



# TrailGroove™

Issue 6 - January/February 2013



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*January/February 2013*

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A special thank you to our contributors for this issue:  
David Cobb, Adrienne Marshall, Jessica Smith, Jolly Green Giant,  
Heide Brandes, and Gary Meyer

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# Editor's Note

Finally, the days are getting longer! While winter can at times throw a wrench in our hiking plans it's still a great time of the year to get out and enjoy a different time on the trail. For those us in snowy areas, new methods of travel open up, and for all of us cold weather forces us to dig deep in the gear closet and dust off all that interesting cold weather gear you put away last spring. With the New Year underway some of us have hiking resolutions made – For us here at TrailGroove we've kept it simple. Get out even more in 2013 and keep crossing destinations that we haven't yet had a chance to visit off the "List".

In this issue Jessica Smith takes us to a nearly off the map Utah destination, and David Cobb shares both some amazing scenery from the Enchantments in Washington State as well a great backcountry photo tip. Heide Brandes takes us through the mental factors involved when you find yourself off track, and we'll take a look at the CDT in watercolors courtesy of thruhiker Adrienne Marshall. We'll also review the Casio Pathfinder PAW1300 – an interesting watch seemingly made for backpacking and hiking, and as always we'll wrap things up with The Drive Home.

Special thanks to all of our contributors and to all of our readers for making 2012 so successful for TrailGroove - and Happy New Year!





# Contribute

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

A few examples of what we 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: Lumens

**A unit of measurement used to determine the total amount of visible light emitted from a source.** In the backpacking and hiking world, you can use the lumen value to compare the amount of lighting you'll get from various nighttime illumination sources such as a headlamp. Higher lumen values typically come at the cost of shorter runtimes and decreased battery life. Brighter lights are also generally heavier and more expensive. For general nighttime trail navigation, we've found that at least 25 or more lumens are needed to follow unfamiliar trails with relative ease, but lights that have the flexibility to switch between several modes of brightness can be especially helpful while backpacking. While in camp very low levels of lighting of just a single lumen or less can be great for reading or finding a tent zipper without disturbing fellow campers. Additionally, very low levels of light will allow you keep your own night vision somewhat intact. On the other hand, there will be times where you may need to briefly light up an area to make it through a particularly difficult section of trail or to check out an unfamiliar noise in the night. For these circumstances a higher level of lighting in the 100+ lumen range can be especially welcome. Don't forget to consider the beam pattern. A light with a flood beam is great for close up work, but won't project very far into the distance. A spot beam projects far, but only illuminates a small area. Consider a light that allows you to switch between flood and spot using a diffuser or a light that compromises and has a flood beam with a center hotspot – Our choice for the best of both worlds.

**Wearing trail runners to save weight on your feet can at times result in a backpacking unpleasantly** – Arriving at camp with wet feet and socks. While not a concern during dry weather, if it's been raining or you had a river crossing late in the day just before camp this can plague the lightweight backpacker wearing the lightweight, non-waterproof footwear option. Of course, after setting up your shelter and unraveling your sleeping bag, you can set your wet shoes aside and change into the dry socks you hopefully had packed away. But what happens when you need to leave the dry comfort of your shelter for a midnight call of nature or to head out to your bear bag to add the snacks you forgot were in your pockets? If you brought camp shoes that have enough underfoot protection, this is where they'd shine, but if you're like me and elected to leave the camp shoes at home in favor of a lighter pack it can become a conundrum. Take your dry socks off and put the wet socks and shoes back on? Go cold and sockless? As a super lightweight solution 2 Subway sandwich bags can do the trick. They pack down to nothing and only weigh a tenth of an ounce each. Simply slip these over your clean dry socks as a waterproof oversock and then put your wet shoes back on as normal. After returning to your shelter and removing your shoes and the sandwich bags you can jump back in your sleeping bag with the same dry socks you left with. Secure the now damp sandwich bags to dry overnight (Hopefully your shoes will too) and you're all set. Cost of the bags? About \$3-5 each, but a free sandwich is included.



## Random Trail Tip





# A Land of Enchantments

By David Cobb

---

**With names like Gnome Tarn, Dragontail Peaks, and Aasgard Pass, you'd think I'd stumbled into a land of Norse Sagas.** But instead I walked through a land of water and granite surrounded by the fall color of subalpine larch. The Enchantments are a small section of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness in northern Washington's Cascade Range. This is a land of high valleys and beautiful aqua-marine lakes, all lying under the ever-present view of Prusik Peak.

There really is no easy way into the Enchantments. The route up Aasgard Pass is shorter, but the 2,220 foot elevation gain in under a mile is difficult (especially in bad weather). So I'd recommend the longer route from the east instead. To get there, you'll arrive by driving west from the town of Leavenworth, Washington up Icicle Creek Road to the trailhead parking area. Here you'll need a valid Northwest Forest Pass to park during your stay. You will also need an overnight backcountry

permit from the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest from June 15-October 15. This is a popular place among backpackers so they created an overnight permit lottery system for the majority of the distributed permits, but a few permits are also given out on a daily first-come, first-serve basis. Only the lucky ones get to proceed to the next leg of the journey.

The trail begins as an endless series of switchbacks climbing out of the valley before heading up canyon a while, then it resumes with the switchbacks. Once you've gained a bit of elevation, the trail becomes slightly straighter and heads towards the forested Snow Lakes area. You may opt to camp here for the night and ready yourself for the climb ahead; we chose to hike on to spend more time photographing the Enchantments. The last segment is an approximate 1,400 foot climber's route in 1.5 miles to the first lake, and there is no water along the way so it's best to fill up before you go. Once





and routes will take you to even higher remote lakes, tarns, and vistas. If you have more than one car, a nice trip can be put together by traveling up the Snow Lakes trail and then up and over Aasgard Pass to your alternate vehicle.

The real draw for me was to photograph the subalpine larch stands scattered throughout this stark landscape. The larch is the only conifer to change color and drop its needles in the fall. The beauty of these trees against a backdrop of emerald

waters and granite mounds is a photographer's dream, and mine was coming true. There is a bit of wildlife in the area, but the most common large mammal sighting is



the mountain goat. In the alpine country the forest service instructs everyone to urinate on rocks, supposedly to avoid the mountain goats from tearing up the backcountry on their ever-vigilant search

*LEFT: ABOVE LAKE VIVIANE  
TOP RIGHT: A CAMP MAURADER  
BOTTOM RIGHT: LOG BRIDGE*



for salt. The mountain goats were constantly licking the rocks around our camp, but left the pit toilets alone. They were known to also get a bit aggressive as one camper found out when chased up a large boulder, so it's best to keep a safe distance.

Of course day hikes on side routes can be made to explore the country further. A walk up Little Annapurna Peak will give you views all the way to Mount Rainier to the south and Canadian views to the north. A walk over the Prusik Pass route will bring you to even more lakes, but before you go up and over make sure

to stop at the reflective Gnome Tarn. If you're a mountain climber then you're in the right place to bag a number of peaks. If you're here for the fall color, chances are you're also here during fire season and the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest always seems to burn during the late summer and early fall months. Smoke can be a problem at times for the lower elevations, but as you ascend you'll probably rise above the valley smog and into the fresh air of the high country. Any way you slice it the Enchantments are a backpacker's paradise, so dust off your gear and enjoy the high country of northern Washington's North Cascade Range. ❖

*BELOW: CHASED BY A GOAT*

*RIGHT: LEPRECHAUN LAKE REFLECTIONS*













**Getting there:**

- 1) For an eastern approach drive highway 2 west from the town of Leavenworth, turn left on road 76 (Icicle Creek road) to the Snow Lakes Trailhead parking area.
- 2) To approach from the west drive highway 2 west from the town of Leavenworth. Turn left on 76 (Icicle Creek road) and pass the Snow Lakes Trailhead parking area. In a few miles you'll turn left on forest road 7601 and proceed to the Stuart Lake trailhead.

**Maps:**

I used the National Geographic "Alpine Lakes Wilderness" map, but maps of just the Enchantments section can be purchased at the ranger station in Leavenworth, Washington.

**Guidebooks:**

Backpacking Washington by Craig Ramano covers hiking in the Enchantments.

