up my gear, and started cycling by 6:00 AM. I covered a few miles to reach State Route 26, then cycled along the highway shoulder to Othello, which led me off the Palouse to Cascades State Trail. I bought supplies in a store in Othello. After leaving town, I ended up on some excellent paved roads with shoulders for about 20 miles before returning to the Palouse to Cascades State Trail.

At one of the trail gates, I encountered a combination lock for the first time. Fortunately, I had the combination from when I registered to ride the trail. Over the next few days, I would come across several more of these combination-locked gates.

The trail was smooth for a while, but then the gravel became too deep for easy travel, reducing my speed to about 4 MPH. I found paved roads nearby and spent a significant portion of the day on those, periodically returning to the trail, though it remained too slow.

Upon reaching Ralston, I initially decided to continue to Ritzville but then turned back when I discovered a campground nearby. I ended up camping at Ralston Memorial Park, which was free and had water but no restrooms. There was a restroom about ½ mile away at the trail. I had started towards Ritzville but returned because the hotel rates were high on Orbitz, and I felt it was better to stay on the trail. Though I missed out on some vertical gain and would have not had to detour around Cow Creek the next day, I was ultimately glad to have stayed on the trail as I wanted to complete it. However, I believe the route through Ritzville would have been easier. I setup my tent in the park and went to sleep around 10:00 PM. (Daily bike miles: 74.57; Total trip bike miles: 294.58)

Day 5, Saturday, August 10, 2024

I woke up around 5:15 AM and started cycling by 6:00 AM, opting to take the Cow Creek crossing detour. This detour was lengthy and slow due to a large missing trestle bridge. Along the way, I ran into Travis, the ranger I had spoken to on the phone about the trail before my trip. I asked if he needed to see my permit, and he said no. He was with a trainee ranger. They informed me the forecast predicted a high of 100°F for the day.

Travis mentioned that I could get water at a place in Revere with a grain towers where trucks were loaded with grain. When I arrived, I filled up with water and continued to Wagner Road. However, I soon realized that my Garmin 22x GPS was missing. I cycled 4.5 miles back to the grain towers but couldn't find it. I stopped to get more water at the grain towers, hoping it might have been left there, but it wasn't. The man monitoring the truck loading offered me cold water and two Gatorades, which I appreciated. I asked him about the GPS, but he hadn't seen it. I should have gone further back; I last saw it at 11:30 AM, and by then it was 1:30 PM, so it might have been another hour back. I couldn't believe I hadn't noticed its absence earlier.

Considering taking the highway to St. John, I abandoned the idea due to heavy traffic and instead took Rock Lake Road, Gene Webb Road, Stephen Road, and then to Pine City. On Stephen Road, a man stopped to let me know I needed to wait for two trucks and two turbines, which were wide for the road. The extra traffic was due to it being harvesting season. After waiting, I continued to Malden and considered setting up an illegal camp on the trail. However, I saw smoke over a hill and feared it might signal a forest fire, so I pushed on, worried that my trip could be canceled due to a wildfire.

As I got further away, the smoke seemed to lessen rather than intensify, easing my concerns. It was getting dusky, and although camping is not allowed on the trail, I hadn't seen anyone for a couple of days since Sebastian, so I decided to set up my tent in a tunnel on the trail. I planned to leave early the next morning. (Daily bike miles: 72.09; Total trip bike miles: 366.67)

Day 6, Sunday, August 11, 2024

I woke up around 5:00 AM and quickly packed up after spending the night illegally camping under a bridge on the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail. The previous night, I could have pushed on to Rosalia, Washington, but I wasn't aware that camping was allowed in their park. Running low on water, I was glad I had been given some water and Gatorade from a grain tower in Revere the previous day. I had exhausted all my water except that from the grain tower.

