

**CTR 2013 Race Report**  
**Christina Nacos**

First the easy part, the stats. For an engineer the easiest way to show things is tables, and I must oblige my internal analytical self. All numbers are from the GPS I carried and are a little different from the CT Databook.

Day	Miles	Climbing	Camp spot
1	82	13,400'	Tarryall detour campsite
2	83	14,000'	Copper Mtn bathroom stall
3	57	9300'	Twin Lakes ditch
4	65	8800'	Mid-Segment 14
5	41	9600'	Right before Sargents Mesa Segment 17
6	74	8700'	Outhouse along La Garita detour, raining
7	27	4800'	Segment 22 Yurt, mucho rain
8	63	12,400'	Bolam Pass for a few hours, rain/snow
9	52	9400'	Finished

Total ride time was 8:17, about a day longer than I expected. The weather turned out to be a big factor and I lost a day hunkering down in a yurt to warm up. Each day I was moving between 11 to 20 hours, except for the yurt day.

### The story

August 1, 2013 at 5am I started from Waterton Canyon on my Southbound ITT (individual time trial) attempt of the unsupported CTR (Colorado Trail Race). The group had started about 12 days prior going Northbound and I was guaranteed to be riding solo the whole way. Less than 2 weeks before I had finished the 3.5 day Cowboy Tough Adventure Race with less than 5 hours of sleep during the race. I was not starting with a fully recovered body but this was the best time for me to go, and so off I went.



Segments 1-3 flew by and I realized I was climbing on the bike much more than I had the previous year. I ran into a group of two on Segment 1 and three on Segment 3 finishing up the CTR Northbound, the only racers I see the whole trip. The weather was perfect with a little sprinkling of rain and about 7 hours later I am at the unknown to me Lost Creek Wilderness (aka Tarryall) Detour. This detour was 72 miles and added over 8300' of climbing. I had been warned by a few about this detour's length, the never-ending hills, how long it would take and yet I still managed to underestimate it. My plan was to get to Kenosha pass and then reassess continuing that night. The dirt road went on seemingly forever, hours ticked by and I start running on fumes. I'm looking for a potential meal at Pat's Stagestop shop but I get to Tarryall town and can't find it. (I'll found out the next day that he is another 20 miles up the road. I really need to do my homework.) I swallow back some vomit, I'm hurting, tired and discouraged. Finally I admit that the best thing for me is to sleep so less than 16 hours into my race I'm at a campsite along the detour. A family invites me in to their

campfire and I warm up while taking in some much-needed calories. I made the mistake of forgetting about 1000 calories at home in my freezer. Nice move Chrissy.

Although my alarm goes off, I don't hear it and wake to the sun rising (another theme that played out almost every day). I need to beat the 6am construction penalty box that has the potential to delay me for hours. I pack up quickly and am on the bike and through the construction just in time. I finally meet Pat at the Stagesstop and he is bewildered. He tells me everyone is done with the race. I let him know about us remaining ITT folks and that Nick is starting his bid the next day. Pat goes back to his computer and tells me, "Yup, you are here." Reassured I am indeed racing on the map, I gather a few goodies and am on my way. The climb up to Segment 5 is uneventful and I'm thrilled to be back on trail again.



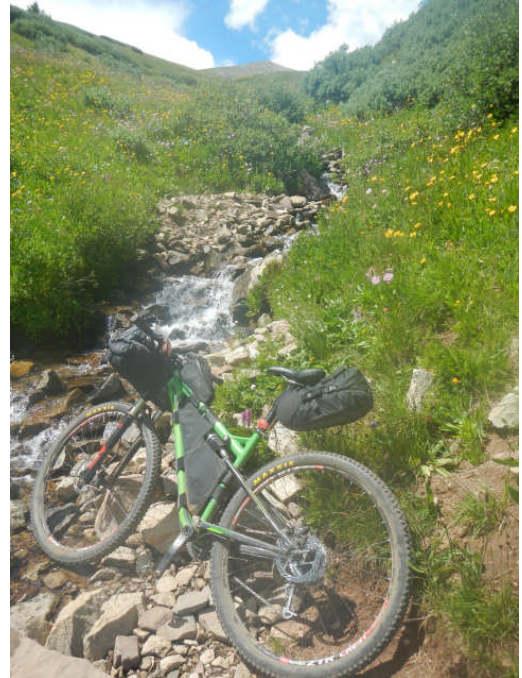
Kenosha by noon and I start the climb up to Georgia Pass. I'm realizing I am headed up to 12,000' at exactly the wrong time of day but the weather again graces me with another perfect day. I'm beginning to think I have a rare, perfect weather week on the CT given to me (which is funny to think about now).