**Contact:**

[Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Website](#)  
509-548-2550

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LEFT: PRUSIK PEAK AT NIGHT



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# The Continental Divide Trail

Watercolors By Adrienne Marshall



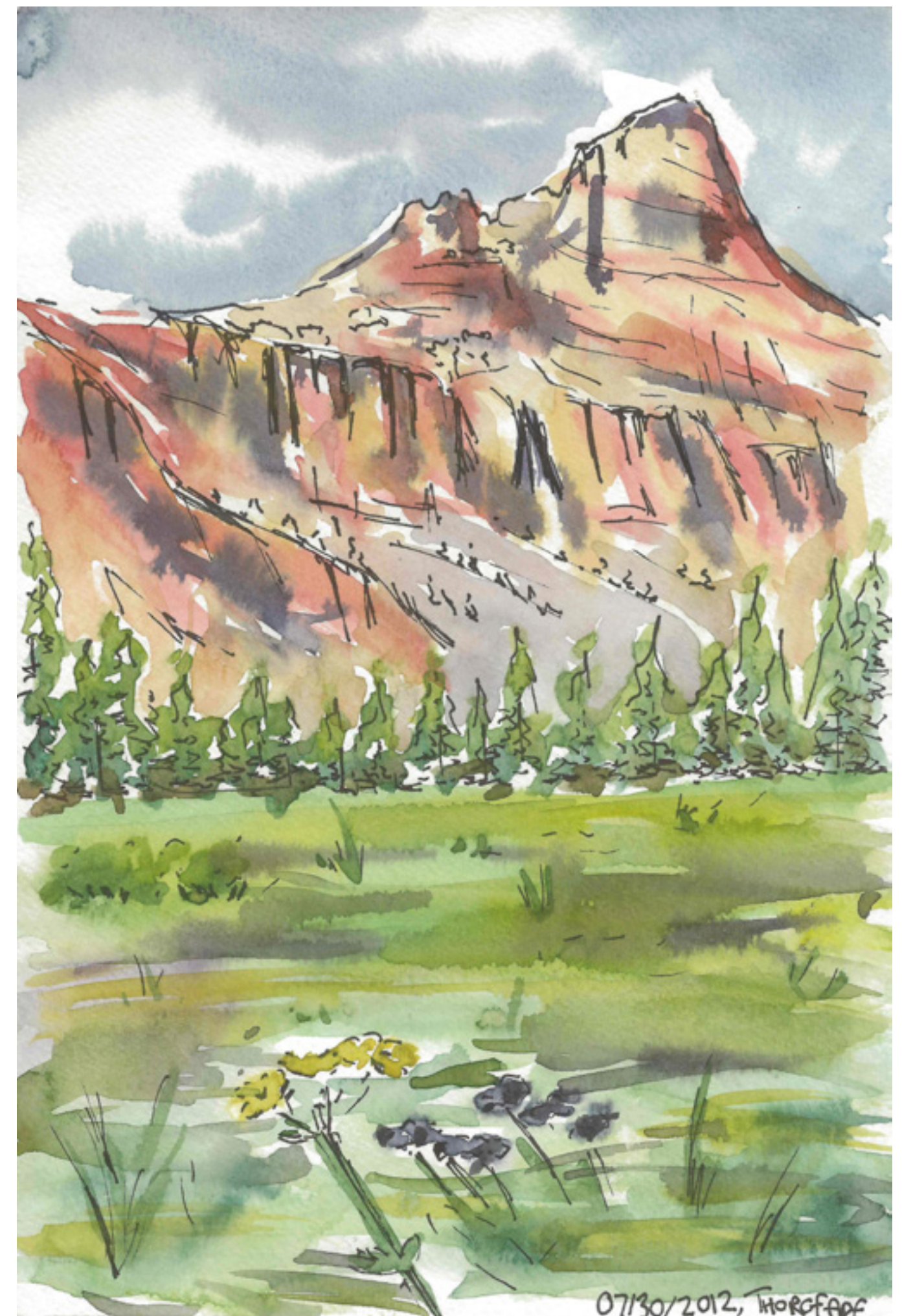


The trail begins in Glacier National Park and runs through Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Along the way I painted watercolor landscapes representing the many different faces of the trail. The CDT traverses everything from pristine alpine environments to desert dirt roads through land that is waiting to be turned into a housing development. It is only about 70% complete, meaning that the trail sometimes follows a highway, frequently is made up of logging roads, occasionally is an actual trail, and once in a while doesn't exist at all. Part of the joy of this trail is that its unfinished state has created a culture in which hikers choose their own routes, following the official route or deviating as they see fit. As a result, the CDT is a trail of vivid juxtapositions, combining adventure with monotony, solitude with companionship, and incredible beauty with trying hardship.

I first started painting watercolors during a similar hike on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) in 2010. The PCT also stretches across the country, but it follows the mountains of Washington, Oregon, and California. Before I left on the trip, friends and family asked if I planned to keep a journal. While I wanted to keep a record of the trip, journaling presented a considerable challenge. Thru-hiking is, in many ways, a fairly boring endeavor. Most days on the trail consist of hiking, eating, sleeping, and not much else. It takes a pretty creative writing style to make those activities interesting. I decided that painting watercolors would be a more engaging and exciting way to record the trip and share it with friends.

Painting my experience became a gratifying way to record my adventures. Thru-hikers tend to have tight schedules, and I am no exception. As we pass through exceptional landscapes, it can be difficult to balance the desire to stop and enjoy the scenery with the desire to get to the border before winter sets in. I found that painting became a way for me to interact with the landscape more deeply. It forced me to carve out the time and mental energy to embrace the scenery, create compositions, and interpret the light and colors in ways that I found meaningful.

Painting during my CDT hike was enjoyable and gratifying, and I'm proud to be able to share the paintings with a wider audience. Both originals and prints are for sale. Please visit my website at <http://adriennehikes.wordpress.com>.







08/26/2012, ELMO LAKE





### ***Commentary for individual paintings:***

**06/26/2012 Chinese Wall:** The Chinese Wall is a striking feature in the heart of the Bob Marshall Wilderness in northern Montana. Twenty miles from the nearest road, it is as lovely as some of the country's most famous physical features, but much less frequently visited. Shortly after this painting was drawn, a snowstorm blew in. The hike past the wall was snowy and cold, with no trail and occasional rockfall tumbling past us, making for a very different experience from what I had anticipated.

**07/30/2012 Thorofare:** The Thorofare is a region of Yellowstone National Park, where backpacking permits and schedules are strictly regulated. As a result, we had a very short day of hiking, and a full afternoon with nothing to do but lounge in the meadow and paint.

**08/26/2012 Elmo Lake:** Elmo Lake is in the very northern part of Colorado, at about 10,000' feet of elevation. This beautiful view from our campsite was a wonderful welcome to Colorado. Coming from our home in California's Sierra Nevada, it was a shock to realize that there were flat, dense forests at such a high elevation.

**09/22/2012 La Garita Wilderness:** In this part of Southern Colorado, I struggled to find a subject to paint, as the mountain pine beetle has devastated the forests. Experts debate whether the recent increase in pine beetle activity is part of a natural cycle or the result of human thoughtlessness. The complexity of the colors and textures in this dead tree acted as a reminder of the value of the natural cycles of the forest.

**09/24/2012 Creede:** One of the pleasures of going southbound is following the fall yellow of the aspen trees. The techniques used in this painting developed in my mind over several weeks, and I finally got a chance to execute it while we waited out a snowstorm in the town of Creede, Colorado.

**Artist Bio:** Adrienne Marshall is a native Californian. After graduating from Scripps College in 2009, she began working in the field of environmental education. She began painting enthusiastically on the Pacific Crest Trail in 2010. Since 2011, she has worked for NatureBridge, an educational non-profit in Yosemite, as a Field Science Educator. With the Yosemite landscape as inspiration, she furthered her art education through workshops and reading. In 2012, she hiked and painted the Continental Divide Trail. She currently works at NatureBridge and resides in Yosemite. She plans to continue painting the CDT through sketches and photos, as well as finding further inspiration in the Yosemite landscape.





