

Aussie Riding Buddies Traverse Colorado ++



July 23-30, 2017

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My three Aussie buddies fly to the US for an Epic Motorcycle Adventure through Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, a bit of Arizona and Utah.

Day 0 – Friday, July 21, 2017

My mates flying from Sydney did a 7 hour loop back to Sydney because the newish Airbus 380 started leaking oil from one of the engines and had to turn around. Tomorrow is a new day 1.

Day 0 – Saturday, July 22nd, 2017 (Again)

Everyone landed safe and on time, I picked them up at DFW, drove them to the motorbike rental place and agreed to meet for dinner at my house. What's for dinner? Steak of course!



Day 1 - Sunday, July 23rd, 2017

Day 1 our Epic Motorcycle Adventure through Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, a bit of Arizona and Utah is finally underway on Sunday, July 23rd, 2017. Today's goal is to make Tucumcari, NM depending on jet lag.

Here is the crew:



We are actually a mixed bunch, from left to right:

Alberto - a Chilean national that met these guys while an expat in Sydney, now living in Dallas TX

Bryan - a Kiwi national, still living in Sydney

Mark - a Canadian national also living in Sydney

David - the only Aussie national, of course living in Sydney

My 3 amigos hired Harley Road Kings from Eaglerider in Dallas and were on our way. 1st stop Tucumcari, NM. A long day, but we needed to get out of Texas and seek altitude for cooler temperatures.

First stop of the day, a Sonic breakfast burrito.



As the day wore on, the miles flowed by on TX-287 north, and by the afternoon we made it to New Mexico. Bonus, we gained 1 hour by entering Mountain time.



Now Tucumcari is definitely our overnight stop. A quick rest...



Arrived in Tucumcari, a retro Route 66 town in NM. All I remember from Day 1 is David wanting an ATM to get some US\$, finally in Tucumcari he smiled.



Tucumcari, New Mexico - Route 66 Mural



The Hotel was great, it had a retro flair including a rotary telephone and an old-fashioned school pencil sharpener.



Next was a couple of cold beverages and dinner. The Pow Wow Restaurant & Lizard Lounge had a shuttle service. It was perfect. The Booths had people painted on the walls, you will never feel alone eating there.



Day 2 - Monday, July 24, 2017

As the mercury rises and Summer heat wearson you in Texas, one must seek altitude to get to cooler temps. Today's ride will take us through the North Eastern NM.

The day started with a hearty breakfast at "Kix, right across the street from our hotel.



Check out the extensive coffee menu in the background



And then we hit the road. On the way, we stopped for a refreshing break in Mosquero, NM. A small town with all the essentials, a market and a coffee shop.



As we started towards Tao's NM, via the Enchanted Circle, the road became very scenic, with sweeping turns and elevation changes.





Along the way, lunch was at the famous Shotgun Willie's burger joint in Red River, NM, one of my favorites. I have to share the toilet sign...





Next up was the famous Rio Grande River Gorge bridge, an iconic landmark and simply awesome.



We continued west on 64 through the Carson National Forest.



Our overnight was Chama, NM, the Chama Station Inn. A lovely hotel in a very picturesque setting.



Right across the street was the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.



I have a soft spot for trains. The do a day ride tour from Chama to Cumbres on an authentic coal fired narrow gauge train.



They use this bad boy to clean off the snow in the winter.

