

Day 0, Sunday, August 17, 2025

I woke up around 8:00 AM and headed out for the Meetup coffee hike in Hillsdale. After the walk, I drove home and then biked to the barbershop. I managed to get a haircut just before the people with reservations started arriving. I think I lucked out! The stylist was really kind and squeezed me in before her next appointment. After that, I biked back home and finished getting ready for my trip. I loaded my things into the car, dropped them off at the Airport Red Lion, and then returned home. I wrapped up my final checklist and was on the MAX to the airport by 5:30 PM. I grabbed dinner at Wendy's, then walked over to my room at the Red Lion. I spent the evening watching TV and reorganizing my stuff into carry-on and checked bags for my flight the next morning. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 0 miles)

Day 1, Monday, August 18, 2025

I woke up around 2:00 AM to get ready for my 3:30 AM shuttle to the airport. At first, the hotel clerk was unsure if the shuttle could accommodate my bike, but fortunately, the driver had no trouble loading it into the van. I changed into my pants from my luggage (duffle bag) with the Smart Tag, but after doing so, I couldn't check where my duffle bag had last been detected to confirm if it was already on the plane. The Smart tag was on me not my duffle bag. Once the bike was loaded in the van, the shuttle took me to the airport. I walked through all the terminals and eventually found Wendy and chatted with her. We boarded the plane around 5:45 AM, with a scheduled departure of 6:05 AM. However, due to a mechanical issue, the flight didn't leave until 7:30 AM, causing us to miss our connecting flight in Seattle. I was automatically rebooked on a flight to Jackson for the following day, while Wendy was initially set to arrive around 9:00 PM. She managed to change our rental car pickup to Idaho Falls instead. She also got me on her flight to Idaho Falls. Meanwhile, I had trouble confirming whether my luggage would be rerouted to Idaho Falls, but after waiting in line for two hours, I was assured it would be. Luckily, it did arrive as expected. Wendy requested meal vouchers for our delay and successfully got us three \$12 vouchers. We each got a free Wendy's Spicy Chicken combo meal. We boarded the next flight around 12:30 PM and were in the air to Idaho Falls by 1:00 PM. We landed around 3:30 PM and drove straight to the Tetons, arriving at the lodge around 7:30 PM. After unloading our things and attending a group meeting, I went out for a hike. I finally went to bed around 11:00 PM. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 0 miles)

Day 2, Tuesday, August 19, 2025

I woke up around 6:30 AM and got ready for the day. We left for Jenny Lake at 8:00 AM and took the ferry across to the far side of the lake. From there, we hiked up to Inspiration Point. I started out hiking with Sarah, but I lost track of her at the viewpoint. I ended up continuing the hike with Rita, Jeannie, and Christy around the lake. Our next stop was the waterfall, and then we headed back toward the boat dock. When we arrived, a group of people said a bear had just gone around the corner. I started walking in that direction while making noise, and the rest of the group followed. Soon after, we spotted a bear on the trail ahead. It moved toward

the lake, where people were gathered, then swam off into the water. Not long after that, we saw a second bear walking directly toward us. Christy managed to get an amazing video of it. I convinced Rita, Jeannie, and Christy to take the longer route around the lake, it ended up taking more time than expected. At one point, they thought I had led them the wrong way. Rita's GPS said we hiked 8.7 miles, even though the loop was only supposed to be about 7 miles. After returning to the lodge, I reassembled my bike. Wendy wanted me to keep the box to protect the rental car, so I did. I asked at the lodge about nearby bike routes and was told the only option was along the highway. However, Christy found a Google biking route, so we decided to follow it instead. The route included a stream crossing over a broken log. I managed to get my bike across and then took Christy's bike over the log stream crossing. Then Christy crossed the stream, but she slipped and fell into the stream. The trail turned into a rough dirt road, which wasn't ideal for our bikes. Christy's bike had narrow street tires. She was able to ride part of the way until we reached the horse trail. Eventually, the dirt road turned into a soft, sandy horse trail, making it difficult to ride, and we had to walk our bikes for a couple of miles. Eventually I was able to ride, my tires are a little wider than Christy's tires. However, Christy still had to push her bike for most of the remaining distance to Colter Bay Village. Finally, we made it to Colter Bay Village, and I biked down to the beach. On the way back to the lodge, we took the highway. A much easier and faster route. (Daily bike miles 12.3 miles; Total trip bike miles 12.3 miles)

Day 3, Wednesday, August 20, 2025

I woke up around 5:30 AM and took Nancy out for breakfast. Afterward, we loaded my bike onto her car. Then I headed out with Wendy to visit Old Faithful. We watched it erupt and then hiked to Morning Glory hot springs, perfectly timing it to catch Riverside Geyser erupting along the way. Next, we drove to the Midway Geyser Basin and hiked around the stunning Grand Prismatic Spring. Later, we continued driving toward Montana and spotted some bears on the hillside. Once we arrived, we checked into our Airbnb. That evening, we had dinner at Café Sabor, which turned out to be a great meal with live music. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 12.3 miles)

Day 4, Thursday, August 21, 2025

I woke up around 6:45 AM and joined Rita and Cherrie for a trip to Harriman State Park. While there, we spotted otters, sandhill cranes, white pelicans, and trumpeter swans. Afterward, we headed to Upper and Lower Mesa Falls and hiked the short trails around both. Both waterfalls were truly spectacular. We then drove through Ashton, Idaho, before returning to our Airbnb in Island Park. That evening, we went out for dinner at Lakeside Lodge on Island Park Reservoir to celebrate Nancy Chase's birthday. It was a cool restaurant where we saw white pelicans out on the lake, and the bar was lined with thousands of U.S. dollar bills stapled to the walls and ceiling. We returned to the Airbnb afterward, and I went to bed around 11:00 PM. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 12.3 miles)

Day 5, Friday, August 22, 2025

I woke up around 7:00 AM and got ready for the rafting trip. Around 9:30 AM, Linda gave us a ride to Mack's Inn River Adventures. We started the float trip around 10:15 AM after being shuttled to the drop-off point, then rafted back to Mack's Inn. They mentioned we might see moose along the way, but all we ended up spotting were a few birds and some fish. It was not that exciting of a float. Afterwards, we returned to our Airbnb and relaxed for a bit. Later, Rita took Cherrie and me to visit the Johnny Sack Cabin. I used Google Maps for directions, but it led us down a rough 4-wheel-drive road, not ideal for Rita's Prius. When we arrived, we met up with Cora and Jeannie. The cabin was a charming historic spot located near the headwaters of the Henry's Fork, a tributary of the Snake River. I ended up getting a ride back with Gene Lively to the other cabin so I could join the group heading to Pond's for pizza, since Rita wasn't planning to go. There was a bit of confusion sorting out my ride for the next day's trip to Norris Geyser Basin. I ate too much pizza, then headed back to the Airbnb to prep for the next day's bike ride. I also packed up the items I wanted Rita to take back and loaded them into her car. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 12.3 miles)

