

# Mountaineer

E X P L O R E • L E A R N • C O N S E R V E

in this issue:

Crossing Alaska by Human Power  
Cautionary Tales of the Watery Kind  
Lake Bagging 101



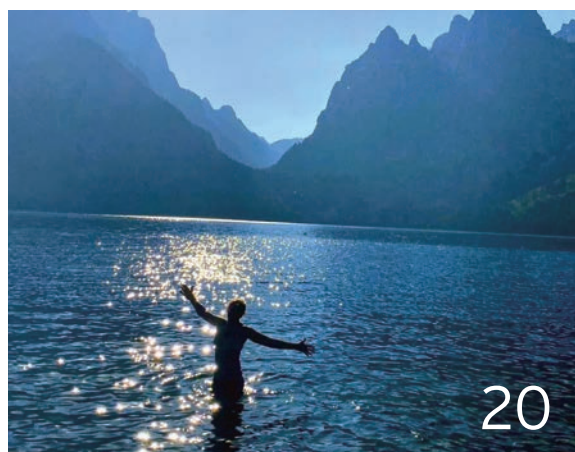


## Summer 2024 | Volume 118 | Number 3

The Mountaineers enriches the community by helping people explore, conserve, learn about, and enjoy the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest and beyond.



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On the cover: Paddling between icebergs in the Copper River in front of Childs Glacier. Photo by Ricardo Martin Brualla.

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## Discover The Mountaineers

If you are thinking of joining, or have joined and aren't sure where to start, why not set a date to Meet The Mountaineers? Check the Branching Out section of the magazine for times and locations of informational meetings at each of our seven branches.



Photo courtesy of Manisha Powar.

When my husband and I moved to Seattle from India, we thought we would stay here for about five years, then go back home. But a friend introduced us to The Mountaineers, and now 20 years have gone by. The Pacific Northwest has become our home thanks in large part to this Mountaineers community that embraced us and made us feel that we belong.

I am honored to now support our community in a broader leadership capacity as our Board President. It's

incredible to see volunteers lead thousands of programs and activities all year round. I find inspiration in watching people learn new skills to confidently enjoy the natural world. By building connections to each other and the natural world, we are inspiring the next generation to protect the places where we learn, play, and grow together.

Last year marked the launch of *Adventure with Purpose*, our new strategic plan, in which we recommitted ourselves to:

- **Lead innovation in outdoor education.** Our vision is that anyone inspired to learn outdoor skills has that opportunity with The Mountaineers through books and programs.
- **Engage a vibrant community of outdoor enthusiasts.** This priority is centered on fostering a Mountaineers community where all people can find inspiration and belonging.
- **Advocate on behalf of the natural world.** This work accelerates our ability to protect the outdoor experience and educate advocates to recreate responsibly and respectfully.

These three strategic priorities, born from our core values, have already inspired growth and innovation. I am energized by seeing how our core values are most fully realized where our priorities intersect: volunteer leadership creates a culture of belonging outdoors, outdoor education inspires care for the natural world, and equitable access and advocacy play together to assure the future of outdoor recreation for generations to come.

One recent example of this intersection is the new Associate Manager of Policy & Planning. This added staff capacity strengthens our partnership with land managers and our voice in recreation plans and permitting processes. This role, made possible through philanthropy, supports outdoor education through courses and activities and creates opportunities for members to advocate for access and conservation priorities.

Our community, and the power of our connections to each other and the natural world, make transformational change possible. We are working together toward a world where our adventures extend beyond our own personal enjoyment and where all people can confidently enjoy the natural world and are inspired to protect it. I am endlessly grateful for the thousands of people who invest their time and resources into making this vision a reality, and look forward to seeing the ongoing impact of our work together in the years to come.

*Manisha P.*

Manisha Powar  
Board President



The Mountaineers is a nonprofit organization, founded in 1906 and dedicated to the responsible enjoyment and protection of natural areas.

#### EDITOR

Skye Michel

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Kristina Ciari, Bayley Stejer

#### DESIGNER

Sarah Kulfan, Beans n' Rice

#### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Tom Vogl

#### EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER

Tom Helleberg

#### DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Bri Vanderlinden

#### PROOFREADER

Nathaniel Reece

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Photo by Heidi Walker.



Skye Michel  
skyem@mountaineers.org  
Photo by Eleanor Lewis.

Most people agree that incessant rain makes for unfavorable recreation conditions. No one – at least that I’ve met so far – prefers climbing up a hillside in drenched clothing only to earn a showerhead of a view.

Most people also agree that Type 2 Fun makes for memorable outdoor adventures. Unsurprisingly, many encounters with Type 2 Fun in the Pacific Northwest involve rain.

I love the rain like I love going on runs. I hate it, until I force myself to experience the magic it works on my mental and physical health. For any outdoor trip with a projected downpour, I not-so-secretly

hope that plans will get canceled so I can stay inside, but every time I brave the deluge, I witness how water has a way of turning us into our best selves.

I had the privilege of experiencing water’s magic recently during a weekend stay for Seattle’s Compressed Alpine Scrambling course at Stevens Lodge. Projected 70-degree weather turned 50-and-cloudy, but we headed out anyway with high (albeit apprehensive) spirits. Our dry rain jackets were short-lived. Water not only came at us from above, but from all sides as soaked leaves and branches sprinkled us while we bushwacked. Rocks grew slippery, improperly packed lunches grew soggy, but our giddiness simply grew. We were kids again, sloshing through the watery terrain and sliding into our self-arrests like we were diving into a pool. At the end of the day, we laughingly compared whose rain gear held up the best (which was practically no one’s). As the rules of Type 2 Fun require, a slightly uncomfortable trip made us all the closer.

This time of year marks our respite from the rain when water-related Type 2 Fun loses its “Type 2” and we can actually choose whether we want to get wet. But the water still holds its magic, and luckily for the PNW, water exists in abundance. This edition celebrates water, exploring the various ways to find joy in our aqueous ecosystems from alpine lakes to river bodies to coastal shores spotted with spirally critters. As you enjoy the warmth of the season’s sunshine during our fleeting summer months, I hope these stories inspire you to embrace water in every form, all Types of Fun included.

*Skye Michel*

When I joined The Mountaineers staff, I never imagined the immeasurable ways this community would enrich my life. For the past eleven years, I’ve had the privilege of engaging with our membership and amplifying stories from our community. This role has given me the honor of turning ideas into compelling, inspiring, perspective-shifting, and sometimes irreverent reading (the best alpine privies, for example). Working with our readers and writers has provided me with so much joy and inspiration, which I hope has translated onto the pages of this magazine.

This edition will be my last on staff at The Mountaineers. Summing up how much love and adoration I have for this community would be impossible, so I’ll just say that I am deeply grateful for your support, wisdom, and kindness. And don’t worry (or perhaps do, depending on your disposition) – this isn’t goodbye for good. I hope to continue to sprinkle my irreverent wisdom on these pages as a volunteer contributor in the future. In the meantime, if you’re interested in following my adventures (poop stories included), you can find my writing at [occasionallyepic.com](http://occasionallyepic.com).

To say I owe my life to The Mountaineers is not an exaggeration. Generations of folks have met their spouses and partners in The Mountaineers, myself included. Today I have a husband and two rambunctious boys thanks to this organization. I promise to remain a Mountaineer for life.

*Kristina Ciari*



Kristina Ciari  
kristinac@mountaineers.org  
@activelifekc  
Photo by Mitch Pittman.



Our **spring 2024 edition** was a colorful celebration of the myriad ways our members cultivate a sense of place through mindful outdoor recreation. Whether climbing in dresses, skiing through sun-lit snow, marveling at glaciers, or munching on mysterious wild berries, our readers were delightfully lost in each story.

"What a wonderful evening, flipping through the entire magazine, reading some of the articles, and being absorbed by the wilds. I hope your stomach has recovered from the berries and no sea monster has chased you. I had to laugh; I keep my eye out for trolls all the time. My sister and brother used to threaten me that they would feed me to the troll that lived in our hollow. I'm sure they are lurking in the mountains."

- Thomas Bancroft, 7-year member



"Just had to comment on Matt Dowell's article. I loved the description of glaciers he wrote, memorable! It always amazes me how good the member writing in the magazine can be."

- Mary Schroeder, 28-year member



In **Trail Talk**, Craig Romano reflected on how some of the most formative experiences with the natural world come from humble places not too far from home, such as his childhood haven, Bear Mountain, and readers agreed.

"Bear Mountain is also a great place to do training hikes for bigger mountains, like Mount Rainier! Very cool story, thanks for sharing it."

- Laura Rachael, *Mountaineer* reader

In **"Personal Growth on Ruth & Icy,"** Matt Dowell shared a poetic account of managing risk, trusting teammates, overcoming fear, and connecting with the natural world during a glacier climb of Ruth and Icy. Readers were touched by Matt's encouraging story and immersive reflections.

"I love the article on Ruth and Icy. It's so calm and gracious and inspiring for someone like me who knows nothing about climbing. I read that article and felt so encouraged to sign up for a climbing course. Plus the photos are great."

- Sky O'Brien, *Mountaineer* reader

In our **winter 2024 edition**, Brianna Traxinger reflected on an upbringing in rural Alaska that shaped a lifelong love of the outdoors, illuminating how different forms of backcountry recreation are rooted in a shared appreciation for the natural world. Readers offered their own experiences of witnessing how respect manifests in different ways.

"I really appreciated Brianna Traxinger's article about how her Alaskan upbringing led her to love and protect the outdoors. I particularly appreciated that her father gave her strict guidelines for using firearms. I'm city raised, don't know anything about hunting, don't have a gun. But a neighbor in Eastern Washington taught me a lot about true hunters. My neighbor had his favorite hunting camp, got his deer every year, and had venison all winter. Once I found a doe with an arrow hanging out of her belly panting under my neighbor's porch. His first step would have been to put her down, but by the time he got home, she had moved off. He searched for her but didn't find her body for a couple days. His care for the deer wasn't prompted by political correctness but rather by a well-learned respect for nature's creatures. You share that respect. Thank you."

- Rose O'Donnell, *Mountaineer* reader



We value feedback from our readers, and we'd like to hear from you! Share your thoughts about *Mountaineer* magazine at [magazine@mountaineers.org](mailto:magazine@mountaineers.org).



**Name** Christy McKinney

**Hometown** Houston, TX

**Member Since** 2023

**Occupation** Field Manager for a Natural Foods Brokerage

**Favorite Activities** Mountain biking, gravel biking, bikepacking, backpacking, hiking, trail running (traipsing), paddleboarding, pickleballing, mountaineering, skiing, and ski touring.



Christine bikepacking along Lake Crescent on the Olympic Adventure Route. Photo by Linzy Gaston.

## What first brought you to The Mountaineers?

I originally learned about The Mountaineers when I noticed the facility at Magnuson Park in Seattle. Upon moving to Bellingham and getting more into ski touring and hiking, I came upon the Basic Alpine Climbing course and was very interested in expanding my knowledge and gaining skills in the outdoors. We're currently a few months into the program and it's been wonderful, to say the least.

## Why do you like getting outside with us?

My experiences so far have been incredibly inclusive, motivating, professionally run, and fun. All the folks I've met in the program and those affiliated with it have been extremely kind in sharing their time and energy with the class. I have left each class or field trip with renewed excitement and look forward to our next time together. Also - I have learned so much in just these few short months from hard skills like knots, climbing, and wilderness first aid to soft skills like group dynamics and advocating for your learning style. The passion in the Bellingham Branch is palpable and I'm so thankful to be a part of it.

## What's your favorite Mountaineers memory?

My favorite Mountaineers memory is from our Avalanche Awareness course at Mt. Baker this year. We'd just received about 100 inches of snow, so wading around practicing companion rescue was incredible and powdery. A few of us ended the day with a quick lap together and while I lost a ski in the deep stuff, my fellow classmates were quick to assist in its retrieval.

## Who/What inspires you?

I'm inspired by all the women, trans/nonbinary, and queer folks who've paved the way before me in the outdoors space. I am also inspired by the planet we get to inhabit. I feel very lucky to have opportunities to play outside among the great abundance of life - big and small. I often think about how short life is and how much I'd like to see and experience. While that thought can be overwhelming, it is also inspiring and pushes me toward a lifestyle I much prefer over working a 9-5.

## What does adventure mean to you?

Adventure to me can be defined in many ways - it can be as simple as being open to what the universe has in store or as complex as a risky high mountain objective. What I do know is that I'm usually up for the adventure, however it presents itself. ▲▲

## Lightning round

**Sunrise or sunset?** Sunrise

**What's your 11th Essential?** Peanut butter

**What's your happy place?** An alpine lake with friends in the sun and the tailgate hangs after a big trip

**Post-adventure meal of choice?** Burrito and a margarita

**If you could be a rockstar at any outdoor activity overnight, what would it be?** Sailing



# Cultural Adventures on the Amalfi Coast

By Linda Shewey, Global Adventures Leader

Global Adventures participants hiking the Alta Via. Photo by Cheryl Talbert.

**W**aking up to the smell of coffee and freshly baked sweet bread... what could be better? Waking up to these after hiking along the magnificent Amalfi Coast in Italy, of course!

