

# TrailGroove®

Issue 11



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## Issue 11

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## Editor's Note

Snow. Cold. Here in Wyoming fall has seemingly turned closer to winter, the leaves are gone and hiking in the mountains involves adding some winter gear. But I wasn't ready to give up on warmer temperatures and fall colors just yet. Recently taking a road trip south and backpacking along the way, I found fall just beginning in places, in full swing in others. Depending on your location across the country, you can find a variety of trail and weather conditions this time of year – All with their individual advantages. One thing that's difficult to avoid is a different perspective of the trail as the weather changes. Colder weather, solitude, different colors, sounds and different things to discover . While perhaps a more fitting analogy for spring, when the seasons change everything still feels new.

In this issue we'll feature a backpacking trip along the Highline Trail in Utah, hiking in Australia, Mount Monroe in New Hampshire, and a trip into the Sawtooths of Idaho. Learn how to stay warm this winter, and find out how to keep your electrolyte levels up on the trail using natural foods. We'll review Tarptent's Hogback shelter, feature another great photo tip, look at the essence of hiking from a few different angles, and more.

On to a little news: With all the support we've been receiving 6 issues per year just wasn't enough. TrailGroove Magazine will now be published at a rate of 9 issues per year – Big thanks to all of our readers and contributors for making this happen! We look forward to bringing you more content, and on a more frequent basis. Enjoy Issue 11!

# Contribute

Photo by Ted Ehrlich

Interested in contributing to the magazine? Please email us at [info@TrailGroove.com](mailto:info@TrailGroove.com) with your idea. We're always on the lookout for quality content, and compensation is offered for quality submissions. Our list of requirements isn't too long, but please keep the subject focused towards backpacking or hiking. However, submissions related to other outdoor activities will be considered. (Backcountry fishing or wilderness photography, for example). Page through our magazine for the general idea of what we're all about, but even if you have something you haven't yet seen in an issue our ears are open. Please send us a note with a broad overview and sample of your idea, as well as an approximate word and picture count. Original and factual material is a requirement. Once received, we'll evaluate your submission and contact you for further discussion. Questions before you start? Just let us know.

A few examples of what we're looking for:

Destinations  
Gear Reviews (Objective)  
Photography  
Video  
Skill & Technique

Art / Illustration  
Short Stories  
Interviews  
Backcountry Cuisine  
Your New Idea



## TrailGroove Magazine Review Policy


The products we review are obtained via normal consumer retail channels. We do not ask for or accept review samples from manufacturers, and we do not obtain the products we review under the TrailGroove Magazine name. As such, we're reviewing the same products that you would obtain - Not hand-picked review samples. Even though we like free gear as much as the next person, but we won't bend on this rule! As a result of this philosophy, we are also able to experience and comment on the same level of customer service that the typical consumer would receive.

Note that this policy does not apply to any pre-release products that we're able to obtain prior to market release for review. In such cases, we will clearly state that the product was obtained from the manufacturer for a sneakpeak, pre-release evaluation in the review.

We use a 5-star rating scale for our reviews:

- ★★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★☆ Very Good
- ★★★☆☆ Good
- ★★★☆☆ Average
- ★☆☆☆☆ Poor

# Jargon: Shoulder Season



In backpacking circles, shoulder season refers to the time of season between the full peak (Summer) and off season (Winter) hiking periods. Shoulder season timing varies by region. In the fall, warm care-free summer days are gone and likely replaced by crisp, but often pleasant shorter days with nighttime temperatures calling for that warmer sleeping bag you may have stashed away for the summer. Sudden cold snaps aren't uncommon, and in many parts of the country, you can encounter significant snow, then warming and melt cycles. In the spring, winter still holds its grip on the land and in colder parts of the country the ground in many places will still be covered with a season's worth of slowly melting snow. Spring is beginning to show itself and winter might be over, but it also might not be...The weather could surprise with a late-season snow storm as well. Overall, shoulder season often calls for a blend of summer and winter gear with most hiking through pleasant daytime temperatures and crisper nights, but with a dose of unpredictability thrown in to make things interesting.

# TRAIL TIP: Secrets to Staying Warm in the Winter

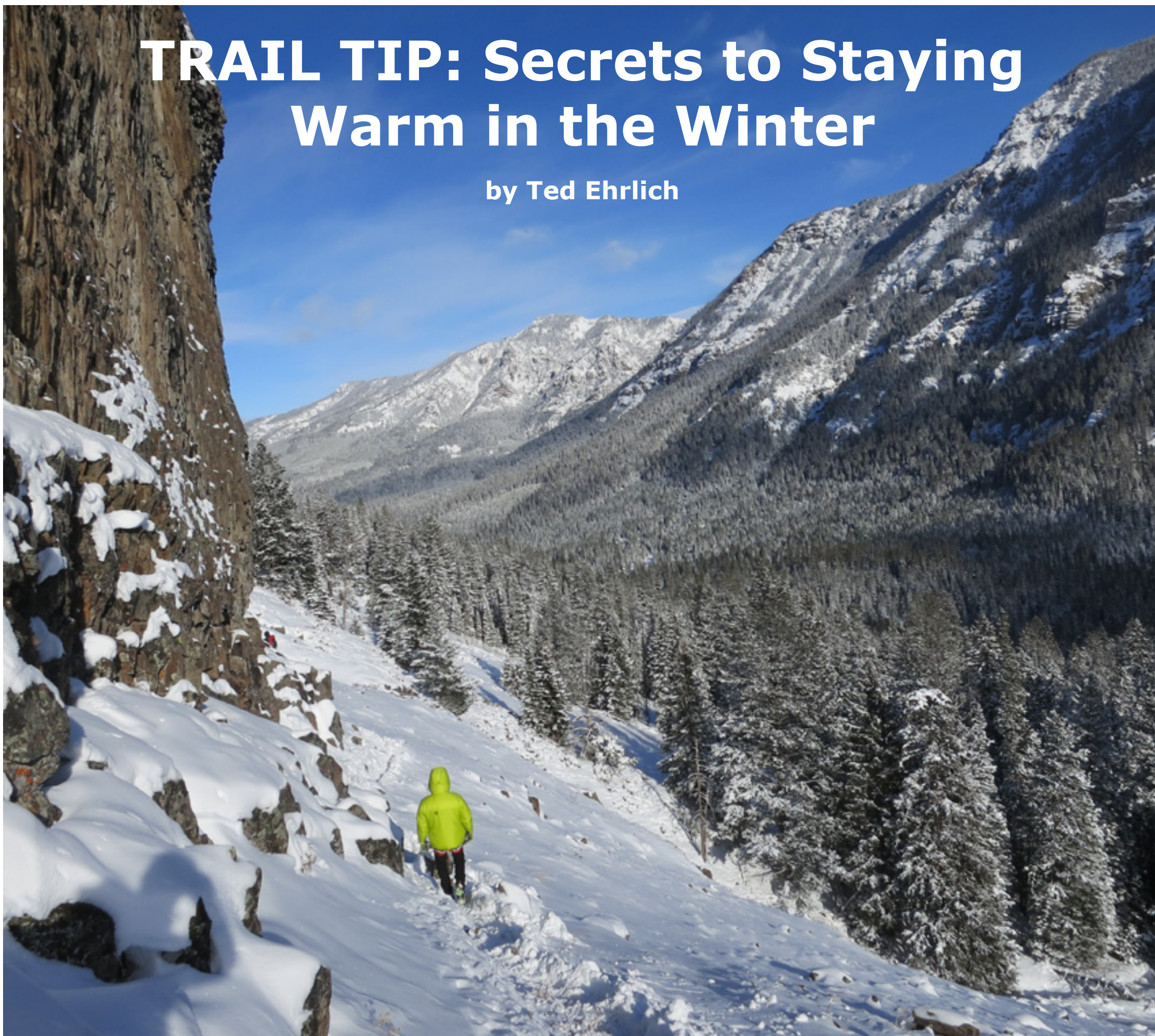
by Ted Ehrlich

**W**hether you've decided to take your first winter trip or you're just trying to extend your summer camping in the shoulder months, staying warm will keep you safe and happy in the backcountry. Winter and shoulder season adventures are great because areas that are normally very busy in the summer will be empty, and you can experience a new season of adventure. The following is the way I keep warm on my winter adventures in the mountain west.

Before looking at what to wear, the golden rule to follow in the winter is sweat kills. Normally the mantra is cotton kills, which is still true. Cotton is a negative insulator and should not be used, but sweat in winter is even worse. Always strip down if you're overheating before you start to sweat, and then add some insulation when you start to get chilled. For active sports in the winter like hiking and climbing, layering is vital to achieving this.

A base layer is first and will stay on all day and sometimes all night. I use 250 g/m<sup>2</sup> merino wool tights for a base-layer bottom, and a 195 g/m<sup>2</sup> merino wool semi-fit hoody for my top. Synthetic base-layers will also work, but I have always preferred wool for the next to skin feel and the lack of smell after a long day or multiple days of use.

The next layer is a thin mid-layer. Unless conditions are especially cold, I won't wear a mid-layer on my legs, but if I do I wear a 100 weight fleece to add to the base layer's warmth. For the top I will wear a quality



100 weight fleece pullover as I find fleece to be great as it stretches with you and is easy to layer. If you tend to run cold, a heavier weight fleece might be a better option.

My last main layer is a shell. A shell is your most important layer as it will eliminate any wind chill and will keep you dry during a storm. I always wear a softshell pant since they have enough stretch to accommodate full range of motion and still keep my legs dry and warm. My legs are also doing most of the work on my hikes, and thus run hotter than the rest of my body, so the extra breathability of the softshell will help with venting. Softshells also insulate, so a softshell under a hardshell is not unheard of, and

in very wet conditions a hardshell pant will be necessary. For my top I tend to use a waterproof-breathable hooded hardshell jacket. My upper body is much more exposed to the elements, so I would rather use a fully waterproof, and subsequently windproof shell, and a well-made hardshell should allow full range of motion.

For especially cold days, a 4th layer will be needed. I use a synthetic fill puffy jacket for this 4th layer, and for active sports I prefer synthetic over down for since they won't lose their warmth if they get wet, but down is great too. A high end synthetic will almost be as warm for the weight as a down jacket and will pack down almost as well. I will layer the puffy

over the fleece and underneath the shell since puffy jackets are not as wind, water, and abrasion resistant as the shell jacket. Insulated pants are also available, and consider side zip pants to make switching layers easier.

For my head, a simple visor and a lightweight fleece beanie hat is my go to for head warmth. While hiking on a nice day, I will just wear the visor since I will want to dump heat and keep myself from sweating, and then when my head gets cold, I will add the beanie with the visor so I still get the sun protection while keeping my head warm. Wind chill on the face may be a factor, and a simple large synthetic bandana will work to keep my face warm. If it is very cold, the hood

from my jacket will provide a wind blocker, and a heavier fleece balaclava will keep the rest of my face warm. While hiking in the snow, snow blindness may become an issue as the snow reflects a massive amount of light that can burn the corneas of your eyes. Darker sunglasses or glacier glasses will work, but so will snow goggles. Goggles will also keep your face warmer, so I will bring goggles on colder, windy trips.

Hands will really depend on how well you do with the cold and how cold it actually will be. I never use disposable heater packs since they are not reliable. For my hands I will bring a pair of gloves that will keep my hands warm while not so warm that they will sweat, and I always bring a second pair in case the first pair gets soaked. Also, if you ever take off your gloves and they are in any way wet, stick them inside of your jacket instead of in your pack. If you stick them in your pack, they will freeze solid, and will take a while to thaw out, where keeping them in your jacket will keep them warm. Mittens will work better if it's very cold out and you don't mind the loss of dexterity, but for what I do I prefer gloves.

Lastly, feet are fairly easy to keep warm with a good system. If it's very cold and snowy, a waterproof insulated boot is needed, and a double boot with a removable inner section is great on multi day trips since you can wear the inner bootie in your sleeping bag at night. In milder conditions, an uninsulated boot may work. Socks should be worn to make the boot fit, not to add to the insulation





of the boot. A common mistake is to wear too thick of a sock thinking it will be warmer, which then compresses your foot inside of your boot, reducing circulation and making your feet cold. For my boots, I size them to work with two layers of thin wool socks and a vapor barrier sock in-between those two layers. The vapor barrier keeps my feet even warmer by eliminating evaporative heat loss from my foot, and keeps the inside of my boot dry. A gaiter is always used, and I prefer a gaiter that fits tightly around the boot and pant to keep snow out and heat in. Some pants have a gaiter built in, but I find they don't work as well. A good gaiter also protects your pants from getting caught and ripped by crampons or microspikes if you are using them. If your boots get wet, use your sleeping bag stuff sack as a dry bag, and sleep with your boots. This will

keep them from freezing up overnight, and keep your feet comfortable the next day.

In the end, there is no replacement for getting out there and figuring out what works for you. Everyone will have different opinions and systems that work. It's good to remember that even with the right gear, it's still possible to get cold. If all else fails, your body has its own defense. Get active, do squats, do jumping jacks, do windmills with your arms, anything to get your muscles moving and your metabolism burning. Even though the winter may be a bit more challenging, many memorable trips have happened during the snowy season, and the experience can be rewarding and enjoyable. ❖

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A hiker with a backpack is seen from behind, walking along a rocky ridge on a mountain. The landscape is rugged with grey rocks and patches of green vegetation. In the distance, a vast valley unfolds with layers of blue mountains under a sky filled with soft, grey clouds. The sun is visible as a bright, diffused light source in the upper left quadrant of the sky.

# Mount Monroe

Location: White Mountains, New Hampshire

by Sarah D. Tiedemann

**F**or a long time, just *thinking about climbing Mount Washington gave me chills and made me nauseous*. A few years ago, Nick and I were in the White Mountains of New Hampshire for the first time. Reaching the top of Mount Washington (whether by car, foot, or railway) is a must do. It is the highest peak in New Hampshire and the highest in the Northeast. It is known as the “Home of the World’s Worst Weather” due to the convergence of three different weather systems at its peak. Clear summits are few and far between. For some time it held the record for the highest recorded wind speed at 231 miles per hour. As anticipated, we drove up and were met with near zero visibility and a thunderstorm. We made it to the top and attempted to wait out the rain to visit the museum and weather station. After about 10 minutes, we decided to make a run for it. We weren’t 100 feet from the car when a lightning strike seemed to hit the ground right in front of us. We didn’t say a word to one another— we both ran right back to the car. We drove down, hail pelting (and denting!) our car (in July!) and me crying the entire way to the bottom. I honestly didn’t think we would make it down unharmed. Thankfully, we did, but I resolved that I would never go up there again and definitely not on foot. In fact, the entire Presidential Range was now out of the question.

Nick’s cousin Norman was in from California so we traveled up to New Hampshire to see him and his parents. While planning the very short weekend, we threw around the idea of hiking the entire Presidential

Traverse, Mount Jefferson, or Mount Monroe and Mount Washington. Choosing a destination or choosing between trails is an arduous task— it’s a huge list of pros and cons. The Presidential Traverse was entirely too long for a day hike (22 miles and 9,000 feet gain); Mount Jefferson required more climbing than I was comfortable with. To my dismay, the trail we were researching to Mount Monroe (and then continuing on to Mount Washington) seemed to be the easiest of any option. I couldn’t believe it, but I was most comfortable with the mountain that was burned into my memory as hell on earth.

