

The

Pack Rat

Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

May / June 2009



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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
c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council
1111 Memorial Drive NW,
Calgary AB T2N 3E4.

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John Schleinich's Bench

For the memory of John Schleinich, the family placed a bench in K Country, one of his frequently visited places. It is south of the parking lot in Wasootc Creek just over the berm, and it faces Mt Allan, his favourite mountain. John was a long time member and led many trips for the club over the years. If you are in the area, please take your time and 'visit John', and reflect on some of the trips we've done with him over the years. Thank You John.....*the Ramblers*



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.

The Ramblers'

Environmental Committee

by *Dorothy-Ann Reimer*

Ramblers love the outdoors; we hike, ski, and snowshoe, and spend lots of time enjoying the foothills and Rockies. And we care what happens to that landscape. For many, 'environment' is not just a word; it means caring what happens to the land we share with other life – from stands of pine trees to bears to tiny spring crocuses. All these enrich our experience and we need to balance our use with their protection.

To this end, in December 2003, Bernie Fritz initiated a Ramblers meeting and we formed an **Environmental Committee**.

The area of interest is **Southern Alberta** including K Country, Banff and the Whaleback. The focus agreed upon is:

- To collect information on environmental issues that may be of interest to members
- To disseminate this information to members
- To suggest or recommend action to members and to the Club itself

A separate environment category was set up on [our website](#) to pass on the information.

During the past five years, the committee has brought forward many issues, for example:

- Shell Canada's plans to drill wells in **Canyon Creek Ice Caves** area
- Shell's **Moose Mountain to Jumping Pound** pipeline
- Oil interests and their continued push to develop the **Whaleback**
- Housing development at **Deadman's Flats**
- Housing development on the slopes above **Big Hill Springs** creek valley
- Wolf control and kill**, carried out with Provincial Government approval
- Club and individual submissions to **K Country** on several proposed Management Plans (*cont*)





Because the Ramblers is not a political organization, we set out a formula for political action (see our website, [Goals, Bylaws and Rules > Rules > Formula for Political Action](#)). For this reason, the Club rarely acts as a group except when we get approval of the general membership, for example, when we respond to K Country's management plans. Therefore, the intent of the Environment Committee is to **give members background information**, and then allow you to act as you wish.

Current members are Peter Fischer, Annette Le Faive (part-time) and Dorothy-Ann Reimer. Dorothy-Ann collects information from Shell, and attends the K Country quarterly meetings with the Trail Users Group. Annette researches news on environmental issues.

We rely on our members to bring important issues to our attention. Carl von Mirbach is our representative for the newly formed Alberta Hiking Association. Christine Grotefeld keeps track of the Jumbo plans.

You can help!

- Contact anyone on the executive if you have an issue you believe Ramblers should know about.
- Join the Environmental Committee.
- Research an environmental issue and share your concerns with the club.
- Read the environment section of our website.
- Write something for the website
- Write something for the Packrat.

Sometimes it seems that our voice is very small but don't forget that many small voices can add up to one very strong one.



☑ **May 24, Sunday, 6:00 - 8:00 pm - Ramblers' Shopping Night at MEC**

Mountain Equipment Coop is opening its doors exclusively to members of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers. Ramblers will receive a **10% discount** and there will be **door prizes**. This is open to members and immediate family only. MEC is at 830 10th Avenue SW. **RRSP by May 17. Fill out the survey on [our website](#).**

☑ **May 20, Wednesday, 7:30 - GPS - Know where you're going. Know where you're at. Know where you've been.**

Ramblers' regular meeting at Rosedale Community Centre

Gil Grandahl of **Gil's GEO Services** will discuss the abilities and inabilities of GPS equipment. Gil will demonstrate how the technology and mapping software can benefit anyone before, during and after any outdoor trek. After the presentation Gil is available to answer any questions - including discussing how **Gil's GEO Services** can provide the necessary skills and training that are not only handy, but sometimes vital.

☑ **July 4, Saturday 10:00, 12:00 am - Ramblers' Annual Stampede Breakfast**

Glenbrook Community Hall 3524 45 St SW

Bring a chair (for outside), utensils, plate and mug.

☑ **Check out the new Kananaskis Trails website**, dedicated to KCountry issues such as access problems, trail conditions, getting the word out about new trails....

<http://www.kananaskistrails.com>

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



**NEXT
PACKRAT
DEADLINE**
June 30

Anatomy by a Ten Year Old

anon

Your head is kind of round and hard, and your brains are in it and your hair is on it. Your face is in front of your head where you eat and make faces. Your neck is what keeps your head out of your collar. It's hard to keep clean. Your shoulders are sort of shelves where you hook your suspenders on them. Your stummick is something that if you do not eat often enough hurts, and spinach doesn't help none. Your spine is a long bone in your back that keep you from folding up. Your back is always behind you no matter how quick your turn around. Your arms you got to have to pitch with and so you can reach the butter. Your fingers stick out of your hands so you can throw a curve and add up rithmatic. Your legs is what if you have not got two you can't get to first base. Your feet are what you run on, your toes are what always get stubbed. And that's all there is to you except what's inside and I never saw it.