Segment 6 is long but goes by quickly and I'm at Goldhill before sunset. Still feeling wimpy for my early bivy the first day, I eat and put on my lights for my nemesis, Tenmile Range. It sucked last year,

and it sucked this year. I'm running on fumes again and pushing my bike. Although I try to be patient in checking, my GPS isn't even inching up a tenth of a mile every time I look. Time drags by, shouldn't I be there by now? I recheck and I'm still on the route. Finally I'm at the saddle, about an hour later than I expected, and I grasp the brakes as I hold on for the steep descent into Copper. Before long I find the Copper Mountain bathrooms, a gold mine! Warmth, shelter and fresh water, so sophisticated. My bike and I take over the handicap bathroom stall and I'm sound asleep by 2:30 am.

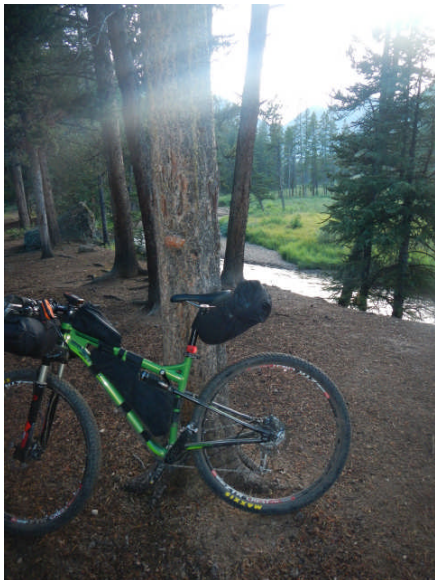
Another glitch in my research awakens me at 5:30 am. I failed to realize that today, Saturday, just so happens to be the Copper Triangle charity ride. And every woman riding of course has to use the bathroom. I still managed to lay there until 7 am before extracting myself from my sleeping bag. It must have been a sight but hey I was warm!

I splurge and take the time for a hot breakfast in Copper village with a second order for the road. Once back on the trail I'm making good time up to Searle & Kokomo Pass. I reach Searle at the same time as a group of guys without gear who left before me. Sweet! A storm is rolling in but I only get a little hail and rain as I skirt the storm heading over to Kokomo. The Kokomo descent is magical with clouds of butterflies flying up around me. Near the bottom I meet Christopher another bikepacker. He is touring on the CT and cannot fathom how it has taken him 8 days and me 2 days from Denver to reach this point. He knows all about the CTR and hopes to race it some day. I hope he goes for it!



At Camp Hale I let Christopher go ahead while I eat my second breakfast...I'm learning I need to take in more calories at one time. I see him again at Tennessee Pass and we ride together until the Mount Massive detour where we part ways. I have one thing on my mind, rotisserie chicken! I purchased a whole chicken at the Leadville City Market, sit down in the entry way and devour a large portion right there. Best chickie ever! Followed by most of a chocolate bar and a Gatorade. Life is good. Leadville is an odd place anyway so no one really pays any attention to the girl on the ground with a whole chicken in her lap.

Full tummy and aims set on Buena Vista that night. Once again I need to adjust my expectations. By the time I get to Twin Lakes my legs are tired, my chest is hurting and I've missed a turn descending. It took me less than 10 min to realize my mistake and backtrack but I'm remembering the trail from Twin Lakes to BV and doubting my ability to follow it at night. This isn't completely true; I just want to lie down and the night is getting to me. I find a ditch by the road in Twin Lakes and bivy. Since I'm out of water, and the energy to get more, fruit punch Gatorade will have to do until morning. I'm aware there is a whole lake there but figuring out how to reach it and actually doing it was beyond my level of effort at the time.



