

# Flying In The Winds

## **Training**

Last check up before leaving Quebec . I make sure I have forgotten nothing . The last days were spent summers review the material , weigh , think and rethink , do, undo and redo bags , imagine the progress , good or bad, throw situations and needs. Finally we must leave. Tamps if it's missing something, seems necessary together . The unexpected is left of the adventure right? And thin , travel tours , ca has never been my thing .

## **in Transit**

Tuesday 16 , the marathon begins : Montreal - Philadelphia - Denver - Idaho Falls. I atteinds my destination at 2am in the small town of Idaho Falls , the capital of the potato. I apply to plan , faithful to regulation: find a quiet place and out of sight where I can set up my tarp .

10 minutes away, a lovely grassy park generously invited me for the night. The sweetness was matched . It will not take long to understand why : little after my installation, sprinklers ballet takes place at a rate of African cicadas. I play hide and seek part of the night , at least the few that remain before a frightful appearance makes mower in my dreams , it's time to decamp .

## **On the go**

Thursday 17 , the test : is it that Americans are all afraid of serial killer hitchhiker or some they escaped the political-media paranoia ? I play on the image, my only reference in this situation: to look cool , traveling , sports , young, foreign educated and keep a healthy ... and it works ! My first lift , takes me right to Jakson Hole, a popular tourist town shortly before Pinedale . I discover the landscapes of Wyoming while Dave expressed a conflict of interest when he meets must meet occasional contracts for Monsanto in the course of his work myself .

We cross ' teton pass' and decided to make a stop to stretch your legs. I'm excited to review mountains , flat country Quebecers made me nostalgic ! Let's go for a little hike, I take my bag with me because I intend to find me off ... and I was right : Prime deco total situation . It's still early, the heat seems to just settle but I 'm not going to wait for my host. And it's an opportunity to test local conditions and see if ancestries curl as the Atlantic. The answer is yes of course. The breeze is not installed , I bounced from bubble to bubble and just ask me 15 minutes later a little lower , a deceleration track along the main road where we had agreed to meet . The sail flies ,

heat rise, brakes slowing the delivery system works, I think everything will be alright .

I finished the day in a tent near the forest . After a small toilet along the creek , I sit and contemplate the forces of nature invisible deliver their message to the people of this planet. It rumbles and it ton in the highlands of the Sierra. A rainbow blends with the orchestra. A magical sound and light fades on the horizon finally come rinse my ideas. The night will be good and light.

## **Pinedale**

Friday 18 , I joined the road and hold out your thumb again , Pinedale management which is not more than an hour away. I saw a figure that stands out slowly from the horizon and soon to face me. It is an Australian who makes the CDT ( see details) ATV . I learn that there is a feasible version bike. It is surprisingly light , has no side bag , just a small backpack and a second on the rear rack ! Apparently the course is physical rather , it offers some asphalt to rest calves parties. We exchanged a few words and that's already left in a rather generous morning sun. I found a nice cap on the bottom side up and rebuke , thumbs up , smiling, looking at spinning the big trucks of the American West .

My saviors come from behind : a car turned around . Two girls returning from a week's holiday parks shared between Yellowstone and the Tetons ( The Tetons National Park are three major peaks side by side overlooking a large meadow a little south of Yellowstone ) . Still in magnetic charm snowy peaks , we share our experiences. One of them is a geologist working on oil drilling . It is shared and ethical obligation to recycle and think on other projects more ' responsible ' .

The signs indicate Pinedale close and I see we're a chain Winds that pierces the misty horizon and tears here and there the inversion layer milky. It is still visible but timidly proudly installed between two desert areas . My heart is racing . This is awesome.

We have a coffee together and then they put me in the bookstore , the gravitational center of the seasoned adventurer . All the amenities are there , the internet is free . Small mailing and quick check up of the weather. Profiles are really good, no storm scheduled for today or for the next day . A moderate wind from the north - western elevation is announced during the next 3 days . The conditions look good but I still expect forecasts Sébastien Fabre , my assigned router.

### Three things I have left to organize :

- Find a place to sleep
- Find a place to store business during the crossing
- Find a way to reach the starting point of the hike , 1 hour by car.

