

The

Pack Rat

Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

March / April 2010



photo by *Celine Souland*

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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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Join us for Calgary's 43rd Annual

Pathway and River Clean-Up

Sunday morning, May 2

Free Breakfast 8:30
Stu Peppard Arena
5300 19 St SW

To join the Ramblers, contact Tony Moran at (403) 286-7904. Details to follow.

The Ramblers traditionally clean up the **Weaselhead** area.

The Pathways and River Clean-Up is about community — Calgarians coming together to remove the litter that accumulates along our riverbanks and pathways.

Last year, 19,000 volunteers collected 11,000 kg of garbage.

The amount of garbage picked up last year is down from 2008. This is very good news.



Consider joining us. Be a hero.

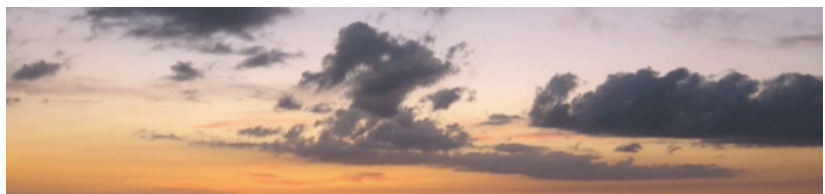
What's your story?

Have you travelled somewhere amazing?
Feeling pumped?

Consider writing about your adventure, and then sharing it with your fellow Ramblers.

Contact the editor for details. I can help.

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



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

Packrat Newsletter

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

Website

www.ramblers.ab.ca.

Visit our website for information about
trips, meetings and special events.

take action - we want the Sawmill parking lot plowed!

Trail Users Meet K Country

by *Dorothy-Ann Reimer*

Representatives of Trail Users met with K Country senior staff February 10. This is a summary of issues discussed.

WINTER STUFF

Unplowed Sawmill Parking Lot

They permanently discontinued plowing this lot to save \$5,000/year.

Users' reactions were:

- parking on the roadside is dangerous (to people and animals; moose come to lick the cars)
- why is Black Prince still plowed? (The University uses Black Prince, so maybe that's why)
- toilets are kept locked
- access is reduced to several ski and snowshoe trails

<http://kananaskisblog.com/sawmill-snowshoe-trail/20>

If we want the Sawmill parking lot plowed, we have to complain IN WRITING to...

- your MLA
- Minister Cindy Ady, calgary.shaw@assembly.ab.ca or 403-256-8969 (Calgary office)
- acting director of K Country Steve Donelon, Steve.Donelon@gov.ab.ca

Ribbon Creek Grooming

Grooming was halted for cost reasons. K Country gave up one of its two snowcats to save \$50,000. Now its focus is Peter Lougheed Park and Mt. Shark where there's more snow. They still try to groom Ribbon Creek when there's snow and when they have time.

Chester Lake and Snowshoers

Over six days Nov to Jan, Alf Skrastins did a mini-survey (very unofficial) of 44 snowshoers he met on the Chester Lake ski trail. He learned:

- no one saw the trailhead kiosk
- all but two saw the snowshoe sign at the lower end of the trail
- eight followed the snowshoe trail up but then they went down the ski trail (they wanted to do a loop or try new trail)

It seems that many snowshoers choose to take the ski trail because it's more obvious and the signs are inadequate.

The snowshoe trail is quite steep and narrow but was 'designed' this way to give a better challenge to users. It's recommended to everyone, regardless of the user's ability. It's popular as it gets good snow early and late in the season.

Barrier Lake Information Centre

Alf Skrastins suggested hours of operation be shifted earlier to serve the early recreationists. K Country agreed to pass idea to his Director.

SUMMER STUFF

Fortress

The bridge is ok to use. The road remains closed. It's possible that a new lease disposition will be granted but even if it is, the new leasee may not open it for summer traffic.

Upper Kananaskis Viewpoint Trail and Rogue Trails

This viewpoint trail is an old fire road to a good viewpoint but is covered by downed trees and brush. We asked if we could get K Country to clear it OR do it ourselves? Short answer – NO to both. K Country says: The public can't build trails (they call them rogues) unless a group has money to do it all AND gets approval from K Country. If anyone is caught building a trail without approval, charges could be laid. K Country has agreed to provide a clear summary of their policy.

Summer 2010 Trails Program

Parks is re-structuring. Some key people retired, and others were promoted. Steve Donelon is the acting director and Dave Hanna is the acting operations manager. K Country staff was unwilling to tell us the plans for trail work this year until re-structuring is completed. They assured us that we'll get it as soon as it's ready.

Moose Mountain Bike Trail

The trail is being built (with approval and money) by the mountain bike group, and it's nearly complete. it parallels the road.

