2650 Miles in 2022

Kate and Nolan on the Pacific Crest Trail

Posts published on August 28, 2023, from 2022pct.com. Printed on August 28, 2023 using Print My Blog

Day 0 | Mile 0 – Thru Hiking the Pacific Crest Trail

March 7, 2022

Categories: Uncategorized



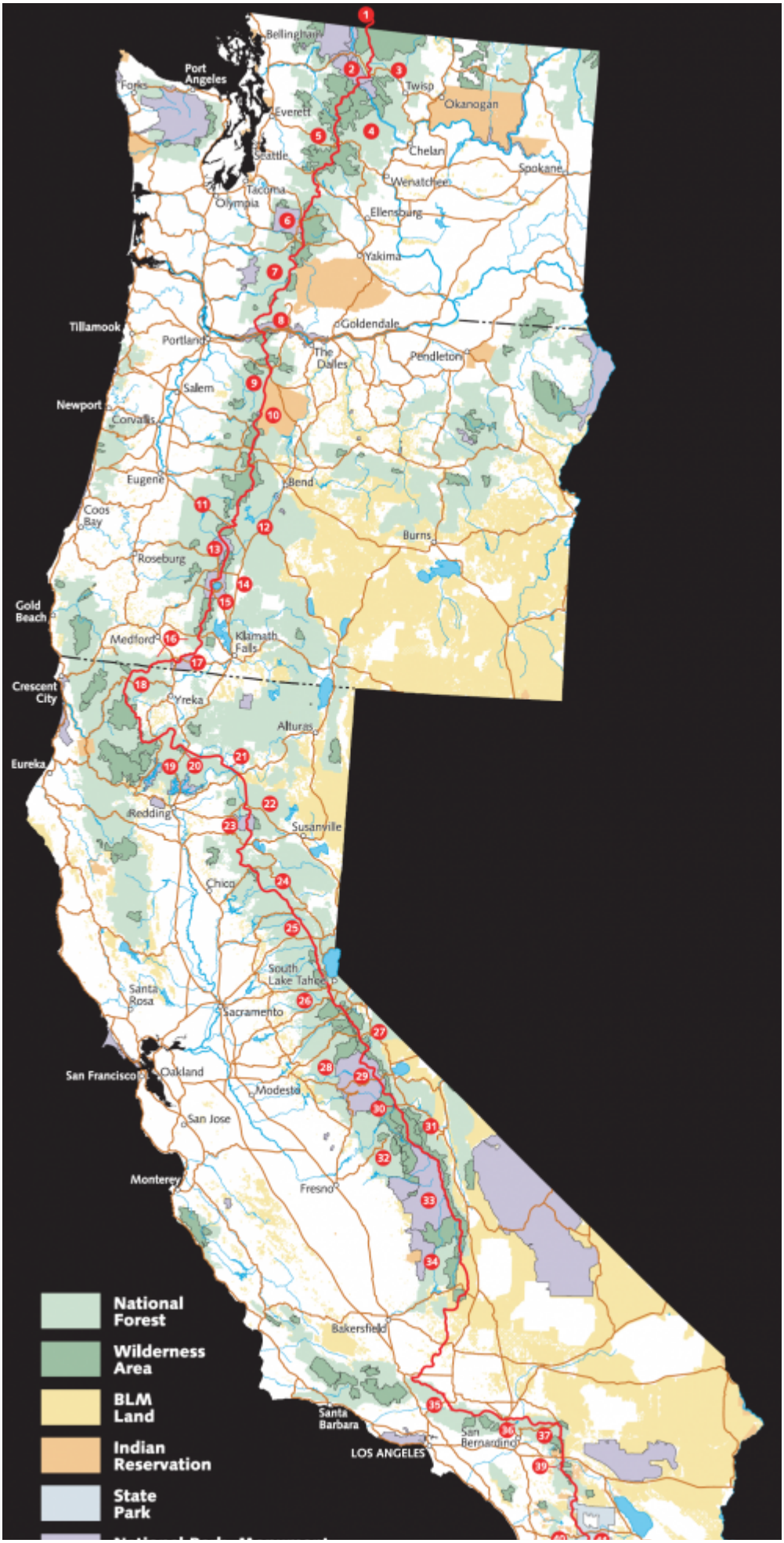
On March 8, 2022, we'll begin our attempt to thru hike the Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada. "We" are Kate and Nolan, both lawyers from Los Angeles ready to tackle the adventure of a lifetime.

The PCT is stewarded by the Pacific Crest Trail Association (the PCTA). The mission of the Pacific Crest Trail Association is to protect, preserve and promote the PCT by, among many other initiatives, training volunteers in trail maintenance, working with agency and industry partners to support the trail, and protecting the trail through land acquisition and easements. The PCTA is supported by over 9,000 members and donors and over 1,700 volunteers. Based in Sacramento, the PCTA partners with the U.S. Forest Service and other public agencies in managing the trail.

An especially visible responsibility of the PCTA is issuance of the PCT Long Distance Permits. These interagency permits are issued for hikes of more than 500 miles and are limited to 50 permits per day for northbound trips starting between the Mexican border and Sonora Pass between March 1 and May 31. The permits allow thru hikers to the hike the entirety of the 2,650 mile trail without needing any local permits. We obtained our permits in January after missing out in the November lottery.

Some quick PCT facts from the PCTA website:

- The trail starts at the Mexican border near Campo, California, and ends on the Canadian border at Manning Provincial Park in British Columbia, about two hours east of Vancouver.
- First proposed by Catherine Montgomery in 1926 and championed by Clinton C. Clarke from the 1930s to the 1950s.
- Designated as one of the first National Scenic Trails in 1968, along with the Appalachian Trail.
- Crosses 26 National Forests, 7 National Parks, 5 State Parks and 4 National Monuments.
- About 10 percent of the PCT is on private land.
- It takes the average thru-hiker about five months to walk the entire trail. Fewer than 5% of hikers go southbound.
- The trail is a hiker and equestrian trail. A small number of horseback riders have ridden the entire trail.
- Click here for PCT use statistics.


Bellingham
Port Angeles
Forks
Everett
Seattle
Twisp
Okanogan
Chelan
Spokane
Wenatchee
Tacoma
Olympia
Ellensburg
Yakima
Tillamook
Portland
Goldendale
The Dalles
Pendleton
Salem
Newport
Corvallis
Eugene
Bend
Coos Bay
Burns
Roseburg
Gold Beach
Medford
Klamath Falls
Crescent City
Yreka
Alturas
Eureka
Redding
Susanville
Chico
South Lake Tahoe
Santa Rosa
Sacramento
San Francisco
Oakland
Modesto
San Jose
Monterey
Fresno
Bakersfield
Santa Barbara
San Bernardino
LOS ANGELES
National Forest
Wilderness Area
BLM Land
Indian Reservation
State Park

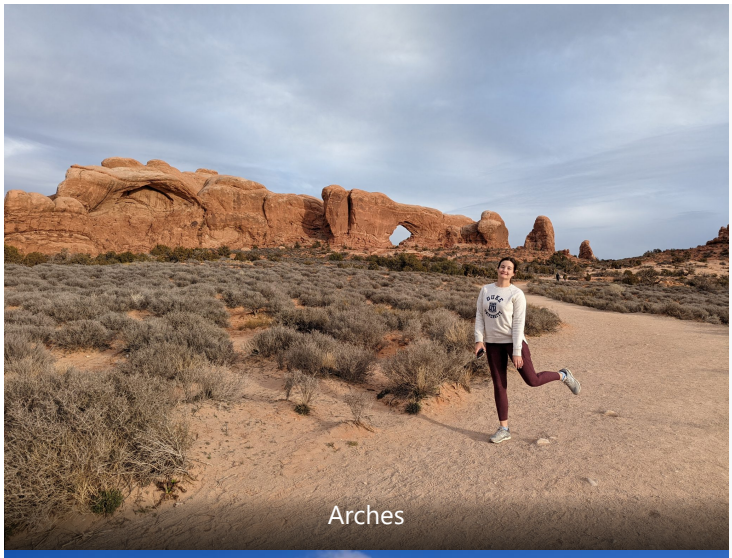
Before heading t[illegible] goodbye to o[illegible] two pets, Moonie (a tortoiseshell) [illegible] months with Nolan's parents in Orange County, while Darby has opted to return to the east coast where she grew up so that she can spend the time with Kate's parents in South Carolina.



This arrangement meant a road trip from LA to Charleston to drop off Darby, providing us with the opportunity to meander our way across the country and see some great sights along the way. We saw friends, family, and many spectacular parks during what would have been an awesome vacation in its own right.



Death Valley



Arches



Grand Teton



Rocky Mountain NP



Gateway Arch tram


Mammoth Cave NP



Darby's drop-off in South Carolina

The road trip is now complete, and we're back in LA. Just one more day until we head down to the border. We're both anxious to get going.

March 8 is an early start date for a northbound PCT attempt. Most hikers try to start in mid April so that they do not arrive in the Sierras to find too much snow. However, we'll be leaving the trail for about three weeks total in April and May to attend weddings, which should result in a Sierra arrival of late May. As long as the Sierras don't see lots of late season snow, a late May arrival should be OK (although definitely still snowy in places).

We plan to add new blog posts once a week while on the trail (every 100 miles or so). Type your email below and click "Subscribe" to receive an email each time we add a new post.

Thanks for following along!

-Nolan and Kate

Days 1-7 | Mile 0 to Mile 77 (Campo to Scissors Crossing)

March 14, 2022

Categories: Uncategorized



And we're off! Here's a recap of our first 2 days on trail. More to come on days 3-7, but some stats and photos for those days are below for now.

The day before our hike began, Nolan's dad drove us down to Alpine, a small town about 40 minutes from the PCT's southern terminus, with the goal of getting us a good night's rest. We had a nice dinner in Alpine then tried our best to sleep despite our excitement and nerves for the adventure to come.

We arrived at the trailhead at about 8:15 AM the next morning. After signing the trail register, chatting with a PCTA volunteer, and taking some photos, we said our goodbyes and started walking.

The first 10 or so miles of the trail was mix of chaparral, boulders and manzanitas. The manzanitas are very beautiful. They have a soft red bark that makes you want to reach out and touch it. We walked through some really cool manzanita tunnels around mile 11. Mile 11 was also where we ran into a friendly middle-aged couple named Jen and Jamber, who had stopped to rest on some rocks in the shade. We learned that they too were trying to make it to Hauser Creek (our destination for the day at 15.4 miles) and Jen joked that we still looked "fresh" and would definitely make it, while the two of them were just taking it hour by hour.




PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL
MEXICO 3 Miles
CANADA 2,647 Miles














MEXICO 3 Miles
CANADA 2,647 Miles


MILE
1




SOUTHERN
TERMINUS
PACIFIC
CREST
NATIONAL
SCENIC
TRAIL


MEXICO 3 Miles
CANADA 2,647 Miles


TRAIL
NO MOTOR VEHICLES



Hauser Creek (our destination for the day at mile 15.4) was dry but there were lots of campsites. The campsites were quite crowded because it's a common stopping point for hikers on their first day. In tents near ours were a couple interesting characters. One, who identified himself as "Sappy" (his trail name), kept offering people joints. Another proudly introduced himself as "Dirty Water." Dirty Water had just been given that name because he had run out of water before arriving at (dry) Hauser Creek and had to filter some cloudy brown water from a nearby puddle. We were relieved to see that the filtered version of his puddle water did actually look quite clear and drinkable. Also near our tent was a couple in their 20s from the Czech Republic. We didn't talk to them, but we'd end up running into them later.

Neither of us slept particularly well in the crowded campsite, with sleeping pads crinkling throughout the night (ours included) but we woke up with the sun around 5:45 anyway, and got ready for Day 2.

On Day 2 we hiked a little over 12 miles from Hauser Creek to a campsite at mile 27.6 just past the Boulder Oaks campground and Interstate 8. The hike out of Hauser Creek first thing that morning was steep: we ascended about 1,500 ft in 1.5 miles. About 4 miles into our day, we arrived in Lake Morena.

Once off the trail in Lake Morena, an older lady sitting outside an RV at the campground asked us what we were up to and mentioned having recently driven a young couple to Campo to start a thru hike. She wished us well and we walked another half mile through town to the malt shop, where we had some delicious breakfast burritos and bought Gatorade and candy.

It was there that we met Tricia, a Lake Morena trail angel. Tricia, outfitted in cowboy hat with the PCT logo and matching shirt, congratulated us for making it to town, took our picture "for Lake Morena" and asked if we were planning to stay over at the campground because she was ordering pizza for dinner and wanted a headcount. We weren't, but appreciated her kindness and generosity.

We left the malt shop and started a long and surprisingly hot desert walk. We had originally planned to walk just 6 more miles to Boulder Oaks Campground and assess whether we wanted to go any farther from there, but while we were eating our breakfast burritos, we noticed a comment on Far Out (a very helpful PCT app) saying that Boulder Oaks was closed to overnight campers this week due to "frog mating season." We decided to go to Boulder Oaks anyway to take a short rest and get water from the campground spigot before going to a campsite a mile or two away from there.

When we arrived, there were construction trucks all over (the real reason for the closure) and we ran into Jen and Jamber. We were happy to see each other and chatted for a bit. They told us that they're section hiking with the goal of getting to Paradise Valley Cafe at mile 150. We all complained about our aching backs and then the two of them (having arrived first) took off first, hoping to find a campsite not too far away. We hung out at the campground for about 25 more minutes then started on our way – hoping to find space at the closest campsite about 1.6 miles away.

As we left an older man who appeared to be a day hiking local stopped us and asked how much farther we planned to go today. He was certain that the closest campsites would likely be full as he'd just told "an older couple who looked spent" (Jen and Jamber) to go to the one closest to us. The closest campsite he thought might actually be available would be 3-4 more miles away. Tired from the hot walk from Lake Morena, Kate didn't like the sound of that but Nolan remained optimistic and we trekked on. A mile and a half later we were grateful to find multiple great campsites available for us with no one else around. We weren't super hungry so opted to have snacks for dinner as opposed to our usual freeze-dried meal and with more time before sunset than day 1, we were able to stretch and relax a bit before retiring to the tent to sleep.


REI
co-op

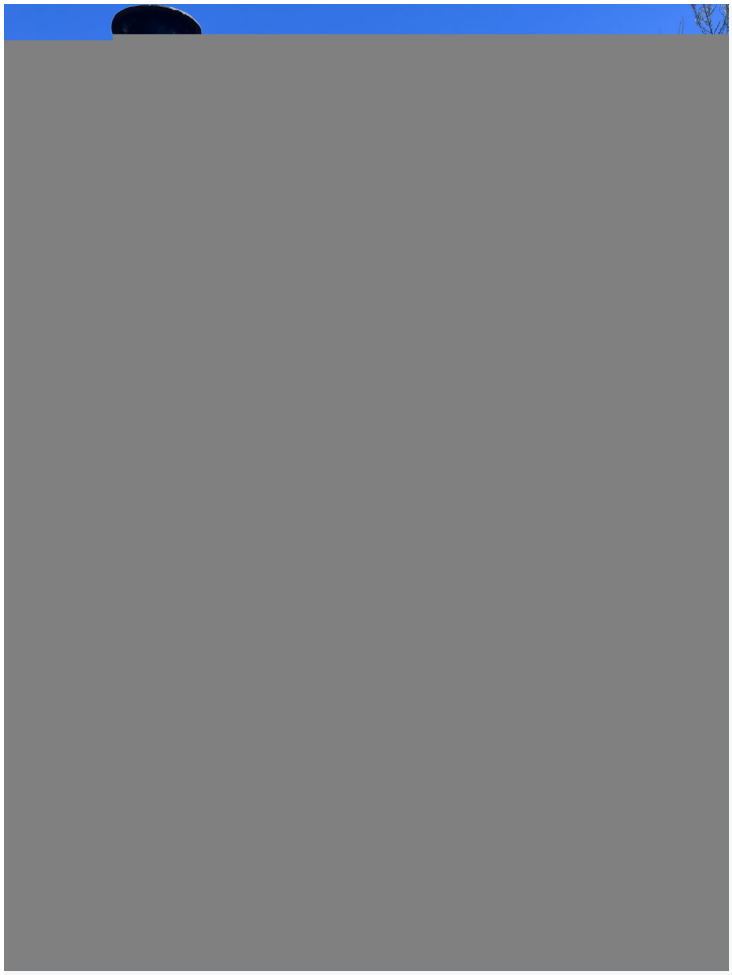












On day 3 we hiked 14 miles to Mount Laguna.

On day 4 we hiked 14.4 miles through the scenic Sunrise Highway trail area.

On day 5 we hiked 10 miles to a ridge overlooking Anza Borrego Stare Park.

On day 6 we hiked 11 miles to Scissors Crossing for a hitch hike into the small mountain town of Julian.

Day 7 we took a zero day in Julian.

In 3 days we'll reach the end of California Section A at Warner Springs

Kate and Nolan

Days 8-15 | Mile 77 to Mile 152 (Scissors Crossing to Paradise Valley Cafe)

March 22, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 8 – 14.2 miles from Scissors Crossing (77) to Third Gate Water Cache (91.2)

Today we left Julian and got back on trail. The zero day in Julian was much needed and very helpful for our bodies. After walking from our motel to the post office on Julian, we walked to the side of the highway to get a hitch back to scissors crossing. A few trucks and SUVs passed by before a red, two door mini Cooper stopped and out stepped a small middle aged woman with a coffee in one hand and a cigarette in the other. She was a very nice woman who rearranged everything the car to fit us and our packs. We'll call her Stacey. On the drive down the mountain Stacey told us all about her life and her kids. Her life has taken quite the winding road, and she was full of encouragement for our hike. Stacey dropped us off right next to the trailhead and off we went.

The first few miles north of Scissors Crossing were a series of switchbacks. The terrain was rocky and dotted with barrel cacti. We met a couple from Santa Barbara and ran into a few familiar characters from the week before. The campsite we had eyed at the beginning of the day was full when we got there, so we ended up hiking all the way to the PCT-famous Third Gate Water Cache. The 25 miles from Scissors to Barrel Spring are completely dry, so trail angels have set up a reliable water cache 14.2 miles in. We camped next to a botanist we've run into several times on trail. We'll call him Bert. Bert has an old school external frame backpack and carries two cameras on his belt. He's documenting and photographing wildlife along the trail and is a very nice man.

We saw our first rattle snake of the trail today (Kate's first ever). As we walked down to the water cache from our campsite, we came across our hiker friends from Alaska (two women in their sixties) who had spotted a baby rattlesnake on the trail. We all gathered around at a safe distance to watch it slither off into a bush.



https://2022pct.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/FullSizeRender.mov











Day 9 – 10.9 miles from Third Gate Water Cache (91.2) to Barrel Spring (102.1)

Today we hiked to the next reliable water source, Barrel Spring. The terrain was very similar to the previous day except for the final half mile, at which point we entered a lush oak-lined creek area.We camped next to a hiker we've seen quite a bit over the last week. We'll call him Doug. Doug is in his late 50s and is hiking the trail alone as a post-retirement adventure. We've had similar pacing as Doug so we keep running into him at watering holes and campsites. Doug is yet another very nice person we've met on trail.







Day 10 – 9.2 miles from Barrel Spring (102.1) to a neglected private campground near Warner Springs (111.3)

Today was the most beautiful hiking day so far. After climbing a bit for the first couple miles, we reached a flattish area with rolling grass covered pastures filled with purple flowers. We eventually came across some very happy cows and had to pause for a minute while they crossed the trail.

Halfway through the day we made it to Eagle Rock, a rock shaped like an Eagle and a popular day hiking destination. The end of the hike took us downhill into another oak-filled creek with some of the thickest live oaks Nolan has ever seen. See photos with Kate for scale.

When we reached the small community of Warner Springs, we walked a mile up to the gas station to resupply our food stock. While eating lunch in the shade we ran into Sappy and Dirty Water, two hikers we had met on night 1 at Hauser Creek. We then made our way back towards the trail and stopped and the Warner Springs community center which has set up a wonderful hiker rest stop with shaded tables, charging outlets, and bucket showers. We both took our first ever bucket showers there.

After our phones were charged we hiked another 2 miles to a sort of creepy abandoned private campground (complete with picnic tables, hooks for hanging food, and apparently an old high ropes course). We had it all the ourselves and set up our tent under a giant oak tree next to a picnic table.












Livestock Area
BARREL SPRINGS
TRAIL




WARNER COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER





Day 11 – 10.9 miles from Warner Springs area (111.3) to a campsite in Cleveland National Forest (122.2)

Today was the hottest day so far as we climbed and climbed out of the oak trees and up into the exposed hills. We ran into Doug (the new retiree) and Bert (the botanist) at the only watering hole of the day, Lost Valley Spring. We got some decent views of the Warner Springs area, but for the most part the hike was kind of an uphill slog.We camped next to Doug again in a small spot hidden amongst some nice manzanitas.









Day 12 – 12.6 miles down the mountain to a campsite in Anza Borrego State Park (134.8)

Today was mostly a slog like yesterday except for a great view at mile 129 looking north towards the peaks of San Jacinto and San Gorgonio, the latter topped with a good cap of snow. We stopped here to eat lunch for a while. Prior to reaching mile 129 we stopped for water at a spot known as Mike's Place. A homeowner named Mike has set up a large water tank for hikers and also welcomes them into his property for food and drink. There we again ran into Sappy, who was gathering firewood to keep cooking food. We skipped the food and drink but left with full water bottles.

We camped near Doug again and made sure to seal our rain fly extra tight since we were expecting a bit of rain overnight. The light rain arrived overnight as expected (our first rain on trail) and the tent performed well.