We did not get an early start to the day as I had hoped we would. We reached the trailhead at 1:00 in the afternoon, and I told Nick that it was highly unlikely we’d make it to Washington. We definitely had time to hit Mount Monroe, the fourth highest peak in New Hampshire. Nick’s really into superlatives, so this helped my cause. I was not prepared for a night hike down the most formidable mountain in the Northeast.

We had an unseasonably perfect day with no storms on the horizon. The Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail runs 3.1 miles and 2,500 feet up to the Lakes of the Clouds hut (run by the AMC) which provides shelter and meals to hikers in the summer months. From there, it is another .04 miles and only 350 feet to Mount Monroe and back, and another 1.5 miles and 1,300 feet to Mount Washington. We had our work cut out for us.



The trail quickly drops you into the lush forest of the Northeast. You'd never believe me, but the woods here remind me of a rainforest. Rocks and trees are blanketed with moss and mushrooms. We passed a placard in memory of Herbert Judson Young, an eighteen year old who died from hypothermia in the area in 1928. It was nearly impossible to think that such a gorgeous area in the summer could be that unforgiving in the winter. After about a mile, we came to a T intersection with the Ammonoosuc River and beared right. The trail hugs the river for the majority of the trek up and it is an incredible treat- the water keeps you cool and comfortable. The path is covered with stray rocks and root systems, and as difficult as it might be, you have to look down to watch your footing.



Just being out in the woods is incredible, but this route is so packed with natural features, it is very difficult to make good time. We often stopped to investigate the micro environments around us. The raging river drowned out the conversation as we walked.

As we turned a corner, we found a gushing waterfall with the most inviting waters I've ever seen. We wanted to stop and swim so badly but knew if we did we'd be hiking back in the dark. Reluctantly, we passed the waterfall where we were met with a series of steep rocks. At that point, we were about 1.5 miles in and barely gained any elevation, so I knew the rest of the way was going to be brutal. We all took a deep breath and got to work.

I was embarrassed by how many times I had to stop to catch my breath (both because of the cardio and the height factor). Every time we stopped, I peeked behind my shoulder. The mountains we saw from the parking lot were beginning to be at eye level. Luckily, the trail began to get more technical, so I didn't have time to worry much about the heights. The higher peaks of the Northeast all seem to follow the same format: a lovely jaunt through the woods, followed by rockier sections, followed by rock slides. The slides had excellent texture so I felt secure in my footing. There were plenty of places to rest your hands and feet as you climbed.

The rock slides were skirting small streams that dumped into various waterfalls, following the mountain to the bottom. At one point, my aching legs and fear of heights combined to create a moment of weakness. I sat down and refused to get back up. The White Mountains were laid out before my eyes, but all I could do was attempt to hold down my breakfast. After taking a breather and reminding myself that people would be envious of my current position, I stood back up and continued on my way.

On most hikes in the Northeast, the alpine zone is not a considerable part of the trail. On this trip, however, we seemed to be in the alpine zone for a long time. We had passed many hikers who all said we were nearing the Lakes of the Clouds Hut. I know many hikers say that to keep you going, but I never, ever believe them. Finally, one woman was right. After passing her, I saw



a glimpse of a building. I was overjoyed—we were almost there.

We stopped at the hut to eat our lunches. There was such an energy there- hikers of all ages were buzzing around- either getting ready for a short hike, checking in, or eating lunch. The hut gets its name from the lakes beside them and they were a nice addition to the view. The hut itself has an interesting history- after a couple of climbers perished in the extreme weather in the area in June of 1900, a shelter was built for emergencies only. Hikers, however, found this to be a welcoming spot and used the shelter for pleasure trips. In 1915, the AMC decided to build a new shelter exclusively for thru hikers. Employees hike up with food and provisions for guests on their backs.



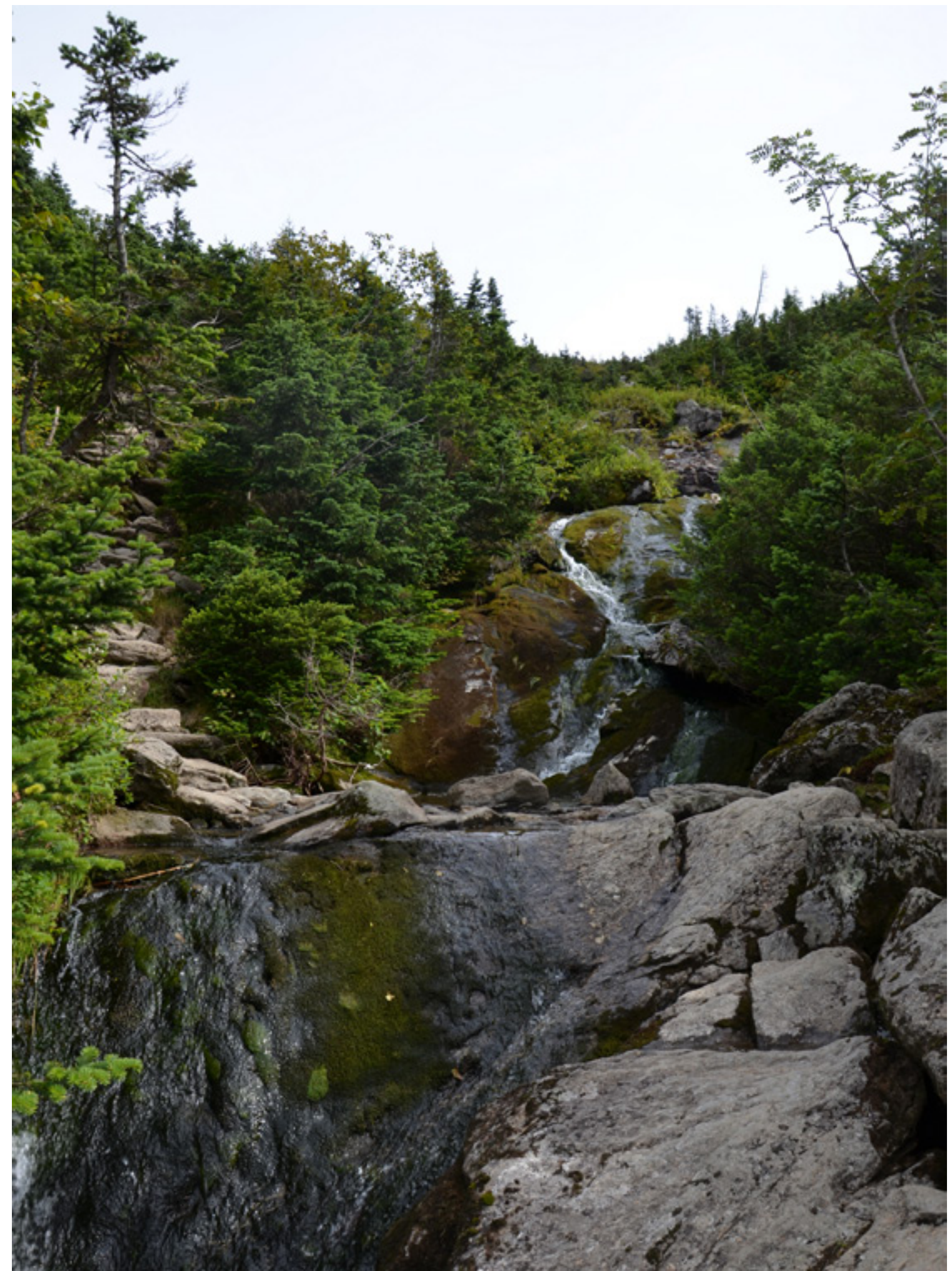


Once appetites were satiated, we left the hut for our approach to Mount Monroe. We were incredibly close but I almost didn't summit. I had a bit of an internal struggle- I had to dig deep to keep going. We made it to the summit at 5:00 PM, and after seeing the view from Mount Monroe's vantage point, I was glad I kept at it. Mount Washington was to our left- its summit clear as glass. You could make out the trail to the top, where the weather station is located. Mount Washington is a little over 1,000 feet above Mount Monroe, but its approach and summit is all rocks. This was a stark contrast from the rest of the view- lush green mountains with trails running across them like arteries. The ridge line was so inviting. Had we had more time, I would have loved to keep going. Once we took our obligatory summit pictures, we headed down. We knew it was too late

for Mount Washington, and although that stung a little bit, Mount Monroe gave us the views we wanted at 5,372 feet above sea level.

We slowly made our way down, chattering away from the excitement of the hike. There was plenty of slipping but no falling. It was pretty humorous- as soon as one of us slipped another one followed suit. I spend most of the descent on my rear end, though I wished I could slide all the way to the bottom. We passed by the waterfall and the opportunity to swim. It was getting late and chilly and the waters didn't seem nearly as inviting at this time of day.

On our final mile, it started getting dark. We made it to the car at 8:00, just as the sun slipped below the horizon. After a round of high fives, we piled into the car for the drive back to Nashua. While I have the upmost respect for Mount Washington, it no longer petrifies me. To Nick's delight, I proclaimed I'd be back.









**Best Time to Go:** Any time of year can be dangerous and produce foul weather. Generally avoid the winter unless you're into that sort of thing. Check the weather report before leaving-- it may surprise you.

**Getting There:** From the New Hampshire Turnpike, take exit 25 for Route 3 North. Turn right on Route 302. Turn Left on Base Station Road. The parking lot will be on your right in about 5 miles.

**Maps:** [AMC White Mountains Trail Map- Presidential Range](#)

**Information:** Parking is \$3.00. Lodging is available at the Lakes of the Clouds hut, though early reservations are imperative. Camping is allowed along the Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail. No camping above treeline and general back country camping regulations apply. If ominous clouds are rolling in, turn around. Bring winter clothing even in the summer.

**Books:** [Mount Washington and the Presidential Range Trail Guide \(AMC\)](#) by Gene Daniell & Steven D. Smith; [Not Without Peril: 150 Years of Misadventure on the Presidential Range of New Hampshire](#) by Nicholas Howe. ❖

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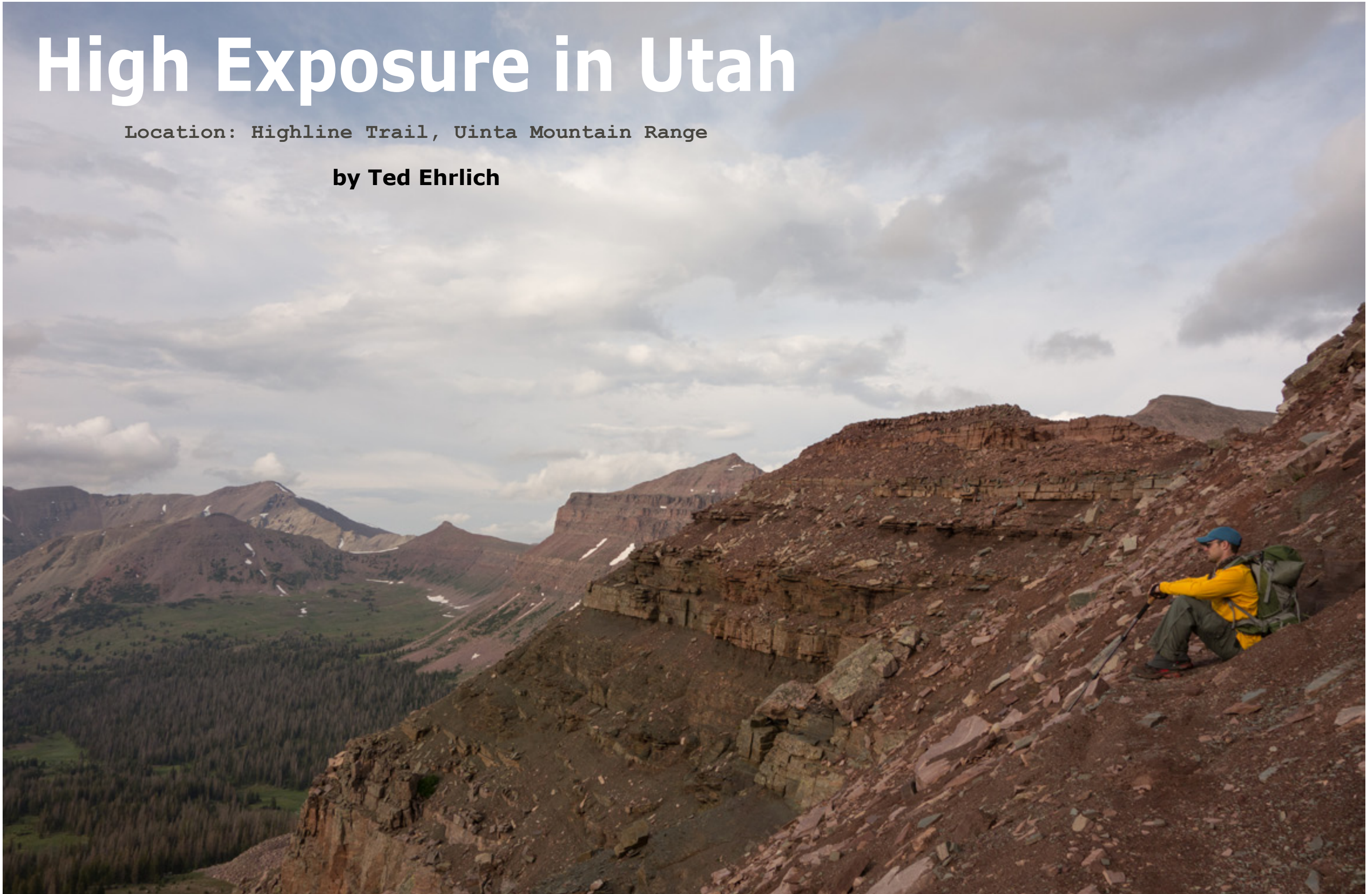
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# High Exposure in Utah

Location: Highline Trail, Uinta Mountain Range

by Ted Ehrlich



**5am – July 4th 2013 – “What in the hell am I doing?” pops into my head before getting a few hours of sleep.** The previous night entailed 8 hours of driving to shuttle my car to the end of Forest Road 43 in the middle of nowhere. After leaving it in darkness on the far eastern slope of the Uinta Mountain Range, we switched cars and drove another five hours to reach our destination. My GPS showed that I was over 55 miles away from where we had left the car, but I knew the trek to get there would be closer to 80. There was no escape route or plan B, just the car at the end and four days to make it there. Ahead lay a route that had caught my imagination a few years back, and had been stuck in the back of my head ever since. I had decided during a New Year’s party that the Utah Highline trail was on my bucket list for the year and the July Fourth holiday weekend was just long enough to make the trek.

### **The Route**

The Highline trail is unique in many aspects. It traverses the entire Uinta Mountain Range running east to west, where most mountain ranges in the US run north to south. The trail maintains an elevation of 10,000 feet or more for the entire duration, with the highest point along the trail being Anderson Pass at 12,700 feet. Consequently, Anderson Pass is at the foot of the highest point in Utah, Kings Peak, cresting at 13,528 feet, and most adventurers will opt to summit Kings while hiking the route. There are 9 major alpine passes along the trail and a thru hiker will gain approximately 17,000 feet of elevation by completing the journey.

In addition, the isolation from major cities and roads gives the route solitude not often found these days. In terms of red-tape, no permits are required and there are no restrictions on fires, camp sites, or food storage. However, animal proofing your food is highly recommended, and for this excursion we used an Ursack.