Driving Through Rajasthan

Horn Please

by Dorothy-Ann Reimer

In the back of a taxi, enmeshed in traffic en route from Indira Ghandi airport to my New Delhi hotel, I had my first lesson in how one drives in India: "Blow Horn" or the more polite "Horn Please". These words are blazed across the back of nearly every truck, trailer or cart traveling on the roads of India.

It was in Delhi that I joined a small group of tourists for a three-week Imaginative Traveler tour of south and central Rajasthan.

Rajasthan is India's second-largest state – similar in size to France. It's largely covered by the ever-encroaching Thar Desert. Rajasthan was once remarkably prosperous: traders from as far as Persia and China had to cross its dry plains to reach the southern ports of Gujarat in Western India. My Lonely Planet guidebook calls it the **Land of the Kings**, and it truly is.

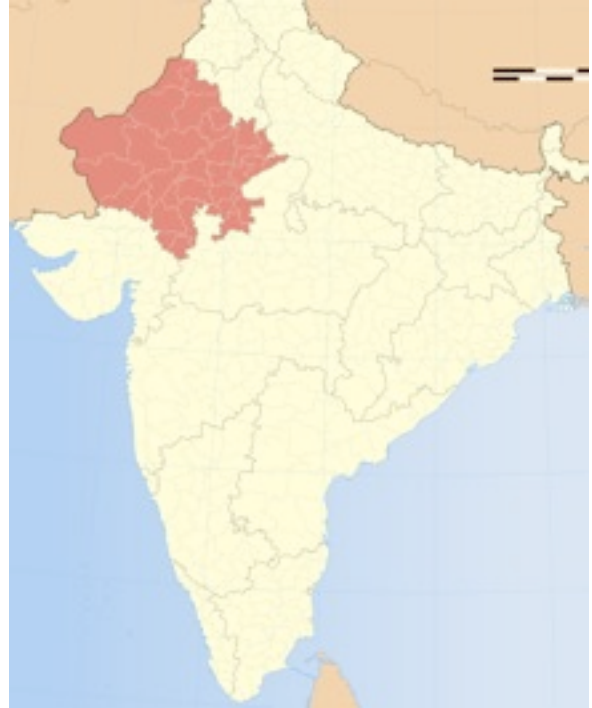
We were led by the enthusiastic Pushpendra Rathore who happily shared his knowledge and love of

his home state with us. This article, though, focuses on the traveling part, navigating the lanes, roads and highways of that beautiful part of the country.

We drove, or rather we traveled in a large bus, piloted by an amazing man from Jaipur. Somehow he avoided colliding with any of the huge variety of objects on the highways, many of which were going the wrong way.

Foremost were **cattle**. Considered holy, these animals are free to wander where they will and what better path than this nice wide road. In ones or twos or in herds, walking, standing, sleeping – it's all the same to the cow.

Not only are you not allowed to kill a cow; you're expected to care for them. Families put out their first cooked roti of the day for any meandering cow to savour. When the cow gets too old, it's allowed to



wander in someone else's village or field until it expires.

Next come the **bicycles**. Forget your 24-speed super bikes – here it's your basic model. In a country of 1.4 billion people, 75% of the 350 million poor live in rural areas. Most travel by foot or bike. These bicycles mosey along, generally on the left side of the road (remember, this is Britain's legacy to India, driving on the left). Not limited to one rider per bike, the bicycle can be piled high with extra passengers, boxes, bags, firewood and whatever else needs moving.

Of course, the more affluent use **motorcycles and scooters**. These are more common in cities and towns. About 10 years ago, India made it mandatory for the driver to wear a helmet but not passengers. When the whole family travels, only Dad has a helmet and the further you go from Delhi, the fewer helmets you see.

(cont)



Then come the **walkers** who throng the roads in and around the villages. You see women carrying huge bundles on their heads, children going to school, old men driving their cattle – and even toddlers who learn, very early on, how to avoid faster traffic.

Several times we passed through a band of Indian **gypsies**, moving to a new site with all their goods. All are on foot except the very young who might be tied on top of one of the donkeys.

Have I mentioned the **camels**? Used to carry all sorts of things, they lumber haughtily along, their noses in the air, sometimes pulling a trailer (with the 'Horn Please' sign on it), sometimes with loads directly on their humped backs.

There are **tractors** pulling trailers packed with produce or people or both. People are perched on top of bags of potatoes, oranges or carrots.



