

The

Pack Rat

Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

September/October 2009

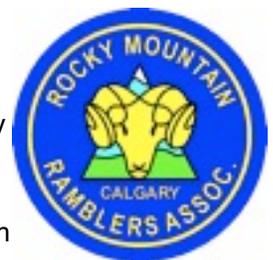


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The Packrat is published six times a year by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. We welcome articles, comments and ideas from our members, and if content is deemed suitable and space permits, we will use it.

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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From the editor

It happens - you've seen it: the headlines on the front page of the newspaper are not that important - they're mundane - maybe even cheerful.

It must be a *low news* day.

This is a *low news* issue of the Packrat. Thanks, Francisco, for sharing your adventures in Corsica. Otherwise, this issue would be all about me.

It appears that everyone is out hiking and traveling and doing what they love to do, and that's great.

Hope you're enjoying your summer.

We look forward to your stories in the coming issues.

The next Packrat deadline is **October 30**.



PS - For those who receive the Packrat online, I apologize for the size of the Packrat. I haven't figured out how to add photos without increasing the size of the newsletter significantly.



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.

I knew it!

Think you're going in circles? You are - German researchers say that's how people tend to walk

20/08/2009 12:46:00 PM

Matt Moore, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TUEBINGEN, Germany - Ever feel that no matter how hard you try, you're walking in circles? A preliminary study by European scientists says that you are.

According to the study carried out using global positioning software, the myth that people who try to walk a straight line and find themselves going in circles is actually true.

The study was carried out by researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics and published in Thursday's edition of Current Biology.

"What we found is that people really do walk in circles," the lead researcher, Jan Souman, told The Associated Press this week. He said that **studies of nine people walking in the desert and in a forest found that all tended to go in circles and/or veer from a straight line if there was nothing to guide their way.**

In the desert, Souman said two people were told to walk a straight line during the day. While neither managed to go in a complete circle, they both veered off from walking a straight line. The third walked at night, by the light of the full moon, but when it was obscured by clouds he made several turns, ending up in the direction he came.

In another test, six students were taken to a large but flat forest and told to walk a straight line. Four of them walked under a cloudy sky with the sun hidden from view by the trees and clouds. They all ended up walking in circles despite thinking they were going straight.

The other two managed to stay fairly straight but Souman said that was because the sun was out.

"The people who were walking in circles in the forest couldn't see the sun," he said. All nine walkers were tracked with GPS and their routes - straight, circuitous or otherwise - were digitally mapped.

Like those in the desert, when the sun was out, the forest walkers were able to stay on a straighter course.

However, put on a blindfold and ear plugs and "people did all kinds of things," Souman said. "One always went in circles. One went in a zigzag," he said. "It was really hard to find a common denominator."

Souman said similar tests are being done using virtual reality with the results, so far, showing that walkers "seemed to do the same thing in the virtual forest, too."

As for why the tests have been done, Souman explained that the results, along with future tests, will help map how the human brain sorts various sensory stimuli from sight and hearing to help guide people. ##

Coming Events

annual dinner and dance - the social event of the year

Friday October 23

Calgary Winter Club - 4611 14 Street NW

\$40 per person (note - that's the same price as last year)

phone Barb **403-254-2276** to reserve your spot

special treat - Tibor and Megan, dance instructors at the U of C Ballroom Dance Club, will dance a hot and sexy dance number, and then show you how to do some salsa moves, straight from the Caribbean

AGM

Wednesday October 21

7:30

Rosemont Community Centre 2807 - 10 St NW

Christmas potluck

Wednesday December 9

7:00

Rosemont Community Centre 2807 - 10 St NW

New Years Eve party

Thursday December 31

8:00

Rosemont Community Centre 2807 - 10 St NW

ideal holiday destination

Hiking in Corsica

by Francisco Gali

Rugged mountain scenery, dramatic gorges and superb white sand beaches make the island of Corsica. This is an ideal holiday destination.

The downside is hordes of tourists in July and August, and sky-high prices.