While this certainly is a great adventure, the trail is not without risks. Hiking at altitude for such lengths of time may require acclimatization depending on where you live and how your body reacts. The remoteness of the trail will also significantly delay any sort of emergency response, with the nearest roads miles away. The only high use areas in the wilderness are the route between Henry’s Fork and Kings Peak and the area around Haden Pass. Mountain bikes

and other off-road vehicles are not allowed along most of the trail and pack animals are scarce because of the difficult passes.

Do not expect any cell phone coverage so make sure you leave a detailed trip plan with friends and family. Carrying an emergency beacon like an ACR is a wise idea since satellite is the only means of communication you will be afforded. A map, compass, and the usual navigation aids are necessary as well. On the flip side the remoteness will guarantee a wilderness experience, with the trail disappearing for miles at a time, offering only the slightest traces to follow and read.

While these may be the typical complexities for backcountry adventure, the exposure along the route is the most significant risk.

Remaining near or above tree line for a good portion of the route means weather and lightning are an even greater danger. Unfortunately for this trip the weather outlook wasn’t clear either, with a 40% chance of storms every day in the midst of the July monsoon cycle, afternoon thunderstorms would surely be encountered.

### **The Plan**

This trip was fairly easy to design. The largest obstacle was getting shuttled from one end to the other. After substantial research I could not find any way to get a shuttle in the area. The northeast corner of Utah is not heavily populated and it seems that most people in the area complete the thru hike by relying on friends and/or using a two car shuttle. Originally my plan involved using my road bike to self-shuttle, however, as the trip approached it became obvious that I didn’t have the extra time to bike from one end to the other. I ended up asking a third friend drive out from Denver with us, which allowed for leaving my car at the eastern end near Vernal and being dropped off on the west side near Park City.





Several hikers on the trail had arranged similar plans which may be more suitable depending on your situation. A group of locals we ran into did a car swap, where two groups hiked in opposite directions and when they met in the middle they exchanged keys, allowing them to drive away in their friend's car on opposite ends. Another pair of hikers we met had flown into Salt Lake City from Louisiana and ended up renting two cars, leaving one at Haden pass and then driving the other to the east side, hiking east to west from Leidy Peak.

If you opt for driving, vehicle permits are only required for parking near Mirror Lake and Haden Pass on the west side. The Forest Service currently charges \$12 for a seven-day pass and interagency land passes are accepted to waive the fees. Since my plan

didn't include any parking along UT-150, this wasn't an issue.

After figuring out the shuttle and the route, all that was left to plan was our gear. July in the high alpine country requires good bug protection, so a head net, bug proof clothing, and bug spray will keep the mosquitos at bay. Lingering snow should be minimal and shouldn't require any special equipment, but an above average snowfall year may warrant using microspikes. In our case we ended up traveling on snow descending two of the passes, but in most situations this could have been avoided.

If you're not familiar with hiking on snow traversing around the steeper snowfields is certainly advised.

## ***The Trip***

After finally getting a few hours of sleep we woke up around nine and got our packs ready. My friend Jason was my hiking buddy this time and it was his first multi-day backpacking trip, so we had worked up a pack list prior to heading out to Utah. This was to make sure we did not miss anything crucial while keeping our packs as light as possible. After emptying out both of our packs, making sure everything was accounted for, and then repacking to even out the food weight, we set off from Haden Pass.

The night before had given us quite the fireworks show as we watched the thunder and lightning erupt over the Uintas, finally clearing just before dawn. As morning

progressed the sunshine slowly gave way to clouds and we made our way through the forest to our first pass, Rocky Sea Pass. Just before the pass the only signed spring along the route appeared on the right side of the trail near tree line. We decided to forgo the spring, not due to the water quality or taste, but simply because it was named Pigeon Milk Spring. I wasn't interested in finding out whether it looked like pigeon milk, tasted like pigeon milk, or how anyone thought a natural spring might compare to the milk of a flying vermin. For what it is worth the water quality along the entire route is great and we didn't have any issue finding water when we wanted it. July is still early enough in the summer that seasonal streams are flowing whereas later in the season you may find water a little scarcer.



After making it over our first pass we descended to the lowest point of the entire trip and the only difficult stream crossing at Rock Creek. After some long-jump practice, hurdling our gear and ourselves across the narrowest section of swift water onto slippery rocks, we made it over the stream with a few scrapes and checked the map only to notice there was a higher route around the basin to Lightning Lake. Being the Highline Trail I wondered why the higher route wasn't the normal route, but we didn't worry about it as we still had plenty of ground to cover. In retrospect I think the Lightning Lake route may have been a bit more scenic than the dense forest around Rock Creek, adding some distance but eliminating some elevation loss and the difficult crossing.

As we climbed out of the Rock Creek basin we crossed tree line again and saw our second pass of the day. Deadhorse Pass is an easy pass from the southwest, but we had been warned by a couple of hikers earlier that it was "impassable" on the north side due to snow. The north side was steep, loose, muddy, and still had some snow, but was definitely passable. As we made our way down the north side, we were treated to a beautiful view of Deadhorse Lake and our next highpoint, Red Knob Pass. After 17 miles evening was creeping up on us, and we decided to call it a day at Deadhorse Lake before the sun went down. We setup camp at nearly 11,000 feet and I went for a quick dip in the cold alpine lake to clean up.

Around 3 am the next morning, I suddenly awoke. I didn't know why at first, but a few moments later, a blinding

flash ripped through the darkness of the tent, instantaneously followed by a ground shaking boom of thunder. A large thunderstorm had rolled in on top of us and I immediately regretted camping so close to the lake and tree line, wishing I had pitched the tent a little lower in the thicker trees. There were still trees around us that were much taller and we were as insulated as possible on top of our sleeping pads, but it was impossible to not feel anxious. After 20 minutes and many more flashes and crashes of thunder the storm passed, leaving us to sleep through the rest of the night.

The next morning we woke up, still a little shaken from the overnight storm, but ready to take on the next passes of the day. We had three major passes, Red Knob, Porcupine, and Tungsten, with lots of alpine tundra in between. Red Knob was up first, less than three miles from our camp. Loose, but not as steep as Dead Horse, we worked our way up towards a slight band of snow until we crested at 12,000ft, the highest point of our trip so far. At the top, Mount Lovenia came into view, one of the seventeen 13ers of the High Uintas. Utah is one of nine states to contain peaks above 13,000 feet, all of which are located within the central section of the High Uintas that we were crossing. The hike down the eastern slopes of Red Knob was beautiful, and as we passed below tree line the trail slowly faded away and cairns disappeared. We turned to the map and our altimeters, determining that we still had 500 more feet to descend, and as long as we kept close to the Lake Fork River we would find the next intersection. Sure enough the trail appeared after a short walk, and we found the signed



intersection pointing us in the direction of Porcupine Pass nine miles ahead. As we gained back some of our elevation, we lost the trail for a second time just before finding the remnants of a small cabin that had collapsed from years of weathering.

Passing the cabin, the trail faded in and out and we relied more on sighting cairns and the surrounding landmarks. Shortly after this section the trees disappeared as we found ourselves in an enormous alpine valley. In the distance, we could see Wilson Peak, another 13er, and Porcupine Pass just to the right. As we trekked through the meadow, rock fall could be heard from the valley walls to our east. The mountains of the Uintas are mainly composed of red shale, a relatively fragile metamorphic rock.

Due to water erosion the rock fractures and falls away, leaving large piles of rubble at the base of the cliff and creating the steep dramatic cliffs of the landscape surrounding us. Porcupine Pass began to loom over us as we steadily approached. As we started to work our way up we found it a bit steep and loose with some decent exposure, but overall still an easy hike. When we crested the pass at 12,250' the tips of Kings Peak and South Kings peak came into view along with Tungsten Pass, our third pass of the day, which was easily visible a few miles below and to the east. Tungsten is unique for this trip in that it is the only pass on route with almost no elevation gain. Compared to the ridge-tops and steep grades, Tungsten is just an opening at the far end of the valley that sprawled out to the east.

As we approached our last pass, we decided to stop at Tungsten Lake to take a quick swim and rinse off since it was the last lake we would see that day. After cleaning up we headed into the valley on the east side of the pass and immediately South Kings Peak loomed over us. By now there were dark clouds brewing to the south and we pressed on to the far side of the valley, stopping just below tree line where we found an obvious campsite that had been used before. Gentle rain began to fall just as we finished setting up the tent. It was the start of another thunderstorm, but this time we were less exposed and the storm was much less fearsome. After making some dinner we passed out, exhausted from the 20+ mile day.

Sunshine lit up our tent on the third day as we awoke to clear skies once again. We were halfway done with the trip and the highest point lay only a few miles ahead. One pass was on the list for day three, Anderson Pass, the highest point along the trail at 12,700ft. By this time we were very acclimatized, so the altitude didn't slow us down much. As we hiked up towards the saddle the dramatic west face of Kings Peak loomed over us. Kings is the highest peak in the Uintas and the highest peak in Utah at 13,627 feet. Most climbers start at the Henry's Fork Trailhead and end up only seeing the north and east side of the peak, which is somewhat mild looking with a gradually ascending alpine valley that smoothly blends into a band of jutting rocky summit, whereas the west slope features

near vertical walls and a spectacularly jagged ridgeline. Next to Kings Peak its sister, South Kings Peak, rises just a few feet shorter. From Tungsten Pass South Kings looks much taller, but as you approach Anderson Pass the true highpoint reveals itself.

Once we crested the pass Jason decided to take a break while I ran up the extra 1000 feet to the summit of Kings, so I dropped my pack and scrambled up solo. Without the pack I felt light and fleet footed, summiting just 30 minutes later. I enjoyed the view at the top of Utah for a few minutes and then hiked down, making it back to Jason an hour after I left. He had taken the time to rehydrate and eat and was feeling better by the time I made it back. I decided this

would be a good time for a little foot repair since looking east from the pass was a clear view of the route ahead of us. Painters Basin opened up and seemed endless as the green tundra unfolded towards the horizon, finally meeting mountains and blue sky. In the distance we could see several mountain humps, one of which was North Pole Pass, our last major pass before Chepeta Lake. With our feet repaired and our bodies re-energized we set off into the vast green basin.

As we hiked, the line of peaks behind us with Kings in the middle provided a spectacular view. For several hours we trekked through the basin, crossed below tree line, and spent the next few hours hiking through the forest towards Fox Lake. I didn't realize



it before the trip, but the third day would keep us below tree line the longest. That was a lucky bit of timing as it began to rain, then sleet, and back to light rain again. The trees kept us mostly protected and eventually we climbed our way to Kidney Lakes and Fox Lake, with the trail fading out in a few spots, but lots of fresh animal tracks in the mud. Just before Fox Lake, we happened upon a lone moose grazing in the willows. It was a gratifying sight since our trip had been lacking in wildlife sightings.

After reaching Fox Lake we started up towards North Pole Pass. We were trying to get a few extra miles in to make the last day a little easier. The plan was to complete North Pole Pass and camp on the east side. We crossed tree line and were part-way up the 12,000+ft slope when we could see another storm fast approaching from the northwest. We couldn't catch a break from the evening storms, which like clockwork, had appeared near sunset the previous two evenings. The decision was made that it would be better to stop for the night and wake up earlier the next morning. Another 20 miles was behind us, and again we set up camp, the rain came, and we passed out after eating some dinner.

The next morning came early, waking up before sunrise. We had three passes for our last day, so it was going to be a push to the end. By the fourth day our legs had stopped complaining so we made quick work of North Pole Pass, blazing up to the top and keeping a steady pace all the way to Chepeta Lake Reservoir. We arrived just in time for an early lunch and had made up some much-needed time with the fair



weather that presented itself that morning.

I had wrongly assumed that on a Sunday morning during a holiday weekend, Chepeta Lake would be a popular hiking area. It was almost completely deserted with a single empty truck sitting at the trailhead. After taking a short break and using the first bathroom we had seen in over three days,

we set off with another 13 miles between the car and us. We initially had trouble figuring out which trail lead away from Chepeta Lake, but ended up realizing that we just needed to follow the road a short way until just before a bridge. There we found the trail leading east from the road marked with 025 signs. At first the trail goes through some relatively flat wooded areas

leading up to another reservoir at White Rocks Lake. However, after White Rocks Lake the terrain changed dramatically, becoming much steeper and turning once again from forest to alpine slopes. In the distance we noticed a large storm beginning to brew in the northwest, but it appeared it to moving east. We headed up and over the pass between White Rocks Lake and



Deadman's Lake, where on the other side we found what would have been one of the nicest campsites on the route albeit some trash and empty cans from careless campers that had been there before us.

Immediately to the east of Deadman's Lake was Gabbro Pass and the only permanent snowfield that presented us a challenge. As we began climbing the steady and dry

western slope it became obvious the storm had started to shift south towards us. We picked up the pace and reached the summit, where the hump of Leidy Peak finally became visible. Stopping for a moment to assess the snowfield, we decided it was too steep to hike down where the trail was covered, so we quickly traversed to a shallower section and side hilled back to the main path.

As we traversed around the snow and hiked towards Leidy Peak, the Green River Valley and Flaming Gorge appeared to the east. By now the storm was closing in on us and the clouds grew more and more menacing. We were near 11,000 feet and without any real cover when thunder began to echo from the sky. We started rushing towards the car, ducking into the trees just before the skies opened up.

Hail, thunder, and rain poured down as we reached the safety of the car. We felt relieved as we took our first break since Deadman's Lake, treating ourselves to a well-deserved cold soda from the cooler I had stashed in the trunk. After relaxing for a few minutes, we decided it was a good thing nobody was picking us up because we reeked. Down the road we started, retracing our route from five days prior, all while fighting off the lactic acid settling in our legs and trying to ignore the suffocating scent of our feet. As we drove, I checked my GPS to see what kind of stats it had recorded. Including the climb up Kings Peak, we had covered 17,000 feet of gain, just over 78 miles, and had stayed above 10,000 feet for almost 4 days since we departed from Haden Pass. Once we made it out of the woods and back to the highway we stopped for a quick dinner in Vernal. Pizza sounded really good so we both fueled up on some cheesy goodness and then headed east towards home.

This route met all of my expectations, and it definitely left me wanting more. Every pass revealed a stunning view and in a world as busy as ours, the remoteness experienced in the Uintas is a precious commodity. The route tested us physically and mentally, and would have been difficult to accomplish without prior experience with off trail wilderness travel and navigation. There are few trails that will rival the experience that the Highline can deliver in North America, and it is a trip I will look forward to backpacking again in the future. I highly recommend the route, and to aid your experience I have made my databook and gps file available on my blog at [mtnnut.wordpress.com](http://mtnnut.wordpress.com). ❖





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**Best Time to Go:** Late June through September. Check local forecasts and conditions from the forest service.

**Getting There:** The closest major airport is Salt Lake City, and the closest towns are Park City, Utah and Vernal, Utah. The west side starts at Haden pass on US-150, and the east end of the trail is off of US-191 north of Vernal.