I'm not sure what is going on with the nights. I've done plenty of rides in the dark and by myself, gone overnight countless times, but I'm struggling. Maybe it is knowing I'm alone, but I'm not scared? I just want to see around me and my mind keeps telling me to go to sleep. I make bets with myself, "ride until midnight and then you can sleep", "ride until the next water source, you are out anyway". I play games with it but don't truly push myself into the night except twice. The benefit is that I get to see most of the trail during the daytime and I'm moving faster. I'm also starting to get some pulmonary edema and triggering my asthma as it gets colder and higher elevations (and I forgot my inhaler, doh!). My goal is to finish so I take the time to sleep more than I expected and try to accept it...the idea of having to repeat the Tenmile climb because I didn't finish this



year provides further motivation to just finish. I really hate that climb.

Again my alarm does not wake me and I'm up with the sun at 6 am. The ride into BV is pleasant, easy miles and I reach it with high spirits. New brake pads installed, warmer thermal top purchased, huge lunch devoured, and food supplies restocked; I'm out of there in 3 hours. Not super fast but not slow either. Last year I was dragging up Cottonwood Pass but now I'm a machine, making miles with solid legs. I whiz through the next segment and make it to Mt Princeton Hot Springs in time for dinner. Perfect! I'm on to Segment 14, the last segment I made it through last year. I force myself to ride into the night for awhile and bivy next to Brown's Creek. This is the first night I don't shake, all the food today has warmed me up and I sleep soundly until sunrise, I've given up using the alarm.



Day 5 and Segment 14 continues for what seems like forever. I'm excited for new trail! I cross US50 and stop to eat the rest of my BV extra lunch. On to Fooses and all the horror stories I've heard about this climb. In reality it was mostly rideable with just the last quarter mile of steep hike-a-bike to the saddle. The rest of the segment I try to stay ahead of the storm and it finally catches me at Segment 16 after Marshall Pass.

Just a little hail and rain and 30 min later the storm has passed and the sun is peaking out. Again I count myself lucky with the weather! I ride into the evening on Segment 16, gather water at Tank Seven Creek, and bivy in Cameron Park just shy of Sargents Mesa. An all too friendly steer tries multiple times to check out my camp and I have to scare him away. I'm wondering if I may wake up with a broken leg from a cow trampling me overnight.

I'm beginning to realize just how bad the swelling in my legs is getting. By mid-day I can see sausage legs setting in and by nightfall my skin hurts from the stretching. My body is not flushing the fluids and lying down is my only relief. The fluids move to my face and I wake up with swollen eyes and cheeks but my legs feel better. I've had this happen before but not to this degree. I'm pretty good with water and electrolytes and more likely a little renal failure is going on, mixed with elevation. At this point I'm mostly above 10,000' for the rest of the route. It seems to clear enough each night so I press on.

I wake on day 6 to find I have use of my legs and have not been trampled by stupid cows. It's going to be a good day. I'm on to Sargents Mesa and am eager to see it for myself after reading all the stories. I'm pleasantly surprised to find it fairly rideable. The trail is full of baby head rocks but I hold on and ride much of it, all the while giving my Spearfish encouraging words. I'm through Sargents in less than 5 hours and

making good time. I'm curious to find Apple's trail magic set-up but I can't find it after Segment 17? Again I need to manage my expectations and I plod on to Saguache Park, Segment 18.

Saguache is easy riding, and what is this? A segment with less than 2000' climbing! The rain that will follow me the rest of the race has set in and the mud begins. At one point I have to get off my bike and push through a swampy section where the mud has locked up my bike. I make it the 12 miles to the La Garita Wilderness detour and find Apple and four thru-hiker groups huddled under a tent from the rain and wind. I haven't seen this many people in a week and my social skills are lacking. Apple makes me some hot water and I have the best tasting freeze dried meal I've ever had. All the other snacks have been picked over and this gluten-free girl is content with a Gatorade and her hot meal.