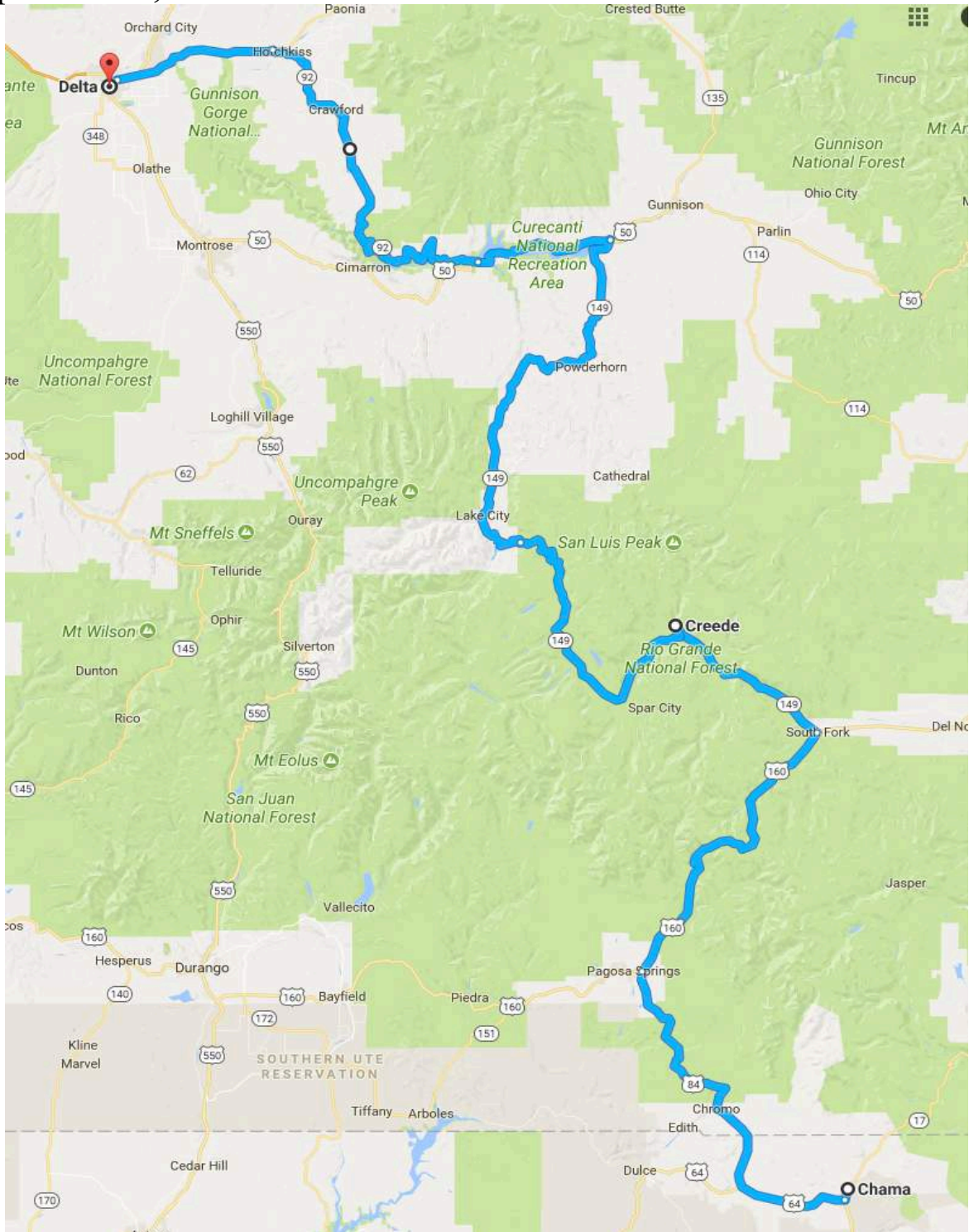


And the night ended at the Tavern next door. A very cool place with an old jukebox and super friendly local folks sharing their life stories. Bryan and I deposited out \$1 bills on the wall and I made a new Friend.



Day 3 - Tuesday, July 25, 2017

Colorado here we go. After a nice breakfast next door to the Chama Station Inn (I wish I had a photo) we headed north seeking altitude and cooler temperatures. We headed north on 64 to 84 to 160 towards Creede, CO. Then Gunnison, eventually following 92 aka \$1.1 Million Highway and ultimately ending up in Delta, CO.



Our mandatory “Welcome to Colorado” selfie.