The most famous of the long distance trails is the **GR20** that follows the spine of the central Mountains North to South. The most spectacular stage is the one that crosses the cirque de La solitude.



Bavella Needles

This was our first day hike. From the trailhead at **Haut Asco** to the **Col Perdu** is only a three hour ascent. It was mid-June, and there was still a lot of snow in the steep climb to the col, with a few scrambly sections. The snow was good to kick

steps into, although the grade was a little intimidating.

From the col is a 200 m sheer descent over exposed rock. Chains help in the worst spots. All in all, it was great fun.



Cirque de la Solitude



Col Perdu

The trail continues over the far side of the cirque with a corresponding notch in the **Bocca Minuta ridge**.

We didn't do this part, happy to climb back to the chain pitches at the first col.

Further south we did another worthwhile hike to the lakes of **Melo** and **Capitello**. Scenery was spectacular but it was quite crowded. Most people stay at the first lake, because getting to the second lake involves negotiating a steep climb with a tricky rock band.

However the dark blue waters surrounded by cliffs and snow banks make the effort very rewarding.

From the lake, it's possible to climb to the crest and rejoin the GR20.

Our last mountain hike to **Lake de Nino** was easy, although the trail was poorly marked and we lost our way several times. The lake is surrounded by lush meadows with wild horses, all very pastoral.

You can do the entire GR20 in 16 days staying in the refuges. There are lots of other day hikes in the area or



The Central Mountains from Capo Rosso

you can spend several days climbing the highest peaks, all of them in the SC category.

We also did a couple of coastal hikes, no shade and very hot. The good thing is that you can stop at any of the coves and go for a swim in the crystal clear water.

We had great weather with temperatures in the mid twenties. June was the ideal month to visit Corsica. July and August are too hot to hike plus way

too crowded.

Other highlights were the excellent charcuterie, the attractive villages of the interior where the dead outnumber the living, and driving the twisting narrow mountain roads. ##

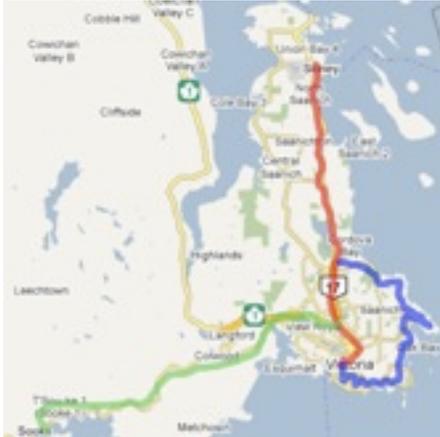


Meadows around Lac de Nino

Canada, eh?

Bicycling in Victoria

by Sharon Wingenbach



Years ago, I took my bicycle to one of the Gulf Islands. I remember the myriad of bicycles and bicycle groups getting on the ferry. Nice to see. I learned that islands are hills and unless there's a path *around* the island, you work hard, any direction you go.

Last week, I enjoyed five days of bicycling in and around Victoria. Vancouver Island has lots of hills but it's a big island, and the paths lead you *around* the hills whenever possible. Cycling on the island is wonderful cycling.

And the islanders are committed to building good cycling and walking trails.

If you go, buy a map, and then just follow the signs.



Lochside Trail

- 29 km from Victoria's Inner Harbour to Swatzen Bay

You pass beaches, farmland and wetlands, and cycle down country lanes and beside suburban back yards. And it's surprisingly flat.

A sign stated I was in 'active farmland' - pumpkin farms, vegetable gardens and hay fields. They were watering the hay fields, even in the rain, so they can get five hay crops off a year. A walker told me the hay goes to the cows in the big barn, and the milk goes to making cheese.

The residential areas are nothing like what you see in Calgary. They're built on and around rock, and have a miniature look to them because - no basements. The landscaping is delightful, with lots of colour. Even the grass is a different green than ours.



Galloping Goose Trail

- 55 km from Victoria's Inner Harbour to Sooke

This is part of the great TransCanada Trail with urban, rural and wilderness scenery. It's a rail-to-trail so it isn't hilly, but you do bicycle up for about 16 km - just a few degrees, but up, none the less. It's a dreamy trail, typical BC landscape - rock and tall trees. I often saw deer running along the path.

