

Itemized Budget (the amount you received and the amount you spent – provide as much detail as possible. We recommend saving all receipts to make this part easier)

Food		\$851.69
Budget Total		\$1,743.58
Budget per person		\$871.79

Pre-trip received^

Spent: 1867.23

Food and rationing (what did you eat, not enough, enough, or too much, what would you change, etc.)

We rationed more than needed. We did not bring 1 bag of granola, 2 packets of freeze-dried food, most of the peanut M&Ms, and a good portion of the oatmeal. Additionally, we did not need all of the powdered milk, and we had excess trail mix. The pop tarts and hot chocolate were nice to have but we most likely did not need to bring them. The bars were all used and were a necessity. Bringing the same amount per day for the next expedition will be crucial. The freeze-dried meals were amazing to have, and we rationed those well. The Nutella was too much, but we did not have enough peanut butter. I wish we had chosen more jelly and more peanut butter over Nutella. These changes don't seem like much on paper, however, it would have made a serious difference in our pack weight. Our packs going in were well over 90 lbs and making them lighter would have created a more efficient approach.

Equipment (what did you end up not using, what did you wish you had brought, etc.)

Equipment wise we were really on top of it. We brought the perfect amount of climbing equipment, as well as camp materials. There was nothing we wished we brought as we had a lot of equipment that was not necessary but was a luxury. A couple of examples are a solar panel, a 3-person tent instead of 2, pillows, 2 books each, camp shoes, and trail runners. We could have gone without the trail runners, pillows, camp shoes, and decreased a book each. The 3-person tent was lovely to have as we ended up spending quite a bit of time in it as the mosquitoes were quite bad, and there was heavy rain near the end of our trip. We brought the right amount of wag bags, which were used and all carried out as part of our LNT promise.

What worked, what didn't, and why?

We brought the right climbing equipment and food. We felt like we could easily ration the food, and not have to starve or stuff ourselves each day. We also had the perfect rack of "light yet still protective" gear. It was never too run out between sections, and there was always gear for a 3 piece anchor. Overall, we should have brought less stuff. Camden got a small stress injury on his ankle that he is still recovering from. It also slowed down our pace tremendously. We were worked the first two days, as 90 pounds was heavier than we had trained for. Although we initially allot two days to the approach, it took much more effort than expected. This is why we had to take a rest day immediately after getting to the Cirque. It drained our electrolytes so we had to use extra electrolytes earlier in the trip, as well as water tablets. This is something that would be bad to run out of in the wilderness. Overall, same med kit, less luxuries, same rack and gear, and less food/snacks.

Travel logistics (how did you end up getting to/from the experience, what should others know)

We traveled from Camden's home in Boulder, CO to the Lonesome Lake Trailhead via car, specifically a Subaru Outback. An overwhelming majority of our travel was done on paved, well maintained, and safe roads.

However, the last hour and a half of our drive consisted of traveling on country gravel roads and forest service dirt roads. Despite this fact arguably any car could have made it up the trailhead as road conditions this season were extremely fair. One thing to note is depending on winter conditions and spring thaw of the season prior the road accessibility may change from year to year.

A final thing to denote is that if visiting the Big Sandy Trailhead it's essential during the summer months to arrive early on the day of your departure. There is limited parking at the trailhead and arriving early helps to minimize the chances you are forced to park on the forest service road or find no parking at all.

Permitting/government relations (any hang-up, what should others be aware of, etc.)

The Cirque of the Towers is situated within the Bridger Wilderness area. As a result of this jurisdiction permits are only necessary for organized groups, educational institutions, and livestock outfitters.

However, we did self permit at the Lonesome Lake Trailhead before entering the wilderness area. As soon as we entered the Bridger Wilderness we made sure to abide by all regulations which included: packing out all non-burnable garbage, camping at least 200 feet away from any trail or lake shore and 100 feet away from any streams, creeks, or springs, staying on trail, and abiding by all other wilderness area regulations.

In addition to abiding by wilderness regulations regarding our methods of travel and campsite we also abided by all regulations set forth by the USFS regarding food storage in the designated wilderness area. This entailed checking out bear safe food storage from the Pinedale Ranger Station in Pinedale, WY. Upon our exit from the backcountry we revisited and returned our equipment to the ranger station.

Leadership and group dynamics (how did your team operate, any challenges, etc.)