Such mornings were typical for our hearty group of Mountaineers during the Amalfi Coast Global Adventure in April 2023.

## Farm to table lodgings

One of the best parts of Mountaineers Global Adventures is the opportunity to combine hiking with rich cultural experiences. At the beginning of our Italy adventure, we stayed in *agriturismos*, a lodging accommodation that combines agriculture and tourism. Our *agriturismo*, Le Tore, is often arrived at by foot through the breathtaking paths of the Alta Via dei Monti Lattari.

Like many others, we hiked the Alta Via (medieval mule tracks) to the highest mountain in the area, Mt. San Michele, where we (could have) enjoyed beautiful views of the Amalfi Coast (if it weren't for the fog) as we ate our lunch. After lunch, we descended steeply through a wooded area of cypress trees and olive groves and arrived to the warm hospitality of Vittoria, the *agriturismo* owner and hostess, who introduced us to her organic farm, including several thousand fruit and olive trees, 60 free-roaming, egg-laying hens, and cattle.

Vittoria served us a bountiful buffet breakfast made with farm-fresh ingredients (homemade jam, fresh bread, fresh-squeezed fruit juice, and eggs), as well as an equally flavorful Mediterranean dinner in the evening. She described the eco-sustainable, responsible tourism practices of her farm, such as recycling, composting, energy conservation projects, and agronomic farm methods.

## Hiking through paradise

Our group spent the next few days walking along a ridge with the Bay of Naples on one side and the Gulf of Salerno on the other. We passed beautiful fields with wild orchids and Mediterranean herbs, small hamlets, medieval churches, and watchtowers. As we descended to the seashore, we entered the city of Amalfi, where we had a personal tour of a working lemon farm that has been in the Salvatore Aceto family for six generations and cultivated the unique lemon variety "sfusato Amalfitano." As a special treat, we got to taste their delicious limoncello.

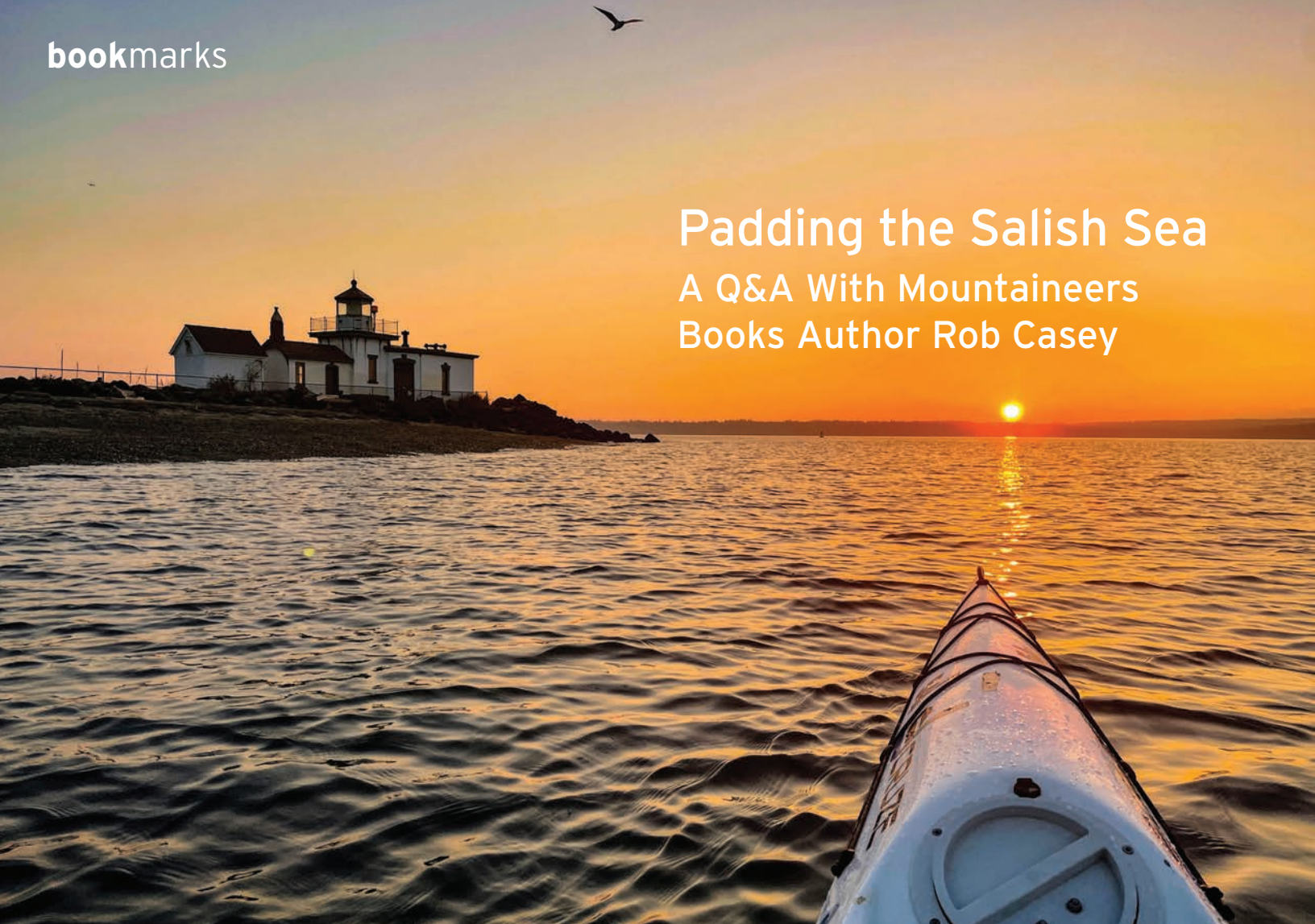
Further exploration of the Amalfi Coast led us through trails such as "Valley of the Dragon" and "Valley of the Mills," and the nature preserve "Valley delle Ferriere" which features beautiful waterfalls. We spent our final days hiking the coastal trails in the Cilento National Park as our guides regaled us with tales from Greek Mythology along this "Path of the Sirens."

## It isn't Italy without pasta

Our final cultural experience took place in the town of Santa Maria di Castellabate, where a group of local women taught us how to make the famous "fusilli del Cilento." Making pasta by hand is a traditional activity that women in Italy have passed down through generations. We made dough out of semolina flour and water, and took turns painstakingly rolling each individual pasta strand around a metal skewer.

After our final Italian meal, we returned home enriched by the land, people, and culture of the Italian Amalfi Coast, never to think about pasta in the same way again. *Buonissima!* ▲▲





The West Point Lighthouse. All photos by Rob Casey.

In *Paddling the Salish Sea*, professional kayaker and paddling coach Rob Casey guides paddlers to the most rewarding destinations across the region. This updated, comprehensive guide covers everything from the quiet inlets of the South Sound to an entirely new section featuring the fjords, waterfalls, and local waterways around Vancouver, B.C. Beginner, intermediate, and advanced paddlers can find beautiful, rewarding routes for their skill levels.

Enjoy a Q&A with Rob about his new guidebook *Paddling the Salish Sea*.

**How did you get your start kayaking? Did you know right away it would be a lifelong passion?**

I used to hike the Washington coast often and on one trip, sea kayaks got to our favorite spot before we did. I decided I needed to learn to kayak to score the best campsites. In 2000, I began to take kayaking lessons. I'm traditionally not athletic and a bit dyslexic, so it took a while to feel confident. It took two years to nail my roll with several instructors. My first time in Deception Pass freaked me out. Then, I took a whitewater kayaking class and the next time, Deception Pass was easy in a sea kayak. Over time I was more comfortable

maneuvering as a tall clumsy type on water vs land. That's when it became my lifelong passion.

**To write this guide, you traveled many (if not all!) of these routes yourself. Did you have a favorite?**

Choosing the more ambitious of two deadlines, I completed most of the update in seven to ten months, working on it in my off-season. Due to the new book being in color, it was critical that I got mostly blue skies and calm seas, which proved to be a challenge as the 2023 winter and spring were cold with many storms. I did 95 percent of the trips on water and all on land to update travel and launch details. I can't list a favorite as they are so different. The new Canadian trips to Widgeon Creek and Witty's Lagoon definitely stood out.

**Living along the Salish Sea is a gift that's easy to overlook. How can residents along the shore take advantage of all the Salish Sea has to offer?**

Since the last edition launch, I've settled into paddling my favorite spots. The book forced me to break out of my comfort zone when revisiting existing book trips and discovering new ones.





The Montlake Cut.

I recommend paying attention to sea life, the shoreline and its changes, and the history and environmental issues along the way. As a history buff, I enjoy spotting culturally modified trees, visualizing what the Salish villages looked like, and learning about post-contact history. I also pay attention to the things that damage the shorelines, such as the miles of armor in the South Puget Sound and Hood Canal, and the endless volume of microplastics and Styrofoam that fill our beaches. I remove beach debris during every paddle I go on.

***Paddling the Salish Sea* is an updated version of a previous guide. What differences can paddlers expect to find?**

We added a beefed-up intro section to better prepare paddlers for trips and also added several new trip destinations, including the Vancouver area, the Gulf Islands and Victoria area, and some in the Olympic Peninsula. The guide is now in color, slightly larger, and includes land acknowledgments.

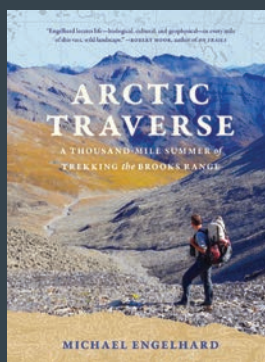
**This guide includes canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding. How do you cater a guide for each of these different modes of transportation?**

Each of those crafts may get there faster or slower and can carry more or less gear, but it's the individual that needs to learn the ins and outs of tides, currents, wind, and/or paddling technique and touring to safely and enjoyably complete a trip.

**What is the number one tip you hope sea kayakers and paddlers take away from this guide?**

To keep exploring new places. ▲▲

*Paddling the Salish Sea* is available for purchase at our Seattle Program Center Bookstore, online at [mountaineersbooks.org](http://mountaineersbooks.org), and everywhere books are sold.

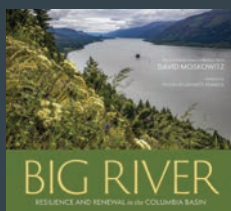


## Arctic Traverse: A Thousand-Mile Summer of Trekking the Brooks Range

By Michael Engelhard

A lyrical memoir that interweaves wilderness, homeland, cultural connections, historical figures, and gritty experiences across northern Alaska, *Arctic Traverse* takes readers on a once-in-a-lifetime journey. Follow author Michael Engelhard across tussock-studded tundra for a captivating tale

of bear encounters, white-knuckled river moments, and poetic reflections on a vast, untamed landscape. A trained anthropologist, Engelhard evokes classic writers like Edward Abbey, Barry Lopez, and Ellen Meloy with profound dives into human and natural history and vivid meditations on Alaskan wildlife, flora, and geology. Much more than a thrilling account of a human-powered, solo thru-hike and float, *Arctic Traverse* illuminates the spirit of Alaska, drawing on encounters with Indigenous elders, guided clients, homesteaders, and others, as well as Engelhard's deeply personal experiences of the land itself.



## Big River: Resilience and Renewal in the Columbia Basin

By David Moskowitz and Eileen Delehanty Pearkes

In *Big River*, award-winning photographer David Moskowitz and writer Eileen Delehanty Pearkes illuminate the hydrogeology, beauty, and activity of the Columbia River while also highlighting current challenges facing the region and the people working on sustainable solutions. Through rich and comprehensive images of the land, river, and people, *Big River* embraces a broad cultural and ecological perspective to explore the Columbia River Basin as a single living, interdependent entity. Moskowitz's many years of photographing the river and Pearkes' decades of research combine to tell a compelling story that seeks to balance the complex issues of water, salmon, agriculture, energy, climate, and, ultimately, a sustainable living river.



## Survival is Not Assured: The Life of Climber Jim Donini

By Geoff Powter

Jim Donini has been an icon of American climbing for the past 50 years, pushing the boundaries of alpine ascents around the world and inspiring generations with his achievements. But his personal life's story has remained largely untold, until now. Author Geoff Powter explores Donini's groundbreaking climbs and tumultuous experiences both on and off the rock in incredible detail, reintroducing

Donini to the public in a way he's never been seen. Through in-depth interviews and never-before-shared stories, readers will learn about Donini through a new light, and anyone who has overcome hardships can learn from *Survival is Not Assured*.



# Grounding Experiences 100 Feet Up

By Alvaro Juarez, Seattle Programs Manager



MAC student, Ryan, projecting a steep route in the Dihedrals. Photo By Christian Hansen.

Being outdoorsy didn't come naturally to me. Although I'm from a small, blue-collar farming community, my parents' idea of spending time outside meant performing back-breaking work in the mid-Atlantic humidity or struggling to stay warm in Carhartt coveralls during blustery winters. In 2013, I migrated to Wyoming and met people who had different ideas of the outdoors: that it could be healing, peaceful, and most importantly, fun.

Suddenly surrounded by people with years of outdoor experience, I felt miles behind. Mentally, it seemed like my pack was heavier than everyone else's, but I pushed forward and made the most of it.