I decided to detour to Rosalia and found a coffee shop called "Hole in the Ground Coffee" (508 S Whitman Ave, Rosalia, WA 99170). I enjoyed a breakfast sandwich and a large mocha coffee there. The owner kindly filled my water bottles before I made a purchase. I took a long break to eat and use their WiFi to work on this journal. Fortunately, the shop wasn't open yet, but the owner still made me breakfast and coffee.

She showed me a photo of a fire near Malden from the previous day. It was the fire which had me change my camp location. She also mentioned a major fire in Malden in 2020 and recommended a book called "The Big Burn," which details a large fire that affected British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, and Washington. She informed me that camping is allowed in Rosalia's park and that she plans to open a hostel in Rosalia next year.

Continuing on the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, I encountered a missing trestle between Rosalia and Tekoa with no warning. I had to backtrack to find a way around it. This was the only missing trestle I came across without prior notice on the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail. There were a lot of bridges out on the trail, but the others had somewhat marked detours.

I met my first fellow cycling travelers since "Traveling with Sed" near Ellensburg—Josh and his companion. After riding another 9 miles, I realized I had lost my Garmin Etrex Vista HCX GPS. Photos I had taken revealed I had it when I met Josh, but it seemed to be missing in later photos. Desperate to retrieve it, I cycled back 9 miles, asking Josh and a ranger for help, but neither had seen it. I retraced my route almost to the point where I first noticed it missing and finally found it, less than a mile from the original spot where I started looking for it. (i.e. I first noticed it missing about 500 ft from where I lost it)

I continued to Tekoa, took a photo at a sign, and then reached a large, intact railroad bridge. While trying to photographing it, I discovered my camera was missing. I cycled back 1.3 miles to where I had taken the previous photo and found my camera on the ground.

With all the extra riding in the heat, I was running low on water again, so I stopped at a store in Tekoa for supplies. Tekoa had a historic, old-western feel. I then cycled to Plummer, Idaho, where I found a motel with no available rooms. I continued to a campground I thought was nearby but found no campground. I eventually made my way to Harrison, where I secured a campsite.

I arrived at the campsite after dark, set up camp, and enjoyed a lovely spot by the lake. My eyes were stinging that night, possibly from sunscreen getting in them. I went to sleep around 10 PM. (Daily bike mileage: 76.35 miles; Total trip mileage: 443.02 miles)

Day 7, Monday, August 12, 2024

I woke up around 6:00 AM, enjoying a relaxing camp spot and not feeling rushed. After some research, I decided to cycle to Missoula and rent a car to return to Coeur d'Alene. As I was leaving the campground, a camper recommended I check out the "Snake Pit" restaurant, the oldest restaurant in Idaho, located near the Enville sign in Kingston.

I then set off on the easy, paved "Trail of Coeur D'Alene". Shortly after starting, near Harrison, I spotted a moose. Compared to previous trips, I didn't see as many interesting birds along the "Trail of Coeur D'Alene", but it was still a pleasant ride with lots of friendly people. I stopped by the Snake Pit but found it was closed for the day, though I wasn't sure why. I also made a stop in Kellogg to visit the ski area.

Once in Wallace, I explored the town and visited the visitor center, where I checked out a display of historic mining equipment. I picked up a visitor map and explored some of the historical buildings, including "The Center of the Universe" plaque at the intersection of Bank Street and 6th Street.

That evening, I discovered that I couldn't rent a car in Missoula to return to Coeur d'Alene. So, I bought a bus ticket for the return trip and booked a hotel in Missoula for August 15th. I spent the night until about midnight trying to finalize my plans, hoping I could eventually get my bike back to Coeur d'Alene. I went to sleep at about midnight. (Daily bike mileage: 52.63 miles; Total trip mileage: 495.65 miles)

Day 8, Tuesday, August 13, 2024

I woke up around 5:50 AM, I was sound asleep when the alarm went off. After packing up and handling some online tasks, I didn't leave the hotel until nearly 7:00 AM. I had intended to get an early start, but that didn't pan out.

