

TrailGroove™

Issue 10 - September/October 2013



Contents

September/October 2013

Note: You are viewing the PDF version of TrailGroove Magazine. For the optimal viewing experience please view the magazine online at:

<http://www.TrailGroove.com>

Direct link to this issue:

<http://www.TrailGroove.com/issue10.html>

Subscribe to TrailGroove Magazine

3	Editor's Note
5	How to Contribute to TrailGroove Magazine
6	TrailGroove Product Review Policy
7	Jargon
9	Trail Tip
13	A Visit to the Chinese Wall by David M. Cobb
25	The Ouachita Trail by Susan Dragoo
39	Variations on Gray Wolf Ridge by Doug Emory
49	Review: DeLorme inReach SE Satellite Communicator by Aaron Zagrodnick
67	Wandering in Sacred Places by Sharon Giacomazzi
81	Gear Mash Cool Gear We've Come Across This Season
83	Photo Tips from the Trail: The Rule of Thirds by David M. Cobb
91	Our Last Hike With Dad by Sarah D. Tiedemann
99	Backcountry Cuisine Pumpkin Curry
101	The Drive Home: The Easy Route by Aaron Zagrodnick



Editor's Note

A woosh overhead and the erie call of a loon woke me again. They'd been keeping me up all night. I unzipped the tent and stepped outside. It was 3am, and I should have been tired, but was wide awake. No headlamp tonight, and the moon wasn't out. The stars were enough to light up the landscape and the milky way stretched out in front of me, from one horizon to the next. I walked a few steps away from the tent, sat on a boulder, soaking up the scene until cold won the battle and forced me back into my sleeping bag. What if I hadn't woken up? If not for the restless loons I would have missed the sight. What if I hadn't made the last minute decision to even take the trip? What if I'd camped along the ridge instead of next to the marsh, so popular with the local loon population? Too many questions at 3am. All that mattered was that I was there. I fell asleep until dawn, the loons must have done the same.

In this issue we'll find out what it's like backpacking along one of the best trails the south has to offer, travel to the wilds of the Bob Marshall Wilderness, take an in depth look at historical rock art sites in Central California, and follow a challenging hike in Washington State. A memorable last trip to Sunfish Pond, tips on blister prevention and care in the backcountry, and we review Delorme's latest satellite messenger, the inReach SE. Check out yet another great photo tip, recipe, and more. In many parts of the country prime hiking season might be starting to wind down, in others it's just arriving. Either way, if you don't make the trip, you'll never know what you're missing.

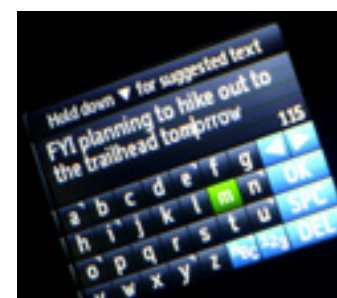
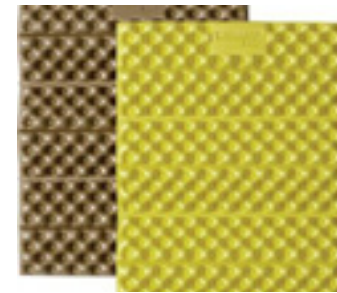
Contribute

Interested in contributing to the magazine? Please email us at 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 are 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.

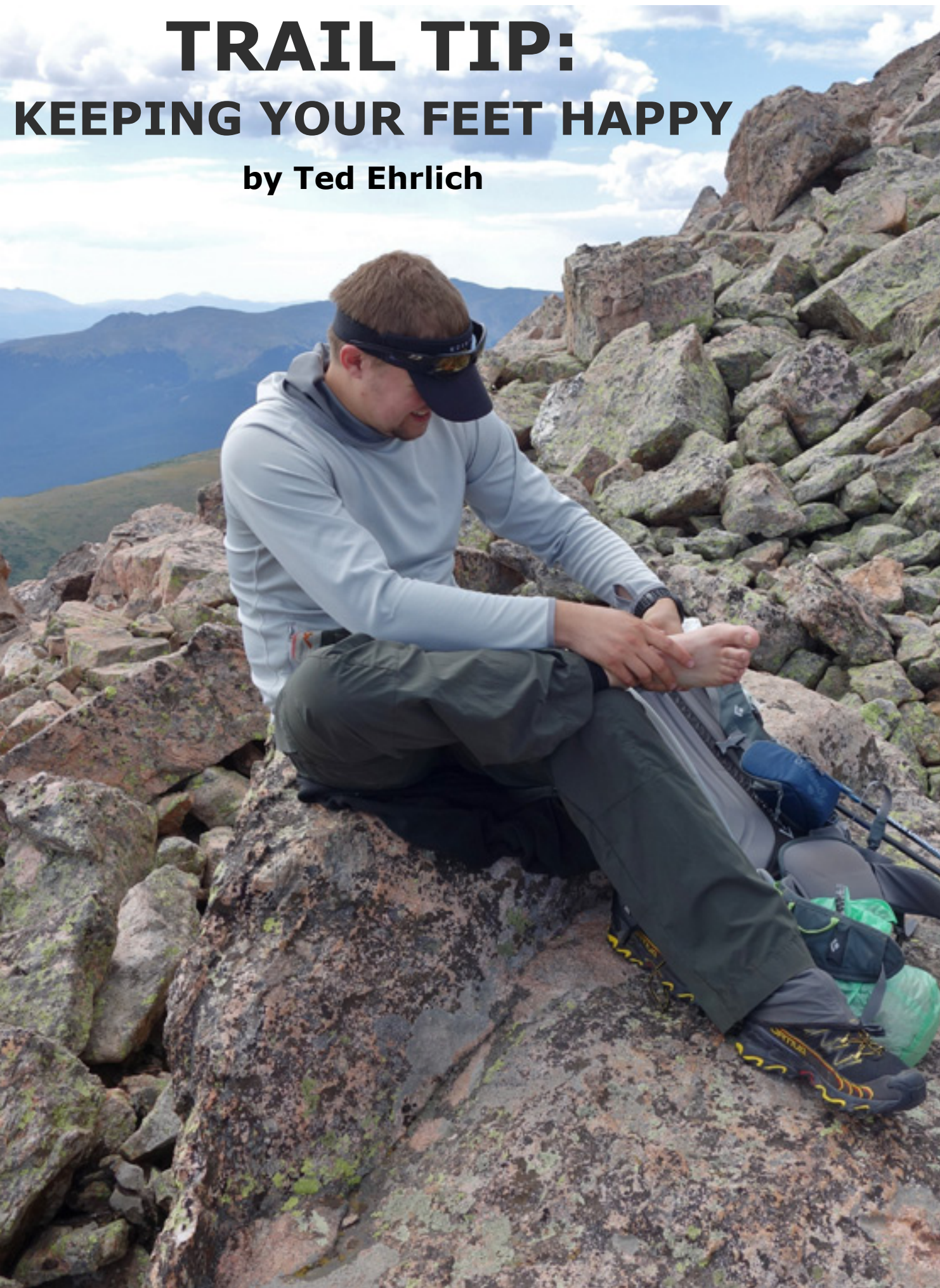
We use a 5-star rating scale for our reviews:

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

Jargon: Hydrostatic Head



At what point will it leak? In the outdoor industry, hydrostatic head (Often abbreviated as HH) is a measure of the waterproofness of a particular fabric, most applicable to the fly of a shelter, canopy, and / or floor materials, as well as rain gear. The measurement reflects how high a column of water a secured piece of fabric could support before leakage occurs. This column of water is measured in millimeters, and the test is performed with a special machine or apparatus that applies water pressure against the fabric in question and measures the result. If the fabric is able to support a column of water 1 meter high before the pressure causes water to be forced through the fabric, a hydrostatic head of 1000mm applies. If the fabric supported a column of water 10 meters high, a 10,000mm rating would result. Just how high a fabric will score and how waterproof it will be depends on several factors such as thickness, weight, weave, and the thickness / quality of its waterproof coating or impregnation, and there are tradeoffs to be considered. A tent with a low hydrostatic head rating may experience “Misting”, where small droplets of water could find their way through the fabric under the pressure of something like a heavy, wind-driven thunderstorm. Additionally, kneeling on a tent floor over wet ground could exert enough pressure to force water through the fabric on lower rated fabrics. However, the fabric itself may end up being lighter and result in less weight on your back. In the end it’s up to you, but most (Though not all!) backpackers generally find the hydrostatic head of silnylon (Usually around 1200mm) to be waterproof enough for the types of conditions encountered on a normal backpacking trip, and even lower rated fabrics can be found on some tents. Higher rated options are readily available as well if further waterproofness is desired.



TRAIL TIP: KEEPING YOUR FEET HAPPY

by Ted Ehrlich

Blisters are a very common hiking injury. While not life threatening, they can cause a trip to become very uncomfortable, and in worse case scenarios they can slow you down significantly causing unintended consequences. I find a small first aid kit with a few specific items and some practice will eliminate most foot issues, and will quickly alleviate small problems before they get big.

My kit includes:

- * A Roll of Leukotape
- * 1 oz. Tincture of Benzoin
- * One Sheet of Precut Moleskin
- * A Victorinox Classic Swiss Army Knife
- * ½ oz. of Tolnaftate on Any Trips That I Think It Might Come in Handy.

These are added to my normal first aid kit, which is a modified American Medical Kits Ultralight/Watertight .3 kit. For further reading, I have found Fixing Your Feet: Prevention and Treatments for Athletes by John Vonhof a good reference book on the subject.

First, a good foot tape is essential. I use Leukotape, which is designed to adhere to skin. White medical tape and duct tape may work, but I have found that they do not adhere to skin consistently, especially when your feet get sweaty or in an area with a lot of friction like your heel or the bottom of your foot. In especially wet situations, even Leukotape may have issues, so the second item I always carry is benzoin. This will either come in swabs or in small liquid filled bottles. It can be very messy if it spills, so double bagging is crucial. Benzoin is a brown alcohol based skin protectant that makes the skin extremely tacky, will disinfect it, and also partially seal any open skin. Benzoin will keep the tape where you applied it, and I use it when I have to slit a blister to make sure it has been disinfected. The third item I always carry is some felt moleskin. The moleskin is designed to be placed around a blister, intact or popped, to keep pressure and friction off the sensitive and swollen area of your foot that is being affected. A fourth item I carry is a small pair of sharp scissors and/or a safety pin, which is very useful for carefully slitting blisters in the correct area. This can be difficult to do with a knife if the blister is deep under skin or in an awkward area, and makes cutting tape and moleskin easier. Lastly, on longer trips where I may run into some very wet weather for multiple days, I carry a small tube of athlete's foot cream. There have been trips where my feet have been completely soaked and hiking 12+ hours in very wet conditions. While I always give my feet a chance to dry overnight and swap/wring out socks during the day, athlete's foot can set in. Athlete's foot can cause the skin to become itchy, peel, or separate, causing additional blisters and discomfort.

Blister prevention is the first step. A comfortable shoe with a quality sock is the best cure, and some people find insoles helpful. I use trail runners with an insole and darn tough light hiker wool quarter socks, and I tend to check the socks position on my foot a few miles into a trip to make sure it has not bunched up, causing a friction point. Products such as BodyGlide, available applied via either a stick or powder that you rub into your feet, can help to waterproof and protect skin, as well as reduce friction and chafing. The second step to prevention is to tape hotspots. On long uphill hikes, I normally will feel a bit of rubbing on my heels, so I will stop, spend 5 minutes applying a few strips of tape on the back of my heel before continuing. Hotspots can occur anywhere on your foot and applying some tape will eliminate these spots before they become blisters. The last step to prevention is to keep irritants out of your shoe by using a short gaiter and/or cleaning out your shoes when you feel any debris in them.

If you fail to prevent a blister, fixing it is next. Most blisters can be carefully slit and drained to reduce the pressure and swelling. Blood filled blisters should be only slit if you can completely disinfect them since they are much more likely to get infected. After cleaning, slitting, and cleaning again, benzoin should be applied to seal it. Pre-cut or custom cut moleskin should be then placed around the blister site, and then tape should then be applied over the moleskin and the blister site, overlapping the surrounding skin sufficiently to make sure it will stay on the foot. A good repair can be done in 10-15 minutes, and can stay on the foot for multiple days. I recommend removing any patches at night to let the foot breath, and reapplying in the morning before any significant walking. The only time I will not remove the patches is if I think it may cause more damage to the foot. ❖



The TrailGroove Store: Gear Up Now ⇨

YOUR AD HERE

PLACE YOUR AD IN
TRAILGROOVE MAGAZINE

WE KEEP BACK ISSUES - AND YOUR AD - AVAILABLE FOREVER.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US AT:
SALES@TRAILGROOVE.COM



A Visit to the Chinese Wall

Location: Bob Marshall Wilderness, Montana

by David M. Cobb

All images Copyright 2013 © David M. Cobb

There's a geologically interesting Chinese Wall that's not in China. It is part of the million-plus acre Bob Marshall Wilderness of Montana and consists of a 15-mile, 1000-foot cliff of limestone that runs north to south along the Continental Divide. The last time I hiked along the base of the wall was in mid-June during my hike of the Continental Divide from Canada to Mexico. That time I post-holed through 4-12 feet of snow, so I wanted to return in nicer climes and for the opportunity of better photography.

The Bob Marshall Wilderness (or “The Bob” as it is nicknamed) is named after the founder of the Wilderness Society. An avid hiker of the backcountry, Bob Marshall spent his short life advocating for

wilderness -- so it's fitting that his name was attached to the preservation of this land in 1941.

On my recent trip to this area in late July, I covered only a small portion of this wilderness, but there are many loops that can be taken from the Chinese Wall through different routes of return. The trailhead begins at the South Fork Sun River near Benchmark, Montana. It stays fairly level for the first 10 miles, undulating through prairie, lodgepole pine forest, and burned areas of the valley. In summer, the fireweed blooms fill the hillsides and can be quite spectacular. Like much of the surrounding area along the north Montana divide, fire

Below: Rock Creek Fire, Montana

Right: Cliff Mountain

Previous Page: Chinese Wall, South





Far Left: West Fork of the Sun River
Left: Bear Warning Sign
Below: Red Butte
Next Page: Fireweed & Burnt Forest

has taken its toll as the burnt hillsides attest. (On my hike, a grizzly kill had occurred near the trail and warning signs alerted hikers to this fact. I always feel like I've entered Dracula's lair when near a grizzly kill, so I stayed alert and walked quickly past. On my return along the kill site, I followed three grizzly tracks and a black bear sow and cub track which made me quite uncomfortable. Bear spray is the recommended deterrent, so packing this on your travels through "The Bob" is probably a good idea.) After a couple of pack-bridge crossings, the route curves westward along the West Fork of the Sun River.