**Maps:** [National Geographic Trails Illustrated Map #711](#) & [Map #704](#)

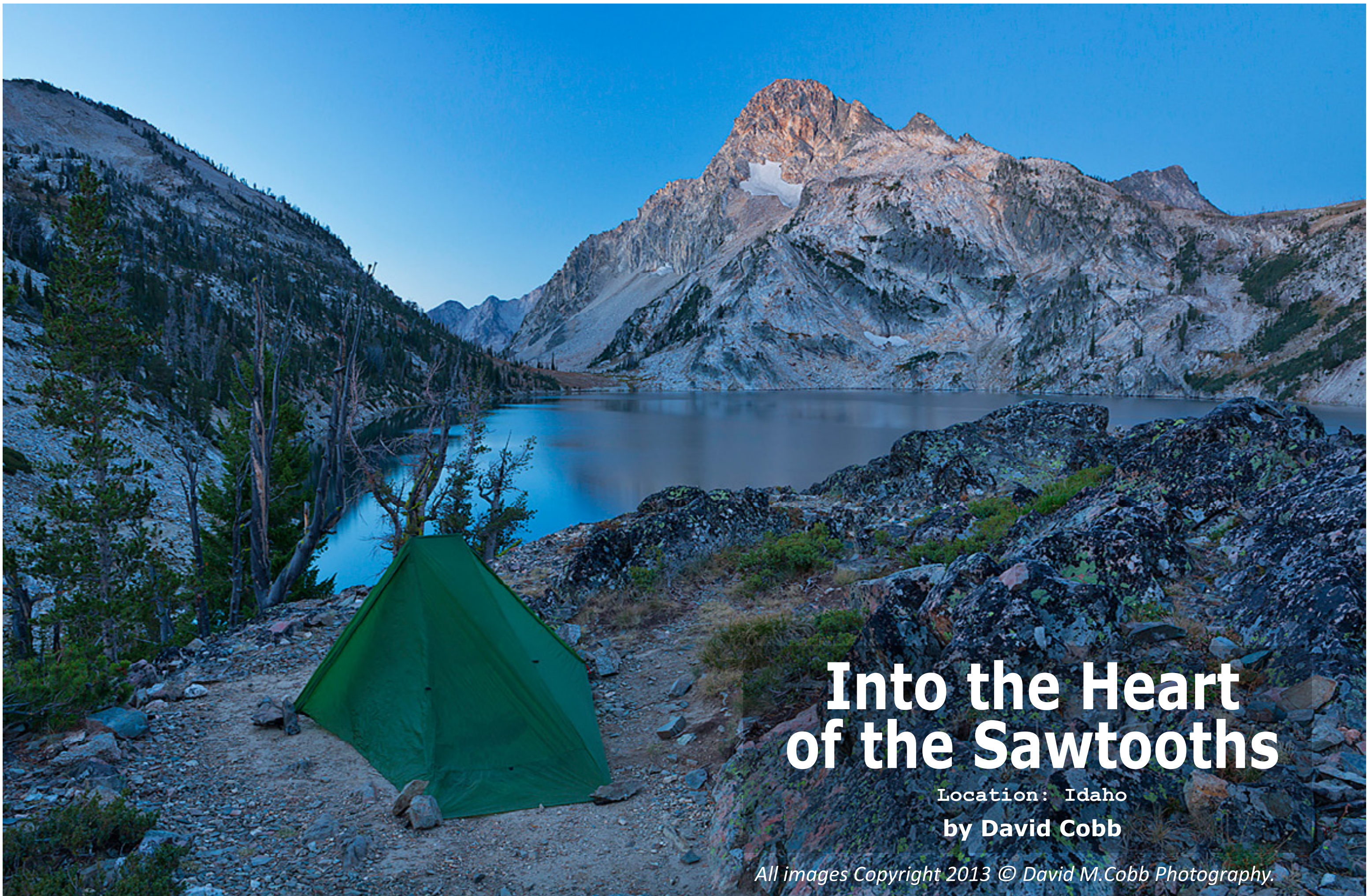
**Information:** There are no permits required for backpacking . Parking along US-150 requires a permit or a inter-agency land pass. ❖

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# Into the Heart of the Sawtooths

Location: Idaho

by David Cobb

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**T**he people of Idaho know what a gem they have in the Sawtooth Range, but few people elsewhere in the world have a clue it exists. Recently my travels took me to Stanley, Idaho which lays claim to being the gateway to the Sawtooths, and from here it's an easy drive to numerous trailheads in the Sawtooth Range. I have photographed this mountain range many times around its periphery, but this time I wanted to backpack through the heart of these mountains. With the help of Stanley Shuttle, who would shuttle my car while I was backpacking, I could make a linear trip from one end of the Sawtooth Range to the other. Stanley is a small town, but it does have

a grocery store and a shop where gear can be purchased. It also has the Stanley Bakery which serves the best breakfast around for hundreds of miles. With the owner's recent purchase of the Sawtooth Inn and Restaurant just a few blocks from the bakery, the local dinners are not to be missed either.

This 217,000-acre Wilderness was signed into law and protected by congress in 1972. The land is filled with granite spires (with 50 over 10,000 feet) and over 400 alpine lakes. There are hundreds of miles of trail and more off-trail routes to secluded valleys and isolated lakes. During the month of September the

**Right:** Baron Lake

**Below:** Sawtooth Pass Tarn





Sawtooths are usually dry, with temperatures in the 70s for highs and 30s for lows. Of course snow can fall at any time in this range, and I've been in the foothills of these mountains when the mornings were in the low teens.

It's pretty easy to get to the high country in the Sawtooths, the town of Stanley already sits at 6,260 feet and so by walking 5 miles from the Iron Creek trailhead you're already at a high alpine lake. My walk began at Iron Creek--an early evening start that allowed me to reach the classic Sawtooth Lake for my first camp. For the majority of my hike the trail I walked for 55 miles would undulate between timberline and alpine with an occasional dip into a deep valley.

After leaving Sawtooth Lake behind, my high valley trail passed numerous tarns, rubble, and a couple small alpine lakes. Walking around the backside of Mount Regan, I soon left the high country and descended into a lowland sage-covered prairie to ford the raging North Fork Baron Creek. In early season this crossing is potentially hazardous, but in late season it's only a shin-deep wade. A few switchbacks later I'd descend to the lowest point on the hike when I crossed Baron Creek. From here, I began another climb towards a large hanging valley of the Baron Lakes area, which is bordered by the jagged Monte Verita and Warbonnet

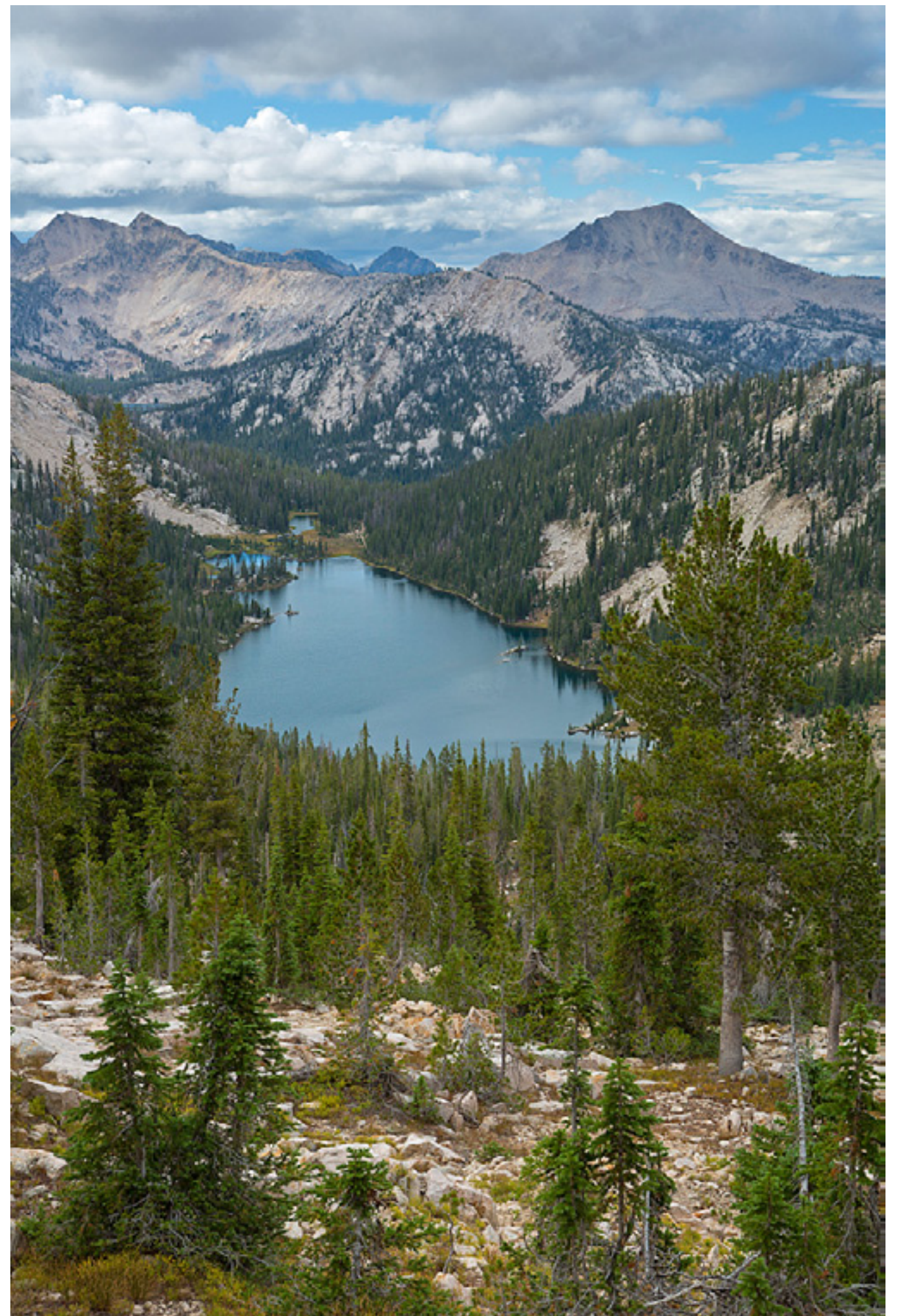
**Left:** Cramer Lake & Peaks

**Next Page:** Huckleberry and Mountain View

**Following Page:** Hidden Lake

Peak. I climbed to 9,160-foot Baron Divide for views of my upcoming travels (in the Sawtooths passes are called divides), and then took a 1,700-foot descent down into the forested Redfish Valley where I began my 2,000-foot ascent to the Cramer Lakes under Sevy Peak and the Arrowhead and 9,480-foot Cramer Divide on the shoulder of the Temple. Cramer Lake is a scene artist Albert Bierstadt would have loved, with its picturesque waterfall and a backdrop of serrated peaks. Above the lakes to the divide is a walk though glacial moraine amongst fallen boulders and glaciated stone. All the hiking is under the watchful eye of The Temple, a magnificent spire of a mountain.

Once I topped Cramer Divide, I recognized that the Sawtooth Range abruptly changes from jagged peaks to more rounded mountains. The land looks softer and more approachable. A quick drop to the beautiful Hidden Lake brought me to meadows filled with huckleberries and my picking skills went into overdrive. I wish I had camped here, since this was the most beautiful lake I had seen on my hike. My route took me to Edna Lake with its views of majestic Glens Peak. After two more climbs and two more 9,000-foot-plus passes, my path descended into the Yosemite-like Toxaway Valley. A walk west brings you to spectacular Toxaway Lake, but east lowers you into a wide, low, forested plain. After a climb over the shoulder of Parks Peak I descended for the last time to the shoreline's calm waters of Pettit Lake. Stanley Shuttle had moved my vehicle during the hike (as



planned) and I was pleased to find my automobile right where expected.

A walk through the spires of the Sawtooths is strenuous and impressive. In late summer be prepared for all sorts of weather. Even though most months bring ample sunshine, I was pummeled by rain for one night on my route. This land has abundant amounts of wildlife and large mammals abound: sheep, goat, bear, cougar, deer, elk, and even a

few moose make their way through this wilderness so keep an eye out for them. Bark beetle and fire has devastated the lower lands, but near timberline the trees look healthy and are devoid of much disease. Outside of Idaho the Sawtooths are a lesser known wilderness area, but the land is enchanting and some of the most beautiful I've visited. If you start planning a trip here, I have a few more suggestions for you listed below.

**Best Time to Go:** Early summer can have heavy runoff and the stream crossings can be treacherous, and mid-summer can get crowded in the backcountry. I prefer the warm days and cool bug-less nights of early September, but you'll need to check for possible trail closures due to fire.

**Getting There:** Stanley, Idaho is the gateway to the Sawtooth Range, and the Iron Creek road to the trailhead is about 3 miles west of Stanley off of highway 21. My end point at Pettit Lake on Pettit Lake Road is about 20 miles south of Stanley.

**Maps:** I used the Sawtooth & White Cloud Mountains Trail Map, 1:63,360

**Information:** Free permits are available at the trailhead and there's a lot of information online. Camping is allowed most places within the wilderness.

**Books:** Trails of the Sawtooth and White Cloud Mountains by Margaret Fuller, published by Trail Guide Books offers hiking suggestions, maps, and trail descriptions.

**Shuttle:** For a small fee Stanley Shuttles ([www.stanleyshuttles.com](http://www.stanleyshuttles.com)) will transport your vehicle from trailhead to trailhead while you're hiking. Call first (928-580-9483) for availability and to arrange a shuttle. ❖