The CDT is what?
------------------

This is the Continental Divide Trail, a hiking trail that runs along the edge of Pacific / Atlantic watershed. It stretches from the Mexican border to Canada and through deserts, plains and mountains.

The thru hikers , as they are called , go South in the spring and then back north to reach Canada before the arrival of winter. Count 5/6 months.

There is also the Pacific Crest Trail to the west , and many others besides .

### **Cosmic Ride**

It seems that the local sports store organizes shuttles. It normally booked in advance but apparently it is possible that he takes me tomorrow morning at for 115 + tx . Aouch , I suspected . I 'm not too confident about hitchhiking , attendance is really low. I decide to find a generous soul who is willing to take me to pay in exchange for a little money to cover fuel costs . I question traders : the selling of food store , hardware , bystanders etc ... everyone seemed friendly and nice to me . They do not seem to be against the idea but do not have the time . Hopeful . What occupies my mind it's mostly about whether I should leave quickly or wait for a more accurate prediction . Not easy to combine the unpredictability of transportation with a weather window .

In these cases , I defer to fate ... and sometimes arrange things so incredible : a funny guy , ' cosmic ' nickname , chosen to address me without doors or around ' cowboy Bar ' . Cap rapper , tattoos on the forearms , wireless headset and gold charm . I quickly told him that I try to go to the next for 1 hour hike . Without asking more or even know where it is , he offers to take me now . I said to him that there was an hour's drive on a rutted trail , it 's late .... It did not seem to concern him in the least . I'm a little taken aback : it is necessary that I go back to the supermarket, I need a new lighter , the library is now closed and I have no way to access the internet ... too bad, the opportunity there, I rush ! I offer him a beer time to update my backpack . The Cowboy Bar , kind of saloon filled with workers still drink footwear that money oil wells they just abandoned the time a " déconnade " around a pool or part of darts , he agrees to keep my business as long as necessary . Perfect .

I boarded the RAM2500 that stirs full V8 gas towards the North entrance of the park , while the sun sets gently and leaves out the freshness of 2500m . Cosmic is a hard fights in bars but does not come back I want to go alone in bear country for 10 days. He communicated to me his fear and now I feel small , alone with its high cliffs that rise into the night. I pitch my tent and wrapped me in my paraglider , still stunned to be already there in nature , under the starry sky in the middle of the Winds.

### **In the attack**

Saturday 19 , morning awakening : 5h . I fold the camp , range paragliding in his sock and toward the deep valley looming before me.

Upstream , I spotted on Google Earth a list of departures ' potential ' throughout the course. But everything is very delicate.

Backpack , stick in hand, I support my slow progress around the Green River Lakes . The landscape leaves me speechless . I expect a bear at every turn and search the shore gaze seeking traces of moose. No sign of life. Already the day before I was torn between two takeoffs , I 'm still not sure of my choice. I continued my way towards the two time soak up the local atmosphere and clarify my remarks. I'm progressing slowly , the bag seems to me not too heavy at the moment. I reach a clearing where a smoke escapes : a small camp is situated along the river. Lovers of fly fishing came to settle in the valley for a few days to enjoy the incredible Winds conditions . Just this morning , while I was crossing a river, I saw a dozen trout , all close to each other , ready to pounce on the slightest opportunity.

I opt for Oswald and attack the mountain path that zigzags through the forest and along a river flowing down a slab 45 degree , 300 m long . A little further up the path splits and goes to the left. I have to cross a river . I runs for 5 minutes and already I imagine the rest of the day with wet feet when I see 3-4 tree trunks blocked through . The bark is part and gives way to smooth the passage of water fibers. It's a little tricky with 20kg on the back but it goes , phew ! Short break sweet / salty and I am gone. I'm lucky, a clearing winds on the slopes of the mountain and saves me a passage in the forest. View emerges slowly southwards. En route, I meet our friends the marmots bask coat and watch me passively . I go , I go . Soon 1000m altitude and I well beyond 3000 m. The lack of oxygen arises. It will take me 7 hours to reach the marked area . Finally here I am . The view is fully open on the valley Squarotop mountain is right in front of me. It is the emblem of the northern part of the Winds. Its towering just above the lake walls , make it a popular cliché lovers landscapes.