Day 6, Saturday, August 23, 2025

I woke up around 5:00 AM and sent Jim Gardner a message on Facebook Messenger asking for his campsite number. He replied that he was at Loop F, Site 136. A bit later, he asked if I was traveling solo. When I said yes, he offered to let me stay in his pop-up camper. I felt that was a bit intrusive, so I said I'd get my own site. He then suggested I just set up my tent at his site instead, and I decided to camp with him that night. After that, I finished getting ready for my bike ride. Before our Bergie Tetons trip, I had emailed our group of 30 asking if anyone could give me a ride to my preferred starting point, Norris Geyser Basin. Only Nancy and Christy offered. Nancy arrived at my Airbnb (we had 3 separate Airbnb for our group) around 8:00 AM, and we packed my gear into her car. We then stopped at Subway to meet others from the group, only Colleen ended up getting a sandwich. We continued on to West Yellowstone, where I filled up Nancy's car with gas. Then Nancy drove me and Jackie to Norris Geyser Basin, and we hiked the Porcelain Basin Loop. Halfway through, we ran into Christy and Colleen, who were finishing that loop and heading to Canyon Village. I wanted to explore the Back Basin Loop to see Emerald Pool, so I told Nancy I'd lock up my bike and go back alone. But Nancy and Jackie decided to join me for the hike. About halfway through the loop, they took a shortcut back while I continued on the longer trail. I ran part of the way so they wouldn't have to wait long. I made it back to the car just as they were returning from the restroom. After that, I loaded my gear on my bike and they drove to Canyon Village. I cycled there separately and caught up with Nancy and Jackie just as they were leaving. Then I headed to Jim's campsite. He was there when I arrived. I set up my tent and let him know I was going biking for a couple of hours to see the canyon before sunset. I rode to Artist Point, then hiked the brink of the Upper Falls trail. After that, I biked to the brink of the Lower Falls trail and hiked the longer trail to the water fall's brink. I also cycled to Inspiration Point before heading back to Jim's site. Jim had a fire going when I returned, and we spent the evening talking about high school. He

remembered a lot of our old classmates by name, some names sounded familiar to me, but I couldn't place them all. His memory for that stuff is definitely better than mine. (Daily bike miles 26.2 miles; Total trip bike miles 38.5 miles)

Day 7, Sunday, August 24, 2025

It was a very cold night, and I barely slept. I officially got up around 5:00 AM and had a great breakfast prepared by Cheryl, scrambled eggs and sausage. She also made me a couple of cups of "camp coffee" (instant coffee mixed with hot chocolate powder). We sat in their pop-up camper chatting about old times until about 7:00 AM. After that, I packed up my bike and went to the restroom. Jim and Cheryl were heading out around 7:30 AM. It was their 40th wedding anniversary. I left camp shortly after, at 7:43 AM. On the ride toward Fishing Bridge, I saw a few bison and a bull elk. I passed up a good photo opportunity with the bison, thinking I'd check out what all the cars were stopped for instead. I assumed it was more bison, but didn't see any. People were using binoculars, and I think they may have been watching a bear off in the distance. Once at Fishing Bridge, I inquired about the lodge Robin had told me about. After hearing it was only really worth visiting if I planned to stay overnight or eat there, I chose to skip it. Since it would've added extra miles to my ride, I decided to prioritize getting to Cody with enough time to explore the town. Continuing east, I was lucky enough to see a grizzly bear along the way. I climbed 15 miles up to Sylvan Pass, which sits at 8,530 feet, then began the long descent to Cody, which is at 4,997 feet elevation. On the way, I met an 80-year-old man near Yellowstone's east entrance riding an electric bike. He was camping nearby and originally from Kentucky. The ride to Cody was stunning, transitioning from high mountain terrain to rugged, rocky canyons. Although it was mostly downhill after the pass, strong headwinds made it tough to gain speed. Once in Cody, I rode to the far end of town looking for a hotel, then backtracked to one I liked. They quoted \$100 for the room, but I found it online for \$90. They told me I'd need to book the room online to get that rate. So, I did and I got the room for \$90. After unloading my bike, I rode back through town and out to Walmart to pick up supplies. I returned to the hotel around 9:00 PM and spent the evening journaling until past midnight. The Wyoming Inn wasn't very clean. I found leftover chicken in the microwave and other items in the fridge from a previous guest. The rest of the room was fine. I ended up staying up and working on things until about 1:30 AM. (Daily bike miles 101.2 miles; Total trip bike miles 139.7 miles)

Day 8, Monday, August 25, 2025

I woke up around 7:17 AM and biked to Walmart to pick up some sunscreen. Back at the hotel, I grabbed coffee and muffins and took my time getting ready since I had a relatively short ride planned. I only had about 52 miles to my planned stop in Greybull. I didn't leave the hotel until 8:53 AM. Although the roads had a 70 MPH speed limit, traffic didn't seem to be moving that fast, and there was a wide, safe shoulder for biking. I reached Greybull around 2:00 PM. I wasn't quite ready to call it a day, but I thought the next possible stop, Thermopolis, was 68 miles away. I asked someone at a local store if there was anywhere to camp between Greybull and Thermopolis, and a woman told me there was camping in Worland, about halfway. I decided to continue on to Worland. Once

there, I used Orbitz to check for hotels and booked the least expensive one I could find. I decided against camping since there were hotels in town. After checking in, I grabbed dinner at Subway and wondered around town a bit. I stayed up late working on my journal. The hotel room had most of its electrical devices plugged into a single outlet using multiple extension cords, which felt like a fire hazard. There was no air conditioning, but I opened the window and it was comfortable enough to sleep. (Daily bike miles 95.7 miles; Total trip bike miles 235.4 miles)

Day 9, Tuesday, August 26, 2025

I woke up around 6:00 AM, got ready for the day, and had the basic breakfast provided by the hotel (just packaged snacks, not much). I left at 7:03 AM and headed toward Thermopolis. The ride was easy, and when I arrived, I saw Hot Springs State Park across the river. It looked interesting, but after visiting Yellowstone, it didn't seem worth the extra stop. I biked around town a bit and then continued on toward Shoshoni. The ride through Bighorn River Canyon was absolutely stunning. The canyon walls were solid rock, and at the far end, I reached the beautiful Boysen Reservoir. I stopped for lunch at a rest area before reaching the reservoir. There, I met a man traveling with a woman and a young girl. He told me he had driven all the way from Alabama to Alberta, Canada, to deliver horses with his long horse trailer, and was now on his way back home to his ranch in Alabama. He shared some cool places to visit in Canada, told me about his ranch in Alabama and told me about the challenges of his 6,000-mile trip, including nearly losing his brakes. He even offered me some BBQ chicken once it was ready, but I politely declined. I wanted to keep moving. He was a really kind guy. On the road to Shoshoni, I started to run low on water. Many of the small towns along the way were nearly abandoned, with few or no businesses. Shoshoni itself has a population of 471 and offered a small RV park and a truck stop-style gas station. I restocked my supplies and filled all my water bottles. As I left Shoshoni, I saw a road sign: Moneta – 19 miles, Casper – 97 miles. I decided to aim for Moneta and see if I could find lodging there. On the way, I saw antelope grazing out on the prairie. But when I arrived in Moneta, I discovered it was essentially a ghost town. Just one building, possibly used for storage, and no signs of life. With no place to stay, I kept riding, not sure where I'd end up. After about 10 more miles of pedaling, I started looking for a place to camp. The land was wide open, with no trees and barbed wire fencing along the roadside. Eventually, I spotted a patch of low bushes near the highway and decided to set up camp there. My tent is green, so it would be hard to spot from a car going 70 MPH. I pitched my tent, added the rain fly, and brought all my gear inside. Luckily, I prepared, since I needed the extra coverage. I was not expecting rain that night. I went to bed around 9:00 PM and slept surprisingly well. I used my portable USB device charger (the Juicer) for the first time to charge my GPS and phone. At first, it didn't seem to work, but then I found the power button, pressed it, and the lights came on, it started charging devices right away. I was still a bit concerned about running out of water, but everything turned out fine that night. (Daily bike miles 95.5 miles; Total trip bike miles 330.9 miles)