My teammate Nick warned me about the hot, dry La Garita detour and suggested I try to tackle it at night. Perfect, it's about 4 pm and I'm starting it! But I have a different experience and the rain remains constant and penetrating. I have to put on rain gear for the first time and it is getting cold. I briefly consider music but decide against stopping, just keep moving. I don't know where my mind goes but hours pass and I'm finally at Los Pinos Pass, the first of two passes. Cold, raining, dark, legs are super swollen and my chest is hurting gasping for air...in the interest of finishing I decide it is better to bivy at lower elevation rather than climb to Spring Creek Pass at 11,000' to sleep. I find a campsite along Cebolla Creek and immediately head to the only shelter I see, an outhouse. The roof provides shelter and I bivy in the entry way around 10 pm, hoping no one needs to use it tonight. I can see my breath and my chest can feel the cold as I start coughing some fluids. Sleep comes quickly.



I'm up with the light and it is cold out. The rain has let up a little but it is gloomy and overcast and drizzling. I'm excited to see Segments 22 and 23, the highest elevation parts of the CT with amazing views. The next 30 miles of the detour and climb to Spring Creek Pass go by quickly and pretty soon I'm starting up Segment 22 and Jarosa Mesa. The rain starts in earnest and is now coming down heavy. The jeep road has become a big mud puddle. Thankfully I reach the faint high alpine trail after a few miles start following the cairns over the mesa;



wet but less mud.

The weather is so set in that I can't see anything beyond the mountain I'm on. I'm prepared for the heavy mountain storms that last maybe an hour or two but I do not have the right clothes for full days of rain at ~35 degrees. I alternate pedaling, hiking, and running alongside my bike to warm up and work my hands to keep them from going numb. I have warmer clothes but if I get them out then they are wet and a bivy with warm, dry clothes is my only backup to stay warm out here.



On the other side of Jarosa Mesa I meet Robert, a through-hiker. He's struggling to put his gloves on his cold wet hands. We start walking and chatting and within 10 min we pass a small white trailer in the middle of the mesa. A man pops his head out and offers us coffee and to get inside from the rain. Trail magic! Gilman is a shepherd from Peru and doesn't speak much English. He enjoys our company and insists on making us a warm meal with rice, canned vegetables, and potatoes. Trail super magic!! One of the best meals I've had and I take two huge servings.

Robert and I say goodbye to our new friend Gilman and set off to find this elusive yurt we have both heard about. I need to dry out and warm up and I've decided that the best thing would be to find the yurt and spend the night there. Otherwise I have almost 30 miles at 12,000 to 13,000' before I reach Silverton and any other shelter. I've gotten dangerously cold and wet. Thankfully within a few hours we see the yurt with smoke rising from it. A total Godsend! The driving rains continued all afternoon as I dried out, ate more, and got warm inside the yurt. Another through-hiker named Captain Blue spent the night there as well...hmm maybe I should adopt a trail name. I'm bummed to have lost a day racing but I honestly did not have the rain gear for this weather. Lesson learned.



The next morning I'm off early in what seems to be a break in the weather. Some fun high altitude riding but a lot of bike pushing as the trail hits above 13,000'. The views are amazing and I'm thankful I didn't miss seeing it with the low clouds yesterday. I "quickly" make it to Segment 23 and am taken back by how remote it is. The trail is still above 12,000' and goes up mountain valleys and over saddles. Lots of hike-a-bike as the trail follows cairns from ridge to ridge as the rain and sleet start up again. Finally I'm at Stony Pass Road and a big descent into

Silverton with brake pads almost gone. In Silverton I find an outdoor store and buy another pair of wool

socks and some ridiculously huge and waterproof gloves. After dinner at a Mex restaurant, I head up to Molas Pass as the sun sets and the rain starts, again. My legs are feeling unbelievably strong and I make good time up the road.



Four more segments and about 75 trail miles left. I'm annoyed that it will take me over 8 days to finish but there is no question in my mind that I will finish. This time I continue into the night as I feel like I need to ride Segment 25, another 21 miles, if I want to finish the next day. The segment is fairly rideable for awhile but the rain and snow are making a mess out of the trail. This segment has another 3800' of climbing and I've quickly climbed up to snow and frost with wet feet again. I've realized that stopping in this cold, rain and altitude is not much of an option anymore so I keep moving. I'm also finding

that the muddy trail goes along a significant ledge and I decide I need to walk much of it. After forever I make it to end of the segment, Bolam Road, at 4 am. There is no shelter there so I find a big rock and bivy for a few hours to give my legs a rest before the final push.



