

75 Years of **STURGIS** • **FREE** Tankbag Maps Inside

AUG '15

Road
RUNNER

Road **Motorcycle** TOURING & TRAVEL **RUNNER**[®]



State College, PA Shamrock Tour[®]

CARVING THROUGH HISTORY

SWITZERLAND SWITCHBACK SENSATION

ICONIC ROUTE 66

The Mother Road



2015 DUCATI MULTISTRADA 1200
2015 APRILIA CAPONORD RALLY
2015 YAMAHA YZF-R3



www.roadrunner.travel

Trans-America Trail, Part 2:
Southern Colorado to Oregon

DETOURS, BROKEN BONES, AND NEW FRIENDSHIPS





As if on cue, my new riding partner, Luke Swab, rolls into Fairplay, CO, on a Yamaha WR250R, where I am waiting to meet him by the side of the road. I'm relieved, yet I'm apprehensive to have a riding partner. The first half of the journey had no rules, no boundaries, and no committee decisions. I'm concerned about losing that on the second half, but prior conversations with Luke have put me mostly at ease. He has worldwide riding experience and a real sense of adventure.

Text: Joseph Trey
Photography: Joseph Trey
and Luke Swab



“Riding is much more fun with the right riding partner!”

- Joseph Trey

As Luke took this shot, I remember singing to myself Tom Petty’s *Into the Great Wide Open*. Our first day riding together—our first detour and an approaching storm!

Day 9: Introductions and First Impressions

Do not fear the unknown ... that’s the mantra! It speaks volumes of my pilgrimage thus far, and it also speaks to my cohort and his motorcycle. The WR Luke arrives on was a Craigslist purchase from a seller in Salida, CO. Prior to flying in from Michigan, Luke had only seen the bike in pictures. Pretty daring! As for the two of us, we have never met, and now we will ride from Colorado to the Pacific Ocean together.

Our TAT adventure together begins with what else? A detour. We take County Road 307 through Mushroom Gulch between Fairplay and Salida. In two months, the Aspens on the trail will be as golden as the yellow brick road I visited in Liberal, KS, on the first half of the TAT. We gear up for rain as the ground beneath us shakes from thunder, and lightning streaks accent the gray skies above. Moving from loose sand to a narrow rocky pathway, my front wheel takes an odd bounce. Rather than roll off the throttle, I feel it lock and run off the trail at about 40

mph. I roll over the soft and flexible Aspens, clinging to the bike like a runaway horse, until a much thicker tree stops me in an instant. It takes several minutes before I feel like getting up but feel OK considering. When I attempt to stand my right foot buckles under me. With Luke's help, we get the KLR back to the trail, and it checks out with minimal damage. I'm grateful not to be riding alone but embarrassed to make such a clumsy first impression. I can only suspect that Luke is now the one who is apprehensive about having a riding partner.

We continue to Salida without incident and up and over Marshall Pass before descending into Sargents, CO. The weather and my accident have eaten up much of our daylight. Luke takes it in stride when I suggest we stay on highway 50 to Ouray. I need to get my boot off and see what exactly I did that hurts so much. I am afraid if I take it off it may not go back on, so I want to put in some more miles before dark. Today is Luke's 30th birthday, and I treat him to dinner at the Bon Ton Restaurant in Ouray's St. Elmo Hotel. It is the least I can do for his help today and for joining me on the second half of the TAT. Post dinner, Luke has a date with a hot tub while I attempt to remove my boot!

Day 10: Taking a "Brake"

When I wake up my foot feels like it has been crushed in a compactor. Lacking a bullet to bite, I ice it down before forcing it into my boot, which acts like a cast. We traverse south on the Million Dollar Highway, summiting Red Hill Pass before re-joining the trail towards Ophir Pass. Anyone who has ridden this area knows why some choose to spell it as "Oh-Fear." Just as we begin to descend the 11,789-foot elevation, I attempt to engage the rear brake only to realize it is nonexistent. After an aggressive amount of clutch feathering and light

The smile on my face was *before* I tried removing my boot, later discovering a black and broken right foot with over 3,000 more miles to go!

The trail is far rockier than the photo reveals, but Luke shows "no fear" as he masterfully descends Ophir Pass, pronounced "Oh-Fear."



ENTERING SAN MIGUEL COUNTY
UNLICENSED MOTOR VEHICLES PERMITTED FOR THE
NEXT 25 MILES, BUT MUST TURN AROUND BEFORE
ENTERING OTHER CITY LIMITS

SPEED
LIMIT
15





front braking, I reach the base. The brakes are worn in a confusing v-pattern.