Seaside Trail

- from Victoria's Inner Harbour and following the West coast

This was a hilly urban ride, but peaceful and relaxing because I stopped when ever I wanted to enjoy the ocean view. I read the newspaper at a coffee shop, and had an organic lunch - a perfect summer day.

About 5:30, I started to cycle home, and then decided to

hell with it, and I caught a bus. For \$2.25, you can hitch your bicycle to the front of a bus, and then move to the top deck for the view.

Hungry? Black berries are everywhere. Help yourself. ##



A big warm welcome to our new members

Karen Peters

María Saley

Carlos Serpas

Bob Levenson

Margaret McQuiston

Hubert Rielinger

Mietka Zieba

Kathryn Baker

Colin Crichton

Pedro Romero

and welcome back, Kim Janewski

Happy trails to you!

...a little bit on the wrong road

Bicycling in the Netherlands

by Sharon Wingenbach

We didn't do a lot of planning before we left. We didn't have a lot of time, and besides, my brother connected us with a Dutch friend, Mieke, who suggested an itinerary. We'd figure out the details when we get there.

Mieke made a big difference to our three week vacation. She picked us up at the airport and drove us to her town, Zwolle, about an hour away. Our first Dutch experience was her daughter's field hockey championship BBQ. We stayed with her family for two days - becoming acclimatized, learning about dikes and bicycling, enjoying Dutch food. We bought a handful of maps and decided what direction we'd go, and then she sent us on our way.

About The Netherlands

The Netherlands is a low-lying country, formed by the estuary of three rivers. 27% of its area and 60% of its population are below sea level.

There are 12 provinces including N and S Holland, and the Netherlands in the north. The great Zuiderzee was drained, creating a huge

polder and leaving the smaller IJsselmeer, still open to the Noordzee.

Water water everywhere... and an elaborate system to keep it in its place.... Should the water level get dangerously high, an emergency plan goes into action. Everyone knows their role.

Often, we rode on the top of the dyke, with the sea on one side, and a field 6 m below the sea on the other side.

It's flat. Canadian prairies are rolling: the Netherlands is flat. The only hills you cycle are when you go up onto a dyke.

It's windy - that's why they have windmills. Windmills were used to drain swamps as early as the 13th century.

We think of the Netherlands as being heavily populated. Actually, 70% live in the triangle from Amsterdam-Haalem-Rotterdam.

The Netherlands has no natural resources yet the Dutch are prosperous because they move goods around. I'm surprised that



vegetable farming is only 3% GDP. [Tulips](#) - what an interesting story that is....

Cheese....oh my gosh. They eat a lot of it, and it's so good.

About Maps

The Netherlands is only 350 km across at its widest point, yet there are 17,000 km of bicycle paths and roads. You do the math - that's a lot of intersections. Sometimes, we'd stop to check our map, or ask directions, after only 100 m of cycling. We didn't do well with the maps.



Early in our adventure, we asked a man for directions, and he politely said, **'You're a little bit on the wrong road.'** That became our mantra.

Truth is, we were lost for the entire three weeks. We'd bought 1:90,000 maps: we should have bought nothing less than 1:50,000. We eventually learned that there are systems - colors and route numbers on signs, and maps that match them eg LF1 or LF4. That's for next time....

On the other hand, we met a lot of friendly people by asking directions.

Last year, when I cycled the rivers in Germany, I always kinda knew what direction I was going. Next trip, I think I'll choose a river....

About Bicycling

The MEC website states that 50% of Canadians own bicycles. I wonder if there's anyone in the Netherlands



who doesn't own a bicycle. And why.

We brought our own bicycles. Mine was a 1981 Fiori road bike. People starred at me. The Dutch have big heavy bicycles, and they ride straighter and taller in the saddle. They ride a lot, and they ride everywhere, but they don't wear lycra and helmets, and they don't generally crunch down and give 'er.