Day 10, Wednesday, August 27, 2025

I woke up around 5:30 AM to the sound of rain tapping on my tent. I'd heard a light drizzle when I first went to sleep, so it might've rained lightly all night. I stayed in my sleeping bag, half-awake, waiting for it to lighten up. When it was bright enough, I checked the weather on my phone. It showed the rain in Casper was expected to stop around 9:00 AM. So, I stayed put until about 8:30 AM, then finally decided to get up and deal with the wet weather. I packed up my gear and got everything ready for riding in the rain. I started cycling at 9:22 AM, and the rain didn't let up until well after noon. The route included a gradual uphill, so my pace was slow, and I started to worry about reaching Casper before dark. Fortunately, because it wasn't hot and dry, I didn't have to worry too much about water. The only real stop between Moneta and Casper was the Waltman Rest Area on US 20, which had water and restrooms. (It's 46.6 miles from Shoshoni and 48 miles from Casper.) I took a long break there and ate lunch. Though it was still raining when I left, I felt more energized and my pace picked up. The climb topped out at about 6,210 feet before dropping into Casper, which sits at 5,118 feet (Shoshoni is at 4,843 feet). Once the rain stopped, it started to warm up, so I took off my rain gear and had another snack. I was feeling much better and on track to reach Casper by around 5:00 PM. Once I arrived in town, I rode around and eventually found a motel for the night. I asked the man at the front desk where I could find food, and he told me to head down West Yellowstone Avenue. I rode a long way but didn't see any restaurants or stores. Eventually, I used my GPS and found an Albertsons about two miles away. In the opposite direction and there were also a lot of fast-food restaurants in that area. Strangely, it turned out to be very close to my motel, so I'm not sure why the motel owner didn't send me that way in the first place. While biking around Casper, I noticed the town felt rougher than others I'd passed through in Wyoming. At Albertsons, I saw a disturbing scene: a man pulled up in a truck with a woman yelling at him. She got out, still cursing, and he calmly removed her belongings from the truck and left them with her. He even apologized to bystanders. She kept shouting angrily as he drove away. The whole thing felt unsettling. I got the impression the woman might now be homeless. I rode back to the motel, ate dinner, and spent the evening catching up on my journal. (Daily bike miles 75.2 miles; Total trip bike miles 406.1 miles)

Day 11, Thursday, August 28, 2025

I woke up around 6:00 AM and took my time getting ready for the day, knowing it would be a shorter ride. I left the motel on my bike at 7:17 AM. The first few miles were on a rail trail, and after that, I rode mostly on paved roads, making good time in the early hours. I stopped in Glenrock to pick up some groceries, then continued on a nice rail trail heading out of town. Unfortunately, it soon turned to gravel and was blocked by construction. Much of the Great American Rail-Trail (GART) through Wyoming is still incomplete (only 3.3% of Wyoming has the trails completed), and this section was one of the only sections with a rail to trails. The roads remained great for biking until about six miles past Glenrock, near the Pacificorp Dave Johnston Plant. At that point, the pavement ended and I hit dirt roads. This section was by far the most difficult section of this trip to navigate. After about 30 fast miles on smooth pavement with wide shoulders, I found myself on rough county dirt roads. Eventually, the route tried to direct me along river paths, but I chose to stick with slightly better-maintained dirt roads. A couple of times, my GPS sent me onto roads that passed directly in

front of farms. It felt like I was trespassing on private property, and I was concerned about getting in trouble. At one point, the route even pointed me through the middle of a farm field. My RideWithGPS route was likely outdated, as the former dirt road had clearly been turned into farmland. I rerouted myself and ended up finding a raccoon caught in a trap. Sadly, I couldn't free it without risking a bite. I continued on and eventually picked up a county road. When I reached the county road, a sign informed me that I had been on private property and warned travelers to remain on the county road for the next five miles. I heard thunder, and a light rain began to fall. I got ready for the rain and kept moving. After about 20 miles of dirt roads and trails, I finally reached pavement again. I took a much-needed break at Fort Fetterman, a small, free museum. I skipped the nearby trail and rode the remaining distance into Douglas. I spent a bit of time deciding on where to stay and ended up picking the cheapest hotel. Later, I biked around town, grabbed some food, and returned to the hotel to eat and work on my journal. (Daily bike miles 65.5 miles; Total trip bike miles 471.6 miles)

Day 12, Friday, August 29, 2025

I woke up around 6:00 AM, got ready, and was on the road by 7:18 AM. The first 9 miles along Antelope Road were smooth and paved, great riding conditions. The next 10 miles were on decent dirt roads. Eventually, I merged onto Highway 20, which I had a nice wide shoulder. There was a fair amount of traffic, but with the generous shoulder, it felt safe and comfortable. Initially, I thought I might only ride as far as Lusk, but I'd already looked into Harrison and it seemed like I could probably find a hotel there. I rolled into Lusk around 12:30 PM, making good time. While in town, a friendly man asked me about my trip. I told him I had started riding in Yellowstone and was heading to Omaha, Nebraska. He was really kind, he gave me a couple of packs of mixed nuts, which I gratefully accepted and snacked on during the ride. After grabbing some food from a local store, I decided to push on to Harrison since I still had plenty of daylight. One reason for this decision was my concern about an upcoming 138-mile day. I wanted to break that up if possible. I left Lusk around 1:00 PM and headed toward Nebraska, reaching the state line at 2:44 PM, where I stopped to take photos. The shoulder along the highway continued to be excellent. Once I got into Harrison, I briefly considered checking out the campground or the Sage Hotel, but it was only about 4:00 PM and I noticed Crawford was just another 25 miles down the road. A quick search on my phone showed there was a motel in Crawford, so I made the decision to keep going, thinking I'd probably arrive around 7:00 PM. I had some hesitation and wondered if I should have just stopped in Harrison, but I went for it. The ride was fairly easy. About 10 miles outside of Crawford, my route took me onto a paved road that looked a bit questionable, grass was growing through the cracks, and there was a "Wrong Way" sign at the start. It turned out to be Smiley Canyon Scenic Drive, a one-way road. Since I was on a bike, I figured it would be fine to ride it in the opposite direction. The road was about 6 miles long, mostly downhill, and felt like a scenic wildlife drive. I only saw one car and noticed several spots that would've made great stealth camping sites if needed. Along the way, I spotted bison and wild donkeys near the roadside. Back on Highway 20, I passed a nice-looking state campground and continued on. My route then led me past Officer's Row at Fort Robinson and onto a well-maintained crushed concrete rail-trail that brought me straight into Crawford. I found my way to the Hilltop Motel, where the owner told me he had just

one room left, available due to a last-minute cancellation. I had been thinking about camping to save money, but with the weather looking uncertain, I opted for the room. After settling in, I went out for food and brought it back to eat at the hotel. It had been sunny and beautiful all day, despite a forecast that had predicted rain. Sure enough, once I was settled in my room, the thunder started and rain began to fall. I was very glad I chose the hotel after all. (Daily bike miles 109.9 miles; Total trip bike miles 581.5 miles)