Mesa Butte

This trail is NOT a designated trail.

GENERAL STUFF

2010 Budget

Total budgets for all Parks is \$176M. K Country's operating budget is back to about the 1991 level.

Friends of K Country

Ann Makem is the new director (Sept 2009). Friends is working on a new mission statement. The Trail Care Program using volunteers didn't work very well last year but we're hopeful it'll work better in 2010.

West Bragg Coalition Trail Plan Proposal

The final draft of this plan was going to K Country for approval in February, and response is expected by late March.

###



correction

The January/February issue of the Packrat included Jean Amatt's story of her 9000 km road trip to Alaska.

I edited the story, noting that they stopped at Anchorage, the capital of Alaska. My mistake—Anchorage is not the capital of Alaska; Juneau is.

Sorry, Jean.

Sharon

hmmm....

A group of **40** year old buddies would like to go out for dinner. Finally they agree that they should meet at the *Gausthof zum Lowen* because the waitresses have low cut blouses and nice breasts.

10 years later at age **50**, they agree that they should meet at the *Gausthof zum Lowen* because the food there is very good and the wine selection is outstanding.

10 years later at age **60**, they agree that they should meet at the *Gausthof zum Lowen* because they can eat there in peace and quiet and the restaurant is smoke free.

10 years later at age **70**, they agree that they should meet at the *Gausthof zum Lowen* because the restaurant is wheel chair accessible and they even have an elevator.

10 years later at age **80**, they agree that they should meet at the *Gausthof zum Lowen* because they've never been there before.

**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

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

David Horrocks

John Clifford

Janet Peace

Enrique Hoefele

Paula Duncan

Catherine Watkins

Gerard Lachapelle

Jonathan Tomm

Beverley Cox

Daniel Kim

Happy trails to you!

Travelling, learning about cultures, visiting the wine regions...

Another Way to Tour Argentina and Chile

by *Brian Westcott*

I'm writing this a week after James Heston's slide show on hiking in Northern Chile and a week before Rita Polt's slide show on hiking in the south of Chile. I'd like describe another way of travelling that Marietta and I, along with Ron and Carole Moore, did – one that involved tasting 63 wines in 18 Days!

We signed up for a program entitled “**Discovering Wines and Traditions of Argentina and Chile**”. It began in **Buenos Aeries, Argentina** on January 26. Marietta and I arrived there four days early to walk around and get a feeling for this city of 11 million people. I'd downloaded 12 walking tours which served as the basis for our explorations and we were able to familiarize ourselves with the various neighborhoods. It's a very cosmopolitan city with some broad boulevards and architecture



Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aeries

showing French, Italian, and Spanish influences.

To me, the most interesting site was the **Plaza de Mayo**, the large square in front of the former presidential palace (**Casa Rosada**). For many years, it's been the scene of large demonstrations supporting or opposing government actions, such as the weekly walk by the “**Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo**” to bring attention to the children who disappeared during the military dictatorship in the 1970's. Eva Peron bade farewell to Argentina from the balcony of the palace.

When Ron and Carole arrived, we caught a ferry over to the town of **Colonia in Uruguay**. Colonia, a World Heritage Site, is a well preserved town, originally built by the Portuguese to guard the entrance to the **La Plata River**.

Back in **Argentina**, the tour began and our days consisted of one or more presentations on the history, politics, culture and traditions of Argentina and Chile, and on various aspects of the wine industry. We'd have some kind of a tour during the middle of the day to visit areas of historical or cultural interest, or, when in wine country, to some vineyards. Lunches



and dinners provided us with opportunities to experience the local cuisine.

After two more days in Buenos Aires, we flew to the town of **San Rafael** in the western part of the country, about an hour's drive from the **Andes Mountains**. A woman who'd moved to San Rafael from Buenos Aires with her husband and children spoke about the cultural differences of living in the two places (think Brooks vs. Toronto). After her presentation, we discussed the cost of living and the standard of living. She said that although inflation has gone down from 2000% in 2001 to only 20% now, it's still very difficult to maintain a middle class lifestyle. When asked if she thought things would continue to improve, she said that because the political system in the country is so

incompetent and corrupt, she's not hopeful of any improvement.

The second theme was to acquaint us with the factors that contribute to the production of fine wines in Argentina. The eastern slopes of the Andes are characterized by almost no rainfall, and a large variation in temperatures between night and day. These factors enable wine growers to control all aspects of wine production with no unexpected variations introduced by Mother Nature.

The only water sources are the large rivers draining the Andes. They're dammed and most of the water is diverted to irrigation. In fact, the river in San Rafael is almost dry. Irrigation ditches run along both sides of every street and towns people are given a daily quota of water they can draw from the ditches. The same system applies to the vineyards and the market gardens. A wine grower can control precisely how much water the vines get and how frequently. The vines are planted running north-south, with leaves allowed to grow on the west side only to ensure that the

grapes get sunlight in the morning but not in the afternoon. This decidedly is an *all science, no art* way of growing grapes!