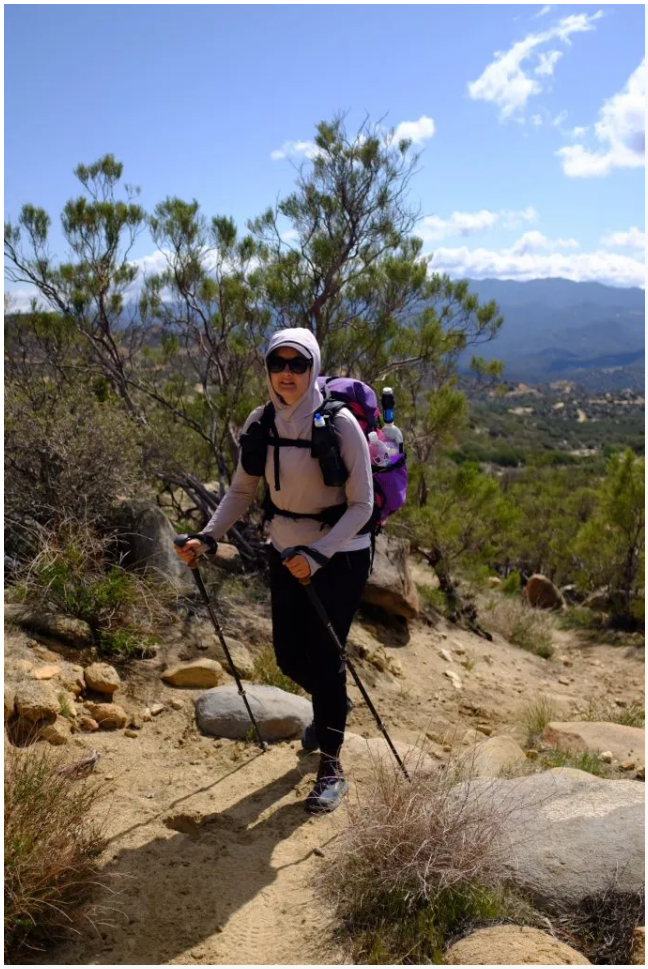
Day 13 – 9.2 miles from Anza Borrego State Park (134.8) to Anza Borrego State Park (144)

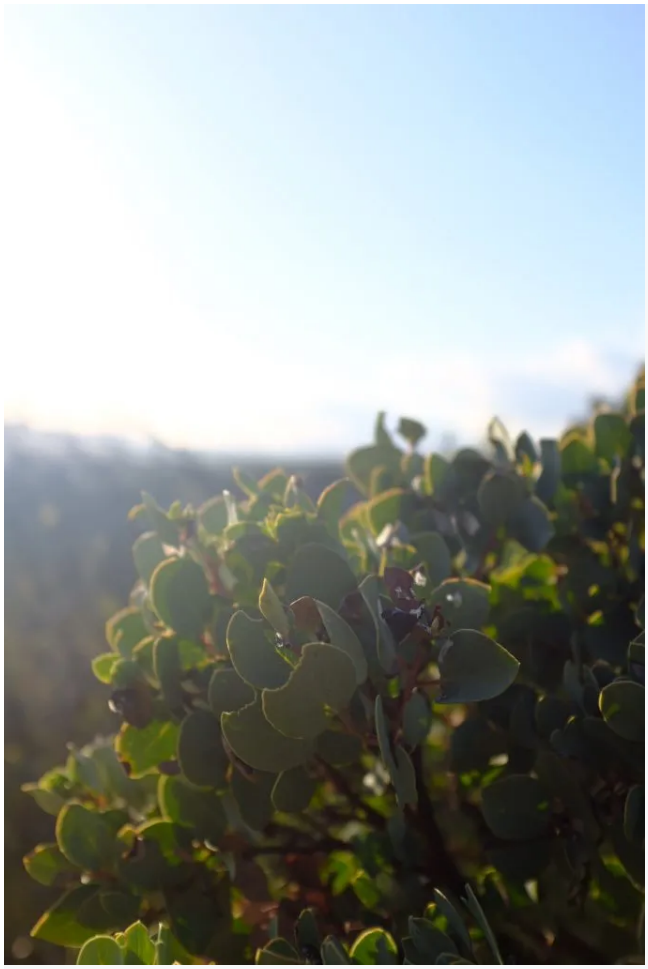
Not too much excitement today. The terrain was very similar to the last two days, with lots of up and down with no real new views. We camped in a neat boulder field. The wind was relentless this night, but Kate’s tent making skills (our tent is always perfectly taut) proved invincible.

















Day 14 – 7.8 miles from Anza Borrego (144) to Paradise Valley Cafe (and Idyllwild) (151.9)

Today was a short day and one we've been looking forward to since Warner Springs. The terrain was still the same as the last three days, but today we met Nolan's parents on the trail and they took us to lunch at Paradise Valley Cafe before driving us (and Doug) to Idyllwild for a zero day.

Huge thanks to Gail and Steve for the lift and bringing gear and food for resupply. It was really good to see them after two weeks on trail. We plan on seeing them next at the Cajon Pass.





















After our zero day today (Day 15) we'll head back to the trail just north of Fuller Ridge at mile 190. Because of snow covered ice on Apache Ridge and Fuller Ridge, we've decided to bypass those sections as they require ice axe skills to safely navigate. Based on our trail conversations, it seems like maybe half of all hikers are doing the same. The PCTA has also been vocal this year about the danger of these icy ridges after a young hiker fell to his death in 2020, and this information campaign seems to have resonated with many hikers. Once we get to Fuller Ridge (via an 8 mile dirt road hike) we'll descend into the San Gorgonio pass and then ascend right back up to Big Bear, where we'll take our next zero day.

Thanks for following along!

P.S. If you are on TikTok, check out @acoupleofhikers. Kate's been posting daily videos with smashing success.

Days 16-25 | Mile 190 to Mile 266 (Fuller Ridge to Big Bear)

April 1, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Quick editor's note: Make sure you are following our Tik Tok (@acoupleofhikers) where you can see videos from each day on trail (the videos are about 10 days behind where we actually are). Strangers on Tik Tok seem to really like them. One video has over 200k views! OK onto the blog.

Day 16 – 8 miles from Highway 243 near Idyllwild to Fuller Ridge Campground (190)

As we mentioned in our last post, because of snow covered ice on Apache Ridge and Fuller Ridge, we've decided to bypass those sections as they require ice axe skills to safely navigate. This meant skipping miles 153-190. Maybe we'll go back and hike those miles another time since we live close by.

To get back on trail as close as possible after Fuller Ridge, we got a hitch from Idyllwild to Black Mountain Road, an 8 mile unpaved forest service road. We got to the "trail head" (where the unpaved road hits Highway 243) around noon and started walking. Also a passenger in our hitch was a man trail-named "KT", presumably because of all the KT tape covering his legs. He hiked the entire PCT last year, and has decided to do it again! He also decided to skip the ridges like us. We leapfrogged each other during the day's hike and ended up camping at the same campground.

The road had a consistent uphill grade that started out exposed but was quickly shaded by nice pine trees. We also had some great views of San Jacinto peak for the first half of the day.

On the way up we ran into Karaoke, one of our hiking pals from Alaska, who was also skipping the ridges. It was fun to catch up with her after not seeing each other for a few days.

When we were a couple miles away from our destination, the Fuller Ridge Campground, snow appeared and started to cover the road. The last mile or so was mostly walking on snow. We were also treated to some amazing views out to the west (towards the inland empire) where we could see San Gorgonio peak and even Mt Baldy.

The campground was awesome, with plenty of space for many tents. A few other hikers who had hiked the ridges that we skipped showed up when we were eating dinner, and even more showed

up after we were nestled in our sleeping bags for the night. As they arrived they recounted their days to each other, including some harrowing tales about sinking into thigh-deep snow, leaving trails of blood on the ice, and sitting down on a ridge to cry because of fear. This made us feel good about our decision to skip Apache and Fuller Ridges, and the next morning KT told us the same.









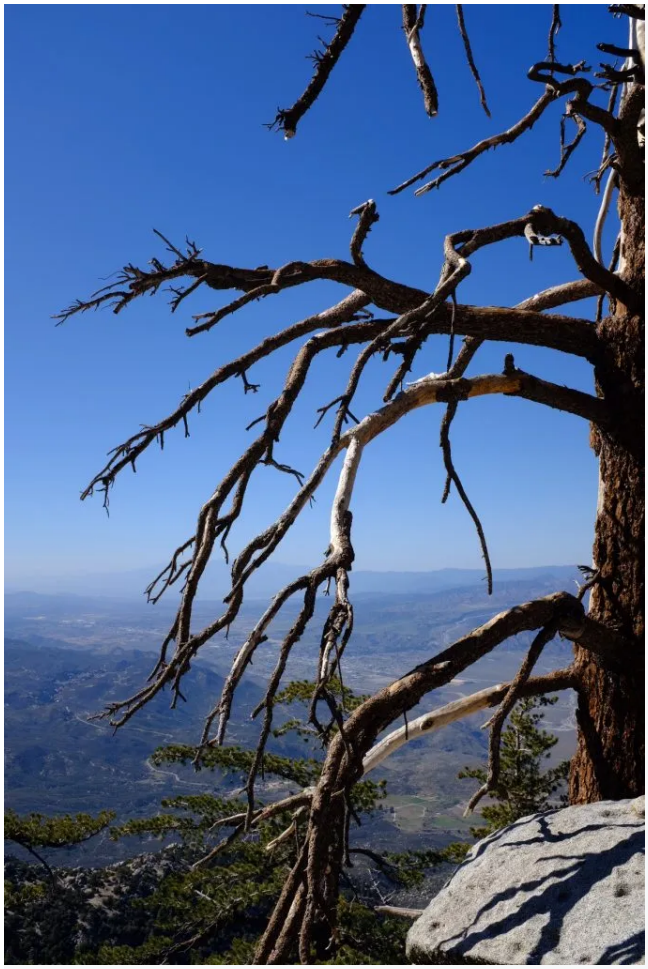

BLACK MTN. GROUP CAMP 1
FULLER RIDGE / PCT 3
BOULDER BASIN CG 1/2
BLACK MTN. LOOKOUT 1
4S01




SAN BERNARDINO
National
Forest
GROUP CAMP

















Day 17 – 10.1 miles from Fuller Ridge Campground (190) to a campsite down the mountain (201.1)

Day 17 was by far our biggest single day net elevation decline at over 4,400 feet. It was also our driest day. We melted snow in the morning to get us down the mountain, and that would end up being the only water we had until mile 205.7. We learned a valuable lesson melting the snow: make sure the pot already contains some water before adding the snow, otherwise the melted snow will take on the taste of singed titanium. It was pretty gross.

The theme of this day's hiking was views upon views. In addition to great views of the San Jacinto peak, we also had wonderful views out to the Coachella Valley and the San Bernardino mountains.

Our campsite gave us an awesome view looking up at the peak.





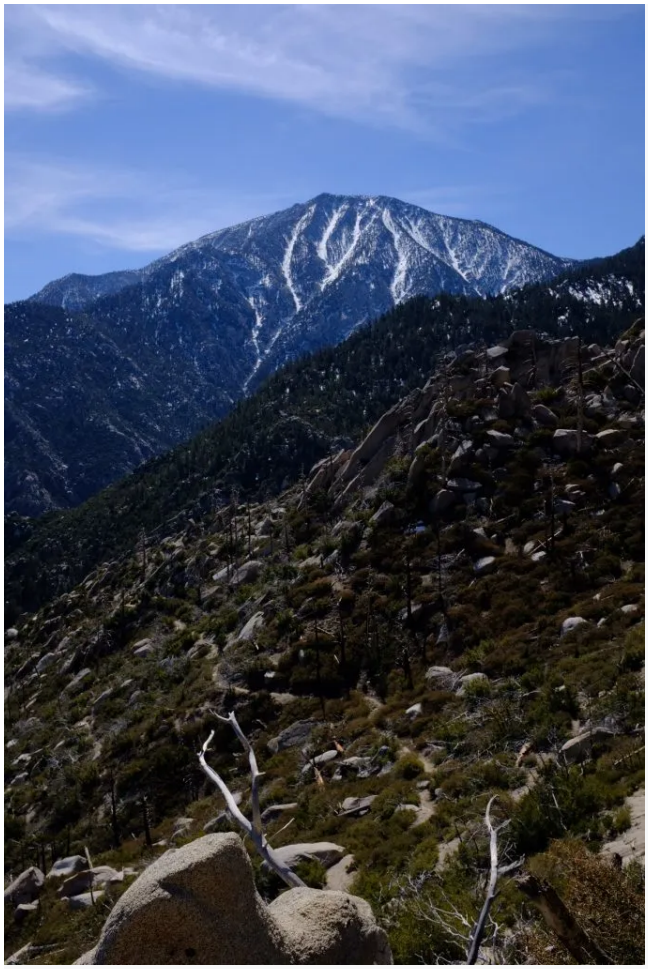




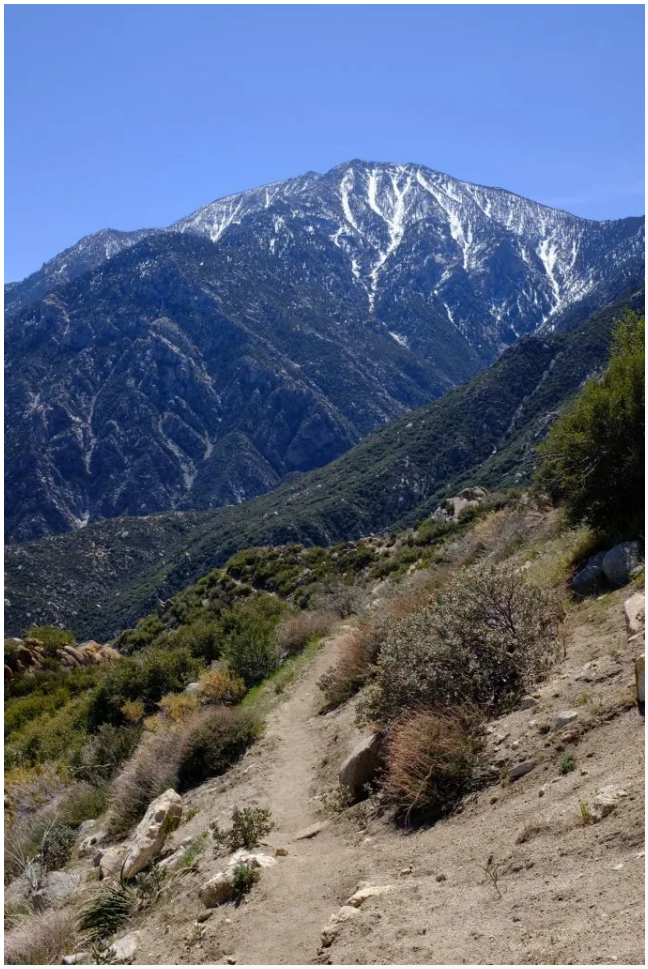



TRAIL



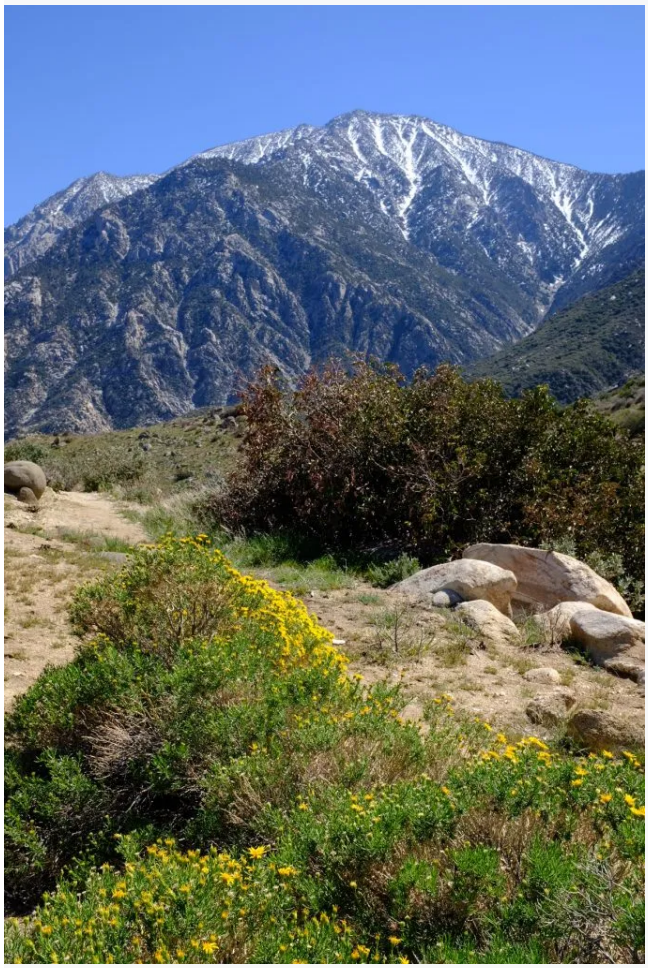


















Day 18 – 8.4 miles from a campsite at the foot of San Jacinto (201.1) to Interstate 10 (209.5)

This day was short and hot. We left camp with very little water and headed towards a faucet 4 miles down the trail. A full grown rattlesnake resting on the trail about a mile from camp really woke us up. The wildflowers were blooming beautifully. By the time we reached the faucet the sun was baking and we were pretty parched, so we spent some time just hanging out under a big shady rock next to the faucet.

Once rehydrated we began a 4 mile completely exposed walk to the interstate. It was only 85 degrees, but wow did it feel hotter. The soft sand under our feet made the walking slow. The I-10 underpass is famous for having trail magic, so we were really looking to maybe some cold drinks once we got there. With about a mile to go however, a white jeep emerged in the distance and drove out to us in the sandy wash. The driver lowered his window and said “anyone order a cold drink?” It was a trail angel named “Eagle Eyes” who had hiked part of the PCT last year and was hanging out at the underpass giving cold drinks and snacks to hikers. What a treat. We each grabbed a Gatorade and made the final push.

At the underpass we had a chance to chat with Eagle Eyes and a few other hikers who had gotten there before us. After a while a couple new trail angels appeared with a bag full of oranges for us hikers. After some chatting, including a recounting of their 2015 PCT thru-hike, we learned that they live in Yorba Linda, Nolan’s hometown! What a small world, and what an awesome trail experience today.

The underpass would be our final destination on this day as we were picked up an hour later by two of Nolan’s friends and driven to Big Bear for the bachelor party of Nolan’s high school buddy.






WARNING
TRAIL MAY BE CLOSED
OR
BLOCKED WITH DEBRIS
POTENTIAL HAZARDS INCLUDE:
FALLING ROCKS, TREES AND LIMBS,
DEBRIS SLIDES, AND TREAD LOSS.
STAY ON TRAIL
DO NOT CUT SWITCHBACKS




Haugen-
Lehmann
EXIT 110





Day 19 – Zero Day in Big Bear

Day 20 – 9.5 miles from I-10 (209.5) to Whitewater Preserve (218.5)

Nolan's friends dropped us off back at the underpass at about noon on this day. We were looking forward to this leg, where we would be hiking right back up to Big Bear. Our destination on this day was the Whitewater Preserve, a former trout farm that is now a nature preserve.

After a moderate climb towards the hills we passed the 30 megawatt Mesa Wind Farm. The wind farm had a little shade hut just for PCT hikers to rest under. There was also a cooler that typically has cold waters but was empty when we passed though. Still very thankful for the shade hut on this otherwise totally exposed day.

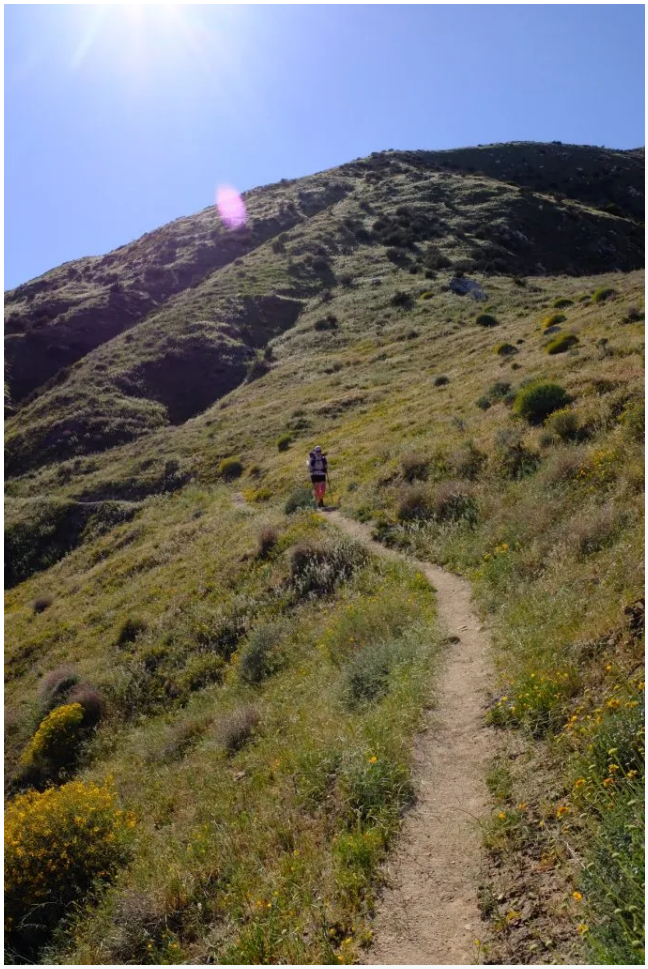
Further on we met a middle aged hiker we'll call David. David is a retired former auto plant engineer from Mississippi, with a heavy southern drawl. He was very nice and probably the most deliberate hiker we've met, as he paused to take in the scene every few hundred yards.

Eventually we reached the Whitewater Preserve and it exceeded our expectations. The former trout ponds have been turned into wading ponds, and the grounds around the visitor center are full of huge shady trees. The preserve is very hiker friendly, as they allow hikers to set up camp under the trees and use the bathrooms and water faucets.

While setting up our tent Kate noticed about a dozen mountain goats on a rocky ridge above the preserve. Their balance was amazing!



https://2022pct.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FullSizeRender.mov





Day 21 – 5 miles from Whitewater Preserve (218.5) to a campsite near Mission Creek (223.5)

Departing the preserve meant beginning our biggest climb of the trip, about 5500 feet to the pine forests of the San Bernardino mountains. Our original plan for this day was to hike about 11 miles up Mission Creek, which would realize about half of the elevation gain, but an incoming storm forced us to change course. Because the trail follows Mission Creek, a well flowing creek in a sometimes narrow canyon, we didn't want to be hiking or camping in the canyon if the waters rose during the storm. We decided to camp about two miles away from the creek, which made for a very short hiking day (just 5 miles).

We set up our tent around 10 AM and relaxed while the rain started around 2 PM.









Day 22 – 16.5 miles from a campsite near Mission Creek (223.5) to Mission Springs Trail Camp (240)

This was our biggest day yet, both in terms of distance and elevation gain. Because of our storm-shortened hike the day before, we had extra miles to make up. We woke up early and were treated to a beautiful view of fresh snow on the highest peaks of the San Bernardino mountains.

For 12 miles the trail followed Mission Creek up a canyon. The trail at many times was in the creek bed, and we must have crossed the creek no fewer than 20 times. Rock cairns aided our navigation as the rocky creek bed made the trail difficult to follow at times.

Up and up we went until we passed through some beautiful oak trees and found ourselves in a spooky burn area. Surrounded by towering black and white trees that burned in 2015, we could only imagine how beautiful this part of the trail must have been.

Eventually we reached a really cool campground that was nestled among big healthy pines. It smelled amazing, and some fog rolled in after dinner which looked really cool. We also had access to a crystal clear spring. Altogether it felt like a great reward for a long hard day of hiking.

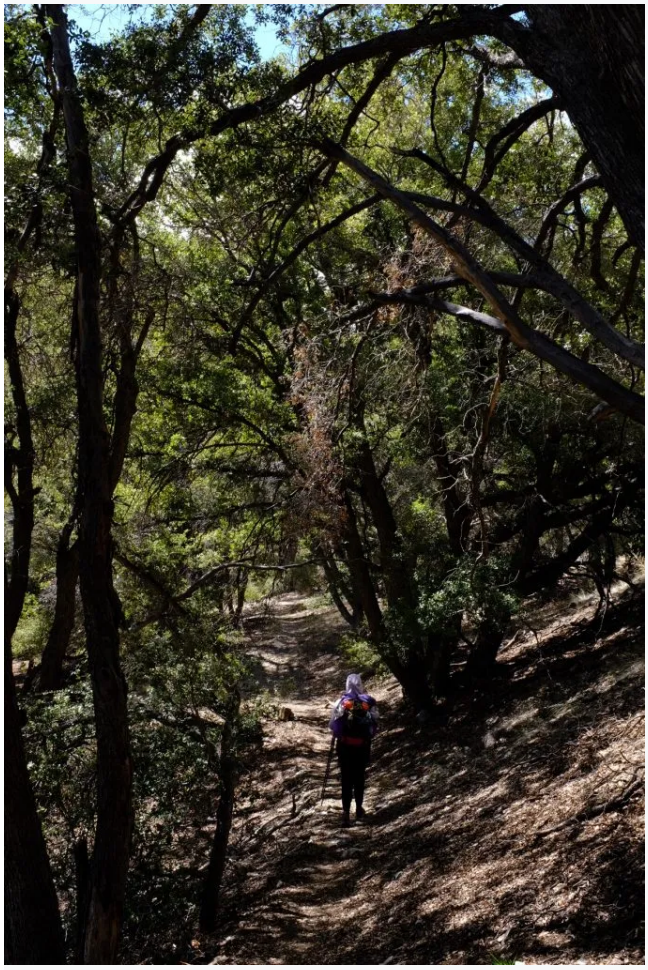







Entering
San Bernardino
National Forest

















Day 23 – 14.2 miles from Mission Springs Trail Camp (240) to a campsite north of Onyx Summit (254.2)

Maybe our favorite day so far, Day 22 consisted of a moderately up and down trek through beautiful thick forest with incredible 8000 ft views out to both the east (Coachella Valley) and west (inland empire and San Gabriels).