It was a spectacular ride, very scenic



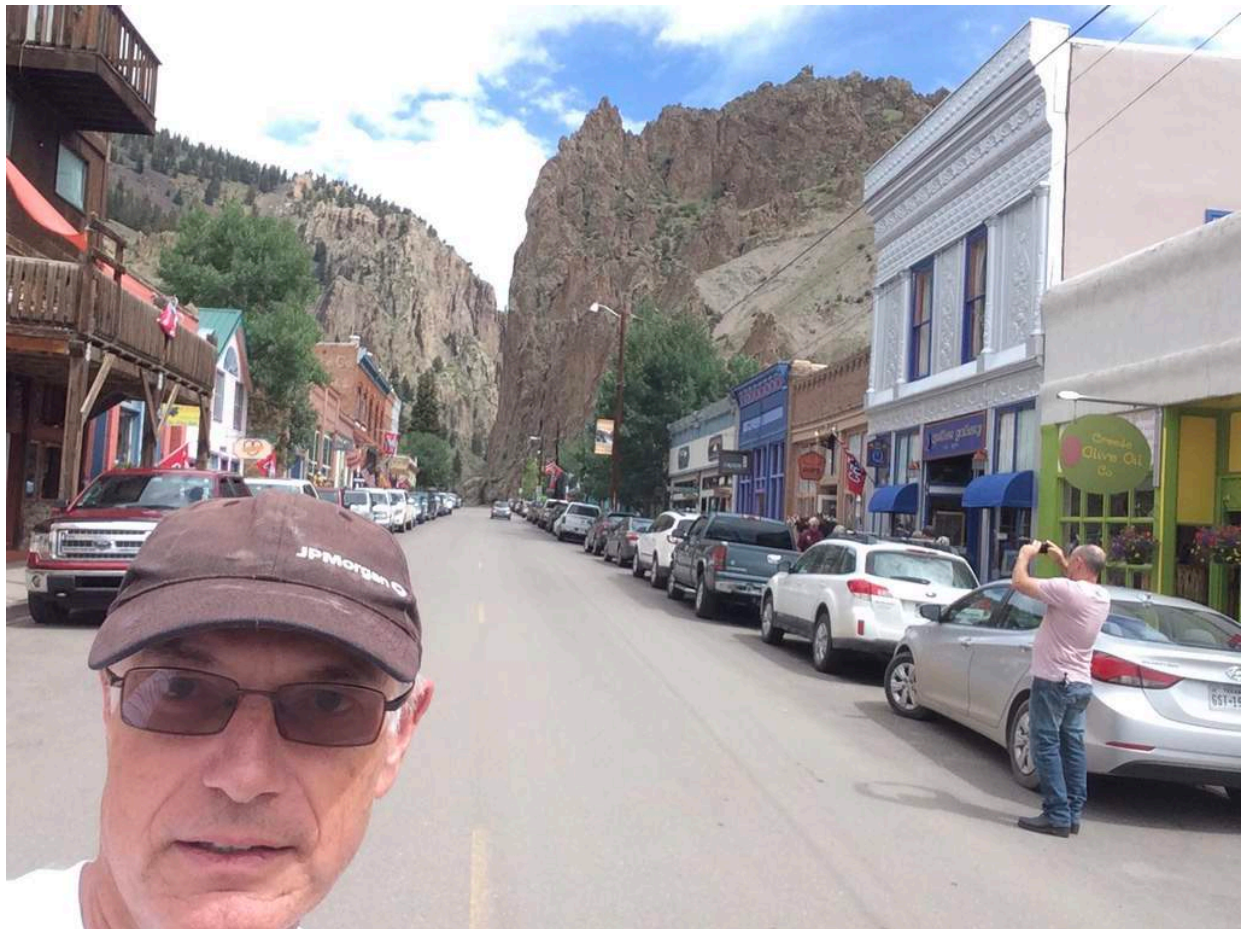
The Mineral County Overlook



Finally arriving in one of my favorite spots, Creede, Colorado.







After a long, well deserved break and a coffee, we continued our trip north.



The scenery continued to impress, almost no traffic and perfect temperatures.



We stopped for Lunch at a BBQ restaurant in Lake City, CO, great food & primitive setting. We just made it before closing time. The waitress is from TX and comes up every summer to work at this joint. How they spend their time after 2:00PM is hard to imagine, there are only 400 residents in Lake City.





The road towards Gunnison did not disappoint, The Gunnison river and lake area pictured below.





Gunnison River viewed from Hwy 92.





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

For Hikers

<p>1 Neverink Trail (easy, 1.5 miles roundtrip) This streamside habitat is ideal for bird and wildlife watching and is partially wheelchair accessible.</p> <p>2 Mesa Creek Trail (moderate, 1.5 miles roundtrip) Following the north shore of Crystal Reservoir, this trail provides views of the sheer and narrow Black Canyon.</p>	<p>3 Pine Creek Trail (moderate, 2 miles roundtrip) Descend 232 stairs along the cascading Pine Creek, then follow the old narrow gauge railroad bed along Morrow Point Reservoir.</p> <p>4 Dillon Pinnacles Trail (moderate, 4 miles roundtrip) Ascending through sagebrush and pine, this trail offers spectacular views of geologic formations.</p>	<p>5 Curecanti Creek Trail (strenuous, 4 miles roundtrip) This is a steep, scenic trail descending into the upper Black Canyon from Pioneer Point to Morrow Point Reservoir following a cascading stream.</p> <p>6 Crystal Trail (moderate, 5 miles roundtrip) Winding through wildflowers, oak brush, aspens, and conifers, this trail gives sweeping views of the Cimarron Valley, the West Elk, and San Juan Mountains.</p>	<p>7 Hermit's Rest Trail (very strenuous, 6 miles roundtrip) Descending through oak, pine, juniper, and fir, this hike leads to campsites on the shore of Morrow Point Reservoir.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">All trails are out and back.</p>
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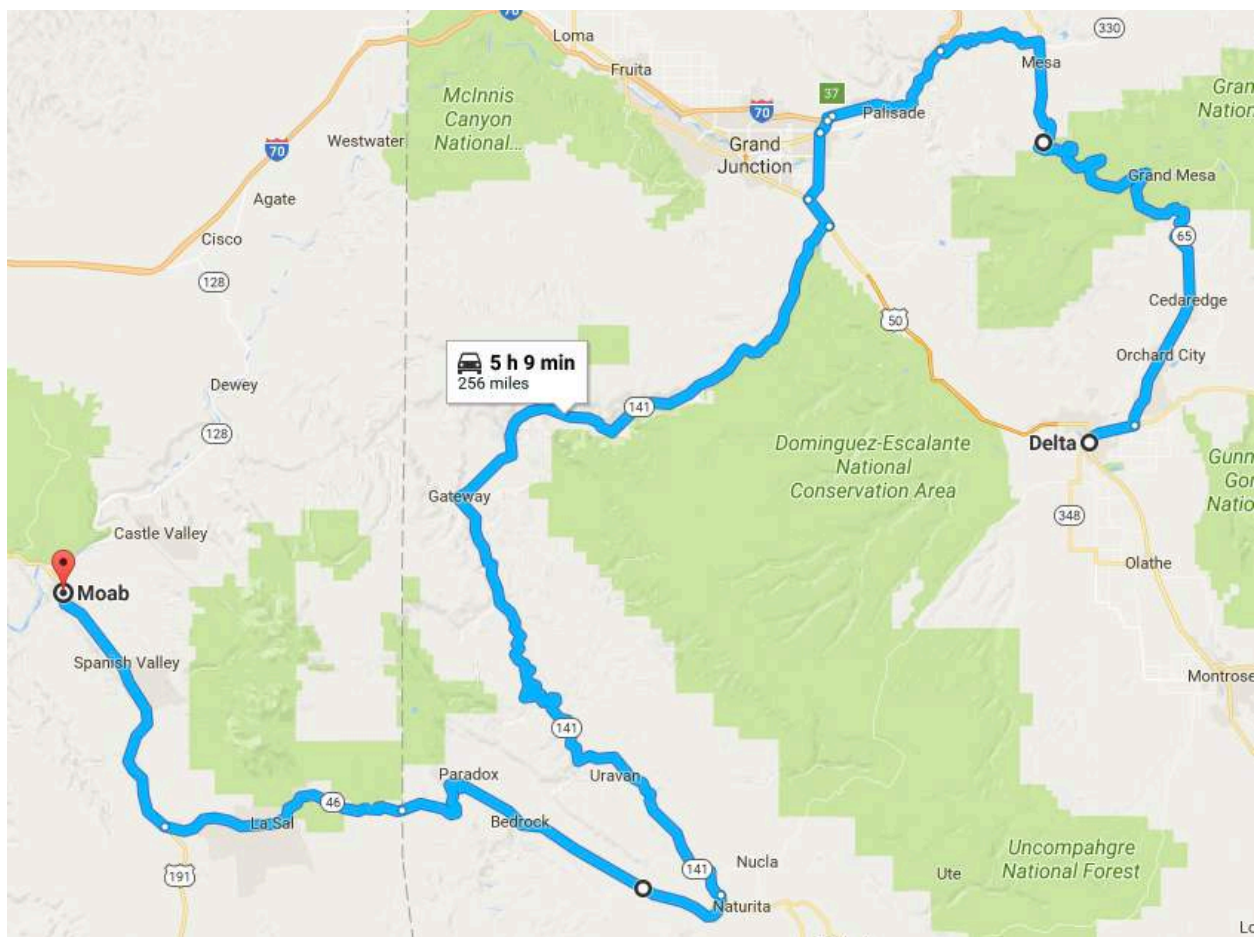
At the end of the day, we ended in Delta as planned. The lady at the hotel was kind enough to give us a ride to a local steak house, the Stockyards. We had a great dinner & drinks, and we all made a new Friend.