We met a group at breakfast who were cycling to the same ferry we wanted to catch. But we wanted to see a town N of

the ferry first. They laughed and said we should have left two hours ago. Well - we rode to the town, had coffee with people cruising the locks, walked around, and still made it to the ferry in time. It's not that we're incredibly strong - just have a slightly different attitude about cycling.

The first time my brother visited Amsterdam, he brought skates, expecting to skate the canals that join 11 Frisian towns, including this town we cycled to. But now the canals only freeze over one year in 10. We were pleased to meet a group cycling the 11 towns that people used to skate. Cool. (photo above)

Yes, we brought our helmets. Why not? Mieke politely offered to store them for us but we kept them and we used them. For the record, next time, I'll bring my bicycle, and my helmet.



Highlights

- ✓ the four amazing families we visited...
Mieke, her husband Henk and their daughter Rixt in Zwolle,
Mieke's sister **Aafke**, her husband Sal and their daughter Floor in Scheveningen,
Aafke's friends **Ingrid** in Rotterdam and **Els** in Breda
- ✓ **cheese** and the cheese market at Horne
- ✓ the **herring festival** in Scheveningen
- ✓ **Rotterdam** - once the largest port in the world (now Hong Kong) - bombed during WWII and rebuilt by traditionalists (some buildings that look 500 years old, aren't old) and modernists (wild - no square boxes) - much like Berlin
- ✓ being invited for tea in a **house built the old way** in 1869
- four trees, planted at the birth of the son, used for the foundation of his house when he married
- ✓ cycling through sheep fields in Friesland, and having to open and close **gates** along the way
- ✓ the evening cruise down the canals in Amsterdam
- ✓ **Amsterdam**
- ✓ the vast number of adaptations to the **bicycle** so they can carry cargo, kids, dogs, girlfriends...
- ✓ groups of cyclists everywhere - one, two or more couples touring together, staying in B&Bs
- one **cycling club** was hosting a club from Bath - they'd cycled together in Ireland last year
- ✓ the **town walks** - people committed to walking for four nights - thousands of people, doing 5, 10 or 20 km, fast or slow - talking, laughing, happy to be out and active, and together...
- ✓ **Zeeland** - the *storm surge barrier* that prevents flooding like the 1953 flood - the sand, the sea - cycling hard on the dike for two km against the strong North wind - the woman we shared lunch with in the dunes



Our trip also included the WWI memorial areas of Ypres and Paschendale in Belgium. That's another story. ##

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LAND OF SMILES

(January 31 to February 14, 2010)

Nowhere but on our **THAILAND** holiday will you experience such friendly smiles and incredible adventure! This is a hiking holiday with a twist – you’ll interact with the locals in hilltribe villages, ride the infamous death train over the River Kwai, bathe rescued elephants and get up at the crack of dawn to offer alms to the monks. We promise you a remarkable journey in a country you will never forget!



VIVA LA PASIÓN

(April 21 to May 3, 2010)

Challenge yourself in the beautiful **Andalucía** region of southern **SPAIN**. Descend into bottomless gorges to see vultures nesting, hike through picturesque “white villages”, learn about 25,000 year old cave paintings and tour the Alhambra Palace. Add some flamenco & sangria and there you have the Spanish passion for living. Olé!



OPA!

(May 9 to 22, 2010)

Hike to the heavens to visit holy monasteries, trek in shade of ancient olive groves and lose yourself in the cobblestone streets of Corfu Town. **CORFU** is considered by many to be **Greece’s** most beautiful island, especially in spring when it is carpeted in wildflowers. And you will never tire of the deep, deep blue of the sea that surrounds you.



UNLEASH THE WILD SIDE

(July 4 to 16, 2010)

Don’t just *drive* through **KENYA** – hike it too! Imagine encountering herds of zebras, giraffes and gazelles right on your path! Travel to 3 different parts of the country, take in incredible sunsets over the savannah, visit Masai warriors in their homes and, of course, see lions, elephants & leopards on our game drives. Accommodations include luxury tented camps and one night at famous Treetops!