The trail meandered along from ridge to saddle to ridge. The north facing ridges had a decent amount of snow, requiring the use of micro spikes so that we didn't slip. Around the halfway point we came across an old cabin called Coon Creek Cabin. The cabin is abandoned but the area around it is used as a group campground and it made for a great lunch rest spot.

Towards the end of the day we came pretty close to a highway that leads to Big Bear and could hear cars driving by, the end of almost 4 days of remoteness. We set up camp in a nice area with big trees and were treated to the best sunset on trail so far.














Cienaga Creek Ranch







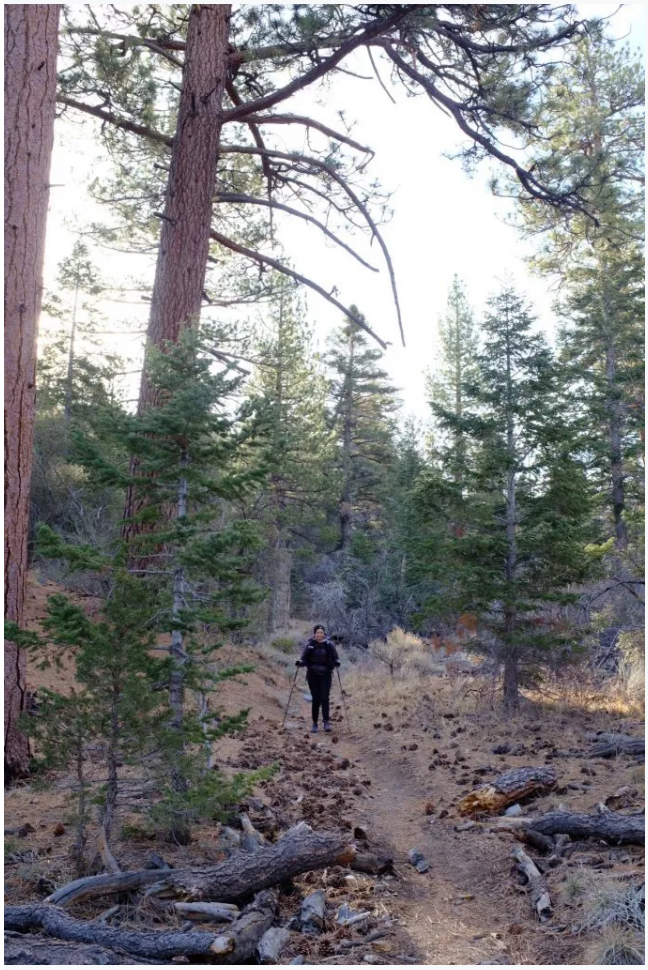


Day 24 – 11.9 miles from a campsite north of Onyx Summit (254.2) to Highway 18 – Big Bear (266.1)

This was another great day meandering through giant trees and taking in awesome vistas. We got a new view out to the Mojave desert northeast of Big Bear which was stunning.

At highway 18 we, along with two other hikers, got a hitch into the town of Big Bear Lake from a day hiker who was very knowledgeable about the PCT.





























Today, Day 25, we rested in Big Bear Lake and took care of some hiker chores. Tomorrow we'll head back on trail towards the Cajon Pass, which is about 75 miles ahead and separates the San Bernardino mountains from the San Gabriels.

Thanks for following along!

Days 26-30 | Mile 266 to Mile 342 – Big Bear to the Cajon Pass

April 10, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

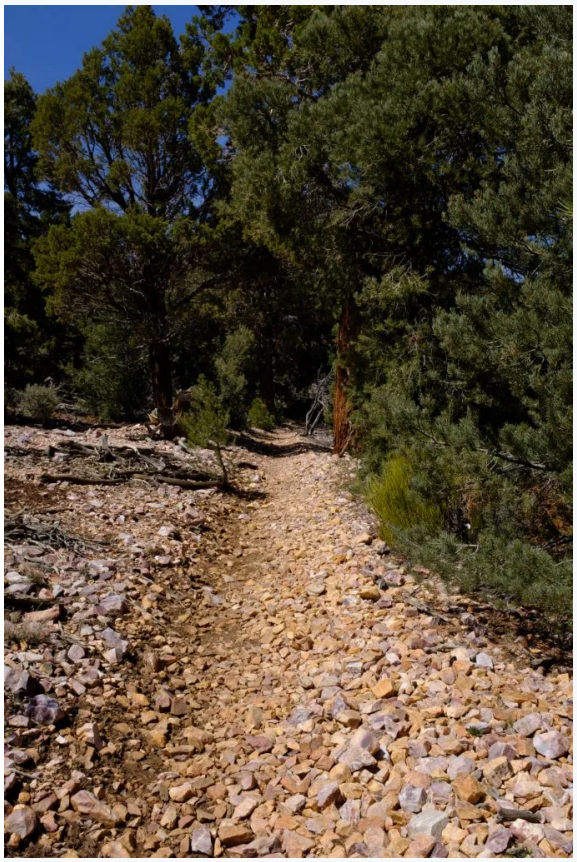
Day 26 – 10.5 miles from Highway 18 near Big Bear to a campsite in the forest (276.6)

After a restful day off in Big Bear we headed to the post office to mail some items and were fortunate to get a hitch back to the trailhead from another post office customer, a local resident. Also in the hitch with us was a hiker named Todd, who we would end up leapfrogging a handful of times over the next few days.

The hike out of Highway 18 was warm and mostly uphill. We didn't start hiking until noon, so this would be a shorter day. We were treated to some great views out towards the Mojave desert. The trail was extremely rocky in places due to some huge deposits of some sort of rock. We camped under some large cedar trees.















Day 27 – 16.6 miles from a campsite in the forest (276.6) to a campsite along Holcomb Creek (293.2)

This day started with a climb that treated us to a great view of Big Bear Lake (both the lake and the city), where we had stayed a couple days before. We also hiked through a neat valley called Holcomb Valley, which shared a name with a creek running through it. Holcomb Valley has an old mining history.

Unfortunately we hiked through lots of burn area later in the day, but we had plenty of natural water sources on this leg which made up for the sometimes bleak scenery. Just before camp, while hiking along Holcomb Creek, we came across an off-road vehicle that had left a dirt road and nearly tumbled 60 feet down a rocky hillside into the creek. A couple dozen people (with their own Jeeps and other off-road vehicles) had gathered around to watch the vehicle get slowly winched back onto the road. We waited until the vehicle was safely on four wheels before walking along the trail below.

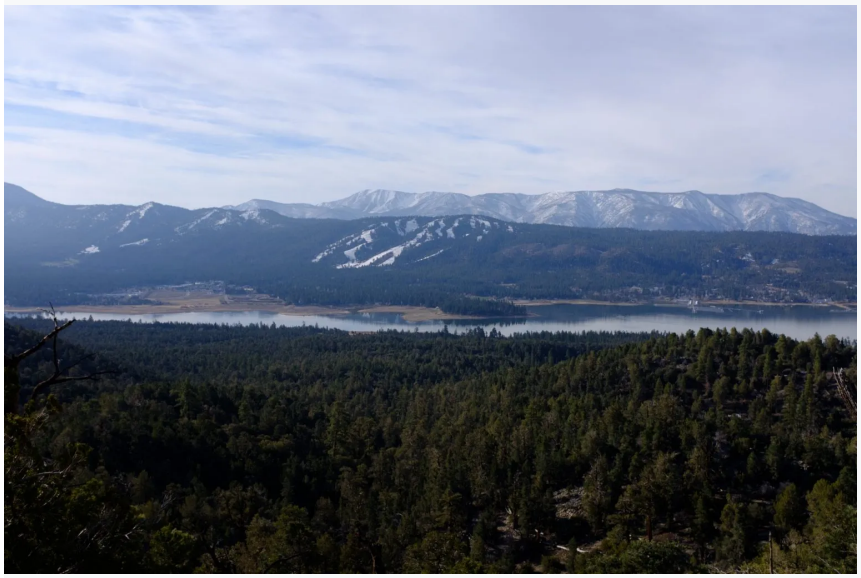
Our campsite was the best of the trip so far; a big sandy area right next to Holcomb Creek, which was flowing strongly. For dinner Nolan ate instant mashed potatoes for the first time in his life and was absolutely blown away by how instantly the potato powder turned into thick mashed potatoes by adding just a little bit of hot water.























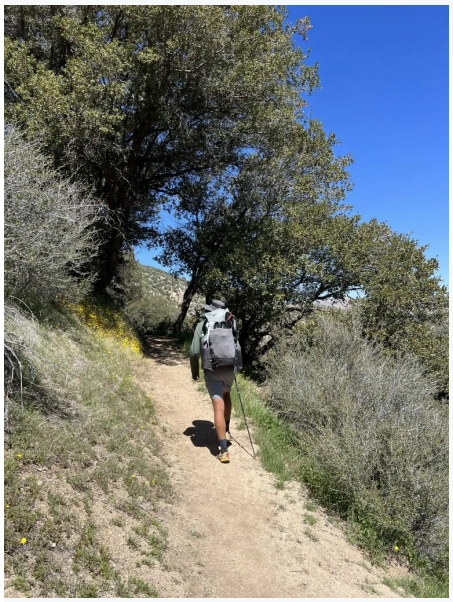


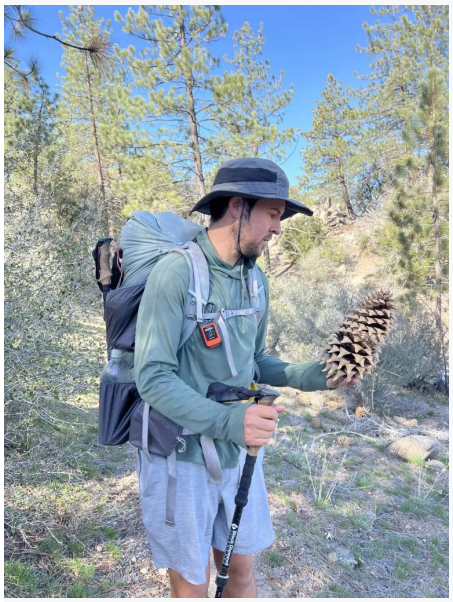


Day 28 – 16.9 miles from a campsite along Holcomb Creek (293.2) to the rainbow bridge over Deep Creek (310.1)

This day was also full of wonderful water sources, a theme for most of the section between Big Bear and the Cajon Pass. After hiking a few miles we reached Deep Creek near Lake Arrowhead, a designated Wild and Scenic River. The trail follows the creek for about 15 miles, switching from side to side via bridges a handful of times.

Although the weather was warm, the frequent access to water kept us feeling energized. We planned to camp at Deep Creek Hot Springs, a natural hot springs along Deep Creek, but the vibe was a bit too rowdy so we kept hiking another 2.5 miles to the PCT-famous rainbow bridge over deep creek. There we a private little beach all to ourselves. Just before the rainbow bridge we passed our botanist friend “Bert” down in a meadow! We hadn’t seen him since mile 120. He was taking a zero day right there in the meadow.








300





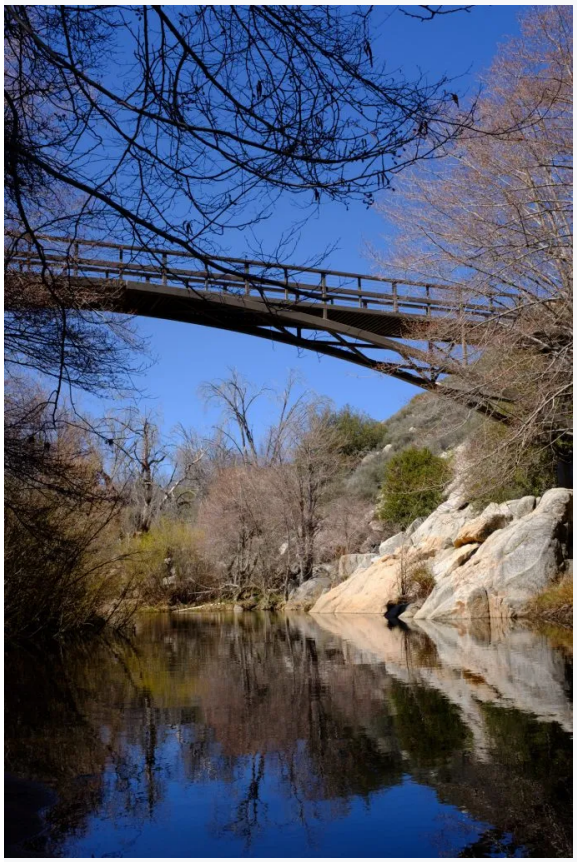


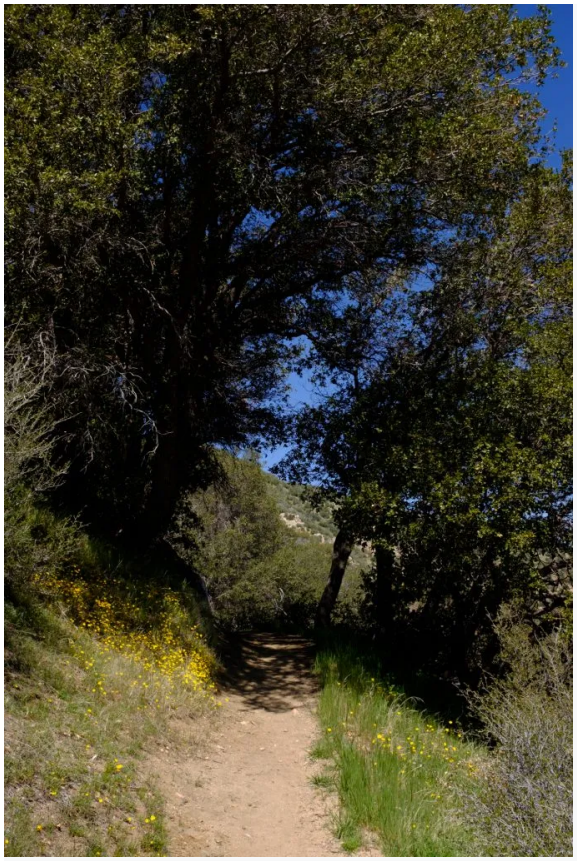






























Day 29 – 15.4 miles from the rainbow bridge over Deep Creek (310.1) to Silverwood Lake (325.5)

The theme of today's hike was water infrastructure. After leaving the Deep Creek canyon a few miles into the hike, we ran into Mojave Forks Dam, which dams water from the California aqueduct. The trail goes right across the spillway, and we took a break there to listen to the awesome echoes coming from the concrete surrounding us. Just before leaving the dam area we crossed Deep Creek for the last time, this time by walking through the water.

Next began a long, hot hike up and along some recently burned hills. There was very little shade, but at least there were lots of wildflowers.

Eventually we came upon Cedar Springs Dam, which holds back Silverwood Lake, a reservoir and our camping destination for the day. Silverwood Lake has a power plant attached, the 32 megawatt Mojave Siphon Powerplant, another CA State Water Project facility. It's an interesting powerplant design as it uses water traveling *to* the Silverwood Lake reservoir to spin its turbines instead of letting reservoir water flow downhill through the turbines like most hydro powerplants (think Hoover Dam and Lake Mead). Once the water passes through the Mojave Siphon Powerplant it is deposited in Silverwood Lake. A friendly power plant worker saw us walking by and gave us cold waters.

After reaching the shore of Silverwood Lake we picked a nice campsite on the sand and Nolan took a dip. It was very cold but felt great. We were treated to an awesome sunset and sunrise at our third straight beachside campsite (two creeks and a lake).




















ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY
FOR INFORMATION
CALL 1-866-ADOPTAHWY







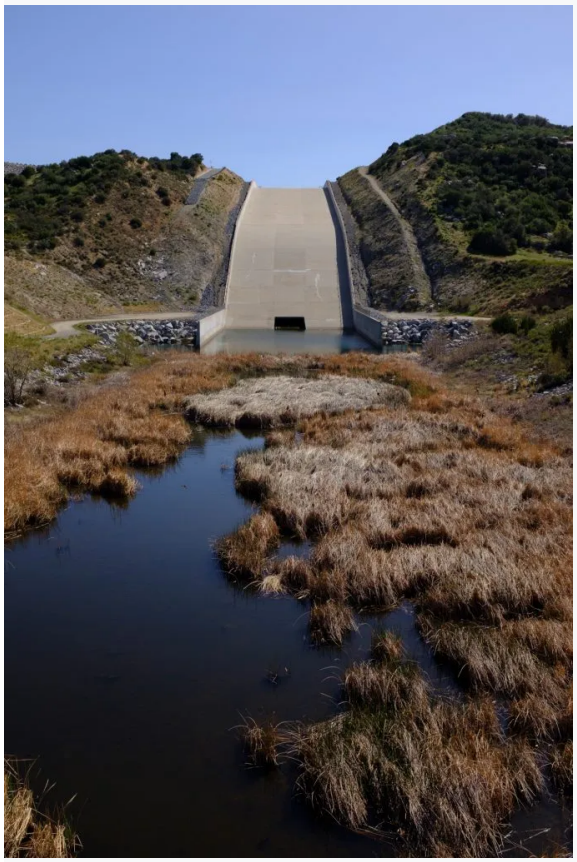



















PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL



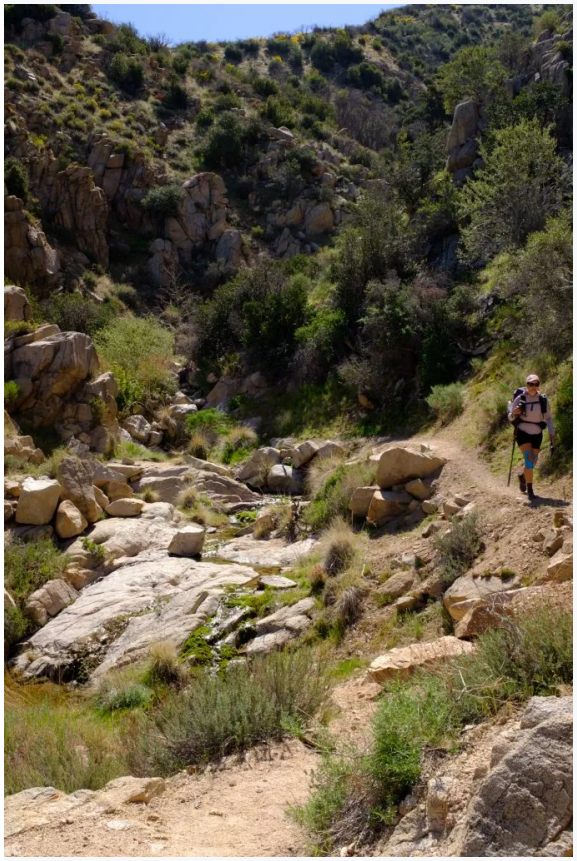




















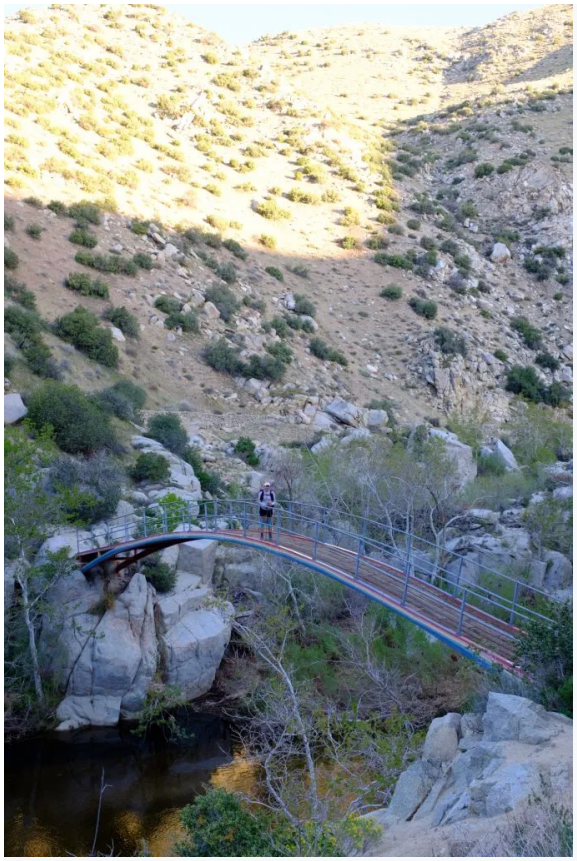












Day 30 – 16.4 miles from Silverwood Lake (325.5) to the Cajon Pass (342)

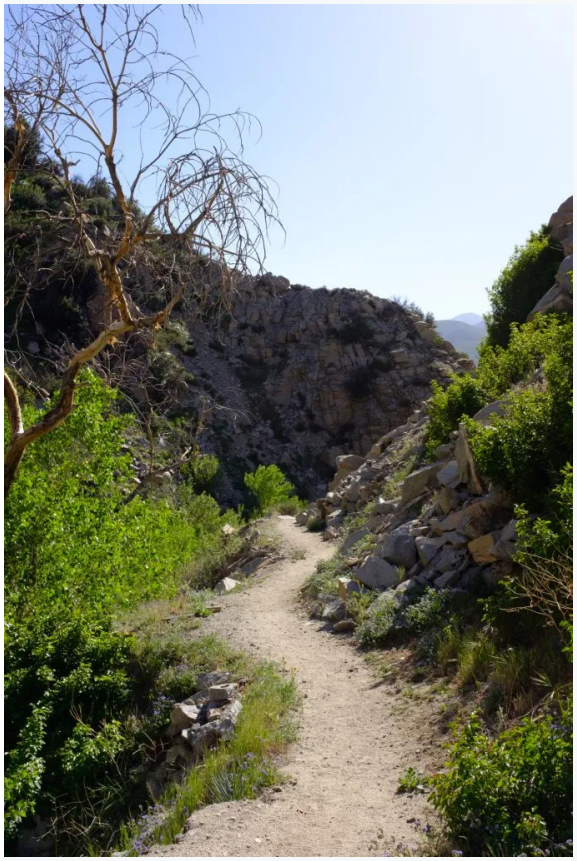
This was our hottest day so far as it reached just over 90 degrees by the time we were done hiking. We started by hiking out and away from Silverwood Lake, which gave us some great views of the lake. Our plan was to hike about 10 miles so that we would have a short 6.5 mile day the next day and reach McDonalds at the Cajon Pass for an early lunch (and get picked up by Nolan's parents for two rest days in Orange County), but the heat was so bad when we reached our unshaded campsite that we decide to keep hiking the final 6.5 miles to the Cajon Pass (and McDonalds).