Day 4 - Wednesday, July 26, 2017

At this point, I realized that my plan for 350 +/- miles per day was too much. When I travel solo, I can easily ride 500+ miles in a day. Additionally, we lost a day because of the A380 plane engine so I had to replan and adjust the schedule. I promised Mark a short day the next day as we make our way toward Moab, Utah.

We took the long way around to get to Moab. Delta to Moab is 152 miles riding on I-70, our route was 252 miles, a short day indeed riding through Grand Mesa Pass north.



The road through the Gran Mesa Pass was awesome.



We were way above the clouds at the peak of Grand Mesa.



Next we took Hwy 141 going south, this road is a hidden gem. No traffic and very scenic.



The landscape evolves into a canyon and you feel you are right in it.





We had awesome weather



The Dolores river, it runs along Hwy 141.



As we head toward Utah on Hwy 46 the landscape continues to evolve and it opens up. (hard to capture in photos)



What is dave saying?



Finally, we make it to Utah!



The short day became long. After checking in to our hotel and going for a PM swim we headed out to Canyonlands NP



A totally worth it detour.



Got to see it live, much better





Now its time for a Margarita Dinner. Bryan and David decided to get dressed up for the occasion



Day 5 - Thursday, July 27, 2017

Our day today begins with breakfast at the Moab dinner, a super cool 60's style diner that serves great food.



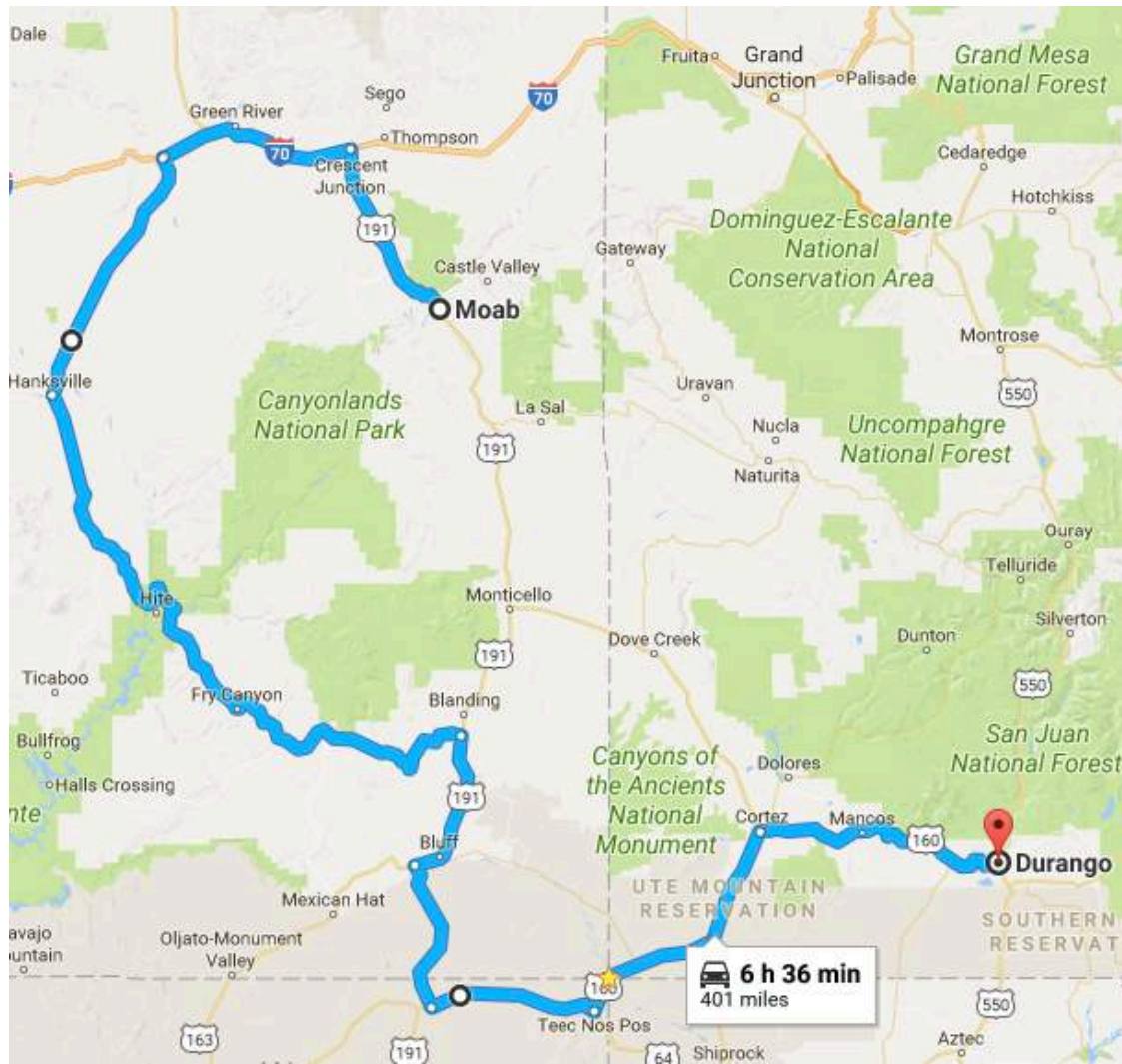
This sign is across the street from the Moab Diner, very timely introduction. We the visit the Arches NP and did a very, very short hike.