This entire section of trail is part of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, so CDT trail markers keep you on course. After passing a backcountry ranger station along the Indian Point Meadows the trail begins to ascend, at first gradually and then steeply northward. After a few last fords of the West Fork Sun River, the trail bends even further westward up Burnt Creek and then switchbacks up to Cliff Pass alongside Cliff Mountain. Views of the “Chinese Wall” begin to appear, and as you reach the pass at 7600 feet the 1000-foot limestone wall extends south and north for many miles.

Along the wall the trail undulates for many miles past streams, tarns, and through flower-filled meadows. The mosquitoes were never bad during my trip, but the biting blackflies and horseflies were tiresome.

Best Time to Go: June is too early unless you like a lot of wet snow and rain. At this time it’s more like “The Bog” instead of “The Bob.” July is a good time to visit to view the prolific beargrass display and other wildflowers. August is fire season; so many trails may be closed due to forest fires in the area. I avoid grizzly country in September, as the bears become too unpredictable for my liking.

Getting There: From Augusta, Montana follow the Benchmark Road to the west as you and look for the Benchmark Wilderness Ranch signs. Turn left onto the Willow Creek Road, and after a few dusty miles of driving go past the Benchmark Wilderness Ranch and drive onward to the South Fork of Sunriver Trailhead.

Maps: I used the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture’s Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wilderness Complex map from 1990, 1:100,000

Information: Free permits are available at the trailhead and there is lots of information online. Camping is allowed most places within the wilderness, but some areas may be closed due to overuse, fire, or grizzly bear activity.

Books: “Hiking Montana’s Bob Marshall Wilderness” by Erik Molvar, published by Falcon Guides offers hiking suggestions, maps, and elevation guides. An interesting book published by The Mountaineers and authored by James M. Glover is called “A Wilderness Original: The Life of Bob Marshall.” It is a wonderful read about this iconic man’s life and stewardship of the wild. ❖

Side trails drop down into drainages and any of these can be taken for a side trip or a longer loop back to your vehicle. My goal was to hike to Larch Hill Pass or Spotted Bear Pass, but a nearby fire closed these areas to me. This large area of the Bob Marshall Wilderness is also a game preserve with no hunting allowed, so wildlife abounds and tracks are everywhere.

I spent a couple of days walking around the high country exploring, photographing, and just sitting in the shade reading. My return trip was much better than my initial one along the divide. “The Bob” is a lesser known wilderness area, but quite spectacular in its vastness, and “The Chinese Wall” is a place to visit time and again.

Note: You are viewing the PDF version of TrailGroove Magazine. For the optimal viewing experience please view the magazine online at:
<http://www.TrailGroove.com>

Direct link to this issue:
<http://www.TrailGroove.com/issue10.html>



All images Copyright 2013 © David M.Cobb Photography.

The Ouachita Trail

Location: Ouachita Mountains
of Arkansas and Oklahoma

by Susan Dragoo

I hear the wind approaching as it moves up the ridge. No other sound breaks the night's long silence, not even the rustle of a possum in the undergrowth. It is early autumn in a year of drought; perhaps the lack of water at this elevation keeps the critters away, which suits me fine. We took care to hang the bear bag high off the ground, regardless. Why tempt fate?

I drift off, awakening later to an unmistakable sound a few feet away. Zzip! Opens the tent. Zzip! Closes the tent. It is Mary, up and around in the darkness. Without looking at my watch I know it is morning, but I am in no hurry. My sleep was restless, as it often is the first night or two on the trail. I listen to the activity and stay warm in the cocoon of my sleeping bag. Soon I hear Deb getting up and decide I had better move. Day is breaking.

Mary already has water going in the Jet Boil. She cooks at the cold fire ring; the three of us gathered around it last night as if it crackled with flame. With the burn ban we could have no fire, but even the suggestion of it held some visceral attraction. By the light of our headlamps, we had perched on rocks, chatting after dinner, sipping a good

Cabernet, making dessert of dark chocolate and homemade pumpkin bread. Now, pale sunlight filters through the green of oaks and pine, beginning to warm us. I eat a breakfast of oatmeal and tea and we begin to break camp.

Soon we are back on the trail. Eight more miles today to finish this segment. Back home in the flatlands, that distance would take about 30 minutes for a cyclist, less than 90 minutes for an average runner, two to three hours for a brisk walker. For us, it will take a good half-day with fully loaded packs, here on the rugged terrain of the Ouachita Trail.

We are hiking the trail a section at a time. Its 223-mile length is divided into 10 segments, each easily hiked in a weekend. A long weekend, for those of us driving from Central Oklahoma to the southeastern part of the state to enjoy the remoteness and beauty of this National Recreation Trail. The "OT" begins at Talimena State Park, just outside Talihina, and stretches eastward into Arkansas through the Ouachita Mountains, the highest peaks from the Rockies to the Appalachians, topping out at 2,753 feet.

Left: The Ouachita Trail Winds Between Tall Pines Towering into the Mist in the Ouachita National Forest





Above: The Sun Peeks Over the Horizon and Warms Our Campsite During an Early Autumn Hike of Section 3, East of Queen Wilhelmina State Park in Western Arkansas.

Right: Stream Crossings Are Plentiful During Rainy Seasons on Section 5 of the Trail, Providing a Bountiful Source of Water

Unlike its big brother in the Appalachians, traffic on the OT is light. Begin a section alone and you may well complete it without seeing another hiker. I cling to this feeling of being “in the wild.” The wildness is, of course, only relative, but it feeds a yearning in me. As a youth I explored the woods and ponds on the outskirts of my home town, defying frequent warnings of snakes and ticks. It was what I knew, and I made the most of it. My best friend and I would clamber over gates and squeeze between barbed wire, almost certainly trespassing although we thought nothing of it at the time. Cowpaths, oil roads, and an abandoned railway bed were our trails, when we weren’t bushwhacking

(not that we knew that word). Stumbling upon a pumpjack or the remains of some old building excited our imaginations, and occasionally we found “treasures” in our explorations. Digging around in a pile of refuse near the railroad we retrieved vintage medicine bottles still in good condition; I have them to this day, displayed on my bookshelf, bearing witness to the truth of the adage, “One man’s trash” A creek trickling over the graduated layers of an abandoned rock quarry substituted for the waterfalls and lush, fern-filled streams I studied in my grandfather’s National Geographic and on the cover of my favorite three-ring school binder.



Decades later, I have visited more beautiful places than I can recall, close to home and continents away. But rather than quelling the longing to be out in nature, time and experience seem to make it deeper, more urgent. Am I more keenly aware of the gift of God’s creation? Or of my own mortality? Assuredly, the pause it forces in a frenzied life cannot be discounted.

Whatever its origin, this calling to be outside won’t leave me alone, and I am thankful that “my own backyard” provides an easy outlet. I can leave my home in the middle of Oklahoma early in the morning and be on the OT by mid-day. There, my mind is washed clean, attention only rarely drifting to anything beyond the journey. Intruding thoughts of responsibility are easily set aside in the sufficiency of the present. I am content to walk, talking with companions or hanging back to enjoy a solitary experience . . . watching the trail ahead for the next landmark, keeping an eye on the surface as I pick my way over rocks and roots, digging in with my hiking poles as I climb a steep slope, or stopping at a vista to absorb the long view over the mountains. I notice the forest change from hardwoods to pines as I move from the north side of the ridge to the south. Ferns and wildflowers appear where there is moisture, and I watch for the coy Mayapple and delicate Dwarf Crested Iris in the spring of the year.

After miles of rocky trail, something as simple as a wide, level stretch with a soft covering of leaves or pine needles becomes a special treat for the feet, and a moss-covered path through a “wizard tree” grove seems magical. Then traversing the granite shards of a “rock glacier” is a welcome challenge.



Occasionally the trail reveals vestiges of white man's early occupation, in the crossing of an old road trace or sighting of an abandoned homestead. I see a lone chimney or the remnants of a stone wall and wonder, "Why here?" pondering what happened to the families who tried to scratch out a living in these rugged hills, now a land set aside for the pleasure of city folk who want to carry their stuff around on their backs for 20 or so miles and then go back to their leisure. Like me.

The sun is warm on the back of my neck as we ascend another switchback, leaning heavily on our hiking poles. A walking stick drops on my arm, and I hurry to brush him off. These insects may be harmless but I find them distinctly unpleasant. Poison ivy lines the

trail and will no doubt leave its itchy legacy. We are just at the cusp of hiking season, still a bit too early in the fall, so undergrowth and insects are part of the experience. Water is getting low and I am thankful we cached at Horsethief Springs. It is not far now, and I look forward to taking off my pack, knowing the rest is well earned.

Reaching the end of the trail is bittersweet. The satisfaction of completing another section is tempered by the knowledge that other obligations and adventures will delay my return. But while I am gone the Ouachitas will remain, the mountains unchanging in any span of time that I can perceive and the forest continually renewing itself in a timeless cycle.

Best Time to Go: Late fall, winter and early spring are best for cooler temperatures, minimal undergrowth and insects, fall colors and spring wildflowers.

Getting There: The western trailhead is at Talimena State Park near Talihina, Oklahoma, 142 miles southeast of Tulsa. The eastern terminus of the trail is near Little Rock, Arkansas. Multiple access points exist along the length of the trail.

Maps: Hiking Trails of the Ouachitas and Ozarks

Information: The Ouachita Trail is primarily within the Ouachita National Forest and is administered by the US Forest Service. It traverses the Flatside Wilderness, the Upper Kiamichi Wilderness and several wildlife management areas. Camping is allowed anywhere along the trail, except near Queen Wilhelmina State Park and the last 30 miles on the eastern end. No permits are needed to hike or camp. Five campgrounds are located along the Ouachita Trail: Talimena State Park, Winding Stair, Queen Wilhelmina State Park, Big Brushy and Lake Sylvia. Shelters are located along the middle stretch of the trail, with new ones under construction on the western end.

Friends of the Ouachita Trail (FoOT) is a non-profit organization created by trail users to maintain the Ouachita National Recreation Trail as a healthy and enjoyable outdoor recreational asset. <http://friendsot.org/>

Books: Ouachita Trail Guide by Tim Ernst

About the Author: *Susan Dragoo is a writer and photographer living in Norman, Oklahoma who would rather be hiking just about any day of the year. ❖*

Note: You are viewing the PDF version of TrailGroove Magazine. For the optimal viewing experience please view the magazine online at:

<http://www.TrailGroove.com>

Direct link to this issue:

<http://www.TrailGroove.com/issue10.html>

Below: Leaving Camp After an Uphill Climb from Potter Shelter Right After Sunrise on Section 6.

Pages 33-34: Pines & Oaks in Rain & Mist on an Early Spring Hike of Section 6, East of Story, AR.

Pages 35-36: Irons Fork Creek at Dawn on Section 6

Page 37: A Springtime Vista on Section 5, West of Story, AR.









FREE SHIPPING
ON ORDERS OVER \$50.

60-DAY NO HASSLE
RETURNS.

KILLER DEALS.


CAMPSAVER



mont-bell




SAVE BIG
ON SERIOUSLY GREAT OUTDOOR GEAR



 [▶ SEE ALL SALE ITEMS](#)

VARIATIONS ON GRAY WOLF RIDGE

Location: Washington State

by Doug Emory



I can claim a history with Gray Wolf Ridge. Twenty years ago, fresh on my moving to the Pacific Northwest, I set the goal of a full Gray Wolf run – three peaks to bag and a double-digit mile loop hike to complete – only to be ignominiously bogged down in thigh-deep June snow and chased off by a blizzard rolling off Mount Olympus. Since that initial attempt, I have taken the ridge in bits and pieces. Last September marked my first time completing the route I had first imagined those long years ago.

Located between the Dungeness and Gray Wolf rivers, Gray Wolf Ridge runs at elevations between 6000-7200 feet. It's an isolated spot. To reach the trailhead, one

“WHOEVER PUT
THIS TRAIL IN
HATES HUMANITY.”

approaches on an unmaintained forest service road that dead-ends at a berm. It's doubtful the Upper Maynard Burn Trail that takes off from there ever was intended for popular consumption, having been put in as a straight shot to fight the Maynard Burn Fire in the early 1900's. My son Nathan's comment as we made the unrelenting approach up seemed fitting: “Whoever put this trail in hates humanity.”

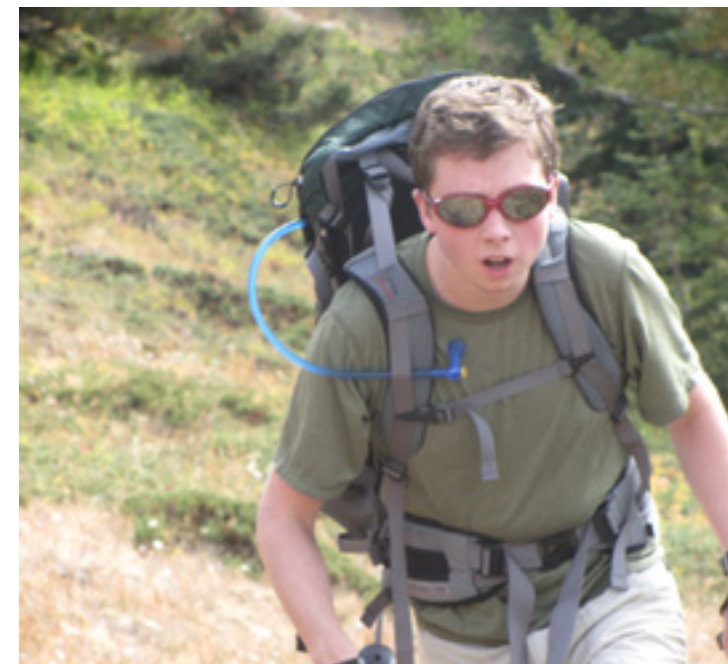


Above: View of Baldy

Below: Nathan Climbing Upper Maynard Burn Trail.

Left: Rock Spine off Tyler Peak.

Previous Page: View of the Ridge.



Those humans who do gain the ridge, though, gain unobstructed views of Mount Olympus and the spires of the Needles. Backpackers can find overnight campsites on the ridge, and those of an adventurous nature can scramble or rappel off the ridge's east face, descending 3000 feet to the Royal Basin Trail. From this point, wanderers can choose to complete the loop or head even deeper into Olympic National Park.

Nathan wasn't out of diapers when I made my original grandiose assault through the snow, but at 21 years old, he's a strong hiker now, so I invited him along in case a strong back was needed to bear my aging carcass home. We met at the Edmonds ferry just after 6:30, grabbed breakfast in Kingston,



and followed Forest Service Roads 2880 and 2870 south from Sequim Bay State Park as they wound along the ridges above the Dungeness River. Where the spur road came in from the west, a small sign pointing the way to the Upper Maynard Burn Trail surprised me – that was the first time I’d noticed an official acknowledgement that the backcountry path even existed.

