



July / August 2008



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Saturday July 12



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The Packrat is published six times a year by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. We welcome articles, comments and ideas from our members, and if content is deemed suitable and space permits, we will use it.

E-mail contributions to the editor at packrat@ramblers.ab.ca or forward to RMRA
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hi-ho hi-ho

It's off to Germany I go...

Sharon Wingenbach

May 16 - The Before

I've always known I was born to travel. The fact that this is my first real adventure outside of Canada is astonishing.

I've talked about bicycling in Germany for a ridiculously long time. Well, a dream is just that - something you talk about.

My dear brother Gerry, the travel writer, got tired of me talking and spoke up, 'Just go. This isn't the trip of a life time'.

It isn't? So I booked my trip. Now I'm not sure what to do next.

A man friend told me that from his experience, women spend a lot more time planning. 'Men just pack shorts and socks, and they go.' Hmmm.

Gerry told me to pack light. He gave me a lot of great tips but he kept repeated the part about packing light. He said to just make two piles - a *must-have* pile and a *maybe* pile - and then pack the *must-have* pile. Then he reminded me that Germany is not a third world country.

I'm surfing the internet, reading blogs, watching videos about how to take a train.... Last night, I visited Google Earth.

So much to do....

Yesterday, waiting for friends, I was alone for maybe 15 minutes, and it occurred to me that I will be

alone for three weeks. That too will be interesting.

Seventeen more sleeps.

June 28 - The After

I'm a much wiser traveller now. I learned quickly that cycling in Europe is a no-brainer. Every has a bicycle, and the paths are outstanding. You buy a cycle map and follow the road signs. If you get lost, you open a map and look confused, and someone will ask you if you need help. If they know some English - bonus - but if they don't, you can still communicate.

Regardless of how much planning you do, you make a lot of decisions on the fly. Many of my decisions were based on when I'd need a bathroom next. I'm not kidding.

It sure helps to be fit. 10-12 hours of walking or riding in the sun, day after day after day, is exhausting.

I travelled alone, but friends and family were an e-mail away. How's this for great support and insight?

•Your last e-mail shows the inner turmoil of traveling alone. The highs and the lows. The experience is dreadfully boring, constantly demanding, and stunningly inspiring.

•Travel really taxes your personality. Go with the flow, don't be judgmental, and leave home behind.

And I think this is the real secret of happy travelling: there's a universal language out there. Smile. Make eye contact. Say thank you. And then when you move on, you think you just met some really nice people.

And of course Gerry was so right. Not being weighted down gave me a lot of freedom.

Trip report next issue.

Alberta Hikers Unite!

Carl Von Mirbach

There is an initiative to form an umbrella group of Alberta hiking clubs. While there are groups representing equestrian, ATV and mountain bike clubs, no single organization speaks with one voice for the far greater number of hikers in Alberta.

Douglas Campbell of **Trailminders of Bow Valley** in Canmore was asked to expand his initiative and find out if there is interest in having an official organization for hiking clubs. The creator of the web site <http://hikealberta.com/> and an ex-Rambler, Doug therefore organized and convened a first meeting at the CAOC office in Calgary.

Hike Alberta kickoff meeting – April 26th

Attendees:

Ramblers Sandra Newell and Carl Von Mirbach and twenty reps from sixteen other hiking clubs from all over the province

Discussion:

Doug Campbell talked about why he was asked to find out if there is interest in creating a **Hike Alberta** association.

Alison Dinwoodie of ACC Edmonton spoke about the reasons for forming this group.

There was good discussion about the value of this organization. In general, there was strong support

for the idea and little dissension about the scope of the project.

The issue that might have split the group was whether the association should include hiking clubs as well as individuals, or only hiking clubs.

One theme emerged - we could provide some sort of counterbalance to the ATV users who are well organized.

A small group had prepared a working paper on purposes and objectives. Discussion was lively. The mood was to keep the objectives simple and general. The stewardship concept did not receive a lot of support.

We agreed to set up a steering committee that would write up a proposal to create a hiking association for Alberta.



