

THE PACKRAT

ROCKY
MOUNTAIN



RAMBLERS
ASSOC.

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2000

ACTIVITIES: Hiking, Backpacking, Skiing, Cycling, Climbing, Scrambling, Mountaineering, Educational and Awareness Programs, Social Functions.

MEETINGS: Every Wednesday evening at 7:30 p.m.
Rosemont Community Hall, 2807 - 10 Street N.W.

MAIL: Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council (CAOC)
1111 Memorial Dr. N.W.
Calgary, Alberta
T2N 3E4

TRIP INFO: 282-6308 Hotline and at meetings.

RMRA EXECUTIVE 1999-2000

President	Garry Denman
President	Danielle Tardif
Past President	Anita O'Reilly
Trips Director	Ron Hunter
Treasurer	Jennifer Oss
Secretary	Linda Eastwood
Social Director	Loris Neff
Programs Director	Carl Potter
Newsletter Editor	Suzanne Costaschuk
Membership*	Jean Amatt

* Not an elected position.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Once again we have some interesting stories sent to the Packrat. Joyce Tomboulion has written a story about travelling in Thailand, and Ron Hunter has recounted tales of his trip to Mt. St Helens. Also, Dorothy-Anne Reimer and David Mulligan have so kindly sent in contact numbers for voicing our opinions regarding the development plans for Mt. Sparrowhawk.

Next Packrat will have an article by Tony Moran on snow-shoeing. I look forward to receiving other articles for publishing in the Packrat. If you can send your items by March 19, 2000, that should give you ample time to write about those great ski or winter holiday trips you guys and gals are having this year. Please send your submissions to _____ or hand them in to Garry Denman or any _____ member of the Executive. I am very hard to get a hold of by phone, but I will be working on your next newsletter as the deadline time approaches. Take good care on those slippery slopes and roads. Suzanne Costaschuk

PACKRAT ADVERTISING RATES:

Rates per issue

- ¼ page - \$10.00
- ½ page - \$20.00
- Full page - \$40.00

SOCIAL EVENTS

Submitted by: Loris Neff

Special thanks to Dawn Jones, Darlene Weger and Roger Woodgate for opening their homes to their fellow Ramblers over the Holiday Season. It was greatly appreciated by everyone who attended these events.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all Ramblers who helped make the Christmas Potluck Dinner so successful. Colleen Jones did a wonderful job entertaining us on the piano.

Forthcoming Events



February 9, 2000 - Valentine's Potluck Dinner
Wednesday 7:00 pm
Bring a food dish for 6 people, dishes and cutlery.
Coffee will be provided.

March 27, 2000 - Dinner at Highwood Dining Room
Monday SAIT - \$27.00 per person
Five course dinner - cost will be \$27 per person
Deadline for tickets will be Wed. March 22, 2000

If you require more information regarding the above, please call Loris Neff

"A TASTE OF ITALY"

Monday, February 28, 7:30 P.M.

Salvatore's Ristorante

Featuring



- WINE TASTING
- ITALIAN FOOD
- SLIDE SHOW

RAMBLERS WELCOME!

Come and enjoy a great evening of Italian wines. You'll sample 4 to 6 reds & whites mostly from the Tuscany area famous for its Chianti wines. There will be great Italian hors d'oeuvres to help you savour the attraction of Italy plus a slide show of Ken Park's up coming 21 day trip to Italy in June, 2000.

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Reservations Required

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9104 MacLeod Trail S.

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Entrance adjacent to Sal's Deli & Italian Market

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On this trip you can do it all! Spectacular coastal hiking. Explore Tuscany's medieval hilltop towns, forts and monestaries. Sienna's fabulous "Palio" horse race rivalry. See Pisa, Florence, Venice, Rome, Pompeii and much, much more!

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HIGHLIGHTS:

- 6 Day Coastal Hiking (Village to Village)
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- Visit Florence, Venice, Pisa, Rome, Pompeii

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* Rome/Pompeii add-on price - \$460.00

* Price and itinerary may vary slightly. For more info call:

KEN PARK 244-6809

With my son and daughter-in-law living in Singapore until next spring, it seemed a good opportunity for me not only to visit them there, but also to travel to other points in S.E. Asia that I had been wanting to see. Seven years earlier I had been in Bangkok on the way back from trekking in Nepal. I vowed that I would return one day to see more of Thailand, and especially to trek in the scenic North among the hilltribes. Joining a tour seemed to be the best way to go, as that is very remote country, and a good guide and translator, as well as companionship, is important.