Arches is known for its famous balancing stone



After visiting Arches, we did a quick tour of Utah, with a final destination goal of Durango, CO.



Our travels included lots of adventure today. Beginning with a break in Hanksville, UT at Duke's Slickrock Grill.



The Duke's Grill is where I think Dave had too much coffee and left us in the dust right after our Hog Spring Picnic area stop. I was able to snap this photo of him just prior to him going MIA.



Dave forgot to stop at the overlook of Lake Powell and the Colorado River.



Dave (my new nickname for him “Twisty, Twisty” as in twist the throttle and stay with us) did not see us turn into the overlook and continued on South. We thought we lost you Mate. We went on a search and rescue mission to find him.

Bryan backtracked to the rest area, Mark and I raced forward, without any luck. We flagged down a car to see if they spotted him, no luck. We pressed on to the next intersection and we were very happy to be reunited with Dave near Blanding without any incidents.

Here is the bridge we missed, photo from one of my previous adventures



On the way to Four Corners, we stopped for lunch in Bluff at the Twin Rock Trading Post. A beautiful view.



Next up was Four Corners, we walked around the 4 states Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico in 10 minutes and bought a sticker as memorabilia.



Today was the day of misses, I missed the petrol station right before getting to Four Corners, we all had plenty of petrol except for Bryan (remember he had to back track to search for Dave).

I asked a local at Four Corners for a petrol station and she said there is a petrol station 20 miles from where we were. We went into conservation mode as Bryan's range showed 28 miles. With the Petrol station in sight I started to feel relieved until we got near it and it was dilapidated and closed.

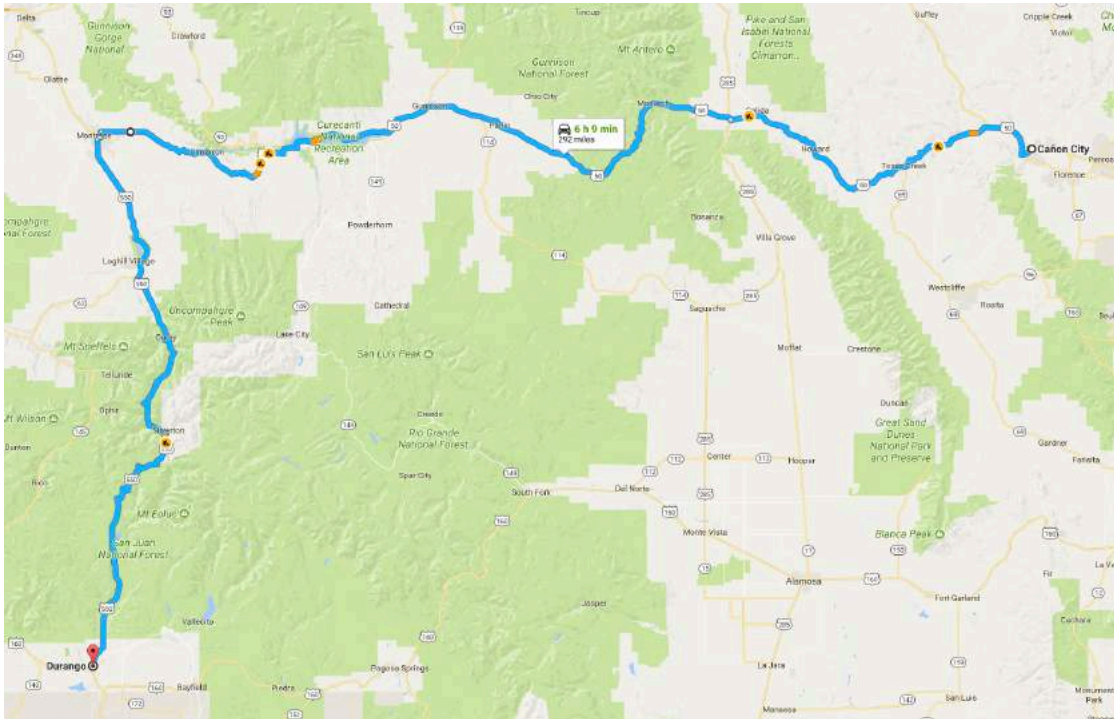
As Bryan's range went blank, we continued to nurse the speed for what seemed an eternity, 8 more miles and finally made it to a proper open petrol station.