When I moved to Washington in 2017, I leaned into the mountain biking community. What I left behind in Wyoming, I found here. Well, almost. My life was full of loamy single track and steep rock gardens, but deep down I missed the alpine starts, boot packs, and scrambles needed to ascend the Tetons. I felt something unfinished in my relationship with the mountains.

I applied for and got a job at The Mountaineers, a perfect opportunity to blend work and play and become further connected with the outdoor community. But similar to my experience in Wyoming, I had a lot of catching up to do, specifically regarding climbing. I decided to head south to Smith Rock State Park with a friend and former American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA) guide to get more comfortable with sport climbing. I'd been climbing before, but never in a leadership role, learning instead with friends through books and YouTube. While those experiences were foundational, there was room for improvement.



Alvaro trying to look comfortable in the Alpine, Becky Route, Liberty Bell. Photo by Cailin Henley.

## All eyes on me

At Smith Rock, my lack of experience was on full display. I was top-roping an easy route that another party was interested in, so my friend told me to clean the anchor and rappel down. I had successfully done all these skills on the ground and rock before, but put on the spot, all knowledge and confidence left my body, replaced by panic and anxiety. I've seen climbers get shaky legs hundreds of feet up in the air; I was only 100 feet off the ground.

I managed to clean the anchor and rappel down, thanks to my very patient climbing partner. When I got down, I felt like I'd been chewed up and spat out. Any inkling of confidence was shot. The rest of the day, I was caught up





Top: MAC Student, Iris, making quick work of a crack feature on Monkey Face. Photo by Morgan Heater. Bottom: MAC Student, Christian, eyeing their next move. Photo by Ryan Welsh.

dissecting my miscues, wondering if there was space for me in the climbing world.

The following day, we spent most of our time practicing buddy rescue and belay escapes on the ground. We closed the trip with a mellow multi-pitch on Koala Rock, and by the time we topped out, I wailed at the top of my lungs. I'm not sure if I was celebrating the summit or the fact that I didn't have to climb anymore. Regardless, I realized I wanted to take up space in the climbing world.

### It's going to be okay

Months later, I was scheduled to go back to Smith Rock with our Mountaineers Adventure Club (MAC). Most of the students had been climbing longer than I had, and about half of them

were part of a climbing team at a local gym. I would be lying if I said I wasn't intimidated.

At previous jobs, I had often been the person with the most experience, encouraging students to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. I would assume the role of loudest cheerleader, uplifting and motivating students when the going got tough. My responsibility was to tell everyone that everything would be okay, which experience had taught me to be true. This time, I needed someone to tell *me* it was going to be okay.

On our first morning at Smith Rock, the MAC students were performing pistol squats and various intense warm-ups (for fun). I was overawed by this, but the students were full of encouragement and positive reinforcement. I climbed mostly everything the students did, but where they flew up the crag, I crawled. Even so, I felt the whole state park was a judgment-free zone because of those students.

My favorite memory was watching a student climb a 5.10c. The pitch was slightly overhung, with small holds and burly moves. I watched in awe, wishing I had been that cool when I was 15 years old. Heck, I wish I was that cool now! They were on the wall like they had a lifetime of experience under their belt, but when they returned to the ground, they were fifteen again. This was the revelation I needed: there wasn't anything I had to prove to these students. I only needed to be present and have fun.

### The kids are alright

My bond with the MAC students grew significantly on that trip. I don't think the students know, but they taught me a lot. I realized not all teaching moments involve technical skill or technique, but merely your presence and willingness to be vulnerable. I learned to drop my ego, especially during humbling moments like seeing a student climb in their croc sandals on a pitch I thought was challenging. I now understand that being uncomfortable is the nucleus of climbing.

These unexpected experiences taught by youth made me realize this generation of young people isn't given enough credit. They may only be in high school, but they have an abundance of life experiences, they embrace challenges, and they have deep patience and grace. Thanks to the students, I've gone from trembling on basic crag climbs to jumping headfirst into my first ice climbing trip. I am a better climber and, more importantly, a better person because of them.

It is a privilege to work with Youth Clubs students and their families, and to recreate on the lands of the Coastal Salish Tribes. I know the trail that lies ahead involves plenty more moments of self-discovery at the crag, and with the help of our Youth Clubs students, I will embrace these moments of discomfort and reinforce the sense of belonging I experience as a climber with The Mountaineers.

I implore you to spend time outside among people with different lived experiences and perspectives. I can say from experience that you will be a better person because of it. I also strongly encourage you to consider becoming a youth programs volunteer with our Youth Clubs. Our Mountaineers youth sure know how to create unforgettable adventures. ▲▲



# The GoHike Experience

By Michelle Song, Associate Director of Leadership

Kalaloch in Olympic National Park. Photo by Sabrina Svedin.

Exploring the great outdoors is a transformative experience that connects us with nature in profound ways. For those eager to step onto the trails but uncertain about where to begin, the GoHike: Beginning Hiking Series course offers an inviting gateway into the world of hiking. The GoHike course launched in 2021 to introduce new hikers, or those who are eager to restart, to the joys of hiking while providing a supportive community and valuable resources to ensure a safe and enjoyable beginner experience.

The GoHike course eliminates barriers that often deter beginners from venturing onto trails by offering meticulously planned hikes led by experienced volunteers. The course is structured to progressively enhance distance, mileage, and knowledge for GoHike students, accommodating diverse skill levels along the way and allowing participants to find their stride and gradually build confidence on the trails. To celebrate the impact of the GoHike course, we asked three GoHike graduates – Alex Schesser, Andrea Mueller, and Carol Johnson – to reflect on how the program has influenced their outdoor adventures.

## What impact has the GoHike course had on your life?

**Alex:** During winter 2023 I did not hike, nor did I spend much time outside. I let the weather turn me away from venturing out. After GoHike, I've been going on at least two hikes a month,

among other outdoor activities. Part of those have been alumni hikes that help me stay in touch with the wonderful community of hikers GoHike has helped me create, and part have been other hikes I have the confidence to take due to the knowledge gained from GoHike. I've also learned to pace myself on hikes. Before joining GoHike, I cared about getting to where I wanted to go as fast as possible, and didn't respond appropriately to the terrain or how my body was handling it.

**Andrea:** GoHike has allowed me to just show up and go from there, learning in increments. It was quite literally one foot in front of the other. When I thought that I was going too slow, another hiker in the group said, "this is your hike too." I realized that my pace was fine as is, and was reminded to not compare my pace to other folks'. GoHike also taught me how to be an advocate for my needs. I learned it's okay to ask for a clothing adjustment, take a water break, or a quick breather to refresh before heading back on the trail. What I learned was: we stick together as a group and build each other up.

**Carol:** I have always loved the outdoors, camping, hiking, and



Alex Schesser.





GoHike participants at Ebey's Landing. Photo by Pam Jorgensen.

gardening. The GoHike course structure was made just for me! I am not a staunch "go farther, hike higher" kind of hiker. I like to savor the surroundings, breathe deeply, and just move. Becoming a GoHike leader gives me an opportunity to share with others the natural beauty of our region, encouraging others to get outside in a safe environment.

**The GoHike community seems to be a close-knit group of outdoor enthusiasts. How has being part of this community influenced your connection to nature and fellow hikers?**

**Alex:** There is nothing like having hike leader Liz McNett Crowl with you to point out the different kinds of plants or tell you what kind of bird a certain call belongs to. Many GoHike participants have great tidbits about plants, their uses in food or medicine, and their cultural significance to Native peoples. Learning about the history of the land connected to the trail, and the richness of life on the trail, lends itself to fulfilling hikes.

**Andrea:** My last hike of the season was at Talus and Ollie Lakes with one of



Andrea Mueller.

the leaders from my first pacing hike. In a way, I felt it was full circle, start to finish. I've met so many amazing people that I wouldn't have met anywhere else. Some grew to be familiar, encouraging faces along the many hikes in-between. Meeting new people along the way to connect and be with in nature is a fun and meaningful journey.



Carol Johnson.

**Carol:** Because we are a like-minded group, the conversations around gear, snacks, tips, and tricks are always enjoyable. I love to be guided and explore new areas. I also enjoy sharing my gems with others. I recently led a hike where every participant knew the others in the group. The hike was lively with discussion and it was heartwarming to see a greater sense of comfortability within the group. To think, I was the catalyst!

**Can you share an experience that highlights the sense of camaraderie and support within the GoHike community, and how it has impacted your ongoing outdoor pursuits?**

**Alex:** One of the greatest parts of GoHike hikes is the varied experiences and interests of the participants and the chance to chat about those things on the trail. I won an inflatable kayak in a raffle. I have not been kayaking in years, nor ever kayaked in the PNW, but of course I found a fellow hiker who loves kayaking and gave me the best advice on where I should go, the weather conditions to watch out for, and the limitations of my particular kayak.

**Andrea:** On a hike at Mt. Erie, a large boulder was embedded in the trail. We had to figure out how to safely navigate over this boulder. Some folks were able to crawl on all fours to climb over the rock and others relied on assistance from those that made it to the other side of the boulder. It taught me that there are a variety of methods to accompany a person over an obstacle. We were able to trust each other and continue our journey to incredible views.

**Carol:** Co-leading with my daughter after the first season! I am grateful to lead hikes with my daughter. She is busy, so I do the administrative parts, posting the hikes, answering questions, and scouting the trails. It is always exciting for me to share our favorite hikes with others; a win-win situation.

## Go hike with GoHike

GoHike opens doors to breathtaking vistas, supportive community, and awe-inspiring natural wonders. Through shared experiences and mutual encouragement, students not only expand their outdoor skills but develop a deeper appreciation for the beauty of the natural world and their own hiking capacities. To learn more about GoHike and sign up for a course, contact [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org). ▲▲





# Investing in the Legacy of Mountaineers Lodges

By Brianne Vanderlinden, Director of Community Engagement

Mountaineers enjoying the teaching space at Baker Lodge.  
Photo by Skye Stoury.

A year into our strategic plan, Adventure with Purpose, we're making significant strides to continue improving support for our mission. To better address the needs of our volunteers who run and operate our three lodges, we are expanding resources and making dedicated financial investments. Of the many improvements taking place this season, I'm excited about a new opportunity to accelerate infrastructure improvements to revitalize Baker, Meany, and Stevens Lodges.

About a year ago, a Mountaineers family approached us with an offer of an investment gift to build on recent projects and accelerate progress in our lodge capital improvements. The family was interested in supplementing the improvement and maintenance investments already budgeted for, allowing us to get more done, faster. Our lodges and outdoor centers provide an entry point for many first-time visitors and quickly become a gathering place where generations of families return season after season. The family had experienced the value of our lodges, and wanted to fund projects that would make operations easier for volunteers while preserving and revitalizing the lodges for future generations.

We presented this opportunity to The Mountaineers Board of Directors at the November Board Retreat at Baker Lodge and invited the Board to approve our application for a \$500,000 grant from the anonymous donor.

For those of you who've experienced the communal experience of Mountaineers lodges, you know that upon arrival, a guest is offered a bunk, a meal... and a chore chart. The same goes for the revitalization of our lodges. To make our grant a reality, the Board agreed to sign up for additional "chores" to demonstrate our elevated financial commitment alongside the donor. In simple terms, this required that in addition to a



Construction at Meany Lodge's zoo extension. Photo by Matt Simerson.

\$500,000 baseline repair and maintenance budget planned for 2024-2028, the Board committed a \$200,000 investment to accelerate other improvements.

## Making a place feel like home

Opportunities to improve the places that make The Mountaineers special are elevated through philanthropy. Thanks to the generous support of members and donors, our fundraising program is experiencing incredible momentum. As I'm writing this, we're on the heels of the most successful Gala yet, having raised \$660,000 (and climbing!). Fundraising efforts like the Gala provide critical unrestricted support across all of our impact areas, including investments in our outdoor centers.

One of my favorite parts about the Gala is working with leaders like Esa Tilija (daughter of Maya Magarati and Nil Tilija, who moved here from Nepal 23 years ago) whose personal stories exemplify how The Mountaineers makes a place feel like home. Esa was a speaker at our Gala this year, and as part of the fundraising program she shared the heart-work of the community she's found within The Mountaineers. It all started at Baker Lodge.





Volunteers helping making repairs at Meany Lodge.  
Photo by Jim Fahey.



Mountaineers scrambling students at Stevens Lodge.  
Photo by Steve McClure.

"My first transformative outdoor adventure took place with The Mountaineers, spending the weekend with my family at Mt. Baker Lodge, my favorite place in the world," Esa said.

Over the years, Esa cultivated a multi-generational community through weekends at the lodge, witnessing time and again how Baker's communal gathering spaces provide first-time experiences that transform a person's relationship with the outdoors. She still volunteers at Baker Lodge, introducing others to the magic of our mountain homes.

"Just last month, I helped host 62 folks of Himalayan descent with the Nepal Seattle Hiking Community," Esa said. "Participants ranged from ages 4-82. There were world renowned Sherpa mountaineers from our community, but for most folks, it was the first time they had ever stayed at a lodge, or experienced snow in Washington. This full-circle experience brought back memories at Baker Lodge, which are such a big part of who I am today."