09/24/2012, CREEDE, CO



# Review: Casio Pathfinder PAW1300 Solar Atomic Watch



Throughout most of my hiking career, I've in many respects been opposed to wearing a watch while outdoors. After all, we're out there to get away from things like rigid schedules and alarms right? I happily hiked with this philosophy for many years until one day on a multi-day trip with Jen about 2 years ago. She brought along her day to day wristwatch – Actually on accident, as she'd planned to leave it in the car. At first I couldn't believe that she'd brought such a useless item along, but soon I found that even despite my fairly accurate guessing of the time by using the sun, I found myself asking for the time at several intervals throughout the day. As the trip progressed we found that knowing the time actually proved to be quite useful – Mostly for help regarding the best time of day to stop and setup camp, and to help us get moving a bit in the morning when we needed it. I've found that a watch doesn't really interfere with my individual wilderness experience – Especially when you're the one setting your own schedule.



After the trip I evaluated my philosophy. I never wear a watch in day to day life, (Except sometimes when running) but I began to see the benefits of wearing one on the trail. I started to wear my running watch while backpacking which worked great for keeping the time, but since that’s all it did, I again began to wonder if it was really worth it or needed. That’s when the battery died. Now, normally replacing a watch battery is a fairly simple exercise. Not so in this instance. First I searched the house for the battery that I needed, but none could be found. The local store had them at \$10 each, but they were cheap online. So I ordered a new set of batteries and set the watch away in a safe place. A week later the new batteries arrived. After searching for the tiny screws that held the watch together that always find a way to get lost, I reassembled the watch with a new battery, but for some reason the watch would never work right again. I tried resets and new batteries, but from that point on it only worked when it wanted to.

**PAW1300 Design**

I checked out various replacement options and eventually settled on the Casio Pathfinder PAW1300 – A slimmer design than other Casio Pathfinder (Now named Pro Trek) watches. A lot of multifunction outdoor watches are huge, and I both needed something that was small and light enough to not bother a guy who’s a lightweight backpacker and doesn’t like to wear a watch in the first place – Plus was light enough to not be bothersome when running. Additionally, the watch was solar powered so no more battery replacement



headaches. The watch has now been superseded by the PAW2000 in the Casio line which adds a more vivid display and sunrise / sunset functions, but the 1300 model can still be found and at a cheaper price. On either model you’ll also get a thermometer, (Not accurate while wearing the watch) barometer, altimeter, stopwatch, digital compass, alarms, a backlight, and more. It’s quite a lot of watch in a fairly small size. The watch is

also water resistant to 100 meters. Within each menu screen and option there are a ton of settings & calibration features if you want to get into it and realty tweak each setting, but for the most part I kept it simple and the watch in an out of box state with just a few minutes of setup time upon receipt have worked well for me. The watch weighs just 2.2 ounces, band included.

**Pros:** A multifunction watch tailored for the backcountry. Solar power and atomic time keeping functions work well. Slim form factor and light weight don’t impose on comfort on the trail or on the wrist.

**Cons:** Alarm not always loud enough to wake a heavy sleeper; no low / high temperature memory.

**Rating:** ★★★★★



**Solar Power**

The watch arrived with a medium charge, but after a few days backpacking in the Wind River Range under sunny skies it charged to its highest level and has been there since – Literally over 2 years. When not backpacking or running, I keep the watch inside and haven’t been particularly careful about exposing it to light. In short, I haven’t had to even think about the battery level of the watch and the solar charging process / battery power isn’t something that even crosses my mind, it works that well.

**Atomic Time Receiver**

You won’t have to set the time either – The watch automatically receives the correct time from an atomic time transmitter broadcast from Fort Collins, Colorado. This is supposed to happen daily in the middle of the night, but depending on the geographic location, or the location of the watch, (Outdoors, indoors, by a window, etc.) this can at times be a bit sketchy. However, even when stored inside away from windows, I found the watch still received a signal at least once a week – More than enough for my needs.

**Altimeter**

I’d never hiked with an altimeter before, and to be honest, I use that feature alone now more than anything else the watch offers. In the mountains and combined with a topographic map, you can really pinpoint your location and it really helps with those “We’ve been going up for 3

hours, is the summit close?” moments. The caveat is that you’ll have to calibrate the watch fairly frequently since the sensor relies on ambient air pressure for its reading and changing weather can affect its accuracy. I’ve found that calibrating the watch to the trailhead elevation, then subsequently calibrating once or twice a day (When leaving a campsite and upon arrival at the next, for instance) seems to maintain a fairly accurate elevation readout. (+/- 150 feet) You’ll have to use your topographic map with elevations to calibrate, which is an easy 15 second process. You’ll also be provided with a nice graph detailing your elevation change over time when in the altimeter mode.

**Thermometer & Barometer**

The thermometer works well when the watch is kept off your wrist, otherwise it picks up body heat and provides an inaccurate reading. If that’s a concern for you, wearing the watch attached to the outside of your pack will solve the problem. One thing I wish the watch had is a low and high temperature memory – There’s no way to find out how cold it got



last night unless you wake up and look. The barometer feature can also display the current barometric pressure and as an option, you can display the barometer data across the main (Time) mode of the watch that takes a reading every two hours and turns this data into a line graph on the display. With this information, you can to some extent forecast the weather. The only problem is that altitude changes will throw off the graph, so you have to be at the same elevation for several readings before the graph will be accurate. The watch does allow you to perform an on-demand quick check of the current barometric pressure vs. the last automatic check if the need arises, however.

**Compass**

The compass is accurate and performs well to take a quick bearing, and can also be adjusted for declination if desired.

One nice feature is the ability to store a particular bearing to the compass memory with two button presses. After the bearing is stored, a digital pointer that revolves around the watch screen points you in your desired direction. Once you no longer need to follow that particular bearing, you can clear the memory with a single button press and return to the normal northerly oriented mode. On the downside the compass will only stay active for about 15 seconds after acquiring a reading once you enter compass mode. (While updating the reading each second) If you need to view the compass for a longer period of time repeated presses on the compass mode button will be required, granting you another 15 seconds each time. This feature is to save battery life, but seems unneeded considering the impressive solar / battery performance we experienced with the watch.

BELOW: THERMOMETER & BAROMETER  
LEFT: ALTIMETER





**Performance**

Overall the watch works exceedingly well in a “Never even have to think about it” sort of way. Durability has been excellent with no issues in that department. The face of the watch is recessed under the bezel, which keeps you from scratching the display under normal circumstances. After getting used to using devices like computers and touchscreen phones there was a bit of a reverse learning curve regarding the seemingly archaic controls, but the included user manual does a decent job of explaining anything you’d like to do. One thing that didn’t work quite so well is the alarm – It’s very quiet. The watch allows you to set 5 separate alarms though, and I found I needed to set

all 5 back to back to have much chance of being awoken for an early departure if I’d had a long day of hiking the previous day. The electro-luminescent display works great to light up the screen, but in favor of battery life it shuts off really quickly. Best for a quick glance at night and that’s about it – Otherwise you’ll be repeatedly pressing the illumination button the entire time. It can also be configured to automatically turn on when you flip your wrist towards you to view the time, but I found that the watch had to be coaxed in order for the light to activate by moving my wrist more than I normally would. With the non-issue of battery life, it would have been nice to at least have the option to have the light stay on when needed or for longer periods of time.



**Conclusion**

Overall the watch has performed very well while backpacking, hiking, and running, and if I wore a watch all the time – It would without a doubt be my first choice. If you want the best of the best go with the PAW2000, but the 1300’s screen is fine, and the PAW1300 is also slightly lighter. For outdoor activities, The PAW1300 has nearly every feature you could ask for without being overly large and heavy. Additionally, with its atomic time receiver and solar power, you’ll never have to set the time or worry about changing a battery again. ❖

Overall Very Good - ★★★★★

The Casio Pathfinder PAW1300 comes in at 2.2 ounces and has an MSRP of \$300, but can usually be found on sale at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

You can also find it at [Backcountry.com](https://www.backcountry.com) and [REI.com](https://www.rei.com).



# Goblin Valley

By: Jessica Smith

All of the guide books had said that when hiking in the desert, thick boots were essential for protecting your feet...



**All of the guide books had said that when hiking in the desert, thick boots were essential for protecting your feet.** I hadn't worn shoes in days. The multitude of little old ladies that poured off of the Elderhostel buses and swarmed the Moab area had been giving me strict criticism as a result.

