# THE LONG WAY ROUND: PART THREE

Posted by Jason Boucher on 7.28.15



Are you finding yourself even more confused than usual? That's because this is part three of the story. To get yourself all caught up, head on over to [part one](#) and [part two](#) and back.

**Day 4 (continued)**

Despite the distance we set out on the stone back of that gently flowing stream, we couldn't help but feel dejected. In our minds, in that moment, our trip was over and we were on our way back to Duluth. We'd failed. We'd been defeated. We'd have to figure out how the hell we were going to get to Tofurkey to meet up with Chris the next day.



No. No it hadn't.

We made it maybe a quarter mile down the trail before it began to pitch up and we were once again off our bikes and hauling them over everything from dead trees to Cadillac-sized boulders. This continue for another mile or so enough so we up another 100 feet or so. Then, just as quickly as it had begun, the trail leveled off again. And it was actually rideable! We were able to ride for about a mile — no longer stretch of riding so far the entire day. We finally felt like we were distinct in tail riders.

But you should be able to guess by now what happens next.

We reached a point where the jeep trail continued on around a bend. Unfortunately, around that bend was a massive, fallen tree completely blocking the trail. It was at a slightly lefter an entered in the camp host. However, those spirits plummeted. Back of any another two hours sooner quickly and before we knew it, the sun was fading and we still hadn't reached Lake Lena.

Suddenly we heard a sound that I typically try to avoid in my normal life but, given the circumstances, I was actually glad to hear. It made me by the the sound of children. That meant one thing. We were close. Finally.

As with the previous evening, one moment we were down to our breaking points and the next, we were emerging from the woods into ecosystem campground. We came out of a half-horror movie. We asked the first person we saw if he could point us in the direction of the camp host. He told us to keep on the trail, that we'd see a sign on the right direction but warned us that there was a huge hill to climb. We'd reached the campground was full. It was a Friday night at around 6 in the evening — everything we hadn't seen coming.

We made our way through the campground and down to the camp host, noticing on the way that there was a beautiful beach on the lake and that the campground was slightly hilly as we arrived at the camp host. However, those spirits plummeted. Back of any another two hours sooner quickly and before we knew it, the sun was fading and we still hadn't reached Lake Lena.

After arguing with them for a bit, they finally agreed to let us close off to the lake before heading back into their trailers to continue watching Tea and a Gulf War movie or whatever else bubble gumball gorge-bought their last amounts of joy to see that night. We thanked them profusely and then, as they were walking back through the campground to look at all those empty campsites again, it occurred to us that we'd a reservation date that was a couple days old, it was safe to say those people probably weren't showing up and that we were free for the pawning.

As we were circling around, we tore into our friend who had given us directions earlier in the day. We'd been told that Lake Lena was a mere 10 miles from Lake Vermilion. We'd be chatting with a few buddies and one of them spoke up.

"Hell, if you just need a place to put up a couple tents I have plenty of space in my site. It's just my son and I and we rarely have one tent."

Holy shit. Well just hit the stronger jackpot. We followed our new senior technic trail name is Dick back to his campsite, charting along the way. He was a biker. He was a mountain biker, and he was sympathetic to our situation. He was our godsend, here to save the day.

We got to his campsite and began setting up. While we did, Eric shared some food, beer, and refreshing with us. He also told us that once we got all situated, we should join him and his friends around the campfire a few sites down — a suggestion we were more than happy to take.



Around the fire, we began chatting with Dave — one of Eric's friends and another mountain biker. Dave, Eric, and their friends had been coming to Lake Vermilion for years and we told him, he informed us that we'd have another 4 or so miles of the same type of bullshit we'd dealt with that day. We immediately asked for advice on other options. Dave told us that we could ride around the lake to the north, but that it would be much back to South Lake Tofurkey and meet up with Chris the next day and avoid doing the lake from there to Tofurkey. While were discussing this option, Dave's wife Becky offered to drive us the hour and half to South Lake Tofurkey.

I've never agreed to something so fast.