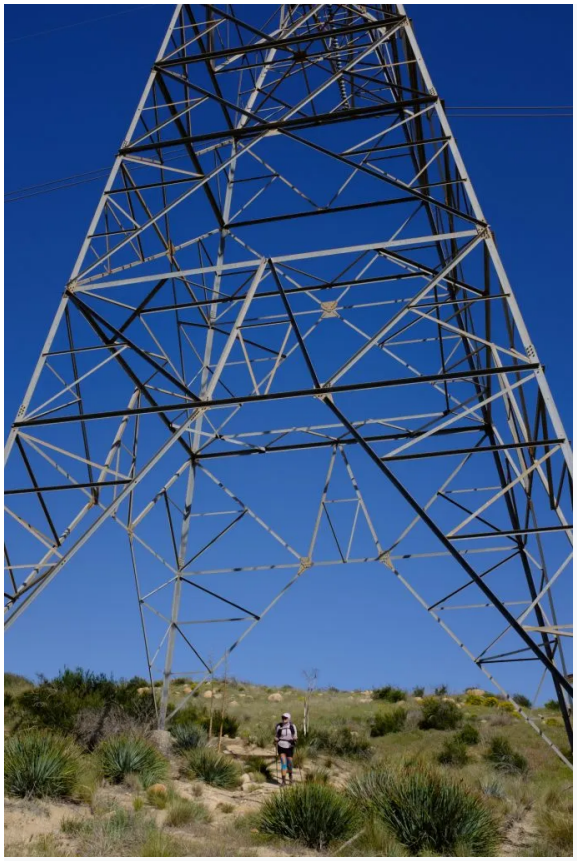
Fortunately Nolan's dad was able to come pick us up a day early, so we hiked with some extra pep the final few miles knowing we would soon have some delicious burgers and fries and a three rest days at Nolan's parents' house.

With about three miles to go we crested a hill and were presented with an incredible view of the Cajon Pass and the San Gabriel Mountains. This was probably the most amazing vista so far. The trail was routed awesomely down some high and narrow ridges. Interestingly we only saw two other hikers the entire day, way back Silverwood Lake. Unclear where everyone was. Maybe sitting the day out to wait for the heat to break?

With a quarter mile left the trail entered a neat canyon with a flowing creek, and then opened up right at Interstate 15 where Steve was waiting for us.
































A Wild Habitat Is Ahead!
You are entering a riparian area, a special habitat along the banks of lakes, streams and rivers. This type of habitat is especially rare in Southern California. Enjoy your time here, but remember to leave it as undisturbed as possible for the plants and animals that make their home here.
International Birds Nest Here
Underwater Creatures Depend On the Plants Too
Trails Are for Walking and Riding
San Bernardino
National Forest












PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
INTERSTATE 15 13.6
GUFFY C.G. 35.7







We've spent the last three days resting in Orange County, eating lots of calories, and preparing for the next leg. Tomorrow morning we'll get back on trail and hike nine days through the San Gabriel Mountains to Agua Dolce, when we'll take our next break.

Thanks for following along!

-Nolan and Kate

Days 31-38 | Mile 342 to Mile 454 – Cajon Pass to Agua Dulce

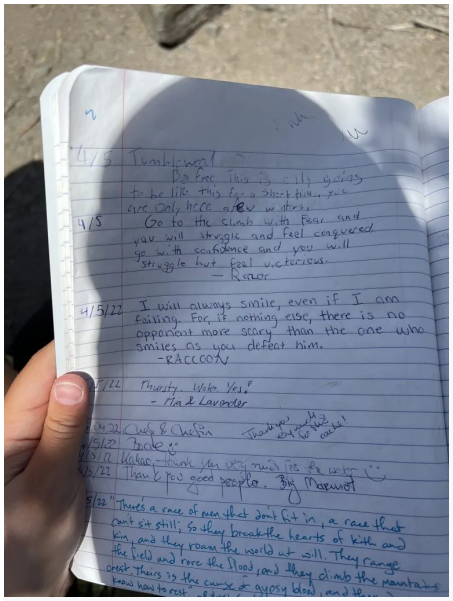
April 20, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 31 – 11.9 miles from the Cajon Pass (342) to a campsite up the mountain towards Wrightwood (353.9)

After a “triple zero” (three days of no hiking) in Yorba Linda, we got back on the trail on Sunday, April 10. Nolan’s dad dropped us off at the Cajon Pass and we immediately started climbing up into the San Gabriel mountains. The Cajon Pass is a very active freight train route, and multiple trains passed by or above us at the start of the day. About a mile in we reached a cool train watching spot with a bench dedicated to a longtime PCT trail volunteer.

Once we passed the train tracks and climbed some hills we dipped down into a small valley called Swarthout Valley which contained a nice water cache and a trail register for hikers to sign and date. We had fun looking through it for names that we recognized. In the valley we met some day hikers who were walking with their friend, a PCT thruhiker. They were very nice and asked if they could take our picture, calling us “Handsome” and “Beauty” (which we later joked we should adopt as our trail names).

After a short break at the water cache we started uphill again. The views of the pass were great, but we could hear the hum of cars on I-15 for quite a while. We set up camp near a ridge about 12 miles in and were treated to a nice sunset.


4/5 Tumbleweed
Be free. This is only going to be like this for a short time, you are only here a few winters.
4/5 Go to the climb with fear and you will struggle and feel conquered go with confidence and you will struggle but feel victorious.
- Rover
4/5/22 I will always smile, even if I am failing. For, if nothing else, there is no opponent more scary than the one who smiles as you defeat him.
-RACCOON
Thursty. Water. Yes!
- Mia & Lavender
Chef & Chefin
Thank you very much for the cache!
Bode :)
Kakao - thank you very much for the water :)
Thank you good people. Big Maewol
"There's a race of men that don't fit in, a race that can't sit still; so they break the hearts of kith and kin, and they roam the world at will. They range the field and rove the flood, and they climb the mountains crest. Theirs is the curse of gypsy blood, and they
know how to rest"

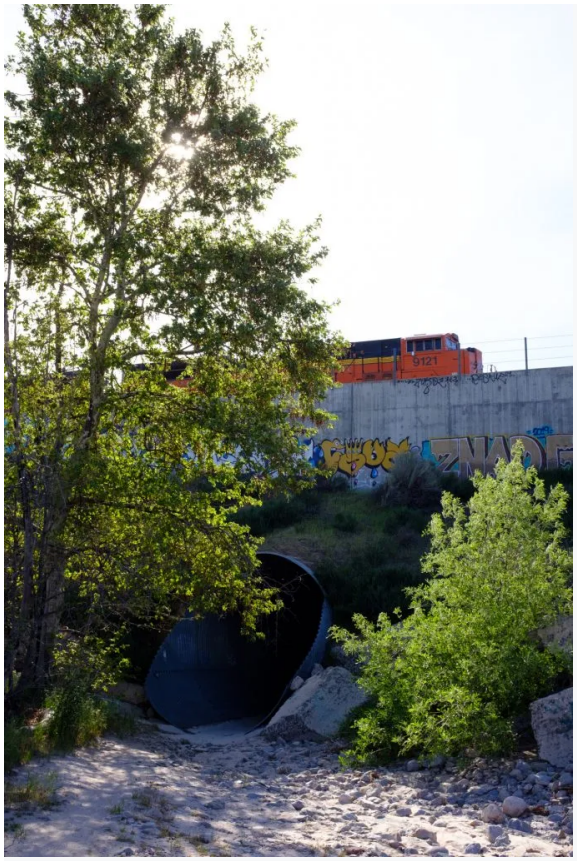


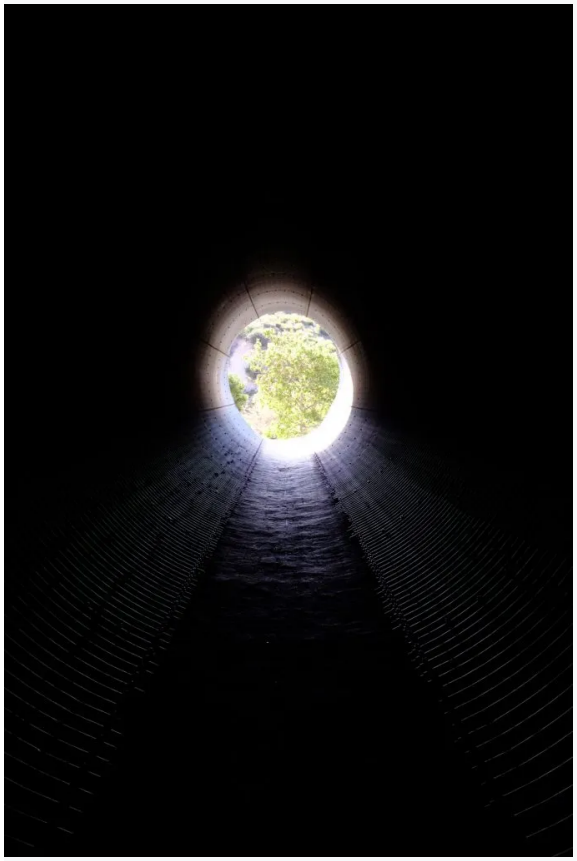









9121








JOHN
WE WILL TAKE
IT FROM HERE


















PCT
TRAILRATZ-SWARTHOUT CANYON-JOHN-DAVE-STEVE







Day 32 – 15.4 miles from a campsite up the mountain near Wrightwood (353.9) to Wrightwood via Angeles Crest Highway (369.3)

On this day we finished the climb out of the Cajon Pass and up into the San Gabriels. We woke up inside a cloud but quickly climbed out of it. The resulting views were tremendous. We could see San Gorgonio and San Jacinto, with nothing but an ocean of clouds from here to there. Along the way we ran into two hikers we hadn't seen since the Big Bear area.

Eventually we reached the top of the climb near Guffy Campground and the weather turned sour as we once again found ourselves inside a cloud, although this time with very strong wind. We kept pushing with the goal of reaching Angeles Crest Highway for a hitch into the small mountain town of Wrightwood. The trail took us directly across the ski area at Mountain High, which was a neat surprise.

We didn’t wait too long for a hitch at the highway, as a day hiker and Wrightwood resident offered us a ride. We stayed the night at a motel and ate a hot meal, both welcome treats after a cold day.































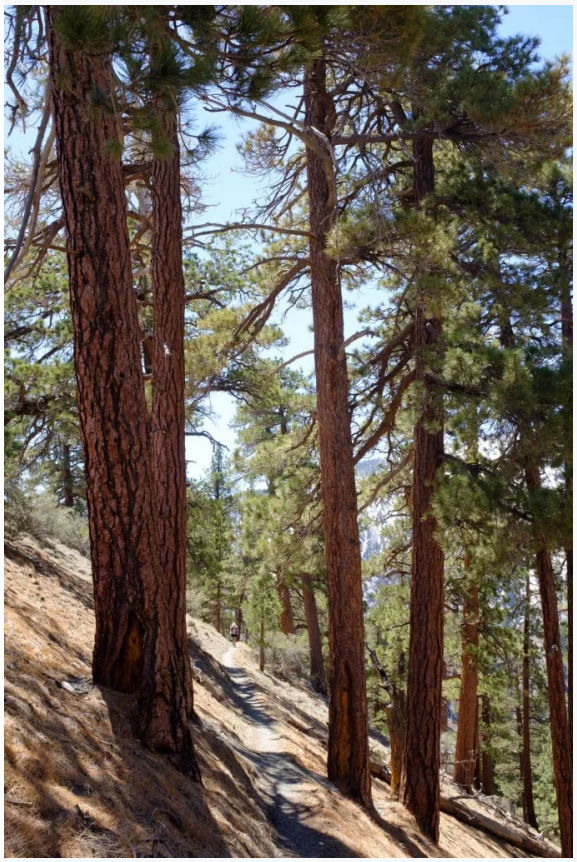














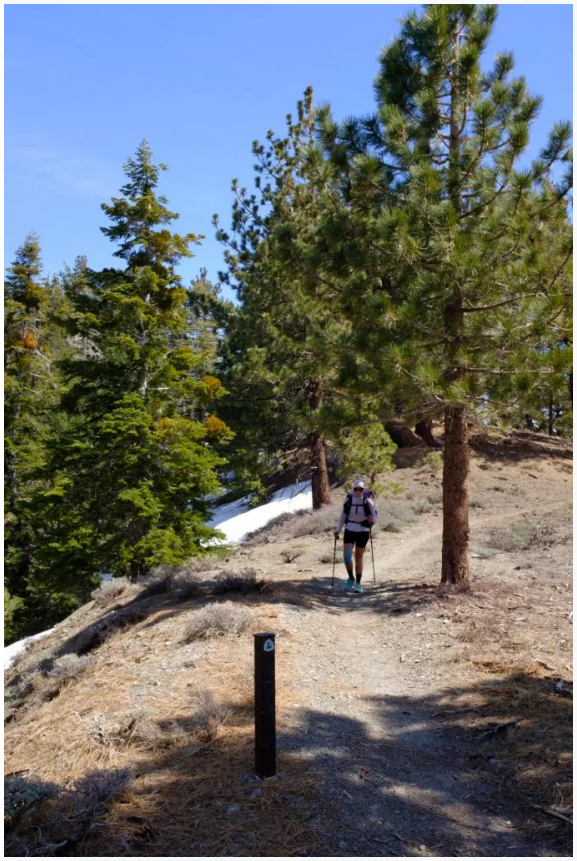





ACORN TRAIL
WRIGHTWOOD 27
PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
GUEST C.G. 1.0
HWY 150 - 31.5



















Day 33 – 9 miles from Angeles Crest Highway (369.3) to a campsite near Mount Baden-Powell (378.3)

Our toughest day on the trail so far, on this day we reached the highest point on the PCT south of the Sierras. After about 5 miles of moderate hiking we reached Vincent Gap and began a 4 mile, 3000 foot climb to the top of Mount Baden-Powell.

We had heard that the trail near the summit was covered in snow and impossible to follow, and it definitely was. For the last mile or so the trail's switchbacks were nowhere to be found and we instead found ourselves following various footpaths in the snow. Most of these paths were steeper than the trail would have been, and many of them went in different directions. Our map app was very helpful in keeping us going the right direction, and eventually we reached a spur where a 0.2 mile trail departs from the PCT and heads to the summit. At the junction we saw the Wally Waldron tree, a famous bristlecone pine that is likely the oldest tree in the San Gabriels at 1,500 years old.

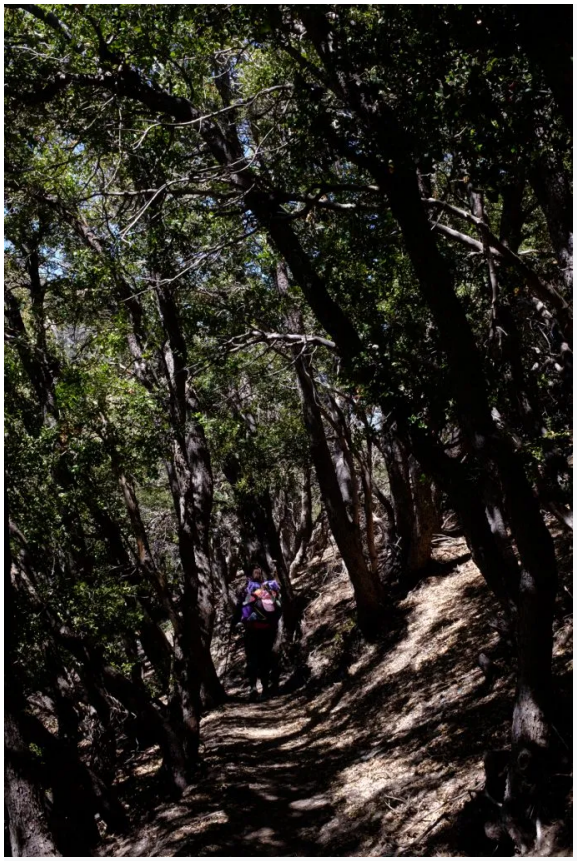
Next was a steep snow/dirt hike to the summit. It felt great up there, and we had it all to ourselves. It was a clear day so we could see all the way out to Catalina Island to the southwest. We also had great views of the Antelope Valley to the north. It was very windy and cold, however, so we didn't stay on the summit long. We had planned to hike another 2.5 miles, which would have taken us down in elevation, but the snow covered trail was taking so long to traverse that we only made it another quarter mile or so before deciding to set up our tent. Although the views from our tent were spectacular, we figured we'd be in for a windy night with our tent being up on a ridge near the top of the mountain range, and we were right. The wind was vicious and the cold was like nothing we had felt yet on the trek, resulting in very little sleep. Even with ear plugs the wind was crazy loud.



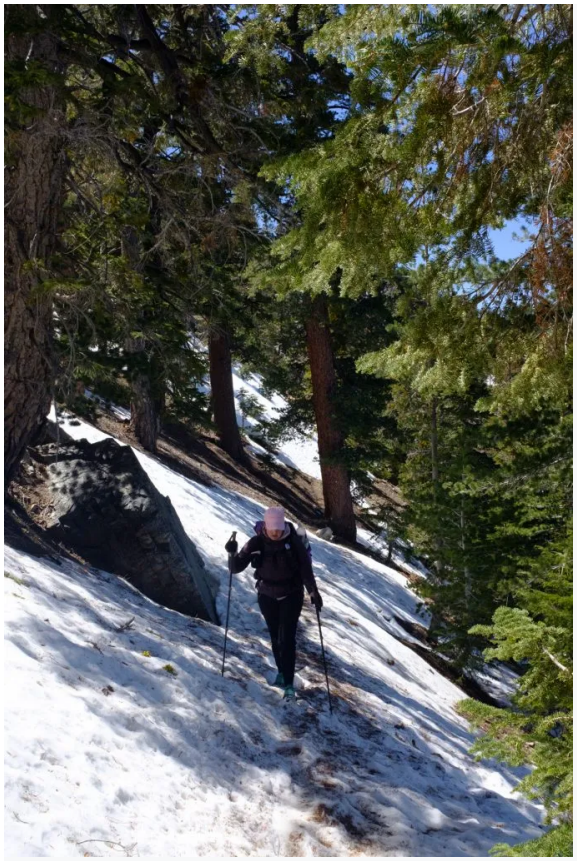




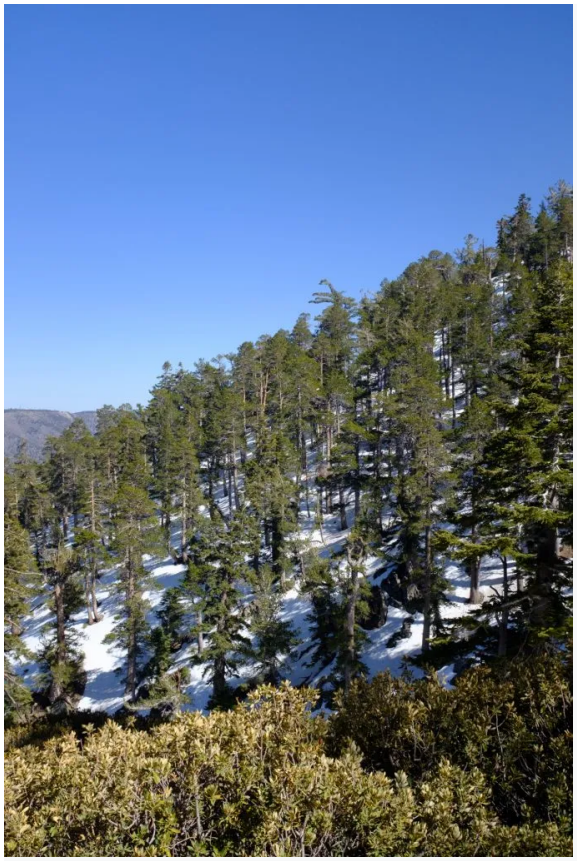










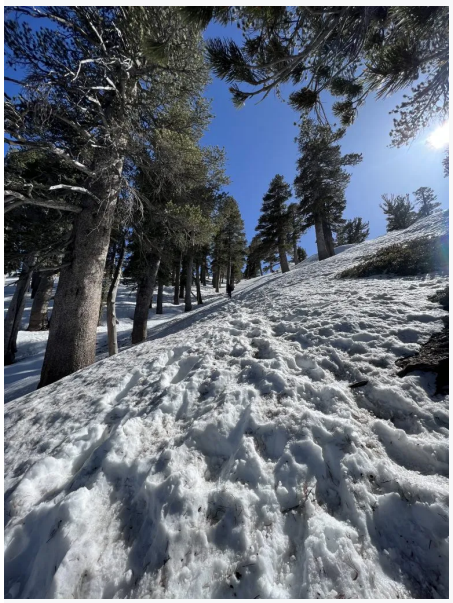














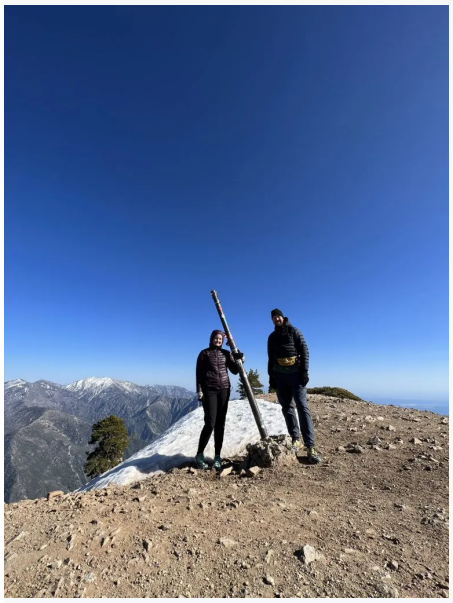



MT BADEN-POWELL PCT JUNCTION
DAWSON SADDLE JCT 25 MI
VINCENT GAP 35 MI
WINDY GAP 52 MI
ISLIP SADDLE 72 MI
ANGELES CREST 100 MILE RIDE
HIGHEST POINT 9300 FT




MOUNT BADEN-POWELL
NAMED 1931
IN HONOR OF THE
FOUNDER OF
BOY SCOUTING
ELEVATION 9399'
ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST
SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS
THIS MONUMENT ALSO MARKS
THE HIGHEST POINT ALONG THE
FAMOUS "SILVER MOCCASIN TRAIL"
OVER WHICH THOUSANDS OF
SCOUTS TREK TO HIGH ADVENTURE.