### **The Art of Tracking**

Upstream , I spotted on Google Earth a list of departures ' potential ' throughout the course. But everything is very delicate : define the feasibility of a takeoff from satellite image is not easy. The first criterion is to imagine aerology local , etc. valley breezes and the prevailing wind that is to operate . From there , the topography comes into play : the location, orientation and inclination of the vertices represent a second selection . Then , the quality of takeoff : broad , short, grassy or rocky ... After access to land : a path exists or is it attempting random access ? Finally , the possibilities of withdrawal in case of theft, near another Deco possibilitéé ask if the conditions are not good . All parameters combined allowed me to create a list of potentially strippable land if and only if the conditions are as I have imagined.

### **Love is in the air**

My attention was quickly diverted by the quality of decoration: not bad but not great ! The general slope is misguided and I must content myself twenty feet away from the valley to the cliff. The location is ok but the direction I do not like totally against the sun. It would be more profitable in the late afternoon. I decided to continue to a second field a little further and better oriented , I hope. Phew , I'm out of breath and do mini- breaks every 5 minutes: bad sign !

Fortunately, the decor is close , 1 hour later I am. I threw the bag to the ground and lie down 30 seconds. The breeze is already installed and frankly back slopes and cliffs of the valley. Some cumulus training here and there. No high clouds , light NW and a blazing sun ... well everything looks together . But my experience has taught me suspicious from the upper air is so unpredictable science , so when we do not even know the field, you can imagine ! It is necessary to put my veil , dress warmly, put on my helmet and install the VSI , put my harness, my bag and install the delivery system , the parachute and finally I "scratch" camera thereon. The whole not take me less than 30 minutes . Short break photos for friends , family and sponsors and I can finally consider off.

I await the start of a new cycle and wraouch I fly there. The heat takes me straight up . I digress relief while still in the ascendancy and go . I rolled to the left , right and continues to rise slowly . It's sweet but it goes well . I get more and more heat expands and homogenized. I passes , maybe a little rushed towards the mountain side and jump start my chip from mountain to mountain , from thermal heat . The solar VSI works wonders .

Lakes shine emerald green and away rapidly northward as I inexorably closer to the entrance of the highlands of Winds. The valley floor rises abruptly to lead the hiker to the high country where granite peaks take place on the limestone cliffs of the North. Reach the highlands , my first goal is becoming a reality and I can now be a little more ambitious.

### **Like a flower**

I now approach the valley " Titicomb " and I flew pushed by winds NW. I'm not very high and find myself regularly peaks near the end of the transition , but until then, it happens.

The " Titicomb " are a must for mountaineers , access is relatively good: a good day walk from Fremont Lake.

Impressive cliffs bordering a small glacial valley with a flat bottom , green and filled with two lakes with turquoise hues that produce concentration of alpine alluvium . This is one of the few places where I would cross tents and hikers.

Is now in the highlands , the valley floor is at 3000m . I have less leeway . Thus , I found rather low on my next transition. Thermals are disorganized and very cyclical , I should have known better . I battle ten minutes and earn as much as I lose. I try

another rock face next . Two passages but nothing franc could revive me in the race. It's good I give up and head to a grassy valley back on the path of CDT.

Five minutes later , I ask myself as a flower in a perfect little breeze and not too restless as it often is in the middle of the afternoon. First flight, 2h unreal navigation of landscapes and amazing here asked me to heaven , the edge of a lake with the only company of spring flowers and little shy squirrels. I 'm back from my emotions quietly , time to realize that I have done my first vol- bivouac ! I set up camp , make a fire , take `` a `` bath watching the sunset and fall asleep in the arms of Morpheus after swallowing a bowl of prepared meals . See you tomorrow .

### **hard drive**

Sunday 20 , I set a departure for me ... it will 6h 7h . Not much choice to get up early, you should be ready to take off around noon to enjoy the thermal conditions of the afternoon . I check my sprouts and found that I had approached the day : it does not germinate much! It must be the altitude . I began to reconsider my meals and their compositions.