"Oh darlin'," they'd gasp, "Where ARE your shoes?" They shook their heads as I skipped past them barefoot on the trails at Arches National Park, looking at me like one would look at an abandoned dog. Who was supposed to be taking care of that girl? To me, it seemed completely natural to go with out the hassle of bulky footwear. Growing up in Florida, it simply wasn't a summer's day with out the feel of sand between my toes. The whole process of socks and lace up boots seemed like tedious overkill, suffocating my feet and keeping me one layer of clothing further from the gritty earth of Utah. After all, I didn't travel to the middle of nowhere to stay cut off and held-up within myself. I went to the desert to wander, to see, and to explore and the less that got in the way of that the better. Taking up my tattered flip flops in one hand I smiled looking out over the bizarre landscape. Arches National Park was several days deep into my recent past. This was Goblin Valley, and there was no one to care about my footwear.

Located a solid 102 miles from the tourist base at Moab, Goblin Valley gives quiet respite from all things civilized. First discovered by cowboys roaming the range in search of lost cattle, this geological

playground was designated as a state park as recent as 1964. Originally the site was known as Mushroom Valley, the name inspired by the comically organic appearance that the rock formations take. Since then, the title of Goblin Valley was added, giving the park an other worldly name that suits the curious and enchanting scenery. Comprised of fickle Entrada Sandstone, erosion has taken it's toll in an almost artistic way. Wind and water slowly sculpted the valley from what once was a tidal flat of an ancient ocean, to the den of the goblins that it is today. With little opportunity for vegetation to take hold, the valley remains for the most part barren, leaving nothing to block your view of the rocks, and nothing to give you shade. The smooth sandstone was easy under bare feet, but the power of the sun is never to be taken for granted. Water, though once deep over the ancient ocean bed, is now a rarity so packing an extra bottle or two is never a bad idea.

Wandering through the garden of rock goblins, I had to continually remind myself that this was the planet that I grew up on. Everything was alien in appearance to me and surely would have rivaled the footage being beamed back from NASA's Mars Rover. I am not the only one to think so either. In 1999, Goblin Valley made it's big screen debut in the film *Galaxy Quest* starring Tim Allen, Sigourney Weaver, and Alan Rickman (to name a few). The park set the stage for an alien planet in the movie, with the film makers wisely taking advantage of a back drop that no man-made Hollywood set could equal.









Though the film crews came and went, looking at the landscape you wouldn't be able to tell. All is as it should be, wild and quintessentially Utah.

Utah, the desert state, with more wide open spaces than city land by far. Choosing how to go about exploring it is half the fun. While Goblin Valley's trails like The Carmel Canyon Trail, The Curtis Bench Trail, and the Entrada Canyon Trail all provide excellent 1-2 mile loops or out-and-backs, sticking to the trail is not mandatory. If you go, take advantage of the ability to wander and explore the goblins for yourself. I quickly lost track of time wandering in, around, and through the sandstone forest, further and further back away from the overlook and parking lot. If you would rather have some guidance in your exploration, the park offers various ranger programs including programs geared specifically for children, lessons in the sandstone geology, and guided hikes to a place known as "The Goblin's Lair", a cavern with 80 foot high ceilings and natural skylights. Mountain biking is also permitted with in the park and wildlife watching is popular, with the most commonly seen inhabitant being pronghorn antelope.

With the closest hotel being around 30 miles away, camping out in the park is a great option for a relaxed or extended visit. The Goblin Valley Campground has room for RV's but remains simple enough to please tent campers. During my stay I made use of a primitive campground site. Located in the campground but just a little bit further back from the road I was able to fulfill one of my wild west dreams



by camping out alone in my own little canyon. The Valley of the Goblins is the main attraction of the park, but the scenery that the campground backs up into is equally beautiful. Even if you do not camp, making a pass through the campground parking lot is worth the little side trip just to check out the layers of multicolored rock. At the campground

electricity is not available, but there is a restroom with hot showers for campers. Recently two yurts became available for rental as an alternative to tent camping. These traditional Mongolian structures give campers the open air closeness to nature that they have come looking for, while still offering more of the comforts

of home. Each yurt has room for five people and they DO have electricity as well as a propane stove for cool nights and an outdoor grill to cook on. Bunk beds, a cooler, and a dining room table with chairs are also included in the perks of yurt rental. For \$60 per night these yurts are a bargain for a family group wanting to enjoy the park overnight. Tent campsites





go for \$16 a night for the economic traveler. Staying in the park overnight gives you the added experience of watching or photographing the sun going down, changing the glowing sandstone's vibrant colors. Being such an isolated park, Goblin Valley experiences little in the way of light pollution and making a night of star gazing a near guarantee. Whether you decided to tent camp, drive in your RV, or try out a yurt for a night, making reservations ahead of time is always a good idea. My trip took place over the Labor Day weekend, and even though the park is remote and finding room to roam alone was easy, the campground was booked to capacity.

If you decide to go, keep in mind how remote the park is. Gas up your car for the drive when you have the opportunity as gas stations become sparse in central Utah. Unlike Moab's National Parks (Canyonlands and Arches) dogs are allowed out on the trails in Goblin Valley State Park as long as they are kept on a leash and cleaned up after. If you are visiting for the day, the park opens at 6 am and the gates close at 10pm year round with a \$7 per vehicle entrance fee. As always when hiking, bring plenty of water, sunscreen, and snacks....hiking boots optional.

For more information, visit the [Goblin Valley State Park Website](#).











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# Family Camping

## From the Jolly Green Giant Blog

**A father worries about many things** – parking lots with elderly drivers, toys with surprising success at being stuffed in a range of human and household orifices, and all items of seeming impossibility that find their way into electrical sockets, to name a few. It was to my great surprise that despite the litany of some fairly inventive scenarios I had fabricated in my own head since the birth of my three and five year old, that I had to admit this one never occurred to me. Yet there I sat, accompanied by my wife, as

we watched in smirked anticipation against the glowing moon while both my wonderful sons seemed to unhinge their faces to make room for an abundance of marshmallows extracted from our fire just a few minutes earlier. Of lesser surprise was the fact that they lacked any responsible reflection to the fact that a pile of charred marshmallows the size of a small Chihuahua probably wasn't suitable to be eaten at one time. Like many times before, I was proven to be incorrect.





It was December in the Virginia mountains of Shenandoah National Park and I was family camping. A look around indicated we were not alone, but the summer crowds had long since disbursed. Those who remained were either elderly or privileged folks on year-round motorhome expeditions, or the rarer bird, those of us who found joy in the out-of-doors even during months when the sun caught up on its slumber.

This was a rare opportunity for my family which only presented itself due to the unfortunate and unexpected loss of a professional position I had held happily for 12 years. The words "lay" and "off" never held much weight until they were uttered to me seemingly so easily by a Vice President whom I had less than 10 conversations with during my whole career and who just a few minutes earlier had laid off my boss. It was only after acknowledgment that I no longer had a career to return to the following day did I realize how much losing a job of any tenure felt like being ostracized from my own family.

Being the consummate worker, I had been working nearly non-stop for the last 72 hours pumping out recently updated resumes to positions I had no interest in taking in areas of the nation which were about as appealing to me as a condo on the surface

of the sun. It all felt so hopeless – so senseless. Eventually in my groggy state, my body was reminded of the fact that sleep is a necessary human requirement which was afforded to me only

after I had applied for any closely related positions and quite a few for which I was no more qualified to handle than if someone asked me to paint highway road markings in a crop duster.

I'd like to say I feel asleep with ease, but stress has a way of making my brain become an Olympic gymnast when I appreciate it the least.





It wasn't long after arriving that my two junior rangers had already explored the surrounding area and made assurances that the family need not worry about any pending dinosaur or dragon attacks. A warm dinner was served and eaten without the pickiness or objection that seemed to be of constant persistence at home. Sleeping bags had already been turned into an hour-long playground and I fully expected to serve my role as a human trampoline later that night just as I let my guard down to sleep.

Little was remarkable about this trip in composition and equipment compared to those in the past. I was reminded by the tenderness of my chest of the joy my kids

had when camping despite the fact that they seemed to be made entirely of elbows and knees with sniper-like accuracy to gonadal regions. While I wasn't entirely free of distraction, I found encouragement in the presence of my family and the fact that just about any warm food in the woods was on par in desire to any 5-star restaurant in town. The outdoors had always been my refuge. When family tensions were running high as a child, I found solace in nature. When youthful romance seemed hopeless, my confessions were always made to the woods. It is of no surprise that in my latest moment of defeat that the most simple medicine remains in the unblemished wild of the nature.