And finally it was another long day for Mark. All was good as we ended this epic day with a few beverages and dinner in Downtown Durango, CO.



Day 6 - Friday, July 28, 2017

Having visited to all 50 States, in my opinion, Colorado is the motorcycling mecca of the USA and in store for us is the Million Dollar highway (CO-550) between Durango and Ouray.



High elevation, steep passes and magnificent scenery along the way. Although 550 is well traveled, its definitely a must do.







We rolled into Silverton, a quaint little town that comes alive in the summers. Its probably snowed in all winter. Brrrr



A mandatory breakfast at Brown Bear Cafe



And we have a happy well fed crew.

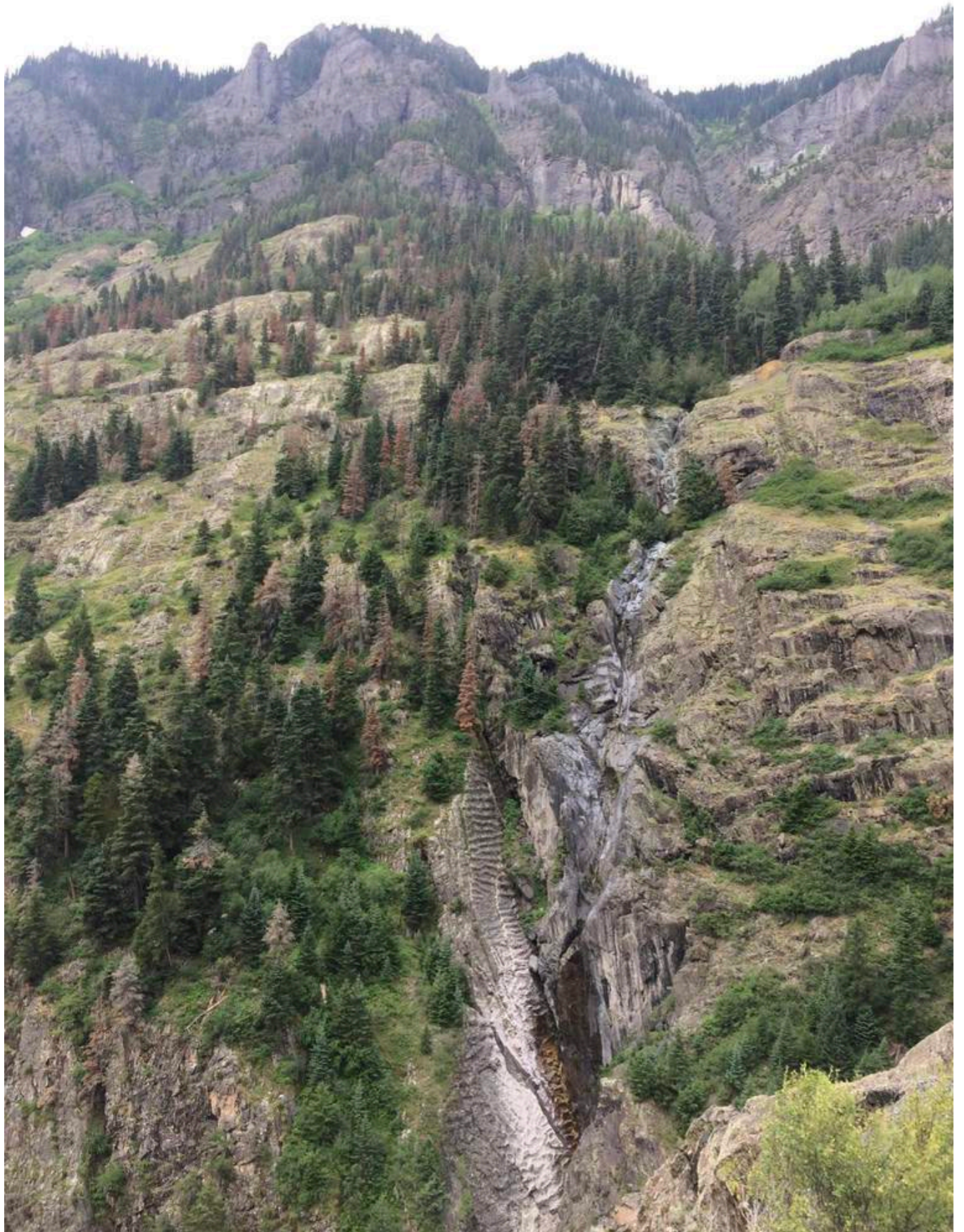


Continuing onto Ouray, the road is stunning, one needs to be careful as there are no guard rails and it is a very sharp drop if you miss a turn.