In the cities and towns, we add the **tuktuks**, the three-wheeled auto-rickshaws which, I swear, can turn on a rupee. The drivers seem to have a sixth sense of just where their vehicle edges are and a ride in one often had me with closed eyes and praying to all of the 330 million Hindu gods simultaneously.

Everywhere is the blare of **horns**. The horn says to other drivers, "I'm here". Everyone ignores the line marking. It's said that Indian drivers think those white lines are for decoration and you're expected to straddle them. There is constant jockeying for an extra inch of space, with every moving vehicle weaving in and out. Traffic lights have a signal telling you how long until the green light comes on, not how long before it turns red.

As I said, traffic moves on the left side of the highway. But you can't depend on it. Driving down our side of a divided four-lane highway, we came upon a laden camel in our lane, and then an old man walking his



cattle towards us. A few wrong-way trucks later, we finally passed a truck going the right way but were thoroughly startled to see a man standing on top of the load. He was wearing only his blue underpants and was waving his trousers in the air to dry them

One guide told us that all prospective drivers have to have an operation before getting a license: they had to have their hearts removed because the heart would surely stop once a driver was faced with city traffic.

While it may sound frightening, traveling on the byways of Rajasthan was a wonderful experience, like sampling a tiny slice of a colourful and tremendously fascinating land. I loved it. ###



one of the newly linked
long-distance paths in England

South Downs Way

by David Mulligan

England is a small country with a large population. Especially in the London area, the place seems to be crawling with people. However, it has a long history that includes many hiking paths, some of which go back centuries. The right to walk on these is fiercely preserved by several groups, such as the **British Ramblers**. Since the 1960s, there has been a movement to link some of these into long-distance paths. A dozen or so of these now exist. One is the South Downs Way.

In April 2009, in conjunction with a visit to relatives, I hiked the South Downs Way. I was pleasantly surprised.

In the South of England, there are two hill ranges going roughly West to East: the North and the South Downs. The **North Downs Way** is 246 km long. The **South Downs Way** (SDW) follows the crest for about 160 km, with 4,150 m vertical, from Winchester in the West to Eastbourne on the South East coast. It undulates along the broad crest, often on a track, with surprising good views over the surrounding farmland. It is extremely well signed, rating Trail 2 by RMRA standards. Maximum elevation gain is about 300 m and the path drops down on several occasions where major roads or railways cross. It's also open for horse riding and mountain biking, and could be a good long distance run.

The standard of the trail is such that I think it would make an excellent mountain bike ride and I saw several groups enjoying this. Opening and closing the many



gates might become frustrating, but in between, the trail is excellent. Much of it was of fire road quality, which is rather hard on the feet. There were occasional short steeper sections, but nothing worse than Prairie Mt. I saw many sheep, some cows and a few people. It never felt crowded. The SDW is now a designated park.

Because the prevailing wind is from the West, I hiked the SDW in three stages and eight hiking days from Winchester in the West to Eastbourne in the East. However either direction is possible – just make sure that your guide book is in the same direction.

I took a Sunday afternoon train to Winchester where I stayed alone in an excellent central bed and breakfast for GBP40 total (Great Britain Pounds is approx Cdn\$80). The following nights were spent in Wetherdown wellness hostel (GBP22 b&b), Master Robert Inn, Buriton (GBP40 b&b), Gumber Camping Barn (GBP10, bunk only) before catching the train at

Amberley to my sister's in Shoreham on the south coast because of blisters on the soles of my feet. I was also suffering from my usual English cold. Some days later, I returned by train to Amberley and hiked to Pycombe (30 km) as a day trip. This was the only poor weather day, with constant drizzle.

Towards the end of my UK visit, my sister kindly dropped me off at Pycombe and I continued as planned via a night in Telscombe YHA (GBP14 bunk only) and Alfriston YHA (GBP19 b&b) to Eastbourne. From here, I went by train to my mother's before returning to Calgary direct from Gatwick with Air Transat (Can \$950 return total).

Although it's possible, with some planning, to drop down off the path to a nearby village pub for lunch, I found it easier to carry the usual sandwich lunch and water. Food and water logistics needed some basic pre-planning, but a full English breakfast made a good start to the day, if you could stomach it.

(cont)

I carried most of my Rockies day pack but with a full change of clothing, negligible first aid, duct tape and a cell phone. With lunch and 1 L of water, it weighed 8 kg. For the camping barn, I added a 1 kg sleeping bag. I wasn't cold.

Initially I used well broken-in lightweight boots, but because these gave me blisters, I used running shoes after Amberley (the second half). These were fine. Most other people wore lightweight walking shoes, rather than boots. To get the blisters, my feet must have been moving around in the hot sweaty boots (weather was warm). I've never had a problem with these boots before, and I used these same boots for 350 km in 2006. The most I walked in one day was 36 km, which was too much. 20-30 km was fine, but you have to schedule in your overnights. With stops, I averaged 3.5 km/hr eg 30 km in 8.5 hours.