Day 13, Saturday, August 30, 2025

I woke up around 6:00 AM, packed up my gear, and left the hotel by 7:21 AM. The ride to Chadron was smooth and easy, thanks to the wide highway shoulders. I arrived by 9:30 AM and decided to grab a quick breakfast at McDonald's. I sat down to eat, and just as I was finishing, it started pouring outside. I figured it was a good time to check my phone and wait out the rain. About 15 minutes later, the heavy rain turned into a light sprinkle, so I went out to my bike, put on my rain gear, and got ready to ride. It was pure luck I had stopped for breakfast when I did, otherwise, I would've been caught in the downpour. The weather forecast that morning had only shown a slight chance of rain, so I wasn't expecting it at all. Shortly after leaving McDonald's, the rain stopped, and I started overheating in my rain gear. I pulled over, packed it away, and continued riding toward Hay Springs. Just outside of town, I noticed the Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail running near the highway, it looked like it had been completed. I made my way over to it. Just as I got on the trail, it started raining again. I quickly took shelter under the first bridge, and right then it began pouring again. I managed to stay mostly dry while I put my rain gear back on. The bridge did have gaps between the planks, but a big head beam to stay under. Once the rain reduced to a drizzle, I continued riding. The trail surface was covered with large rocks and bridges were a bump to get on and off, so not a great trail for riding. I was wearing my rain gear again and overheat quickly. When the rain finally stopped, I packed the rain gear away and returned to the highway shoulder, which was much easier to ride on. The night before, I'd checked the map and it indicated the trail wasn't complete between Hay Springs and Rushville, but was finished from Rushville to Gordon. That seemed mostly accurate. While the bridges along the trail looked brand new and there were no signs saying it was closed, the surface between Hay Springs and Rushville was rough and had large bumps near the bridges, probably still in need of final grading. Given the smoother ride on the highway, I decided to stay on the road until Rushville. Once there, I stopped to check out a classic car show in the park, then continued on toward Gordon. Just outside of Rushville, I rejoined the trail. This section had a packed clay and sand surface that was great for cycling, so I stuck with it all the way into Gordon. Once I arrived, I checked into a hotel, rode around town a bit, and eventually turned in for the night around 11:00 PM. (Daily bike miles 76.1 miles; Total trip bike miles 657.6 miles)

Day 14, Sunday, August 31, 2025

I woke up around 6:00 AM, packed up, and was on the road by 7:11 AM. The first few hours of riding went quickly, and I made it to Merriman without much trouble. Then it started to rain. I pulled over in the bike lane to put on my rain gear when a friendly young

woman in a truck stopped to check if I was okay. I told her I was fine, just getting suited up for the rain. A few days earlier, an older woman had also stopped to see if I needed help. People around here are incredibly kind and willing to help someone who looks stranded. This time, the rain was a steady drizzle that lasted quite a while. Usually, it pours for about 15 minutes and then clears up, but this was different. I kept riding with my rain gear on, but I started to get warm. When I got to the park in Cody, I stopped and took it off. By then, I was feeling drained and really wanted a caffeinated soda. Unfortunately, nothing was open in Cody, Nebraska, and the vending machine I found didn't work. I pushed on to the tiny town of Nenzel (population 20) and, thankfully, found a vending machine that worked. I grabbed a Mountain Dew, and it gave me enough of a boost to ride another 10 miles. At one point, I spotted a trestle and thought it might be part of a rail-trail. I walked up to check it out, but the trail wasn't finished, so I returned to the highway. My GPS kept trying to direct me onto the rail-trail, but every time I checked, it was overgrown and unrideable. The headwinds picked up and really slowed me down in the afternoon. I finally reached Valentine around 6:30 PM, rode around town a bit to get a feel for the place, then decided to get a hotel room. After that, I picked up some groceries and returned to the room to eat. At some point during the ride, I crossed into Central Time, so then everything is an hour earlier. (Daily bike miles 94.9 miles; Total trip bike miles 752.5 miles)

Day 15, Monday, September 1, 2025

I started my day around 6:30 AM, had the complimentary breakfast, packed up my bike, and left the hotel at 8:11 AM. I cycled the Cowboy Trail heading out of Valentine, crossing the Niobrara Bridge not long after, a long trestle bridge spanning the Niobrara River. Most of the trail surface was crushed stone, which made for a smooth ride. Not far along, I began noticing clusters of plants along the trail that looked a lot like marijuana. I kept spotting them for days to come, which was odd. When I reached the town of Johnstown, I met a couple of fellow cyclists. They were grabbing burgers and mentioned they'd started biking in Wyoming. One of them was headed to Omaha, and I'm not sure about the other. They said they preferred riding on the highway shoulder instead of the trail because of the reduced rolling resistance. While the highway may be faster, I really appreciated the trail, peaceful and away from traffic. So, I stuck with the trail. Past Ainsworth, I finally saw another cyclist on the trail, the first I'd seen since Valentine. A bit later, I encountered an animal on the path. It was moving toward me, digging or sniffing around, and I thought it had left. But then it reappeared, walking straight at me. It clearly hadn't seen me, so as it got very close to me, I made a noise. It hissed but didn't back down right away. I stood my ground, made a few more noises, and eventually it backed off. Later that night, I used Lens to identify the animal. It turned out to be an American Badger. Just before reaching Lone Pine, I crossed another impressive trestle bridge. Near Bassett, I met another bike traveler who mentioned possible lodging in either Bassett or Stuart. I debated stopping in Bassett, but ended up continuing to Stuart. I was craving a soda but didn't see anything from the trail in Bassett. In Newport, I found a vending machine in front of the 24/7 Newport Pool Hall. It was a self-serve kind of place with snacks, T-shirts, and pool tables, all on the honor system. I felt a little awkward about going inside and left after peaking in the door. I wish I would have looked around. I just

left after grabbing a soda from the vending machine outside the pool hall. Once I got to Stuart, I hoped to stay at the Stuart Village Inn. There was no office, but someone in one of the rooms came out, but didn't speak English. He tried to help me. Then he fetched another guy who spoke English that told me I needed to go to the nearby gas station to get a room. So, I biked over, reserved a room, and wrapped up the day writing in my journal and organizing things until about 11:30 PM. (Daily bike miles 86.8 miles; Total trip bike miles 839.3 miles)