**Right:** Lake Edna Sunrise

**Next Page:** Temple Peak

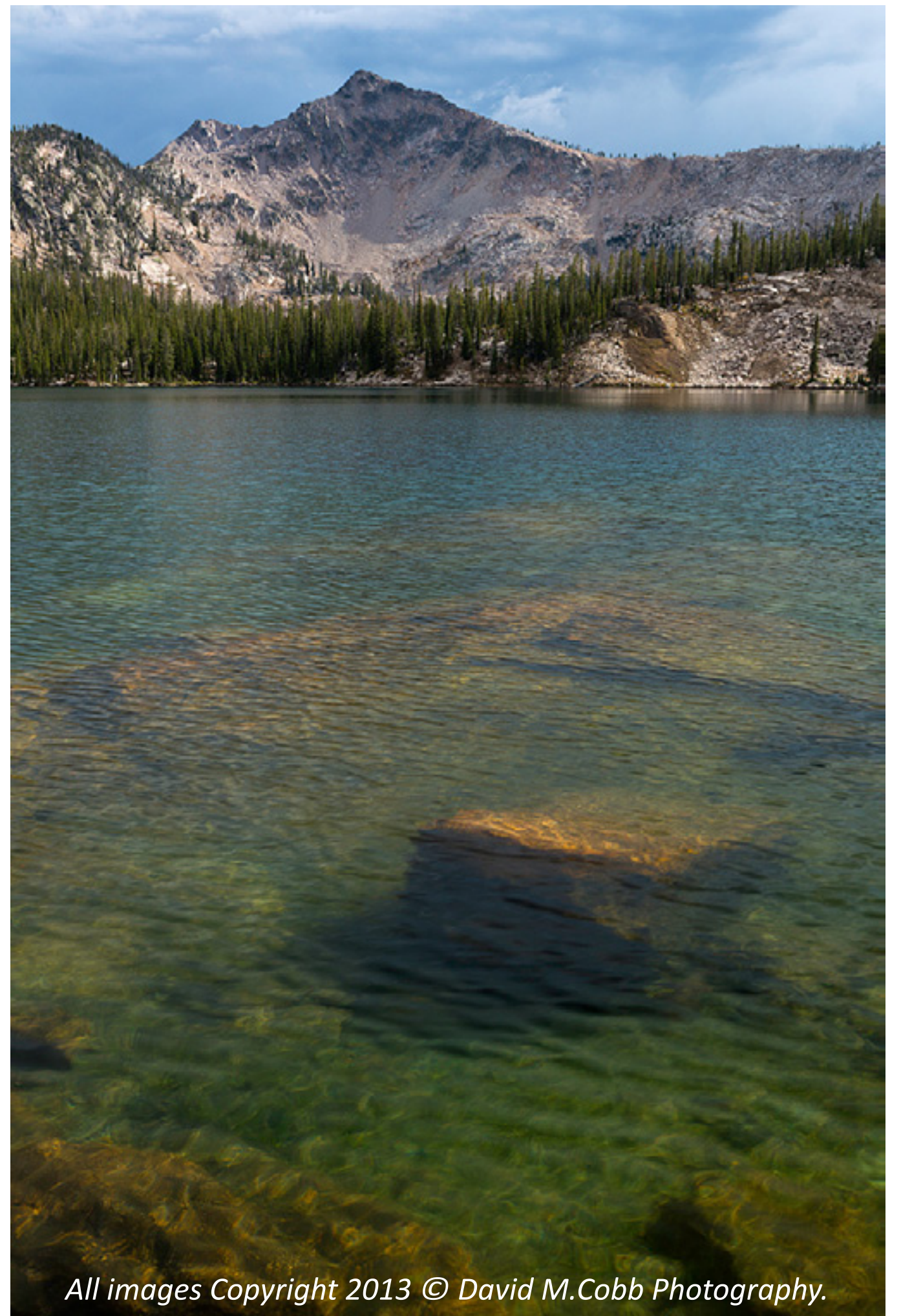
**Following Page:** Lake Edna

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# Tarptent Hogback

Review by Aaron Zagrodnick





**W**ith a new addition to the family, I at first held fast to my minimalist approach to backpacking, and on our first trips together we tried to make smaller shelters work. We could find a way to all fit in a 2+ person tent right? For two adults, a child, and a dog who somehow takes up twice as much space when asleep than awake those shelters worked, but without a doubt made for some of the most uncomfortable backcountry sleeping arrangements in recent memory. I learned my lesson. We simply needed more floor space, and more livability. Enter the Hogback, a double-walled shelter from Tarptent rated to sleep 4 and with a listed weight of just over 4 pounds.

### Specs

Price: \$395  
Square Feet: 51  
Sleeps: 4  
Optional Crossing Pole: \$18, + 9 ounces

Listed Weight: 65 ounces including 6 stakes  
Measured Weight: 66.3 ounces including 6 stakes (After seam sealing)

Measured Weight Breakdown: (In ounces)  
Weight of seam-sealed fly: 31.9  
Weight of seam-sealed inner: 21.9  
Pole Weight: 8.9  
6 Stakes: 2.7  
Stake Bag: .1  
Stuff Sack: .8

Floor Dimensions: 86" x 86"  
Peak Interior Height: 49"  
Packed Size: 20" x 5"

**Pros:** Great space to weight ratio, double wall construction, square floor plan, great construction details and ease of setup.

**Cons:** Small vestibule space, cozy for 4 full sized adults, included stuff sack on the small side. (Difficult packing)

**Rating:** ★★★★★

### Design

The fly of the Hogback is silnylon, and is supported by a long aluminum, collapsible tent pole that slides into an exterior sleeve and is then secured at each end using grommets near each of the tent's two

zippered doors. Each door opens with separate zippers, (One for the fly and one for the inner) and a storm flap, securing with Velcro, covers the outermost zipper. There's also a clip at the bottom of each door that allows for some venting in dryer weather with minimal door flap, and the clip also serves to take some stress off the zipper itself. Small vestibules are formed by the fly on each door end, and the fly and screen doors will roll up and secure open for ventilation or views with a Velcro tab. Dual top vents can be opened for ventilation if desired, they each secure in the closed position with a Velcro strip.

Each corner of the tent is supported by Tarptent's "PitchLoc" pole system, a sewn-in carbon fiber and collapsible strut arrangement that aids in tensioning the fly

and also creates some nice vertical interior space near the edges of the tent. Additional struts are provided in the center of the two sides opposite the main arch pole ends. The lines are made from reflective Triptease, and are tensioned utilizing Linelocs all around. The floor consists of a large, square shaped silnylon floor forming a bathtub edge all around. The floor has 4 points you can optionally clip up to raise the bathtub higher for even more wind and rain protection at the loss of some floorspace. Noseum mesh completes the inner tent, and the whole thing clips up to the outer fly, allowing you to setup the tent as one unit. An interior hangloop is conveniently included at the mesh interior's peak. If you're looking for greater snow load and wind support, an additional crossing pole can be ordered. (\$18, 9 ounces) If you'd like you can also choose to setup the fly alone, and the inner can also be setup separately using the optional crossing pole or using additional guylines and some creativity.





6 8" Easton Stakes are included, as well as a stake bag and stuff sack. Two additional / optional guyout points are available for extra wind stability. The tent isn't seam-sealed by default – You'll either need to seal the seams after receipt or request that Tarptent seal the tent for an additional charge. If you do seal it yourself, pay special attention to the stitching around the top vent where it meets at a corner, I had to apply additional sealer to this area for a fully rainproof experience. No groundsheet is included, and Tarptent offers an optional Tyvek solution for \$15. I however opted to make my own out of Polycro by cutting and taping two sheets together with packing tape for a final weight of 5.8 ounces.

### **Impressions**

Initial impressions of the Hogback were very good. Construction and workmanship are above average, good stakes are included, and setup is very straight-forward. (Just make sure to push / inchworm the main arch pole through its sleeve, if you pull it will separate) Setup takes just a few minutes and the tent pitches quite taut with ease. With a lot of silnylon shelters, I find myself making several rounds around the tent / shelter tightening guylines, resetting stakes, retightening again...The Hogback just always seems nearly perfect after initial setup. Additionally, silnylon sag hasn't been as large of a factor compared to other shelters after setup and rain.



A favorite feature is the square 86" x 86" floor, which doesn't skimp on sleeping space and actually allows four standard sleeping pads to be arranged parallel or perpendicular to the doors. Headroom is good, though be aware that the listed peak height of 49" is actually the peak height of the fly. The inner's peak height is closer to 46". The vestibules are small, definitely requiring an upright approach to pack storage. However, the small vestibules do cut down on the footprint size and the Hogback can still squeeze into some smaller spaces. The tent actually doesn't seem to appear all that large from outside, but climbing inside reveals more space than you might at first expect. The entry zippers will snag on the silnylon flap that protects them from rain when closed, zipping is best done as a two handed

operation to hold this flap out of the way. The reflective guylines really light up at night with a headlamp. A lot of times we find ourselves cooking dinner away from camp in bear country, leaving the tent close to sunset and returning at night. Finding the Hogback was always easy. Just head into the woods and make a 360 with your headlamp and you'll find it. Personally I feel the guylines may be a little too bright for the backcountry, and might replace them with something non-reflective and with a softer hand. However, I've never tripped over the Hogback's guylines – And I can't say that for the other tents I've owned. The fly sets up alone very nicely, however utilizing the optional crossing pole to setup the inner by itself had a less than impressive result. Unless you use a lot of guylines, quite a bit of interior space is lost and it wasn't really

practical in the field. It just doesn't feel like it was meant to be setup that way. However, Setting up the tent as one unit, then unclipping half the fly and staking out the inner works great for views as long as it's not too windy. A stake at each corner of the floor and a guyline out from the center works well, though you could use more guylines for even more space. You can roll the unclipped portion of the fly together with the struts, and secure the fabric on the opposite side using the clips

designed to keep the vent closed. If it rains unexpectedly, the fly can be reinstalled completely in a couple minutes. Packing the tent can be a little tricky – The included stuff sack is on the smaller side, but then again, I do appreciate the extra space gained inside my pack by it being the size it is. Once packed, I haven't had any issues taking the Hogback along, packed vertically it fits nicely in a ULA Circuit and even an MLD Burn.





### **Livability**

Livability of the Hogback depends entirely on how you use it. For us as 2 normal sized adults, a toddler, a dog, and our gear the Hogback ends up being essentially the perfect amount of space. You're not packed in like sardines, and there's still enough room for a 1 year old to burn off a little energy after being trapped in a backpack carrier all day. For groups of 4, especially larger sized individuals, sleeping room is adequate but definitely cozy, and gear storage becomes a vestibule-only arrangement unless some of the group are on the shorter side. You could choose to sleep head to toe for a little more room if the slope allows. Pads arranged parallel or perpendicular to the doors is up to you, though sleeping with the doors at your head and foot end might make entry and exit a little easier when used for 4. If the doors had been designed on opposite sides this might have made things even better for larger groups. If sleeping 4 arranged in this manner however, the 2 people on each end will have limited headroom. Headroom is much better when you sleep with the doors at your sides.

### **Performance**

#### *Wind*

The Hogback handled inclement weather very well. While I did expect a dry interior during wet weather, wind was my initial concern. However, the Hogback has performed admirably well in windy conditions, and has handled 45 mph gusts without complaint. And that's without the optional crossing pole. I prefer to pitch the arch pole side of the tent into the wind,



and utilize the 2 extra guyout points when I expect the wind to kick up. While a lot of pressure is placed on the corners, even without wind, the 8" Easton Stakes that are included really anchor each point and it's nice to hit the sack during windy weather without worrying too much about your stakes pulling out as you sleep. This is one tent where I wouldn't try to get by with

shorter stakes, except perhaps for the additional guyout points where a stake failure would only cause more of a temporary inconvenience and not affect the main support system.

#### *Snow*

The Hogback has also handled light to moderate snow surprisingly well – Without

the optional crossing pole some sag is definitely experienced on the panels opposite of the arch pole, but even when this occurred, I was surprisingly able to still sleep comfortably in the tent at 6' 2" without contacting the fly itself. (Though I did lose some headroom while sitting) The double wall design, along with the main arch pole and PitchLoc corners really made



a difference here. However, if you plan to frequently take the Hogback out when snow is in the forecast, especially heavy snow, or want the best windy-weather performance the optional crossing pole might be a good thing to take along if the additional 9 ounces don't scare you away. If you're hiking as a group though, this extra weight is easily divided, and the Hogback is still a light 4 person tent either way. Both poles are the same, so if something were to happen to the main arch pole you'd also have a backup in this case. The crossing pole is easy to use, taking just a minute to install or remove, though it seems as if some of the attachment points could be a little more user friendly. If you're a trekking

pole user, and since the Hogback doesn't need any trekking poles to setup, you could also utilize your poles and extra guylines to provide some additional support for the panels opposite the arch poles.

#### *Rain*

Rainy weather isn't a big deal in the Hogback – The main concern would be keeping anything in the small vestibules dry. They're small enough where it's pretty easy for a pack to become partially exposed close to the ground, so make sure you either tuck everything in tightly or remove anything that can't get wet. If you have room inside the tent for packs though, the vestibules offer good protection for the doors and are

a great place to store your shoes. The top vents help with ventilation and are quite waterproof even when open, but are best closed in driving rain or snow. However, you can't effectively operate the vents from inside the tent with the inner installed; an outside trip would be needed for a middle of the night adjustment. We haven't experienced any significant condensation issues, but if the fly interior does get wet for any reason, the double walled design helps keep you from contacting any wet walls. It's also worth mentioning that the Hogback will knock down quite of a bit of any wind and the double wall design does seem to add a small, but noticeable amount of warmth at night.

#### *Durability*

After over a year of use, I haven't had anything that needed replacement or repair on the Hogback. Well-constructed and reinforced in key areas, the tent has definitely met expectations in this regard. I have noticed a small run or two in the noseeum mesh interior that I suppose I could patch if so inclined, but since they haven't gotten any larger and still remain bugproof I haven't bothered. With as much noseeum netting as the Hogback has this could be a common scenario, but careful packing and use (Watch out for dogs and kids) will certainly help. If you do end up having an issue, or even just a question, Tarptent has excellent customer service.





### Conclusion

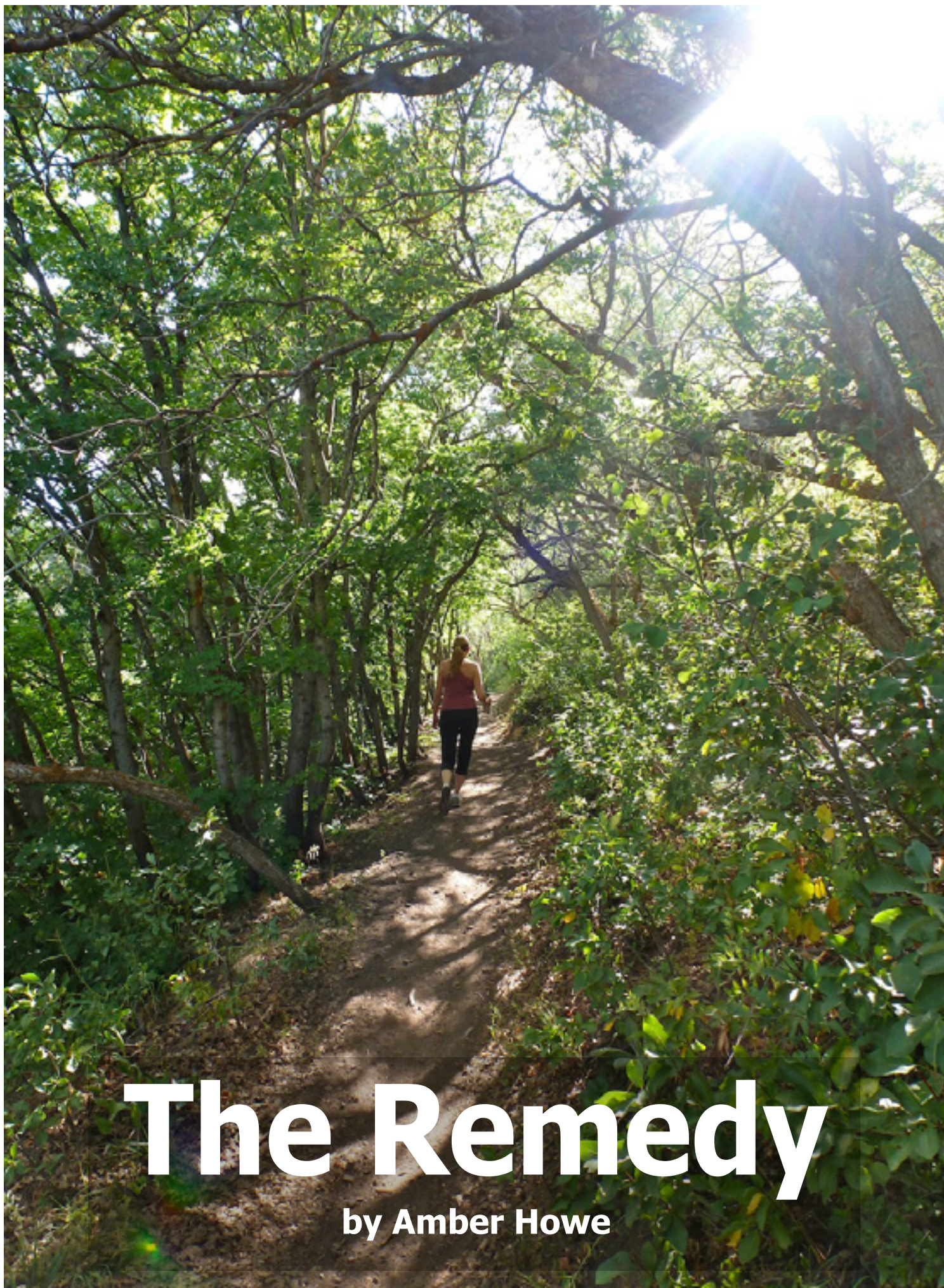
The Hogback didn't disappoint and it's our without a doubt go-to option for family unit trips. The space the shelter offers is not only livable, but comfortable as well. 4 adults will fit, though with small vestibules gear storage and accessing it might cause an occasional claustrophobic moment when the Hogback is used to capacity. However, if you consider the Hogback more of a 3 to 3+ person tent you'll end up with more room to move and more room inside the tent for any gear you might need quick access to. Utilized in this manner, the Hogback is spacious and extremely easy to live out of as a group. No matter how many people you choose to pack in the tent, the Hogback ends up as a well-designed, weather and trail-worthy space with subtle touches of quality throughout. With this much space at just over 4 pounds and beyond adequate performance, the Hogback should be a top contender for anyone looking at a lightweight, backpackable family or group shelter. ❖