An easy paved route to Mullen. Then I set off toward Lookout Pass, I went uphill for a distance and then I took a wrong turn. My GPS indicated I was on the right path, directing me straight ahead instead of prompting a U-turn when I missed the turn. If I'd still had my Garmin Etrex 22x (which I lost a few days earlier), I probably would have caught the mistake much sooner. After cycling downhill for a couple of miles, I flagged down a truck to ask for directions. The driver pointed me in two directions: one back the way I came and another that might have involved cycling on I-90. I retraced my route, asking for directions at a fish hatchery. I was advised to return to the highest point I had reached, 3,940 vertical feet. I had lost about 500 feet of elevation before turning around. I cycled back to where I had started the downhill segment an hour or so earlier. It turned out there was another road slightly above the one I had taken, going in the same direction but slightly uphill instead of downhill. This detour cost me valuable time.

From then on, I used my cell phone and Google Maps to confirm my route whenever I was unsure. I was determined to reach Missoula by the next day to figure out how to pack my bike for the bus ride back to Coeur d'Alene, for which I had purchased a ticket the previous night.

I reached Lookout Pass around 11:30 AM and chatted with a man camped in the parking lot. He asked if I had bear spray and went on about how bears are always attacking people. He claimed that no one knows what happens to people who get lost, he claimed that bears maul these missing people and then bury them. After that conversation, I felt more apprehensive about bears. The Montana wilderness seemed like prime bear country. When I checked my pack, I noticed that the tuna sandwiches had a strong smell. Concerned that bears might be attracted to them, I ate the sandwiches immediately.

I saw several deer along the trail but no signs of bears. The trail from Lookout Pass to St. Regis was fantastic and mostly downhill. The trail was like a dirt road with almost no traffic. Maybe I saw one or two cars the whole time. In St. Regis, I considered staying the night but decided to push on to cover more miles for the next day. As I left St. Regis, it started to rain, and I regretted not staying there. I sheltered under a bridge briefly, put everything in plastic bags, and donned my rain pants. The rain continued but lightened as I rode on.

Finding a camping spot became difficult as the day wore on. Before reaching Superior, I discovered Lolo National Forest and biked down a trail to set up camp. I set up my tent, secured all food-scented items in a bag, and hung it about 20 feet in the air, around 300 feet from my tent, hoping it was downwind. I was particularly worried about bears.

I used my juicer to charge my GPS and cell phone. Last time, the juicer's battery had dropped by one bar; this time, it dropped by two. I might need to be more conservative with power, especially if I can't find a hotel the next day. (Daily bike mileage: 74.18 miles; Total trip mileage: 569.83 miles)

Day 9, Wednesday, August 14, 2024

I woke up around 5:50 AM, though I had intended to get up earlier. My alarm, which I had accidentally set the previous day, went off, but it took me a while to get moving. I left camp just before 7:00 AM. The road quickly turned to pavement, then transitioned to a brief stretch of backcountry dirt trail marked with "Great American Rail-Trail" signs. The road became paved again with a gentle downhill and minimal traffic for over 10 miles.

When I encountered a detour sign, I decided to continue since both my GPS and Google Maps indicated the route was clear. However, a few miles later, I arrived at a bridge with construction workers who refused to let me cross. Despite it seeming like it would have been easy to let me through, they insisted I take the freeway. I explained that biking on the freeway was not allowed, but they were uncooperative and made me ride 3 miles back to an entrance ramp. They said cycling on the interstate was allowed and they turned out to be correct. In most states you are generally not allowed to cycle on Interstates.

The freeway sign indicated it was a limited access road but didn't explicitly ban bikes, so I proceeded. The large shoulder on the freeway made it manageable, though it was nerve-wracking with cars speeding by at 80 MPH or more. After cycling a few miles on I-90, I could see the bridge under construction and realized there would have been no issue letting me pass.