Day 16, Tuesday, September 2, 2025

I woke up around 6:30 AM, got ready quickly, and was on my bike by 7:11 AM. My goal for the day was ambitious, to ride over 100 miles on the crushed limestone Cowboy trail. A little past Atkinson, I came across two cyclists loaded with gear. We stopped to chat. They told me they were riding from Norfolk to Valentine and back, a trip they've been doing annually for the past seven years. Both were around my age and, if I remember correctly, from Sioux City, Iowa. They mentioned how rare it is to see other riders on the Cowboy Trail and how much the trail has improved over the years. Apparently, goat heads (thorny plants) used to be a major problem, and the surface wasn't always well maintained. Now, it's in excellent shape, a crushed stone base and completely closed to motor vehicles. They asked how far I was going, and I told them I was aiming to make it all the way to Norfolk. They said I still had about 82 miles to go. Later in the day, I passed two women also loaded with bikepacking gear. They didn't stop to talk. The rest of the day went by fairly quickly without much incident. I hit two detours (which the guys earlier had warned me about) that forced me onto the highway for short stretches. The shoulders were wide and smooth, so although I had to deal with some traffic, it was faster than riding the trail. At one point, I saw some large drones flying low over cornfields, likely inspecting the crops. Aside from that, the trail was quiet. Up until about five miles before Norfolk, I had only seen six other cyclists and four walkers on the trail since leaving Valentine (over the course of 2 days). As I approached Norfolk, the trail suddenly became much more active, more walkers and a few additional cyclists. I reached Norfolk just as the sun was setting around 7:50 PM. Found a hotel, grabbed some food, and spent the rest of the evening working on my journal. (Daily bike miles 104.5 miles; Total trip bike miles 943.8 miles)

Day 17, Wednesday, September 3, 2025

I woke up around 6:30 AM and had the breakfast included with my hotel stay. I started riding at 8:02 AM. The day began with a light drizzle and stayed cool and overcast throughout. As I left Norfolk, I hit a 7-mile stretch of road construction. I had to wait for traffic to clear before crossing a narrow bridge with just one lane and no shoulder. A semi-truck behind me waited patiently while I pedaled as fast as I could with all my gear until I reached a spot where I could pull over and let the line of cars pass. After that, I was able to ride in the closed lane for about two miles since that section of roadwork was blocked to traffic and no one was actively working there. Eventually, I had to shift into the middle of the highway due to ongoing construction with heavy machinery. Again, a semi-truck followed behind to keep me safe until I could get off to the side. Those semi-truck driver were a big help. I ended up riding on a very

narrow shoulder next to the freeway divider, not ideal for cycling. At one point, I noticed a construction worker taking a photo of me with his phone. Once past that section, I continued riding in the empty work lanes until I exited the construction zone. I kept a strong pace all morning and made it to Columbus by 12:30 PM. I considered stopping there, but it felt too early in the day. I wasn't sure if I'd find lodging 20 miles further. Just before Highway 92, my route wanted to divert onto a dirt road. Using my 22X GPS, I saw I could avoid it by staying on Highway 81 to meet up with 92 later. That detour saved me about 20 miles of rough riding, definitely a good call. I stopped in Rising City at a store, and the cashier asked if I was biking. She mentioned meeting a group of seniors (one of them a retired judge) who had stopped at the store during their ride from Vermont to Oregon, and then continuing down the Pacific Coast. She said they were about my age. I'm officially a senior! At one point, I saw a sign saying it was 66 miles to Omaha. I was following the GART route toward Lincoln, which would leave me 112 miles from Omaha. I realized I could have saved nearly 100 miles by heading straight to Omaha, but I wanted to stay committed to the GART path. In Brainard, I turned toward Lincoln. At the edge of town, my route led me to the Oak Creek Recreational Trail. I met a woman on the trail who said the trail went about 14 more miles to Valparaiso. The sign said the trail closed at sunset, but it was only 4:30 PM and sunset wasn't until 8:00 PM, so I went for it. It was a beautiful crushed-stone trail in great condition, with several bridges. The only other person I saw on the trail was a woman jogging near Valparaiso. Once in Valparaiso, I checked my phone for hotel options but had no signal. I asked a local woman, and she told me there were no hotels nearby. She said the closest hotel might not be until Lincoln. It was just after 6:00 PM, and I still had about 25 miles to Lincoln. I rode hard on Highway 79, pushing an average of 17 MPH. The shoulder was excellent. When I reached Raymond, my route suggested a turn, but I was concerned it might lead to another dirt road, so I stayed on the highway to save time. About five miles before Lincoln, I rejoined my planned route, hoping for a bike path. Instead, I found myself in traffic with no shoulder and crowded sidewalks, not the best cycling environment. In hindsight, I should've stayed on the highway. Eventually, I reached a lake park in Lincoln and decided to find a hotel. I chose the Quality Inn, good price, close by, and easy to locate. After checking in, I got some food and ate in my room. Later, the hotel's main fire alarms went off. I grabbed my phone and threw on a warm shirt before evacuating. I wish I'd also taken my camera and laptop to keep them safe. They reset the power in the building, and the sprinklers went off in the hotel lobby, though thankfully not in the guest rooms. The fire alarm continued after they reset the power. Two fire trucks showed up, and firefighters with axes entered the building. They were able to get the fire alarm to turn off. After about an hour, we were allowed back in our rooms. The lobby was soaked, with waterlogged walls and a cleanup crew still working hours later. Back in my room, I couldn't get a stable internet connection, likely a weak signal. Something was wrong with the electrical system in the room too. I kept getting small shocks when I touched my computer or anything plugged in to the wall. When I used the microwave, it tripped the circuit breaker on the power strip. Possibly a bad ground. (Daily bike miles 118.6 miles; Total trip bike miles 1062.4 miles)

Day 18, Thursday, September 4, 2025

I woke up around 6:30 AM, had the hotel breakfast, and started cycling at 8:11 AM. The route from the hotel to the trail was a bit confusing at first, but once I got onto the paved West MoPac Trail, everything was smooth. When the trail transitioned into the East MoPac, it became unpaved, but the crushed stone surface was excellent, easy to ride and well-maintained. It was a great 22-mile stretch through Walton, Eagle, Elmwood, and Wabash, and is marked as part of the Great American Rail-Trail (GART). In Wabash, I found a map showing a connection to the next trail segment via the MoPac Link interim bike route. The signed route was slightly different from the one on my GPS, but I followed the signage near the end of the trail. It ran parallel to my GPS route, so I wasn't sure which was better. There was a "Closed to Through Traffic" sign, but a road worker assured me I could probably get through. At the far end of the construction zone, a crew member let me pass around some freshly poured concrete, allowing me to reach the open road and continue on. I crossed a cool cycling bridge in South Bend (Lied Platte River Bridge) then continued on. Just before reaching the Omaha National Cemetery (near Schram Road and 144th Street), I was riding fast on a good stretch of crushed stone when I suddenly hit deep gravel. I lost traction and ended up in the ditch, but managed to stay on the bike until I gently laid it down in the grass. Fortunately, neither I nor the bike was hurt. Near the cemetery, the route turned into a dirt road, so I decided to backtrack to the main road and reconnect with the trail a few miles later. Traffic was heavy, but the road had a good shoulder. I eventually hopped on the Halleck Trail, which led into a larger trail network running through Omaha. Around 5:15 PM, I searched Google for nearby hotels and found the Relax Inn Motel and Suites. Online, it showed a price of \$69, but I couldn't find that hotel in Orbitz (my normal hotel reserving app). It ended up costing \$89 with tax, I probably could have found something cheaper, but I didn't want to risk being without a room. The google listing said breakfast was included, but the person at the front desk said there was none. After settling into my room, I walked to a nearby Walmart Neighborhood Market to grab food for dinner. (Daily bike miles 72.2 miles; Total trip bike miles 1134.6 miles)