The Steering Committee:

Doug Campbell
Dinwoodie
Sandra Newell
Maurice Gaucher
Marc Pinel
Rick Young
Joyce Hildebrand

The members of the steering committee will meet, possibly electronically, and have draft documents prepared by the end of June, to be reviewed by the rest of the group.

Hike Alberta steering committee objectives – May 27th

- To act as an advocate at provincial and regional levels for walking, hiking, and snowshoeing interests.
- To create an information network that facilitates sharing ideas, concerns, and actions needed to promote and preserve hiking and the natural environment on which it relies.
- To advance the development and maintenance of well-built hiking trails and to encourage trail-building initiatives in Alberta.
- To promote responsible, minimal-impact hiking that respects the natural environment and to educate others through our example.
- To increase awareness about the benefits to health and local economies of walking, hiking and snowshoeing.

If you have comments, or would like to discuss this or want more information, feel free to contact Sandra Newell or Carl Von Mirbach.

**words of little wisdom -
you can't lick your elbow**

Activities

Hiking
Backpacking
Cross-Country Skiing
Downhill Skiing
Snowshoeing
Cycling
Climbing
Scrambling
Mountaineering
Camping
Education and Awareness Programs
Socials

Meetings

Every Wednesday evening at 7:30
Rosemont Community Hall
10 St NW at Confederation Park

Contact Us

Rocky Mountain Ramblers
Association
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council
(CAOC)
1111 Memorial Dr NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3E4

Trip Info

The Information Line at 282-6308,
our website and weekly meetings

Website

www.ramblers.ab.ca

If we have your e-mail address,
we will automatically notify you when
an electronic copy of the Packrat
is on the website.

Why not?

Question: I recently read that moderate alcohol consumption (a drink a day) reduces the risk of heart disease as much as moderate daily exercise. **Why not just have a drink instead of exercising?**

Answer: Don't give up exercise in favor of drinking if you are looking for heart benefits.

A drink a day can raise blood levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol and can also (like aspirin) help prevent clots. This is fine, as far as it goes. But alcohol has its bad side. Drinking (especially heavy drinking) increases the risk of several cancers, as well as car crashes, injuries from falls, and other mishaps. There's also the risk of alcoholism and birth defects. And it provides extra calories.

Aerobic exercise has many clear heart benefits. It will make your heart stronger and enable it to pump more blood with each contraction, thus lowering your resting heart rate. In addition, aerobic exercise helps control blood pressure and can also raise HDL. To benefit most, you should exercise strenuously enough to raise your heart rate and make you sweat, and do this for at least 30 minutes on most days.

The study you heard about appeared in the European Heart Journal in February. It concluded that leisure-time physical activity and moderate alcohol intake are both important ways to lower the risk of heart attacks and all-cause mortality.

But the researchers also noted that there might be good reason for abstaining from alcohol. There's rarely a good reason for abstaining from exercise.

copied from *University of California, Berkley*
Wellness Letter
June 2008

Comment from the editor - Germans have a version of beer that they enjoy with breakfast....

If you received this newsletter in the mail, but instead you prefer to receive it online, send an e-mail to the editor. About 85% of Ramblers receive the PackRat online only.

Online, you can see all the brilliant colors in the photos, and you save trees....

packrat@ramblers.ab.ca

PACK RAT ADVERTISING RATES

The Club offers advertising space in Pack Rat and the following rates apply:

Quarter Page	\$10
Half Page	\$20
Full Page	\$40

Payment MUST be received prior to publication

Trail Users and K Country

Dorothy-Ann Reimer

A meeting between K Country and the Trail Users group was held May 21.

Highlights

Trail Work Planned

- upgrade **Death Valley/Windy Point/Foran Grade** (hurray!)
- finish **Canmore Hi-Line** trail
- enlarge the parking lots at **Elk Pass** and **Highwood Meadows** (another hurray!)
- widen **Evan Thomas** trail
- upgrade **Chester Lake** and **Ware Creek** trails
- reroute **Lusk Pass/Baldy Pass**, now that the logging is finished.