Look out Point Waterfall







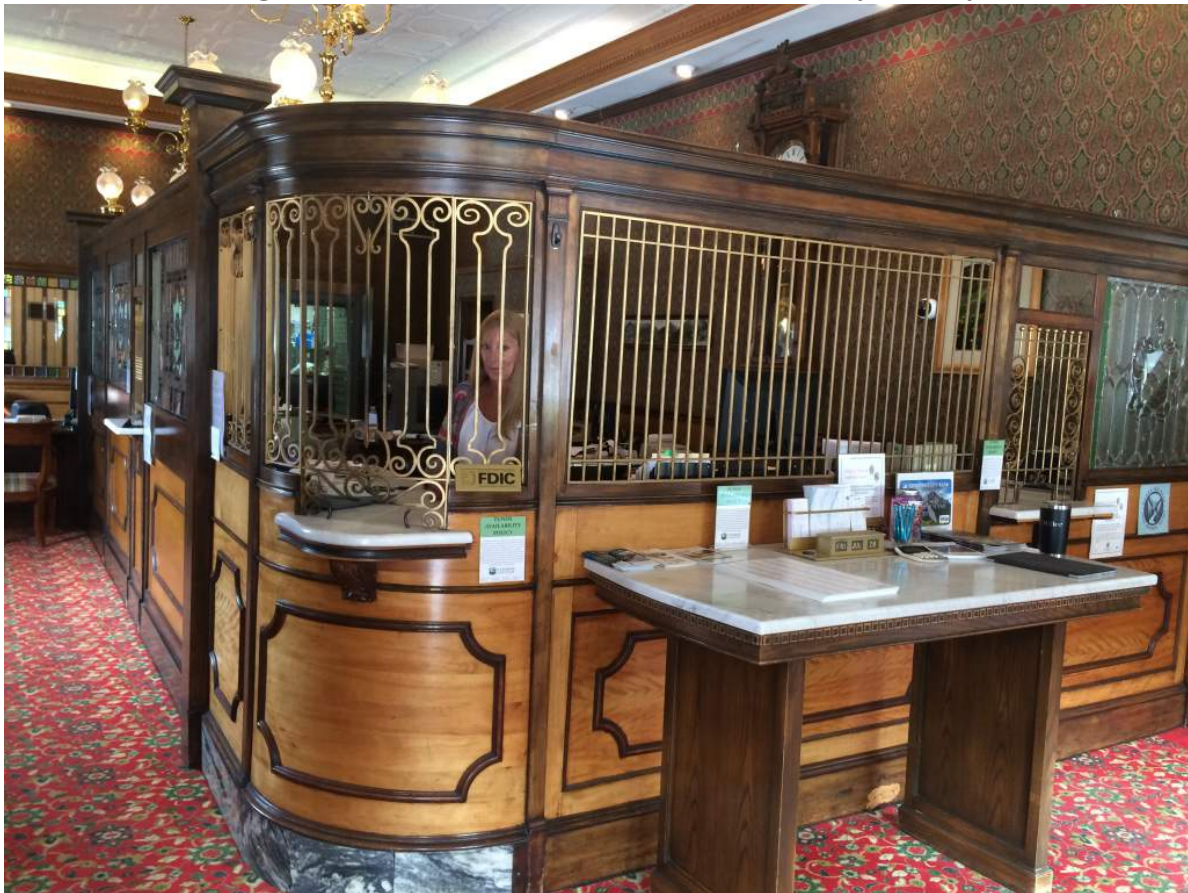
And finally Ouray, very similar to Silverton but far more developed.



Downtown Ouray



Retro banking at Citizen State Bank of Ouray, very cool.



Lots of Micro-Breweries in Colorado.



On the way to Cañon City, we got a bit of rain, making our stop at Tomichi Creek Trading Post extra long for a rain reprieve.



Last night, David introduced us to his sleeping aide, I thought he had been holding back an 18 year old Single Malt Scotch. Instead he pulled his secret concoction from the mini fridge, a gallon of milk.

Dose: 1 or 2 glasses before bed



Day 7 - Saturday, July 29, 2017

Today, we begin making to our way back to Dallas. Our plan is to reach Amarillo, TX – Home of the 72oz Steak. After a hearty breakfast at Max's Place in Colorado City, CO we press on.



Welcome to the Great State of Texas



Tons of Railroad traffic in TX



Right after crossing the border we found the Sugar Shack Restaurant in Texline, TX. A tasty burger and diet coke and we were on our way to Amarillo. Today is a short day just for Mark.



We have been seeing The Big Texan restaurant advertisements for miles both on the way up and now on our return.



(Not my Photo, Google search)

So finally after checking into the hotel, the Big Texan sent a limo to pick us up and drive us to the restaurant. Dig them horns in the front.



Here is glutton number 1, did not make it. I left when they brought out a bucket for him. Yuk.



We had more reasonable steaks



A good time and lot's of entertainment. From the drunk at the bar driving a Peterbilt truck to the tableside sing-alongs.



Mark and Bryan made some new friends



Watch those hands.