Out of the box, Cam is the more experienced rock climber of the group. All of the decisions that did not involve rock climbing immediately were made as a group. We both feel as though we contributed equally, respecting each other's opinions and critiques. Luckily both of us fall on the conservative side of outdoor decision making, so most of the decisions were made in agreement. When it came to rock climbing decisions, there was some division. Cam is the more experienced of the two, so he had to correct Ben on certain tactics and decisions. However, Ben was welcoming to the advice, yet still questioning everything in its own way. Cam lead almost all of the pitches, so there was definitely more of a vibe of "Cam is the leader on the rock." This is tough because the leader in a group of two is not ideal, yet it is the reality of most climbing partners. We worked through differences in a healthy way, nothing major came up.

Safety and risk management concerns (how did you manage risk in the field, did anything unexpected come up, etc.) Specific route descriptions & concerns (did you have to make in-field changes, did anything unexpected come up, etc.)

We tied these two questions into one as they pertain to each other.

We made the choice to climb K-crack, 5.6 4 pitches, on one of our first days in the cirque. This allowed us to see where the rappel stations were, and it was a relatively low committing route as it was easy route finding, short, and easy climbing. If we were to get off of Pingora in the dark, it would be very useful to know exactly where the rappel stations were. This was not in our initial plan, but it should have been as it is a good warm-up to the area, and crucial for the descent off of Pingora. In hindsight, we should have made this our first route of the trip.

Camden specifically: I went for a trail run by myself one day to check out the approach to Tiger Tower (the approach to Wolf's head). We had heard from another party that the usual approach was much too wet to climb. There was a glacier on the descent of the scouting mission that was steep and long. I thought of the idea of taking the faster way (the glacier) however I decided to go around the long way (on Tallus field around the glacier). I choose the conservative approach. Even though I was close to camp, I was still by myself and a slip on the snow field could have ended the trip in an accident.

We climbed Pingora quickly for both of our ascents. (More information in the daily course log) And it was very straightforward. However, we got some cell service when on top of Pingora, and when looking at the weather, it was forecasted to be horrible for the next full week of our time in the Cirque. We decided to wait one more day to see how the weather would fare. We got up

early the next morning to scramble up the Mitchell Peak via the south face, 3rd class. We checked the weather report again and it continued to look horrible. As we descended, the sky opened up and it rained heavily on us with thunder in the distant. We noticed that that day was supposed to be the most tame day of the cold front that had moved in. After talking to other climbers in the cirque who were planning on bailing, as well as hours of deliberation amongst ourselves, we made the difficult decision to hike out. We sent an inreach message to Kate and Chris on our Pingora summit day, two days prior to leaving. Neither responded that same morning or day. The next day we heard from Chris late that night, telling us it was up to us if we should bail or not. Kate did not respond until the next day. In the moment it appeared to us we would be spending the rest of the trip sitting in our tent playing cards. On our hike out we were rained on and with occasional lightning. This was slightly devastating to both of us as we had invested so much into the trip, however, we are confident in our decision. It was on the more conservative side of approaches but we are unscathed as a result of our decision.

At least two photographs of the trip participants, more photos are appreciated.









A detailed daily course log (we encourage you to keep a daily log while you are in the field to make this part easier to include daily starting and ending locations, what you did, anything significant to note, etc.)

7/7/24- Pre Trip Day

This served as our pre-trip day. Cam was coming in from a wedding in New York so wouldn't arrive until roughly 11pm. I arrived in Boulder during the afternoon around 1pm and ran a variety of errands for last minute items. Once this process was done and Cam arrived into town we spent a solid two hours splaying gear out across the living room floor. By the end of our categorization we had covered the floor and were working to decide on how to divide communal items such as the large quantity of food, our tent, stove, the climbing rack, and our rope. Around 1am we decided it was time to catch some z's and finalize our packing in the morning before heading out to the trailhead.

7/8/24- Day 1

I would classify this as our everything day. It consisted of some packing, a lot of driving and a bit of camping with a side of freeze dried meals. We started it off with the last bit of packing which meant using every available space and gear loop of our pack. Once all was said and done our packs felt to be in the 80-90 lb range. We loaded our gear up into the car and after a quick stop for gas started the seven hour drive up to Pinedale, WY. It's important to note Pinedale is about 15 minutes north of our turn off in Boulder, WY to Big Sandy Trailhead but we required a stop there to check out our bear canister and bags. After an hour in Pinedale for our last groceries, meal, and gas, we drove roughly an hour and a half to a dispersed camping site about .25 miles from the main trailhead.