Then it was gone. The bag is heavy quickly , I feel the altitude slowing pace myself while accelerating the heart . I meet my first hiker, a young man who performs the entire CDT . He does not seem to struggle too . The landscape scrolls gently under my feet and each new lake I meet I marvel at the harmony between lakes and mountains, wildlife, blue and gray. I realize that I should have bifurcate earlier . I try crossing a wild and soon to confront me to my first river crossing . The place where I am is not ideal , I turned back slightly to a slab submerged by water flowing down in small waterfalls. My sticks are used to stabilize me . Wet feet , I continue the climb towards the summit on the other side of the valley. I still think 2/3h . The distances are quite large and I do not move fast .

Meanwhile , I ask myself more and more , do not I should stop at the lake against the bottom now and take the opportunity to rest ? I feel weak and the clock is ticking .

Arrived tired and taking off too late would be unfortunate .... but sunny days are numbered, hard to choose . I opted for a nap for an hour and the opportunity to swallow a few nuts. It is already 13h , I leave a little against my will , to take off that looks more and more like a field of stone, which is more misguided . Tac , I cut branches across pastures to finally turn towards another slope ' grassy ' which seems better located . It is slightly further but never mind, better sweat 30min more and make a nice flight to end miserably 300m Nightly laziness .

### **Ca plane pour moi**

And the result is : conditions already installed , it blows a lot but I like that better . Same course yesterday , I prepared a little faster this time . 3,2,1 takeoff.

It goes very outset , I climb up a bit in compression. I try to digress a bit when I have enough altitude . It stirred a little , good bubbles here and there raise me but do not allow me to extract myself again. I walked along a little relief in search of a little more healthy heat and wait to enjoy a new cycle.

Yahoo ! it wraps tight and go and this one I did not let go . Northwest wind always shifts me slowly and I tend to find myself a little behind the reliefs still in heat but sometimes a little low for my taste . It rises slowly but surely. It is always a sense of fun and lightness that find themselves hovering so high, to go an entire chain at a glance .

The ceiling looks really high , small cumulus , just as big as it is necessary, line the sky hoping to distance and a sense of confidence . Sometimes I drift southward , I sometimes passes into another valley , another mountain , another cloud . Thermals are large and healthy , it rises slowly , perfect conditions.

I cast a glance at the altimeter already 16,000 feet ! I will not let anything , tightens up the center of the heat and continue my inexorable . 18 000ft , WAOW ! it should be about 6000 m right? I am aware of the altitude and forces me to do deep breaths from time to time .

### **Airsickness**

The temperature is correct , some slight chills but nothing nasty . Cap The circus of towers , the famous climbers surveyed by cracking circus. Splendid peaks mingle in the distance while I fly the hooker hill, " jumped" by friends in base jump last year. I do some tracking for a possible opening, but I'm almost too high to judge the quality of the cliffs !

I am next to the circus when suddenly I 'm dizzy . Slight headache , I suddenly feel very small. The steering is a growing effort, I have a hard time concentrating . I rehydrate and try to achieve my " grignotins " relief . A shot of sugar will do me good . Well no, it does not change my condition. I feel overwhelmed and events not only think of one thing : ask me ! More than 5000 m, after only 2 hours flight and already the end of the chain in order , that took me a good altitude sickness.

I already regretted not exploring this famous circus, we 'll ask . But losing nearly 3000 m altitude is not easy, especially when it goes everywhere : I do not even go ! I managed to find a backward area and let me slide down , for now . Then I found in the lower layers and there it strong breaststroke. It is 16:30, the machine is in full swing . In addition I will be behind the reliefs under the NW wind at the back of the circus in a valley not too cashed. My experience made me acrobat perspective , but remain cautious. A bottom bar ( translation : I speed up the sail ) , large ears , I try to stay the course and make me shake roughly.

A wall on the left, another right , I feel like a real lift .... which finally opened its doors to a lawned ground floor that gently greets me in a crazy landscape. Stone dead , I do not even off me and collapsed me in 1h , lying on Mother Earth that delivers me a well deserved rest .

### **moose**

Monday 21 . Good night's sleep has not had the desired effect , I always feel so drained of energy. The day will be calm and quiet, the simple act of thinking about the organization tired ! I go for a morning walk and headed to the small river at the mouth of the lake.

Something caught my eye : a moose sneaks into the small pine forest. I'm going after him by myself as unobtrusive as possible . He plays hide and seek but I find it a little lower as it moves towards a sort of bog. I watch a few minutes behind a tree before he finds me and partners trot (it trots a moose ? ) Take refuge in the forest. On the way back , it is a doe who takes to his heels in turn .