Day 19, Friday, September 5, 2025

I woke up around 6:30 AM, got ready, and left the hotel at 7:57 AM. Navigating through Omaha involved lots of turns and connecting bike trails. I passed by the football stadium but didn't realize I had already gone passed downtown until I was about to cross the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge into Iowa. There were no border signs on the trail, so I wasn't sure exactly when I entered Iowa. Later that evening, I figured out that the state line is actually on the Bob Kerrey Bridge. Once across the bridge, I ran into a trail closure with detour signs. One of the detour signs didn't seem accurate, so I used my Garmin 22X GPS to find an alternate route. It took a bit of extra time to navigate, but I eventually reconnected with my planned RideWithGPS route. After that, I had about 10 miles of great concrete trail, passing by Iowa Western College. Then I followed the Iowa Byway highway, which had a paved shoulder for a while. After Neola (about 30 miles into the ride), the shoulder turned to rough gravel, making it hard to ride. I had to alternate between the pavement and the rocky shoulder, checking my mirror and moving over when cars approached. I passed another cyclist loaded with camping gear going the opposite direction. He was riding on the road. From that point on, I mostly stayed on the pavement, and cars

simply went around me. A little past Neola, I turned off the Iowa Byway highway onto Tamarack Avenue (G18), which had much less traffic. I rode mostly on the pavement there. The shoulder was narrow and difficult with rumble strips, about 16 inches of pavement, and steep drop-offs into gravel. So, I avoided it when I could. Just before reaching Walnut, I turned onto a dirt road (500th Street/Piling Street). I checked my map and chose this shortcut to save time, as I was running late and wanted to reach the hotel before sundown. The best lodging option was the Days Inn, since hotels in Atlantic were more expensive. This 5-mile shortcut meant I skipped the North Atlantic Trails System, a loop trail through parks. I also missed the very beginning of the T-Bone Trail. The T-Bone Trail is 19 miles long, and I only missed a few miles at the start, so I was okay with that trade-off. The road to the Days Inn turned back to pavement for a bit, then reverted to dirt. Though the shortcut saved 5 miles, it meant bypassing Atlantic entirely. In hindsight, I should've stayed on pavement and ridden the full T-Bone Trail. About 3 miles before reaching the hotel, I reserved a room online. When I arrived, check-in was done through a video screen. I scanned my ID, and the person on the screen (possibly located overseas) took my photo and checked me in. There was no one physically present at the hotel's front desk, which made for a strange experience. There were no food options near the hotel, just the closed-down Valley Country Café. After settling in, I took a shower, which somehow triggered the fire alarm in my room. I had to fan it for a while before it finally shut off. I spent the rest of the evening working on my computer until after 11:00 PM. (Daily bike miles 80.3 miles; Total trip bike miles 1214.9 miles)

Day 20, Saturday, September 6, 2025

I woke up around 6:20 AM and had the least satisfying breakfast of the trip so far (just sweet rolls, orange juice, and coffee. I used the last two waffle mixes, but there was nothing else available, no fruit, oatmeal, yogurt, or toast). I left the hotel at 7:55 AM. It was a cold morning, and I regretted not starting the day in long pants and a jacket. The first 17 miles were on the excellent paved T-Bone Trail. The trail ends in Auburn, where I stopped to get a photo with Albert, the world's largest bull. After Auburn, I transitioned to paved roads without shoulders, followed by a stretch with a decent shoulder. Eventually, my GPS route directed me onto a dirt road. I consulted both my GPS and the TrailLink app to decide whether to take the unpaved route. I didn't see a good paved alternative at that point, so I followed the dirt road, hoping it would eventually return to pavement and luckily, it did. By doing so, I avoided about 15 more miles of gravel road. My bike doesn't handle rough gravel roads well, the stones are too large, and my tires aren't wide enough. However, it performs great on crushed gravel bike trails, as long as there aren't clumps of loose gravel. Later, another paved road led to a dirt road turnoff. It was definitely the shorter route, and I wasn't sure if there was a fully paved alternative, so I took the dirt road again. It turned out to be a tough 5-mile stretch, gravel, hilly, and slow going. At one point, I was pushing my bike uphill, and a passerby stopped to check if I was okay. I thanked him and said I was fine, just walking the bike for now. Eventually, I reached pavement again and followed it to the town of Coon Rapids. From there, I headed toward Bagley, where my GPS directed me to a trail that didn't actually exist. It appeared to be a proposed extension of the Raccoon River Valley Trail. On the TrailLink website, that section is marked as "proposed" (in red), so it's not yet complete. I'm not sure who created the GPS track I had downloaded from

RideWithGPS, but it didn't match the real conditions on the ground. According to the Rails-to-Trails map, the trail officially begins in Herndon, where it's marked as complete (in green) and part of the Great American Rail-Trail (GART). I used the Rails-to-Trails app to locate the actual trail entrance. Once on the trail, it was a smooth cement surface, and I made great time riding all the way to Perry. At the Dawson depot, I stopped at the unmanned station, which had clean and well-maintained restrooms. It's amazing how much trust exists in small-town Iowa, if this were in Oregon, those restrooms would probably be trashed. I made it to Perry around 6:00 PM, checked into the Motel 6, and then cycled around town until nearly 8:00 PM. After that, I worked on my journal and some other tasks late into the late night. (Daily bike miles 81.1 miles; Total trip bike miles 1296 miles)

Day 21, Sunday, September 7, 2025

My alarm went off at 6:07 AM, and I hit the 5-minute snooze, but it never went off again. That's the first time that's ever happened. I finally woke up around 6:25 AM, grabbed a quick hotel included breakfast (another weak breakfast, just cereal, bananas, yogurt, bread, orange juice, and coffee), then packed up and was on the road by 7:35 AM. The ride started off well but soon led me onto a dirt road. Then I spotted someone riding on a nearby bike trail, so I stopped to check my TrailLink GART map. I realized I was near the High Trestle Trail, which my RideWithGPS route had bypassed. I decided to follow the High Trestle Trail instead, and I'm glad I did, it was a smooth cement path that took me all the way to Slater. Just beyond Woodward, the impressive High Trestle Trail Bridge spans the Des Moines River, an unforgettable highlight that made the detour more than worth it. In Slater, I transitioned from the High Trestle Trail to the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. There was a sign there recognizing the Great American Rail-Trail (GART), which was a cool connection to my overall journey. Later, while passing through Rhodes, I came across an Army tank on display and stopped to take a photo. Some kids on bikes saw me and asked about my trip. I shared my story with them, and one of the boys warned me about a muddy section of trail he didn't like. He suggested I stay on the highway, where there was a cement path running alongside the main freeway. I took his advice. At one point, I came across a "Trail Closed" sign, but I continued on anyway without any issues. That trail eventually brought me into Marshalltown. Once there, I was eager to continue. My GPS tried to send me down a dirt road, but I was able to reroute and stay on pavement. Not long after, I saw a sign that said the road ahead was closed in 1,000 feet (though it was much farther than that). I decided to investigate and see if I could get through on my bike. At the closure, I asked a construction worker if I could cross the bridge they were working on. The foreman was very friendly and even showed me a way to safely cross the area where the bridge had been removed. He said if I'd shown up earlier, I could've joined them for bratwurst. He offered me a beer and a couple of cold bottles of water. I took the water and passed on the beer. The whole crew was genuinely interested in my trip, which was a nice moment of connection. After passing through the closure, I reached the town of Albion and had to decide whether to continue straight (and possibly avoid more dirt roads) or follow my original route through town. I opted to take the smaller paved road into town, hoping it wouldn't turn to gravel. Unfortunately, it did. I stopped to check my GPS and phone maps to weigh my options. Just then, a man in a truck coming off the dirt road stopped to see if I was lost. I told him I was headed to