Our plan for the day was simple – charge up the Maynard Burn Track until it disappeared in alpine meadows below the saddle between Tyler Peak to the east and Baldy to the west. From there, we would turn west, leaving the prospect of a day hike to Tyler behind and committing to Baldy (6797 ft.) as our first summit, to be followed by Gray

Wolf’s apex at 7,218 feet and Peak 7076 after that. Then we would either rappel or simply pick our way down the slopes descending between those latter two peaks, catch the Royal Basin Trail and follow that to the Lower Maynard Burn Trail, which, with any luck, would get us back to our car – around 15 miles more or less, with 7000 feet of elevation gain.

We started out in brilliant September sun, with the trail being just as I remembered it – straight up, sans switchbacks alongside a draw and then into the meadows underneath the dragon spine of rock outcroppings that runs off Tyler. From that point on, we would be off-trail, but route-finding isn’t an issue with Gray Wolf. The route stays above tree

line and holds directly to the ridge’s crest, over every conceivable bump, a fact that accounts for the ridiculous elevation gain. (That’s also why we’d decided to venture that uncharted descent – a couple of short rappels struck us as a better choice than the demoralizing slog back-tracking, since returning on the ridge mixes 2000 feet of uphill hiking in with the merciful descents.)

Just before cresting Baldy, we entered the national park, and from that summit the truly wild part of the route revealed itself – the steep, barren climb to Gray Wolf’s summit tower, hard walking on packed dirt and shattered shale to a dark outcropping already backlit by the sun. Farther to the south, the Needles, peaks that presented

some of the hardest technical climbing in the range, rose before gathering clouds.

With weather coming in, we paused just long enough for photos on top. We crossed the next saddle, exited the ridge for the first time in hours, and bypassed snowfields between Peak 7076’s twin summits. We kicked our way through scree to tag our third top of the day.

The route down was about as confused and treacherous as I’d envisioned. The ridges channeled us into a watercourse that cliffed out, so we scrambled over a rib to a slope so sheer our boots kept sliding out from under us. Nathan finally rigged up the rope, and we rappelled through the trees before he

Left: Top of Baldy.
Below: Gray Wolf Summit.





Above, Clockwise from Top: Needles; View of Ridge End, Summit of Peak 7076 ;
Nathan, Just Below Gray Wolf Summit
Right: Doug on Top of Gray Wolf Summit

detected a trunk notched with a blaze just beyond another shattered rib. We followed what turned out to be a line of blazes to a dugout, and below that, where the ground finally flattened, we stepped into a faerie garden straight out of Narnia, an open circle of boulders completely covered in moss, all faintly luminescent in the dying light.

From there, it just required a jaunt to the Royal Basin Trail and a dogleg north toward home.

We came out in the dark, and as I unpacked under starlight, I asked what I had learned during my two decades experiencing Gray Wolf's variations. Well, I had learned to

only approach late in the Northwest hiking season, since wading uphill through crotch-deep snow might make suitable training for Olympic athletes, but it's distinctly unpleasant for mortal men. I had learned that Tyler Peak and Baldy make challenging day trips and that enough snow stays on the ridge to provide water for an overnight high camp. I had learned that the off-trail descent from the ridge is doable and that the long ridge run can be followed by a trip into the Royal Basin backcountry.

Most of all, each trip had taught me that I want to go back. Twenty years marks a large portion of my personal history, but Gray Wolf Ridge will stay young forever.

Getting There:

The forest service roads approaching this area come from the north side of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. If you're starting from the Seattle metro area, one pleasant way to make the trip is to take the Edmonds ferry to Kingston and then take Highway 104 to Highway 101 north. Taking Highway 101 north from Olympia is less picturesque, but it gets you there just as well. The turnoff for the roads (FS 28--2880-2870) into the Dungeness River backcountry is directly across from Sequim Bay State Park, about five miles east of the town of Sequim and twenty-five miles east of Port Angeles.

Maps:

Although I just use a map program now and print my own, Green Trails makes decent maps covering this area. If you can find a copy, the topographic map showing the full Buckhorn Wilderness area is handy since that shows both the national forest and national park sections of the route.

Information:

This route is little traveled, and because it crosses from national forest to national park and back again, getting a full picture of it (as well as figuring out which permits to buy) can be a challenge. Parking at either the Upper Maynard Burn or the Dungeness River/Royal Creek trailheads requires you have a USFS Northwest Forest Pass, available at any ranger station or at a number of private vendors such as REI. If you intend to set up a wilderness camp anywhere on the ridge from the summit of Baldy on, you should contact the NPS Wilderness Information Center in Port Angeles (360) 565-3100 to see if a permit is required. If you intend to camp at Royal Basin, reservations are necessary, so you want to book early. Remember too that, if you love hiking with Man's Best Friend, Fido needs to sit and wait patiently below the summit of Baldy since dogs are verboten in the park.

Books:

I first saw this route vaguely described in the "High Alpine Traverses" section of The Climbers' Guide to the Olympic Mountains, by Olympic Mountain Rescue and published by the Mountaineers. While this book does need updating, it gives great essential information about the Olympic peaks and the main approaches, and it gives just enough detail about this trip to get you safely on the ridge.

About the Author:

Doug Emory is an avid cross-country skier, hiker, and mountaineer who lives in Woodinville, Washington. He has completed the back-country ski circuit of Crater Lake, Oregon, about half a dozen times and has climbed 199 different peaks, including the Cascade volcanoes from Hood to Baker and the three Mexican volcanoes. In his off-hours, he works for the community and technical college system. ❖

50% off
everything at
golite.com



SHARE THE
BENEFITS OF
REI MEMBERSHIP

REI members get free shipping on eligible orders, an annual member refund and more.



► Learn More About
REI Membership

DeLorme inReach SE Satellite Communicator

Review by Aaron Zagrodnick



This spring Delorme released the **inReach SE (Screen Edition)**, an updated version of their popular **inReach Satellite Communicator**. The newer SE builds on the original model by allowing 2-way 160 character satellite messaging and SOS without the need for a Bluetooth connected smartphone – Messages can be read and replied to using the SE’s color screen and 4-way directional pad, although an iOS or Android smartphone can still be connected for ease of use and for additional capabilities. You can also setup tracking so that friends and family at home can follow your progress as you hike, or to record your route for your own use later. The inReach SE utilizes the Iridium satellite network for worldwide coverage, and a service plan is required for use. Unlike its predecessor, the SE features a non-removable internal lithium battery, recharging via USB, and sports a more cell phone like shape. It’s also lighter, coming in at a reasonable 6.7 ounces according to Delorme. The device is waterproof and dustproof under normal backpacking conditions, and shock resistant.

Impressions

Delorme had launch delay and supply problems with the SE for most of the spring, and initially units were hard to come by. Additionally after the product launch some website features were not available, specifically the syncing of quick text messages, preset messages, and contacts that you can setup in your account on Delorme’s website, then sync to the inReach. Delorme however, has now resolved that limitation and the supply issues have vastly improved.

Pros: Excellent battery life, stand-alone 2-way messaging capability, dependable worldwide Iridium satellite coverage, SOS, ruggedness at a reasonable weight.

Cons: Slow typing in stand-alone mode, USB port cover could be improved, doesn’t stand upright due to rounded corners for antenna orientation, activation and plan downgrade fees, Earthmate Application occasionally buggy.

Rating: ★★★★★

In any event, out of the box the unit has a solid feel and overall the device is stout for a unit that weighs less than half a pound. Though Delorme does offer a neoprene protective case for the SE, it doesn’t really seem necessary to me unless you really plan to be using the device where it’s going to be knocked around quite a bit. (Though if you need the SE to float, you’ll want to get the case) One part of the SE that doesn’t quite seem up to par with the construction of the rest of the unit is the USB port cover – It’s tethered to the unit with a weak piece of rubber and the cover just doesn’t close in a confident manner. However, it’s still holding up and while it seems like it could be improved, it hasn’t posed any type of problem. Additionally, the exposed press-and-hold to turn on power button could lead to an accidental power-on event while packed away, but I haven’t yet had that happen while stored in a hipbelt or exterior pack pocket. The unit requires activation, (One-time \$19.95 fee) subscription to a service plan, and

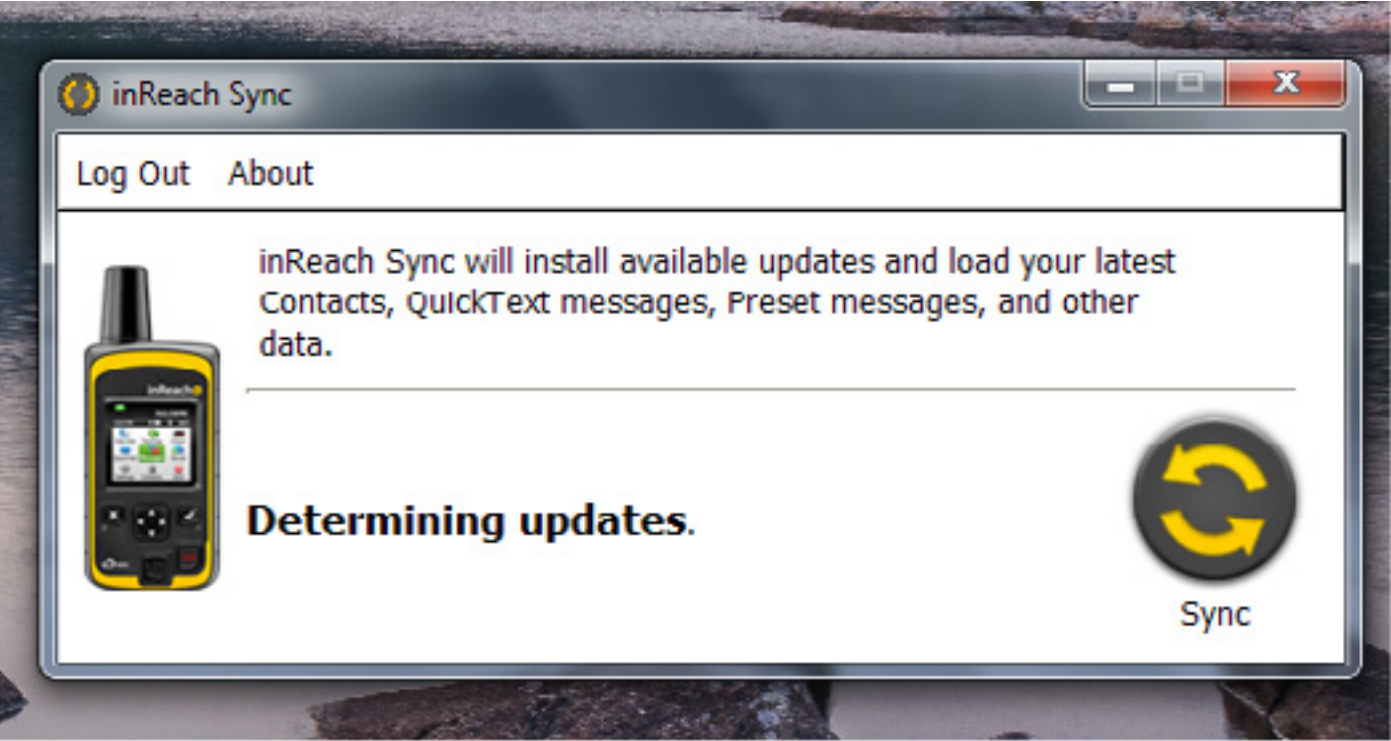


some setup on Delorme’s website to get started. Following the directions in my case resulted in a smooth and quick initial activation process. The device measured in at 6.9 ounces on our scale, and if you like you can remove the attached belt clip by depressing the tabs on each side and sliding up to remove, saving .2 ounces. I’m not sure Delorme actually intended for this to be removable, as it does require some difficulty to detach and the clip may be bent in the process. However, for my use I had no need for the clip (I keep the SE in a hipbelt pocket) so it was worth removing, resulting in a slightly smaller form factor and slightly less weight. Pairing to a smartphone via Bluetooth was easy as well, and by downloading Delorme’s Earthmate app you gain a full keyboard and downloadable offline topographic maps with the ability to see your current location and track your progress. On occasion I did find that the Earthmate application wouldn’t recognize the inReach, even

though it was definitely connected to the phone via Bluetooth. Forcibly terminating the application and reopening, or cycling Bluetooth on the phone solved the issue when this happened on an iPhone 5. Charge the inReach SE from a computer’s USB port or by using the included wall adapter. While charging, the device displays the current charge percentage as well as an estimate of how much time remains until a full charge is reached – A very nice touch.

Service Plans

Delorme’s service plans offer options for a wide range of intended use. They do allow you to switch between plans during the year, but you’ll be charged a \$25 fee if you move to a cheaper plan. I fell into favor with the Recreation Plan, with unlimited preset messages, unlimited tracking, 40 allocated custom messages per month, and an overage fee of 50 cents per message sent / received.



Service Plan Pricing and Details as of 9/15/2013:

	Safety Plan	Recreation Plan	Expedition Plan
Annual (12 Months)	\$9.95 Monthly	\$24.95 Monthly	\$49.95 Monthly
Seasonal (4-month minimum)	N/A	\$39.95 Monthly	\$64.95 Monthly
SOS	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Predefined Messages from inReach	10 per month shared with Messages	Unlimited	Unlimited
Messages	10 per month shared with Predefined Messages	40 per month	120 per month
Tracking	\$0.25 per track point	Unlimited	Unlimited
Overage	\$1.50 per message	\$0.50 per message	\$0.25 per message

Messages

Over the summer I tested the inReach SE throughout the Wind River Range, and was continually impressed with the reliability of the product. In the field use starts at home however – Prior to leaving for your trip you’ll want to setup your preset and quick text messages in your account on Delorme’s website. You can configure up to 3 preset messages, and you can choose to send each message to one or more recipients. In the field this saves time, (No typing needed) and if you’ve subscribed to the Recreation Plan or above, the best part is that these preset messages won’t count against your monthly message allotment. You can also choose to post these messages to your MapShare Page, which is a webpage hosted by Delorme (Optionally protected by a password) where people at home can view messages and tracks if you choose,

along with the location from where they were sent. Additionally, they can even locate you (If you’ve enabled this option) from this page. Quick text messages on the other hand do count against your message allotment for all plans – They’re simply there to save time. As such, you don’t have the same 3 message limit as preset messages. If you have phrases that you frequently use and don’t feel like typing them out on the SE every time, quick text messages are for you, and simply selecting them from the SE’s screen saves the typing. You can also create and subsequently load contacts to your inReach SE from your Delorme account. After configuring your preset messages, quick texts, and contacts be sure to sync your inReach SE using the USB cable and the inReach Sync Application from Delorme. (Updating the firmware, if needed follows the same process).

Preset Messages

Quickly send any of these three messages using the Preset Message button/icon on your inReach. Edit text and add recipients below.

Message 1

Just checking in!

+5555555555, Aaron@TrailGroove.com, MapShare,

Edit

Message 2

Setting up camp here for the night...