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Moments of peace are a highly sought after requirement of the human condition. Our world commonly provides distraction from our problems in the form of the fermentation of sugar from starch, or for those without access to Wikipedia – alcohol, as well as other equally rudimentary coping strategies. I feel fortunate in knowing that no matter how bleak it gets, I need only take a walk to both realize the real priorities and blessings of life haven't actually gone anywhere which can be oddly illustrated by an excessive amount of mildly burned marshmallows and sleeping on the

ground. I run a small personal backpacking blog where in a moment of personal weakness I disclosed my unemployment. One of my readers (Stephen M.), who apparently had more welcomed advice than a fortune cookie author, shared sentiment which seemed wonderfully inviting. He wrote, "When I was faced with a layoff last year I immediately purchased a thru-hiker's guide to a trail that I was interested in. Might be time for a break." ❖

You can visit the Jolly Green Giant Blog [here](#).





### Sea to Summit Folding Bucket

Carry enough water back to camp to keep the entire crew hydrated, or create a super durable gravity filtration system. 10L or 20L capacity options. About \$30 & 3-4 ounces. [Backcountry.com](http://Backcountry.com)



### MSR Hubba Hubba 2-Person Tent

A double wall classic. About 4.5 pounds and \$330:

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



### GoLite Tumalo Pant

Waterproof. Breathable. 7oz. \$50:

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



### Snow Peak Hozuki LED Lantern

A soft glow that you can program to flicker in response to wind, movement, & sound just like a real candle. Except this one runs off AA batteries or USB. \$90 & 6 ounces: [REI.com](http://REI.com)

# GEAR MASH



### MSR Carbon-Core Tent Stake Kit

4 carbon core stakes shielded with an external covering of 7000-series aluminum. 5.5 grams each. Just under \$30 for 4: [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



### Marmot Precip Shell Gloves

Waterproof breathable protection & lightly lined. Under 5 ounces per pair. \$45: [REI.com](http://REI.com)



### Steripen Freedom

Prefilter your water then sterilize with the latest backcountry offering from Steripen. Rechargeable via USB or solar. Just under 3 ounces - \$120: [Backcountry.com](http://Backcountry.com)



### Harmony House Backpacking Kit

18 pouches of assorted dried vegetables keep trail meals interesting without weighing you down. About \$50 with a 12-24 month + shelf life: [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)





# Photo Tips from the Trail

by David M. 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 ideas 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 #3: INCLUDING A FOREGROUND**

In the last issue of TrailGroove, I wrote about the leading line and how to help create a more three-dimensional look to your image. This month I'm going to add to the ways to take that 2D image and help it look more 3D by including a foreground. This is the best way to anchor the eye to the front of your image and create that classic "near-far" look that helped make Ansel Adams' work more interesting. By using a foreground of some sort the eye will begin at the bottom of the frame and drift upwards to the distant landscape, but the illusion it creates is for the eye to drift more inwards. Boulders, shrubs, logs, and bright colors are some of the best foregrounds you can use on the trail. You'll need quite a bit of sharpness to your depth-of-field to take on this tip, so stopping down as much as your camera allows will work the best (I often try for f16 or f22 for that near-far look). Try this tip yourself, and start creating more depth to your images and garner more interest by including a simple foreground.

*Page through for more examples of including a foreground. All images Copyright 2012 © David M.Cobb Photography.*

LEFT: LESLIE GULCH

NEXT PAGE: DESERT SUNSET

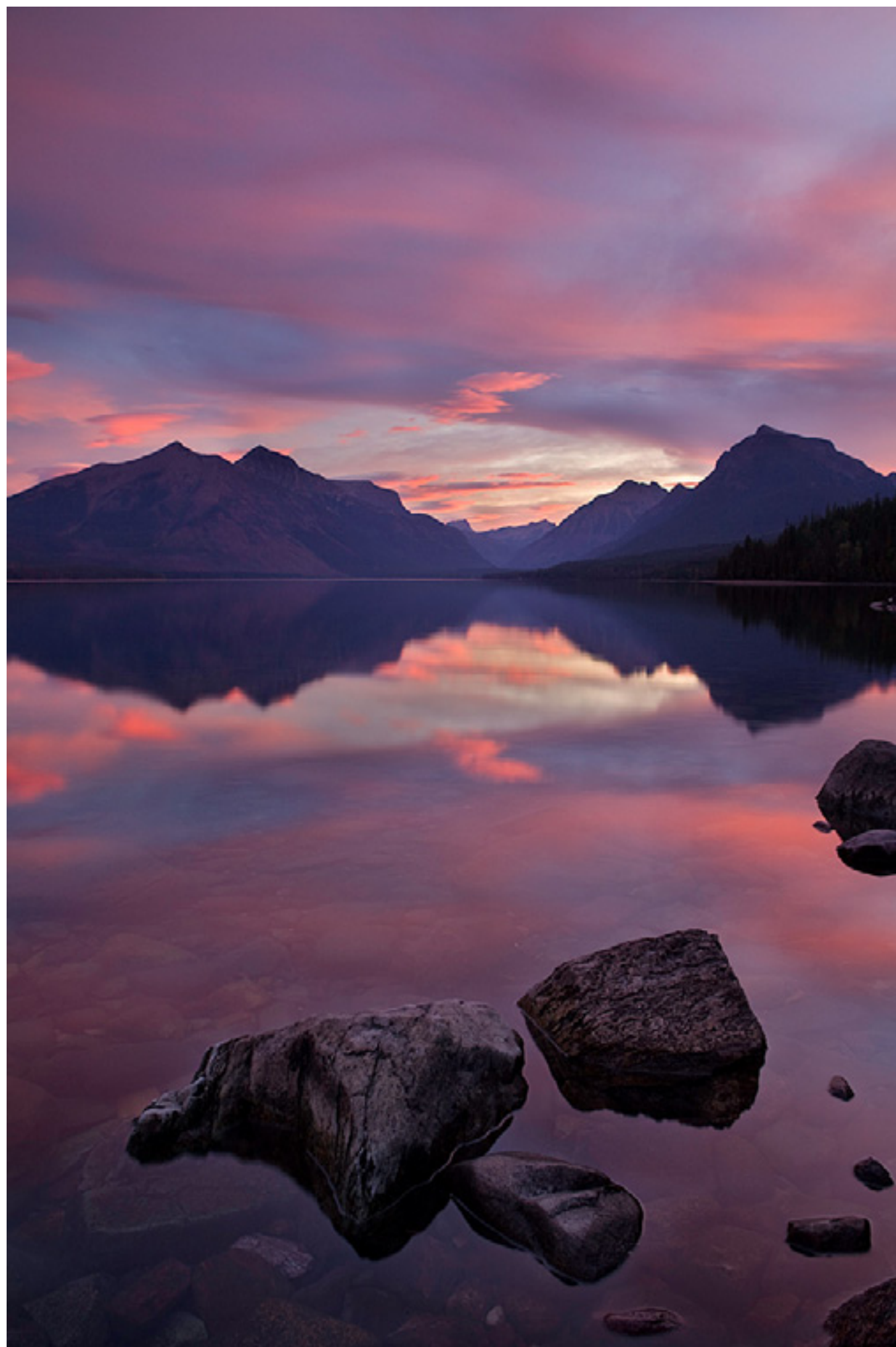












Check out our next issue for another great tip from David!

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

*BELOW: TENT CAMP  
LEFT: LAKE MCDONALD  
PREVIOUS: GLACIER LAKE*







# Primal Fear

## *The Psychology of Being Lost*

*By Heide Brandes*

**I was hiking back on the stretch of the Buffalo River Trail in Arkansas I had spent most of the day exploring when unexplainably, unexpectedly and stunningly, I was lost.**

The trail was just simply gone. One moment, I'm trekking on it, the next moment, it had disappeared.

On the weekend following Thanksgiving, most of the Ozark trees had surrendered their leaves. The Ozark Mountains and the Buffalo River Trail were smothered with the gold, red and browns of fallen carpet.