Management Plans

- **Sheep Valley/Bluerock**: not signed yet but the new Minister has it (Cindy Ady)
- **Gorge Creek Road**; still not open between Ware PRA and Gorge PRA. It is obvious that K Country does not want to open this section as they have omitted Volcano Ridge PRA from their proposed management plan for all the PRAs. **Why don't any of you in her riding (Calgary Shaw) drop in on her with a plea for opening up to Volcano Ridge PRA?**

- Provincial Recreation Areas (PRAs) Plan: The Terms of Reference are finalized. (Rambler's submitted comments). A draft plan is expected June 2008 with a deadline of Sept 30 for public input. Rambler's plan on making a submission. **If you have comments on what to include, contact Brenda Everitt, Laszlo Jamniczky or me.**

- Issues K Country expect to be important for the plan include – cattle conflict, fire pits, boundary amendments, reclassification of some sites (e.g convert to provincial parks, allowing fixed accommodation). Up to 12 new sites may be added.

- **Toilets**: The new toilets will have hand sanitizers. Vault toilets will become uni-sex.

- Communication Towers: A new tower at **Mt. Kidd**. A Swing Tower will be added to **Mt. Indefatigable** tower to allow signal in Peter Loughheed.

Winter Stuff

Snowshoeing

- Public is asking for longer trails
- K Country has no overall policy re trail development. Seems to be focusing on trails adjacent to ski trails which favour the seniors' bus groups.

- I suggested Rummel Lake, Rawson Lake and Marushka (shark) Lake. They said Marushka is too far (tho' not much beyond Chester) and didn't sound very enthusiastic about Rawson either.

- Volunteer trail work handled through Friends of Kananaskis

- The Elk Pass 'temporary' trail was well used but no decision on making it official.

- Signs of "No Snowshoes on Groomed Ski Trail" will be posted this fall.

Skiing

- Still trying to find room for better beginner trails.

- Asked about making Fortress Road an official trail but vetoed until the legal problems between the former operator and the government over the cancelled lease. Also concern about avalanche zone.

- Some members of the Calgary Ski Club hosted an information meeting re issues related to decline of XC skiing here and possible ways to build interest. One of the best areas for snow is Sawmill but it has the least favourable terrain for novice and low intermediate skiers.

Tenting Fees

Official policy – if there are two tents but only one vehicle, the second tent is free. Does NOT apply if the vehicle is itself a motorhome or camper-van.

Next Meeting

Sept. 17, 2008 Your comments are always welcome.



A Township of South Africa - A Tourist's Perspective

Dorothy-Ann Reimer

In May 2008, news spread round the globe of terrible violence in the Alexandra township of Johannesburg, South Africa. Reports blamed clashes on conflict between residents and immigrants, people who'd come from other countries. They all have my sympathies and here I offer my observations of one township, as seen by a tourist.

During my recent trip to South Africa, I visited one of these townships in Cape Town. It was an emotional experience; at one point I stood on a barren yard, tears flowing down my cheeks, as I thought of the courage these people were showing, trying to build decent lives from such a shattered past.

...the courage these people were showing, trying to build decent lives from such a shattered past.

No, I didn't wander in alone. With five fellow travelers, I joined Samantha, a Xhosa woman, mother of a 9-year old girl and guide with Camissa Tours, who'd struggled for years to get her education and training. She is a delightful person, full of energy and life and courage as she openly shared her community with us.

The first person we visited was Mam, a young grandmother living in one of a set of attached housing

units. Her home was two rooms plus a bathroom, each room about 3 x 4 metres. In this tiny place lived Mam, her daughter, son-in-law, two grandchildren (ages 3 & 5) and her son – 6 people. Her rent was about 250 rand/month (\$35 to \$40 Cdn).