+5555555555, Aaron@TrailGroove.com, MapShare,

Edit

Message 3

Heading out for the day!

+5555555555, Aaron@TrailGroove.com, MapShare,

Edit



Press & Hold

The Preset Message button/icon can be used to send three different messages you create here on the web site.

Quick Text Messages

For use on a smartphone, inReach SE, or PN-60w GPS, these messages save you time by letting you select complete, commonly used messages.

Hey how's it going?

Edit

Setting up camp here for the night!

Edit

Heading out!

Edit

I'm checking in, everything is okay.

Edit

I'm starting from here.

Edit

I'm stopping here.

Edit

I'm having a great time!

Edit

I'm on my way.

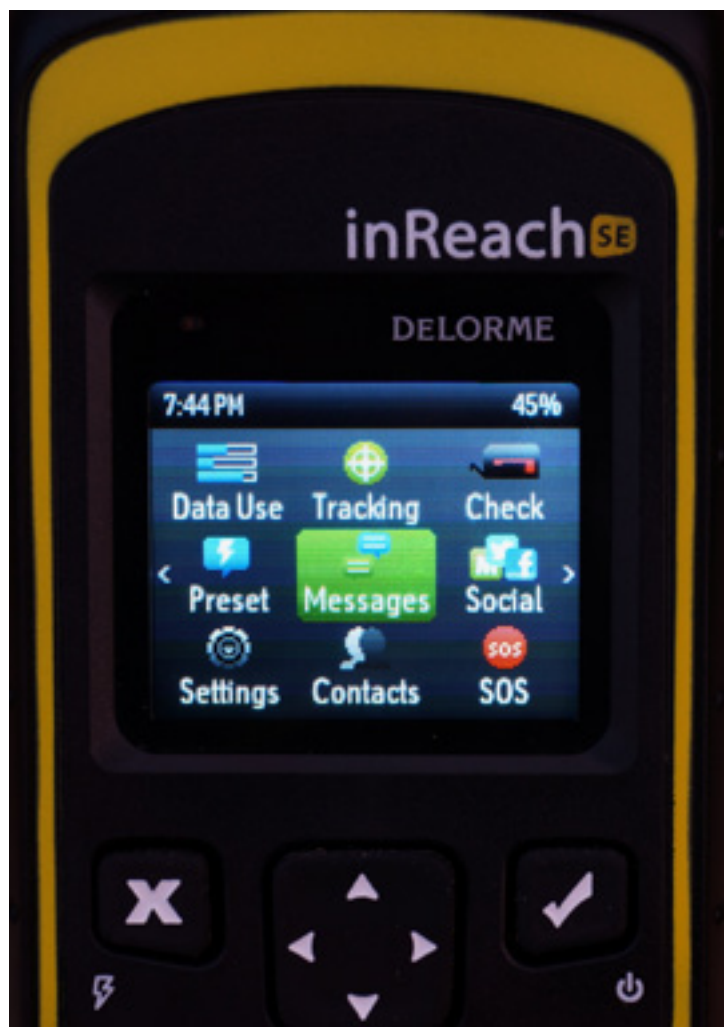
Edit

I'm going to be late.

Edit

I wish you were here!

Edit



Custom messages are composed by first typing or selecting a preset contact and utilizing the 4-way directional pad to select letters, eventually composing words and your message. The text is predictive and sometimes it will make a correct guess at what you're attempting to type, and when it does simply holding the down arrow accepts the word. Other times however, you'll be putting the 4-way keypad through its paces to compose your message. As you're typing an indicator displays how many characters you have left out of the 160 character maximum, and Delorme has provided a few shortcuts to make things easier. Holding down the left arrow serves as a quick delete key, hold down the right arrow for a space, up for shift, and down to jump to the "OK" key. While the system works



Above: An Example of the DeLorme inReach SE's Predictive Text Feature

and adequately so, I do flash back to text messaging with old cell phones in late 90's at times. Pair your device with your iOS or Android smartphone utilizing Bluetooth and the Earthmate App however, and you'll be able to compose messages quickly with a full keyboard. One nice thing about pairing the device to send messages is that you can place the inReach SE outside your tent with a clear view of the sky while you message using your phone inside, though oddly due to its rounded design the inReach won't stand up on its own, with the antenna pointing upwards for best reception as suggested by Delorme. You'll need to find a prop. Either way, once you send a message you'll get a visual working icon indicator showing that the device is working to send the message, a flashing

indicator LED, and when the message is successfully sent an indication chime and the icon will change to reflect the success.

You can send messages to cell phone numbers or email addresses, and when a recipient receives your message they'll receive the text of the message and a link to see your location on a map hosted on Delorme's website. Recipients receiving a text message can reply directly to the message, while recipients receiving an email will need to click a link in the message they received and reply from a form on Delorme's website. The "From" telephone number for text messages is a temporary number that according to Delorme, remains active and recipients can reply to it so long as there is an active conversation

being carried out between you and that recipient. What defines an "Active" time period however was not defined and is apparently fluid, so if someone needs to proactively send you a message compared to simply replying to yours, it's best to have them do so from your MapShare Page, which features a message sending form. Be sure to ask your contact to keep any messages under the 160 character limit – Otherwise their message will be split and count as multiple messages. The inReach SE will automatically check for new messages at a specified interval, this is configurable in increments ranging from every 5 to 20 minutes. Additionally, you can turn this off and choose to only check manually to save battery, or you can still initiate an on-demand manual check even if automatic checking is on. New message arrival is signaled by a ring, (You can change or turn this off) an inbox indicator within the SE's menu system, and by the LED indicator light on the device.

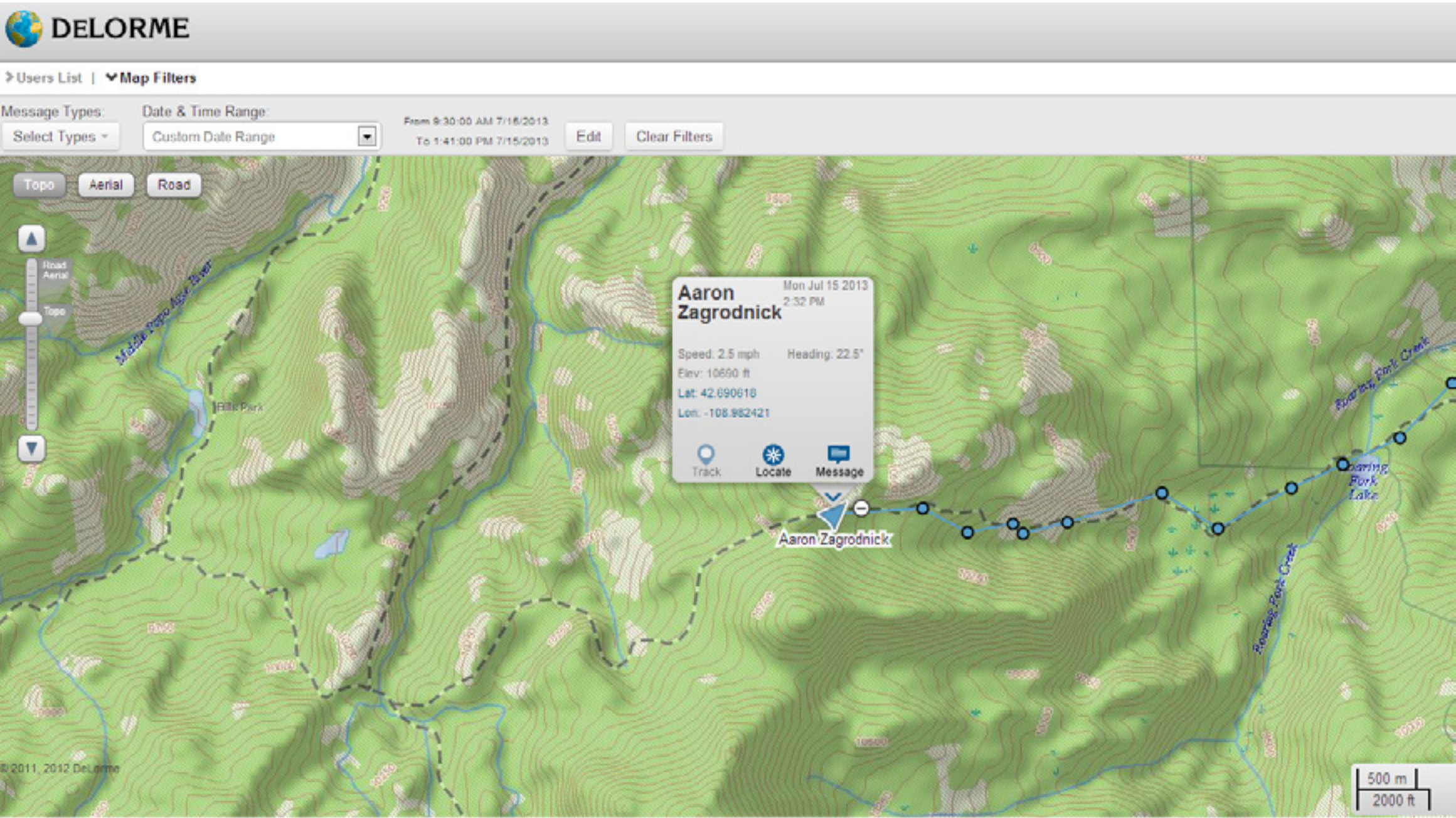
SOS messages are triggered from the SE's menu system, a dedicated physical button on the outside of the unit, or from the Earthmate application. An SOS signal from the inReach SE is routed to GEOS, a 24/7 rescue and emergency coordination center, and with its 2-way communication, you'd potentially be able to coordinate with and inform rescue personnel of the exact situation prior to their arrival. Lastly the inReach SE, if you so choose has the capability of posting to your Facebook and Twitter accounts, or you can send a custom message to your MapShare Page and share the link with as many people as you choose.



Message performance and reliability has been stellar, rain or shine, field and forest, with no failed or lost messages to report. Sending and receiving messages is snappy when you have good reception, though at times in situations such as a narrow valley with mountains on all sides, or under tree cover, the inReach SE may take quite some time to send or receive. Usually and with a good view of the sky however, it's quite fast and a message sent confirmation takes less than 30 seconds. The great majority of the time I hiked with the inReach off during the day and essentially used it only at night after setting up camp, so even if there was a delay waiting wasn't a problem. When on the move and if a delay was encountered, I just kept hiking with the SE in a side pack pocket – Eventually you'd hear the successful message sent confirmation. The location recorded when sending messages was very accurate, and the great majority of the time the accuracy was within – or closer – than the +/- 5 meter accuracy specification of the device. However, on occasion it would be slightly off, with a worst recorded messaging discrepancy of 40 feet. In addition to your location, your speed and elevation are recorded.

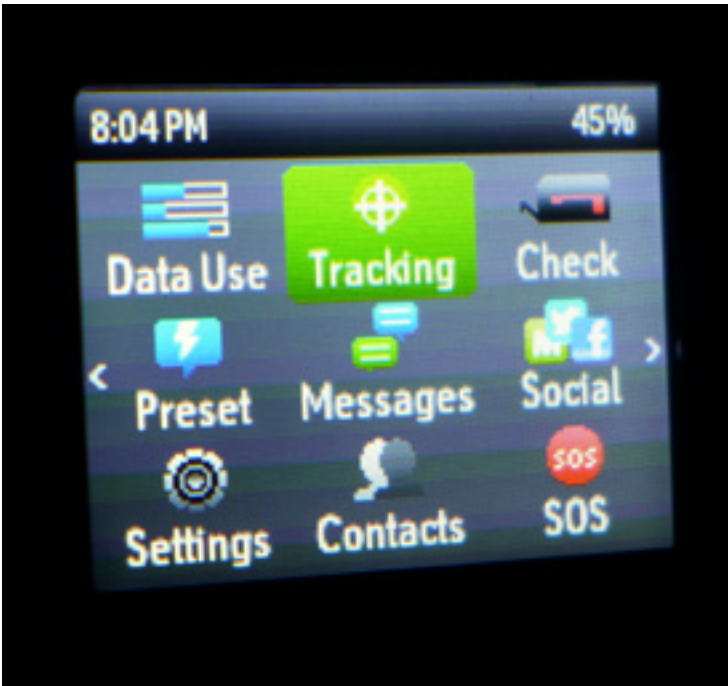
Tracking

Turn on tracking from the SE's menu system and the device will automatically send waypoints at specific timed intervals. The default is every 10 minutes, but you can slow this down in increments to as little as every 4 hours to conserve battery life if you prefer. Additionally, even if you've selected a more frequent interval the SE smartly slows down sending waypoints to every 4 hours when it detects that the



device has stopped moving, so you're not sending constant waypoints and using up your battery while you're stopped and in camp. When you start moving again, the device will automatically resume sending waypoints at your selected interval. Unfortunately, you can't customize the stationary interval and radius on consumer plans, but it works well as set by Delorme. (Enterprise plans gain this customization ability) You can later view your waypoints on a map from your account on Delorme's site, view them from the Earthmate App on your phone, or optionally you can choose

to post each waypoint to your MapShare page, allowing those at home to follow along. As with messaging, speed and the elevation of each point are recorded, and tracking worked as expected in use with accuracy and reliability nearly on par with my experience utilizing the SE's messaging functions. On occasion however, a track several hundred feet off would be recorded, but this was much closer to an oddity than the norm and the great majority of tracking points were accurate to within a few feet. At home or on the Earthmate App, you can view your track, or by configuring



your track points to post to your MapShare page those at home can follow along.