Our next stop was **Mendoza**, the most well known of Argentina's eight wine growing regions. It's in the desert so all its water comes from irrigation. The city has a central square, four other squares and a large park. We were told that green areas were designed so that the populace has a safe place to gather during earthquakes. In the three days we were there, we learned about wine growing and we visited small boutique wineries and large commercial operations. Each one illustrated a different way in which the growers implemented the wine growing "science". All of the results tasted mighty fine!

The next portion of the trip involved a bus trip over the Andes from Mendoza to **Los Andes, Chile**. The road climbs over a 3150 m pass just south of **Mount Aconcagua**, the highest mountain in the Western Hemisphere (6960 m.). There are almost no trees in the Andes, so the view along the way consisted of

rocky hillsides topped with snow-covered peaks. The road to the pass had a gentle but steady grade, but on the Chilean side, the road tumbled precipitously down to the valley with over 28 switchbacks and no guardrails. This road is a major transportation link between the seaport of Valparaiso, Chile and Argentina, so there were many trucks to contend with along the way.

The next three nights, we stayed in a hot springs resort near Los Andes, a small town in the **Aconcagua River Valley**. The valley is well known for its wine producing and is also the source of many of the fruits and vegetables exported to Calgary and elsewhere. Since the area is affected by Pacific weather systems, we were back in an area where Mother Nature dictated the growing conditions, and winemaking once again became an art, rather than a science. This gave us an excuse to visit several boutique wineries that produced limited quantities of excellent wines. During our stay at Los Andes, we were introduced to local traditions including local dishes, a rodeo, and dancing "La Cueca", the national dance of Chile.

The next stop was in the seaside resort of **Vina del Mar**, adjacent to the port of **Valparaiso**. Valparaiso is also designated a World Heritage Site due to its dramatic location on 44 steep hills running down to the sea. Colorfully painted houses, many built on stilts, completely cover all of the hills. Near the end of the 19th century, 33 funiculars were constructed to enable residents to get to their homes, leading to the saying "An elevator is a neighborhood".

The wealthy people decided to relocate a few miles north to **Vina del Mar**, where there are white



Andes Mountains

sandy beaches and where the land is level. Today, Vina del Mar is a beach resort town for Santiago and was very crowded when we were there. In fact, when we decided to walk on one of the beaches, there wasn't enough room through all of the people to reach the water.

We ended our trip in **Santiago**, the capital of Chile. On the way, we stopped to visit a very unusual and interesting organic winery (Matetic Winery). The building is built into the side of a hill and is covered with grass to enable an environmentally efficient temperature control. The owners believe that positive thinking and good music helps to produce better wines, so we were encouraged to stop and chant *Om* when in the vicinity of the wine barrels. Their wine was quite good, so who knows?

Santiago is an hour's drive from the Andes and on a clear day (which seldom occurs), the snow-covered mountains provide a dramatic backdrop. I found it a nice city for walking as there's a park/pathway along one side of the river that bisects the city. In the center of the city is the 1784 acre Metropolitan Park which



The Valparaiso Hills

contains numerous pathways that link two hills that rise more than 300 m. There are also many fine restaurants, so it's definitely a city worth stopping in for a few days.

The tour ended with a visit to the huge Concha y Toro Winery which produces 16 billion liters of wine each year of which 6% is sold in Canada. I didn't notice any chanting going on around their operation. Of course, many

of their wines aren't as good either...

People travel for many reasons: adventure, sightseeing, relaxation, hiking, etc. Marietta and I like to get to know our destination in a bit more depth than we'd get from most tours or even from independent travel. This tour met our objectives nicely and I'd recommend it to any one with similar travel motivations. ###

On March 4, Chile—including the areas Brian visited—was struck by a devastating earth quake. Here are some harsh numbers that I found at www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/03/chile-earthquake-wine-industry.

- * damaged vineyards lost 125 million liters of wine in bottles (12.5% of stock, 17% of annual export)
- * they lost 12% of wine production
 - * 5 m high stainless steel storage vats toppled, cracked and spilled huge amounts of wine
 - * century old irrigation canals collapsed
 - * vineyards had no electricity so growers couldn't water during a very hot time of the year
- * the March fruit harvest was just under way, but the apples were shaken to the ground
- * ports such as Valparaiso were damaged and closed (Valparaiso is now open)

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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!

ALPS & ADRIATIC

(August 29 to September 11, 2010)

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.



LA DOLCE VITA

(September 18 to October 2, 2010)

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.