We navigate to Rico, CO, where we can get a decent phone signal. Over lunch at the Que Rico Restaurant, Luke displays his proficiency in speaking Spanish with the owner while I call around looking for parts. This is harder than I expected, and I am kicking myself for not bringing extra brake pads. The closest location with anything in stock is Arrowhead Motorsports in Moab, UT. After three hours of cautious riding, we arrive in Moab and secure the pads and some additional items before heading to the Moab Rustic Inn. Zach, the manager, who I've met on previous visits, allows us to turn our parking space into a makeshift garage, and we get to work.

Day 11: A Chicken Dinner Among Feathered Friends

This morning we head to Potash Road, flanked by petroglyphs and dinosaur tracks. We look over the ridge as we ride, hundreds of feet below us the Colorado River's main tributary—the Green River—carries boaters through the canyon. On any other trip this

would be an appetizer to the White Rim Road, which meanders 100 impressive miles around the Canyonlands National Park area known as Island in the Sky.

We exit the canyon and continue on to Salina, UT, to the small family run Ranch Motel. Our eclectic hostess serves us fresh chicken and dumplings as I ice my foot with a six-pack. We sit with her outside, enjoying our dinner and trying to avert the judging stares of the 20 or so chickens that peck around us.

Day 12: Surrounded by Stars and Flying Saucers

The trail this morning parallels I-70. We cruise for several miles before turning northwest and away from the hum of cars and trucks. Within a few miles we are rewarded with lush woods, a complete contrast to the highway's desert views. Unfortunately, the trail eventually fades away and dead-ends at the top of a canyon. The rest of our day is improvised as we make our way back to civilization and into Nevada.

We arrive at Great Basin National Park during the prolific yearly Perseid meteor shower. We are lucky

Speed limits on the Trans-America trail are rare and rarely needed; the beauty of the trail is the only sign one needs to slow down and take it all in.

To travel across the country and not visit Crater Lake would be a crime. No need to prosecute, we took a day to explore this most magnificent natural wonder!

TOURS

Potash Road weaves through the beautiful desert landscape of Moab and summits at the entrance of Canyonlands National Park. It must be ridden to fully understand the power this road holds over its travelers.

enough to find lodging at the Silver Jack Inn & LectroLux Cafe in Baker, NV, among the throngs of traveling stargazers. Terry, the owner, is a true artist who has created an oasis for guests. Amid his many creations are vacuums turned fanciful flying machines that hover around the cafe's centerpiece and a Deals Gap Tail of the Dragon banner—a subtle reminder that the establishment is indeed motorcycle friendly.

Day 13: Enduring Pain on the Pony Express

The increasing black color of my foot convinces me that it is broken, fractured, or in great need of a bath! My boot continues to act like a cast, and I wince as I force my foot into it each day. The pain makes standing on the pegs near impossible and keeps me from wanting to wrestle with the deep Nevada sand. Instead we ride through Ely, NV, on the Loneliest Road in America—a name negatively attributed to Highway 50 in a 1986 *LIFE* magazine article. Savvy Nevada officials re-appropriated the phrase into a marketing slogan and even created a passport book for travelers who venture to drive close to the original Pony Express route. Many local businesses offer unique cancellation stamps in exchange for your patronage. We end the day at the Scott Shady Court Motel in Winnemucca, NV—a town that annually celebrates a famous Butch Cassidy bank heist that never happened! They sure are shrewd in Nevada!

Day 14: Conserve the Reserve

Today I pound the pain pills, and we get back off-road. But first we make the same mistake that many TAT riders have in believing that there is fuel in Denio Junction. Apparently, the very weathered “fuel is coming soon” sign on the pumps is relative to the speed in which most things move around Denio. It is another good reminder to have enough reserves. Undaunted, we continue into the Nevada sand, keeping a close eye on our maps for another town that may have fuel.

The trails are a mix of farm roads and complete desolation as well as sand and steep rock climbs. In other words . . . perfect! To conserve maximum fuel, Luke coasts downhill whenever possible. We eventually cruise right into the Lakeview Lodge Motel in Lakeview, OR. We spend our evening with a couple of Canadian Harley riders who are returning home from a U.S. tour of the West Coast. We share stories and beverages late into the night, completely







Pony Express riders traveled 75-100 miles a day, and about 50 percent slower than the average TAT rider. They stopped every 10-15 miles to change horses. We occasionally stopped at a gas station to eat hot dogs!

Luke admires the impressiveness of the TAT. Dreaming of the road ahead, not just on this journey but also the next, and embodying my personal mantra, “Don’t go anywhere . . . go somewhere!”

missing dinner. When we tell them of the thousands of miles we have covered, you can almost see their buttocks twitch beneath them. They stare at our narrow dual sport seats in awe and then back at their own cush-Cadillac thrones with relief.