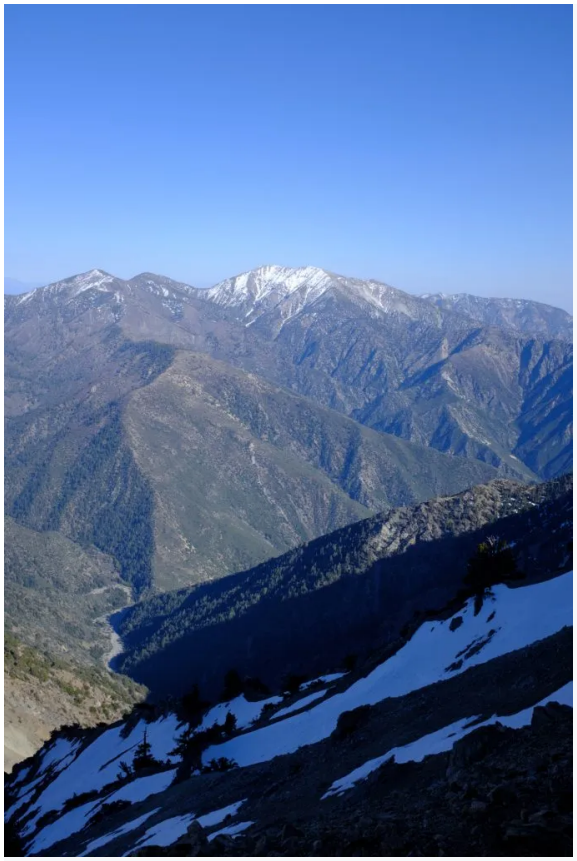












Day 34 – 16.9 miles from Mount Baden-Powell (378.3) to Cooper Canyon Trail Camp (395.2)

Our toughest morning on the trail so far, the wind was absolutely whipping when we decided to make a break for it and leave our tent. It turns out our tent stakes had frozen into the ground during the night, which is maybe why our tent had performed so well in the wind. We threw on every layer and threw everything else into our packs as quickly as possible.

We still had a couple miles of trail finding across snow, which was miserably slow. Eventually we started dropping in elevation and the wind and cold abated. The great views continued though, and we for a while could see downtown Los Angeles if we squinted.

The trail headed into a burn area caused by the 2020 Bobcat Fire. This portion of trail (almost 20 miles long) only just opened to hikers on April 1, so we were some of the first people to see the damage. It was absolutely brutal as you can see in the pictures below. We walked as quickly as we could through the area until we once again reached Angeles Crest Highway (our third crossing so far). Although the Bobcat Fire closure had been lifted, there remains an endangered species closure for about 5 miles of trail (it's unclear if the endangered frogs survived the fire since the

species' area was completely burned). This closure could only be bypassed by walking on the highway.

Eventually we reached our campsite for the night, a trail camp called Cooper Canyon. It had a wonderful stream alongside it and nice picnic tables. Most importantly it was dead silent, with not a hint of wind. What a difference from the morning.




SHEEP
MOUNTAIN
WILDERNESS
ANGELES












13'-6"


NOTICE
IN AN EFFORT TO ALLOW THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTING THE HA!ITAT OF THE MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROG, AN ENDANGERED SPECIES, THIS AREA IS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL (661) 269-2808





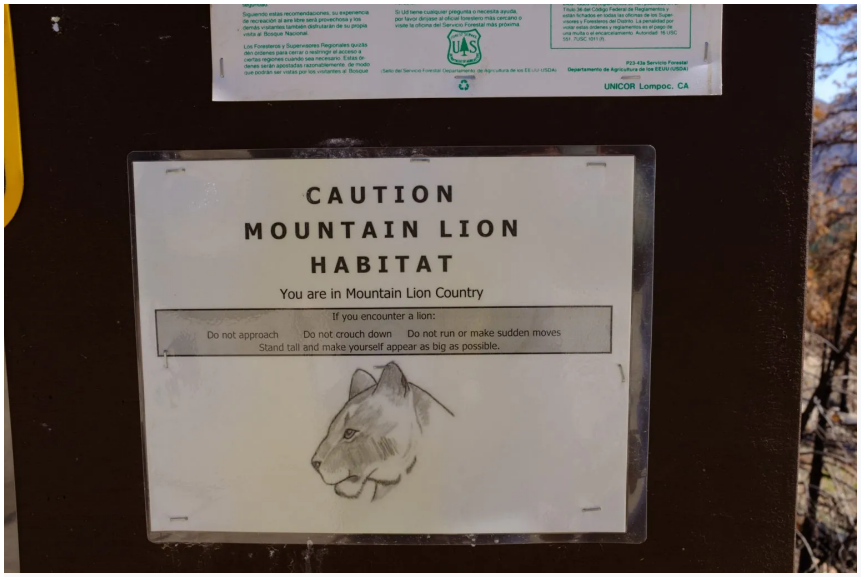




Day 35 – 15.1 miles from Cooper Canyon Trail Camp (395.2) to a campsite near Mount Pacifico (410.3)

We slept in on this day to try and recoup some lost sleep from the night before. The trail continued through more Bobcat Fire burn area, but eventually switched into an older burn area caused by the 2009 Station Fire. The Station Fire was caused by an arsonist and was the largest fire in California in 2009. We'd end up hiking through this burn area almost all the way to Acton. Because 12 years have passed since the fire, many plants have recovered, but the scars are still very obvious. It was sad to see entire hillsides treeless except for charred stumps and downed branches.

We hit the 400 mile marker then stopped for lunch at a picnic area by the trail. During our lunchtime break we met a middle aged couple from Switzerland with trail names Snowplow and Froggy. They were very nice.


CAUTION
MOUNTAIN LION
HABITAT
You are in Mountain Lion Country
If you encounter a lion:
Do not approach
Do not crouch down
Do not run or make sudden moves
Stand tall and make yourself appear as big as possible.
UNICOR Lompoc, CA









Day 36 – 16.7 miles from a campsite near Mount Pacifico (410.3) to a campsite near Mount Gleason (427)

Hiking through the Mount Pacifico area was a highlight of this leg. Although the mountain was burned in the Station Fire, many huge pine trees survived the fire and gave us great shade as we climbed. The top of the mountain was large, with lots of little nooks and flat spaces to camp, and it provided awesome views of the Antelope Valley.

Halfway through the day we refilled our water and took a break at a fire station in Mill Creek. Eight miles later we found a nice campsite on the way up Mount Gleason. As we were eating dinner a couple birds flew about 30 feet above our heads. They were just crows and they weren't flying particularly low or fast, but we both marveled at how loud their wings were as they flapped above us. It was a sound we've heard a few times on trail but never before. The slightest hum of urban and suburban life blocks it out probably.
















Angeles Forest Hwy
Pacifico Mountain Rd


MILL CREEK
PICNIC AREA
ANGELES
National Forest





Day 37 – 17.3 miles from a campsite near Mount Gleason (427) to Acton (444.3)

On this day we got most of our elevation gain our of the way early, and we got to do in some beautiful, cool mist that had settled on Mount Gleason. We then started the gradual but significant descent towards Acton and the RV resort (formerly a KOA) that was our destination.

Almost every PCT hiker stops for a night as this particular RV resort, so we were excited to make our visit. Nolan couldn't wait to get a can of Coke from the general store. It tasted so good. They also had a grill going so we both ate burgers with fries and added a bacon-wrapped hot dog. We also took showers, which felt great after five days of some tough mountain hiking. We ran into our Swiss hiking friends Snowplow and Froggy at the campsite, and Froggy gasped in disbelief when she saw Nolan's sock tan. She insisted to Kate that it couldn't be real (it is real).


















ANGELES
National Forest
ROADSIDE
REST
NORTH FORK


Angeles
National
Forest





















Day 38 – 10.2 miles from Acton (444.3) to Agua Dolce (454.5)

A short but sweet day, we once again got our elevation gain out of the way early while shrouded in fog. The landscape was mostly chaparral and tall grass, although we did see a field with dozens of blooming yuccas, the most we've seen in one place so far.

Eventually we reached Highway 14, the main artery from LA into the Antelope Valley, so we got to go into a sweet tunnel under the highway. When we popped out on the other side we entered a riparian wonderland with gigantic rock formations. We had entered the Vasquez Rocks area! The Vasquez Rocks have been made famous in various movies and TV shows, most notably Star Trek. The rock uplift is caused by the San Andreas fault, and these are the same type of uplifted rock that we saw back on day one of this leg in the Cajon Pass.


STOP
PRIVATE
R R
CROSSING
NO TRESPASSING
METROLINK
REPORT CROSSING EMERGENCIES TO
1-888-446-9721
U.S. FOREST SERVICE/
PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
CPUC #V-50.61-D
DOT #916113N


U.S. FOREST SERVICE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
COMPLETED JUNE 5 1993
PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL
CANADA TO MEXICO 2638 MILES
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT


STOP
METROLINK
PRIVATE






































PEPPER TREE









Once in the town of Agua Dolce, then end of PCT Section D, we took a Lyft to the Metrolink station and rode the train to DTLA where we took another Lyft to our house. A fun transportation day! We have a wedding to attend in Costa Rica, so we're taking a one week break from the trail.

Thanks for following along!

-Kate and Nolan

Days 39-45 | Mile 454 to Mile 558 – Agua Dulce to Tehachapi

May 4, 2022

Categories: Uncategorized

Day 39 – 11.1 miles from Agua Dulce (454.5) to a campsite near Bouquet Canyon Rd (465.6)

After ten days off trail to attend a wedding in Costa Rica, we were dropped off by Nolan's parents where we left off in Agua Dulce. The trail runs right along the main street in Agua Dulce for a few miles before getting back up into the hills. We climbed for a while through a recent burn scar before reaching an awesome ridge with great oak trees. We then headed down the north facing side of the ridge until we reached a nice campsite. It felt good to be back on the trail.













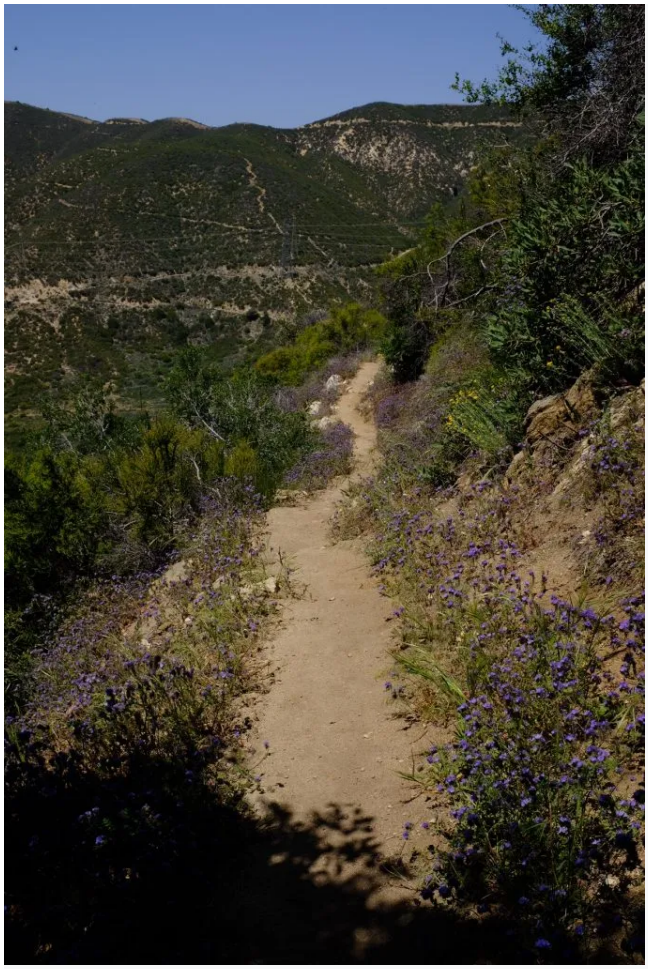


Day 40 – 16.9 miles from a campsite near Bouquet Canyon Rd (465.6) to a campsite near Leona Divide (482.5)

A day of literal ups and downs, we put in good miles going up and over a couple valleys.











Day 41 – 15.7 miles from a campsite near Leona Divide (482.5) to Sawmill Trail Camp (498.2)

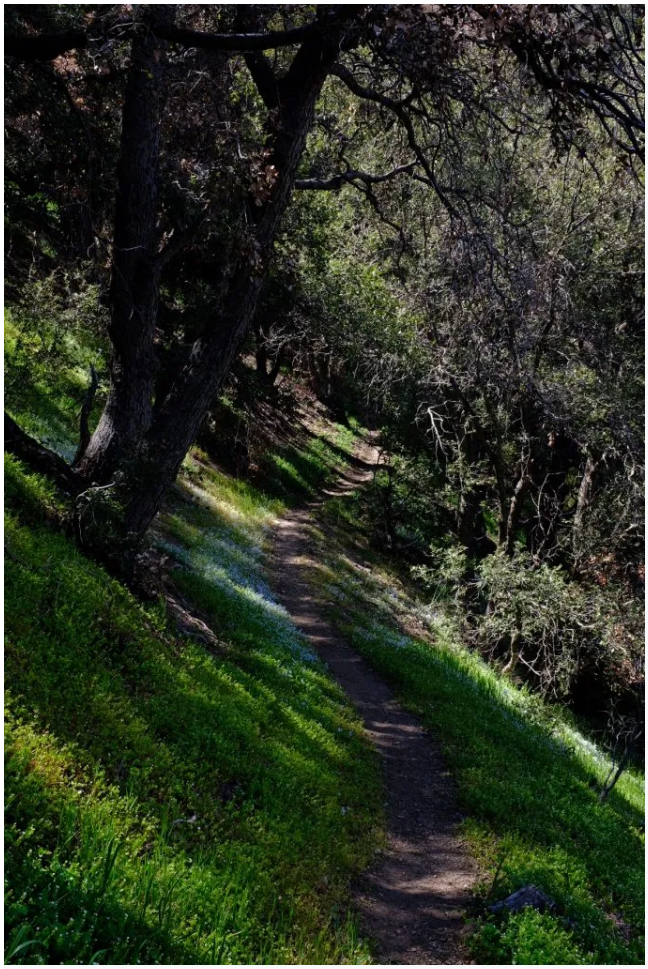
This was one of our toughest days so far. We endured some hot and steep climbing. The reward was a great view of the desert that we would soon traverse.

















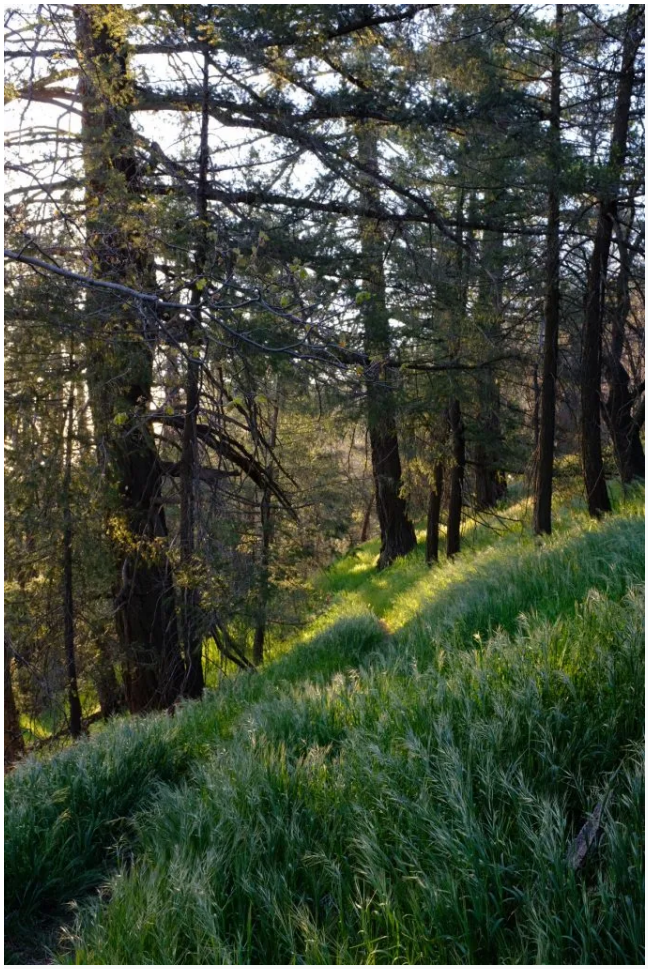
Day 42 – 19.4 miles from Sawmill Trail Camp (498.2) to Hikertown (517.6)

We woke up early to tackle our biggest mileage day yet and were rewarded with a beautiful sunrise. Shortly after leaving camp, and in the middle of another burn area, we passed mile 500! We still clearly remember how happy we were to reach mile 50, so it’s kind of crazy to think how far we’ve come.

Eventually the trail left the burn area and we entered some beautiful oak savannah. From there the trail descended continuously all the way to the Mojave desert floor. Our destination was a hiker hostel called Hikertown. Hikertown is modeled after an old west town, and we stayed in the "theater."

We went to bed early in anticipation for the next day's Aqueduct walk.















Day 43 – 23.9 miles from Hikertown (517.6) to a campsite in the Tehachapi mountains (541.5)

This day was highly anticipated because of its unique scenery and challenge. For 18 or so miles north of Hikertown, the trail follows the California aqueduct and then the Los Angeles aqueduct. The trail is completely shadeless for the first 16 of those miles as hikers walk alongside (or on top of) the aqueducts. For this reason most hikers start very early in the morning or even hike entirely at night. Our weather was favorable (75 degrees) so we began just before dawn.

The aqueducts were really cool, especially the LA Aqueduct which looked original on many places. The history of the aqueduct is very interesting, so it was neat to reflect on that while we walked alongside it. Eventually the trail entered an area full of giant wind turbines, which was also really neat.

The wind was howling as the day ended and we settled into a campsite in a little canyon in the Tehachapi mountains. Unfortunately the wind picked up as the night went on and we didn't get much sleep.











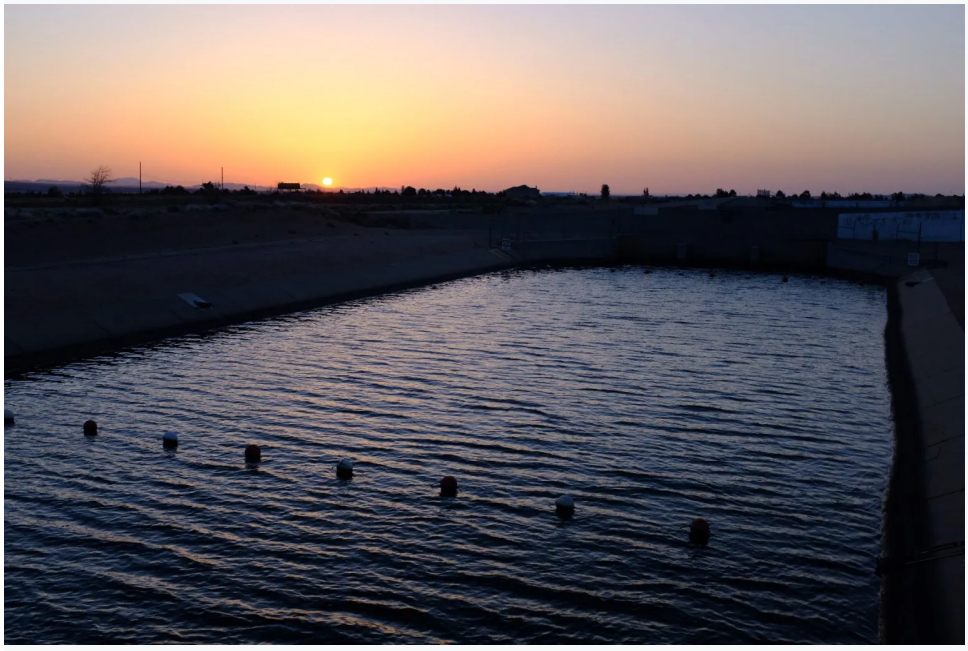


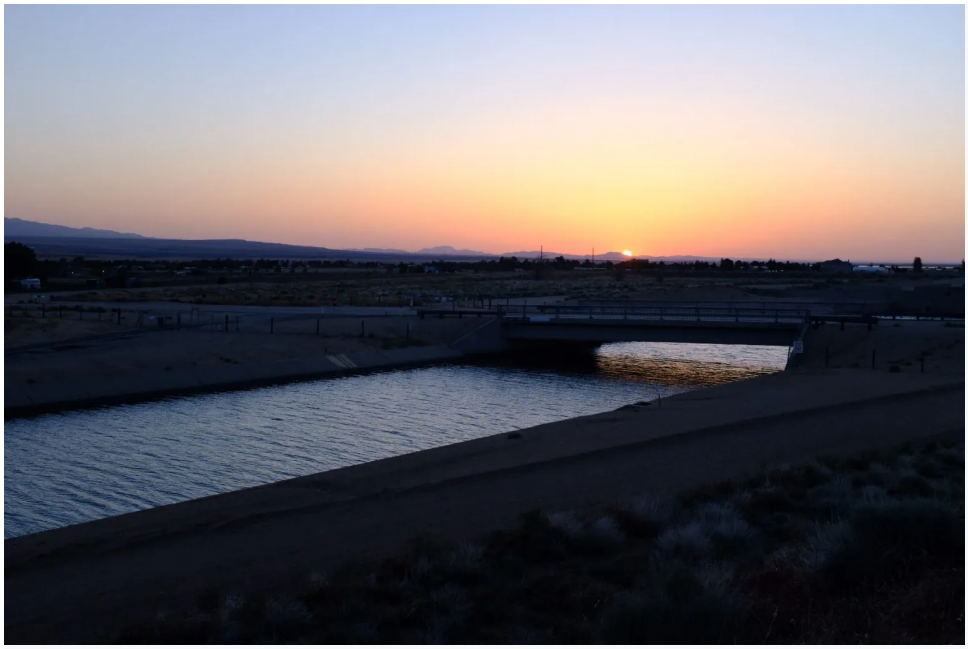



END
STAY OUT OF AQUEDUCT
YOU MAY DROWN



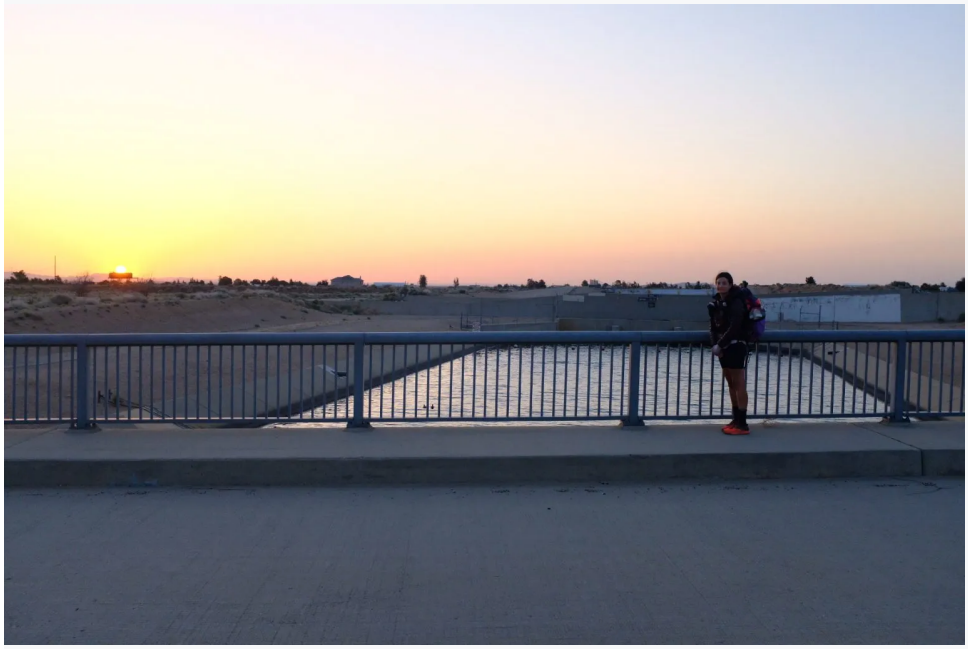







PRIVATE LAND
CROSSING


CROSSING
PRIVATE LAND
CAUTION!




