Eldora, and he let me know the gravel section was only about 1.5 miles long before returning to pavement. He was very kind, and I thanked him for the help. I decided to go for it. My goal was to ride farther this day so I wouldn't have to cover over 100 miles the next day. I ended up riding more than 100 miles this day instead and finished in Eldora for the night. The night before, I had checked hotel prices in Eldora online and saw a listing claiming only one room left at \$70 per night. But when I arrived, I found the same hotel advertising a \$64 per night rate. I asked the clerk if I should book it online to get that price. At first, he said there were no rooms available at that rate, but after I showed him the deal, he agreed to match it. The room itself had only 2-prong electrical outlets, luckily, I had packed my 2-prong to 3-prong adapter. The room next to mine had a group of Spanish-speaking guests sitting outside, drinking and singing. They were quiet by about 10:00 PM. Possibly farm workers staying at the hotel. I worked on my journal and other tasks late into the night. (Daily bike miles 100.6 miles; Total trip bike miles 1396.6 miles)

Day 22, Monday, September 8, 2025

I woke up around 6:15 AM, packed up, and was on the road by 7:17 AM. The night before, I discovered the "River's Edge Trail" on the railstotrails.org app, part of the GART route, but not included in my RideWithGPS track. I decided to follow that trail instead of the highway route suggested by RideWithGPS, and I'm glad I did. It was a smooth, paved off-road path all the way to Steamboat Rock. From Steamboat Rock, I continued on the highway to Holland. The shoulder wasn't great, but traffic was light and generally respectful. After that, I picked up the "Pioneer Trail", which took me most of the way to Reinbeck, with only a couple of brief stints on the highway. From Reinbeck, I rode on the highway again toward Hudson, where I picked up the "Sergeant Road Trail." A few miles into the trail, I saw a sign indicating it was only 6 miles to Waterloo. It was around 1:00 PM, and I realized I could've been in Waterloo by 2:00 PM, but that felt too early to end the day. Instead, I followed my GART route, which looped through Cedar Falls before circling back to Waterloo. I thought this would only add a few extra miles, but it turned out to be at least 20 more miles. Still, it was a great ride, and I was glad I chose that path. The route had lots of trail options and turns, but everything matched my RideWithGPS track perfectly, so navigation was smooth all the way into Waterloo. I arrived in town around 5:00 PM and quickly found a hotel. I had to bring my bike up to the third floor of the hotel and the elevator was frustrating to use. The door would not open when it arrived at the first floor, you had to press the call button again after the elevator stopped moving in order to open the door. Despite that, it was the cheapest hotel of my trip, and surprisingly nice. It even included a decent breakfast. Later, I walked to the John Deere Museum, but unfortunately, it was already closed for the day. It looks like a great (and free) museum. That evening, I worked on a few things related to the upcoming Bergie Ice Cream Party and the Nancy Chase's bike ride. Nancy Ferry had texted me to ask if I was attending the Ice Cream Social (I hadn't registered yet) and Nancy Chase's bike ride. I also recorded and sent a happy birthday video to my brother Jay. I turned in around 11:00 PM. (Daily bike miles 65 miles; Total trip bike miles 1461.6 miles)

Day 23, Tuesday, September 9, 2025

I woke up around 6:10 AM and had the hotel's included breakfast. Despite being a budget hotel, the breakfast was better than expected (eggs, biscuits and gravy, orange juice, and coffee (though no fruit, yogurt, or toast)). I got my bike down to the lobby using the finicky elevator and was cycling by 7:49 AM. The trail was easy to find. I was just a few blocks across the river from where I'd left it the day before. I started on the Cedar Valley Lakes Trail, transitioned to the Cedar River Levee Trail, and then the Evansdale Nature Trail. From there, I spent the rest of the day on the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, all the way to Cedar Rapids. The RideWithGPS route handled all the trail transitions perfectly. The trails were excellent, mostly new smooth asphalt, some concrete and a few short sections of root-damaged asphalt. At one point, I spotted a very old fire truck almost hidden in the trees, it was in surprisingly good shape! Before reaching Cedar Rapids, I checked Orbitz to reserve a rental car for a couple of days, hoping to box my bike and take everything to the airport on departure in the car. But there were no cars available for my original dates (9/10–9/12), which made me anxious about how I'd get everything home. Closer to Cedar Rapids, I hit a confusing trail detour. The signage was mostly helpful, but one sign pointed the wrong way. I relied on my Garmin 22X and some intuition to navigate around the closure. It worked out fine, and I was soon back on track. Once I reached the "Welcome to Cedar Rapids" sign, I tried searching again for a rental car. This time adjusting my pickup date to 9/11. That made a big difference, and I found plenty of options. I booked a hotel and rental car before reaching downtown Cedar Rapids. The hotel was cheap and the room itself was decent, but cleanliness was questionable. There was food left in the microwave and brown water on the bathroom floor. Staff were dry-vacuuming the hallways when I showed up, likely due to plumbing issues or a flood. Still, it served its purpose. After checking in, I did a test ride to the airport (CID), about 6 miles away. Google said it would take 33 minutes, but it took nearly an hour due to road construction and a tough stretch with gravel shoulder and heavy traffic on Edgewood Road. My route was: Motel 6 (616 33rd Ave SW) → 33rd Ave → Edgewood Rd → Wright Brothers Blvd → CID Airport. On the return to motel trip, I explored a different route with almost no traffic and no construction. After that my new route to the airport changed to: Motel 6 → 33rd Ave → Edgewood Rd → 60th Ave → 26th St → 76th Ave → 18th St → CID Airport. Later that night, around 1:00 AM, my ceiling started leaking. Water poured into my hotel room. I think my hotel room was the only one that flooded in the hotel. I quickly moved everything off the floor and went out to the hallway. The hotel staff were already on their way to my area when the flooding started. I was frustrated and muttered a few curses about the situation but did my best not to take it out on the staff. Still, I felt they could have been more helpful. They went upstairs to check the room above mine, woke the guest, and moved him to a new room. Apparently, he only had a small amount of water around the toilet and hadn't even realized there was a problem until they woke him. Once things settled down, the staff assigned me a new room and gave me a stack of towels to dry off my belongings. Fortunately, I was awake and had noticed the leak quickly. I only had a few of my things get wet. I had been ready for bed at 1:00 AM, but due to the room flood fiasco, I didn't get to sleep until 2:30 AM. (Daily bike miles 82 miles; Total trip bike miles 1543.6 miles)

