

Day 24 - Bike For MIMA

Written by Bill Wagner
Saturday, 24 July 2010 16:06

Day 24--55 Miles

Another good day riding the woods along the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route. Today had many memorable moments...

I awoke at the campsite to find the guy I had been riding with the last few days (Chip) to be long gone. It was just daylight but he left a note stating he wanted to try and beat the RV's and the mob of people out on the road. Good thinking, as we felt as though most of Western Civilization was at the campground last night. Yesterday we rode this very cool dirt road that cut between Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. It was obviously not well known as you really got the sense that you were in genuine wilderness while on it; at least until we started seeing the 4X4's as we got closer to the campground. We rode in about 3 hours of rain to get to the lodge/campground and inquired about a room but they were sold out. Just as well as the campsite alone was nearly \$30, can't imagine what the rooms go for. And it cleared up so we didn't have to be soaked while sleeping, major bonus!

Jimmy Crack Corn & I don't Care. Now, that's not a very good attitude if you ask me. My first few hours of riding today had me thinking that 'Chicken Pot Pie & I Don't care' was on the cook's mind last night as he made my entree! As the Aspen's and I had more than one intimate moment together! Riding just after dawn is lovely; little traffic, silent space, really peaceful way to start a day...until the rumbling begins! Thank God I know how to ration TP!

Just as my gut was settling down I came upon the Majestic Tetons. Whoever named this Park chose the wording well, they are AT LEAST Grand indeed. Their rugged and ragged teeth jetting towards the sky in a seeming invincible way. Truly awe-inspiring nature if you ask me. My camera and I were having a love affair that the battery could barely keep up with. Gorgeous weather, (OK, there were hordes of people but I let them have their moment with too) clear skies, paved riding, adequate shoulders, and a settled stomach. AHH, life was good.

I had lunch at a funky cowboy diner about mid-day and got a salad with the color green in it which is always a treat. Then the climbing started...

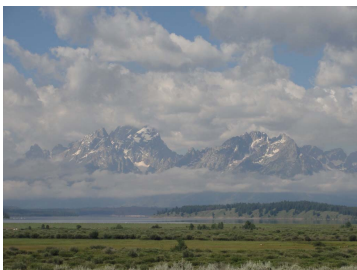
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Oh, did I climb. 2700 feet was this climb, half on dirt (in the woods) and half on pavement. It peaked at 9658 feet (my highest altitude yet) and the seventh Divide Crossing of the trip. I have a history of altitude sickness on one of the trips I took with MIMA to Bolivia and I think I was feeling a little short for air near the top. It could just be that I was pretty exhausted but I'm going to have to keep a close eye on that as Colorado's climbs are much higher yet. On the way to the pass I encountered a lot of road construction, so much so that I had to be shuttled in two different trucks as the road was unridable. This is where I met Tammy...

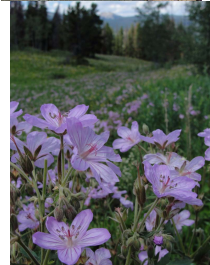
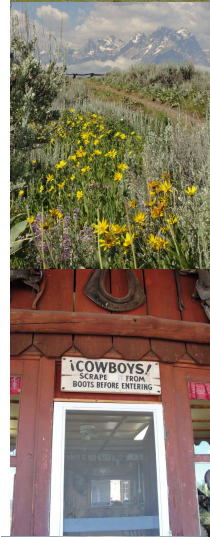
"I'm telling you I don't how you guys do it riding those bikes all day?! I can't imagine how tired your legs must get, I'd never do it. God my feet are killing me!! My mom got me this job and I wish it did go all year as then I wouldn't have to look for more work in the winter. I'm always doing flag and I hate it but if I drove the pilot truck they'd think it was favoritism. I'm wearing her boots but they don't fit me and my pinky toes are KILLING ME!!! Man my feet hurt, my husband gets paid on Thursday so he's gonna get me some new ones. Yeah, they been doing this project for three years but they're behind schedule. We can't let nobody ride on the fresh asphalt as it's so hot it would melt the tires. Man my pinky toes all got blisters! I've been standing here since 6 this morning and I can't wait for this day to be over, at least it's not raining like yesterday". "Yeah I know, I was out in the rain yesterday too, that's not much fun". "Hell no it isn't". "Hell no indeed".

I hope she does get some new boots. As I sit here in front of the fire I built below a clear sky and a full moon I'm reminded of how many of us have to wait until pay day just to get some boots that fit. My heart fills with a great sadness at that reality as the tears roll on down. Why some and not others? The ever-present reality of the haves & have-nots. Maybe she had all the same opportunities as me but chose a different fork in the road? Maybe she never had a chance? As I stare at the moon among this silent night at 9000 feet somewhere in the deep woods of Wyoming I can't stop my crying. Why so sad? I'm not exactly sure? But I get the sense that all the climbs and rain and soreness I'm enduring might actually be pale in comparison to what many people have to endure just to get by, until payday.



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