I remember thinking just an hour before how the trail was only discernible by the flattened and tramped leaves from hikers before me. I had thought about how easy it would be to wander off the trail and into the primitive wild.

And, I had done just that.

It's an unnerving feeling to be lost alone on an unfamiliar mountain with the sun setting, especially for someone new to solo hiking for long distances. I knew my fiancé was still over four miles away at a campground fishing, and if I wasn't back by dark, he would worry. So I turned around and backtracked until I found the trail I had been on. I walked forward again until it disappeared. It just ended. No trail, no hint of a trail, nothing that even looked like a trail.

I started to feel my breath quicken, my body temperature rise and a fog engulf my mind. I just couldn't fathom that the trail wasn't there, so I just started walking... randomly. I walked until it was clear to even my foggy brain that the fallen logs and brambles that tore at me were not part of any kind of trail. That growing panicky voice in my head told me to keep moving. I tried hiking up the side of the mountain, thinking this particular stretch of trail was higher. Nope, no trail. I tried hiking down and found only sheer bluffs.

For a few terrifying moments, I couldn't even find my way back to where the trail petered out, and that's when I knew I did the wrong thing. In all honesty, I wasn't truly, deeply, no-hope lost. I could see the highway that runs between Boxley and Ponca in Arkansas off in the distance, and I knew which direction I had to go. The thought of tromping through unfamiliar woods on a mountain that plummeted into hundred-foot cliffs while navigating the dark didn't appeal to me, but I would've done it.

I wasn't completely lost, but lost enough to feel frightened, angry and stupid

How embarrassed would I be if I had to be rescued on a day hike? What would happen when the sun sank into pitch black night? What if I froze to death when the temperatures dropped below freezing? What if an errant black bear wandered along and ate my face off?

Scenarios – all unpleasant and dramatic – filled my imagination. My main concern now wasn't finding where the trail continued, but to go back to where the trail ended. I desperately searched for landmarks and stumbled back until I finally found the original trail that petered out.

Out of options, I sat on a small rock overhang where the trail disappeared and just thought. I let my breath slow down, I drank some water and I just relaxed a bit. I also considered my options. In my mind, I could either stay where I was and trust that my fiancé' or someone would come find me, or start plotting a route to head down the mountain to either the highway or to the next campground before the sun set.

For a long time, I simply stared at the trail I had come from, and I knew that it had to continue somewhere. So, I stepped up onto the rock to take a look around, and holy of holies, there was the trail. Just one simple step onto a rock would have saved me 45 minutes of uncomfortable fear.

I may have found my trail again, but getting lost is an alien and uncomfortable feeling in this day and age of GPS mapping and Google search. It does happen though, and what our brains go through is just as strange. The psychology of "lost" is one that can help you or harm you, depending on how you handle it.



## WE ALL GET LOST

Beginner or experienced, it doesn't matter. All hikers at one point or another get lost. Many times, even the most experienced hiker will panic in a situation like that.

Don't blame yourself – you are hard-wired to react that way. It's in your DNA.

Jennifer Pharr Davis knows more about hiking than most people on the planet, having hiked over 11,000 miles on long distance hikes throughout the world. In 2011, she became the first female to claim the overall record on the Appalachian Trail by hiking the 2,181-mile trail in 46 days, 11 hours, and 20 minutes for an average of 46.9 miles per day.

But, she has been lost.

JENNIFER PHARR DAVIS,  
APPALACHIAN TRAIL END PLAQUE



"I've been lost umpteen times, and when I hiked the Pacific Crest Trail in 2006, I got lost so many times that I developed a routine for whenever I got lost," Jennifer said. "I had hiked the Appalachian Trail several times and the trails are well-marked; however, on the Pacific Coast trail, I really got lost.

"My first instinct was to panic. I was fearful that I didn't have enough water, didn't have enough food and was worried I wouldn't be able to find my way back."

An experienced hiker, Jennifer has authored four books on hiking and is owner and founder of Blue Ridge Hiking Co. in Asheville, N.C. The author of "Becoming Odyssea" and a hiking trainer, even Jennifer made the wrong choices based on the panic of being lost in the woods.

"The situation seemed so dire because of the conditions. I kept thinking, 'I have to get back to the trail as soon as possible,'" she said. "I just took what I thought was the shortest direction back to the trail, which was a bad decision. You have to go through rivers, briars and all kinds of obstacles, and I ended up in more trouble than I was already in."

Ernest Troth of Virginia had a similar reaction when he became lost on a day hike in Colorado. Being lost wasn't just frightening, but embarrassing as well.

"It was really hard to believe that I was lost. I've been a hiker since I was a kid some decades before, and actually said to



ERNEST TOTH, GRAYS TORREYS PEAKS HIKE

myself, 'I can't believe you did this. How embarrassing,'" Ernest said. "All the peaks looked the same. There was no trail, no other hikers. The day crowds I'd grown accustomed to were just now completely absent."

The instinct to panic is a natural reaction for human beings when placed in a fearful situation. Ernest wanted to run in any direction, but he forced himself to stay calm.

"Planning ahead for eventualities helped a lot. I immediately implemented 'STOP' - stop, think, observe, plan - when I realized I was way off the trail," Ernest said. "I spent the next half hour with map recon, compass orientation and visually retracing my route until finally the correct downhill direction seemed obvious."

## THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON FEAR

Fear does funny things to our bodies. One of the most primal instincts embedded deep into our evolutionary DNA, fear and adrenaline also cause even the most

experienced and logical hiker to revert back to instinctual behavior.

Fight, flight or freeze – it comes down to those simple reactions.

"People vary in how often or how likely they are to become frightened or anxious, but virtually everyone has a point where they can feel flooded with anxiety and fear," said Dr. Holly Parker, a practicing clinical psychologist at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, MA.

"This can certainly happen if someone gets lost hiking, and there are ways that fear can work against people. Anxiety and fear narrow the focus of attention, meaning that a lot of details can be missed. They can also bias how people come to understand what's happening."

Dr. Cynthia Divino, executive director for the Boulder Institute for Psychotherapy and Research, said the brain reverts back to a primitive response when flooded with adrenaline. The primeval brain takes over, and the logical brain slows down.

"When we encounter a situation that we perceive as life threatening, our fight, flight or freeze response ignites. When this happens, most of the blood flow from our brain goes to the hind brain and mid-brain (or emotional brain). The part of our brain that can think logically (our frontal lobe) essentially turns off as the blood flow shifts to our hind-brain," Divino said.

"We find that we can't think clearly and are consumed by fear. With our fight,



flight and freeze response taking over, we revert to primitive instinctual responses which are often very poor choices in that particular situation.”

Parker says that research shows that fear and anxiety can lead people to interpret a situation in a negative, threatening and anxiety-provoking way, causing them to assume the worst case scenario.

“This can create a situation in which the complete picture of the person’s situation or problem isn’t seen, and so the full range of decision making options may not be available to them. Panic can cause people to forget the survival lessons they were taught, so trying to remain calm and allow time to more fully think through lessons taught and the options available is key, rather than reacting,” she said.

### ***THE MISTAKES WE MAKE***

In Kenneth Hill’s 1998 “Lost Person Behavior,” studies show that hikers choose to do a number of things when they find themselves lost; many times, these behaviors only cause you to become even more lost. These strategies include:

- \* Random Traveling – the person moves randomly in the woods with no particular motivation except to find safety.
- \* Directional Traveling – the person travels in a specific direction, regardless of the terrain
- \* Route sampling – the person tries out several routes from an intersection
- \* Directional sampling – the person

samples short distances in various directions leading away from a landmark

- \* View enhancement – the person climbs a tree or hill in order to see landmarks
- \* Backtracking – the person follows his own tracks back to the safety
- \* Folk wisdom – relying on adages like following streams downhill or orienting oneself by using the North Star
- \* Staying put – the hiker stays in one place until help arrives

Backtracking and staying put are the most successful ways to deal with being lost, but so few hikers actually stay put or backtrack.

“When I got lost, I thought, ‘Oh my god, I have become that guy,’” said Troth. “The first instinct is to run back, run up a hill or just go anywhere. I think this is worse for guys – it’s the same reason we won’t stop and ask directions. If you stop and stay put, you have to admit you are lost.”