As soon as the sun hits me I pack up and start out with extra clothes on in the cold. The trail is sloppy, muddy and slow going but at least the sun is out. The next segment passes goes by fast but I'm starting to hallucinate and feel the fatigue. I'm beginning to wonder if I'll really finish today. The storms are moving in again but I'm lucky to have no lightning on Indian Ridge, the last high section.

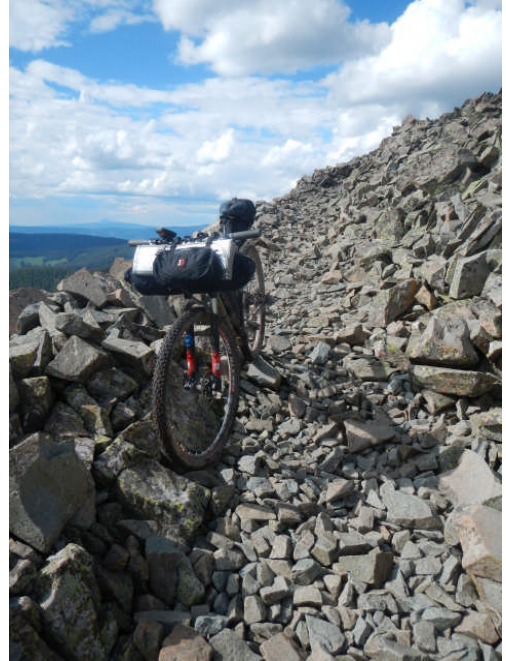
I am so completely focused on making miles that I'm forgetting to eat and drink. At one point I actually put my bike on the ground and force down some calories before continuing. This seems like it should be a normal occurrence but it wasn't for me (which was not good). After what seems like forever I'm finally on the last segment around 6 or 7 pm.

21 miles, 2000' of climbing and lots of descending left. I can handle this! I even ride down the scree field traverse after being warned about it. Another rain deluge but at least I missed the big hail storm I see on the ground. I seem to be making great time but then I get to the one big climb. The trail climbs up along a steep hillside and I don't trust myself to try to ride much of it right now. At one point I do hop on the bike and pedal an easy incline, until I'm stopped and lean to the wrong side of the trail. I find myself clipped into the bike and upside down about 30' down the steep hillside caught by a tree. It takes me some time untangling myself and dragging my bike back up to the trail. That's it. I need to walk this part. I'm not safe riding on this ledge. It's getting dark and I'm frustrated I'm not there yet. Even once I get to the long, final



descent the miles seem to drag. I find myself landing hard after a fantastic over the handlebars crash and yell out loud "Enough! Focus Chrissy!"

I roll into the Junction Creek Trailhead parking lot at 10:50 pm and am not sure what to think. My dad is there and says "you did it!" but I don't believe him. I have to circle the parking area and make sure that I'm truly at the end; that I'm not cutting out a part. Then I zoom in on the GPS and check. Finally satisfied I snap a few pics of my bike by the sign and shed some tears. My legs are swollen and bleeding. I realize I'm starving and thirsty. My mind is as worked as my body. I've been so focused for the last 8 days 17 hours on moving and finishing that I don't know how to think about anything else...



My focus on finishing was unwavering, even when mother nature threw those 3 days of cold rain at me. I never wondered why I'm doing this. I never listened to the iPod I brought. I never was scared or lonely. My mind disconnected from my body, I felt no pain, I kept moving and the hours, days passed by. Where did my mind go all those days? Sometimes I would think this is a great time to have a serious conversation with myself such as "where am I going with my life" and without much acknowledgement my mind answered back, "nope, not going there". I'm not sure how to explain to someone that I was just broken down again and again and again and I'm trying to figure out what is left of me. Perhaps my 8 year old said it best when I asked him if he understood why I did these things. He replied, "I know you need to do this mom. I don't always like it but it is who you are." Smart kid.