The Earthmate Application

Paired and utilizing the Earthmate App, you'll gain convenience and mapping capabilities that can be quite helpful in the backcountry, utilizing the SE's GPS. Be sure to download the maps you'll need prior to your trip, so you'll be able to view where you're at outside of cell range. The app guides you through the download process and the maps surprisingly don't take up much storage space for the large areas that they cover. The maps are well done and are

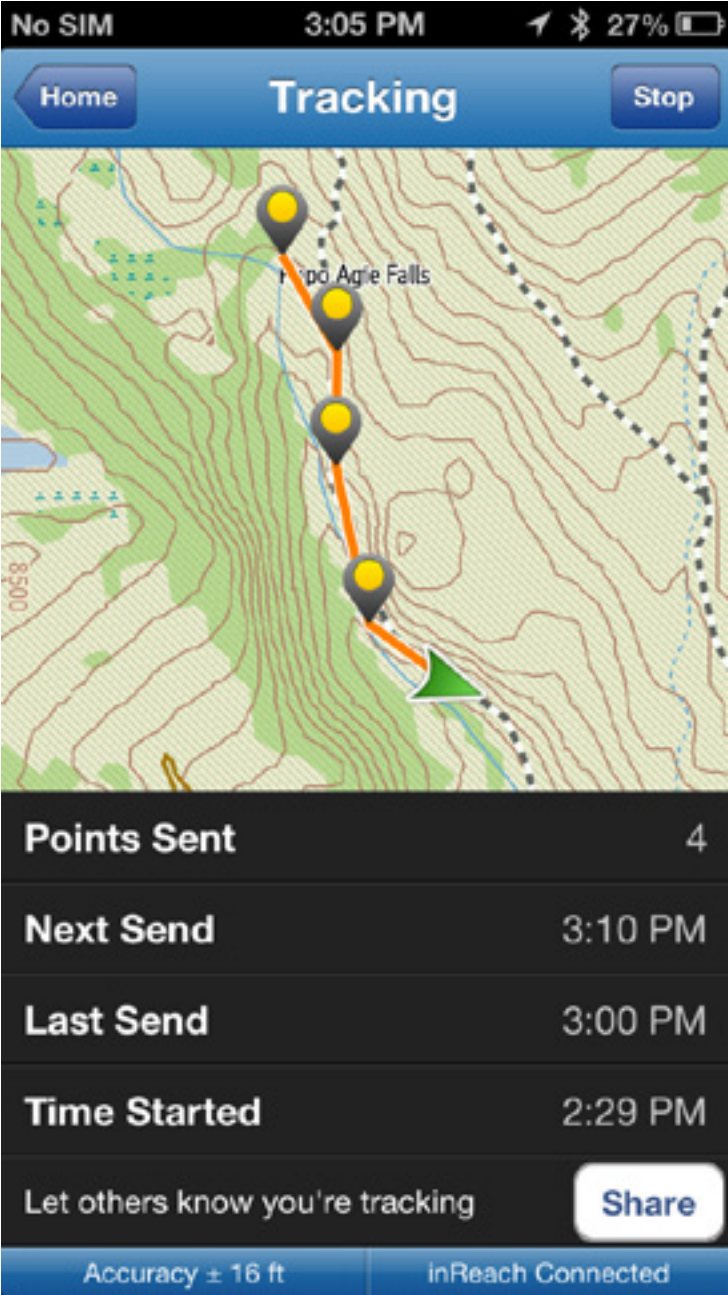
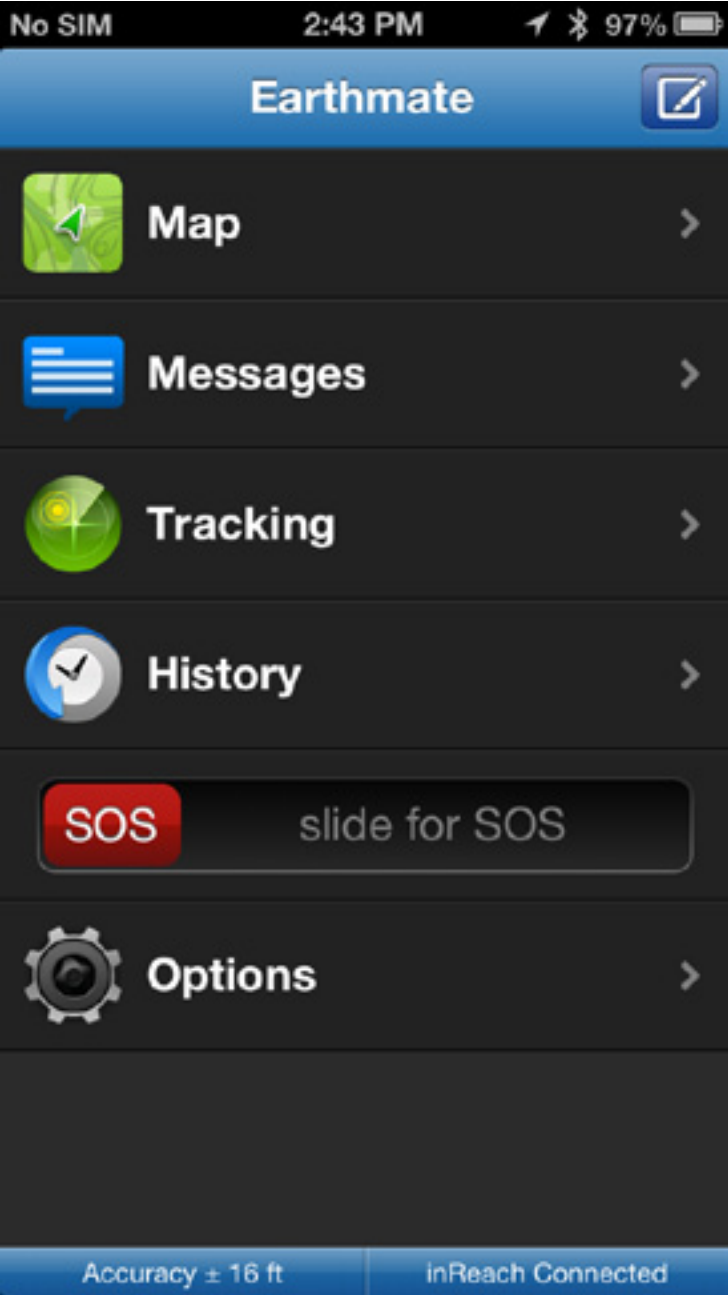
adequate, but personally I prefer the USGS topographic style compared to Delorme's. However, it's all personal preference. From within the app you can message, start and view tracks, and pinpoint your location. You can also navigate to some extent utilizing only the SE and a paper map – Send a tracking point or message and browse to the history icon, which will show the Lat / Long of messages and tracks sent. Matching these up to the measurements on the border of a map, you can determine your current location. This works fairly well, depending on how well the coordinates are detailed on your map. If they're well

detailed, you'll be able to pinpoint your current location quite accurately. If they're not well detailed, you'll be guessing a bit.

Battery Life

Battery life is excellent, and if you utilize the inReach only for messaging, you can expect to use the device without a recharge on fairly lengthy trips. As an example starting with a fully charged SE on a 5 day backpacking trip and sending 34 messages over that time frame in mixed paired / unpaired mode with an iPhone 5 resulted in only 14% battery used – We completed the trip with 86% left. (Device set to 75%

screen brightness and a 5 minute message check interval, Bluetooth on) We had the device mostly turned off during the day and at night, but it was on to check and send messages during the morning prior to leaving camp and in the evening upon arriving. We powered up the SE a few times during the day to check for incoming messages as well. The phone was the weaker link however, with 57% remaining by trip's end – But this will definitely vary with the screen and radio settings used. Screen brightness and power saving options on the SE are configurable for additional power saving opportunities. For tracking



Delorme specifies 100 hours of life with a 10 minute tracking interval and a clear view of the sky. In practice this worked out to be a fairly accurate specification, with the device averaging a loss of 1, or just slightly more (But less than 2) battery percentage points per hour. When paired and tracking, our iPhone 5 lost power at just over twice this rate. The battery power is reflected on the SE's screen in an exact percentage, allowing you to keep close tabs on remaining life – If you're on a trip without the ability to recharge and are running lower than expected, just turn off tracking or slow it down. As the device winds down you'll encounter warning messages suggesting that you reserve any possible remaining power for the SE's SOS capability. Orient the antenna with a

clear view of the sky for the best battery life. If you won't be pairing the SE with a smartphone, turn off Bluetooth under settings to save power. For additional battery life, ensure that the automatic message checking interval is slowed down, or set it to manual. Turning the device off when you don't need it is always your best bet.

Too Connected?

I'd been hiking all day – 2000 feet of elevation gain over a couple miles and finally, I crested the ridge leading to the pass. I was within the Popo Agie Wilderness testing the tracking capability of the SE, but even though Wind River Peak and the valleys below stretched out in front of me and the view was hard to beat, I found it

difficult to shake the fact that every 10 minutes tracking points were being sent from my exact location to be viewed by those watching my hike from home. "It's all in my head" I thought, as I sat on a boulder to soak up the view. Then the silence was broken – "Ring, Ring". Someone had sent me a message, just checking in on the hike and commenting on how fast I'd seem to clear the pass. Does the inReach SE intrude on the wilderness experience? That's a personal question, but for me and on that day it did just a bit. 2 months later however, and the grandparents were in town and willing to watch our 1 year old for a few days while Jen and I trekked into one of the most remote, trail-less areas that the Wind River Range holds. Would that trip have happened without the SE?

Never a chance – We needed to check in to make sure things were going smoothly at home to calm a worried mother's nerves. Without the SE that trip would have never happened, in that case...It actually made the wilderness experience possible. Fortunately, the SE has an off button, and you can even disable the incoming message chime if you prefer. Personally, I prefer to decline use of the tracking functions, turn the device off during the day, and simply check in at night and perhaps the next morning.

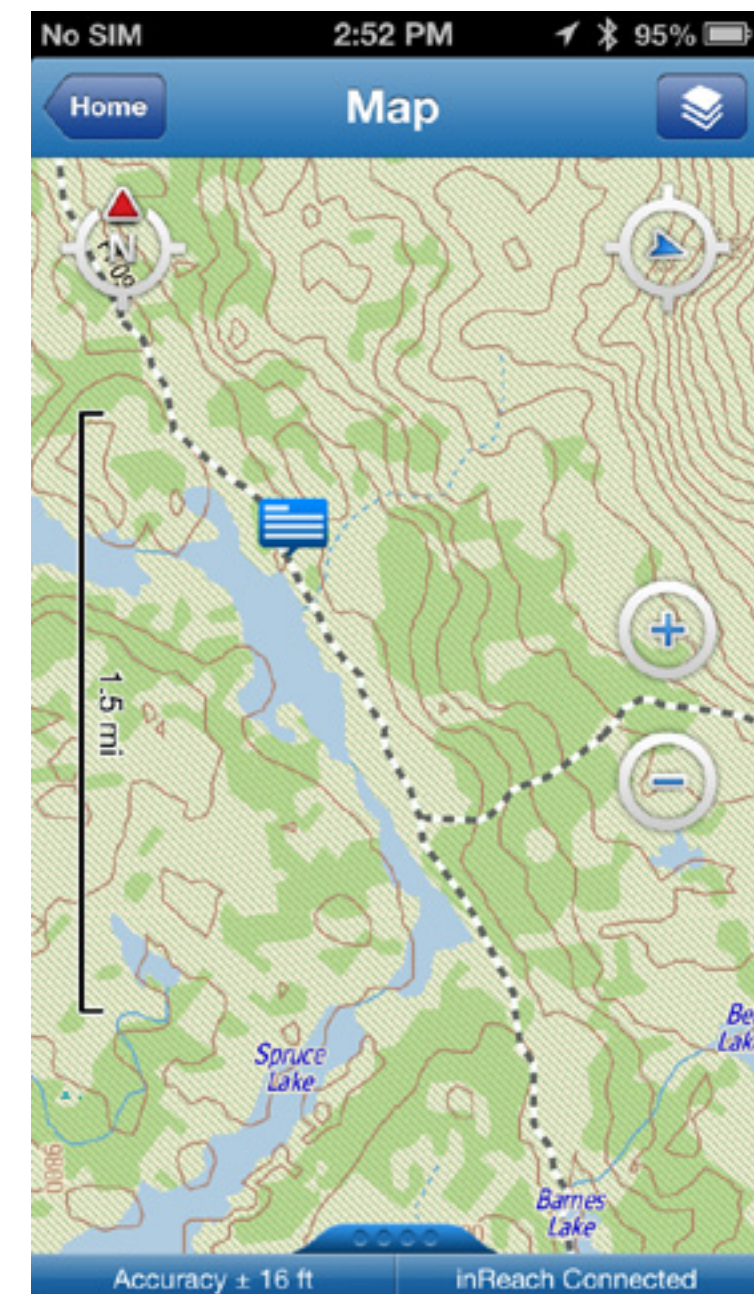
Conclusion

Overall, the inReach SE from Delorme works as advertised and does so admirably well. Any drawbacks are relatively minor and though typing in stand-alone mode can be a bit slow, if you setup preset and quick text messages that drawback can be mostly negated, along with a bit of patience. If you choose to pair the inReach SE with your smartphone all features are essentially boosted to another level, along with its ease of use, and you'll gain offline topographic maps and the ability to pinpoint your location within the Earthmate App. However, since this isn't required to utilize the SE's messaging, SOS, and tracking features you can still save weight by leaving the phone at home, and the unit is small and light enough to actually be justifiable for a lightweight backpacking trip. Initial cost is on the higher side, and you'll have to pay for a monthly or seasonal service plan. The service plans seem well thought out, and the average backcountry user should be able to find a plan suitable for their intended level of use. However, the deal would be a little sweeter without the one-time activation fee and plan downgrade fees. Tracking features work very well, and message and tracking points are generally quite accurate. Battery life is excellent. Overall the inReach SE is packed with features with little direct competition, and whether it's staying in touch with friends and family at home, having them follow along as you hike, the peace of mind that SOS capability provides, or the convenience of the Earthmate application that you're after, the inReach SE solidly does the job in all respects. ❖

Overall: ★★★★★ – Very Good

The Delorme inReach SE currently retails for around \$300. Check it out at the following retailer links:

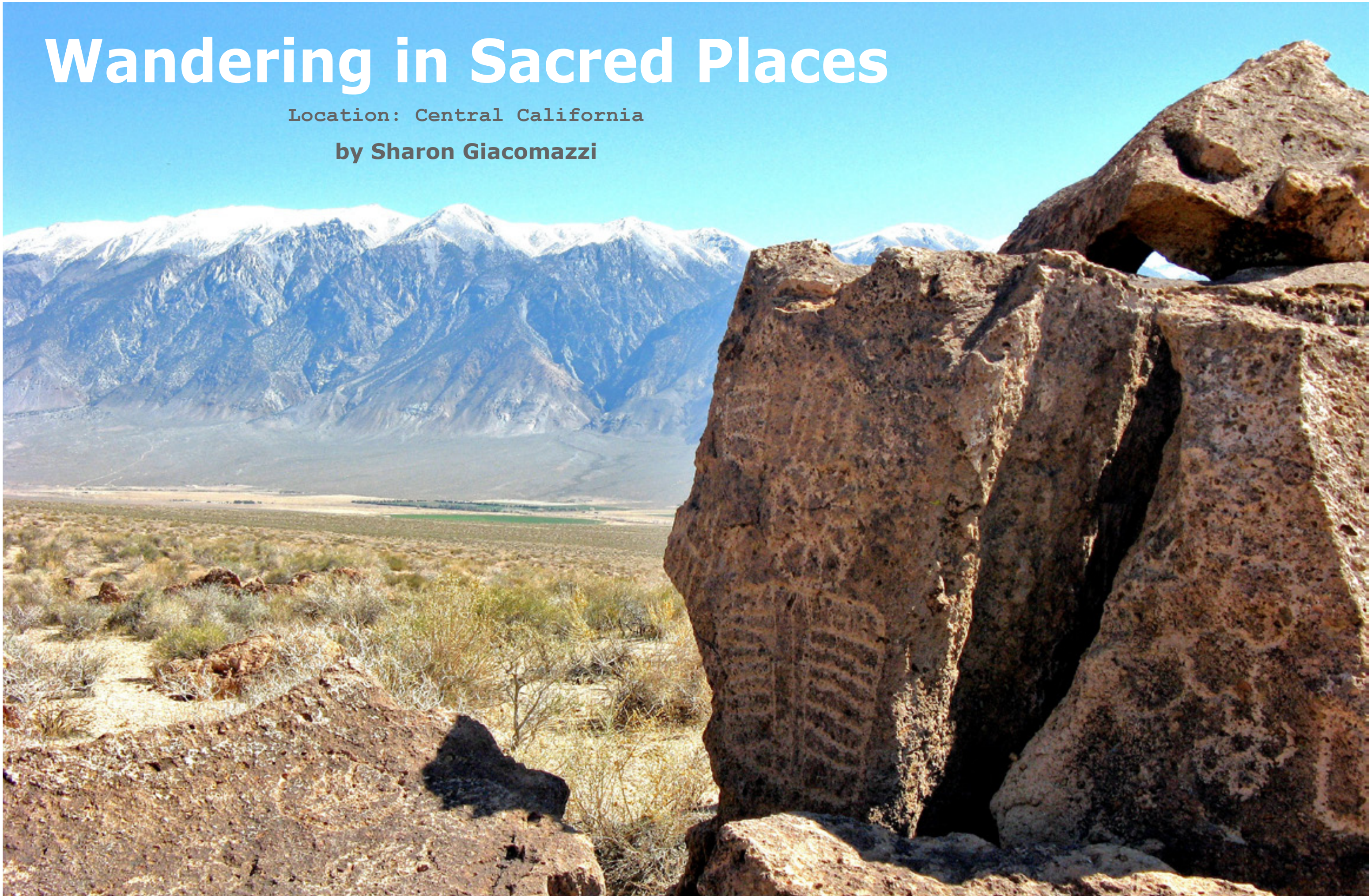
Find it at REI.com or Here at Amazon.com.