Overall: ★★★★★ – Very Good

You can find the Hogback and other Tarptent shelters at:

<http://www.tarptent.com>



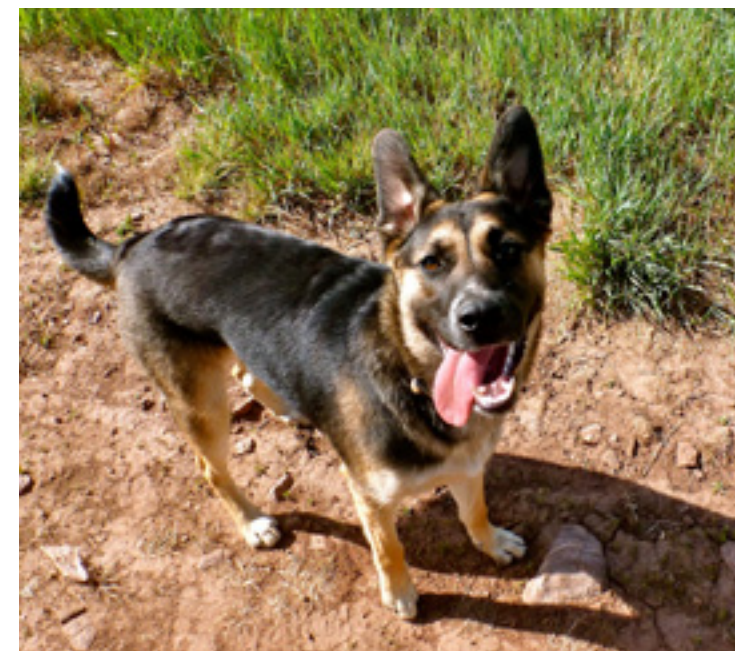


# The Remedy

by Amber Howe

**I sit in my car, parked at the trailhead, and pout.** The lot is deserted- the shaded Summit Park Peak trail *could* be all mine. But I don't want to be here. My dog sits shotgun, feigning patience, her head cocked to one side. I envy Cholula's endless energy, her innate ability to just BE- to live in the moment and relish simple joys. It's the combination of her eagerness and my own guilt that finally prompts me to get out of the car and just start walking.

I know that my resistance is ridiculous- I'm acting like a spoiled child. These are the glorious mountains of Park City, Utah, where people come to vacation- and where I get to *live*. And yet, I trudge along, slightly annoyed at Cholula's zig-zagging, unabashed glee to be chasing squirrels in the great outdoors. My mind is too full. Like a boat on choppy seas, it bobs from one source of anxiety to the next until I feel slightly seasick. I find it



difficult to clear my head. And that's precisely why I'm here, grumpy and hiking. I'm here to find peace.

The anxiety is recent, the result of multiple life changes occurring at once. I spend time with my therapist, talking through my feelings of being overwhelmed. My acupuncturist addresses the spots where my tense body betrays my secret stress.

I'm learning a meditation relaxation technique. But I know by now that the only things that will help me find that elusive calm soul are sweat and sunshine. And so I hike on.

The trail narrows, winding upward, through overgrown vines and over fallen trees. As I gain elevation, I start to breathe harder. One by one, whatever thought is clutching my heart fades into the background- all that matters is what my body is doing. It's steep. It hurts. At the trickiest part of the trail, my mind is blank and all five senses are engaged.



There's a tingle as a cool breeze blows over the little beads of perspiration down the back of my neck. I feel my heart pounding in my chest. I hear the muted crunch of each footstep on the dried pine needles, the squawk of a chipmunk Cholula has alarmed. I smell the verdant, earthy aroma of lush vegetation, taste the salty sweat on my lips. In autumn, my eyes would be dancing over crayon-box colors: burnt sienna, brick red, rusty orange, goldenrod. Today, I'm counting the different types of vibrant wildflowers competing for the sunshine (my record in one day is 16).

At the summit, I pause to take in the view. As my breathing slows, I can hear the happy songs of mountain birds, chatting with each other across the canopy above my head. Two butterflies flutter across the path, temporarily distracting Cholula from the too-big stick she's contentedly gnawing on. The panorama before me boasts hillsides carpeted with pine trees and aspens, peaks with the last bits of snow tucked into shady crevices, and a huge, blue sky. I breathe deeply: in with the good, out with the bad. And then I head back down the hill.





Somewhere along the trail, in the shade of the Utah forest, my perspective had changed. I now tell myself to look up, and see the silvery leaves of the aspens tickling the sky, the tallest pine trees swaying as if to a song. Cholula's manic squirrel hunt is now cause for laughter-her utter happiness is contagious. There is blood pumping through my veins, fresh mountain air in my lungs, and a smile on my face.

I am capable.

I am alive.

I am grateful.

My soul is calm.

Once again, it was on the trail that I found peace. ❖



**About the author:**

*Amber Howe lives and writes in Park City, Utah with her mountain man husband and a crooked-eared dog named Cholula. She chronicles their adventures in Utah and beyond on her blog [www.theusualbliss.com](http://www.theusualbliss.com) where her mantra is, "TODAY is the happiest day."*

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# The Flinders Ranges

Location: South Australia

by Tim Eisemann

## **S** *Stories from the Flinders Ranges*

**The Flinders Ranges are the dominant range in South Australia.** Running roughly north/south for 500 km, from Mt Remarkable in the south, to Mawson Plateau in the north, it is geologically and ecologically similar throughout. It is a semi-arid to arid system and enjoys fairly reliable winter rainfall. The area is known for its flash flooding capacity, when the gorges have walls of water rushing through.

It is a really ancient place. In deep geological time this range was higher than the Himalaya. Rippled rock faces are evident here and there, telling of a time when it was all under the sea.

This region has always been in my consciousness. I first travelled here nearly 50 year ago to camp at Wilpena campground. At other times our family took a caravan tour through the bigger gorges, all of us itching to get out and explore. When mountain bikes were the new fangled thing, we took a few to test out in the tough conditions. I have bushwalked in wilderness exploring the gorges of the Gammon Ranges, and taken an interpretive tour up the range with an Adnyamathanha (traditional owner) guide. I have seen it in flood and the dramatic blossoming that follows and seen it parched dry, when the only moisture is your perspiration for the hordes of flies that all get on board to quench their thirst.

Once we were camped at a secluded and idyllic waterhole above Paralana Hot Springs. I took an afternoon walk up the dry Paralana Creek valley, towards Mawson Plateau. The sun was hot and bright, but comfortable.

The way was over a bed of loose, rounded river rocks, shifting and grinding under foot. Many large red gums lined the creek and they were very full of corellas, many thousands of them. They erupted hysterically with loud screeching at my intrusion. They played leapfrog en masse to ensure the cacophony was always ahead and behind me. For nearly an hour they harassed me incessantly with their colossal noise! It wore me down, and I imagined being lost here, with no water, the corellas tormenting my increasingly unstable mind..... I shook myself, reminding myself they were only birds, and that I knew exactly where I was. I turned, and headed back to our quiet and idyllic waterhole.

On another occasion, we were camped near Sacred Canyon. This is a rock art site of some antiquity. The Adnyamathanha say the engravings were created by spiritual beings unknown. We were a large group of 18 on mountain bikes. We arrived late and set up camp, had a cuppa and retired. Next morning around 9am there was a stir. A group of women had wandered up the gorge and seemed to have been halted by an invisible threshold. Two women started sobbing and the other 3 were a little freaked, and none would proceed further. No problems for the guys- either we were too insensitive or it is a men's sacred site. Very spooky.

On 2 separate occasions I have heard a single loud rumble that I could not explain. The first time was clear night at Rover Rock Hole, deep in the Gammons. Ten years later, I heard it again during a gentle shower at Arkaroo Rock - 200 km south at the southern edge of Wilpena Pound. I was with an

Adnyamathanha elder so I asked him about it. He said plainly, "that is Arkaroo, the rainbow serpent" (a creationist giant snake being). I can't say that this is true, nor can I dispute it. It is just part of the mystery that is so palpable here.

For 40,000 years the Adnyamathanha sang their songs and observed custom. The indigenous people of Australia must have been the most ecologically sustainable civilisation ever. They did not build houses, nor farm the land. Their lifestyle conferred fit bodies in a wheelless world. Their population was consistent and they had a culture full of reverence and ceremony. The Adnyamathanha tradition was geared

toward sophisticated survival strategies - a moiety system to protect the clan gene pool, totemic systems to preserve biodiversity and unequalled biosphere knowledge to extract safe nutrition and medicines from this seemingly meagre environment.

This enduring relationship to the land has contributed to what many visitors feel is a spiritual presence in the land. It is everywhere reflected by the beauty; from the blue tinged ridgelines across the horizons, to the gorges and water holes, some rarely visited, then zooming in - flotsam texture pictures of rock, fallen timber and plants that seem as if the greatest Japanese landscape architect had laboured long, to create it just so.



**Right:** The Saddle Above

## Wilpena Pound

Wilpena Pound is central to the range and located 450 km north of Adelaide. Although the Pound appears as a crater it is actually 2 separate up-folds. The range is flanked east and west by enormous peripheral salt pans-Lake Frome and Lake Torrens.

The multi clan Adnyamathanha (rock people) call this place Ikara which means 'meeting place'. The Pound drains through Wilpena Gap (eastern side), and here permanent water sits. It must have been of special prominence in the Adnyamathanha song-lines; telling of a place where food and water was a surety, even in the direst of times.

The first white settlers to the area came here for the same reason. The first grazing lease was taken out in 1851. In 1901 a homestead and crops were established in the Pound.



The crops were a failure and the homestead was eventually abandoned.

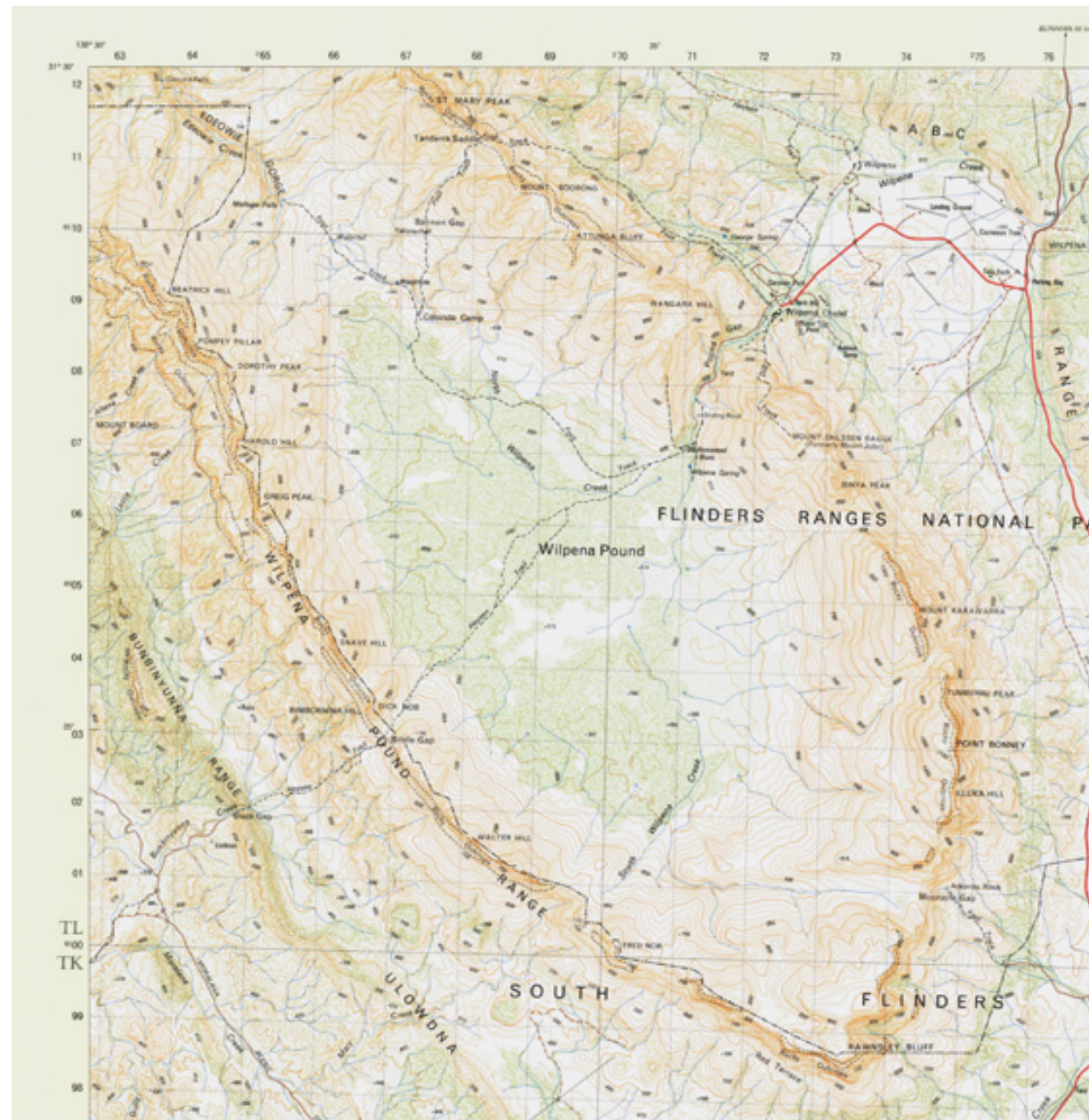
And so began the encroaching dispossession as the Adnyamathanha people were rounded up and compounded in a paddock up on the old Copley road, to live out their days. Here they were denied their traditional foods and given rations of flour, sugar and salt (guerrilla native food excursions were frequent). In 1930 they were moved to a new mission on the site of today's homeland village of Nepabunna. In a welcome turnaround, they have at last achieved a purpose designed school where they teach language to their kids. The area is also the gateway to the Northern Flinders Ranges - the Gammons, Arkaroola and Mawson Plateau.