## Even centuries old traditions need stewardship and care

Esa's story is one of thousands that makes up the fabric of those who've experienced our lodges for nearly 100 years. The love and hospitality Esa felt with her family is the same tradition that welcomes more than 2,500 visitors, young people, and families to The Mountaineers lodges every year.

Increasingly, our lodges are not just winter destinations for snowy adventures – they're used year-round for activities and programs such as Mountaineers courses, summer youth camps, Pacific Crest Trail overnights, and educational excursions such as Meany's Mushroom Weekend.

The desire to expand lodge use while operating in harsh mountain conditions has increased the need for a thoughtful approach to ongoing maintenance and revitalization projects. We've focused efforts over the last five years to address deferred maintenance projects and make high-priority improvements at our lodges. Examples include installing heat pumps at Stevens and Meany, remodeling the bathrooms at Stevens, upgrading the water system at Meany, building a new teaching room and replacing windows and siding at Baker, and converting lighting at all lodges to energy-efficient LED fixtures. Thanks to the generosity of lodge volunteers and donors, with the support from the Board of Directors, we've

invested more than \$750,000 in these projects over the last five years.

To make the most of our investment, we've made cost-conscious decisions about sourcing materials and selectively using professional contractors for complicated jobs. This approach has allowed us to make headway on some of our highest-priority projects; however, there are still significant needs to be tackled. A new roof, oven, and commercial dishwasher are needed at Meany; the electrical service at Stevens needs an upgrade along with a new stove, range hood, and countertops; and Baker will require an upgraded water system and interior and exterior finishes associated with the new teaching room. In short, we've accomplished a lot the last five years, and there's quite a bit more to be done.

## Many hands make light work

As many lodge-goers know, at the close of a weekend stay, we all pitch in to help. Together, we do dishes, sweep the floors, clean up the bunk rooms, and scrub sinks and toilets. Before departing, we divide trash and recycling to take home. For one person, it's a lot to get done, but it's not much effort when we work together.

In a similar way, revitalizing our lodges requires community effort. For some folks, this might mean making a financial gift. For others, it might mean offering professional contract work at favorable rates or even as an "in kind" gift to The Mountaineers. For many volunteers, it means continuing to lead and invest time and skills into supporting our lodges.

In the next few years, we have the opportunity to do something special for the future of our community. Revitalizing our lodges is truly a "many hands make light work" experience. The Mountaineers way is to work as a community – just like we do when staying at a lodge, contributing to write Freedom of the Hills, volunteering to restore a trail, or teaching people to recreate mindfully. Simply put, we're our best selves as members of a vibrant community working together to accomplish our goals.

If you're inspired to support this work, I hope you'll consider adding your name to the "chore chart" to help revitalize our lodges. If you're interested in discussing how you can help, please reach out to [briv@mountaineers.org](mailto:briv@mountaineers.org) with your ideas and questions. We look forward to providing more updates along the way. ▲▲



# Stewarding Washington's Lands and Waters With The Mountaineers

By Conor Marshall, Advocacy & Engagement Manager

Olympia Mountaineers removing a broken sign at Collins Campground on the Olympic National Forest this spring. Photo courtesy of Meg Hunt.

Growing up in Seattle, I wasn't fully aware of the human-caused impacts on our environment, nor did I understand our responsibility to give back to our shared home until an elementary school field trip taught me about the impact our stormwater systems have on local salmon populations. Picking up trash with my classmates and spray-painting stencils of salmon near storm drains around our local watershed remains imprinted in my mind, reminding me of the interconnectedness of nature and our charge to steward it.

Mountaineers programs and activities rely on healthy landscapes. Our community takes action to help protect these places through advocacy and hands-on stewardship activities. At its core, stewardship is the protection of the natural environment through conservation. Stewardship includes acts of giving back to our lands and waters through activities like trail work or habitat restoration. As we explore, learn about, and conserve the lands and waters of the Pacific Northwest - from Seward Park to the Olympic National Forest and beyond - it's important to stop, connect, and reflect on how we can protect and restore the places we love so they continue to thrive for future generations.

To get you ready to begin - or continue - your stewardship journey, let's celebrate the thriving practice of stewardship at The Mountaineers by highlighting some recent work by branch stewardship leaders to organize a community of stewards to give back to Washington's lands and waters.

## Stewardship at The Mountaineers

Stewardship brings Mountaineers together from across



Ginger Sarver (Olympia Branch) facilitating the Olympic National Forest trail user survey in 2022. Photo by Kathy Fox.

branches and activities for the shared purpose of caring for our natural places. These places include public lands and waterways managed by a government agency, or a private or nonprofit organization like a land trust. According to The Mountaineers new organization-wide Stewardship Standards, the primary purpose of a stewardship activity is to care for our public lands, waters, and other outdoor spaces. This could include, but is not limited to, trail work, habitat restoration, trash removal, historic lookout maintenance, and care of Mountaineers facilities.

Land managers working at all levels of government to conserve and protect natural resources regularly face lean budgets and a chronic lack of staff resources. They rely on nonprofit, volunteer-driven stewardship efforts to maintain and restore



our public lands and enhance the recreation opportunities they provide. The Mountaineers frequently teams up with partner organizations to restore and maintain trails, pick up trash, and remove invasive species, helping ensure healthy landscapes.

Mountaineers have participated in stewardship activities for decades, but growing impacts from a changing climate and soaring visitation make it more important than ever for recreationists to take a break from their typical adventures and give back to our lands and waters through a different type of outdoor trip. Volunteers across all Mountaineers branches make it possible for our community to give back by creating year-round stewardship opportunities. We're excited to highlight two of the popular recreation corridors where The Mountaineers and our partners have focused stewardship efforts so far this year.

## Stewardship spotlight: Olympic National Forest

One shining example of Mountaineers stewardship is our Olympia Branch Conservation & Stewardship (C&S) Committee's ongoing partnership with Olympic National Forest. In summer 2022, Olympia stewards led trailhead outreach for the Forest's trail user survey, which solicited feedback from recreationists to help shape more sustainable recreation management on the Olympic Peninsula. As a result of the C&S Committee's commitment to promoting the survey, The Mountaineers received a coveted recognition of Citizenship Stewardship and Partnership as a Group in the U.S. Forest Service Region 6. (Region 6 covers national forest lands throughout Oregon and Washington.) With many groups working to steward and conserve the Northwest's national forests, The Mountaineers is honored to receive this type of recognition.

This year, the Olympia C&S Committee is expanding their work from the last three years to support the clean-up of winter debris from campgrounds across Olympic's Hood Canal district and beyond. In April, the branch cleaned five campgrounds throughout the forest: Big Creek, Collins, Hamma Hamma, Lena Creek, and Brown Creek. "We are aware of the Forest Service's limited resources and are collaborating with them on the cleaning of campgrounds in our area of the Olympics," says Meg Hunt, the committee's campground coordinator. "These opportunities give us a chance to get more Mountaineers involved in stewardship work and give back to the lands where we recreate."

## Stewardship spotlight: Mountains to Sound Greenway

Our Foothills Branch Conservation Committee regularly partners with the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust to provide stewardship opportunities throughout the Greenway that focus on trail work, invasive plant removal, and salmon habitat restoration. This spring, the Foothills Conservation Committee teamed up with the Greenway Trust for several stewardship trail work events at popular state and federal recreation areas throughout the Mountains to Sound Greenway. One of the focal areas for this important work was the Middle Fork connector trail, which parallels the Middle Fork



Snoqualmie River. Mountaineers helped create a new picnic area along the river and improved the trail surface. "I love connecting Mountaineers with opportunities to care for the lands and waters throughout the Snoqualmie River Valley - a place that continues to provide me with a special connection to the outdoors," says Foothills Conservation Committee Chair, Deloa Dalby. "As our partnership with the Greenway Trust continues to grow, we look forward to offering more of these opportunities."

## Start your stewardship journey

Every individual act of stewardship makes a difference - whether you're caring for our landscapes on your own or as a part of a group activity. You don't have to be in the backcountry to make an impact. State and local parks close to home offer great opportunities to connect newer outdoor enthusiasts to stewardship. You might be surprised how the practice of stewardship can deepen your connection to a place, and I have a hunch you'll head home feeling good about your contribution to Washington's lands and waters.

This summer, take a few hours away from hiking, backpacking, and climbing and earn your Mountaineers Stewardship Credit badge by participating in one full-day (six hours) or multiple half-day stewardship activities with The Mountaineers or an outside organization. Our stewardship opportunities webpage is the best place to start your stewardship journey with The Mountaineers and many outside stewardship organizations working throughout western Washington: [mountaineers.org/stewardship-opportunities](https://mountaineers.org/stewardship-opportunities).

Looking for deeper involvement in stewardship through The Mountaineers? Branches can designate committee(s) as eligible to organize stewardship activities. Stewardship leaders must demonstrate the basic competency required to lead these activities and be approved by a branch committee to do so, as outlined in The Mountaineers Stewardship Standards. Reach out to your branch leadership to start organizing a stewardship activity.

As more Mountaineers incorporate stewardship in their time outdoors, we can help ensure our outdoor spaces and the transformative recreation experiences they provide endure for future generations. Thanks for adventuring with purpose with us in all seasons! ▲▲



# FINDING CONFIDENCE AND COMMUNITY IN THE MOUNTAINS

By Amy Carlsen, 2023 CHS Graduate



Amy at Ptarmigan Ridge. Photo courtesy of Amy Carlsen.

I'm standing on the Ptarmigan Ridge trail - a nine-mile day hike in the North Cascades lined with lupine, sedges, and patches of blueberries - seriously questioning my sanity. We've been hiking for over ten hours in the hot September sun. To make this route qualify as a Conditioning Hiking Series (CHS) graduation hike, we added the Chain Lakes Loop, another six miles through lush forests and alpine lakes. Coleman Pinnacle, Mt. Baker, and Goat Lake are just some of the incredible views we've observed so far.

The trail is rocky and steep, but seeing our cars a half-mile away gives me a small burst of energy. The only problem is that the trail in front of us is blocked. Dinner at the lodge will be served in less than 30 minutes. Daylight is waning. Dirty, chaffed, and hungry, I'm in no state of mind to make rational decisions.

None of us like the idea of hiking several more miles on a dusty trail to go around the roadblock, but the idea of scrambling up a rocky hillside isn't attractive either. As Mountaineers, we stay with our group. We've supported each other the last six months building up to this graduation hike and here we stand, exhausted, trying to collectively come to a decision.

## Conditioning with community

My hiking journey began two decades earlier as a way to spend time with my son who has autism. Being in nature calmed him and allowed us to connect in a way that we couldn't anywhere else. Over the years, he grew up and lost interest in hiking with his mom. The pandemic left me lonely, isolated, and deeply craving the calmness and connection found only in nature. In a leap of faith, I signed up for the Seattle CHS course. This course is not for the faint of heart. For those who finish, it is life-changing.

CHS is a volunteer-run course, founded in 2005 by Kelly and Matt Cleman as a way to safely train for long hikes as part of a community. Hiking enthusiasts commit to a minimum of two hikes per month from April through August in preparation for a graduation hike of 15-20 miles in September. The six-month timeframe allows for hikers to get to know people, make friends, and learn The Mountaineers culture. "You spend a lot of time together hiking on the trail," said Kelly Cleman. "Most of my friends I met through CHS. We continue to do things together." The bonding that happens through hiking together in the wilderness, and often sharing a meal together afterward, is the secret sauce of CHS.





Ptarmigan Ridge. Photo courtesy of Amy Carlsen.



Grand View Peak. Photo by Sheila Reynolds.

In its first year, Seattle CHS registered 25 hikers and six leaders. In 2024, 120 hikers and over 60 leaders enrolled. A similar growth can be seen across branches. In 2015, Donna Kreuger established CHS in Olympia and its registration continues to fill every year. Carlanna Livingstone started CHS in Tacoma in the midst of the 2020 pandemic, and the Tacoma Branch now offers three seasonal series of hikes. About two-thirds of the hikers who sign up for CHS, graduate from the course. Graduates often stay involved after the course to become future advocates, volunteers, and CHS hike leaders.

## Reaching new heights

Although I had been hiking for some time, CHS gave me the confidence to try longer and harder hikes. This confidence also came with some challenges. My first CHS hike in April left me with black, bruised toenails from ill-fitting hiking boots. My irrational fear of heights prompted many fellow hikers to lend a hand as I tiptoed through Kendall Katwalk, Tunnel Falls, and the narrow ridges of Norse Peak. Over halfway through the course, I rescued my best friend when she had a seizure on our vacation in Yellowstone National Park. Traumatized from the experience, I was terrified to hike at all, but the graciousness and support of my fellow CHS hikers propelled me forward. Overwhelmed with gratitude and courage, I kept hiking.

CHS provided me with the opportunity to hike in many incredible places. Some of my favorites include the granite spires of Dragontrail and Colchuck Peaks, the stark moon-like landscape of Navaho Pass, and the multitude of waterfalls along the trail to Tunnel Falls in the Columbia River Gorge of Northern Oregon. I also found some lesser-known local hikes in Issaquah that offer year-round forest solitude, such as Margaret's Way to Debbie's View and May Valley Loop.