NO DUMPING


2129+49
LADWP
MOJAVE












CAT
CATERPILLAR
















DANGER
HIGH VOLTAGE
UNDERGROUND CABLE
ELECTROCUTION HAZARD
PCT ACCESS OPEN






PCT CROSSING
SLOW & WATCH
FOR HIKERS









Day 44 – 17 miles from a campsite in the Tehachapi mountains (541.5) to Tehachapi (558.5)

On this day the trail took us through the best wildflowers of the entire trek so far. The purple flowers were super fragrant. We also saw dozens and dozens of lizards. The wind turbines also continued as we approached the Tehachapi pass, the birthplace of the American wind industry.
















HIKERS
WELCOME
to
TEHACHAPI
549




















NICON



Today, day 45, we took a much needed zero day in the town of Tehachapi. Tomorrow we get back on trail for our longest stretch yet: 8 days and 145 miles to Kennedy Meadows, the gateway to the Sierras!

Thanks for following along!

-Kate and Nolan

Days 46-53 | Mile 558 to Mile 702 – Tehachapi to Kennedy Meadows

June 3, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Editor's note: We made it to Kennedy Meadows on May 12th and left the trail to attend weddings in San Diego and Spain. It was an awesome side-trip (notwithstanding each of us getting COVID while in San Diego and having to postpone our flight to Spain by over a week), but we're excited to get back on trail and tackle the Sierras. We'll return to Kennedy Meadows on June 4th.

Day 46 – 14.8 miles from Tehachapi (558.5.5) to a campsite north of Tehachapi Pass (573.3)

After a day of good eating and town chores in Tehachapi, we got picked up by a trail angel for a short ride back to the trail. We shared the ride with a another hiker named Bard who we hadn't seen since mile 130 or so. It was great to catch up with him. Bard is an inspirational guy, as he's hiking while managing multiple chronic heath issues and ADHD. He has a great blog at AdamHiking.com.

Once back on trail we hiked through another wind farm for about 8 miles until crossing Highway 58. At Highway 58 was small water cache where we stopped to fill up. A trucker taking a driving break saw us and chatted us up. He didn't know anything about the PCT and was really curious and fascinated by our journey. He asked if we had seen any mountain tigers (he meant mountain lions), and shared that he had recently made some major life changes after his mother passed away from COVID-19. We were touched by his story.

Once full of water we began the climb out of Tehachapi pass. With 8 days of food and 4.5 liters of water (our max capacity) on our backs, combined with a hot sun, the climb was very tough. A few miles in we took a nap break under some Joshua trees. We hiked with Bard for most of the day. The wind was also fierce the higher we climbed. A few ridgelines were borderline dangerous. Luckily we found an awesome place to camp amongst some scraggly trees. The wind blew strongly all night, but our tent stayed quiet.




Trail
Maintained
By
TERRA GEN
Operating Company
and
B.S.A.
Troop 135













Day 47 – 19.6 miles from a campsite north of Tehachapi Pass (573.3) to a campsite in the Piute Mountains (592.9)

This day took us up and down through another wind farm, this one on top of a high ridge. These wind turbines were just installed last year, and they were the largest we've seen so far. Unfortunately the wind blew strongly most of the day. We did get some great views out to the east and met some nice hikers including a man named Spacemaker who hiked the entire PCT last year and had returned to do just a section this year.















Day 48 – 19.1 miles from a campsite in the Piute Mountains (592.9) to a campsite overlooking the Scodie Mountains (612)

This was a day of two halves. We woke up on the later side and stepped out of our tent to find that we were inside a cloud. Perfect hiking weather! Or so we thought. After a couple miles we realized that the cloud was absolutely soaking us. Although no rain was falling, moisture from the cloud was collecting on trees and dripping on us constantly. By mile 5 our socks were soaked through, with water seeping out on each step. It was miserable. For most of the morning we couldn't see more than 75 yards ahead. We were only on day 3 of an 8 day leg, and all we could think about was getting dry.

Around mile 10 we crested a small pass and noticed some sunlight trying to peek through the cloud. A few minutes later we saw blue sky, and a few minutes after that the cloud was completely gone. All around us were giant, healthy, beautiful pine trees dripping in sunlight instead of water. It was wonderful. After a short while our socks were dry and our spirits had completely flipped from the morning.

We enjoyed the forest for a while before reaching a ridge overlooking the Scodie mountains to the north. We settled in a nice bouldery campsite area where a few other hikers had already settled for the night. One of our most miserable and happy days so far on trail.






Hiking Trail





Day 49 – 18.8 miles from a campsite overlooking the Scodie Mountains (612) to Bird Spring Pass (630.8)

The “desert” section of the PCT is generally considered to last for the first 702 miles, from Campo to Kennedy Meadows, but no day on trail has felt like hiking through desert more than this day. For the 40 miles north of our campsite there is basically no natural water source, and hikers are forced to rely on water caches as they trek through some of the hottest and windiest miles of the trail. Without these caches, which are generously maintained by a handful of trail angels, it’s hard to imagine how this section of trail would be possible to hike.

In the afternoon we battled the worst wind of the trail for many miles. Eventually we reached our destination, Bird Spring Pass, where a water cache was set up. The wind was insane, however, and so we searched for a while to find sufficient shelter from the wind. We picked a decent stand of Joshua trees and built the best tent we could. It worked and survived the night.























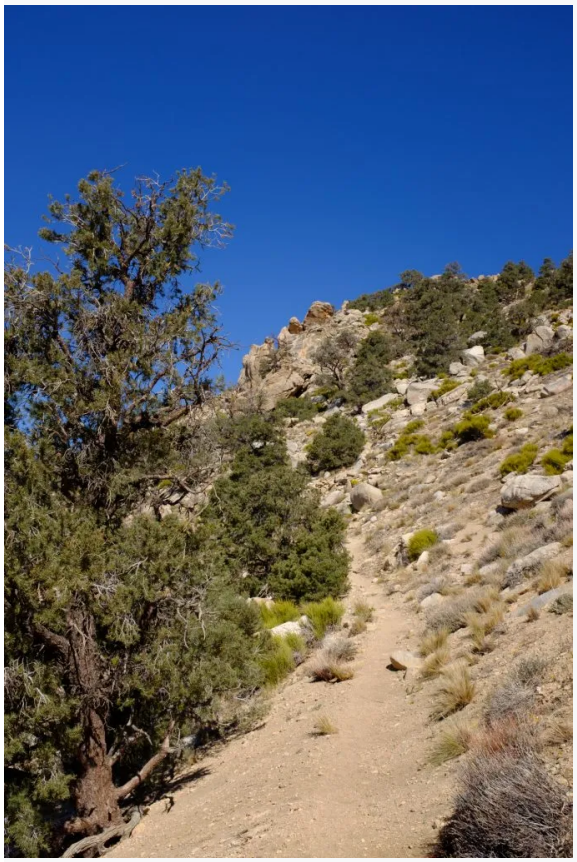


Day 50 – 20.5 miles from Bird Spring Pass (630.8) to Walker Pass Campground (651.3)

After a super windy night we left Bird Spring Pass and started climbing right away. The next 20 miles of trail were in the Kiavah Wilderness (not to be confused with Kiawah). After a couple miles we reached a ridge that gave us an incredible view of both the Sierras to the north and the San Gabriels to the south. We could simultaneously see points on the trail that were 350 trail miles apart. It was a cool moment and we took a rest break there.

The rest of the day we hiked up and down some moderate hills before eventually reaching Walker Pass where the trail descended significantly. Along the way we spotted two fluffy foxes chasing a rabbit. At the Walker Pass campground we met a few trail angels, one of whom named Cheshire Cat had set up for a couple days to provide fruit and snacks to hikers. He gave us some awesome cherries and oranges. One of the other trail angels was the man who maintains the Bird Spring Pass water cache, so it was great to be able to thank him in person.

We set up our tent behind a big, dense tree, excited to start the final 3 day stretch to Kennedy Meadows in next morning.
























KIAVAH
Wilderness



Day 51 – 17.4 miles from Walker Pass Campground (651.3) to Spanish Needle Creek (668.7)

After a week of windy nights, we finally had a reprieve and slept well in our spot behind the tree. We took advantage and slept in a little later than usual, then spent some time talking to three trail angels — Jumanji, Possum, and Cheshire Cat — who had gathered at the campground to dole out snacks, fresh fruit, and water to hikers (see below, pictured with Cheshire Cat's dog Stella). We were especially happy about the water, which would allow us to skip the first water source of the day: a spring that our app informed us had recently tested positive for traces of uranium but was apparently ok to drink in small qualities. We also took an orange and some local cherries for the road and set out on our way, starting our three-day trek to Kennedy Meadows.

From the campground, we walked about a mile to the main road at Walker Pass, which had a monument to Joseph Walker who "discovered" the pass. The road is also where some hikers hitch to Ridgecrest, Lake Isabella, and other nearby towns to resupply (we had opted to carry 8 days of food to avoid the side trip to town). When we arrived at the road, a bunch of hikers were piling out of a minivan, having hitched back to the trail from Ridgecrest. To our surprise, the group included two older women (Kari and Monica) who we'd hiked near during our first few weeks on the trail and been very fond of but hadn't seen since a few days before Cajon Pass (about a month ago). We weren't sure we'd ever see them again after taking over a week off for Costa Rica, so it was a really nice reunion. They were planning to hike to the same campsite as us that night, so we looked forward to catching up with them more throughout the day.

Leaving the road, we had a somewhat daunting ascent ahead of us, climbing 2500+ feet up to about 7300 feet of elevation. Although we had prepared for a slog, the views were awesome and it was nice to catch up with our old friends along the way, so the day was shaping up to be one of the best on trail yet.

With less than half a mile left of our first ascent, we agreed to meet at the top to take our lunch break. Nolan went first, and I caught up to him about a tenth of a mile from the top, talking to a hiker who was sitting in a niche in the rock wall beside the trail, which ran along a steep ridge. It was cold and windy, and the hiker appeared to be somewhat disoriented. When I joined the conversation, Nolan was telling the hiker which way he'd have to hike to get to Kennedy Meadows (which should have been obvious to someone who had hiked up the mountain) and asking him if he had enough food and water. I wondered whether he was hurt or might be suffering from altitude sickness, even though we weren't too high up. In response, the confused hiker kept apologizing but otherwise not stringing too many words together. Things became more clear for me when Nolan said, "We've all had bad trips, you just happen to be having yours right now."

Apparently, this hiker — a fellow thru hiker who was hiking on his own — had taken mushrooms a few hours earlier and stopped near the top of the mountain when he began having terrible hallucinations and paranoia.

He had chosen probably the worst possible spot to stop (a cold, windy, steep ridge at 7300+ feet), and we didn't want to leave him there, so we decided the best/only course of action was to escort him down the mountain to the nearest campsite. Unfortunately for us, the trail down the mountain followed more steep ridges, which meant the next place to camp was almost 5 miles away, at none other than the uranium spring. And so began a much slower descent than we had planned. The hiker was able to walk fairly well, albeit slowly. And his already snail-like pace was further hindered by the fact that every quarter of a mile or so he would dramatically collapse on the side of the trail and profess that he had no idea what was happening to him or ask for a wet wipe to wipe off his face because he was convinced there was something all over it (there wasn't). Other highlights included him thinking we were the cops taking him "straight to jail" and him thinking that his bad trip had made the national news.

Eventually, we got him to safety at a campsite next to the uranium water and once he had come to a bit, we decided it was ok for us to leave and continue on with our day. With a few more hours of daylight left, we were still able to hike to the originally planned campsite.

The day's adventure earned Nolan his trail-name: Trip Advisor.














MOUNT JENKINS
7921'
IN HONOR OF
JAMES CHARLES JENKINS
1932 – 1972
AUTHOR • NATURALIST • MOUNTAINEER
SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF JIM
UNITED STATES
BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
DECEMBER 1984






JOSHUA
TREE
SPRING
1/4 MI

Day 52 – 12.2 miles from Spanish Needle Creek (668.7) to Canebrake Rd (680.9)

The day began with a big climb out of the canyon in which Spanish Needle Creek meanders. This gave us great views right away. We could see far out to both the east and west. We hiked near our old friends Kari and Monica again and stopped for lunch with them before the final descent of the day.

As we approached Canebrake Rd, a dirt road used by car campers to reach Chimney Peak Campground, Kari and Monica were just behind us. When we reached the road we saw that another old friend, a man from Slovakia named Andre had set up on the road with a Jeep full of drinks and snacks to surprise Kari and Monica. Andre, who we met way back around Mount Laguna when he was hiking with Kari and Monica, had hiked ahead and reached Kennedy Meadows a few days earlier. He had then rented a Jeep to come back and surprise his hiking friends with trail magic. When Kari and Monica saw Andre they erupted and tears were shed. Andre was headed back to Slovakia in a few days, so they didn't think they would see him again once he hiked ahead.

Although we had planned to hike a bit further to make our final day into Kennedy Meadows shorter, we decided to stay the night at Canebrake Rd with our old friends and some other hikers we had met in the days prior. It was a great evening of drinking, eating and storytelling. What a perfect final night on trail before our big break. Hopefully we'll run into Kari or Monica up north somewhere.











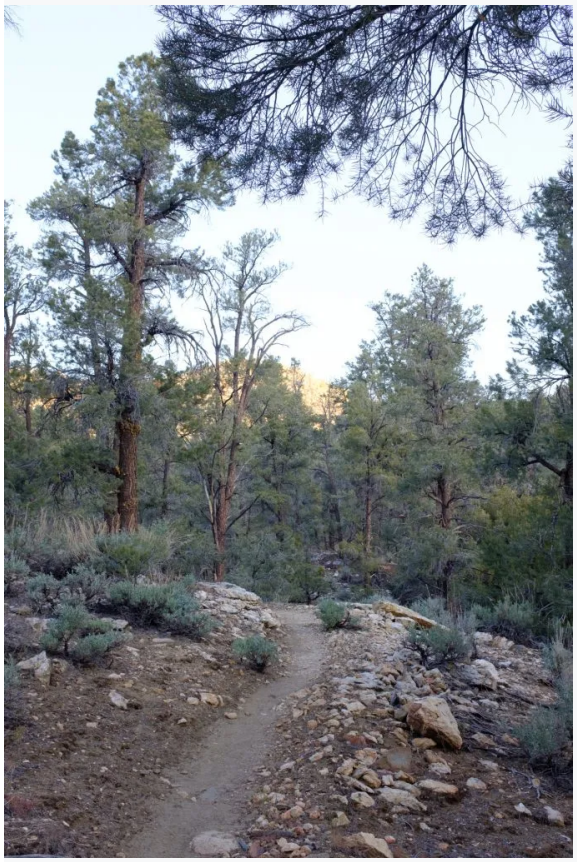
Day 53 – 21.3 miles from Canebrake Rd (680.9) to Kennedy Meadows/Sherman Pass Rd (702.2)

With the goal of reaching Kennedy Meadows early in the afternoon in order to be picked up by Nolan's mom Gail, we left camp very early before the sun came up. We did lots of climbing for the first couple hours, but the trail was nicely graded and mostly tree covered. Eventually we reached the top of the climb and were rewarded with great views of a big valley and the South Fork of the Kern River. That felt like the moment we reached the Sierra, and the hiking was mostly downhill from there to Kennedy Meadows.

The Kern was by far the biggest river we've seen since Deep Creek in the San Bernardino Mountains. We walked alongside it for about 8 miles all the way to Kennedy Meadows. Kennedy Meadows itself (like the actual meadow) was really neat and much bigger than we imagined. KM is such a big milestone for northbound PCT hikers, and we got lucky and had it all to ourselves. It felt really cool to look around at the quiet mountains, river and meadow and reflect on how far we've come.

We crossed the 700 mile marker and then noticed some sticks in the sand that said "MOM" (see photo below). Kate joked that Nolan's mom must have left that, but neither of us really believed it. A mile later, however, we came across some markings in the sand that said "Gail —>." We couldn't believe it, but Gail had actually wandered out down the trail an hour earlier and left the markings for us. About a mile after that we reached the road and spotted her blue Subaru waiting for us. We drove a mile down the road away from the trail to the Kennedy Meadows General Store, a mandatory stop for all PCT hikers. Most hikers spend at least a night here and eat a hot meal or two, but we just grabbed some ice cream and took some pictures.

On June 4th we'll return to KM to start the Sierras!






FOX MILL
SPRING
WARNING
WATER NOT
TESTED FOR
SAFE DRINKING



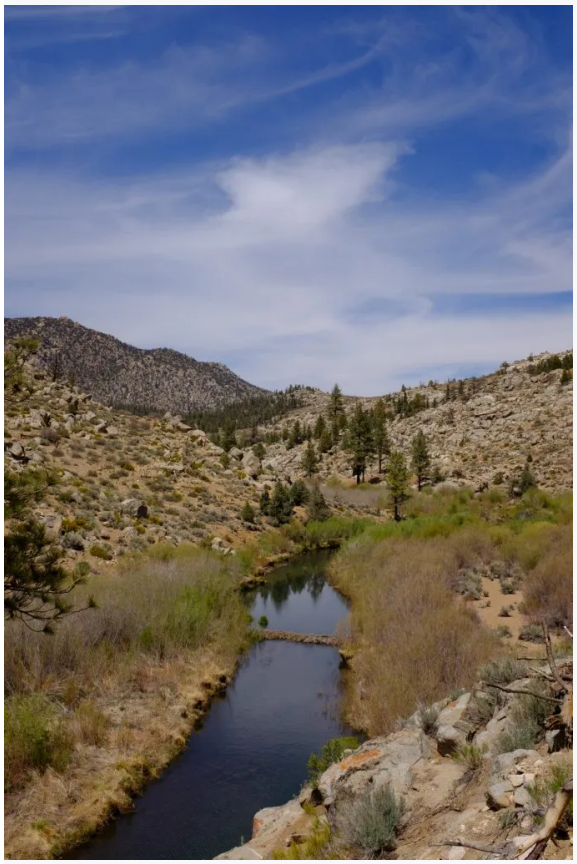

























GENERAL STORE
KENNEDY MEADOWS, CA
YES WE'RE
OPEN

Days 54-59 | Mile 702 to Mile 745 – Kennedy Meadows to Horseshoe Meadow (Lone Pine)

June 9, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 54 – Zero day at Kennedy Meadows

After three weeks off trail, Nolan's Mom dropped us off at KM to pick up where we left off. We arrived around lunchtime and relaxed for the day.



Day 55 – 10.5 miles to a campsite in the Inyo National Forest




679



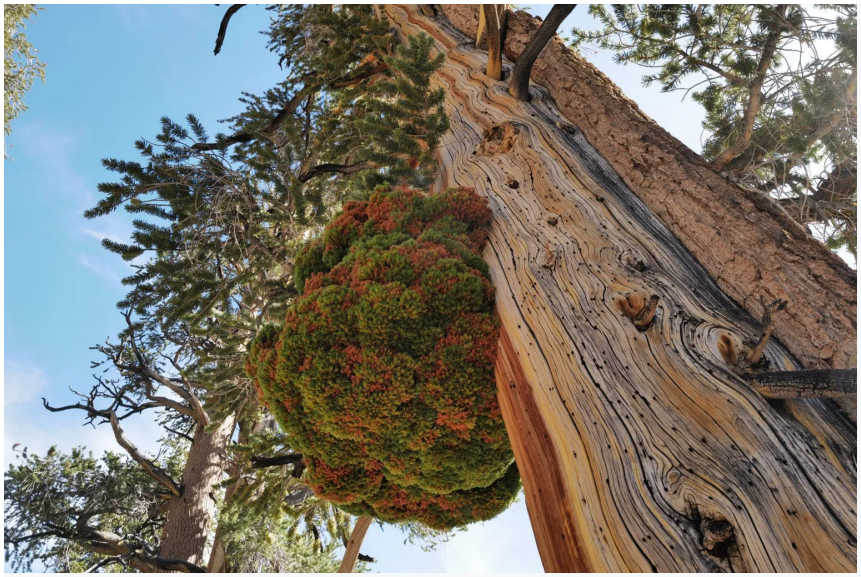
Day 56 – 12.3 miles to a campsite near Olancha Peak















Day 57 – 10.3 miles to a campsite overlooking Owen’s Valley











Day 58 – 12.2 miles to Horseshoe Meadows (and a hitch into Lone Pine)





Today, day 59, we took a zero in Lone Pine, a nice little town with all our resupply needs close together on one street. Tomorrow we'll head back up to Horseshoe Meadows for the next four day leg to Kearsarge Pass, which will take us through the highest point on the PCT, 13,000ft Forrester Pass!

-Kate and Nolan

Days 60-65 | Mile 750 to Mile 789 – Horseshoe Meadow to Kearsarge Pass (plus Mt Whitney!)

June 15, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 60 – 12.8 miles from Horseshoe Meadow via Cottonwood Pass (750.2) to Rock Creek (760)

After a nice zero day in Lone Pine we got a hitch from a San Diegan day hiker back up to Horseshoe Meadow. Instead of retracing our steps up Trail Pass we decided to head up Cottonwood Pass. It hits the PCT about five miles farther north. The three mile trail was steep but gave us nice views of Horseshoe Meadow.

After less than a mile of moderate hiking on the PCT we came upon Chicken Spring Lake, our first alpine lake of the trek! Although we knew we'd be seeing hundreds of these lakes over the next few weeks, this one was special. We sat under a tree overlooking the lake for a long lunch.

After a bit of climbing north of the lake we began a long descent towards our camping destination, Rock Creek, entering Sequoia National Park along the way. A couple miles before the creek we noticed a smell of wildfire smoke and some haziness in the sky. Unsure of where the fire was, we messaged Nolan's parents using our Garmin satellite messenger and they told us that the only fire they could find was a prescribed burn in the western part of the park. The next day we'd come across a park ranger (our first of the trek) who confirmed it was a prescribed burn and nothing to worry about.

Rock Creek turned out to be absolutely gorgeous, even with a little smokey haze in the air. Next to our tentsite was a bubbling brook with a big meadow where deer were grazing.


TRAIL PASS
COTTONWOOD PASS



















Day 61 – 7.2 miles to Crabtree Meadows (off mile 767)

We awoke to beautiful morning light next to the creek (the sky was clear of smoke) and more deer grazing behind our tent. This day would be a short hiking day so that we could rest before ascending Mt Whitney early the next morning.

The hiking was up and down through beautiful forest, ending with a decent into Crabtree Meadows, which is just off the PCT on the trail to Mt Whitney. We arrived in the early afternoon, crossing a beautiful stream full of baby golden trout, and set up camp near lots of other would-be Whitney summiters. We got to sleep early, trying to get as much rest as possible.

Although we had both been feeling fine in the altitude thus far, Kate was a bit anxious about Mt. Whitney after hearing multiple stories of fellow thru hikers having to be airlifted recently due to altitude sickness. She didn't get a ton of sleep.













Day 62 – 21.7 miles to the summit of Mt Whitney and back, then north on the PCT to Bighorn Plateau (772.7)

Our alarm went off at 12:01 AM and we broke camp at 12:30, beginning the long 7.5 mile climb up the tallest mountain in the lower 48. It was cool but not freezing, and there was no wind. Nolan wore shorts and his long sleeved hiking shirt the entire ascent. Because of a near full moon, we were able to hike without headlamps for most of the time until the moon set behind a peak west of Whitney.