Wandering in Sacred Places

Location: Central California

by Sharon Giacomazzi



The high desert volcanic tableland north of Bishop, California is an ancient landscape. Its character was shaped 700,000 years ago when a monstrous eruption in Long Valley blanketed the region in a fiery rain of ash and rock. The violent convulsion left behind a sere and desolate rolling plateau.

350 square miles were smothered by a 500-foot-thick mantle of incandescent rock fragments that covered hills and filled canyons. As the red hot material cooled, it fused and compacted into a porous, pinkish rock known today as Bishop Tuff.

Contrary to expectation, concealed in this bone-dry environment are several ponds and wetlands. Watered by a few springs, they are the last of their kind in Owens Valley. It is a surprising green oasis in the midst of an otherwise monochromatic, arid world as far as the eye can see.



The ponds and marshes provide essential habitat for several endangered plants and animals. So crucial is this watery niche that it and hundreds of surrounding acres have been designated on “Area of Critical Environmental Concern” by the Bureau of Land Management.

The unexpected slough was reason enough for me to explore its unique ecosystem, but it was another resource of inestimable value that lured me to the area.

I rambled in the stark setting where rainfall is measured by the tablespoon in search of petroglyphs, prehistoric rock art, etched 1000-2000 years ago by predecessors of Owens Valley Paiutes. Three significant sites used by the Old Ones are located along a road that arrows through the high desert north of Bishop. The wide dirt track is much the same

as it was when it functioned as the main stage/freight artery between Bishop and the remote mining communities of Bodie and Aurora in the late 1870s. Not far away, other locales north and south of the road are also rich in petroglyphs.

The strange and enigmatic designs from a distant past reach out to us, offering a palpable connection to an ancient culture. It really doesn’t matter much if you don’t understand what they represent. Is the beauty of a wildflower diminished if you don’t know its name? Nevertheless, most observers will sense that the symbols were deliberate, meaningful and placed in special powerful places.

We have archaeologist Dr. David Whitley to thank for groundbreaking information about prehistoric rock art. His “Guide to Rock Art Sites in Southern California and Southern Nevada” provided a wealth of fascinating scientific data for this essay.

Rock art, wherever it is found in the world, is of two types: pictographs are rock paintings and petroglyphs are rock carvings. Pictographs are very rare in Owens Valley. Most rock art locales in California and Nevada are power spots or vision quest sites where Native American shamans entered an altered state of consciousness to journey to supernatural realms for instruction, help or empowerment.

Trance states could be induced in a variety of ways: ingesting hallucinogens such as jimsonweed or native tobacco, fasting, sensory deprivation, extreme physical pain, repetitive drumming and/or dancing or by meditating. To indigenous people of the far

“ROCK ART IS OF TWO TYPES: PICTOGRAPHS ARE ROCK PAINTINGS AND PETROGLYPHS ARE ROCK CARVINGS. ”

West, the supernatural world was a realm parallel to ordinary, everyday reality.

A shaman’s power and knowledge came from direct personal interaction with helping spirits he encountered in other realities. The helpers were often animals, but they could also be ancestors, divine beings, spirits of a mountain, river, etc. or the elemental spirits of air, fire, water and earth.

Dr. Whitley instructs that while rock art sites served as places of concentrated spiritual power and gateways to a sacred realm, the





rock art itself illustrated the supernatural visions experienced by a “walker between worlds” while in a trance. The designs created by the shaman were meant to preserve his visionary images for future generations.

It is now widely accepted that the designs were not random patterns, as once thought, created by an aboriginal migration through Owens Valley. Nor were they route markers, water hole indicators or tribal boundary lines. Most importantly, they also were not the aimless chipping and doodling of an idle people or the cryptic designs left by stranded extraterrestrials.

Whitley stated that neuropsychological studies have proved that some of the puzzling etchings are patterns seen by shamans, or anyone, in one of the four stages of a trance state. By far the most common are geometric motifs, such as grids, spirals, checkerboards,

dots and curves. Geometric designs are called entopics.

Because the patterns are the unique recordings of what each shaman envisioned, it is likely that most rock art will remain a mystery. Without the shaman to interpret his altered state experience, we can’t be privy to what the images meant to him.

Though eager to begin exploring, I took time to be still, to become acquainted with the volcanic tableland’s unfamiliar personality. Gleaming, sky-scratching peaks of the Sierra crest marched along the western horizon. Although it is invariably those high, wild places that speak to my soul, there was an elusive quality about the desert’s flat, minimalist beauty that grabbed me hard.

I once thought of a desert as a blank spot on a map, a place to race through on the way to somewhere else. To me it was a gigantic sandbox as parched and sere as old 2x4s, a vast drab, monotonous landscape remarkable only for mind-melting heat.

In time, with repeated explorations in all seasons, I realized a shift in perception. At some point, I grasped its spare elegance and began to appreciate the harsh, Spartan beauty. Lean and lonely and peaceful, I came to admire a severe landscape where all life forms have learned that survival is a marathon, not a horse race.

I soon found what I was looking for among the boulders near the slough. A few dozen ‘glyphs had been pecked in the relatively soft volcanic tuff. All were geometric designs. Bisected circles on horizontal rocks are especially common at this site, as are grinding





slicks. Flat surfaces on horizontal rocks were used for crushing seeds and nuts which suggested this location was also a village site. Shaded by the overhang of a large boulder, I discovered seven mortar cups, or grinding holes.

Further evidence of its multipurpose use were remnants of stone circles, indicating foundations of ancient dwellings that were covered with brush or animal skins. Though the walled circles were here when the first Paiutes arrived, and were even used by them, anthropological studies indicate that present-day Paiutes profess no knowledge of their creators.

After a leisurely investigation, I moved on to the next location along the historic high desert corridor. Within a few minutes, I

arrived at an amazing site where its 100 designs were confined to a tall clump of tuff boulders. Here, too, most 'glyphs were geometric shapes seen during the initial stage of a shaman's trance.

The spirals and concentric circles represented concentrators of supernatural power. Whirlwinds, related Dr. Whitley, were associated with a shaman's ability to fly, which symbolically carried him to an altered state of consciousness. A spiral was often substituted for a face on a human-like figure as a symbol of his concentrated power used for healing and other ritual activities.

The last of the petroglyph locations along the road covered a large area where two major concentrations of rock art were engraved on boulders and tuff cliff faces.

Besides geometric patterns, this site had intriguing figurative designs scattered among the complex groupings of spiral, grids and bisected circles.

Stick figure humans (anthropomorphs), zigzag snakes and a few big horn sheep were among the scores of 'glyphs. Snakes were important inhabitants and guardians of the supernatural worlds, as well as a shaman's potent spirit helper. Diamond patterns also represent rattlers. To Shoshone and Paiute people of the Great Basin, big horn sheep were the special helpers of rain shamans.

The most fascinating and mysterious designs at this site were atop rock surfaces covered with hand prints and an unmistakable set of bear paw prints. Three paw prints walked across the top of a rock in the same direction as the human prints. Bears, too, were sentinels at portals to the supernatural world.

Foot and hand prints are numerous at hunter/gatherer rock art locations worldwide. In the Great Basin, however, human tracks were often associated with "Water Baby," a small human figure believed to live in springs and streams who served as a very powerful spirit helper for the shaman. On top of a high horizontal surface filled with footprints at the western complex of 'glyphs, I found what must have been a water hole or spring ages ago. The configuration of smooth, polished rock suggested the work of moving water in the distant past. At this spot, offered Dr. Whitley, a shaman journeyed to a parallel world via a water hole whose entrance was protected by a bear.

Hand prints, too, were universal motifs. Rocks were believed to be passageways to the spirit world. By placing hands on the rock, the shaman was able to make contact with the spirit realm and absorb some of its power.

Time passed quickly as I roamed through the location. Though still intense, the sun was low on the horizon, and I needed to return to Bishop. But, I wasn't quite ready to leave the quiet, austere scenery that had unexpectedly touched me. On the way back, I was drawn to revisit the slough site. I wanted to take in as much of the volcanic tableland as possible before heading back to civilization.

As I ambled farther away from the truck, the desert's hot breath wrapped around me. Nuances were magnified in the deep silence and became significant events in the quiet, solitary world. In what I assumed to be a barren land, I found a bounty of life.

Scavenging magpies prowled the airways, ever vigilant to score a meal. Coyote, a lean hobo, trotted along purposefully, occasionally investigating crevices and holes. A kiln-dried breeze romanced sagebrush leaves into releasing their pungent fragrance. Above the sun-drenched desert the sky was a great blue beast, and the scent of baking rocks was inexplicably soothing.

A sunbathing banded lizard, while doing what looked like pushups, warily tracked my movements. Suddenly a cacophony of unseen buzzing and clicking insects briefly shattered the air. Near my boots, a khaki-colored snake sheltered in the meager shade of a prickly poppy. A wet plop signaled the landing of a heron in the slough.





But best of all, the tangy air, a primal scent both familiar and alien, unlocked some haunting memory from another time. A human's deepest recollections are buried in our sense of smell. I vacuumed in huge drafts of it so that my cells would remember this moment.

Nearing one of the stone circles of a former dwelling, I realized that today I had been walking in the footsteps of an ancient race who chiseled cryptic designs as an expression of their spiritual beliefs. To modern Native Americans descended from the Old Ones, rock art sites are as sacrosanct as churches, synagogues, mosques and temples.

Reluctantly returning to the truck, I moved respectfully and quietly, knowing that I had been wandering in sacred places.

Two days after I explored the volcanic tablelands in October '12, vandals had struck at one of the sites I visited. I was shocked at the extent of the damage and couldn't wrap my mind around why anyone would choose to despoil this touchstone to our past.

Using ladders, drills and generator-powered masonry saws, thieves cut some large petroglyph panels out of the cliff. Dozens more were scarred by hammer strikes and saw cuts. The BLM office in Bishop called the outrageous event the worst act of vandalism they'd ever seen.

The good news is, thanks to an anonymous tip in February '13, the panels were recovered. The thieves have not been identified, and BLM is continuing its investigation.

The bad news is, irreparable damage has been done. When or if they are recovered, the ancient, spiritual connection has been severed. Once rock art has been moved, removed, defaced or destroyed a priceless piece of the past is lost forever. Though rock are may seem durable, it is a fragile, non-renewable cultural resource.

The desecrated site harbors great spiritual value and is still used by local Native Americans for ceremonies. Though the 'glyphs are not very valuable on the illicit market, they are priceless to the Paiutes who regard the massive half-mile- long tableau as a window into the souls of their ancestors.

When you visit a rock art site, consider yourself a guest in someone's home. Like other places of worship around the globe, the area deserves your utmost respect and care. Please do not touch them with your hands or feet. Observe, photograph or sketch only. Please keep your dog under control, and do not allow it to desecrate any of these precious artifacts.

Bottom line, defacing or removing these precious resources is against the law. They are protected by the Antiquities Act, National Historic Preservation Act and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. If caught, anyone found to be defacing or removing any artifact or altering any site will be fined and may spend one to five years in jail.