Of all the inspiring views, alpine lakes were my favorite. I saw several during this final graduation hike while walking around Chain Lakes. Our group was too tired to talk, and instead spent quiet time together basking in the grandeur of nature, enjoying the coolness of the lakes and their refreshing, filtered turquoise water.

## Celebrating 20 years of CHS

This summer marks the twentieth anniversary of CHS. Alumni will gather in Seattle on June 21 to reconnect with each other and celebrate the friendships formed through 20 years of hiking. We will also remember the hikers who are no longer with us, such as Karen Sykes, one of the first CHS hike leaders. She passed away hiking Mt. Ranier in June of 2014.

Time moves on, but memories are lasting.

What will the future 20 years hold for CHS? "I hope the program continues to be personally meaningful for both volunteers and participants," Kelly said. Olympia CHS Co-Chair Terry Pressly's vision is "for future outdoor generations to get excited by advocating for our lands, and getting to places where the price of admission is physical health and well-being." For me, CHS instilled confidence to try my next grand adventure: two weeks of hiking Finland's national parks this summer with Global Adventures.

## Crossing the finish line together

On the trail from Ptarmigan Ridge, we gather together, dusty and worn, to face the roadblock ahead. After five minutes of deliberation, our stomachs win. We take a deep breath, then band together to navigate the steep and rocky hill.

Standing safely at my car, I pause to take in the incredible view. I am overwhelmed with emotion as I ponder the past seven months. I've crossed rivers and snow fields, scrambled up steep mountains and scooted over rocky ledges, observed a Carnivorous Sundew wildflower, and learned the value of drinking electrolytes. Through it all, I experienced the incredible beauty of nature and the power of community.

Doing CHS will always be one of the best decisions of my life. I am forever grateful for the administrators and leaders who had a vision for CHS and continue to volunteer their time to keep it vibrant and alive. I am also thankful for my fellow hikers who stuck with me as we finished our journey together. I hope to meet you again in the mountains. ▲▲





# LAKE BAGGING 101

## Jumping In to Slow Down

By Jessica Hirst, 17-year member

Photo by Ida Vincent.

*Hiking – I don't like either the word or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains, not hike!*

– John Muir

**O**n a hot August afternoon, I quickly stuff the final bites of burrito in my mouth as I look back one last time at the jade-blue mountain lake we're about to leave. The lake is surrounded by a brushy, amber-meadow, hushed in the glow of high summer. I had jumped into the cool water the moment we arrived, feeling the heat and fatigue leave my body to be replaced by a sense of buoyancy and freedom. This lake is on the way to our campsite in the Olympics, where we will spend the night before scrambling Mt. Henderson. Even though I'm excited for the overnight camp and scramble, I feel a tug as we pack up, wishing I could linger by the water a little longer.

When I recently heard the term lake bagging, I was immediately intrigued. As it turns out, I'm not the only one who wants to linger by - or as John Muir would say, saunter in - the wilderness. Lake bagging, despite the name, tends to mean the opposite of peak bagging to most who do it. Many enjoy hiking or scrambling to mountain lakes to jump in or sit by the shore for no reason other than to connect with nature, experience beauty, and have fun. Rather than collecting bragging rights, lake baggers return home with wet shorts in a plastic bag and the memory of being immersed in clear, glacial water surrounded by a ring of craggy peaks.

### How Mountaineers are lake bagging

To learn more about exploring alpine lakes, I caught up with three members of The Mountaineers who are passionate and



Packrafting in Copper Lake, Alpine Lakes Wilderness.  
Photo by Deb Fox.

intentional about lake bagging: Deb Fox, Allison Tapert, and Kari Durr.

For Deb, a 24-year member and graphic artist, the main draw of lake bagging is the vivid colors. "When I see a jewel-like lake with this searing monolith behind it, it's hard not to be gobsmacked by the beauty: the white of the granite, the blue of the water, and the green of the foliage," she said. "A friend once gave me a grand tour of a major jewelry store on Rodeo Drive and he took out all these jewels costing tens of thousands or even millions of dollars. They had this refractory quality, sparkle, and brilliant color – and alpine lakes are just like that. When you see the wind kick up with sunlight on the water, it starts to sparkle. They can have a sapphire color, and in the shallows, a cobalt hue that turns into cyan and blue topaz."





Floating in Thunder Mountain Lake. Photo by Lorraine Yerger.

For Allison, who joined The Mountaineers this year, turning 50 was the catalyst for what has become years of alpine lake adventures. After realizing how little free time she had taken for herself over the years, she took a tally of the activities she loved most: swimming, hiking, and being outside. She came up with the goal of visiting 50 mountain lakes for her fiftieth year, and since then has continued to visit dozens of lakes every season.

"I don't love the term lake bagging," Allison said. "It sounds like a conquest, whereas for me it's really about connection with nature. Now I can embrace my birthdays because I'm getting out in the woods, connecting with new people, and swimming in the most beautiful places I've ever seen. There's nothing like jumping into the water and seeing these mountain peaks behind. It just lights me up; it's gorgeous."

Kari, a Conditioning Hiking Series leader and former administrator, is currently working toward earning multiple branch-specific Alpine Lake badges. She says her love for mountain lakes started at a young age while hiking in the Cascades with her family. "I can still recall basking in the sun at the lakeshore with my sandwich and gazing around with awe at the stunning alpine surroundings, listening to the sound of the breeze rustling over the surface, keeping my eyes peeled on the high meadows for wildlife, and sometimes soaking my feet in the clear, ice-cold waters," she said. "All of that was such a wonderful reward for the effort it took to huff and puff myself up the trail. Now I'd rather hike to an alpine lake than anywhere."

## The freedom of lake bagging

If you're like me and inspired by these lake bagging accounts, it's time to jump in! There are over 8,000 alpine lakes to choose from in Washington State. Let your sense of adventure guide you; the rules of lake bagging are ultimately up to you. Just remember to stay safe and respect the lands and waters. ▲

## TIPS FOR (SAFELY!) TAKING THE PLUNGE

**Find lakes that interest you** by searching The Mountaineers website or Google Earth, where you can see how large a lake is, whether it is accessible via trail, and if there are any other lakes nearby that you might want to visit.

**Practice Low Impact Recreation.** Wipe off any sunscreen or insect repellent before jumping in to avoid contaminating the water, and be sure to camp at least 200 feet from the shoreline if you're staying overnight.

**Be aware of the risk of hypothermia,** especially on cooler days. If you're cold when you get out of the water and the air temperature is dropping, your body temperature could become too low.

**Let your body acclimate before jumping in.** Entering the water too quickly could put you at risk of cold shock. Instead, try wading in slowly and splashing water on your face and neck to help adjust to the temperature of glacier-fed water.

**Remember The Ten Essentials,** especially navigation tools, a headlamp, an emergency blanket or bivy sack, and warm clothes to change into after a plunge. Navigation tools are important as alpine lakes can be difficult to reach, even if they're on the trail.

**Earn Mountaineers Alpine Lakes Award badges** for extra inspiration and motivation.

**Be creative and have fun!** Bring a wetsuit, blow-up raft, or sketch journal. If you can, swim out to the middle of the lake and float on your back for a while to feel fully immersed. Skinny dip if the spirit moves you!

## KARI DURR'S FAVORITE ALPINE LAKES FOR BEGINNERS

**Lake Ann** (at Mt. Baker): Located in a stunning setting a stone's throw away from Mt. Shuksan, Lake Ann offers close-up views of the Lower Curtis Glacier.

**Larch Lake** (via Ewing Basin): Looking for solitude? This lake is a good choice, as the trail is generally quiet. In the fall, the namesake larches surrounding the lake glow like amber.

**Spectacle Lake** (off the PCT near Salmon la Sac): This lake is close to Seattle and particularly nice on a hot day. The route via Pete Lake winds through fields of pink fireweed and stands of silver trees with views of the Three Queens and involves a (sometimes rather exciting!) ford of Lemah Creek. Delate Creek Falls, on the way to Spectacle, offers a cool respite from the summer sun.





# CROSSING ALASKA BY HUMAN POWER

## 3,000 Miles on Foot, Bike, and Packraft

By Salomé Stähli, 3-year member, with Ricardo Martín Brualla, 13-year member

Paddling the Inside Passage between Ketchikan and Wrangell in late March's freezing temperatures. All photos by Salomé Stähli and Ricardo Martín Brualla.

**T**he alarm jolts us from our slumber at 4:45am. I unzip the tent and walk to the cliff to see a blue sky on this clear, April morning. I feel no wind. A happy scream escapes me as I run back to camp. With no time to lose, Ricardo and I stuff cereal into our mouths while dressing in our paddling clothes and drysuits. Coffee will need to wait. We have to start paddling quickly, before the wind returns.

We are two weeks into crossing Alaska by human power, from Ketchikan at the southern tip to Kotzebue in the far north. At more than 3,000 miles, our route travels through Alaska's most remote areas. We set aside six months to paddle the Inside Passage with our packrafts, hike along the Lost Coast, cross the Wrangels and Alaska Ranges, bike up to and hike across the Brooks Range, and paddle the Noatak River until Kotzebue. The trip is self-supported, with planned stops in town every 14 days or so to pick up packages of food shipped from Seattle.

Upon leaving Ketchikan, we quickly learn that good weather in the Inside Passage often brings northerly headwinds. Our transportable packrafts offer the flexibility to walk on beaches when the weather is too rough to paddle, but they have one major drawback: they're impossible to paddle against wind. We have to get out ahead of the wind we know is coming.

### Difficult start in the Inside Passage

We left Petersburg five days ago in heavy rain. We were elated when the weather switched to sunshine, only to be flattened quickly by the wind. Yesterday, as we rounded Cape Fanshaw,

the full brunt of gale blew us backward. With no beach to walk on for the next 30 miles, we had no choice but to pull our boats to shore and wait for the wind to stop.

This unplanned camp isn't the first time since leaving Ketchikan that the future of our adventure is at risk. On only our fifth day, a late winter storm froze the ocean water in the bay along our route, forcing us to turn back to Ketchikan. We could take one big setback, but a second one?

But this morning at least, luck is on our side. We paddle furiously toward the uninhabited Five Finger Lighthouse, perched on a tiny rocky outcropping in the middle of the sound. We climb up the rocks covered in anemones, chitons, sea stars, and urchins, careful not to poke a hole in our packrafts. We have the island and lighthouse to ourselves and the freedom and protection to wait here for the next wind-free day.

Two days pass. We watch orcas swimming, humpback whales breaching, and sea lions and dall porpoises fishing. While unplanned, the wind has given us a gift: the time to enjoy a piece of paradise. It's also taught us to be patient and believe in ourselves. We choose to listen to what nature is saying. In two weeks, we'll reach the end of the Inside Passage, completing the first part of our long journey through Alaska.

### Suffering on the Lost Coast

Thorns of salmonberry bush dig into the skin of our hands in early May. We will remove thorns from our hands for the next two weeks, but right now we don't even notice. All we





Clockwise from top left: Our route across Alaska. Enjoying great hiking and incredible views of Mt. Hayes in the Alaska Range. Exploring an ice tunnel of the Chistichina Glacier, formed by a meltstream. Soaking up a moment of sunshine after a long day scrambling in the rain through endless boulder fields toward Kaluluktok Creek in the Brooks Range.

can think about is if the bushes will hold our weight. Below, a steep chute of loose boulders drops straight into the ocean. A fall now will mean grave injury.

We're in Boussole Bay, the last bay before the Lost Coast, and we can't find the bear trail we're supposed to follow. Slowly, Ricardo takes another step toward a grassy knoll and pulls himself up to safety. I follow. We are out of harm's way, but shaken and exhausted. We set up our tent on a tiny ledge, more of a hole than a camping spot, with only half a liter of water left between us. We eat dried apples and crackers with butter, augmented by small sips of water.

We wake in the middle of the night to the sound of rain pattering on our tent, a godsend. We collect it with our pot to quench our thirst. Alaska has a way of humbling you, but tonight Alaska is also taking care of us. In the morning, we will spend countless hours climbing up and down three ravines, still unable to find our way out of the bay's maze. We will despair, going to bed with tears streaming down our faces. But tonight, we drink in our appreciation of Alaska.

On the third morning in Boussole Bay, we wake to a glassy ocean, a rare break. Usually this coast is so rough that paddling our small packrafts isn't an option, but the Lost Coast seems to beckon. Surprised by our luck, we paddle around the headlands and start hiking the 400-mile long beach.

Hiking is our preferred mode of travel, but our confidence is shaken from our struggles in the maze. And, it seems the

Lost Coast is no longer welcoming us. As soon as we start hiking, rain sets in and doesn't stop for 12 days. Temperatures hover barely above freezing and we have zero views of the impressive St. Elias Mountains. Many close encounters with the omnipresent, gigantic brown bears wear us down a bit more each day, and our determination withers. Then we begin to feel guilty. We have chosen to do this trip and feel pressure to enjoy it. But right now, there's not much to enjoy.

When we finally reach Yakutat, we barely recognize ourselves in the mirror. We've lost weight and our faces look hollow. We're defeated, but we've dreamed of this adventure for so long and we can't stop now.