Day 15: A Scenic Drive and Story Time

Crater Lake bottoms out at 1,943-feet deep. It’s a remnant of the Mount Mazama Volcano, which erupted around 7,700 years ago. Luke is not only willing but he is excited for the diversion. I continue to appreciate having him as a riding partner. The detour brings us out of the park down onto the Rogue-Umpqua Scenic Byway with its geologic wonders of waterfalls, lava tubes, and underwater rivers.

A fortuitous road construction stop results in a lodging recommendation from the crew and the promise of free beer if we join them. We head to Shady Cove, OR, and the Royal Coachmen Motel. The crew later arrives with libations in hand. They ask us about our trip, and in turn, they share sordid tales of life as an Oregon road crew.

Day 16: Fires and Oceans Oh My!

Thirty miles into the Galice-Hellgate Back Country Byway, we arrive at Galice Creek Road and our final TAT section. As we turn, two National Guardsman immediately stop us. We politely ask for an explana-

tion as they look straight past us and make a circle in the air with their fingers. Either they are land-based synchronize swimmers or they are telling us to leave. We suspect the Big Windy Fire has forced closures in the area but cannot understand their aggression and lack of assistance.

Each alternative route we attempt frustratingly ends in a blockade. When we finally breach the forest, we arrive at Highway 199 just north of Crescent City, CA. Eighteen short miles later we arrive on the beaches of Clifford Kamph Memorial Park and the Pacific Ocean. Not the way I imagined it but then what in life is?

Touching the water, I immediately understand the meaning of this odyssey, for me, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. We will reach Port Orford in an hour, but for now, I am simply grateful for the amazing camaraderie I’ve shared with Luke and appreciative of the people I’ve met on the journey. I’m thankful for the time to grieve the loss of my dad—in the only way I knew would work for me. And I’m indebted to my wife for gently pushing me out the door for the experience of a lifetime and the healing I needed. **RR**

Printable maps, along with the digital version of each issue are included free during all paid subscription periods. To access these benefits, visit us at www.roadrunner.travel.

Facts & Information

Total Mileage
Approximately 2,220 miles



Always consult more detailed maps for touring purposes.

In General

The Colorado section of the trail is some of the most beautiful riding one will ever encounter, however, it is also the most technical. Be prepared to climb and descend rock-littered trails reaching nearly 12,000 feet. Early July through late August is the best time of year to travel the TAT to avoid pavement in Colorado. However, even in the summer, it is possible for passes to be closed by several feet of snow. Only a few miles away, Utah and Nevada serve up ample helpings of sand. Unlike the trail that precedes Colorado, the sand is not a momentary diversion—it can accompany riders for miles at a time. Wildfires are common in the summer. Be prepared to reroute.

How to Get there

Salida is a common starting point for those beginning the TAT from Colorado. To officially cover the whole state, head southeast of Branson, CO.

Roads & Biking

The Colorado to Oregon segment of the TAT is more technical than the Tennessee to Colorado section. Being comfortable riding on rocks and sand, crossing running and standing water, and adjusting tire pressure for terrain is a must. The more difficult portions have alternate options documented on the official TAT maps, or riders can create their own.

Food & Lodging

While many choose to camp, the trail was designed for stopping in towns at night. A particular highlight is the Castaway by the Sea (www.castawaybythesea.com). It is situated next to the famous tile viewing area often seen in TAT finishers' photos.

TAT riders will find everything from great gas station eats to fancy French eating at Ouray's Bon Ton Restaurant, authentic Mexican in Rico via Que Rico, evening brews and grub at the Moab Brewery, home cooking at Mom's Cafe in Salina, and finally, celebratory fish and chips in Port Orford at The Crazy Norwegian, followed by goodbye coffee at the Siren's Cove Café.

Books & Maps

The number one source for roll charts and GPS files is: www.transamtrail.com. Secondary local maps, picked up along the way, are an invaluable source of alternate route creation.

Resources

- Riders sharing their experience in real time via Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/45838518814
- Official TAT Facebook page with updates for travelers and discounts for business along the TAT: www.facebook.com/TransAmTrail
- Arrowhead Motorsports (great halfway point for parts and support), 2970 Desert Rd, Moab, UT, (435) 259-7356
- Moab Rustic Inn, (435) 259-6177, www.moabrusticinn.com

Motorcycles & Gear

2008 Kawasaki KLR 650, 2008 Yamaha WR250R

- Helmet: Shoei J-Cruise, Schuberth C3
- Jacket: Firstgear Teton Textile, Joe Rocket Phoenix 4.0
- Pants: Joe Rocket Phoenix 2.0, BMW Summer
- Boots: Sidi Canyon GORE-TEX, BMW Santiago
- Gloves: Held STEVE and AIR, Scorpion Cool Hand
- Luggage: Ortlieb MOTO Saddlebag, Wolfman
- Comm System: Sena SMH10