To WestCan Treks I went, and found that an Australian company called Peregrine Adventures offered a 'Northern Thailand Experience' package, as well as dozens of mouth-watering tours to other remote places in countries such as Borneo, Vietnam, Laos and Papua New Guinea. The price, at \$1,050 Canadian for 15 days, which included all accommodations, various modes of internal transportation, guides and porters, permits and admissions, and many of the meals, seemed reasonable enough. (S.E. Asia is still generally an excellent value for the Canadian dollar once you've paid for the return flight!)

I met my tour group in Bangkok on November 6—five Aussies, three Americans, and me, the only Canadian, plus our Thai guide, Tee. We set off on our 'experience' the following day, travelling by train through rice paddy country, first to Sukhothai, one of the old capitals of Thailand. Here we explored the historical, and largely restored, ruins by bicycle. The rainy season had passed, but some streets and parts of the city were flooded. That didn't stop the noisy and chaotic traffic, and people just waded from their houses to wherever they were going, taking it in stride.

On we went by bus to Chiang Mai, the well-known northern city where hilltribe treks often originate. It is an old walled and moat-ringed city that has much of interest to offer, including numerous ornate, colorful Buddhist temples and a Night Market where you can bargain to your heart's content. Next day we drove further north by van, mostly on good paved highway, to the trailhead for our trek through increasingly scenic and hilly country. A touristy village named Pai (which had a 'Pai in the Sky' restaurant!) was our last 'civilized' stop.

Finally, we were trekking in the beautiful, mountainous jungle among the hilltribe people! We trekked for five days and spent four nights in hilltribe villages. Two nights were in villages of the Karens, the most numerous of the hill peoples, and two nights were in Lahu villages. The people were shy, but always cordial to us. It was interesting to observe their way of life, which is primitive by our standards, but also seems very satisfying in its simplicity.

Accommodations in each village consisted of laying out our sleeping bags, dormitory style, on the bamboo floor of one of the thatch-roofed huts that was built on stilts, presumably to keep out pests. Unfortunately, this allowed for snorting pigs, barking dogs, crowing roosters, and various other domestic beasts to roam beneath us as we tried to sleep (and by the third night we were able to sleep through just about anything!). Getting up in the night to visit the hole-in-the-ground outhouse was an added challenge!

Trekking through tropical mountains was new to me and I found the lush vegetation and the scenic vistas breathtaking. Even though it was November, there were many varieties of abundant and showy flowers, a bright yellow sunflower being the most common. They celebrate an annual festival in honor of that flower. I was disappointed that we saw no wildlife, not even any type of squirrel, among so much plant growth. Birds of many types could be heard, but rarely seen, with the thickness of the leaves and undergrowth.

Trails were generally good, though the tropical red clay soil is always damp and seems to be covered with a slippery moss. This made for some unexpected slides down hill, but our porters were always to the rescue, and there were no casualties among us. There were also numerous stream crossings, but again, our porters got us across with nary a wet foot. However, unlike Nepal, porters here do not carry packs for trekkers. As we didn't need tents, and they did carry all the food and cooking supplies, our packs weren't that heavy anyhow, probably 20-25 lb. Once we were assisted briefly by an elephant ride.

We trekked only about 5-6 hours per day at a pretty easy pace, but in the hot, humid conditions, we were always happy to arrive at our village where we could get a refreshing, double-sized Singha beer, and occasionally a stream to cool off in. And we always looked forward to the delicious, authentic Thai dinners, cooked by our guide and porters.

It's hard to say how many miles we covered in total. Our guide was pretty indefinite about the distance, and I'm not even sure it's been measured. In that part of the world you just get on the trail that goes where you want to go (no easy feat, given the maze of possibilities) and walk until you get there (usually the next village). There was a lot of up and down, as this is mountainous country, but no very extended elevation gains. While highest peaks in the area are about 1,000 meters or so, we were not 'peak bagging' and probably didn't get much above 1,000 meters. There were many scenic viewpoints, as well as cool lunch spots by creeks with lovely waterfalls.

The trek ended all too soon, at the town of Mae Hong Son, very near the Burma (Myanmar) border. Here we stayed at a nature resort, nestled into a gorgeous jungle-like setting. It seemed like paradise, also because it had showers, a swimming pool and air conditioning. I could have stayed there a very long time, and could relate easily to a Californian we met there who was looking for a retirement place.