In the town of Alberto, I stopped for a snack. A bit further along, two women asked about my trip. I chatted with them, and one was curious if I was planning to take the road to the freeway. I showed her my GPS map, and she indicated the GPS route was a more scenic route. But she said it was 10 miles longer, hilly and involved dirt roads. She said her route was direct, paved, flat, but required cycling on I-90 for a short distance. I opted for her suggested route, which included a 3-mile stint on I-90. I was pleased with the choice.

I aimed to reach the hotel before dark. I noticed that one of the women had mace clipped to her waist and regretted not asking if it was bear spray or if she'd ever used it. She seemed like a tough individual. The other woman provided me with directions and mentioned that my hotel was in a somewhat rough area, catering to the homeless.

I cycled to the southern end of Missoula to revisit a place I'd been to during a previous trip. Then I returned to the bus station, where two people informed me that it wouldn't open until 7:00 PM. I went to the UPS store and learned that shipping my bike would cost about \$300.00—quite expensive but potentially a viable option. The hotel clerk suggested it might be challenging to arrange a ride to the bus station and that getting a bike box there could be difficult. I cycled back to the bus station for more details, but the staff was too busy to assist me. They insisted I needed a box, and she wasn't totally confident the bike would make it onto the bus.

The hotel clerk advised using UPS, and I began to lean towards shipping the bike. That night, Greg texted offering a ride from Missoula to Coeur d'Alene. I accepted, grateful for the convenience. This meant I could spend the next day relaxing rather than dealing with bike packing. I attempted to get a refund on my bus ticket but could only change the date, so I decided to forfeit it. I went to bed around midnight. (Daily bike mileage: 82.6 miles; Total trip mileage: 652.43 miles)

Day 10, Thursday, August 15, 2024

I woke up around 6:00 AM and had the breakfast provided by my hotel. Afterwards, I cycled to Best Buy to look for a new camera. I first stopped at Target, but they had nothing of interest. I then headed to Best Buy, only to find it was closed until 10:00 AM. So, I went to Walmart, where I also found no suitable cameras. When Best Buy finally opened, their selection was disappointing and their prices were much higher than what I remembered paying for a pocket camera. Even with the high prices, they didn't have anything comparable to the camera I wanted to replace.

I biked back to my hotel and scheduled an appointment with a dermatologist. I also purchased a replacement for my lost Garmin Etrex 22x on eBay, along with a cover for it. Additionally, I ordered an SD card with European maps from the Garmin, opting to pay extra this time.

Previously, I had bought cheaper European maps from eBay, which I suspected were from a free GPS map site like opensourcemap.com and lacked points of interest (POIs). I hoped the more expensive Garmin map would include POIs.

Later, I cycled around town and explored some bike trails, including the Bitterroot Trail on the south side of Missoula. I then visited Adventure Cycling, formerly known as Bike Centennial, where I had obtained maps for my first bike trip in 1988 from Albuquerque to San Diego. I spent about an hour there discussing bicycle touring. I met a cyclist traveling from the East Coast to the West Coast and shared information about routes through Oregon. I also spoke with two cyclists from Berlin who had started in Alaska and were heading to Tierra del Fuego. I asked if anyone knew Pete Straut from DTNA, who had gone on to work at Adventure Cycling. While the main staff didn't know him, the financial guy mentioned having met Pete once. I had met Pete a few times at DTNA, but wasn't sure if he would remember me. After retiring from DTNA, he had cycled across the country and then started leading rides for Adventure Cycling.

I left Adventure Cycling around 4:00 PM, just before closing time, and biked to the Missoula Information Center. From there, I followed the walking tour of downtown Missoula. The weather took a turn for the worse, starting with rain that quickly became a heavy hailstorm for about 30 minutes before easing into light rain. After the storm, I cycled to East Missoula and then back to Missoula, where I rode along the riverfront trail and visited the university. It was windy with intermittent rain.