You can also be a responsible visitor and steward of petroglyph and pictograph sites by reporting vandalism of any kind as soon as possible. Call local law enforcement, BLM or Forest Service offices. ❖





MSR MicroRocket Stove

The smallest and lightest stove that MSR makes, the MicroRocket won't weight you down. Fold up pot supports and built in wind resistance make cooking fast and easy. Ignite the stove with the included piezo igniter, protected inside a fuel-gathering tube. 2.6 ounces and about \$50:
[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



GoLite Race Visor

This synthetic visor from GoLite shades your eyes without blocking the breeze. One size fits most with an elastic band fit system – Just over an ounce and under \$15:
[GoLite.com](https://www.golite.com)



MSR Cyclone Tent Stakes

A spiraled design offers holding power in soft soil, while 7000-series aluminum keeps the strength up and the weight down. 1.2 ounces and about \$7 each:
[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



Big Agnes Fly Creek 2 Platinum Tent

At around 2 pounds depending on how you pack it, the Fly Creek 2 Platinum gives you a double walled freestanding tent with ample room for one and a more cozy fit for 2. Taped seams, stakes, and stuff sacks are included at \$500:
[REI.com](https://www.rei.com)

GEAR MASH



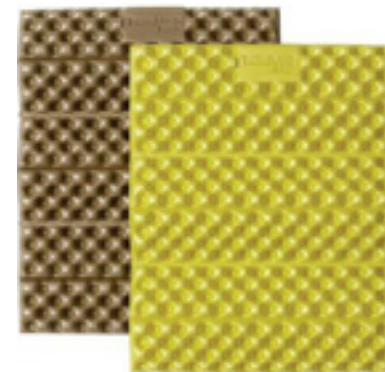
REI Flash Sleeping Bag

REI's lightest backpacking bag, the Flash combines synthetic insulation on the bottom with 800-fill goose down on top, and selectively placed waterproof/breathable panels work to protect the insulation. Rated down to freezing and available in regular, long, and men's/women's specific models. 25 ounces and \$260:
[REI.com](https://www.rei.com)



Black Diamond Trekking Pole Tip Protectors

Quiet down the ride and prevent scarring of rocks and the trail with these slip on tips for your trekking poles. About an ounce per pair and \$5:
[Campsaver.com](https://www.campsaver.com)



Therm-a-Rest Z-Seat

Upgrade your lunch break with this 2 ounce solution from Therm-a-Rest. Great for damp ground – This sit pad could also help out in the tent at night for a quick pillow or additional insulation under your feet. Folds accordion-style for easy packing and a quick deployment. \$15:
[Campsaver.com](https://www.campsaver.com)



First Need XLE Elite Purifier

An update to First Need's venerable purification system, the XLE Elite offers longer cartridge life, an updated direct connect system, a more shock-resistant cartridge, and a perhaps most notably a clean out port to make cleaning in the field easier. About a pound and around \$100:
[Backcountry.com](https://www.backcountry.com)



Photo Tips from the Trail

by David Cobb

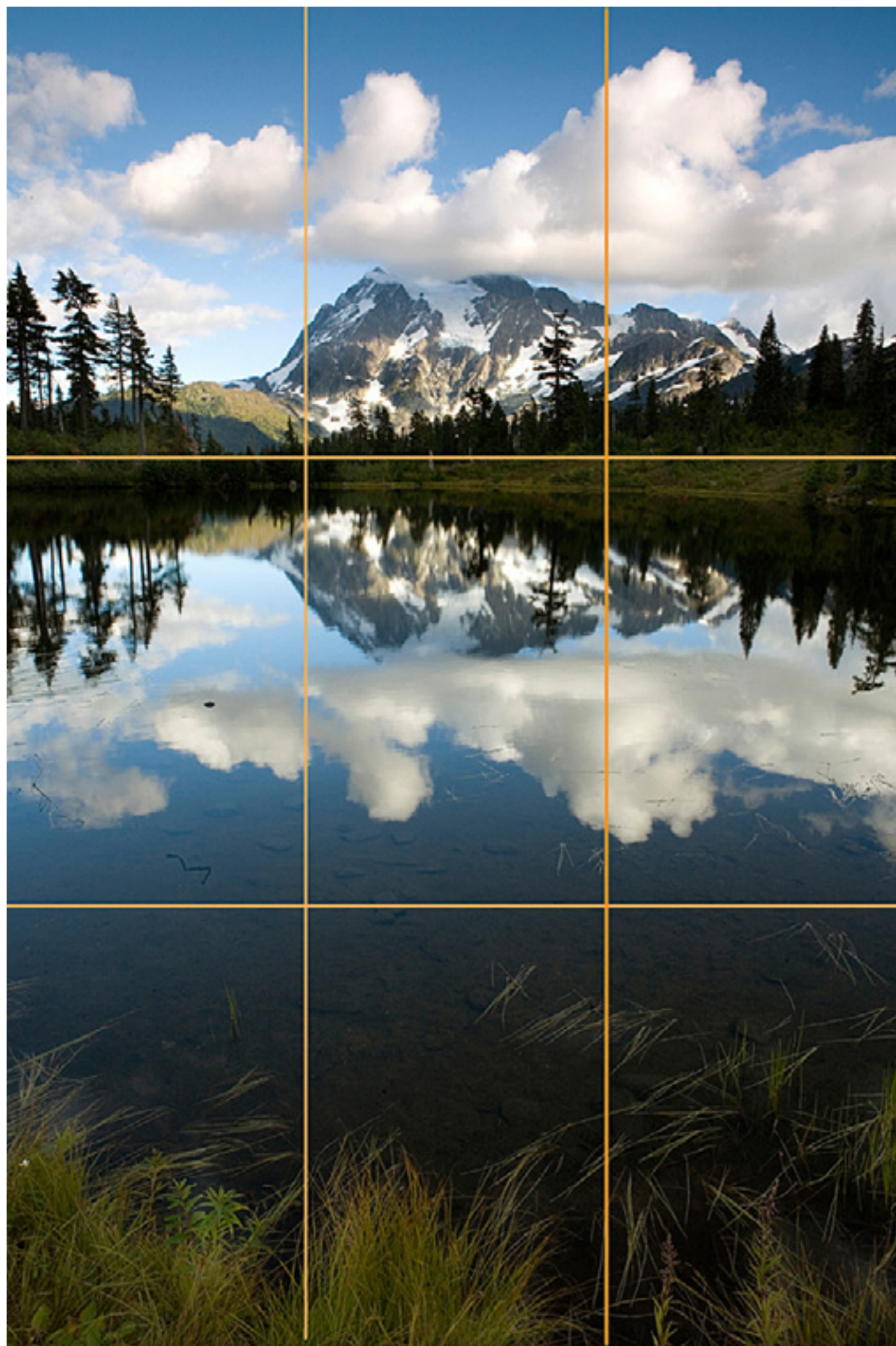
Since long-distance hiking helped form so much of my photography, I thought it might be helpful to supply a few photo tips I picked up from the trail. These tips don't require the use of tripods or fantastic cameras; they are suggestions designed to help improve your composition and use of light and 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 #7: The Rule of Thirds

An easy compositional rule you can follow when you're taking pictures on the trail is the "rule of thirds." The Greeks thought of it a few thousand years ago, so it's been around for a while, but it still holds today: simply divide your frame up vertically and horizontally by thirds, and then place your subject where those lines cross or somewhere in that vicinity. My example of a barn in harvest time in the Palouse area of Washington demonstrates this technique. If your subject has a face, then have the face looking into the frame to help create a suggested line-of-sight into the setting.

Left: Mt. Shuksan, Picture Lake.

All images Copyright 2013 © David M. Cobb Photography.



You can also use the rule of thirds to help balance the compositions of your photos, using the vertical and horizontal lines within the frame to create balanced compositional spacing in your landscape images. In the sample photos you can see the balanced image of Mount Shuksan and Picture Lake. The upper third of the image is comprised of the mountain, trees, and clouds; the middle third is the reflection of the same; and in the bottom third I filled the area with lakeside grasses.

So get away with placing your subject in the compositionally boring dead-center of the image, and start using the rule of thirds to create something much more interesting. ❖

David Cobb is an avid backpacker and photographer. You can see more of David's images at www.dmcobbphoto.com

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

Left: Mt. Shuksan, Picture Lake, Rule of Thirds.

Pages 73-76: Red Barn, Rule of Thirds.

All images Copyright 2013 © David M. Cobb Photography.







Our Last Hike With Dad

Location: Worthington State Forest, New Jersey

by Sarah D. Tiedemann

Sunfish Pond is a glacial lake nestled in a forest of hardwoods, mountain laurels, and massive boulders. It is skirted by the Appalachian Trail and lies within the confines of Worthington State Forest in Columbia, New Jersey. The lure of this place has become a part of the very essence of my husband Nick's family. They all adore it and claim it as their power spot. There are countless memories and family stories of the pond, many told long before it became a popular hiking destination. The first time Nick took me up there, it was easy to see why they felt so much love for this place. It is magical

in any season and wildlife is abundant. It is a place where you'll forget you're in New Jersey, just two hours away from home in a sprawling city. As a child, Nick hiked up to the pond frequently. Together, I can't even count how many times we've been there.

In February, Nick and I spent a weekend with his brother, John, and girlfriend, Shadis, at a cabin in nearby Jenny Jump State Forest. Snow was forecasted all weekend and we spent the first night playing cards in front of a roaring wood stove. The next morning, we were off to hike to Sunfish Pond. I had never

been there in the winter and Nick was ecstatic to take me. We were back and forth on the phone with Nick's Dad, trying to convince him to drive up for the hike. It had been years since he had been there in the winter and we wanted him to experience it with us.

When we left for Worthington State Forest, we were still unsure that he would be there to meet us. We were thrilled when we pulled up and he was there, smiling away, lacing up his boots. Nick had forgotten his hiking boots and was going to tough it out in dress shoes, but Dad surprised us by pulling them out of his trunk. We forgot to ask him to grab them- it was a father's instinct. As soon as he pulled them out, I was reminded of a story Dad would tell about going up to the pond in the winter. Nick was about nine years old and didn't want to wear boots. He insisted on wearing his sneakers which proceeded to get soaked by the snow. He cried his eyes out on that hike, but Dad made him continue on. It's easy to see where Nick gets his resolve.

It was a blistery day, just below zero with the wind chill. Our trail of choice was mostly frozen over and icy, but thankfully we were dressed for it. We talked and laughed on our approach to the pond, our lungs burning from the cold. As we got closer, it started snowing. When we reached the pond, it was blanketed in white. The adage that "boys will be boys" held true- Nick, John and Dad walked out on it immediately, while Shadis and I hung back until we knew it was safe. It was strange and otherworldly to walk across the length of the pond that we had seen full of water mere months before. Dad knows I'm a bundle of nerves, so he told me to watch out for the cracks in the ice (which he said were springs) because they could give way to water at any



moment. My face apparently dropped and I had exhibited a true look of dread. I can still hear that full bellied laugh of his, thrilled that he had tricked me. We only saw three other people at the pond that day. It was *our* power spot.

We climbed on top of Dewar's Rock, the place we always have lunch. We ate our usual peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and took in the beauty of the pond in winter. The hike felt like any other, except for a permeating sense of peace I had never experienced before. I never thought it possible but I was connecting to the pond in a way I never had. We quickly became chilled to the bone and started our descent.

We made our way down on a different trail, this time on the lookout for fallen tree branches. Nick had begun carving serving and mixing spoons from branches- using only a hatchet, hook knives and sand paper. After the hurricanes that hit our area, there were a plethora of fallen trees to choose from. We found a beautiful downed birch tree and we all took turns sawing away. Laughter was abundant as we struggled to free the limb. We made it back to the car, Dad going home and us going back to Jenny Jump. Nick and I lived with Dad, so we'd be seeing him in a few days.

After we returned home, Dad couldn't wait to see the pictures from our hike. Whenever anyone came over, he would ask us to bring them out. He would tell anyone who would listen how he tricked me about the springs. Whenever he talked about that day, he had such joy in his eyes. We never imagined that this would be the last time we'd hike with him.

Dad passed away two months later as a result of a work accident. It was a horrendous, shocking and earth shattering ordeal. He was only 58 year old, still active and vibrant. Nick has a large and close knit family and as a result it hit everyone really hard. They have had it tough- three of his uncles had already passed away. Dad slept next to his brother Ed every night since he came into possession of his ashes. He always talked about spreading them up at the pond (Uncle Ed's power spot as well) with his brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews, but no one got around to planning it. Looking back, I'm glad it never happened. We were going to bring Dad and Uncle Ed to their power spot together.

Nick's aunts and uncles range in age from 50-72, so we planned to hike up in June to allow everyone time to prepare. They had all gone there when they were young but many hadn't been there in over 30 years.

About 25 family members and friends met at the trail head. It was a typical New Jersey summer day- hot and humid. Luckily, the

forest there is dense so there are plenty of opportunities to find shade. We made our way up, slowly breaking into smaller groups as we progressed. The mountain laurels were in bloom and the forest floor was covered in ferns. The entire landscape was saturated with color. It is amazing how quickly the forest regenerates- just a couple of years before, there had been a wildfire there that

wiped out a considerable amount of acreage. Now, it looks as if it never even happened. I can only hope we will be able to regenerate and bounce back the same way.

I insisted on carrying Dad for a portion of the hike and Nick carried him the rest of the way. Uncle Joe was carrying Uncle Ed. Once we got into hiking mode, it was easy to forget





why we were there. Everyone was talking, laughing and poking fun at one another. We were only reminded occasionally of the real reason for the hike by the weight of our packs. We were there to bring Dad and Uncle Ed back to the earth. Dad always joked about people still taking up space in graveyards when they die. In death, he wanted to give back and return to the cycle of life. We were there to honor his wishes.

The younger folks headed up quickly, but Nick, his sister and I hung back with those who were less able. We weren't there to hoof it to the top- we had done that a million times over. We knew that this might be the last time everyone was willing and able to make the trek. We were there to find some sort of closure, to be with family, to find peace and heal along the trail. As we approached

the pond, Nick put distance between us and those we were hiking with. He had a tearful moment and we held hands until we made it there.

As we brought up the rear of our group, we were met with thunderous clapping from those already at the top of Dewar's rock. We all ate lunch together and picked wild blueberries. Some of us swam in the crystal blue water, others basked in the sun. Aunt Cindy, however, was having trouble- she was overheated and exhausted from the hike. Uncle Dick is a doctor, so he tended to her needs and laid her down in some shade. To our pleasant surprise, the others made it up there with no problem at all.

Uncle Dick performed a Native American pipe ceremony, in which we brought in good

spirits, drove the bad spirits away, gave our good wishes to Dad and reconnected with the earth. We cleansed the area and our spirits and spread some of Dad's ashes on top of Dewar's rock. Nick and I brought bags to divvy up Dad and Uncle Ed for anyone who wanted to have a personal farewell. We each took turns dropping them into the pond and surrounding area, making sure to save some for a few spots on the way down. Aunt Cindy was not recovering, so Uncle Dick called 911 and an ATV was on its way to pick her up and take her down. A few strong men helped her to the mouth of the pond to meet the emergency responders. It was a feat of mental and physical strength for her- we were thankful she had at least made it up.

After about an hour at Dewar's Rock, we all descended on different trails in different groups. Our group each took turns spreading Dad in the streambed, his favorite approach to the pond. It was interesting the way the ashes behaved in the water. We were expecting them to immediately flow down the stream and eventually make their way to the river. They just sat right where we left them, as if Dad was saying he wanted to stay right there. We continued down the Garvey Springs Trail where we passed two deer running through the forest. It sounds metaphysical, but I felt like that was Dad and Uncle Ed letting us know they were there, giving us their approval and love. It was surely more than happenstance- Dad was an avid hunter all of his life.



Photo by Laura Tiedemann



“WHENEVER I BEGIN TO FEEL SAD, I CAN ALMOST HEAR HIM QUOTING AUGUSTUS MCCRAE IN LONESOME DOVE- “IT AIN’T DYING I’M TALKING ABOUT, IT’S LIVING.””

We stopped at another opening of the stream, where we returned Dad to another one of his favorite spots. At this stream is “Lover’s Rock”, which, as family legend goes, is where Nick’s brother John was conceived. We all joked about the entire Tiedemann family having “relations” in Worthington. There was a lull in conversation for the remainder of the descent. There was a tangible weight in the air- we knew our trip was drawing to a close.

At the end of every hike to the pond, we stop to say hello to the Delaware River. We gathered at the river, this time with heavy hearts. Nick spread the rest of Dad, rinsed the bag in the water and him and Uncle Joe embraced. Except for some ashes saved for him and his siblings, all that was left of Dad was an empty bag. His death felt final and real at that moment. While it was tough to say our official goodbyes, we knew that’s where he wanted to be.