The next day, after a short river rafting trip, we took a 25 minute flight back to Chiang Mai. It was another clear, sunny day, and we enjoyed looking down on the trails and the beautiful country we had trekked. Then it was back to Bangkok by sleeper train, and off to Kanchoaburi by bus. Here was another resort for relaxation on the banks of the River Kwai. We also spent time visiting the World War II memorials and the so-called 'death railway', and we liked to temples and waterfalls in the area.

Then it was over and time to part. We had been a very congenial group, despite the diversity in origin, age, and circumstances. It had not been a very strenuous outdoor trip by Rambler standards, but the historical, cultural and social aspects, in addition to the trekking, made it a very rewarding experience overall.

After that I went on to visit my son and daughter-in-law and the sights in Singapore and then on for some R & R in Bali. But that's a story for another time.

A Hike That Was A Blast

Submitted by: Ron Hunter

In September, Barb Mitchell and I made our way to Mount St. Helens in Washington State as part of a hiking tour of the U.S. northwest. For Barb the hike was a repeat of a trip she made 10 years ago so she was designated coordinator of our expedition.

A little background for those unfamiliar with the peak: Mt. St. Helens is one of the Cascades volcanoes and until May 1980 was a dormant, snow capped peak about 9,500 feet high. In late May a major eruption blew out the north side of the mountain and took off the top 1,200 feet of the summit. The blast leveled the forests for miles to the north and melting snow & glaciers formed large mud flows that devastated many of the adjacent river valleys. There were also heavy ash falls from the original and subsequent eruptions over the next few months, mostly downwind to the east. The volcano has had some minor seismic activity since then, but it generally seems to be cooling down as it returns to a dormant state. The area surrounding the peak has been designated a national monument with restricted access to parts of the blast zone to allow scientific study of the regeneration process.

Our destination was the south side of the mountain where a route may be followed up to the south rim of the crater. But first you must obtain climbing permits which are limited to 100 persons per day. About half of them can be reserved by paying the \$15 fee in advance for a specific date, however given the propensity for rain on the West Coast we decided this was not very attractive given the exposed nature of the route. We chose to take our chances in the daily lottery at Jack's Store near the town of Cougar whereby the unreserved permits are allocated among those who put their names in for the next day's hiking slots. As it turned out, a mid-week day in September after Labour Day only attracted a total of 30 people despite a beautiful forecast, so we had no problem getting permits.

The next day we drove up some forestry roads to the Climber's Bivouac parking lot at 3,800 feet. From here there was a fine cloudless view of the mountain and the snow patches on its flanks. There was a surreal air about the vista because the snow was not very white and had a distinctly dusty look to it. The trail started off through forest which still had some snow left over from last winter in the shady spots. After about 45 minutes we started to emerge onto a rocky area composed of boulders from an old lava flow which forms Monitor Ridge, our route to the summit.

Wooden posts have been placed in the rocks to provide guide posts as the route might not be very apparent in cloudy or rainy weather. This section of the trip alternated between boulder hopping and following trails pounded into compacted ash. We became aware of a rather strong wind blowing from the east and also the volcanic ash that was blowing into our eyes. Afterwards we also noticed that the fine, dusty ash particles had worked their way into our hair down to the roots.

But enough of the aggravations! As we climbed higher the views started to get more expansive with Mt. Hood visible to the south in Oregon and Mt. Adams visible to the east. Interspersed among the rocks were small colonies of plants and flowers starting to regain a toehold in the hostile environment. With about 1,000 feet to go out of the total 4,500 foot climb we left the boulders behind and followed a path beaten into the pebbles and sand of the ash. While the surface was compacted in some places, other spots were quite loose and it was like climbing a pile of sand where you seem to slide back a half step for every bit of forward progress. But the end was in sight and three & a half hours after starting we reached the rim. What a sight of spectacular devastation! The treeless terrain of the blast zone extended north for miles from the breach in the north wall of the crater, while in the foreground the lava dome was embraced by the jagged walls of the rim stretched in a semi-circle. Parts of the cliff seemed to be steaming although it may just have been blowing ash. The beautiful weather rewarded us with a cloud free view of Mount Rainier in the northern distance.

We hung around for an hour to enjoy the view, checking out Spirit Lake in the blast zone which revealed through binoculars that it was still half full of logs 19 years after the eruption. There were also seismic monitoring devices visible on top of the central lava dome. Heading down was relatively easy, the ash that was an uphill slog was ideal for rapid descent. Below the ash section into the lava boulders one had to take care watching one's step but the wind had died down so it was quite pleasant. There was even time for an Official Rambler Nap in a convenient sheltered spot. The rest of the descent was uneventful and we drove back to our campsite with plenty of daylight to loot the mostly empty campground for scavenged wood and to cook our dinner. There are some other interesting volcanic features in the area such as old lava tube caves and canyons scoured by mudflows, but that's a story for another day.