The northern end of the Pound drains through Edeowie Gorge. It is plunging gorge with many ochre rock walls and outcrops dotted with native pines and xanthoreas (grass trees). There are several waterfalls, though these rarely gush (but what a sight that would be). Several years ago we were walking up the dry creek from the plains toward the falls, when a brown falcon flew close and low along the creek line, below the river red gum canopy. Another followed close behind, then another and another. All up, 12 falcons flew over head in procession. It was the most awesome sight. We wondered why? Was there an eyrie meeting high up in the Pound?

The rim of the Pound has 12 peaks over 1000 metres. St Mary Peak (Ngarri Mudlanha) is the tallest at 1170 metres and is the only

**Left:** Xanthorias and Waterfall

**Right:** Wilpena Map



one with a trail to it- almost every person who has ever visited Wilpena will have climbed it. The remainder are rarely visited as there are no trails to the ridge. Approached from inside the Pound, the slope is a gentler grade but a thick acacia scrub barrier stands in the way. Bush bashing can be a long and uncomfortable struggle. From the outside the ramparts are steep with many rocky outcrops.

It is worth the effort. The rewards of off trail are always surprising and out of the ordinary. There is a sense of wild and untamed nature-wilderness. It makes me want to breathe deeply - to suck it all in.

## Peak Bagging

In winter 2012 I hooked up with a great team (with me makes 6) who were keen to bag all these 1000 metre + peaks. There are some



competent navigators amongst them which was very reassuring. The first trip was to bag 4 peaks on the south eastern rim. We drove up on a Thursday after work and met up in Quorn (332 km north of Adelaide) for a 3 day black magic odyssey. The previous summer had seen a small bushfire along the southeast slopes so we figured an inside approach through the thinned char a good possibility. Early Friday morning we headed up to Wilpena (118km) together and set out with our packs into the Pound. Before long we left the trail and headed toward the south east area. The Pound floor is mostly a flat woodland of native pines with river red gums along the creeks.

Mt Karawarra was first on our bag list before we made camp. We dropped our packs (loaded up with water- 6-7 litres each) and set out to conquer. It was a 2.5 hour return and we navigated back to our packs without issue. We set off again to make base camp further south.

We found an open firm sandy site that suited our 6 tent group. I knew I was in good company when all the tents were set up. Four shelters were Tarptents, mine - a spin twin tarp and a bivvy. When an all in frisbee game erupted my view of the company was confirmed..... 165 grams of fun!!

**Left:** Rocky Outcrops

**Below:** The Team on Pompey Pillar



In the morning we set off early for Illuka Hill on the eastern rampart. Our approach soon came into the burned area- a sea of 1.5 metre high charred sticks. Weaving our way through these was tedious. Despite being denuded of their foliage, they still grabbed and pushed and lent a sooty smear to everything. Once above this we came to rocky slabs and boulders. This was much easier going and way more fun!

We made Illuka Hill, and then followed the ridge north to Point Bonny (1133 metres). On top the ridge we walked along the sheer outcrops running across the edge and had great views all around. At Point Bonny we found a log book and cairn and made our contributions. Onward to Tumburra Peak for our 4th bag of the trip. Here the precariously ragged outcrops tempted us to explore further before we turned for our descent back to camp. We descended along a different route which took us through a pleasant gorge with frequent water holes.

**Right:** Carpet Python

**Below:** Wilpena Pound Panorama from Beatrice Hill

We happened upon a carpet python curled up lazily amongst the rocks. Despite our curiosity it never behaved aggressively. These snakes are so rare in South Australia and little is understood of their distribution and habits. Jez conjured the GPS coordinates and passed them to the Environment Department Biodiversity program who were keen to add this piece to the puzzle.

After a Sunday morning Frisbee game we struck camp. It was a pleasant unburdened walk back through the Pound as we returned to the cars, and home. But first a pub meal and cold beer at the Cradock Hotel.

### ***Of Emberlits and Tarps***

In winter 2013 we returned to bag 4 more 1000+metre hills in 3 days. We again met up in Quorn on a Thursday evening. This time we were 7 and looking at the western ridge. Pompey Pillar (Wildya Ngulhiindanha) 1165 metres is the highest of the group.

Simon and Nick had attempted an approach from inside in previous years and were beaten by the tough and close acacia scrub. Our plan was to approach through a neighbouring property, Arkaba Station, for an outside approach. Their boundary runs along the western ridgeline with the National Park. Our plan was to camp on the ridge somewhere, on which side of the boundary we didn't know or care.

For many years camping has been prohibited on Arkaba land. In recent years they have destocked the 60,000 acre property and turned it over to eco tourism. Currently it is for sale for a cool \$4M. It contains the Elder Range with Mount Aleck (Urdlu-warlpunha) the highest peak at 1095 metres. The 1200km long Heysen Trail runs through it and crosses into the Pound at Bridle Gap.

Water is always an issue in the Flinders Ranges and caution is sensible. I have never set off for a multi day trip without 6 or 7 litres packed- even this is inadequate - that's why we only go when we know it has had rain.

Mindful of the extra weight of water for the climb, 3 of the team went minimalist with tarps and emberlit wood stoves.

The previous week 17.4 mm fell, the only rain for July. This is well below the July average of 59.6; the highest is 171mm in 1986, the lowest in 2002, when not a drop touched the soil.

We parked at Black Gap and joined the Heysen trail briefly along a running, bubbling creek. It is such a cheering sight to see this





once a year event. We pushed off toward the north and followed a woodland valley of native pines, with growing views of rocky outcrops high above. The ground was covered with the green of young and eager plants. We crossed several minor creeks, all dry.

After about 6 km we came to our ascent along Leslie Creek. A modest flow of water signified the ebbing of the last rain, 7 days earlier. Rock pools were charged here and there with cascades. We climbed up to a saddle on the main ridge, avoiding a deep ravine. A quick recon of the saddle showed that it was a very marginal camp site, but there was nothing else within coo-eee, so

**Below:** Elder Range on the Horizon

**Right:** Following Leslie Creek



we took it. But before we could do that, we dropped our packs and headed for Harold Hill to pop it in our metaphorical bag.

On a neighbouring peak we saw several goats, tenacious ferals that are so well adapted to these rocky tops. These were the lucky ones-over 50.000 of their distant mates were not so lucky, eradicated without favour for the abattoirs knife.

We returned 2 hours later along a long rocky outcrop, and set about establishing camp. Nick alone found the sweet spot for his Z-Pack hexamid, the rest of us had to squeeze in any way we could. I had to pitch my Spin Twin tarp over a corpse sized clearing



amongst shrubs with a rock for a pillow. It was very snug.

The wind came up so the kitchen was set down slope in the lee of the ridge. I cranked the emberlit to make a damper in the outback oven. The wood was damp and a good flame for baking was tough going. I resorted to my emergency fire lighters-cotton wool buds soaked in Vaseline jelly. We saved the damper for the following day. At our first peak, chunks of thyme and onion damper were passed around with smiles and murmurs of 'yum'.

Our mornings walk took us first to Dorothy Peak, then down a impressive line of rocky outcrops and up again to Pompey Pillar. The way through the bush was close and sprinklings of acacia paradoxa - kangaroo thorn- made things more 'interesting'. This small tree is covered with soft looking foliage but beneath the stems are fine thorns

that spear into the skin and break off. And they irritate like hell. The way was mostly obstructed with low angled branches, either dead and brittle or supple and whippy. Rocky seams were always a welcome respite. Along a contour of about 700 metres springs appeared in the gully lines where we could top up water.

Meandering clumsily through the bush, my mind turned to Zen and the art of bushwalking. I checked my breath, quietened my mind and brought my awareness to the flow or vinyasa of my body in space. Sharpened awareness develops a sort of body wisdom response. The body becomes more fluid in plotting passage through the encumbrances, each footfall increasingly sure and transition more flowing. Awareness underpins all by degrees. A little awareness means more miss-steps. Absolute awareness brings elegant fluency and a bubbling sense of contentment.

We made Pompey Pillar for a windy boulder top spot for lunch. The log book here had a record since 1983. Just 30 odd folk had come here over those years. Onward we went to Beatrice Hill (Wilkalanha), the final hill to bag. From the vantage of this most northern peak we could see the dish like Pound in total. Below us the floor of the Pound folded in, as Edeowie Gorge deepened on its passage north. Above us, wedge tail eagles soared as they patrolled the landscape - for lunch?

We made our way back along a higher contour, weaving toward our windy saddle camp. On return we decided to break camp immediately and drop down to a lower, more protected and well watered spot. We descended 150 metres and dropped straight

on to a peninsular of land abruptly ending at a V cliff with a choice flat area. Below was a confluence of 2 creeks that lay each side of us, steeply dropping in cascades and waterfalls. This was the ravine we avoided on the way up. It was the perfect camp, though a little crowded. The air was strangely still and the background sounds of bubbling water relaxing. We designated the north creek for drinking water and the south creek for washing. Numerous rock pools dotted the creek here, with ice cold water that was invigorating but bone shatteringly painful if immersed too long. Dinner was a lively and happy time as everybody unloaded and shared their stash. There was chocolate and whisky, Bailey's liqueur and a chocolate self saucing pudding, baked to perfection and served with custard.

On the gentle walk back we discussed future trips. The Southern Ranges in Tasmania next February will cover summer walking. For winter there are 2 more bagging trips to Wilpena Pound and the Elders. Beyond that there is a yearning to go to Mawson Plateau- the last great wilderness of the Flinders Ranges.

Next stop the Cradock Hotel for a cold beer and burger before heading home.

I don't think I will ever be finished with this magnificent range. My early visits here were like a skimming over. Now I want to delve ever deeper in this special place, to just sit in the red dirt witness the mystery.



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**Best Time to Go:** Winter, early Spring (wildflowers and waterholes charged)

**Getting There:** 450km north of Adelaide, South Australia

**Maps:** Wilpena 1:50 000

**Information:** Camping is not permitted in Flinders Ranges National Park (incorporating Wilpena Pound). Camping is not permitted on Arkaba Station. ❖

**Left:** Rocky Cascade Bunbinyanna Creek

**Next Page:** Rocky Way to the Top, Harold Hill



A promotional banner for REI. The background is a black and white photograph of a forest floor covered in fallen leaves. The banner is divided into several sections. At the top, a dark blue box contains the text: "FREE SHIPPING ON ORDERS OVER \$50.", "60-DAY NO HASSLE RETURNS.", and "KILLER DEALS.". Below this text is the CampSaver logo, which consists of a white dome shape above the word "CAMPSAVER". To the right of the text and logo is a vertical column of brand logos: MSR, a circular logo with a mountain and water, mont-bell, a logo with a stylized 'N', Marmot, and a yellow logo with the word "GOLITE". Below the dark blue box is an orange banner with the text "SAVE BIG" in large white letters, followed by "ON SERIOUSLY GREAT OUTDOOR GEAR" in smaller white letters. Below the orange banner is a black and white photograph of a person climbing a rope ladder on a rock face. At the bottom left of the banner is the REI logo, and at the bottom right is a white button with the text "SEE ALL SALE ITEMS" and a right-pointing arrow.



### MSR Lightning Ascent Snowshoes

A frame made from a vertical blade of aluminum instead of more conventional round tubing adds traction in slippery scenarios, and a flip-up heel lift bar helps on steep ascents. Available in 3 sizes, and separate tails add flotation in soft snow. Around 4 pounds per pair and \$270 - \$300.

[REI.com](http://REI.com)



### GSI MicroGripper

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### Sawyer Mini Filter

If you've been using Sawyer's Squeeze or 3 Way filter systems, you might want to check this out. Smaller and lighter, the Sawyer Mini Filter still offers filtration down to .1 micron and can be used several different ways. About 2 Ounces and \$25:

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### Therm-a-Rest NeoAir XTherm

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# GEAR MASH



### GoLite Bitterroot Jacket

Over 5 ounces of DownTek water-repellent 850 fill down makes this 13 ounce hooded jacket quite warm for its weight, as well as more workable in humid environments. Elastic all around seals in the heat and 2 zippered hand pockets round out the package. \$200:

[GoLite.com](http://GoLite.com)



### Marmot Kompressor Daypack

At just 10 ounces, this daypack from Marmot keeps things light and simple. The Kompressor features 1100 cubic inches (About 18 liters) of storage, a built in hydration pocket, and durable ripstop nylon construction at \$50:

[Backcountry.com](http://Backcountry.com)



### Teva Raith eVent Hiking Shoes

A relative hiking footwear rarity, the Teva Raith shoes offer an eVent waterproof/breathable membrane in an effort to keep your feet as dry as possible. Spider365 rubber offers traction in a variety of situations. About a pound per shoe and \$110:

[Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



### Petzl Nao Headlamp

An integrated light sensor automatically adjusts both light intensity and beam pattern to suit the level of ambient light and the activity at hand, with brightness ranging from 7 to over 300 lumens. Just under 7 ounces and \$175:

[Campsaver.com](http://Campsaver.com)



# Photo Tips from the Trail

by David Cobb

*Since long-distance hiking helped form so much of my photography, I thought it might be helpful to supply a few photo tips I picked up from the trail. These tips don't require the use of tripods or fantastic cameras; they are suggestions designed to help improve your composition and use of light and will affect the overall impact of the photos you take along the trail. (I hope you enjoy these tidbits from this ongoing TrailGroove series.)*

## **TIP #8: Photographing Waterfalls**

One of the most refreshing things to come upon during a long hike in the mountains is a waterfall. It's a great place to cool off, fill up the water bottle, or just take that much-needed snack break. After resting for a while, you might want to take a photo for posterity to remind yourself of that wonderful little site along the trail. What follows are a few suggestions on improving the image quality of that scene.

*David Cobb is an avid backpacker and photographer. You can see more of David's images at [www.dmcobbphoto.com](http://www.dmcobbphoto.com)*

*Check out our next issue for more "Photo Tips from the Trail" by David M. Cobb. Be sure to check out previous issues for his other great tips.*

**Left:** Tamanawas Falls in Winter

*All images Copyright 2013 © David M. Cobb Photography.*



First, never take a waterfall image in bright sunshine. What you'll get back are overexposed blobs of white and dark splotches of shadow—not at all like the peaceful scene you remembered. If it's a bright sunny day, wait for a cloud to pass by or just save that shot for a rainy day—literally. Evenly lit overcast days are the best times to photograph a cascade and the image will look just the way you remembered it. To show the power of a waterfall, you'll need to photograph with a shutter speed of 1/500th of a second or faster to stop motion. To highlight the grace of a waterfall and for that cotton-candy effect, photograph the scene at a quarter-second or slower. Of course, to do that you'll need to balance your camera on a rock or use a small tripod, because there's no way you can hold a camera steady for a quarter-second or slower. Anywhere between a quarter-second and 1/500th of a second looks pasty, so if you want your waterfall to look like glue then go for it.

I often show a bit of stream leading up to the waterfall in order to accomplish a couple of things: First, it creates a leading line (see TrailGroove Photo Tip #2) and second it allows you to show the waterfall in its environment, which looks much better than a simple portrait of the falls. Also, adding people to the shot is a good thing, because you're not only photographing your friends but also adding a sense of scale. So the next time you're on the trail, think of these simple tips and add a little life to that inspiring waterfall. ❖

**Left:** Waterfall Shower.

**Pages 107-108:** Wahclella Falls.

**Pages 109-110:** Outlet Falls.

*All images Copyright 2013 © David M.Cobb Photography.*







# Muir: A Centennial Tribute

by Roger Drouin



**T**he grasses and the jagged palmettos will grow back soon with the light and the first rains, but the vast openness is startling here without the slash-pine crowns mixing sun and shadows.

