

## Chapter 1: Beginnings (Days 1 - 4)

Day 1, 13 AUG: 6.5 miles, near Pine Creek, WY

FB Post: Today is my anniversary! For Marianne's present, I got her a free 30-day vacation from me. Actually, the five of us had the best time exploring the West for the first time. But now, it's gametime. It is just so new ... seems like another country ... I guess it is. I started hiking at 11:30 AM. I can't believe that Kahtoola sent me two right foot gaiters, and I didn't check before now! Another episode of Humble Pi (AYFKM!?!)

It is just so rugged. Everything is sharp and unforgiving. It is clinging to life and looking to survive. It feels merciless- the sun, the heat, the big black ants that begin to swarm the moment I sit. The dead pine stacked on top of one another, everywhere gnarled.

It is just so quiet- less birds, no cars, and only a very few planes. There is an occasional squirrel or fly, but for the most part the silence is deafening. Even the wind has been quiet for the most part.

Mercifully, I am beside a stream (pic below).

I feel a little like Red on his way to see Andy in Mexico (Shawshank Redemption). "I find that I'm so excited I can barely hold a thought in my head ... I hope."