Photo

And so, the night ended with our new found religion, a few glasses of milk



(Image borrowed from Google search)

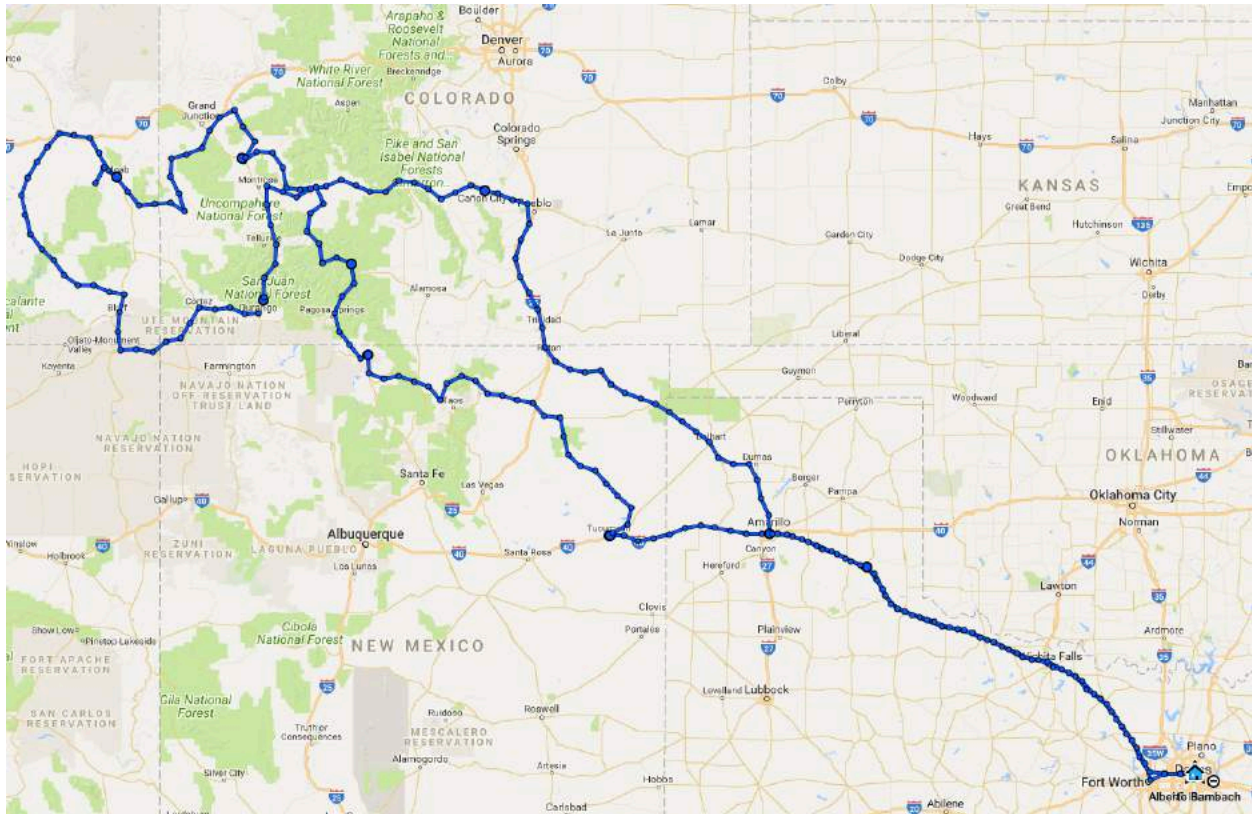
Day 8 - Sunday, July 30, 2017

Back to reality, the ride from Amarillo to Dallas is long and straight. First stop was a breakfast burrito in Clarendon, TX at our favorite (perhaps my only) fast food joint, Sonic.

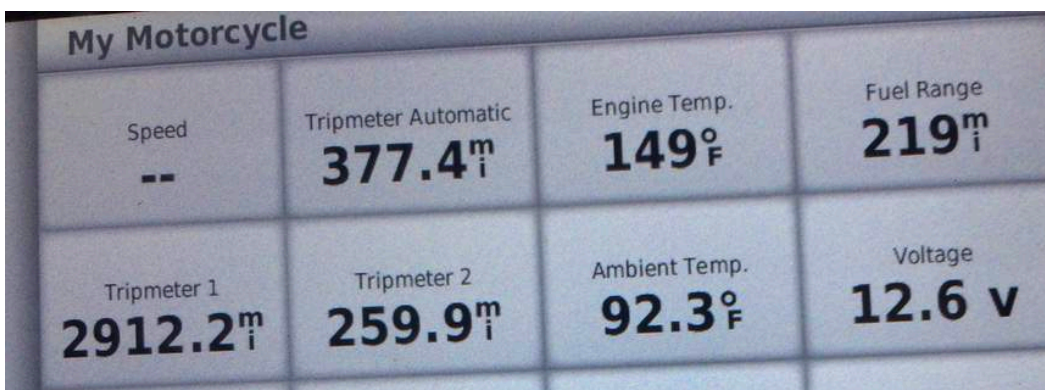


I was hoping for an uneventful easy ride, but the rain gods finally caught up to us. And did we get wet. Torrential rain for about 1 hour, although it seemed like 3. Thankfully we all were able to ride through it without any incidents. Once in the DFW Metroplex area we hit some traffic but made it to Eaglerider Bike hire place with plenty of time. After a casual dinner at home, Mark headed to the airport for Sydney and David and Bryan to Miami's South Beach. I will let them tell those stories.

Trip Summary:



Almost 3,000 miles cover. What happened to the short days?
New terminology – Ride Time is different from Saddle Time



Thanks to David, Bryan and Mark for making the trip and a most memorable truly epic ride...AB