Full of dread, we leave Yakutat for the second half of the Lost Coast. A gorgeous evening across Yukatat Bay, complete with stunning views of Hubbard Glacier, lifts our spirits. Then the rain returns. Four days later, Ricardo sprains his ankle.

Despite his pain, we continue for three days until we reach Icy Bay, roughly the 700-mile mark of the trip. We know this is one of the hardest bays to cross. Our weather forecast warns of a big 7-day storm, and we know it is simply too dangerous to paddle. The storm forces us to do what we should have done earlier: fly to Seattle to take a much-needed break. We have pushed ourselves too far.

## Second chance

While Ricardo's ankle heals, we brainstorm how to best use







"Remember you are half water. If you can't go through an obstacle, go around it. Water does."

-Margaret Atwood







our remaining four months off from work. We decide to shorten our route, leave the Brooks Range for another time, and reverse our itinerary, setting off from Healy, near Denali National Park, in early July to reach Icy Bay before fall.

Back in Alaska, Healy greets us with blue skies, sunshine, warmer temperatures, and fewer mosquitoes than usual for this time of year. Our packs are lighter too: this time we are only carrying a single, one-person packraft for us both. We hike east, parallel to the Alaska Range, crossing valleys and glaciers and admiring the stunning mountain range with glacier-capped peaks. Wildflowers are plentiful, and to our surprise we don't see anyone. We finally feel in our element.

After ten days of hiking, we arrive at the shore of Delta River, the last obstacle before reaching a highway that will bring us into Delta Junction. With only one packraft, we've developed a technique of crossing rivers by ferrying three times to the other shore: once with each backpack and a final trip with both of us in the boat. But this crossing is different. The current is too strong and the river too wide to ferry multiple times.

We load our gear inside the packraft's tubes and cram into the boat. We've heard many accounts of people capsizing, even with a packraft each. Our safety plan consists of stuffing a satellite messenger, lighters, and energy bars into our pockets while wearing rain gear - not very comforting. Once on the water, we realize that the boat is hard to steer. Sitting at the front, I point out rapids and shallows that Ricardo can hardly see while paddling at the back. Stroke by agonizing stroke, we maneuver safely to the other shore.



Clockwise from top left: Floating down the John River in the Brooks Range crammed into a single packraft. Jumping over meltwater pooling on aufeis (overflow ice) in late June on Anaktuvuk River in the Brooks Range. Biking to the Brooks Range with the Alaska Range in the background.

We spend the next three weeks in the Alaska and Wrangels Ranges enjoying gorgeous scenery, steady progress, and wildlife. We see caribou, dall sheep, coyotes, foxes, lynx, wolves, and bears. Our smell and hearing sharpens and we develop a sixth sense for bears, often feeling their presence before we even see or hear them. We learn to trust this sense.

One evening, we pass a little meadow perfect for camping, but something in our intuition tells us not to stop. We inch closer to check and sure enough, a black bear - not more than five yards away - runs out of the brush. We continue down the river for another hour to get away from the bear, feeling uneasy without understanding why. Nearly 20 bald eagles surround us as we set up camp. The next morning, the reason for our unease becomes clear: the river we'd been hiking along is filled with spawning sockeye salmon, a perfect meal for a bear.

For the rest of our time in the Wrangels, we hike on faint historical trails through settlements from the Gold Rush era leading to McCarthy, where we pick up the second packraft. As we paddle down the Copper River to the ocean, we're surprised to fall in love with the very river that had scared us months prior. This time, it offers the right amount of challenge. We're rejuvenated by the area's incredibly beautiful peaks, with glaciers calving directly into the river.

## Completing the loop

It's September now and we're at the delta of the Copper River coming back toward the Lost Coast, which is showing itself in a different light. Salmon bump our boats as views of the snow-capped St. Elias mountains greet us on this sunny, warm day. The fireweed and strawberry leaves have turned red, adding color to an already beautiful scene. Learning from our previous mistakes, we wait out two storms instead of pushing through them. We're lucky that they happen right as we're staying in the only national forest hut in this area, and again later while we're in a friendly fishing lodge.

We continue our journey back to Icy Bay on foot, where we had to quit and fly home so many months ago. A mile out, we feel the anticipation of our final destination as the tide is rising and the beach begins to shrink. Each wave touches our





Taking in the view of the Chistochina Glacier in the Alaska Range.

feet as we walk. Ricardo and I look at each other, agreeing silently to continue to the end tonight. Turning around while so close to Icy Bay is not an option.

Alaska has another plan for us. The tide rises quickly and we realize we'll be trapped if we continue walking the beach. Ricardo attempts an escape by climbing up a mud cliff about 10 feet high. He's making good progress until his feet get stuck in sticky, muddy, glacial silt. The more he moves, the deeper his feet sink.

I try not to panic as waves splash my knees. Ricardo digs at his feet with his hands. The water is rising higher with each passing moment. Suddenly Ricardo breaks free, sliding down the cliff on his back. Humbled, we do what we should have done from the start: backtrack to where we can climb up to the forest. Ricardo strips his clothes at the first stream we pass. They're so heavy with silt that they plummet to the ground.

In the morning we stand on the shore of Icy Bay. During our first attempt to cross this bay in May, the sky was gray with heavy rain, whitecaps and icebergs making the crossing impossible. This time, Mt. St. Elias thrones over us, the water is glassy, and two-story-tall icebergs tower above as we paddle. The crossing is a delight.

We camp one last night, making a fire on the beach and watching the sunset bathe the bay and mountains in pink. Sandhill cranes fly south over our heads. Like them, it is time for us to go home, having closed our loop at last. While we

dream of fresh food and a shower, the thought of this journey ending feels bittersweet, like losing a friend.

Before leaving on this adventure, people often asked whether we were afraid this adventure would break us apart. Both leaders by spirit, we fought over decisions and who got to navigate. But slowly, over the months in Alaska, we learned to let each other lead - to make space for Ricardo's need to push himself physically through long days and for my need to slow down and admire the wildflowers, lichen, and scenery. This journey has shown us that we are able to do so much more than we thought, both physically and mentally, as a team.

We watch the fire, both deep in our own thoughts. We completed the loop, but I am not ready to let go of this adventure. Plus, crossing the Brooks Range is still missing. As the sun dips below the horizon, I whisper to Ricardo "Next summer we return to Alaska, no?" ▲▲

In 2023, Salomé and Ricardo returned to Alaska to connect Denali National Park to the Arctic, first biking to the Brooks Range, then hiking west through the mountains to the Noatak River to paddle to Kotzebue. They were once again humbled and invigorated by the adventure. You can read more at [north2arctic.com](http://north2arctic.com).





# FROM CHECKLISTS TO CHOOSING HOME

By Brittney Moraski, 7-year member

Alpine scramble at Bryant Peak. All photos courtesy of Brittney Moraski.

I am at my limit, sick to my stomach and reduced to guttural responses to my fear and fatigue. I have never climbed a mountain before, let alone one at 14,000 feet. On this late-season climb, I've seen my crampons spark on the rocks of the Disappointment Cleaver and twice tiptoed across ladders straddling yawning crevasses. And yet, the mountain expects more of me. I keep pushing as the rope propels me forward.

For the last two stretches of our Mt. Rainier ascent, Dominic, our guide and rope lead, coaches me to keep pace. He notices I've become sloppy maintaining the rope that connects me to my fellow climbers. I understand what is unsaid: if I don't improve, I'll have to descend the mountain without summiting.

At our final stop before the summit push, I feel the nearness of the mountain's crater. And I feel far from the parking lot where our climb began 20 hours ago. But mostly, I feel exhausted. My inability to keep pace makes me feel like I am being pulled up the side of a mountain and, in fact, I am.

When Dominic tells me I won't be continuing with the group, I accept his words with resignation and a small amount of relief.

## Checking boxes

This experience was not what I anticipated when I registered for a four-day summit climb with RMI Expeditions, the mountain guide company founded by Lou Whittaker. As a new Seattle resident, I was unpracticed in the ways of Pacific Northwest outdoor recreation. What I lacked in experience, I thought I made up for with an excellent record of achieving my goals.

Before Seattle, I lived in six cities around the world and never failed to embrace what made each place special. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, I ran along the Charles River after a day of classes. For the 18 months I lived in China, I navigated a new culture and language. During my studies in London, I took advantage of inexpensive flights to explore Europe. And my recent master's degree in business administration instilled a heady confidence in my ability to conjure just about any accomplishment out of an expertly formatted spreadsheet.

Obviously, I identified summiting Mt. Rainier as a Washington rite of passage. Personally, this challenge met a deeper,





Top: Seattle Basic Alpine Climbing climber's reunion. Bottom: A snow field trip which included practice with ice axe arrest, roped travel, crevasse rescue, and snow camping.

more elemental need as well. I am restless and have been since I was a child. My goals are a means to manage this insistent anxiety, so I keep my list long and ambitious. If I check enough boxes of "must-do" experiences where I live, I can give myself permission - and perhaps justification - to leave someday.

## Rerouting

In the weeks after my failed Rainier summit, I can still recognize the fear I felt on the upper mountain, but other, positive experiences shape my memories: the camaraderie of my climbing group, the beauty of seracs and snow, the clarity of mind I found focusing on each step. And so, I register for a Rainier six-day expedition climb with RMI in 2019, the following year. I want to try again.

As part of my training plan, I enroll in many Mountaineers courses: Basic Scrambling, Backpacking Building Blocks (B3), Wilderness Navigation, and Wilderness First Aid. Having completed Basic Wilderness Skills in 2017 and the Conditioning Hiking Series in 2018, I know The Mountaineers system of awarding badges for completing courses suits me.



Basic glacier climb of Mt. Baker via the Easton Glacier route.

I review my profile page of The Mountaineers website with satisfaction as my number of badges grows.

My training plan and Mountaineers activities distract me from a lonely period of life. My friends are marrying, buying houses, and becoming parents. I am not, mostly by choice. Rather than investigate my ambivalence, I narrow my scope to the objectives scheduled in my calendar and work through my feelings while running up my apartment stairs with a weighted backpack.

## Back on Rainier

"If you continue past this break, then you're going to the top," Ben, our RMI guide tells me and the other climbers as we complete our break ritual - parka, pee, water, snack, sunscreen - as quickly as possible.

"How are you doing, Brittney? You going to do it this year?" Ross, another guide, asks me specifically.

I nod. I feel unexpectedly strong; far stronger than I was ten months ago when I was turned back at this very juncture. I'm still humbled by the mountain, but my fear is tempered by my physical and mental stamina.

Climbing resumes. The darkness we've been trudging through for hours recedes with the emerging sun, and my emotions give way. I let out sobs between pressure breaths as I realize





Brittney Moraski on the summit of Mt. Rainier.

I'm about to achieve a goal two years in the making. "I'm going to do it!" I repeat to myself, rest step after rest step, until we reach the flat, sulfurous crater of the mountain. I ask a fellow climber to take a video of me, and in it, I yell triumphantly, "I did it! The top of Mt. Rainier!"

That summer, I am filled with awe again and again. On an August Mountaineers backpack circumnavigating Mt. St. Helens on the Loowit Trail, I become overwhelmed eating ripe, wild huckleberries. "A summer's worth of photosynthesis!" I repeat with wonder, both to myself and to each perfectly delicious berry.

## Reassessing

During the pandemic, I take to exploring my Capitol Hill neighborhood to interrupt the monotony of remote work. Sitting under the giant sequoias in Volunteer Park reminds me of backpacking, so I bring a blanket and spend an afternoon reading. Eventually, I stitch together an elaborate walking route that incorporates my favorite trees, three city parks, and a midway stop for a cookie and ice cream. It is - I tell myself - almost like hiking.

I am no longer tethered to Seattle for work. And, I have crossed the key items off on my PNW must-do list: summitting Mt. Rainier, completing STP (the Seattle-to-Portland bike ride), and even seeing the Dave Matthews Band perform at the Gorge. With this checklist complete, I start to imagine

what my life could look like if I relocate again: maybe back to Washington, D.C., a place of happy memories, or to Chicago, a city that would bring me closer to family. I consider the appeal of each city, the lives I could live, and the new checklists I could pursue. And yet - and yet! - I find myself thinking how much there still is to explore in the Pacific Northwest.

## Discovering the freedom of the hills

I complete the Basic Alpine Climbing course, a capstone of my Mountaineers education, in 2022. I join dating apps and add details from my adventures to my profile, including my Rainier summit video. One man asks if I want to climb the mountain again. He, too, is a mountaineer, and quickly becomes a constant in my life, steadying the freneticism of my untethered life.

I take pride in knowing that my outdoor abilities are something I acquired on my own, before my partner and I met. But his favorite activity is skiing, so our relationship becomes my opportunity to develop a new skill. In April 2023, I try backcountry skiing for the first time.

Summit at Snoqualmie is closed but there is enough snow to ski, if you're willing to skin up, or to practice glacier travel, as I see others doing. As I grunt and maneuver up the slopes on my skis, a beginner once again, I watch the groups practicing rope management. I know who they must be - Mountaineers - and what they are doing, because I have been on that snow





Basic Alpine Climbing course field trip demoing knots, ropes, and prusiking.

field trip before as a Mountaineers student.