In the evening, I checked out "Downtown Tonight" at Caras Park, which featured live music and food trucks. The event was impacted by the wind and rain, causing the stage to close and some food trucks to shut down early. However, there was still a crowd under the tent enjoying food, drinks, and a few impromptu musical performances. I cycled back to my hotel to grab some food and then returned to my room. Busy day! (Daily bike mileage: 36.97 miles; Total trip mileage: 689.4 miles)

Day 11, Friday, August 16, 2024

I woke up around 7:00 AM and enjoyed the breakfast included with my hotel stay. After packing, I worked on my journal. Although I was initially scheduled to take the bus to Coeur d'Alene, my brother Greg pick me up at my hotel. Which saved me a lot of time and allowed me to bike around the area the previous day.

Greg arrived to pick me up around 11:30 AM. We headed to Lookout Pass, where we gathered information about the Hiawatha Trail. Next, we had lunch at the Snake Pit restaurant. We then drove to Coeur d'Alene and met up with my brother Jay around 4:00 PM. We went for a bike ride around Coeur d'Alene before cycling back to the place Greg had rented.

My niece Natilie joined us around 7:30 PM, and we all spent the evening chatting until about 11:30 PM. I went to bed while Greg and Natilie continued talking. At some point, my brother Dave arrived, but I was already asleep by then. (Daily bike miles: 11.62 miles; Total trip bike miles: 701.02 miles)

Day 12, Saturday, August 17, 2024

I woke up around 7:30 AM and spent some time journaling. Everyone else got up around 8:00 AM. We headed to Safeway for drinks and then drove to the Route of the Hiawatha Trailhead. I was with my brothers Jay, Greg, and Dave, as well as my niece Natalie.

We all rode together down the trail, which features 7 high trestles and 9 tunnels. The first tunnel we encountered was the 1.6-mile-long St. Paul Pass Tunnel (Taft Tunnel). The trail continues downhill, passing through more tunnels and over trestles. The entire route is about 15 miles of downhill biking on a well-maintained gravel railroad grade trail. At the bottom of the trail, a shuttle can take you back to the top of the trail.

When we reached the shuttle, we saw that the line was very long. I wasn't keen on waiting for the shuttle, but I didn't want to bike back up the trail either. Dave was determined to ride back up, so after finishing my hotdog, I joined him. We all started the uphill ride, but Jay and Greg turned back to take the shuttle back. Natalie was in a hurry to find a restroom, so I kept up with her.

Afterward, I thought we had only 15 minutes to reach the bottom of the trail to catch the last bus back up. I told Natalie we needed to turn around, but Dave showed up to inform us that we actually had 1 hour and 15 minutes, since the bus stopped running at 5:45 PM Idaho time, not Montana time (1 hour later). With the extra time, we decided to ride the entire way back up.

When we reached the top, Jay and Greg had not yet returned on the shuttle. We arrived about 30 minutes before they did. Once they got back, we drove to Wallace, Idaho for dinner and then returned to Greg's rental house.

We went to sleep around 11:00 PM. (Daily bike miles: 30.03 miles; Total trip bike miles: 731.05 miles)

Day 13, Sunday, August 18, 2024

I woke up around 7:15 AM, had breakfast, washed the bikes, and packed up Jay's truck. Jay then drove us back to his place in White Salmon. On the way, we stopped in Biggs Junction, Oregon, to pick up some takeout Indian food.

Once we got back to Jay's place, Karen was there, and we enjoyed the Indian food while catching up. We played a game of Hearts, and I almost lost, with Karen way ahead. I spent the night at Jay's place and went to sleep around 10 PM. (Daily bike miles: 0 miles; Total trip bike miles: 731.05 miles)

Day 14, Monday, August 19, 2024

I woke up around 6:00 AM and we left Jay's place in White Salmon at about 6:30 AM. Jay drove me to Vancouver, Washington, where he had a doctor's appointment. From there, I cycled the rest of the way home to complete my trip. Although Jay offered to drive me the rest of the way home after his appointment, I preferred to finish the journey by bike. (Daily bike miles: 16.63 miles; Total trip bike miles: 747.68 miles)