Both above and below us we could see the headlamps of a dozen or so other hikers also trying to reach the summit by sunrise. The moon illuminated the cliffs above and the creeks near the trail. It was incredibly beautiful. The altitude became difficult but not overly so. We took frequent breaks and relied on 767 miles of PCT conditioning and an awesomely light pack (we left all our camping gear at camp) to keep ourselves moving uphill. After a dozen long switchbacks we reached the junction with the other Whitney trail from the east (Whitney Portal) and began a two mile walk along a gnarly ridge. At times we could simultaneously see to the east (Owens Valley) and the west (the heart of the Eastern Sierra). As sunrise neared, incredible color bands appeared on the eastern and western horizons.

The ridge walk eventually ended and we found ourselves looking up at a large, rounded, and rocky mountaintop. This was the final push. With the summit in sight our steps became quicker with anticipation. First we noticed the rock hut and then a group of hikers posing for pictures. A minute later we joined them, and it felt amazing. We'll never forget the view of sunrise of Whitney and the feeling of being present in that moment.

On the descent we took our time and took tons of pictures of the peaks and lakes we hadn't been able to see in the darkness on the way up. When we returned to camp we rested and napped until the afternoon. We decided to hike a few miles north in order to be closer to Forester Pass the next day.

Our campsite at Bighorn Plateau was stunning. We were in the middle of a huge expanse with a lake and little vegetation and an incredible view back towards Whitney as the moon rose above it. Because it was slightly cold and windy, other hikers opted to camp further down the trail so we had the whole place to ourselves. We had to bundle up but it was worth it to see the beautiful sunset colors over Whitney. What a day.











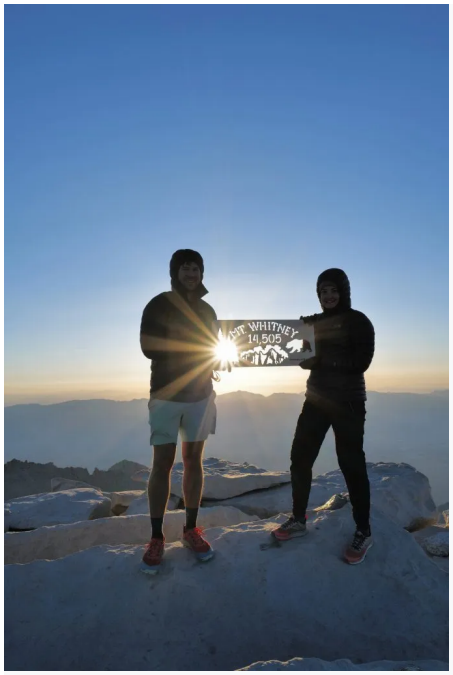











MT WHITNEY
14,505





Day 63 – 14.1 miles over Forester Pass to Bubb's Creek (786.8)

After sleeping in a bit, we said goodbye to our view of Whitney and started another climb, this one to the official highest point on the PCT, Forrester Pass. Due to it's elevation and position as the first big pass in the Sierras, Forester gets a lot of nervous attention from PCT hikers, us included. However, it out to be super cool and less grueling than expected.

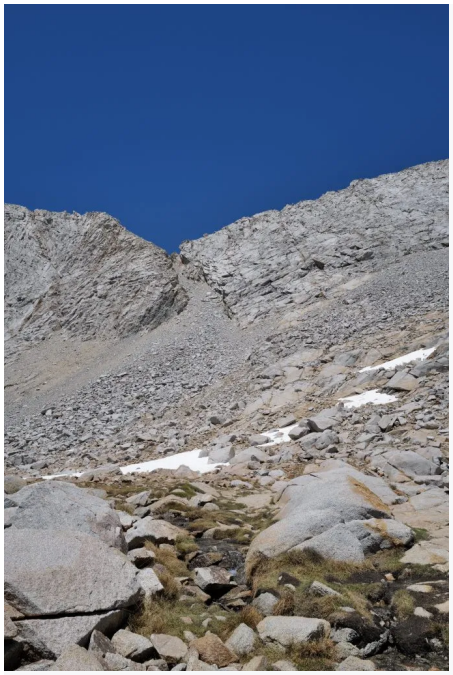
Approaching the pass we looked up at the rock faces in front of us and couldn't really imagine where the trail would navigate us over. About a mile out we finally spotted hikers making the way up switchbacks to what looked like a tiny notch at the top of a rock wall. Soon however, we found ourselves standing in that notch with an insane view to the north and south.

The descent from Forester proved to be even more spectacular. As we descended, the valley gradually revealed more beauty, from outrageously blue lakes to perfect freezing cold creeks, to wonderful little trees, and eventually a full blown river with waterfalls called Bubb's Creek. The "wows" per minute was off the chart.

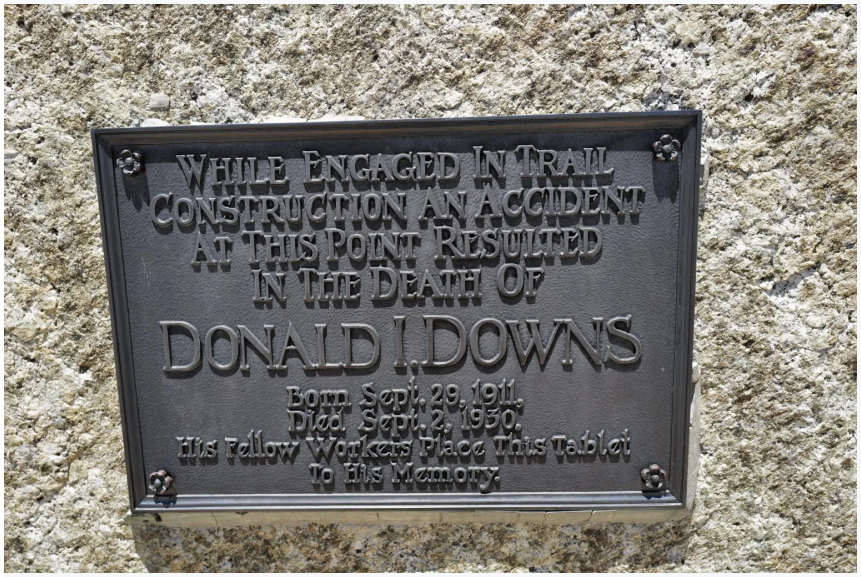
Our campsite sat at a beautiful bend in the river. Another spectacular day.









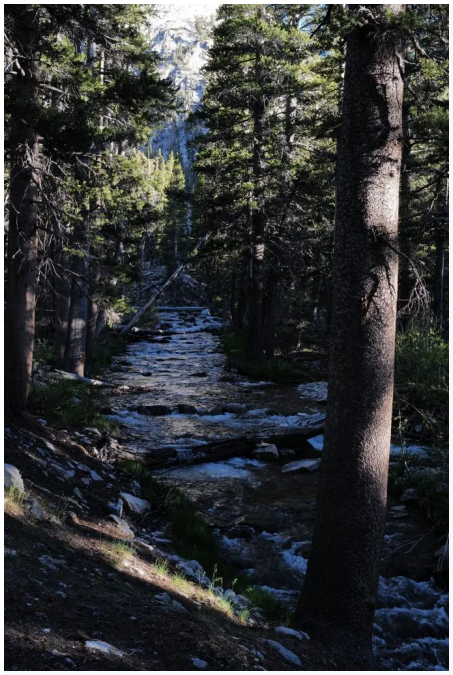

While Engaged In Trail
Construction An Accident
At This Point Resulted
In The Death Of
DONALD I. DOWNS
Born Sept. 29, 1911.
Died Sept. 2, 1930.
His Fellow Workers Place This Tablet
To His Memory.



















Day 64 – 10 miles over Kearsarge Pass to Onion Valley Campground (off mile 788.9)

We only hiked 2.1 miles on the PCT on this morning before heading up a side trail to Kearsarge Pass in order to resupply in the town of Bishop. The pass was steep but stunning. It's a common exit point for PCT hikers taking a day off in Independence or Bishop after hiking Whitney and Forester, and we had the good fortune if running into multiple hikers we knew who were heading the opposite direction back into the PCT, including an Alaskan couple we hadn't seen since Tehachapi. Turns out they also spent a few weeks off trail.







Today, day 65, we spent the day off in Bishop attending to hiker chores. Tomorrow we'll get back on trail via Kearsarge Pass and head north towards Mammoth, a leg that will take seven days and traverse some of the most famous scenery in the world.

Thanks for following along!

-Kate and Nolan

Days 66-74 | Mile 789 to Mile 906 – Kearsarge Pass to Red's Meadow (Mammoth)

June 25, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 66 – 12 miles up Kearsarge Pass then north on trail over Glen Pass to Rae Lakes (793.4)

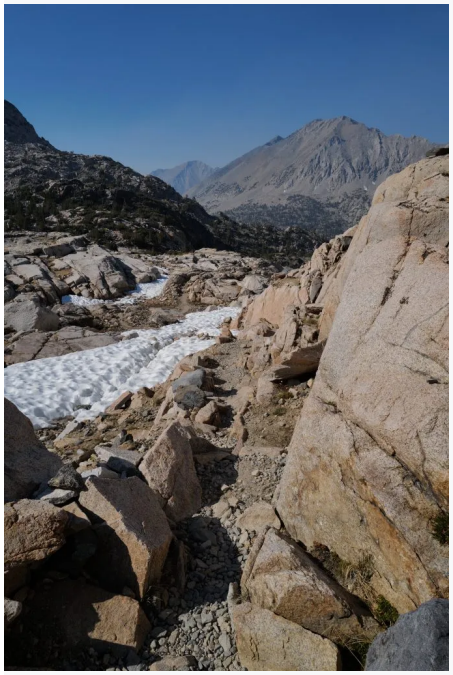
To get back on trail from Bishop we caught the first bus of the day to Independence. Once in Independence we got a hitch from a nice man who hiked the Appalachian Trail last year. He wasn't even heading up to Kearsarge Pass, but he drove us anyway.

The hike back up Kearsarge Pass want super exciting since we had already come down the pass two days before, but the views were still nice. After about 7.5 miles we joined the PCT again and headed towards Glen Pass. Although Glen Pass is 12,000 feet high, we weren't giving it too much thought since the elevation gain wasn't too big. Glen showed us who was boss however. It was very steep, making it feel much higher and more difficult that it should have. Because Glen was so tough we didn't make it much farther on trail and decided to camp at Rae Lakes (about 7 miles shy of our planned destination). The silver lining was that Rae Lakes is one of the most beautiful locations in the Sierra, and our tentsite was really cool.



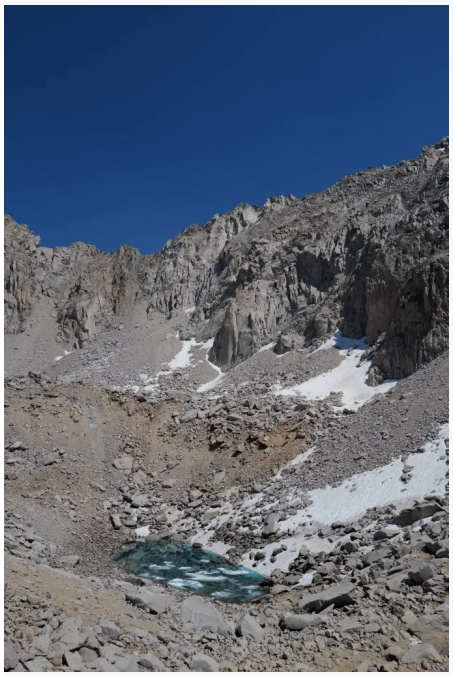












Day 67 – 10 miles to a campsite near Pinchot Pass (803.4)

The next day we continued the descent from Glen Pass towards the South Fork of the Kings River. Once we crossed the river we immediately began heading uphill again, this time towards Pinchot Pass. Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate. The day had started off cold, windy, and overcast. When we were about a third of the way up to the pass it started snowing very lightly.

Looking up at the peaks around us we could tell that visibility was definitely worse higher up, so we decided to call it a day and tackle the high pass in the morning after the weather had cleared.



Day 68 – 17.2 miles over Pinchot Pass and Mather Pass to Palisades Lakes (820.6)

After the snow-shortened day before, we woke up early knowing we would be trying to tackle two passes in one day, Pinchot and Mather. As soon as we left the tent we started climbing. Fortunately, the skies were perfectly clear, even if the temperature was very low. After climbing what seemed like a thousand rock stairs on trail, we reached a beautiful valley surrounded by rock walls on three sides. One of the walls had an awesome orange tint and it turned out that that was the area we would be hiking over. The trail got steeper the closer we got to the top of the pass. We saw lots of frozen lakes and frozen creeks on the way up which was pretty neat .

Finally, we reached the top and were rewarded with a spectacular view to the north and we could almost see our next pass: Mather. Next came the nice leisurely stroll down into the valley. There were lots of marmots around and one of them was very friendly, coming up to within 10 ft of Nolan. He seemed to be posing for photos.

At the bottom of the valley we came across our first real river crossing that required us to get wet since the San Bernardino Mountains. We took off our shoes and socks and waded across where we then took a minute to dry off before heading towards Mather pass. The approach to Mather was very gradual and beautiful. Once we were above the tree line we were treated to a 360° views of the valley looking back towards Pinchot Pass and ahead towards Mather. Like some of the other passes we've come across, we had a really hard time figuring out where the heck Mather pass was located up on the rock wall. It wasn't until we were about a mile out that we finally saw humans on the switchbacks that gave away the pass's location.

By the time we started the final ascent of Mather Pass, the light was getting absolutely beautiful as the sun started to get low on the horizon. From the top of the pass we were treated to an incredible view of the Palisades lakes and the small canyon in which they sit. This was definitely the narrowest canyon we've seen from a pass so far. After a long rocky descent from Mather Pass, we reached the shores of the stunning Palisades lakes where we set up camp for the night.

Day 69 – 14.4 miles to a campsite near Muir Pass (835)

After an extremely cold night during which frost formed on our tent and creeks near our campsite froze over, we struggled to get out of our sleeping bags. About 2 hours after our alarm first went off, we finally broke camp. We didn't know what to expect as we started hiking north except that in front of us was a tall narrow canyon formed by the Palisades Creek. We'd be walking along the creek for about 7 miles before we hit the Middle Fork of the Kings River, where we headed east to follow it upriver. The Middle fork of the Kings River is absolutely incredible. One minute it's meandering idyllically and peacefully through a meadow and the next it turns into a thundering waterfall. It was really neat to follow it up the valley.

Day 70 – 21.1 miles over Muir Pass and down Evolution Basin (856.1)

We broke camp at 6:15 to head up Muir Pass. Along the way we crossed the Middle Fork of the Kings River, although the flow was much lower than it is further down in the valley. About a mile out from the summit we started walking across stretches of snow on the trail. We put our spikes on to give us a little bit more traction.

About a quarter mile out from the pass the snowfield became constant and the supposed switchbacks of the trail were non-existent. The path that hikers had carved into the snow went almost straight up towards the summit. It made for a tough final quarter mile but we eventually reached the top and were rewarded with spectacular views. On top of muir pass is a hut named

Muir Shelter. It's an old stone building built in 1930 for hikers to use if they get stuck in bad weather on the pass. It was really neat and we spent a couple minutes inside. On the descent from Muir pass, we walked by multiple beautiful alpine lakes including Wanda Lake, which is named after one of Muir's daughters.

Soon the trail started to be filled with more vegetation. Trees appeared around us as we descended. The streams of water coming out of the various lakes and out of the sides of the mountain combined into a large creek called Evolution Creek. We descended further into Evolution Valley. The highlight was a meadow called McClure Meadow through which the creek meandered peacefully and idyllically. It was probably the most beautiful location on the entire PCT so far.

About a mile after McClure meadow, we crossed Evolution Creek. During normal snow years this is the most hazardous river crossing in the Sierras on the PCT as the water can be chest-high. However, because 2022 is a historically low snow year, we waded across with water no higher than our calves. We sat on the bank of the creek letting our feet dry for a few minutes and it was one of the most wonderful moments so far on trail. Hopefully the pictures below do some justice to how beautiful Evolution Creek was. Not long after that peaceful Creek crossing, however, Evolution Creek turned into a raging series of waterfalls and rapids. It was as stunning as the peaceful Creek through the meadow.

Eventually, we departed the creek and went down a series of switchbacks about 500 ft until we hit the South fork of the San Joaquin River, into which Evolution Creek flows. The San Joaquin is a large river with bridges helping hikers cross it. One bridge was especially photogenic. It was made of red steel with wooden planks and the sunlight was shining on it just the right way. After a couple miles hiking down the San Joaquin, we reached our campsite nestled among some beautiful pine trees.

Day 71 – 17.8 miles over Selden Pass (873.9)

The climb over Selden Pass proved to be one of favorites of this entire leg. The approach wasn't too steep, which have us time to stare in amazement at the creeks packed with trout. We'd seen plenty of trout to this point but the creeks near Selden were insane. So many little trouts.

We were excited to check out the lakes beyond Selden Pass that we'd seen from the top, but were quickly swarmed by mosquitos upon our descent and had to hightail it out of there. The mosquitos remained present for the rest of the day and we had to take as few and short breaks as possible to avoid them (even with bug spray and pre-treated clothes). We set up camp along a ridge that gave us awesome views to the west and made good use of our head nets.

Day 72 – 14.6 miles over Silver Pass (888.5)

We woke up to a stunning sunrise and began the climb towards our last big pass of the leg, Silver Pass. The mosquitos were still out and we were very tired and hungry from seven days of tough Sierra hiking. It made for a tough day, but we were rewarded by some nice views descending from Silver.

Day 73 – 18.1 miles to Red’s Meadow (Mammoth) (906.6)

With thoughts of town food on our minds, we broke camp early and climbed up towards Virginia Lake. From there the trail was mostly downhill to Red’s Meadow, a camp and pack station with a shuttle connection into Mammoth. Along the way we got hit by rain and graupel for a few miles but dried off quickly as the sun reemerged for our final miles of the day.

While waiting for the shuttle we ate ice cream, and it tasted really good after the eight toughest days on trail so far.

Today, day 74, we spent the day eating, doing laundry and relaxing in the ski town of Mammoth Lakes. Although much bigger than Bishop or Lone Pine, Mammoth has a free trolley that has made getting around town easy. Tomorrow we'll get back on trail and head north towards Yosemite and Sonora Pass.

Thanks for following along!

-Kate and Nolan

Days 75-81 | Mile 906 to Mile 1017 – Red's Meadow to Sonora Pass (Kennedy Meadows North)

July 9, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 75 – 9.2 miles to a campsite overlooking Agnew Meadows (915.9)

We took our time getting out of Mammoth and got back on trail around 1 PM, but not before stopping at Red's to enjoy a couple hamburgers. Although the terrain wasn't tough, the weather was hot, making the day's short hike a challenge. Along the way we were treated to a great view of the neat Devil's Postpile. It's an old volcanic remnant and unlike anything we've seen before.

The trail meandered along and then across the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River, a mostly gently flowing river with nice swimming holes and fishing areas. Because we were still very close to Mammoth (and Devil's Postpile) there were lots of day hikers around. It's fun having conversations with day hikers as they are always so stunned and impressed to hear how far we've hiked.

After crossing Agnew Meadows, which has its own developed campground, we began up a series of switchbacks. This rewarded us with an awesome view of the valley encompassing Postpile, Reds, and Agnew. Towering over the valley was Mammoth Mountain, an impressive 11,000 ft ski resort. We set up our tent on a ridge with another awesome view of the valley.

Day 76 – 14.1 miles to Donahue Pass (930)

Another hot day meant a tough day of hiking. We left our great campsite overlooking the Devil's Postpile valley and immediately started climbing. The heat was tough but the views were great. We could see out across the San Joaquin River to an incredible ridge of mountain peaks called Ritter Ridge. Eventually we reached Thousand Island Lake, one of the more famous locations on the PCT (and JMT). Maybe we've become a little numb to incredible alpine lakes because it didn't blow our socks off. It was very cool however to see a horse and two mules ride up while we were taking a break at the lake's edge.

The real climbing on this day started once we departed the lake. Up and up we went towards Donahue Pass, the final 11,000 ft pass of the PCT. Along the way we meandered through a spectacular setting of small ponds with beautiful creeks flowing from one pond into another. All the way up the mountain the streams and ponds continued. It made the hot climbing a little more bearable.

At the top of the pass we got awesome views to the north and south. To the south we could see Mammoth mountain, some big peaks near Silver Pass, and even a sliver of the Owens Valley. To the north we got a peak of Tuolumne Meadows, about a dozen miles down the valley. By reaching Donahue Pass we had entered Yosemite National Park, our third National Park of the trek. From the pass we descended only about half a mile to an exposed site giving us great views of the valley.

Day 77 – 16.5 miles to the Tuolumne River (946.5)

Today was Kate's birthday! We were excited to head down towards Tuolumne Meadows to collect some birthday presents from the post office there. Along the way we strolled along the scenic Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne River. The heat was tough again even on super mild terrain. As we got closer to Tuolumne Meadows we saw more and more day hikers. Eventually we reached the road, which was the first road, paved or unpaved, we'd seen intersect with the trail for almost 250 miles.

We spent a long time just hanging out at the Tuolumne Meadows general store where we got ice cream and Kate opened her presents. When we got back on trail we followed the Tuolumne River for for miles to reach an incredible tentsite about 100 yards up from the river on a section with an incredible cascade.

Day 78 – 18.8 miles to a campsite just shy of Benson Peak (965.3)

Determined to not let the heat best us for a third day in a row, we woke up early and broke camp at 6:45. Back near Kennedy Meadows South, a hiker named Godfather told us offhand that every mile before 9:00 a.m. was a free mile. His theory was that because the brain is not fully awake before 9:00 a.m. the body did not fully process the miles. Not sure if that rationale holds up to science, but the idea of getting started early does seem to work in practice.

The first mile and a half of the day's hiking followed the Tuolumne River again. This section of the Tuolumne is absolutely stunning. The water is constantly cascading down waterfalls and around rocks. We reached the Glen Aulin camp, a developed backcountry campground, and crossed the river on a neat bridge. From there we headed uphill though a nice forest. We saw lots of marmots including two babies who were very interested in us while we took a break.

We crossed numerous nice streams, some via rock hop and one by wading across. Eventually we reached Miller (Lite) Lake, a stunning medium sized lake with a nice sandy shore. The trail then took us to a ridge overlooking a huge steep valley holding Matterhorn Creek. After a brutal descent we reached said creek and walked alongside it for a while. Finally we began our last climb of the day, about 1000 vertical ft up Wilson Creek towards Benson Pass. The trail was beautiful. Our campsite was in an idyllic little meadow area, which we were very stoked to reach since we were gassed at this point.

Day 79 – 17 miles over Benson Pass and Seavey Pass (982.3)

We broke camp early again and immediately began climbing the steep final mile up to Benson Pass. The climb was pretty but we got hounded by mosquitos at the top so we didn't stay long. The descent took us through nice meadows and alongside wonderful lakes, most notably Smedberg Lake. After descending over 2000 feet we started back up, this time over Seavey Pass. Over that pass we saw more nice little lakes. We then began another long descent (lots of up and down from canyon to canyon on this day). Each canyon we saw was lined with giant granite cliffs. This part of Yosemite seems to be 90% granite or water, with trees and dirt sprinkled in.

We took a nice long afternoon snack break on the bank of Rancheria Creek before the final climb of the day. That climb brought us up and over a hill to our campsite alongside a creek in Stubblefield Canyon.

Day 80 – 20.5 miles over Dorothy Lake Pass (1002.8)

In the morning we did a steep climb and descent before starting a long but gradual uphill towards Dorothy Lake and the northern edge of Yosemite. The route uphill followed Falls Creek, a well flowing river with a mix of cascades and gentle sections. Unfortunately the mosquitos were awful all day long. We could barely stop for minute long breaks without being brutally attacked, and we wore our head nets most of the day.