Back at camp , I thought go fishing but I can not even find the strength to do it . I lay down again and dozed for a while. Yet I can not bring myself to spend the day lying and decides to make an attempt at fishing . I'm trying to build a system on my walking sticks . I would dispose of only equal to the length of the stick over , but it's worth a try. My new cane in hand, he 's missing a bait. I attack the ground with the tip sticks, hollow edge of lake, forest, meadow ... the floor is ultra compact , full of roots, or to no bugs , nothing! How could I anticipate that 3000 m soils were empty of life ? Too bad, I replace the hook with a spoon. The water is clear , the river is really quiet . Not easy to approach the shore undetected by trout that myself, I can identify 5 m from shore.

It does not work , they look to pass the spoon occasionally come close but do not bite . I change the site and redo some tests in vain , it will not work ! We'll have to find something else ....

### **Our insect friends**

Each Problem its solution : I need to catch bumblebees foraging ahead and use it as bait !

I lie down in a field and wait for the opportunity presents itself . They are not very bright and relatively easy to catch. I use a " Ziploc " bag that I close the bug . It is a strange feeling to feel a big bell vibrate between her fingers. I close the bag then snatches the wings through the bag . I can now take my fingers without risking it flies . A hook shot and presto, the bait is mounted, the trap is set , the food is served .

Same approach : I crawl behind the grass and make sure not to let my staff appear . I put the food on the surface of the water and wait for me to make me pull the stick at



all times , but nothing happens . It is not appetizing my drone ? Two, three tests in the same place and elsewhere. It is the failure . I do not really understand why . Perhaps the fact that an insect treading water in the stream, or my big black stick above water. I give up for today, I 'm going to go around the lake and then returned to my camp . I started a small fire and forced me to swallow something. I cooked sprouts but they do not really go , I am still bloated. Finally, I wrap myself in my paraglider is 21h, good night .

### **little hummingbird**

Tuesday 22 , it gets better . Enough for me to find the motivation to get a little meditation . I sit against a rock overlooking the wetland where I hope to see my friend the moose. I quietly soothes my mind , calm the mind and let myself be carried by the sound of the creek .

I hear a bird fly that passes nearby. I think of a friend who explained to me how to approach wild animals : just imagine being a tree and they will see you as well . I'm trying to grow my roots extend my branches and now 2 minutes later, a bird fly approaches and gets to hover right in front of me , 10 cm from my face. I stares ten seconds , suspended by invisible beat its wings , moving gracefully from side to side , as worn by the waves. The time has stopped within a few seconds ... then he leaves as quickly as it arrived . A beautiful experience.

I returned to camp , nibbling something and sets priorities for the day: catch my dinner , my repair lines and identify future takeoff.

I assess the damage : two lines were cut during takeoff . This is the downside of the light and efficient sails, lines are devoid of their protective sheath which provides less friction and better gliding in the air. I knot at each end to one another. The difference in length slightly deform the sail but nothing really significant on the overall performance .

### **A good lesson**

Back in the vicinity of small rapids , I meditate on a new technique that would allow me to have a bit of soft flesh to put my teeth . What to do ? ..... Eureka! I will use my reel to give over and just let my drone drift in the current until he fly ! A hunting drone. And it is a gadfly who has a bad idea to come to ask or sting on my left leg ... PAF! I go on a big rock above the rapids and drop my bait started to drift slowly but surely. Suspense. Is it going to work?

Hey presto, the wire tightens and I start up the fish. I 'm tangled and nodes in a hurry. I get out of the water. A beautiful trout ( rainbow apparently) has bitten ! She then debate excited I wear my hand my camera to capture the moment . Not even time to press the button that already she unhooked ! I jumped on him, almost falls prey while I slipped my hands and go back to where it came from. That will teach me ! The good news is that it works . Here we go again : flower , bumblebee, hook,

rock , running , fish! This time without error , I put the trout in the rocks and cutting off his head soon ( Hic! ) . Fish for tonight, yay!

A little later in the day, I see at the bottom of the valley a thick milky smoke . A forest fire , it is no doubt , provided it does not go here!