Once at our campsite we rifled through our "neatly" packed backpacks in order to access our sleeping equipment. Once our tent was pitched we brewed a pot of tea, journaled, and got to chatting about our plan for the following day.

7/9/24- Day 2

We started our day at 6:00 am to the unwelcome sound of our own blaring alarms. It took us about an hour to get breakfast made and our bags repacked. Eventually with this task done we threw our bags in the car and made the short drive to the Big Sandy Trailhead.

We self registered at the trail entrance then mounted our packs and started the roughly nine mile trek to our designated basecamp area. The trail was rather easy going for the first six miles as it was an extremely mellow pitch towards Big Sandy Lake. About six miles in after making it to the far end of Sandy Lake and before our turnoff we set our packs down for a lunch of tortillas and peanut butter.

Thirty minutes and a full lunch later we got back onto the trail determined to complete the last three miles by the end of the day. At this point in the day we had covered roughly 7 miles and gained 3000 vertical feet. I was personally beginning to grapple with the reality of carrying an 80lb pack and how it tolled on the shoulders. As we started the switchback section over towards North Lake I was starting to slow down his pace and reach a lulled point of exhaustion. About 2 miles later we reached an overlook point over North Lake. At this point it was

recognized that it wasn't completely feasible to attempt Jackass Pass and drop into our main basecamp. We continued roughly another .2 miles to a suitable camping location tucked into the trees and above the lake within close proximity to the trail.

We pitched our camp within the trees and Cam looked for a suitable location for a bear hang as the tent was put up and our sleeping kit was assembled in the tent. After our food was stored we spent some time relaxed in the tent avoiding a bout of thunder and light rain. Eventually the weather subsided and we decided to make some dinner and tea in a nearby clearing, with Quinoa bowls on the menu.

After our dinner atop a rock clearing we retreated to the tent where books were read and plans were made on how to approach the final 1.5 mile section over Jackass Pass and into the Cirque where we were set to establish our final base camp.

7/10/24- Day 3

The morning was marked with a 6am wake up call and the quest to pack up camp. After a feast of oatmeal and tea once again we began to pack up camp and assemble our gear. The final portion of our approach into our designated basecamp was set to be about 1.5 miles and an additional 2000' of gain.

Once we mounted our packs we began the climb from North Lake up to Arrowhead lake. This trek started with a series of switchbacks through the trees and eventually brought us to a boulder field along the banks of the lake. Following the trail along the river bank and stumbling for balance with massive packs among massive boulders we eventually made it to the Jackass Pass break off climbers trail. Once reaching the foot of the trail we dropped our packs and hiked the quarter or so mile to a nearby stream. After refilling our waters we mounted our packs once again and headed up the Jackass Pass climbers route. The steep climbers trail covered roughly 700 vertical feet in .1 miles before we reached the saddle. Once at the saddle we were on a nice wandering trail into the Cirque basin. The trail was calm and occasionally patched with snow.

When we reached the central stream running directly in line with Warrior wall within the basin we set down our packs and started the search for a base camp. It took some time selecting a campsite that could accommodate non-negotiables such as distance from the trail, streams, and options for bear hangs but to also accommodate our other desires which included having space from other campers and easy access to certain faces we planned on climbing. Eventually, we found a campsite tucked away in a meadow directly under a no name Alpine Lake and looking up at *War Bonnet and Warrior I*.

Upon our arrival at camp we got to work selecting the perfect spot in the meadow, performing our sleep kit routine, and hunting for the best spot to locate a bear hang. We chose to hang our food off the boulder 100 paces away and stash our bear canister in the bushes 15 paces from camp. Once camp was established and packs were off our backs we started to think about the days ahead and how we'd plan our climbs along with some welcomed reading and rest time.

By the end of the day we'd made the decision to climb the *South Buttress on Pingora* the following day. We chose this straightforward route so we could dip our toes into climbing and dial our systems while getting a feel for *Pingora* as another one of its routes was on the agenda for the following day.

Following our discussion was a brief dinner consisting of curry and tea followed up by some reading, journaling, and a few lively rounds of cribbage.

