

Kristen Richards and Lila Galinkin Post-Trip report

Itemized budget:

We adhered to the budget we initially submitted, although we went over our food budget a little bit, and the price to mail boxes was more expensive than we initially had planned for. I will attach another copy of our budget list with marks on what we ended up having to change slightly.

Food and Rationing:

We wanted to prioritize not running out of food, so we packed extra and ended up with extra. We also packed some new dinner items that we had not previously tried, and that we didn't like. However, there was no situation in which we were even close to running out of food. We had plenty the whole time, and lots of extra to spare. We could have included a little bit more variety, but for the most part, we were very happy with the food we brought with us.

Equipment:

We did not end up using the stove repair kit, which was definitely a good thing! We used our rain gear/pack covers more than expected. Since it was such a hot summer, we did not really utilize our colder clothing layers, except when we were camping very high up. We used our bear cans for all food/things with any smell.

Travel Logistics:

We were dropped off at the trailhead by Lila's parents. At the end of our trip, they met up in Durango and we all drove back up to Denver.

Permitting/government relations: None to be noted.

Leadership and group dynamics:

Throughout the more challenging aspects of the hike (physically and mentally), we both worked to support each other. These times of struggle did ebb and flow and we were able to push each other and instill more motivation because there were two of us working together on the trip.

Safety and risk management concerns:

Lila ended up getting a lot of mosquito bites, and we both dealt with blisters at some point, especially when we were hiking in the rain, and after. We ended up enduring more thunderstorms than expected, but stayed safe during all of them, and did not have any close calls with lightning.

Specific route descriptions and concerns:

Both Lila and Kristen were very happily surprised at how well marked the trail was. We had marked our campsites by water sources, which ended up being both good and bad. Days we wanted to cut shorter/extend longer were determined by water sources. In the future, I would

hope to have more exibility with days and water sources, as we were also trying to not carry a lot of excess water because of the weight of our packs.

Week 1

It was a hot first week full of early starts and water breaks. It was the hardest part of the journey getting used to the feel of our extremely full packs and aching bodies at the end of each day. Our electrolyte mixes were a crucial part of our success, as were our sweet treats and salty snacks! It was incredible to see how fast the landscape changed as we went, and it felt even better when it started to cool off at a higher altitude. Hitting our first resupply was a highlight! Our biggest disappointment at this point of the trip was discovering we did not love the freeze-dried tofu we packed, but we persevered and ate it anyway. We got better at making the freeze dried tofu more tolerable as the trip went on... or we just got used to it. Overall, week one was probably the biggest hurdle we had to overcome in our trip. We were tired at the end of each day and found ourselves unmotivated to do anything but rinse off in water, if it wasn't a dry campsite, eat, and lay down. Kristen still managed to make time to write as she had intended, but it wasn't till later on that she started to dig into her writing after a day on the trail. While many other highs and lows lay ahead, week one was the one of most doubt and the hardest to persevere through.

Week 2

We needed the zero days that we planned at this point and would recommend it to those hesitant to take a zero day relatively early on. Rain became a challenge in the afternoon and we found ourselves wishing for warmer clothes. Our raincoats and puffies got us through these cold nights making rice and beans in the pouring rain! Mornings were frigid and dewy, but hot coffee made

it worth the while to get out of the tent! We got in the rhythm the second week and felt more confident about finishing the trip. This was the week we also learned how crucial our “sacred socks” (the socks specially reserved for camp and not hiking) were. Wet socks would sour the trail every so often, but getting to camp and putting on that special pair made the world melt away. This was the week our blisters also got a bit worse with all the moisture, but with a bit of moleskin it wasn’t a problem. Our second week on the trail was less difficult than the first, but it was the one where we realized it wasn’t all going to be sunny days, literally.

Week 3

Our resupply in Leadville was a nice way to start this difficult week. We were able to get real hot coffee that wasn't made from freeze-dried crystals before starting on this next leg. We were excited about the new snacks and started on the new week with good spirits. The elevation increases got steep and we started to feel similarly to how we did on the first days of the trip... tired and sore! We enjoyed starting to see more though and day hikers at this point in the trip too! Our favorite buddies to share the trail with were the local dogs and their people! This part of this trip also became weirdly buggy and insect bites were no laughing matter. We definitely would recommend hikers bring **STRONG** bug spray and cover all exposed skin in the evenings and morning. Getting in the tent early in the evening was an excellent strategy to avoid insect bites and was well worth making earlier dinners. We even learned to appreciate the rain this week, at least it drove away the bugs momentarily.

Week 4

This week whizzed by and we enjoyed our resupply day in Gunnison, we even got ice cream in town. The trail was gorgeous, our deck of cards was well-worn, water-damaged, and filthy, and our routine from the beginning of the day to the end was cemented. We felt some of the longer days were harder than others, but our bodies were used to it by now. Our food variety was getting quite old by this point, but we were glad we still had a rotation that kept us from daily repeats of the same meals and snacks. We also picked up a bag of the red starbursts in Gunnison, so that helped add some new excitement to our snacks. The predictability of our days was comforting, and being on the trail felt as natural as it had felt to sleep on a real mattress just a month ago.

Week 5

This week was hard with longer mileage days, but we were ready after being on the trail for so long. Hitting our last resupply was exciting and felt like a real landmark! Kristen wished she had resupplied with another book despite the heavy packs and Lila longed for fresh fruit. This was a challenging week, but a rewarding one. With our packs full for the last time, we felt happy to be close to the end. We knew all the tricks to be on the trail and were in a good head space heading into our last full week. Grime under our fingernails and muddy boots were no longer a nuisance, they were simply the expectation.

Week 6 (partial week)

We were motivated and excited to hit a shower, our spirits were high and we started dreaming of the junk food we would buy when we got to the end. The last day was gentle on our tired bodies and a true hiker's high. In the last few days, we became overly excited to use real silverware and flushing toilets. Making it to the end was joyful and full of emotion. Our bodies felt strong yet

weary and we were ready for the end. It was bitter-sweet that we had reached the end, but fresh produce quickly distracted us from any of the sadness that it was over. This trip was the accomplishment of a lifetime. We are so thankful that we had this opportunity, it was unforgettable. Our biggest regret was taking so few photos along the way, but in many ways, it also made us more present in our journey. We have our memories, Kristen has some water-damaged poetry to show for it and Lila has a chicken scratch daily journal to treasure forever.