I chose to stay in nightly furnished accommodation. Theoretically, it's possible to backpack, but why bother when there is a much more comfortable and easy option? There are few designated camping sites, so to be legal, you'd have to get permission from the farmer, who may and may not be nearby. Clean drinking water would be an issue. Several nights, it poured, and I was glad to be inside under a roof. I only saw one couple backpacking – they did not seem to be having fun.

Highlights: difficult to choose. The **Meon Valley** was beautiful, the views around **Truleigh and Ditchling Beacon** were excellent, and of course, the **coastal 7 sisters** near Eastbourne were very pleasant. I visited some quaint villages including a church from 966AD. It was also lambing season and the lambs were jumping around, a delight to see. Daffodils were in full bloom as were some other flowers, but the trees were just starting to green up. Even the traditionally aloof British were friendly. There was negligible evidence of the current "financial crisis".

With some anecdotal advice from my sister, I did all my planning via email and Internet from Canada



The Long Man of Wilmington which is adjacent to the trail

(after more than 30 years, I'm essentially a tourist in England now). I mostly used the guidebook *South Downs Way* by Jim Manthorpe which I borrowed from the Calgary Public Library. This book has some very useful, narrow, accurate sketch maps, and includes accommodation, food and other places of interest. It's written west to east. I also carried the good 1:40,000 Harvey strip map bought over the Internet for GBP11.95, but seldom used it on the trail, as the book was sufficient. Any interested Rambler is welcome to borrow this map. A general road map was useful to put everything in perspective. The tourism office in Winchester was very helpful.

I also found the following useful:

<http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/southdowns/index.asp?PageId=1>

<http://nationalrail.co.uk/>

<http://www.visitwinchester.co.uk/>

<http://www.harveymaps.co.uk/>

Happy Rambling.

NOTE Some day, I want to repeat the 400 km Pennine Way. Any takers?

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WHAT MAKES THE “BEST” HOLIDAY? (PART 2)

The BEST holidays make you sweat (literally). The benefits are both physical and psychological and can last up to 8 weeks post-holiday. Research has also shown that exposure to sunlight, fresh air and water make you feel more alert, clears your mind and improves your mood. (You know where this is going, don't you?)



SLOVENIJA & CROATIA (August 30 to September 12, 2009)

Two completely different weeks combined for one perfect holiday. First, discover the fairy-tale setting of Slovenija with its Julian Alps & medieval castles. Hike behind the thundering Slap Pericnik waterfall, up the challenging but rewarding Mt. Triglav & around glacier-fed Lake Bohinj. Then cross the border into Croatia for a week along the Dalmatian Coast. Hike along pristine pebble beaches, enjoy al fresco dining & swim in the Adriatic. **There are just 4 SPOTS LEFT for this trip!**

SAVOUR TUSCANY (September 19 to October 3, 2009)

Mouth-watering gelatos, world-famous wines, gastronomic feasts, passionate locals and some of the most picturesque hiking in the world await you on this 2-week adventure in glorious Tuscany. Join us as we hike the region famous for its vineyards, olive groves and renaissance architecture. Get a taste of *La Dolce Vita!* **There are just 3 SPOTS LEFT for this trip!**



HISTORICAL TURKEY (October 19 to 29, 2009)

Hike in Cappadocia with its secret frescoed churches, underground cities and volcanic tuff sculpted into fairy chimneys. Visit ancient ruins, shop the bazaars of Istanbul and take a history lesson through time. Steeped in tradition and a masterpiece of nature, Turkey will impress you.



THE REAL CUBA (November 15 to 27, 2009)

Forget the resorts and come see the real Cuba! It's only by walking the countryside & meeting people will you get any real understanding of the culture. Hike through jungle-like forests, picturesque colonial towns & sugar cane fields. Explore the Viñales Valley, swim in the San Juan River pools & have lunch on a coffee plantation. Get a true feel for what Cuba is really all about – culturally, scenically and historically, and have yourself an experience you will talk about for years to come.



**A big
warm
welcome
to our
new members**

Wil Tabak

Lynne Lewis

Nan Morrison

Ron Weed

Jytte Ebbesen

Susan Mitchell

Lindsay Sawatzky

Andrew Yang

Carole Levasseur

Pat Mcfadden

David Van Den Assem

Dennis St. Louis

Frith Powell

Lorna Gower

Jodi Hall

Zorica Knezevic

Dawn Korkie

Dorothy Morrison,

and welcome back to Valerie Morsette

and Sheila Quigley

Happy trails to you!