7/11/24- Day 4

Waking up around 6:30 am we had slept in just a hair over our planned wake up time of 5:30 am. We lumbered out of the tent and split up with one of us off to fetch the granola, dehydrated milk, and tea from the bear hang while the other got the stove out and water boiling.

With our water boiled, tea steeped, and bellies full we rinsed our bowls off until they were creaky-clean and got ourselves geared up for the climb ahead. I donned my harness and put together a backpack coil for the rope while Cam took the rack.

Leaving camp around 7:50 am we headed northeast to the base of Pingora wall. The approach was roughly 1.2 miles with a gain of 1100 vertical feet of gain. A majority of it was across a well trafficked climbers trail before transitioning to a talus field, a brief snow patch, and then a third class ramp to the final slab to climb. Once through the ramp we hiked up a bit more along the slab and arrived at the base of *Pingora's South Buttress* around 9:00 am ready to tackle the route and climb the famous '*K Cracks*' which comes as a result of the unique crack system that runs across the third and fourth pitches.

Situated at the base of the climb we flaked the rope, organized the rack, and sat waiting for the party above us to vacate the first pitch. The climbing was extremely fun and fast moving as we cruised up the first two pitches and got the most exposed crack climbing throughout the last pitch.

Once at the top of the last pitch we did the 200 feet or so of easy third class scrambling to the summit block. We were lucky enough to have a clear sky and catch absolutely stunning views looking right into the heart of the range and over to *Gannett Peak*.

From the summit we followed the 200 foot path we'd come up before branching off and starting on our way down towards the rappel station. Luckily, by the time we made it to the rappel station another group was just getting ready to rappel and we were able to come down on their rope. We traded off ropes and were able to complete the section in three rappels, albeit with some crowded rappel stations but the time savings were worth it.

After we'd gotten off the wall we started back along the same second/third class scrambling we'd come up on. This time around we opted to follow the climbers trail and switchbacks down instead of the rocky ramp we'd come up. Forty minutes and 20 switchbacks later we made it back to camp ready to bathe in the alpine lake, make some lunch, and plan for the upcoming day.

Upon our return we feasted on salmon and celebrated a climb well done. This not only was delicious but paired excellently with our tortillas smeared in Nutella. After lunch we both made our respective trips five minutes up the talus field to rinse off in the alpine lake.

By the time we'd eaten our lunch, ran to the lake, and read for a bit we were approaching dinner time and ready to have some more food. We cooked up some Chicken Pho and ate atop our dining rock discussing our plans for the next day. After the long day and a delayed exhaustion from the hike in, I necessitated a rest day and communicated with Cam that I wasn't in the headspace nor physical space to take on a climb the next day. The decision was made to hold off on a climb the next day and we got ready for bed.

7/12/24- Day 5

We woke up around 8:00 am and fell into our usual routine but instead of opting for granola this morning we had apple cinnamon oatmeal, it's always nice to break up the monotony. I stayed in for the day and made a massive dent in my crime novel, caught up on my journaling, and worked to organize my gear as moving in and out of the tent constantly throughout the past few days had thrown my things into a state of disarray.

As I hung out Cam ventured out on a short excursion to scout the approaches for some potential routes we were considering climbing.

When Cam returned we took another short trip up to the lake. About two minutes into the short trek up there I put a small gash across my upper shin and we headed back quickly to treat it. Using an irrigation syringe and plenty of clean water along with some gauze I worked to clean the wound completely. Once there was no dirt or debris from the gauze I applied a coat of bacitracin and an oversized bandage to the area. Cam headed back up to the lake while I hung out below not wanting to aggravate the fresh cut in the lakewater.

As Cam was up at the lake I got a jump on dinner and started getting our water filtered, meal prepped, and water boiling. As soon as Cam was back we got that boiling water in our freeze dried meals and waited the necessary 15 minutes for a freeze dried meal to become somewhat edible.

After our dinner we split the dish duty, water filtering, and cleaning up and hoped to get into bed at a reasonable hour to be prepped for our biggest climb of the trip.

7/13/24- Day 6

When I woke up around 3:15 am to get ready for our climb I had that existential feeling of dread that comes with getting out of my warm sleeping bag. It took a minute to conquer this feeling but once I had I bundled myself in all my warmest layers and got started on breakfast. Sticking with tradition I started boiling the water as Cam retrieved the oatmeal in the bearbin.