We all agreed to meet at Hot Dog Johnny’s in Buttzville, which is a tradition at the end of every trip to the pond. We often joke that we are unsure if their hotdogs and fries are really that good or if we are just so famished after a hike they taste amazing. Nick swears the only reason I go

to the pond is for the hot dogs on the way home. It seemed fitting to throw away the bag that contained Dad’s ashes here. We all had a meal together and went home to our respective corners of New Jersey.

We hope that in time life will become easier and that some iota of normalcy will return. I can still feel Dad’s hand on my back, telling me to straighten Nick out as he often did, joking with me about falling into the springs at the pond. Dad will always live on in our understanding, connection, love and knowledge of the earth. Whenever I begin to feel sad, I can almost hear him quoting Augustus McCrae in Lonesome Dove- “It ain’t dying I’m talking about, it’s living.” If you ever find yourself at Sunfish Pond, say hello to Dad and Uncle Ed for us. ❖





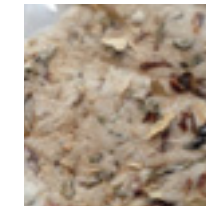
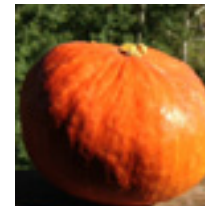
Backcountry Cuisine: Pumpkin Curry

Yeah, it's actual cooking, but don't be afraid – With a close eye it's easy. The pumpkin might be the hardest part about this recipe. Take a whole pumpkin to celebrate the fall season, and you'll be able to tell that story for the rest of your backpacking career. (You'll definitely want to carry it outside your pack and take pictures!) More realistically, prep it freshly at home and make this meal your first night out. If you have time before hand, use a dehydrator to save the most weight. If you really want to go old school, take the canned version and a P38 can opener. You can try this with butternut squash too... which is can be purchased freeze-dried. Serves 2.

Ingredients

1 packet olive oil
1 1/2 cups pumpkin, cut into small cubes (or 1/2 cup dehydrated)
1 cup instant rice
2/3 cup coconut milk powder
1/4 cup dehydrated onions
1/4 cup dehydrated mushrooms
2 tablespoons dehydrated bell peppers
Salt to taste

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder or freeze dried garlic
1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon curry powder
1/4 teaspoon ginger, grated
1/2 cup freeze dried chicken (optional)
1 teaspoon dehydrated jalapeno peppers (optional - this is spicy!)
Water to rehydrate



At Home:

Package all ingredients except the pumpkin, olive oil, and instant rice (and water!) into a ziploc bag. Remove the peel of the pumpkin, then cut into small pieces of approximately 1/2 inch. Keep the pumpkin cool, and plan to use it the first night, unless you are using canned pumpkin. If you use a can, remember to use less water and perhaps add some extra spice/salt to counteract the concentrated flavor. You may even want to try this recipe at home first to get the right balance of flavors for your palate.

In Camp:

Add 1 cup of water to the ziploc bag containing the coconut milk, spices, and veggies to let them rehydrate. Reseal, then knead the bag to evenly mix. Set aside.

In your pot, boil just enough water to cook your rice. Add the olive oil, rice, and pumpkin cubes, cooking until the rice and pumpkin are almost tender. Then, add the contents of the sauce bag to the pot. Stir frequently and continue cooking until the sauce is heated through and thickens to the desired consistency. If the sauce is too thick, add small amounts of water until it is just right. Serve and enjoy! ❖

The Drive Home: The Easy Route

by Aaron Zagrodnick



We'd been planning the route for a year – A loop hike over 5 days through parts of the Wind River Range that Jen and I hadn't yet had a chance to explore. No shuttle needed, easy logistics, and we even convinced the grandparents to watch over our 1 year old son and 11 year old dog while we were gone. We definitely weren't used to having to care only for ourselves, if we even remembered how.

The weather forecast couldn't be better. We said our long goodbyes early on a Monday, and made the 2 hour drive from home to the western side of the Wind River Range, which would both shave some miles and elevation gain off the hike.

As we drove we began to see the high passes along our planned route, looking impossibly steep from so far away. We picked out the passes we'd be crossing as we drove. We'd be on trails part of the way, but the meat of the trip was following offtrail routes in the wilderness – Some that were known routes, others that we'd made up after pouring over the topographic map a dozen or more times. We'd chosen to keep the mileage expectations light, covering just less than 15 miles per day.

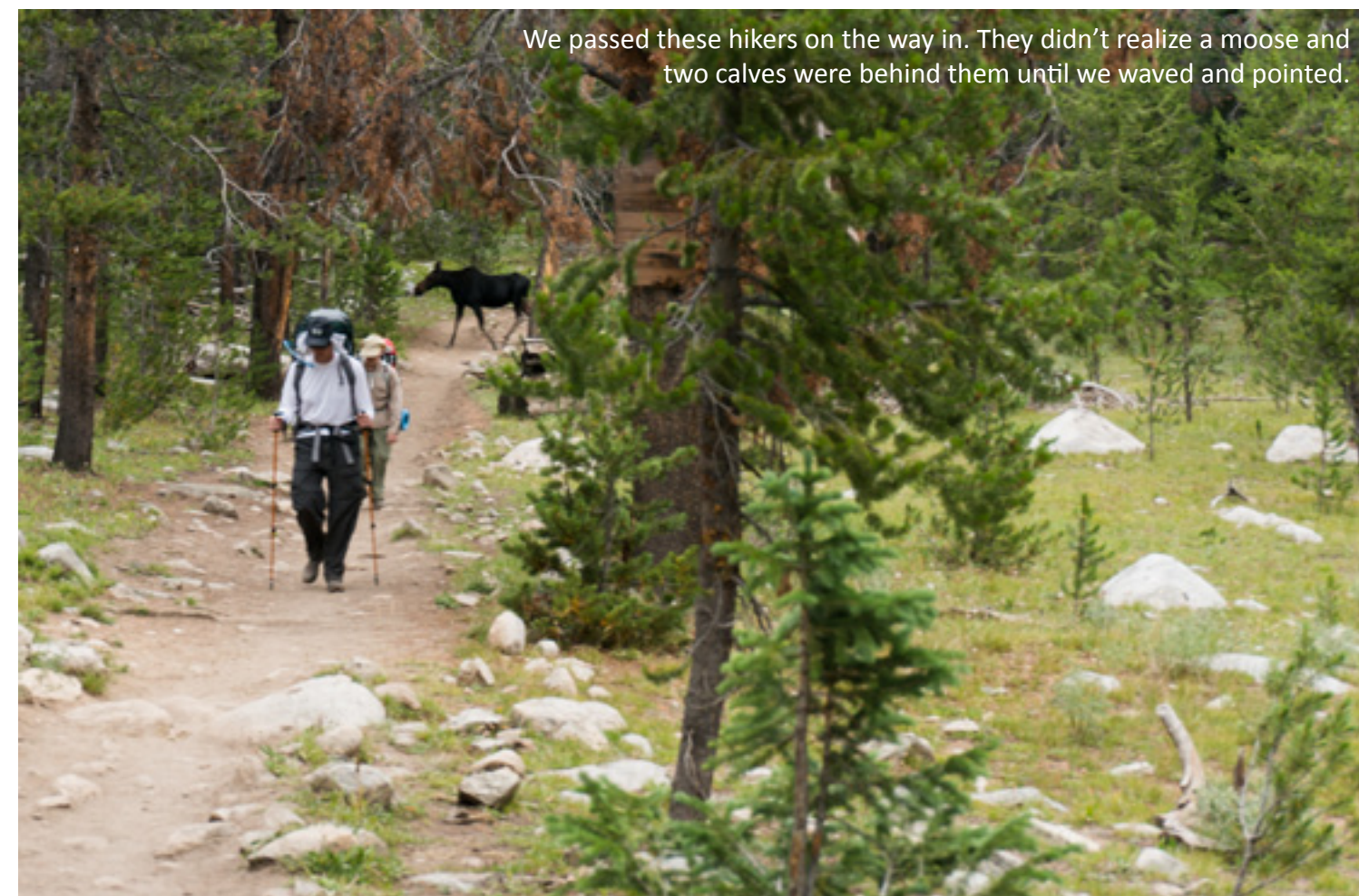
The trailhead was packed, and it was difficult even finding a place to park. Little did we know that after today, we'd go 3 straight days and see no one but each other. Already afternoon, we took an obligatory picture at the trailhead and hiked a few easy hours, passed several moose, then another.

Quickly a trail sign came into view ahead. Our first big decision. We'd planned the loop,

but left or right was the question we hadn't yet answered. The route we'd planned had 2 crossings of the continental divide. One was reputed to be a gentle pass across grassy slopes, the other would be a glacial traverse.

Go left and we'd be descending a glacier tomorrow with packs still heavy with food, but would finish the trip with the easy pass. Right and we'd get the easy pass with heavy packs tomorrow, and would then have to finish the trip by ascending the glacier – But with light packs. As we looked at the map and glanced left and right, we tried to establish which direction had more pros than cons, but couldn't come to any reasonable conclusion.

In the end we decided to keep things as easy as we could for as long as possible, and took a right. It began to rain, and an hour later we found ourselves camping in a sparse pine forest on a small, rocky rise set back from and above the trail, eating homemade brownies Jen brought for dessert. A lake spread out below us in the distance and reached out to the west. Early the next day, we'd leave the lake and head the opposite direction.



We passed these hikers on the way in. They didn't realize a moose and two calves were behind them until we waved and pointed.





“Not again,” Jen said. She was sliding from one boulder to the next, reaching out with an extended foot to meet the next boulder below. It was midafternoon on day 2. We were 4 hours into a scramble through boulder fields that never seemed to end.

The route up the western side of the pass had been a piece of cake. The eastern side was another story...Crossing the continental divide can often result in stark difference from one side to the next. “Watch out, the flat one moves,” I yelled back as a boulder shifted under my feet – Never a good thing. This was supposed to be the easy day, the easy pass. I knew just what she meant. 2 years ago on a fabled trip into the Winds, our first trip into the Winds, we’d faced a similar challenge as we descended a similar pass, which wasn’t really a pass at all. On that occasion it had taken us hours to traverse a boulder-ridden slope, each rock seemingly ready to give in to gravity’s relentless pull at a moment’s notice. At least this time it wasn’t as steep.

“I see trees ahead.” I yelled back. I dreamed of soft pine needles under our feet, which were sore and blistered from hours of balancing and moving over pointed,

“THE ROUTE UP THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE PASS HAD BEEN A PIECE OF CAKE. THE EASTERN SIDE WAS ANOTHER STORY...”

unforgiving rocks. Perhaps we’d find salvation in a deer trail, leading us down easily. But this forest was just like the last one we’d just pushed through, choked with pack-ripping brush and hungry mosquitoes. Even the deer knew this wasn’t suitable terrain to be wandering about. Instead of covering miles per hour, we were moving at hours per the mile. On the other side of the trees, another boulder field of huge car sized rocks piled haphazardly against each other.

We could see the lake below, our target for the night, and we pushed towards the stream to our right, which we knew led into the lake. The pattern of boulders and forest repeated itself again and again, and an hour later we squeezed between 2 boulders for the final time and stepped into the soggy meadow that marked the lake’s inlet. There had to be an easier way.

As we approached the lake’s shore a cairn, and a faint trail led back up the pass, on the opposite side of the stream from which we’d just descended. We were tired, our feet hurt, and we both hiked and looked straight ahead as the pass had beaten the



enthusiasm right out of us. For some reason I’d chosen to wear brand new shoes for the trip – That combined with the boulder fields had left my feet badly blistered, and I hobbled about camp like an aging prospector. Jen wasn’t in much better shape. But with rest, ibuprofen, and tape, I knew hiking would at least be bearable tomorrow, and we still had a long way to go. We setup camp in pines on a bench above the lake, and quickly ate dinner, today with ibuprofen for dessert. The wind picked up, then died as the sun set beyond the western ridge across the lake from where we stared. Uncertainty hung in the air.

Thursday. It had been two days since what is now simply referred to as “The Pass.”

I was walking upstream with my fly rod, sight fishing for golden trout that were rising steadily in a stream between two alpine lakes. Jen sat next to her pack on the grassy and flower-filled streambank. She had her hands tucked into her rain jacket and a mosquito headnet firmly cinched around her neck. The mosquitoes were horrendous. Golden trout often don’t live in easy to reach places, and as such we weren’t near any established trail, and were over 20 miles from the nearest trailhead.

We weren’t however, where we’d planned to be. Our blisters were worse, and while we were fast asleep, a curious black bear had ruined everything in our first aid kit 2 nights prior. But that’s another story

altogether - Or maybe, I'm just not ready to talk about it. No longer did we have luxuries like tape for our feet or pain killers, or even a toothbrush – The bear had chewed and stomped everything to pieces, all of it now packed in our trash bag. At least our food had made it through the assault. It just hadn't seemed like the loop was meant to be, and eventually we made the tough, yet easy decision to focus on a few world class fishing opportunities in the immediate area.

Suddenly, of all things, a Rottweiler emerged out of the brush ahead of me and casually trotted into the stream, drinking casually before glancing up at me, water droplets falling from its chin like rain drops back into the stream. If it had been the bear that ate my toothbrush, I might have been less surprised. The dog on the other hand, didn't seem at all surprised and simply laid down in the stream, looking back towards the bushes from where it came, panting heavily.

At that point a woman emerged from the brush with a hello. I fumbled a hello in return, struggling with conversation after both being surprised and having only talked to one other person for 3 days. She stated that she had just picked up a food drop, but we were nowhere near the CDT. I didn't have the presence of mind to ask about her route. She did however, know the right way back up the pass that had been haunting us since the second day. Our suspicions regarding the cairn and faint trail were confirmed. Today would be our last day.

This time the pass was easy.

Even though we'd hung around fishing until nearly noon, we decided to push 20 miles, mostly downhill, back to the trailhead. On our way back we ran into Joe, who had made the trip to the Winds from Connecticut. It began to rain again and the wind picked up. "You didn't come from the pass on the eastern side of the lake I hope?" He asked. Before we could reply, "Man, I'll tell you what, that pass nearly killed me – Ruined the first few days of my trip. It was terrible," he said. "I know I'll never be taking that route again." I tried to explain the easier route we'd found up, but Joe wasn't having it. It had been that bad and we knew exactly how he felt.

We hiked fast and made it back to the trailhead just before 9pm. The trip hadn't gone as planned. But that's backpacking, and if it wasn't challenging I'm not quite sure it would be the same. We'd still made a trip, while different than expected, happen. I didn't look back at the high passes from the highway on the way home. It was too dark anyway.

Maybe next time we'll go left. ❖







“The earth, like the sun, like the air,
belongs to everyone -- and to no one.”

- Edward Abbey





Thanks for Reading Issue 10

Check out our next issue
(available in November) at:

www.TrailGroove.com

Copyright © 2013 TrailGroove Magazine LLC