**PROPOSED SPRAY LAKES DEVELOPMENT
IS THIS WHAT WE WANT FOR K-COUNTRY?**

Submitted by Dorothy-Ann Reimer

The January 11, 2000 issue of the Calgary Herald carried the headline 'Sides square off in resort battle' and proceeded to describe the controversy over a planned year-round resort facility to be constructed at the south end of Spray Lakes Reservoir.

The developer is Genesis Land Development Corp., a company which already has interest in several similar facilities in B.C. The proposed plan will include hotel, ski resort, cross-country ski facilities, water-based recreation facilities (already they have approval for boat tours on the lake), interpretation and educational programs and other associated amenities. Specific facilities are to include a downhill ski area for 6000/day, 27 hole golf course, 400 units accommodation, and 750 car parking lot. In addition there will be snow cat and helicopter skiing on the SW face of Mt. Sparrowhawk (this slope faces a valley that Ramblers often hike which is a great area for fossil hunting).

The information given above is available on Genesis' web site at www.genesisland.com and it is worth while to read it to best understand the full scope of the project. Genesis is required to ask for public input and, for this end, have provided the web site. As well, a display of the proposal and maps is available at the Calgary Public Library, Castell (or downtown) branch. Deadline for submissions, comments, or whatever is March 7 (45 days from the date of Genesis' announcement). Their e-mail address is genesis@genesisland.com

Genesis requests that interested persons send comments to:

Director, Environmental Assessment & Strategy
11th Floor, Petroleum Division Plaza, South Tower
9915 - 108 St.,
Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 2G8

If you have opinions that you want expressed, write them down and send them - by mail, by e-mail, by courier or carrier pigeon if you desire. While you are writing to Genesis and Environmental Assessment why not send one along to Premier Ralph Klein and copy it to your MLA.

Ramblers were concerned enough to make a submission to Praxis on K-Country's future. The arguments we used then are equally valid here. Let's give it a try.

Spray Valley Development: by Dave Mulligan

Extensive development is planned in the Spray Valley vicinity of Mt. Sparrowhawk and Tent Ridge by Genesis Corp. to include heli-skiing, golf course and 2000 beds.

>From a flyer distributed by:

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
#306, 319 10th Ave SW, Calgary T2R OA5
Tel: 232-6686 Fax: 232-6988
Email: cpawscal@cadvision.com

You can direct you comments to:

Genesis Land Development Corp.
2nd Floor, 2852 11th Street NE, Calgary T2E 7S7
Attention: Gobi Singh, CEO
Tel: 265-8079, Toll Free: 1-800-341-7211
Fax: 2680746 EMail: genesis@genesisland.com

The Honourable Ralph Klein
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
1080 97th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B7
Tel: 780-427-2251, Fax: 780-427-1349
Email: abconnects@gov.ab.ca
(Identify who your email is to be directed to)

All Alberta government offices may be called toll-free through the Rite Number: 310-0000.

Your own MLA : His/her address, phone and fax number may be obtained by calling 310-0000. Use this number to call him/her toll-free.

ITEMS FOR SALE

For Sale: Ortovox F1 Focus Avalanche Transceiver. 457 kHz. Purchased last winter. Used 6 times. =20 \$200.00. Pregnant / Must Sell.

For Sale: Cross-country Ski Set. 200cm Trak fishscale no-wax, Pinto 3-pin bindings, Trak boots size 41, Moonpoles. \$10.00. Ron Hunter

FEBRUARY - MARCH

KEN'S QUOTABLE QUOTES

- Q: How can you increase the heart rate of your 50-year-old husband?
A: Tell him you're pregnant.
- Q: Are there certain foods that 50-year-olds shouldn't eat?
A: Yes. Avoid any food that is spicy, salty, fried, fattening, creamy, meaty, filling, satisfying or delicious.
- Q: Why are 50-year-olds more stable than young people?
A: They have a lower centre of gravity.
- Q: What can a man do while his wife is going through menopause?
A: Keep busy. If you're handy with tools, you can finish the basement. When you're done, you'll have a place to live.
- Q: What can a 50-year-old woman wear to stop traffic?
A: A school crossing guard uniform.
- Q: What do you call a 50-year-old man with no gray hair?
A: Bald.

Submitted by **KEN PARK**