So, there were no more pawings and with new friends, enjoying some delicious Coors Banquet, and struggling to believe how our luck had changed — we just that night [Day 4] — we sat around the campfire and told stories. Dave told us stories of growing from the birthplace of or weird good people. Becky offering to give us a ride was the latest but we truly couldn't have made it this far without the friendly advice of our fellow mountain bikers. Eric told us stories of his days as a biker, as well as some of his own favors, and our hang-gun that shared their no water with us. I mean, we probably (maybe?) would've made it eventually but the kindness of these individuals was the only reason we were able to do it. Without the folks we're reading this, we truly can't thank you enough for your kindness and hospitality.

**Day 5**

With the offer of a ride on the table, we decided to wake up a little later than we had in an attempt to sleep off the previous day's exhaustion. We made a quick breakfast and rode down our camp while the boys down the sections over to our campsite. We loaded up our bikes, said our good byes to our new friends, and headed out. Destination: Lake Tofurkey. Finally. For real for real. We'd be at Becky's house in my back at the campground with their kids.



Since Sean didn't live far from Lutsen Lake he served as an excellent tour guide of the area and we spent the morning driving around and checking out the sights. Before we left Lutsen, Sean suggested, since he'd been to Grand Marais many times, that we stop by Angry Inch Brewery and we were more than happy to oblige. We hadn't had a beer in days and we were looking forward to a delicious beverage.



The food and stuff (Eric went quickly and before we knew it, we were unloading our bikes from the van and saying our thank yous and good byes to Dave.



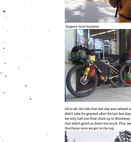
We dropped us off at Cold Water Brewery a spot that was recommended the previous night around the fire for a beer and burger. We loaded up before hitting the road.



Our route for the final day would follow Highway 61 to the west side of Lake Tofurkey. From South Lake Tofurkey we'd head to Grand Marais where we'd have the chance to a while until the road flattened out coming into Tofurkey. From Tofurkey all the way up to Lutsen, we'd be riding on the Lake path that ran parallel to the highway and offered spectacular views of the lake.



Above's was Roger made several oppressions on the trip.



This homework stood very like an oasis in the desert.



Support from Tofurkey.



All in all, the ride that last day was relaxed and uneventful, something we definitely needed after the past few days. We rode for about 3 hours, stopping for lunch in Grand Marais, we only had one flat tire (Scott) up in Tofurkey/Lutsen. It was a long but a steadily grade that didn't grind on down too much. Plus, we had a cushy e-ride-ete Ancient down to Tofurkey once we got to the top.



As we began our descent, I started reflecting back on the past few days. Less than 24 hours before, we'd been at our breaking point and were ready to call it quits. Now, we are here we were. By being flexible with our route and schedule and ultimately, throwing all our pre-determined expectations of the trip out the window, we were able to [finish the ride we set out to accomplish](#) and do it through different [routes](#) than we'd originally planned.



As our trip was nearly — and I mean nearly as we were descending at an eight — coming to an end, I found myself thinking about the [Surly Krampus](#) that I'd left in Schelles, and a couple other 29ER Monstercrosses wrapping photos out of videos of us descending. We couldn't have timed it any better. The road began to flatten out and I saw the sign welcoming us to Tofurkey.



We had arrived.

**The Route**

Whether for a day trip or an entire week, I can't recommend riding the trails around Lake Tofurkey enough. Despite all the struggles and challenges we encountered on the route, it was still an incredible experience. In fact, it's the hard times that make the good times so much better. Plus, the scenery is absolutely breathtaking. Even in the more ugly — maybe without the ice- hour hike-a-bike day-time-ine.

[You can find the route Aaaron and I set out to complete here.](#) This is the original route I put together and doesn't include any of the short cuts or services we cut out.

For a more complete route (and one that I'd actually recommend more), [check out the route that Chris Bergeron put together for the Tofurkey 100](#). Chris's route is based on the [Nine Knee Maze](#) observed from build this time and put together a more complete loop around the lake that used our route as a jumping off point. Before they left, I sat down with Chris and Jeff and went over the route and made some changes that I think eventually end up in the sets and for the ride again, there is the more. I'm doing in addition to posting together a more complete and better loop, Cole is also in build better photographer than I am. We've started [the blog](#) to get a better idea of how truly beautiful the Lake Tofurkey area is.

See you out there.

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