We then visited a former hostel – a large building with a central communal area (stove, sink, table, all of which looked almost unusable) and small rooms around it. During apartheid, men were housed here. Now each room is home to one or more people,



sometimes whole families. Here we met a young woman. With one pre-schooler of her own and four or five other little ones, she spends her day babysitting in this tiny room. I asked, "What sort of toys do you have?" She looked blank – there was nothing other than the TV.

The township we visited is Langa, a Xhosa settlement (Langa is 'sun' in Xhosa language). In the 1950s, under apartheid, several townships were set up around Cape Town, as they were for all the towns of



South Africa. People were separated by ethnic classification with descending levels of restrictions; white (none), then Indian, next Coloureds, and, finally, various tribes such as the Xhosa. One criteria, if a pencil, poked into your hair, stayed put, you were coloured.

Cape Town's District 6 became white only; houses demolished, schools closed. Not all whites agreed; many refused to move into the District and many new houses were never occupied. Today there's land re-distribution though the government would prefer giving compensation. To get land back, one must prove one had been 'removed'; to date, only 48 families have come back.

So what's it like in Langa today? Crowded, according to Samantha. Crime-ridden. Hostel renovations started but halted when the contractor disappeared two years ago. All the services – clean water, sewers, shops, garbage pick-up, electricity, gas station, etc. – are there. Just very basic.

A few streets are paved. Most homes are small but relatively clean and tidy. There are run-down buildings as well (like some of the old hostels), garbage and litter strewn about. Contrast this with the few lovely homes and yards of some of the better-off Xhosa who've chosen to remain here. These are their people, after all. As Samantha said, "If you were white, had a nice home in a middle-class suburb, and some weekend your Xhosa neighbours had all their friends and family over for the ritual slaughter and roasting of a goat or cow in the back yard – we-eell!!!"

Lots of the men work only two or three days/week, often not at all. Some men and women make hand-crafts to sell. Others do menial work. School is compulsory from grade one and up, free until university. Children are taught in Xhosa in Langa for the first three years, and then are bused to outside schools where they learn in English. Standards are lower than in white schools and equipment is meager so kids are not attracted to science and math. Children could attend white schools but traveling and fitting-in make it much more difficult.

Ringed each township (true of all) are the 'informal settlements'; squatter shacks really. Even these have clean water and toilets, though the taps are communal and the toilets are port-a-potties.

This is where the crush is the worst. Samantha estimates as many as 20,000 people come into the

townships every month; relatives, friends to stay while looking for work, asylum seekers. CapeTown's situation is bad enough; Johannesburg's is far worse due to the city's more central location.

Standing there in Langa, I wondered how these people manage to keep trying, and to not give up. Then Mam answered my thoughts. "No, I definitely won't give up. Now we have freedom. We can go where we want." And that says it all.

The township tour I took was with Camissa, a travel tour and marketing company that has high BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) credentials. (They are 67% Black owned and managed.) Camissa focuses on the people who live in the Townships, their daily lives, culture, traditions, norms and customs.

For your own township tour, visit the Camissa Travel and Marketing website: www.gocamissa.co.za in Cape Town, South Africa.

A big warm welcome to our new members

Karen Whitlow

Patricia Lavelle

Arlene and Michael Verdiel

Wendy Lockie

Albert Walle

Ralph and Turid Nelson

Ian Brown

Warren Ford

Linda Mackay

Phyllis Mercer-Ward

Gwen Smiley

Barb Tait

Happy trails to you!

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February 8 to 22, 2009

Countless new experiences await you in Thailand – hike through tribal villages, visit incredible floating markets & Buddhist temples, bathe elephants and taste an abundance of fresh & flavourful foods. Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai & the River Kwai - all part of this incredible journey.



ANDALUCÍA, SPAIN - April 19 to May 2, 2009

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It's that time again!

Mosey on down to the Ramblers' annual

Stampede Breakfast



Saturday July 12

9:00 - 12 noon

Lakeview Community Hall at 6110 34 Street SW

Bring a chair and a plate and cutlery and a coffee/tea mug.

FREE, but please [RSVP by July 9th](#) by filling out the survey on our website OR by e-mailing social@ramblers.ab.ca.