Day 24, Wednesday, September 10, 2025

I woke up around 6:30 AM, grabbed breakfast at McDonald's, and got ready to start biking. I was on the road by 8:10 AM. First, I cycled back to the spot where I had exited the trail the previous day near my hotel, just to reconnect the route. Once back on the trail, I rode to mile zero of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, passing through Ely. I wanted to make sure I could easily connect the dots when I return to continue the trail in the future. I even ended up riding about a quarter mile on the Hoover Nature Trail. Then I turned back toward Cedar Rapids. On the way, I stopped at the Mount Trashmore Overlook Trail, but the sign said you needed permission to go up, so I continued into town. Using my phone, I located the visitor center inside the DoubleTree hotel. I stopped in and asked the staff for ideas on what to do with my one day in Cedar Rapids. Most of their suggestions were bike trails. I was hoping for some kind of self-guided city tour, but they didn't have one, it's a small city. They did mention the Cedar Rapids Art Walk which consisted mostly of murals and printed out directions for me to explore it. They also strongly recommended visiting Mount Trashmore. I followed the Cedar Rapids Art Walk and viewed most of the murals in the southeast part of the city, although I wasn't able to locate a couple that were listed. I started looking for mural in other parts of town, but I got mural fatigue and shifted focus to logistics. I specifically wanted to get a bike box for my flight home. I found a bike shop and asked if they could provide one. They said yes, and I explained that I'd need to wait until I picked up my rental car the following day. They told me I could come back at 11:00 AM. Next, I checked out NewBo City Market, which the visitor center had also suggested. It's an indoor food court, but I didn't see any Thai food, so I decided not to eat there. I then went back to Mount Trashmore, registered for access, and biked up to the top. There was a mountain bike trail going down, but after nearly riding off it, I returned to the summit and took the road back down. The one recommended sight I didn't get to see from the visitor center list was the Czech clock, which is said to open a door on the hour to reveal dancing figures. Afterward, I biked back to my hotel, then cycled to Target to grab groceries, and returned to the hotel. I worked on various things until late into the evening. (Daily bike miles 45.7 miles; Total trip bike miles 1589.3 miles)

Day 25, Thursday, September 11, 2025

I woke up at 6:40 AM and grabbed breakfast at McDonald's. Since I didn't need to pick up my rental car until 10:30 AM, I took my time and worked on some computer tasks. I packed up my bike and left the hotel at 8:57 AM, taking the airport route, I had scouted out the previous day. I arrived at the airport a little before 10:00 AM and asked the airline check-in attendant if they had bike boxes available. She said no and wasn't particularly friendly. I was still a bit early for my rental car pickup. I could have gotten the car sooner, but that would've meant returning it earlier the next day. Once I picked it up, the first place I went was the Czech Village to see the clock that had been recommended. At the top of the hour, the doors opened and a set of figures danced around inside. It's a replica of the 15th-century clock in Prague, Czech Republic. After that, I stopped by Goldfinch Cyclery to pick up a bike box. They gave me one, but it ended up being too small for my bike. The guy there suggested removing the rear wheel and brake system to make it fit and also mentioned I might find a larger box at Hall Bicycle Company. I loaded the smaller box into my rental car, it barely fit since I wasn't able to get a hatchback at Avis. The only Avis alternative was a truck, which was a lot more expensive, but in hindsight, might

have been the better option. At Hall Bicycle, they had one box left, but it was oversized. The box was originally from an electric bike and far too large for my rental car. I forced it in as best I could, having to step on the edges to partially collapse it just to make it fit in the car. Then I went to Walmart to buy a USB-C to USB-C cable because my rental car only had a USB-C port. My phone also uses a USB-C connection, but I had only brought a USB-B to USB-C cable, which wasn't compatible with the car. After that, I wasn't sure what to do with the rest of my day. I considered driving to Davenport to see the Mississippi River, but it felt too far. Instead, I drove to Iowa City and explored the University of Iowa campus. The place was buzzing with students. I found a parking meter, took a short 20-minute walk around, snapped some photos, and then moved on. Next, I visited the Devonian Fossil Gorge, but it wasn't as impressive as I had hoped, just a riverbed with some faint fossil impressions and a self-guided pamphlet to help identify them. Later, I used Orbitz to book a hotel back in Cedar Rapids. Once checked in to my hotel, I spent a couple of hours modifying the larger bike box to make it fit in my car with the bike inside. I cut it down in height and width and taped it back together, though doing so weakened the corners. I figured it would need stronger strapping tape to keep it secure. I then packed up everything for my flight home the next day. In total, I cycled about 1,596 miles since leaving Yellowstone 20 days earlier. This ride completed another section of the Great American Rail Trail (GART), at this point, I've now finished over 75% of the entire route. I ended the day watching TV and working on my computer until around midnight. (Daily bike miles 7.1 miles; Total trip bike miles 1596.4 miles)

Day 26, Friday, September 12, 2025

I woke up around 6:27 AM, had the included hotel breakfast, spent some time on my computer, and left the hotel around 8:50 AM. I stopped by both Target and Walmart searching for stronger strapping tape for my bike box, but had no luck. Eventually, I found some at a FedEx store. After that, I filled up the rental car with gas and drove to the airport. From the rental lot, I had a long walk with my duffle bag and bike box to the rental car return desk. Luckily, I found a free luggage cart once inside the airport terminal, which helped a lot. I returned the rental car and then taped up my bike box with the newly bought string-reinforced tape, using all of it along with most of the original tape, hoping it would hold up through the flights. At check-in, the airline staff expressed concern about whether my bike box would fit in the plane's cargo hold. The desk agent called someone from baggage to inspect it. After a short wait and a bit of drama, it was cleared for loading. I think the agent may have just been overly cautious. Airport security was quick, and once I got to the gate, I actually saw them load my bike onto the plane, which was reassuring. We boarded and were just about to take off when the pilot announced a battery failure. Everyone had to deplane. Despite having only two agents handling rebooking, they re-assigned passengers impressively fast. It was much quicker than what I experienced at the start of this trip with Alaska Airlines in Seattle, even though they had more staff assisting. A replacement battery was being flown in from Chicago, and my flight was delayed by five hours. I received a meal voucher and had a chicken sandwich with tortilla soup, then worked on my journal while waiting. The flight finally departed a little after 5:00 PM. This time, I saw everything loaded on the plane except my bike, which made me nervous, but it went on last, thankfully. The connecting flight to Minneapolis (MSP) went smoothly, and once I landed in

Portland, I decided to reassemble my bike and take the MAX light rail home. To save money, I opted to skip a taxi home. I brought the bike box with me, thinking it might come in handy for a future trip, but it turned out to be a major hassle moving both the bike box and my bike from the MAX station to my house. When I got home and began unpacking, I realized one of my panniers was missing. I backtracked to the Max by bike, looking for it. When back home I had a photo of my bike on the MAX and checked it. Sure enough, the pannier was already missing in that photo. I figured I must have lost it at the airport, so I drove back there to look. No luck. The airport security staff told me they hadn't seen it and would have been notified if it had been found without anyone around. They gave me contact numbers for both airport and Max lost & found. On the drive back, it hit me, I couldn't recall ever putting both panniers on the bike. Sure enough, when I got home and checked my duffel bag, the missing pannier was still inside. By the time everything was said and done, and I finally got to sleep, it was after midnight. Long, exhausting day.
(Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 1596.4 miles)

Day 28, Saturday, September 13, 2025

I woke up around 5:10 AM and couldn't fall back asleep. I spent some time unpacking, went on the Bergie bike ride (not included in trip miles), stopped by the Bergie ice cream social, and later attended Frances's 70th birthday party. (Daily bike miles 0 miles; Total trip bike miles 1596.4 miles)