With our oatmeal scarfed down, dishes washed, and tea drank we got to the task of racking our gear, filling our Nalgens, and preparing ourselves for the day ahead. As our day before I had the rope and our assortment of Nalgens and Cam the rack as he was doing the leading.

We left our tent at 4:15 am and started NE towards the base of *Pingora's NE. Face*. It took about twenty minutes to make it the three quarters of a mile to the base of our climb. The trail was ridiculously straightforward requiring only talus hopping and a 20 foot patch of snow right below the base of the climb. It was right below this patch of snow that we waited for the wicked fast part above us to move a bit out of the way so we could start our climb.

Once the party above us moved beyond the first pitch Cam got on the sharp end and started the climb upwards. We were able to cruise through the route in four hours. The only small problem was a stuck BD #1 near the beginning. There was some rope drag on the traverse 5.8 pitch and the cam walked in. We relied on our expertise, the water in the Nalgens on our harness, and the Clif bars stuffed in our pockets to fuel us up.

We reached the top at roughly the same spot we had come up near the day prior and again made the 200 foot easy third class scramble to the summit block where once again the views did not disappoint. After deciding we had taken in the view sufficiently we followed our same footpath from the day before all the way to the rappel station.

At the rappel station we had the lucky fortune to again accompany another party there making the rappel much quicker. We made it to the bottom of the rappels in record time and this time opted to take the ramps as part of our downclimb and shaved about twenty minutes off our descent into camp. We arrived back around 1:00 pm and celebrated again with some salmon, this time it was smoked.

The rest of the day seemed to float by and was populated by a gear sort, some nutella-tortilla wraps, many games of cribbage, and some reading. By the time evening rolled around we had pasta and got to talking about the next day's plans. It took us a while to sift through routes and we eventually opted to wake up a little later and depending how the weather looked take a trip up Jackass pass and onto *Mitchell Peak*.

7/14/24- Day 7

The seventh day marked our planned halfway point into the trip but became our final day in the backcountry. It was a tough day, not physically, but mentally. We started the day off as we had many others but a bit later around 8:00 am with a breakfast of two oatmeal packets each and some tea. We had decided to take the day after our Pingora adventure to brainstorm; the remainder of the weather forecast did not seem promising. It was mentioned the night before that hiking up *Mitchell Peak* may serve as a good alternate plan. As we sat eating breakfast we looked back at that plan and decided it was a good way to take advantage of the weather window we held and think about the future of the trip.

To ascend *Mitchell Peak* we threw on our trail runners, vests, and packed a splash of food and water along with a light jacket. We ascended Jackass Pass before descending back down to the shore of *Arrowhead Lake* which we had passed on our way up. Instead of taking the trail back down to Big Sandy we veered right and followed a bypass up towards the slope of *Mitchell Peak* eventually branching onto the rocks to scramble upwards. The peak itself in my mind felt deceptively small, this mindset ultimately changed with each false summit and had me eating my words to Cam. It required roughly 2000' of gain and brought us atop *Mitchell Peak* with a stunning viewpoint and new perspective on the *Cirque of the Towers* and the entirety of the Wind River Range. Atop *Mitchell Peak* we performed a check of the forecast and got to brainstorming our ideas about the remainder of the trip. Ultimately during our descent we made the decision to return early and initiate the hike out before thunderstorms rolled in.

We descended *Mitchell Peak* and came up *Jackass Pass* once again and down the small climbers trail into our campsite. We ate a quick lunch before beginning to pack up our belongings and mentally preparing for the hike out. As we finished our packing the weather began to turn and we had the luxury of being bashed by wind and pelted by rain. Eventually, we got our things together, mounted our packs, and were on our way.

The hike out expectedly was much more pleasant than the way in despite the mental weight of knowing your expedition is coming to an end. We ascended the climbers trail towards the summit of *Jackass Pass* and began the process of retracing our steps back to *Big Sandy Trailhead*. At about 1.5 miles in we filtered water along the stream near our first nights campsite and then continued on down the valley and towards Big Sandy. We opted to skip lunch that day and instead made our push out to the car. We arrived back at the car around 6:15 pm tossed

our packs in and started the drive back to Pinedale where we planned to return our bear bags and canister.