Looking at this new cohort practicing snow travel at Snoqualmie, I feel a wave of warmth wash over me. I recognize that I am only able to repurpose my knowledge and conditioning to this new activity because hundreds of Mountaineers volunteers have shaped me into the strong and capable person I am today.

In addition to the nostalgia and gratitude, I feel something in me shift - something expanding to redefine how I think of myself, and even let go of what no longer serves me. I am witnessing others on a journey I have been on. A journey, I understand at last - not a checklist.

## Arrival

For most of my life, I have equated adventure and exploration with picking up and moving, intentionally seeking novelty over community. I was driven to find something that could be tidily summarized, like reaching the summit of a mountain or achieving a course graduation badge. Now, the outdoors and The Mountaineers are leading me toward a slower, more mindful approach - toward savoring the miracle of ripe huckleberries, seeking comfort under the hardy branches of a sequoia, or discovering new ways to explore familiar landscapes.

I'm always going to be goal-oriented, but by slowing down and learning the necessary skills to safely travel in and



Top: Alpine scramble at Wallaby Peak. Bottom: Skinning at Snoqualmie.

explore the outdoors, I have come to appreciate things I would have otherwise missed: the land and its Indigenous history, watersheds, ecosystems, and what it means to honor, protect, and preserve. These aren't boxes I can ever check; these are practices and beliefs I must commit to for my lifetime.

I now recognize what I misunderstood in my restlessness, something no badge or checklist can capture. The purpose of a journey isn't to roam indefinitely, but to reach a destination, and then choose to stay. ▲▲



# CAUTIONARY TALES OF THE WATERY KIND

By Kristina Ciari, Director of Membership & Communications

Illustrations by Sarah Kulfan

I have a tumultuous relationship with canoes. When I was eleven, my first canoe trip turned into a raging disaster when a thunderstorm upstream caused a flash flood, overturning our canoe and stranding us on a quickly-shrinking island. Years later, I refused to do the canoe-tipping test required to swim at summer camp. Even into my 30s, I was the only person in my group who could not get back into a canoe after swimming in Lake Union, dumping everyone and everything out in the process (RIP iPhone 3).

I prefer my water frozen, in snow form. This preference is primarily recreation-informed - I'm a skier first and foremost - but my opinion that frozen water is superior has been continually reinforced by life experiences. Like all of the cautionary tales you'll read in this article, of both the humorous and let's-never-do-that-again kind, I've had a number of close calls with liquid water. The story I'm going to share today involves a seemingly innocent paddleboard.

A decade ago, my colleague-turned-friend Becca Polglase (the Director of Programs & Operations at The Mountaineers) set me up on a blind date with her friend Jordan. As she so eloquently put it, we were "both skiers, climbers, and borderline-obnoxious." Hey, you can't argue with the truth.

For our first date, Becca organized a flotilla meetup in South Lake Union. Becca and her crew headed out on paddleboards and canoes while I puttered down with my friends on a speed boat. When we got close enough, I dove into the water and began swimming toward Jordan's paddleboard. "Swimming"

being the operative word.

I am not a good swimmer. I know how to swim, but no one would call me graceful, which is why I gravitate to activities that are water *adjacent*. Fishing on the shore. Laying on the beach. Riding on a speedboat. Near water? Yes! In water? Not so much.

Jordan grew up on the east coast, next to a beautiful beach on the Atlantic. When he was training for a triathlon, he earned the designation Most Improved Swimmer. All his favorite activities involve water. So you can imagine Jordan's concern when he saw me dog paddling toward him (staying afloat just fine if you ask me) and thought I was drowning.

Ever the hero, Jordan threw me his life vest for assistance. The guy had excellent aim, and hit me square in the face.

Then I was drowning.

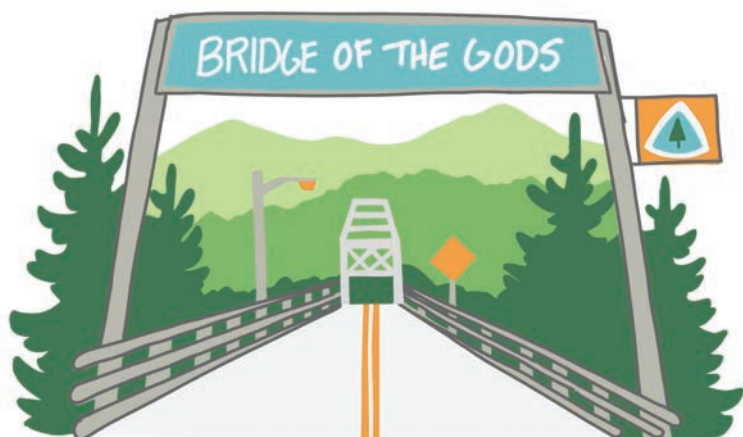
Jordan realized his grave error and jumped into the water, helping me to his paddleboard. I reorientated myself, and we all had a good laugh. As he puts it, he didn't expect to save my life the first time we met. I like to tell people that the first time we met, he tried to drown me.

Our second date was the aforementioned Lake Union canoe incident. Our third date was also on the water, paddleboarding in Puget Sound. When we got married six years ago, Becca was our officiant. Today, we have two young boys. They both love the water.

## Always bring your keys on a car-to-car adventure

By Rheanna McLaughlin

For our first backpacking trip together, my then-boyfriend Mike and I backpacked 37 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). The forecast called for a quarter inch of rain each day. Mike tried to give me an out, but we had only been dating a couple months and I wanted to impress him. It rained three inches that weekend. I didn't own good rain pants, so Mike gave me his. Even still, by the fourth morning everything we owned was soaking. We hobbled into Cascade Locks at the Oregon border wearing only base layers and strategically placed garbage bags. As Mike was ringing out his wallet the last morning of the trip, I smugly proclaimed, "That's why I left my keys and wallet in your car so they wouldn't get destroyed!" Mike looked at me and asked me (politely) to repeat myself. It took me way too long to make the connection... We were hiking to my car. We are getting married in August, so I guess it worked out.





## Weight limits are made to be tested

By Lace Laya

One time we hiked a giant inflatable kayak up to a mountain lake, attempting to kayak with three adults in a three-man kayak. The math was perfect. We left our dogs at camp until Trooper's barking and Tokul's crying became so insistent that we turned around and put both dogs in the kayak too. Unsurprisingly, we popped the bottom of the kayak with our excessive weight, forcing us to paddle as a giant cuddle puddle back to shore. I think our laughter was louder than the dog's barking! It was happy and ridiculous.



## Wool is not warmer when wet

By Steven Jay Ellis

A few years back, I was working at the old North Face store when a customer spun this adventure story: She was on a winter Outward Bound canoe trip on Lake Superior, and was very cold as she paddled. She just couldn't warm her hands. Then she remembered what the guide had said in their dry land session: wool is warm when it's wet! She promptly dipped her wool mittens in the lake and found to her surprise that wool wasn't warmer when wet. She still managed to make it out with all her digits.



## Guidebooks exist for a reason

By Mark Langley

A long time ago, I was on a backpacking trip in the Wind River, WY, in early July. One cold morning, we attempted a wide river crossing with one pair of sandals between us and no hiking poles. The moving water was more than knee deep and we were wearing big packs. Using sticks for balance, we stripped below the waist to stay dry and attempted the crossing one at a time. We threw the sandals back and forth across the river so that we could both use them (it took a serious throw to make it). The crossing ended in the shade, and the wet end of our walking sticks froze in the time it took us to dry off. That day was the coldest I have ever felt. When we re-read the guidebook later, we realized we missed the part that said, "The Wind River is too cold, too fast, and too deep to ford safely in early July."



## Only trespass if it comes with a cocktail

By Courtney Francis

During COVID, we floated the Methow River with our kids on inflatable kayaks. We misjudged where to pull out and ended up climbing the bluff hauling the kayaks, trespassing on someone's private property. The owner came out of his house - we were completely embarrassed and worried he would be upset at our intrusion - but he ended up being a retired psychotherapist who gave my husband a cocktail and my boys ginger beers while I took a cab to retrieve our car. Our conversation with him was the highlight of our Mazama trip that summer.

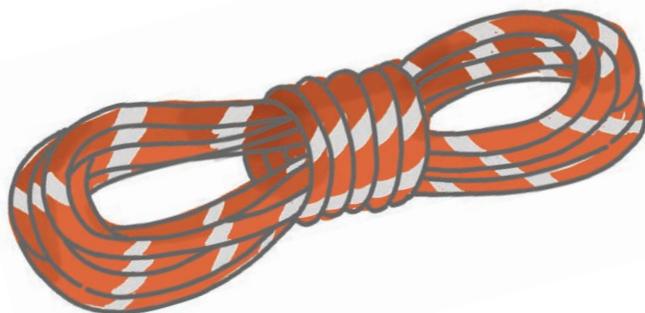




## Dry bags are meant to keep water out

By David Haggith

When I was in the Boy Scouts, one of the dads presented the importance of keeping your clothes and sleeping bag dry when packing in preparation for our upcoming backpacking trip. He educated the group on drybags and how to use them, and concluded the presentation by giving us all dry bags. A week later we embarked on our four-day trip. From the get-go, Joe, a fellow Boy Scout, was complaining about how heavy his backpack was. We all thought he was being dramatic and encouraged him to trudge on. After a full day of hiking, we got to the campground and started to unload bags and pitch tents. Joe pulled out his dry bag and inside - along with his clothes and sleeping bag - was a gallon-sized plastic milk container he had repurposed as an oversized water bottle, the entirety of which had spilled into his dry bag. The bag looked like what you'd receive when buying fish at a petstore: bulging and heavy. Joe opened it, pouring out all his soaked clothes and sleeping bag. Thank goodness the scoutmaster packed extras of everything. Joe didn't go cold, but he did learn to never pack water inside a dry bag again... or so we hope.



## If you're at the end of your rope, don't drop it in a cave

By Daryl Greaser

As a caver, I spend a lot of time in dark, damp, tight spaces. I love exploring new boundaries, so a few years ago I set out with my wife and friend to attempt the first "through trip" of an alpine cave. A connection passage was known to exist, but no one had ever done it. We reached the crux eight hours into our attempt: a body-width crack with a deep pool occupying all but the top few feet. Our plan was to stem horizontally above the water - with arms and legs out in a superman position - until we reached the other side. The others went first, crossing without difficulty. I went last, carrying our escape rope in a dry bag clipped to my harness. I thrashed through the crack, dragging the rope bag through the water behind me. Safely on the other side, I realized to my horror that we no longer had the rope - 100 feet of static line needed to exit the cliffside entrance safely. Despite the icy, 34-degree pool, I stemmed back over and dragged my leg through the water in hopes of hooking the rope bag. But it was gone, sunk in the now-turbid water. We faced borderline Type 3 fun getting out, but we lived. The rope remains at the bottom of the deep pool, unretrievable. ▲▲

# SUMMER BOOK SALE

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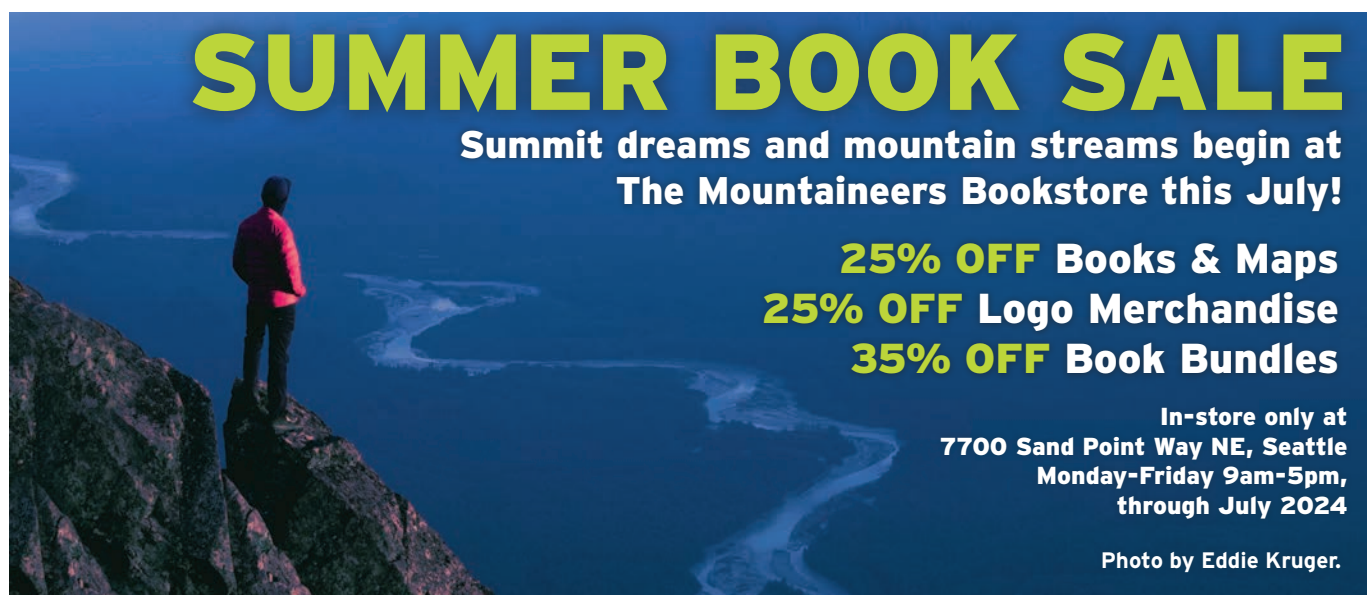
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Photo by Eddie Kruger.