I hike slowly, making my way across the ashen dirt and charred branches where the fire burned the hottest. The branches I don't step over crack under my boots.

I see the small tracks, and I take a close look on a knee. There are only two more sets before the tracks disappear in the burnt soil, when I hear it — the soft-footed steps of the cottontail hiking across the burned over stillness. I try not to startle the cottontail, making the same trek to the forest ahead spared by the fire, probably seeking something to eat. I think of John Muir, sleeping at Turlock and waking to

walk out in the morning sun along a sandy trail, awakened by the freedom of the wild Sierra after spending ten citybound months writing.

Muir was an observer of the tracks left behind in the sandy soil.

“Upon the smooth slopes of these sand furrows I soon observed a most beautiful and varied embroidery, evidently tracks of some kind,” Muir wrote.

At first the explorer thought of mice, but soon saw the tracks were too light and delicate for mice. Muir saw a tiny lizard darting into the stubble desert shrub ahead and after carefully examining the trail he made he saw it was just like “the fine-print embroidery he was studying.”



### More than expected

I can envision Muir studying the tiny tracks of the lizard. I can see him bent low with the keen attention of a scientist and the joy of a boy playing in the sand.

“Always, in truth, he found more than he expected in nature. Never did he get enough wilderness,” Edwin Way Teale wrote of John Muir, the wildest of the nature writers.

Muir thrust the same energy of his constant exploring into his legacy efforts to save Yosemite as a national park and secure approval of the National Park bill passed in 1890. 2014 will mark the 100th anniversary of the death of John Muir — who now has natural spaces across the county named in his honor.

Muir was a man of action. And there are a few things about him that tell us about his philosophy of life and the way he lived.

When he was a teen Muir almost died. He was working to dig a well on his father's Hickory Farm in Wisconsin when carbonic acid gas had settled in the well. John's father had pulled him from the well, at the last moment. Maybe the experience taught the young man to seek new mountains.

It wasn't his only brush with near death. His account of a dangerous crossing of a glacial crevasse is detailed in his story “Stickeen.”

Muir went weeks in the backcountry with only bread, water and coffee. “Those who accompanied Muir into the mountains often marveled at the manner in which he would go for the better part of a day without thinking of food,” Teale wrote. “On his solo expeditions into the Sierra, he sometimes took oatmeal, which he cooked in little cakes; but the great staple diet of his life was hard bread.”

He hated the “dead pavement” of cities.

Muir loved to watch birds, from the zealous water ouzel to the skimming swallow. “It was a great memorable day when the first flock of passenger pigeons came to our farm,” Muir wrote in *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*. The passenger pigeon became extinct the very year Muir died.

In his chapter on the birds of Yosemite, he notes the flight of flocks of beautiful swallows skimming over the streams. He describes the “little red-bellied nuthatches, the chickadees, and little brown creepers, threading the furrows of the bark of the pines, searching for food in the crevices” and the song of the water-ouzel (American dipper) through storm and calm. In *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, he pays homage to all the songbirds he remembers from his days exploring as a boy in Scotland and a teenager in Wisconsin.

He never tired of writing about the trees — the Silver Fir grove to the pines of Yosemite to the Sequoia.

### **The open world**

When I was in college I would read Muir, an old used, worn copy of *The Wilderness World of John Muir* I kept from my environmental literature course, and within minutes I would be inspired to load

up my thermos and hiking pack into my old Plymouth. I’d lace up my sneakers and head out the door.

My friends were sneaking Gatorade and vodka to the pool. I was headed

the opposite way, along county roads to the woods. Leaving the Plymouth at the trailhead, I would leave the stress and worries of classes, leave my loneliness, and head out into the open world of the rabbit tracks and chickadees singing. ❖



# Backcountry Cuisine: Electrolyte Trail Mix

by Canny Green



In the world of sports nutrition, the word “electrolyte” refers to minerals dissolved in the body’s fluids that are lost in perspiration. Those little packets of sweetened electrolyte powder or brand name drinks allegedly offer all you need to replenish lost electrolytes during endurance exercise. But real food is the best nourishment and includes both what you know you need and what you don’t know you need.

For electrolyte replenishment on the trail, it is so easy to create a trail mix that holds all those minerals lost through sweat: sodium chloride, calcium, potassium, phosphorous, and magnesium...and then some! Every person is metabolically different and each endurance event has different demands. I believe that the wisest course of action to avoid dehydration and electrolyte loss on the trail is to STOP! REST! DRINK! and EAT! at regular intervals.

Your snacks can make the difference between your hike being a fun, safe journey and a nightmarish slog. Start out with a trail mix that is loaded with electrolyte-rich ingredients. Mix up a combination of the following nuts, seeds, veggies, and salt to your personal taste. Munch a handful or two with a good drink of water every hour for the steadiest electrolyte replenishment. ❖

## SODIUM CHLORIDE

Seaweed  
Sea Salt

## POTASSIUM

Banana chips  
Citrus  
Sweet Potato chips  
Kale chips  
Shredded coconut

## CALCIUM

Almonds  
Apricots  
Brazil nuts  
Figs  
Dates  
Oranges

## PHOSPHOROUS

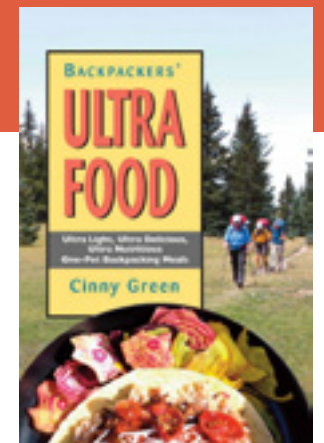
Sunflower seeds  
Peanuts  
Raisins  
Figs  
Strawberries

## MAGNESIUM

Sesame seeds  
pumpkin seeds  
Dark chocolate  
Dried edamame

I am not a nutritionist. I am a hiker who loves to go into the backcountry for days—and I love to eat. In the process of experimenting with assorted trail food strategies and learning over the years what constitutes “healthy” food, I’ve come up with Backpackers’ Ultra Food: home-prepared, dehydrated meals made of the tastiest, lightest, most nourishing ingredients. I found that if I eat junk food (and many packaged backpackers’ meals have a lot of junk in them), my body rebels. If I eat nourishing food, rest when I’m tired, and plan with forethought, I am rewarded with great energy and a sense of well-being. I can literally walk miles and miles!

Canny Green’s book, *Backpackers’ Ultra Food*, offers more tips, techniques, and recipes to elevate eating on the trail. You can find the book [Here at Amazon.com](#).



# Seeking Fall

by Aaron Zagrodnick



I gazed outside, watching as the treetops silhouetted against the night sky swayed vigorously in the unrelenting wind. The cold soon forced me back. I zipped the door and assembled every item of gear I could find, creating a barrier on the side of my tent facing the wind. It wasn't perfect, but resulted in a refuge not much larger than the sleeping pad I laid on. The shelter shook around me as I crawled into my bag for the night, but each stake, stitch, line, and pole held. The wind never stopped, and in my cocoon I was soon lulled to sleep. I woke early, but forced myself back to sleep – The sun wasn't yet over the horizon and I just couldn't bring myself to venture outside. Once the sun began to shine through the trees some warmth returned to the forest and I crawled out of my tent, but with each gust of wind I was reminded that summer was long gone. Hot coffee was quickly made in defense, and I knew I'd found fall, or maybe it found me.

I stayed busy. Breaking down camp kept me active and fought the chill, and soon I shouldered my pack and searched for the trail I'd hiked in on last night by way of headlamp. I found it, nothing more than a foot wide, slight depression through the forest running west to east. I took a right, and quickly hiked towards the rising sun while shrugging against the wind. Soon enough temperatures climbed, and I dropped over a ridge where I left the wind behind. Fall was in full swing, though some trees resisted, leaves still green in full defiance of the changing weather. Others were ready for winter,



and in places you'd look up to see their bare branches, the forest below littered with the red, yellow, and orange leaves that had previously graced their limbs. Most were somewhere in between however, and the forest felt alive in its medley of colors.

I hiked for 2 days before I saw another person, the string of blue blazes I'd been

following nearly the only sign that other people do in fact, hike this trail on occasion.

I didn't know where I was going, and just kept heading east. The terrain was rough, alternating between ridge tops and valleys. Everything was blanketed in forest. At times I'd crest a hill where the winds howled and I could see the valleys

cascade out before me, the most distant hidden by haze. I could see the hills I walked along miles ago, and the hills to come miles ahead. But then continuing on I'd plunge back into the quiet forest, protected by wind and left alone with my thoughts, staring at my feet through the rocky terrain.

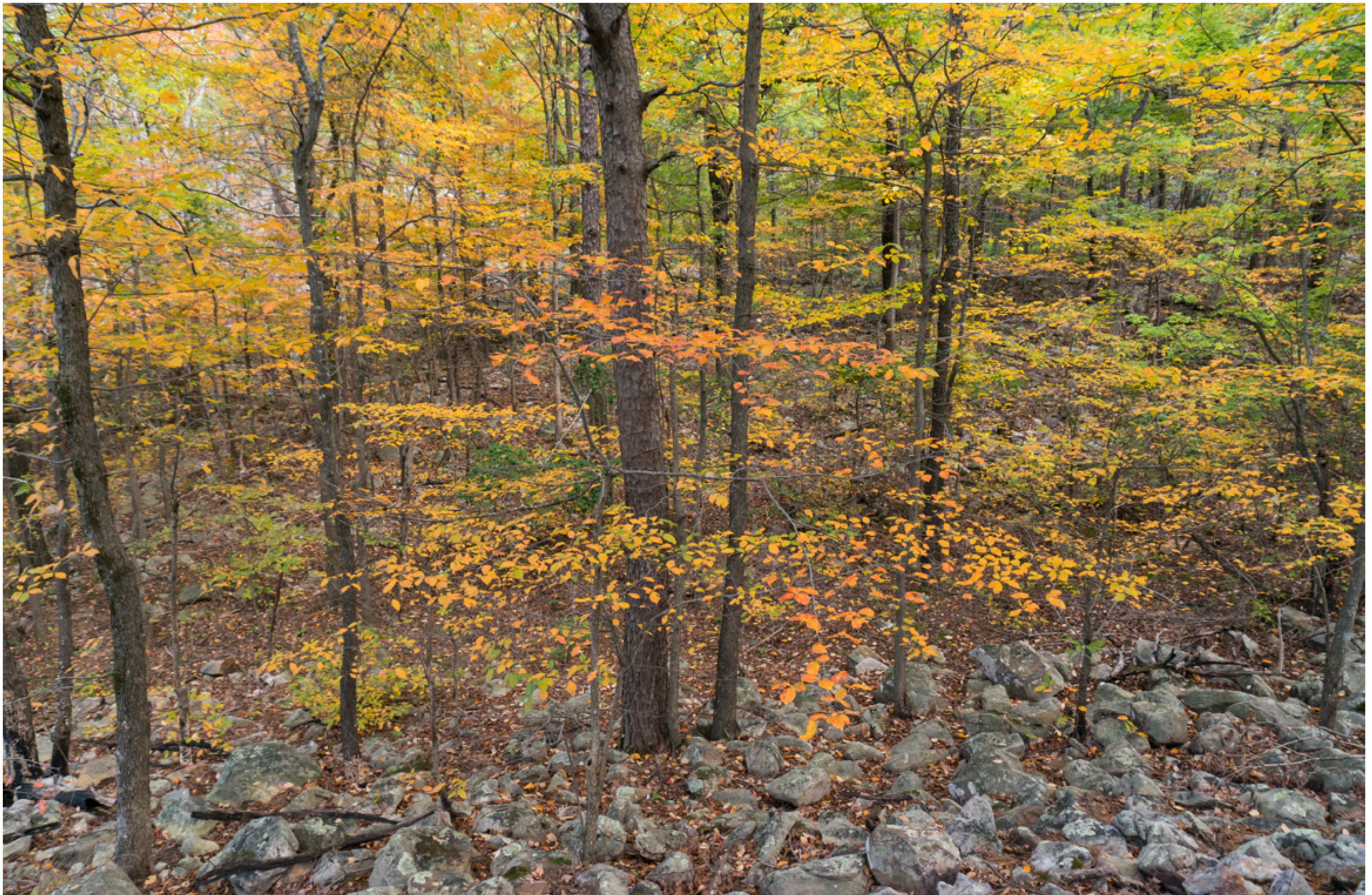


As I walked I pondered why I'd made the trip. This wasn't a destination you normally hear about, in fact the trail barely existed. It was more of a route. A route where? Sure it had a starting point, and an end point. The steps you took along the way would be in the same footprints of anyone else that had ever walked along the trail. More would follow. But each walk was different. The route wasn't a destination, it was your simple existence on the trail, sharing a moment in time with what that corridor of nature had to offer at that exact moment. The leaf covered in morning dew, the call of a bird you could only guess at in the distance. The swaying of a tree in the wind and an orange leaf finally tugged from its branch for the season, spinning and rocking towards the ground as it fell. How many moments? Thousands, maybe more. The same path was shared by many, but the moments were never repeated. Somehow they remained freely and selfishly my own.

Day 3 of the long weekend trip brought cloudy skies and periods of light rain along with the wind. Fog settled into the valleys where the wind couldn't reach. Cold blanketed the land and crept through to me, but as long as I kept moving it wasn't too bad. Wet grass soaked my legs; rocks offered only slightly more traction than if they'd been covered by ice. Eventually, signs of civilization. First a powerline, then a road. Cold, wet, out of coffee and nearly out of food, I headed downhill, following the road towards town. After 3 days on a rocky trail, the road's paved surface made for worry-free walking, and if it wasn't for the rain, I could have actually looked up at the trees as I walked. The road soon

began to hurt my feet and joints however, its unyielding surface offering no respite for my tired legs. Freshly fallen leaves covered the road. They rustled, then blew about around me creating a kaleidoscope of fall colors as I walked. The cold rain began to fall with a greater intensity and the leaves, now soaked, stubbornly clung to the road. No cars or trucks passed. Cold began to win the battle; my hands and toes slowly became numb. I walked faster.

After some time I intersected with the town, and walked towards the first restaurant I saw. I grasped the handle to the door and walked inside, bells loudly indicating my entry to the staff and patrons within. Those within looked a bit surprised to hear the door open, as no car had pulled up. A crisp wind followed before the door could close behind me. The warmth of the restaurant began to soak into my body as I walked further inside. A waitress hesitantly approached me. "Can I help you?" She asked. "Looks like somebody just got off a mountain." I tried to fumble out words, but my mouth was too cold to make much sense. I just nodded my head. She pointed to a nearby table. "Coffee?" She asked. I mumbled out a "Please," dropped my pack beside a chair and took a seat. The rain fell harder outside. On the table, under the glass, was a topographic map of the wilderness I had just walked out of. I pulled the chair closer and rubbed my hands together for warmth, then cradled the hot mug that was soon delivered. I still didn't even know how I was going to get back to my car 40 miles away. Over coffee the next trip was planned. ❖







“The wilderness is a place of rest - not in the sense of being motionless, for the lure, after all, is to move, to round the next bend. The rest comes in the isolation from distractions, in the slowing of the daily centrifugal forces that keep us off balance.”

- David Douglas





# Thanks for Reading Issue 11

Check out our next issue  
(available in Mid-December) at:

[www.TrailGroove.com](http://www.TrailGroove.com)

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