After summiting Dorothy Lake Pass and entering the Emigrant Wilderness, we continued downhill for about 3 miles where we hit a major milestone: the 1,000 mile marker! A few other hikers were there as well, and they took our picture with the rocks that spelled out “1000.” Feels like not that long ago we were thrilled to reach the 100 mile marker.

Day 81 – 14.1 miles to Sonora Pass (1016.9)

Now north of Yosemite, the terrain began changing immensely. The walls of granite were gone and replaced with giant mountains of reddish volcano rock. First thing in the morning we climbed some long switchbacks to reach a ridge with incredible views in almost every direction. The scenery was breathtaking. Some spots felt like the surface of Mars but with a little bit of snow. This day was one of the coolest of the whole trek.

After walking a series of ridges above the tree line for about 8 miles we descended to the highway at Sonora Pass where we caught a shuttle to a fishing/camping/horseback riding resort called Kennedy Meadows. Confusingly, this place has the same name as the town at mile 702. We were lucky to snag a small cabin for the night and enjoyed a hot meal, ice cream, and showers.

Days 82-87 | Mile 1017 to Mile 1091 – Sonora Pass to South Lake Tahoe

July 9, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 82 – 9.1 miles to a campsite along the Carson River (1026)

Over the first 1016 miles of the PCT we've enjoyed hot meals from plenty of questionable kitchens in small trail towns. Until today the food had always been met well by our stomachs and satisfied our hiker hunger. Today we finally lost a battle. Nolan woke up with a terrible stomach ache that had him rolling on the floor. Some Tums cured the pain but other symptoms soon followed. Those symptoms continued throughout the afternoon until cured by an Imodium. He thinks it was the prime rib special from the night before, but who knows.

Fortunately we had planned to only hike a half day, so by the time we hit the trail at 3 PM he was feeling mostly fine. We hiked nine miles into the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness north of Sonora Pass to a nice campsite along the Carson River. Along the way we crossed the final 10,000 ft elevation spot on the PCT. All downhill from here.

Day 83 – 18.1 miles to Noble Lake (1044.1)

Great views and no mosquitos on this day. The birds were chirping like crazy too. The terrain in this area is really neat. It's a mix of beautiful forest and reddish rocky volcanic rock. We camped next to a nice lake with great views way out to the north.

Day 84 – 17.4 miles to a campsite near Wet Meadows Reservoir (1061.5)

More spectacular views and scenery on this day. This whole section from Sonora Pass to Lake Tahoe is proving to be really awesome. Some of the best views of the whole trek. We spent most of the day in the Mokelumne Wilderness which contains lots of stunning volcanic formations and abundant spring-fed creeks. At one point we could see all the way into Nevada (we think). At Ebbet's Pass (Highway 4), we received trail magic from a past thru hiker in the form of breakfast pastries, breakfast beers, and orange juice.

Day 85 – 20.4 miles to Showers Lake (1081.9)

Another gorgeous day of hiking. The wildflowers were next level as we continued north towards Lake Tahoe. At Carson Pass we received sodas and snacks from volunteers manning the information center. We also met a very curious group of 15 boys and their dads who were going on a four day backpacking trip south of Carson Pass. “How do you shower?” and “where do you get food” were two of the many questions they asked us once they found out we had hiked from Mexico. Our campsite was near Showers Lake and had a small view of Lake Tahoe, which we’ll be seeing a lot of over the next week.

Day 86 – 8.9 miles to Highway 50 (South Lake Tahoe)

We broke camp fairly early for the short hike to Highway 50 where we caught an Uber into Tahoe.

Today, day 87, we took a zero day in Tahoe. We are lots of good food and saw Top Gun Maverick for the second time.

-Kate and Nolan

“I heard a crack” – Kate

July 15, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Unfortunately our trek is on hold for a few weeks. On Sunday, when we were about half a mile out of Tahoe near Echo Lake, Kate slipped on some loose gravel and fractured her ankle. We were fortunate to be close to the trailhead, and Kate was able to hobble back. We were also fortunate to be close to South Lake Tahoe, which has an urgent care (where an x-ray confirmed Kate’s fears), and close to the airport in Reno to be able to fly back to our house in LA. The diagnosis is also as good as one could hope for with a fractured ankle: 2-3 weeks with a boot then strengthening exercises and pain tolerance. Obviously we’re very bummed to be off trail. Because of the acceptable weather window, this injury puts an end to our goal of walking every mile of the PCT this year, but the situation could’ve been much worse and we should be able to get back on trail in August to continue hiking north.

Days 89-93 | Mile 2098 to Mile 2148 – Timberline Lodge to Cascade Locks

August 19, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 89 – 5.5 miles from Timberline Lodge (2097.8) to a campsite near Mt Hood (2103.5)

After five weeks at home to recuperate Kate's ankle, we flew to Portland and got back on the trail today at Timberline Lodge. Nolan's cousin Mandy gave us a ride from Portland, and we had a wonderful dinner the night before with Nolan's relatives who live in Portland.

Our original plan when we left the trail five weeks ago was to get back on near the CA/OR border in Ashland, OR, but since mid July some fires have broken out near Ashland and Bend that have closed the PCT. Additionally, the section of trail north of Bend burned by the 2020 Lionshead Fire remains closed. These closures mean that restarting in Ashland would have required multiple trail departures and long hitches. To avoid that headache (and to make sure we can get though Washington before the weather gets bad) we decided to get back on trail just north of the Lionshead closure at Timberline Lodge near Mt Hood.

We felt anxious getting back on the trail after such a long time at home and with Kate's ankle mostly untested, although pain-free and cleared by the doctor. Fortunately the trail gave us some nice moderate terrain, and we intentionally did a very short day. The views were spectacular, as the trail hugged the base of Mt Hood all day. We crossed a handful of nice creeks and walked under big mossy pine trees. It felt great to be hiking again and thankfully we still remembered how to set up our tent.

Day 90 – 13.1 miles to a campsite in the forest (2116.6)

Early in the morning we were treated to a nice view of the mountains in the area, and we even caught a glimpse of Mt Rainier in the distance. The day had a lot of elevation gain and loss, but the grade was more moderate than we experienced in the Sierras.

We passed lots of day hikers visiting Ramona Falls and the area around Lolo Pass. Our campsite was nestled in some wonderful trees with a cool view through the trees of Mt Hood at sunset.

Day 91 – 14.7 miles to Wahtum Lake (2131.3)

This day took us through some beautiful green tunnels with occasional views of Mt Hood to the southeast and Mt Adams to the north. The tread was really nice and the near constant canopy gave us much needed shade from the hot sun. Even with the shade it felt like one of our hottest days on trail so far, and having to navigate lots of downed trees didn't help.

All along the trail we found blueberries and other types of wild berries. They were delicious. We setup camp next to Wahtum Lake.

Day 92 – 16.8 miles to Cascade Locks (2147.8)

During the night we were treated to some light rain that seemed related to the humidity, and this day we were treated to even more humidity. It was by far the most uncomfortable hiking weather we've experienced. Fortunately the entire day was downhill, but we still ended up sweating out boatloads of water.

We took an alternate trail from the PCT the whole day. It was called the Eagle Creek trail. I'm 2017 a fire ripped through this area and burned everything. A good amount of underbrush and wildflowers have grown back, but the lack of healthy trees was sad. We could only imagine how beautiful this trail must've been as we descended closer to the Columbia River and came into view of the reason we took this alternate trail: several massive waterfalls. One of them, Tunnel Falls, was one of the coolest things we've seen on the PCT. Check out the pictures below of Kate about to enter the trail's tunnel behind the waterfall. Really incredible trail construction.

The waterfalls are a popular day hiking destination, so we saw lots of day hikers as we got closer to the trailhead. We also ran into a family hiking the PCT with three kids under 5 years old. We've

been following their journey on Instagram and Kate was a bit starstruck to see them. We chatted for a bit and found out that Cascade Locks would be their ultimate destination. One of the children is getting too big for his carrier on mom's back, making each day too difficult.

Once we reached the trailhead we walked about 2.5 miles along the old Columbia River Gorge highway, with nice views of the Columbia River. The highway has since been replaced by Interstate 84, so now this portion of pavement is used just for walking and biking. At this point we were soaked with sweat and eager to get to our motel in town for a shower.

Today, Day 93, we took a zero and got to experience a neat PCT event called PCT Days. It's held annually in Cascade Locks. The event brings together hikers, gear manufacturers, trail advocates, and fans of the PCT for two days of hanging, eating, and info sessions. We didn't intentionally time our visit to coincide with PCT Days, but many hikers do. In fact we ran into multiple hikers we hadn't seen since Southern California, including one we camped with on night 1 at Hauser Creek and hadn't seen since mile 100 or so.

We when ran into Liz "Snorkel" Thomas, the triple crowner and former AT record holder who gave us our first (and incredibly serendipitous) hitch from Scissors Crossing to Julian! It was all pretty cool.

Tomorrow we'll leave town and walk across the Bridge of the Gods over the Columbia River into Washington!

Days 94-102 | Mile 2148 to Mile 2296 – Cascade Locks to White Pass

September 3, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 94 – 13.1 miles to a campsite near Table Mountain (2160.9)

We left town in the morning and headed towards the Bridge of the Gods. The bridge spans the Columbia River and is one of the most famous landmarks on the PCT. As we walked across, we shared the bridge with cars, which was a little unnerving, but most of them gave us plenty of space. The river views from the bridge were stunning and it was a really exciting moment for us to walk into Washington.

Once across the bridge we darted across Washington State highway 14 and started climbing into the hills. The climb was long and hot, but we did cross a number of beautiful creeks along the way. The trail was also wonderfully forested. This was some of the lushest forest we've hiked through.

Eventually we reached the top of the climb near Table Mountain and settled into a nice camping area in the trees. Fortunately the humidity from a couple days earlier was gone, so the air cooled off well as the evening went on.

Day 95 – 16.7 miles to Trout Creek (2177.6)

Another hot day and another green tunnel for most of the day. At one point we got a nice view of Adams and Rainier, but for the most part we were walking up and down hills underneath big trees. Although the lushness is nice, today felt like hard work. The heat is tough.

We did cross many nice streams, and we camped right next to Trout Creek, a well flowing creek with a cool bridge.

Day 96 – 22.2 miles to a ridge near Blue Lake (2204.6)

Another scorcher and more climbing. This may have been our hottest feeling day on trail. Who would've thought it would happen in Washington. We did get to visit some awesome waterfalls called Panther Creek Waterfall (via an alternate to the PCT). We took a long break there.

After more hot climbing we made it to Crest Camp where an incredible trail angel had set up a full-scale hiker rest stop. He was serving grilled hot dogs, beans, fruit, snacks, and cold waters. Nolan often dreams of trail angel hotdogs on the trail, so it was incredible to finally get one!

More climbing after that rest stop took us up a ridge with great views of Hood and Adams. In the trees we found a great little campsite.

Day 97 – 20.3 miles to Trout Lake Creek (2224.9)

Day 98 – 8.6 miles into the town of Trout Lake (via hitch) then back on trail to a campsite at the foot of Mt Adams (2233.5)

The town of Trout Lake is an extremely hiker friendly small town near Mt Adams. A group of locals organizes each summer to pick up hikers about 15 miles from town where the PCT crosses a small highway. It's very organized, with set pick up times and everything. We hiked 5 miles in the morning and caught the 10AM "shuttle", which in reality was two SUVs and a truck with room for hikers in the bed.

Once in town we took showers at the county park and did laundry at the general store. We also bought food for the next leg to White Pass and got a burrito from a taco truck. The town's population must have been doubled by all the hikers hanging out for the day. Some hikers chose to camp behind the general store or at the park, but we decided to head back to the trail on the 5:30 shuttle. Kate got to enjoy a fun ride in the back of the pickup!

Day 99 – 23.2 miles to a campsite north of Mt Adams (2256.7)

We got an early start and were rewarded with stunning views of the sun peaking out from behind the glaciers on Mt Adams. Although we walked through a burn area for a bit, soon we were surrounded by nice green trees that gave way every now and then to big views to the north and south. At multiple points we had simultaneous views of Adams, Rainier, and St Helens.

Later in the morning we crossed a pretty gnarly creek full of glacier melt. Kate crossed by walking on a log but Nolan had to crawl on the log because he is scared of log crossings.

The second half of the day was back into the trees and included a couple incredibly long straight segments. Very little trail creativity on those parts.

Near the end of the day we met a guy who asked if we were on tik tok (which of course we are and you should all be following). He said he recognized us at Trout Lake but didn't say anything and was bummed that he missed his chance to "fan girl" (his words). Fortunately for him he passed us on the trail and got a second chance. He was a big fan of Kate's tik toks.

We set up camp near some ponds around 6PM and rested until bedtime. This was our biggest mileage day in a long time, so our feet were feeling it.

Day 100 – 19.5 miles to the Goat Rocks Wilderness (2276.2)

This was a day of two distinct halves. For ten miles we trudged up and down through forest with few views. The most exciting moment was when we crossed paths with 4 alpacas hiking the trail with 3 hikers. All 4 alpacas looked us in the eye. They seemed very nice. One of them was carrying a big cooler. Seemed like a nice setup for those 3 hikers, who were only carrying daypacks while the alpacas hauled their gear.

The second ten miles were stunning. We climbed near the treeline and entered the Goat Rocks Wilderness. This area is frequently cited as the most scenic part of the entire PCT. From the little we saw today, it didn't disappoint. It reminded us of Sonora Pass but with more trees and wildflowers. There were streams everywhere and some incredible waterfalls. The water was crystal clear and ice cold. Above us were towering volcanic cliffs. Every color of wildflower was nearby, and we spotted four different types of butterflies. It was truly incredible.

As we neared our planned campsite, clouds and fog started to roll in. It got pretty chilly for the first time since we got back on trail, and we found a nice spot near some trees. What a change from the sweaty green tunnel of a couple days ago.

Day 101 – 19.7 miles over the Knife's Edge to White Pass (2295.9)

The fog that rolled in as we went to sleep the night before turned into rain and high winds as the night went on. It was one of our worst nights of sleep on trail, as multiple tent stakes came loose, letting water into the corners of the tent. Sand was also blowing in through the mesh, making it tough to stay asleep. It was also tough getting up and ready in the morning as many things were either wet or sandy, plus it was very cold out.

However, we were excited to tackle the Knife's Edge, a section of trail through the Goat Rocks Wilderness that is famous for being the most scenic section of trail in Washington and infamous for the way it delicately rides a very narrow ridge with huge dropoffs on either side. As we approached the first quarter mile of the Knife's Edge, we first had to choose whether to take the alternate "Old Snowy Route" above a short high angle slope or the standard PCT route straight across the slope. A small snowfield remained on the standard route's slope, and with the rain the night before it had gotten pretty icy. We walked all the way up to the snow to test it and decided to hike back to the alternate junction to go up the old route alternate instead. We no longer have our microspikes, so walking on the icy snow on such a high angle slope felt too dangerous. However, the alternate proved to be sketchy in its own way, as the winds up high were brutal. We had to hunker down multiple times, and Nolan scooted along on his butt for some parts because he was afraid of getting blown off the ridge. Kate was much braver.

After maybe an hour of somewhat harrowing and very slow hiking/scooting, we rejoined the PCT for the main part of the Knife's Edge. After our travails on the old route alternate, the rest of the ridge wasn't quite as scary. We still had to be very cautious and time our movements to miss big winds, but we made much better time. We were wearing all our layers as the cold air and wind made it feel close to freezing. Every once in a while Mt Rainier would peak out from behind the clouds and fog to tower over the vista to the north.

After traveling about 4 miles in 4 hours, we rounded a bend on the ridge to find a big gentle slope in front of us. We had completed the Knife's Edge. Phew. The rest of the day was thankfully much calmer. The day ended with a big descent into White Pass, where we were treated to sodas and fruit by some kind trail angels before we made it to a motel for hot showers and much needed rest.

On Day 102 we took a zero day at White Pass. Although we needed the rest, this place was definitely the most boring spot to take a zero on the PCT. The only business (literally) was a gas station convenience store. We collected our resupply box from the store, did some additional food shopping, and spent the day resting our feet and bodies.

Thanks for following along!

-Kate and Nolan

Days 103-108 | Mile 2296 to Mile 2394 – White Pass to Snoqualmie Pass

September 8, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 103 – 19.7 miles from White Pass to Mt Rainier National Park (2315.6)

After a restful day off in White Pass we headed out around 8AM. We had read that this section from White Pass to Snoqualmie Pass (the next 100 miles) is the least inspiring section in Washington, but we were ok with some "boring" hiking after our experience on the Knife's Edge two days earlier.

Most of the day's hiking was done under a shady tree canopy. It was nothing we hadn't seen before, but it was nice, and the creeks we crossed were all very pretty. We stopped and talked for a while with a man traveling on horseback. He had two horses and was heading into the forest to stay at a meadow for a few days. He told us he recently crossed the Knife's Edge on horseback. Scary.

Near the end of the day the trail entered Mt Rainier National Park and rewarded us with a stunning view of the volcano. Mt Rainier is incredible every time we see it. Its prominence is breathtaking and its glacier coverage is awesome. We're looking forward to getting more views over the next couple days.

Day 104 – 19.8 miles to a campsite east of Mt Rainier National Park (2335.2)

Whoever said this section was the boring one was wrong. After hiking 9 miles to Chinook Pass, the eastern driving entrance to Mt Rainier National Park, we witnessed our first bear on trail! It was an adolescent black bear. He was coming down a slope near the road and a very busy hiking trail (this area has lots of day hikers – we probably passed 50 over two miles). As we watched from across the road we noticed that two hikers were walking up the trail and didn't see him. Nolan yelled out "BEAR!" as loud as he could and pointed towards it. The hikers perked up and looked to their left to see the bear. They were spooked but so was the bear, as he turned around and headed back up the hill into the trees. Kate thinks that Nolan's "BEAR!" was effective because he has so much practice yelling "FORE!" after hitting wayward golf shots.



https://2022pct.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FullSizeRender.mov

After the excitement of seeing our first bear, we headed uphill to the north. The day started out warm but by the time we started climbing after Chinook Pass it was downright hot. We climbed for a few miles past Sheep Lake and the heat got worse and worse. Unfortunately we were a little short on water which made things extra difficult. Eventually we made it to a spring with ice cold water – probably the best water we've found on the whole trail. It came at the perfect time, as we were more parched than at any time on the trail so far. We found a campsite near the spring and guzzled water until bedtime.

Day 105 – 20 miles to a campsite near a logging road (2355.2)

Up and down through forest (lots of it burned) we went. We hiked a bit with a man from Switzerland who we've seen on trail a few times. He started his hike at Sonora Pass (about 80 miles south of Lake Tahoe).

We were treated to great trail magic halfway through the day by a Seattle resident who has section hiked most of the PCT and knew the perfect dirt road to park his SUV and serve cold drinks and candy.

Day 106 – 19.8 miles to a campsite near some power lines (2375.0)

Another hot day with a good amount of up and down. We walked through lots of nice forest and lots of recently clear-cut forest. What a difference between the two. Even though some of the clear cut forest has regrown to 20+ feet, it doesn't provide much shade and is much hotter.

We spent more time today with the Swiss hiker. He has some shin issues that may force him to stop at Snoqualmie Pass. He has one surgically replaced hip and is waiting to replace the other hip but neither of those previously known injuries are giving him any trouble. He joked that before the hike started and the shin pain developed, he didn't even know he had a shin.

Day 107 – 19.1 miles into Snoqualmie Pass (2394.1)

The first half of the day took us uphill mostly, and we passed some beautiful lakes including Mirror Lake, a popular day hiking spot. The steep descent into Snoqualmie was brutal, as the trail was littered with rocks. It was really slow going and the heat didn't help.

We were stoked to reach our motel in Snoqualmie but quickly learned some sad news. A fire at the US/Canada border has forced the closure of the final thirty miles of the PCT. This means that hikers can no longer reach the trail's northern terminus, which is obviously a months-long goal for most hikers, including us. Unless something drastic changes, we will be forced to end our hike short of our goal by exiting the trail at either Hart's Pass (the northernmost dirt road) or Rainy Pass (the northernmost paved road).

On Day 108 we rested at Snoqualmie Pass and enjoyed a good pancake breakfast and pizza dinner.

Days 109-113 | Mile 2394 to Mile 2464 – Snoqualmie Pass to Stevens Pass (Leavenworth)

September 20, 2022
Categories: Uncategorized

Day 109 – 17.2 miles to Spectacle Lake (2411.3)

We departed Snoqualmie Pass after filling up on pastries at Laconia Market, one of our favorite food spots on the PCT. We knew we'd be doing lots of climbing, and it started immediately after passing under Interstate 90. Fortunately though, and unlike the last couple weeks, the weather was really nice and cool. That combined with good shade from lush trees made the 7 mile climb feel fairly easy. After about 2600 feet of gain we reached a section of trail called the Kendall Katwalk where lots of dynamite was used to blast a path through a rocky ridge.

The trail was full of day hikers since Snoqualmie is so close to Seattle (50 minutes), but most of them ended their hikes at the Katwalk. We continued farther into the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and were treated to awesome views of rocky peaks, grassy hillsides, and sparkling lakes. This was some of the best scenery in Washington so far.

The highlight of the day came when Nolan spotted a marmot resting on a rock about 100 feet below the trail. This was no ordinary marmot though. This guy must've weighed 60 pounds and he was lounging without a care in the world. He reminded us of a sea lion. The marmots in the Sierras weighed probably 15 pounds and were both more curious and more skittish.

After a long descent, we set up camp by Spectacle Lake, a beautiful medium sized lake with a rocky shoreline.

Day 110 – 19.7 miles to a campsite near Waptus Lake (2431)

Our morning started with a big descent. Along the way be passed a beautiful waterfall called Delate Waterfall. Once at the bottom of the basin we were treated to an awesome view looking up at Summit Chief Mountain and Overcoat Peak.

We then began a long upward hike, but the weather was cool and breezy, which made for a pleasant climb. From the top of the pass we got a great view of the mountains to the north and once we started descending again we got great views of Waptus Lake. Around 6:45 we reached a campsite on a wonderful stream feeding Waptus Lake, and we settled in for the night.

Day 111 – 19.8 miles to a campsite near Glacier Lake (2450.8)

Big climbs (over 5100 feet) and tons of awesome creeks on this day. The final climb of the day gave us maybe the best views yet in Washington. We think we might have been able to see the snowy peaks of the Olympics far in the distance.

Day 112 – 14.4 miles to Stevens Pass (Leavenworth) (2464.2)

The three big days leading up to this day set us up for a shorter day into Stevens Pass. The mountains and creeks were awesome, but the highlight of the day (at least for Nolan) was the most scenic and peaceful outdoor toilet we've ever seen. Most pit toilets we come across have four walls, but this one was just a toilet surrounded by trees. It was pretty cool.

The descent into Stevens Pass took us underneath more ski lifts. It seems that every pass in Washington has ski slopes. After a pretty long wait to get a hitch, we got a ride into Leavenworth from a local and his dog.

On Day 113 we enjoyed an off day in the kitschy Bavarian style town of Leavenworth. The town is a real hoot. When the logging industry died in the 20th century, some local business owners came up with the idea of creating a German style mountain town to attract tourists, and it's been a huge success.