Embarrassment – especially for experienced hikers – also keeps them from staying in one spot to wait for rescuers.

“I think it is embarrassing to get lost, but it happens to everyone whether you are a beginner or an expert,” said Jennifer. “At our hiking company, we plead with the people who take our classes to stay put if they get lost. But, it’s a pride thing. We want to prove we can survive, and it’s a hard thing to admit when you are lost and need help.”





## WHAT TO DO

Most experts agree that hikers should above all stay calm and stay put. By acting on adrenaline only, hikers can make their situations spiral into dangerous waters.

“Our minds often take their cue from our bodies, so if we can calm the body, we can calm the mind,” said Dr. Parker. “Grounding exercises take advantage of that by essentially grounding you back into the present, rather than getting pulled away mentally by overwhelming emotions.”

Parker suggested trying to ground the mind by naming as many states, as many colors, sports teams, holidays, movie titles, spices, types of trees, etc., as you can.

“Try this for a few minutes and notice how your anxiety goes down. Then when you feel more centered and calm, return to thinking about possible solutions for your situation,” she said.

Dr. Divino agrees. Even a simple deep breathing exercise can help reduce the panic or emotional response.

“What people can do is start taking slow, deep breaths. This shuts off the fight, flight, or freeze response and blood flow will return to the part of our brain that is most likely to get us out of the situation quickly,” Dr. Divino said. “It helps if people have knowledge of what to do in these situations beforehand because they can more confidently return to what they know or have read.”

Survival expert Annie Aggens, director of

Polar Expeditions with Northwest Passage and Polar Explorers says sometimes lost means “LOST.” If you’ve run out of options and no plan seems to be working, she said the best thing you can do is help searchers find you.

“I’ve been lost, and it is hard to keep the panic down,” she said. “You need to keep a really cool head. If you can’t think your way out of a situation, then stop, think, organize and plan. Start making markers in the direction you are traveling to help searchers find you.”

Strips of cloth and arrows made from wood or rock can be placed in visible areas. If an aerial search is ongoing, take a belt and shake a tree branch.

“A weirdly shaking tree branch will be noticeable if they are searching from the air,” Annie said. “Doing these things not only make you feel like you are doing something constructive, but it helps you maintain hope. If you lose hope, you go to a very dark place. Find a place to settle down and make it homey. Make it comfortable, and if it’s safe, make a fire.

“Above all, don’t give in to panic and go running off into any direction. The most important thing to do is keep a cool head.”

Looking back at my own adventure of losing myself, I did fall into the trap of not thinking straight, but I did keep my cool for the most part. Backtracking and stopping to assess my situation helped me find my way again in the deep, dark woods. It also taught me that no matter how dire a situation seems, panicking will always make it worse.

Next hike, I’m bringing markers! ❖





# Backcountry Cuisine: Hiker's Risotto



Cooking risotto can be a time-consuming process, as it requires stirring and adding liquid to the rice slowly. If you are at camp and have time to cook this creamy, rich dish, it makes a delicious comfort food when away from home. If you are in a hurry, as we often are backpacking, it can be made using Minute Rice which results in more of a pilaf. You can add dehydrated chicken or another protein, as well as different vegetables to mix it up. Add more cheese, olive oil, or butter if you need more calories.

### Ingredients:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Rice (1 Cup Arborio for Risotto; 2 Cups Minute Rice for Pilaf) | 1 Packet Beef, Chicken or Vegetable Stock Powder |
| 1 Tablespoon dried onions or shallots                          | 1/4 Cup Parmesan Cheese                          |
| 1/4 Cup Freeze-Dried Peas, Mushrooms                           | 2 1/2 Cups Water for Cooking                     |
| 1-2 packets Olive Oil  | Salt & Pepper packets (add to taste)             |



### At Camp - Cooking Time ~ 25 minutes (Less if using Minute Rice)

Heat the olive oil in your pot until hot. Add the rice, onions/shallots, stirring to be sure all pieces of rice are coated in oil. Add 1 cup of water, the flavor packet and the vegetables. Cover and cook until rice absorbs liquid. Once all liquid is absorbed, slowly add the other cup of water a few tablespoons at a time. Keep stirring each time until the liquid is absorbed. When the rice is tender and all liquid is absorbed, add the parmesan cheese and stir. Serve immediately. Serves 2.

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# The Drive Home: The Basics

**The alarm went off at 4:00 AM. As usual, I'd fully intended to pack the night before, but had given up halfway through the evening in favor of sleep.** I

started the coffee maker and then quickly took my last shower for the next 2 days. I never could quite get used to turning lights on in the morning – It just never seemed right with sunrise eminent. But incandescent lights lit the scene as I downed 2 cups of coffee and finished packing from the night before. I checked the doors to make sure they were locked, then checked again. I stumbled outside into the predawn morning and towards the car. Frost covered everything and my breath filled the air. I threw my pack in the

backseat and the car chugged to life slowly, groaning against the cold. Heat to the max, I sped away toward the trailhead, 7 hours away.

As an outdoor enthusiast, living in Chicago wasn't easy. Somehow though, my job had taken me there as a career progressed. With only weekends available and decent backpacking destinations at least several hours away, an early start was a requirement. I'd actually hoped to start the drive even earlier and drive through the night after work on Friday, but the work week had left me exhausted and I needed those few extra hours of sleep Friday night. There were closer destinations than my choice for this trip, but I'd

already mostly covered all the trails through each place. This time I was headed to Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I'd been there before, but with more trail miles than many other Midwestern backpacking destinations, there were still parts of the park I wanted to cover and explore.

I stopped for gas once and made it to the park at Noon on Saturday. I'd have to report to my office (Rather, cubicle) first thing Monday morning, another 7 hours back the way I'd come from. I hit the trail running and out of the trailhead parking lot. I passed quite a few hikers out for the day, but after about 3 miles the crowds thinned out and I found myself alone in the green humid tunnel of a Midwestern summer trail. I had a fairly ambitious loop planned – 35 miles and only 1 and a half days. I kept pushing and with no breaks, I made it about 15 miles by the time the sun had dipped below the horizon and night began to overtake the woods. I walked away from the trail into the forest and haphazardly walked around looking for a suitable flat place to set up camp. Eventually and after some searching, I found a nice flat spot on the crest of a small rise and the shelter was set. I grabbed my food bag and alcohol stove, then wandered about a hundred yards away from camp in the opposite direction of the trail that was now a quarter mile the other direction. In the fading light I cooked up my commercial freeze dried dinner by way of headlamp. (Not quite lasagna, but it said so on the package) And though I could not

see it, an owl perched close by to investigate, its presence only given away by the other-worldly sounds only an owl can make when you're in the dark woods alone.

I'd left to cook dinner while there was still some light left in the sky, but now it was completely dark. Even with the headlamp it was difficult to locate camp – In the dark the trees each looked the same. At one point I even gave up and headed back to my food bag, which I'd hung close to where I'd cooked dinner, then started the search for camp yet again. This seemed to do the trick, and soon my headlamp illuminated the tent that seemed to look so out of place in the night of the forest. I jumped in and laid there in my sleeping bag, alone with my thoughts. But mostly I was just tired. At one point I unzipped the door and looked outside – Cloud cover and a thick fog had rolled in, and it was pitch black. I'd never seen a night that dark before or since, and as I gazed outside it was so dark that I wasn't able to even see the trunks of the trees just a few feet from the tent. It was just blank space. I retired back into the tent and quickly fell asleep.

I opened my eyes at some point during the night. Something was growling close by, perhaps 50 feet away. It was a short growl, and it came at intervals. This was black bear country and what I was hearing was a loud, low, and angry sound from something that obviously was not pleased with my presence. This was no coyote. At least the sound was coming from the opposite direction as my food bag, I thought.





I gathered my bear spray in one hand and made sure I still had my headlamp on my head with the other, and prepared to exit the tent in a rush to defend camp if need be. But I laid there quietly for the time being, and eventually the growling and huffing faded away into the night. I made myself catch another hour or two of sleep – Now with one ear on alert – Until the alarm on my watch broke the now silent and still dark night very early the next morning.