### **Moonlight**

It's the end of the afternoon , I go towards the corridor Wisconsin, steep passage that climbers use to descend their ascent . Alpine environment , some not easy climbing and here I am to pass between the granite towers that look like to here more of a ridge . I spot a potential decoration in front , take a picture and continues to the nearby summit. I agree on easy crack me zigzagging to the top in the 5 + superb.

I realize how much my bag I braked and changes the progression. I find this sense of freedom to hike light, just the minimum on the back. I'm enjoying the sunset before redirecting me to the base camp I guess just the moonlight . No need to front , a blue light illuminates the valley and guide me all the way down without difficulty.

### **Breath can**

Wednesday 23 . As expected, the bad weather arrives. Of high clouds block the sun's rays . I think this is the last day before the arrival of flyable weather, enjoy it!

I head back to the hallway to reach the Wisconsin spotted Eve decoration. It will take more than double the time to travel the same distance with a bag of 20kg . But today I am less rushed than usual, the decor is very close ... except that when I arrive at the target area , it looks like anything but a takeoff ! I even wonder how I was able to interpret that as a breeding ground .

The game perspective is a dangerous game , really misleading ! I saw a slightly sloping top was actually completely flat and covered rocks. Fortunately, I discovered or identified another location on my way just a little lower . It fits in a pocket handkerchief , he 'll have to develop the area and round the sharp rocks but it is possible. After an hour of work, the field is ready.

### **Change of plan**

This flight and the conditions will be decisive as to the purpose of my adventure . All my rationing sprouts being useless, I do not have a lot of reserves. I also have a card that I miss : I miss the very last part of the mountain range, it is highly traveled. I had not paid attention to before. And finally , hikers have informed me of the arrival of bad weather. Two options are available to me . Conditions seem to be good enough to get through the final part in full; either I head to the classical output on which people hikers, thus shortening my voyage of about 30km .

## **The fight in the air**

Once the sail is unfolded each wing tip rests on a rock : It required no less ! But now it is the wind that is lacking. Of high clouds prevent radiation to heat the valley. I still patient 40 min and then decided to try. I expect a feeling of wind on my face, however mild , then swells my sail and off.

To my surprise, it goes . Slowly, here and there, small bubbles give me a little altitude . Good, I need it . But just out , I feel I already countered by a NW wind which always became stronger . Not easy to operate thermal under these conditions. I saw the car in the distance and decided to direct me to it , without hesitating too much considering the quality of the sky and ominous signs . It remains for me to fly three peaks and a little plain before reaching my destination . I 'm doing pretty well despite the conditions a little rowdy . No big ceiling today , but beautiful closures.

As I fly over the plain and I approach the parking lot, I found myself countered , taken in an area where I do not much advance, rise , not fall ! And bam, a lateral closing , then another and yet another . The wing tips are closed easily when I accelerate sailing, not so easy to stay on course . After 10 minutes of fighting, I extricate myself a little turbulence and then suddenly it's all in front of the veil that closes. A large front , which will re-open properly and keeps me awake !

## **Acrobranche**

I finally give up my landing area marked by lack of horizontal velocity . I then clearing is one second on my left, lose altitude ensuring the wingtips that constantly " flapper ." I align the ground : 50 m , 40 m, 20 m and flaff an asymmetrical burst takes me by surprise and leads me on the left to get to know the American Douglas pines.

Safe and sound, I was lucky . I knew the Alpine sapinette , rocky is not bad either! Seriously , I just passed through some branches close to the ground and my veil was nicely garlanded , a little ahead of the season! Recovered from my emotions, I climb the packet dropping nodes and 1 hour later, the veil is released remains to unravel everything.

I'll take that as a lesson , a little nudge in the ribs that keeps integrates my humility. It's good from time to time .

Arriving at the parking lot, I met two young hikers from Maine who agree to take me with them in Pinedale . The one of them was not wary of the sun at altitude. His face , neck and arms are completely burned , not very smart ! 1:30 later, a bit shocked contrast , I offer a dish at the Chinese restaurant . Then I realize how much my stomach is hollow and as altitude suppresses appetite . The food is greasy and hearty and I delight . But what I remember most is the message contained in the small sweet biscuit traditionally offered after a meal :

*" Excitment and intrigue follow you Closely Wherever You Go "*