For me, enjoying a hot cup of coffee on a chilly morning is a highlight of any backpacking trip. But today I just didn't have the time. I broke camp as quickly as possible and in an attempt to save time, mixed up some instant coffee in cold water. I'd drink the cold coffee as I walked a few early morning miles – Not from a nice titanium mug but rather from the plastic soda bottle I'd brought along for water. It wasn't the same.

As I shouldered my pack and left camp I looked for any sign of the growling noise from the night before, but none could be found. I almost started to believe it had been my imagination. I ticked away a few miles and munched on energy bars until lunch time. Then more energy bars. I still needed to drive home today, and with 20 miles left on the loop when the day started I needed to cover some distance and quickly.

The day wore along and the only thing on my mind was making time and making miles. I trudged through sections of muddy trail and battled hordes of mosquitoes as I frequently referenced the map to verify my

progress. At one point I crested a point, climbing out of the humid and mosquito-filled forest, and the view was amazing. A cool breeze wiped the sweat away from my forehead and Lake Superior stretched out before me. As much as I tried, I couldn't see Canada, making the view all that much more amazing. Solid rock was underfoot, I'd only been sinking into mud all day long. My watch told me I didn't have much time however, and I pressed on.

After countless more energy bars and various gels and chews, I broke out of the woods and trudged across the concrete trailhead towards my car, my mud and water soaked shoes leaving tracks across the hard surface. It was late afternoon and I'd just covered 20 miles. I was beat.

You'd think you'd have a lot of time to reflect while on a backpacking trip, but not one like this had been. Now that it was over and with nothing else to do but drive, I could finally think.

Sometimes you just have those random thoughts...As a kid I remembered heading into the woods hiking for the day with only some sandwiches, a canteen, and a box of matches. I'd wander through the woods, each day discovering something new, losing myself in a complete sense of wonderment and peace.

Mile markers slowly danced passed in my headlights, still hours from home.



I was now in my twenties. I'd hiked a lot, and all the backpacking trips had been nothing less than grand. But frequently I'd catch myself on the trail with tunnel vision, looking only to make miles while at times forgetting to even look around me.

I'd nearly beat my feet to death with long mileages and overzealous distance / speed goals and a lot of that wonderment I found hiking as a kid was perhaps lost...even though I was still outside. I'd covered a lot of ground, and I'm not sure I'd go back and trade everywhere I'd been...but who knows what was missed along the way.

Eventually, home. The next morning the alarm went off again as I lay in my bed, and this time... Destination: Work.

That trip took place several years ago. I'm now not that far removed from my twenties, and what the future holds I'm not quite sure. Lately however, I've tried to just get out for the moment and not necessarily the miles. Sometime the miles are still ticked away at a high pace, but that's no longer the single point, and not the main focus of the trip itself. The location has since changed and the job is gone. And some of what I'd experienced as a kid heading out with some sandwiches, a canteen, and a few matches thrown into a bag – It's back. ❖

*Back in issue 3, we featured a piece called "Why I hike" by Gary Meyer. This time, we heard from Gary who shared his own version of the "The Basics" of hiking and how he came to love the outdoors. Thanks, Gary!*



*I was born late 1951 in the city of St. Louis, MO. And I do mean city! I grew up as a child, and all I remember is concrete; no colors, just shades of grey. You could see Pruitt-Igoe ( a notorious high rise inner city housing project from the 50's which was a haven for drug gangs and every crime you can name) from my grandmothers back yard. My home was not that far away. I vividly remember going to Cardinal baseball games at the old Sportsman's Park. The green of the outfield grass almost took my breath away. You mean there is a place where the grass is green?*

*When I was 5 or so we moved to the suburbs (not the country mind you) and there happened to be a cemetery (Memorial Park Cemetery, I looked it up after forgetting about it for many years) close by. Suddenly, things*

*changed. I spent as much time as I could in a small woods inside the cemetery. At the time, I thought it was like the black forest! I climbed trees, found frogs and snakes, dug a mud fort, made a tree house, and saw creatures such as skunks, raccoons, and possums before I had only read about.*

*It changed me, and I have loved backpacking and hiking here in the midwest ever since. We live in Kansas now. It's really flat here compared to where most of the Trailgroove readers are. But I love the rolling hills and woods. Today I try to hike with that same inner thrill from when I was a kid in the woods, experiencing the outdoors for the first time. I'll hike until the day I can no longer walk.*

*- Gary Meyer*







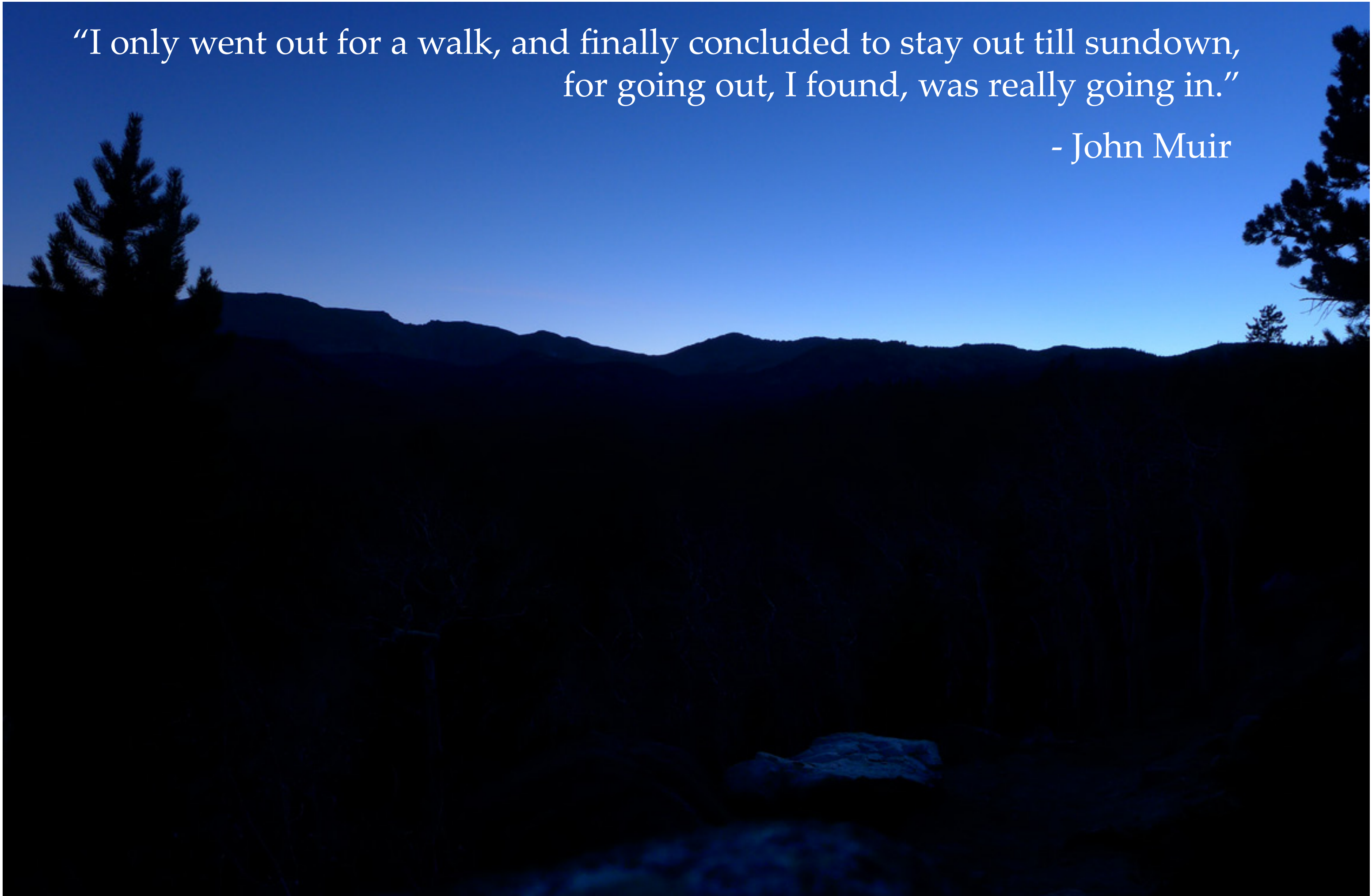






*“I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown,  
for going out, I found, was really going in.”*

*- John Muir*





# Thanks for Reading Issue 6

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

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

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