# Preparing for a Lake Bagging Trip

By Courtenay Schurman, MS PN2

I love visiting alpine lakes in any season. Last summer, I waded in Olallie Lake's frigid waters and in the winter, I got to enjoy a snowy walk across its frozen surface with my daughter. Alpine lakes offer a refreshing respite during summer adventures, but they can be a trek to reach. Here are some tips and tricks on how to prepare for a lake bagging trip, so you can take the plunge with ease.

## Physical training needs

Getting to most alpine lakes, especially remote ones, will involve significant elevation gain. You'll need to practice gradually increasing your pack-carrying capacity the longer and more involved your trips will be. This means including cardiovascular and strength training that works the large muscles in your core, legs, and upper body.

Accessing lakes often means encountering uneven terrain. Prepare your legs and core with squats, step ups, planks, and deadlifts, so you have the leg drive to get over downed logs and boulders. If you do any bushwacking, expect the trail to be rocky and unforgiving. Incorporating balance and flexibility training will improve your overall stability and help prevent slips and falls as you navigate over and under downed branches.

## Training suggestions

If you've never plunged into an alpine lake, know that they are *cold*, even in the middle of summer. In anticipation, try swimming in a local lake not too far from home (like Lake Washington in Seattle) before venturing to the mountains. If you plan to swim across a lake, be aware of your physical limits and include swimming in your weekly training regimen. If you can't find a suitable exit, you may have to swim all the way back, which means double the distance.

To train, begin with shorter hikes and gradually add distance, elevation gain, and pack weight - not more than ten percent per week - to prepare for the lakes you'd like to visit.

## Anticipated difficulties

Unlike well-trodden paths to popular peaks, the routes to secluded lakes may not be well marked. Know how to use a map and compass. Practice orienteering in familiar surroundings before you have to rely on them in the wild.



Courtenay wading through the cold waters of Rachel Lake.  
Photo by Brooke Schurman.

Update your route-finding skills if you anticipate GPS won't work wherever you're headed.

Terrain on the way to lakes can vary from rocky paths to gravel slopes to muddy, rush-filled edges. Bring a pair of lake shoes to protect your feet from murky mud, brambles, and unseen snags, so you don't injure your feet getting in and out of the water.

While your goal may be to swim in cool, sun-dappled, emerald-green water on a hot day, expect rapid change in weather, especially in the mountains. Bring appropriate, warm clothing and gear so that you don't experience hypothermia if the weather catches you off guard.

Finally, remember that lakes are sources of habitat and water for wildlife. You are a visitor in their home. Research what wildlife you might encounter so you can stay alert and prepared.

With the proper preparation, you can make lake bagging a memorable and rewarding experience. Think ahead of what your end goal will be - distance, elevation gain, time in the water - and build your training program accordingly. Then, get out and take a swim! ▲▲

*Courtenay Schurman is an NSCA-CSCS certified personal trainer, Precision Nutrition Level 2 Certified Nutrition Supercoach, and co-owner of Body Results and Thrive Clues. She specializes in holistic coaching for outdoor athletes. For more how-to exercises or health and wellness tips, visit her websites at [www.bodyresults.com](http://www.bodyresults.com) and [thriveclues.com](http://thriveclues.com) or send a question to [court@bodyresults.com](mailto:court@bodyresults.com).*



# A Life Well Lived And I'm Not Done Yet!

By Craig Romano, Mountaineers Books Guidebook Author



Craig mid-run at the Cuyamaca 100K. All photos courtesy of Craig Romano.

I took my final dose of prednisone last March after being on the corticosteroid for three years. Excited and relieved, I also felt apprehensive. Would my symptoms return? Two months later and so far, so good. My condition is in remission.

I was diagnosed with Polymyalgia Rheumatica (PMR), an autoimmune disorder, in February 2021. My symptoms began in spring 2020, shortly after the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, and grew progressively worse. By December, I was in serious discomfort with limited range of motion. I had difficulty turning my neck, bending over, and lifting my legs. My sleep suffered because of the pain in my arms and shoulders. At 58 years old, life as I previously knew it was over. Thinking that my best days were through made me depressed.

Within days of starting prednisone, the pain subsided and my range of motion returned. I felt reborn, and realized how blessed I'd been the past six decades to do the things I loved. Now, I no longer take my health and physical fitness for granted. I reflect daily on how grateful I am for my experiences: the trails I've hiked, the races I've run, the roadways I've biked, the parks I've visited, and the countries I've traveled to. Every day is another chance to live to my fullest.

## Making the most of time

Turning 60 during the pandemic and acquiring an autoimmune disorder woke me to the reality that time is fleeting, and there is still much I want to do. I don't know when it's all going to

end, so I've put my life into hyper drive. With renewed vigor, I'm letting emotional burdens go, loosening the workload, and focusing on what is really important to me: spending time with family, traveling for enrichment and enlightenment, and seeing how far I can still push my body. My best days may still be ahead of me.

I've returned to running - marathons and ultras - making it a point to run 26.2 miles in every state and go for new distances. For my 62nd birthday, I ran my first 100K, a challenging run in the mountains of Southern California. I'm thinking about doing my first 100-miler next and bicycling cross-country again, something I haven't done since I was 20. This time, I will do it with my son.

Whether I'm successful at these goals is unimportant. The passion and excitement I embrace engaging in these feats is what counts. I'm trying not to lament over what I don't have, what I've lost, or what I'm not capable of doing. I'm grateful I can still dream big in my 60s, and extend this perspective to how I see the world. Yes, there's so much suffering, despair, and environmental destruction. But I must be positive and focus on what I can change, not beat myself up over the things I can't.

## Doing what we can

On a recent trip to the Low Country of South Carolina and Georgia, I had the opportunity to hike and kayak through





Craig's wife and son at Congaree National Park.

Congaree National Park. This amazing place protects the largest tract of old-growth bottomland forest left in America. I paddled through groves of monstrous water tupelos and century-old bald cypresses. I hiked among towering loblolly pines and chestnut oaks – trees that rival in height and girth the giants growing in ancient Pacific Northwest forests. I was in awe that such a forest exists in the East.

Two hundred years ago, these giant hardwoods, pines, and cypresses could be found on over 30 million acres across the Southeast. Today, only about 40 percent of this magnificent ecosystem exists and of that, less than 0.5 percent is old growth. The largest tract is protected within the small 26,700-acre Congaree National Park. We almost lost Congaree in the 1970s, but thanks to the hard work of Harry Hampton, a local newspaperman, and a growing conservation movement, this cathedral forest was saved.

Sauntering through the park, I could have been enraged that humans wreak so much destruction on our planet. But instead, I felt grateful for the luminaries who protected this sacred place, and blessed to experience this forest. Going forward, I'll take the lessons learned at Congaree to guide me. I can't change the past, but I have power in the future. There are other places we need to preserve and restore.

## What we leave behind

If you've been reading Trail Talk these past ten years, you know I continuously preached self-reflection, self-actualization, and self-fulfillment through an active lifestyle and connection with the natural world. I advocated for us to be good stewards of our natural lands and to work toward expanding our trails, preserves, and parks for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. I passionately celebrated the beauty and importance of our ecological heritage beyond our crown jewel parks and their superlative beauty. There is beauty and richness, too, in the swamps of the Southeast, the prairies of the Midwest, and the remaining green pockets of our major metropolises.

This article marks the end of my Trail Talk column. It's time to allow new voices to be heard. Of course, I invite you to follow



Craig at the finish line of the Cuyamaca 100K.

my writings through my books, blog posts, and social media. I thank you all for your support and feedback, and hope that I've inspired you to push yourself farther and explore new places.

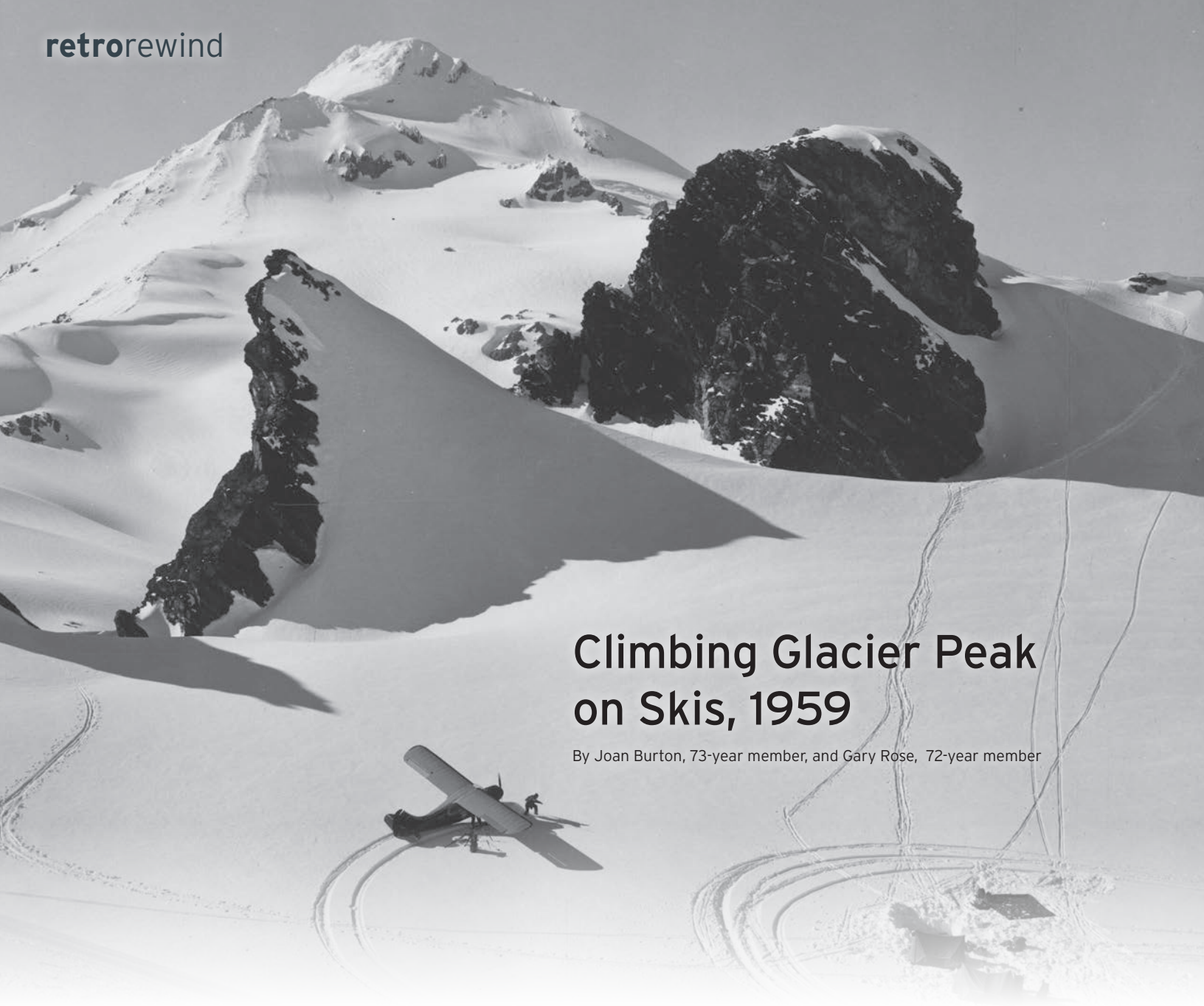
Ten years ago, I started this column with the story of my near-death experience on the summit of California's Mount Shasta. At 32, prepared to be struck by lightning, my life flashed before me. But absent were thoughts of misgivings. I was content, realizing I was living my life exactly how I wanted to live it: with adventure, like every day was my last. On what I thought would be my last day, my life was validated. I had no regrets.

I don't know how I survived that storm or how I got off the mountain. All I know is that it wasn't my time to go. That event became a major turning point in my life, affirming my belief in my creator and confirming that I was living my life's purpose. I am incredibly grateful for the past 62 years and for each and every day I am able to hike, run, and experience the natural world with all of its splendors.

As I age, I question what my legacy will be. Instead of taking experiences with me, I wonder what I will leave behind. When I was young, I obsessed over trying to do it all. Now, I simply hope to get the most out of what I do. My journey continues. And I thank you for reading along. ▲▲

*Craig Romano is an award-winning guidebook author who has written more than 25 books, including Backpacking Washington, Day Hiking Columbia River Gorge 2nd edition, and eight titles in the Urban Trails series (Mountaineers Books). Purchase his titles in our Seattle Program Center Bookstore, online at [mountaineers.org/books](http://mountaineers.org/books) or everywhere books are sold, and follow Craig on his website, [craigromano.com](http://craigromano.com).*





## Climbing Glacier Peak on Skis, 1959

By Joan Burton, 73-year member, and Gary Rose, 72-year member

Plane and camp beneath Glacier Peak, UW 42254. All photos courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections.

In May of 1959, a party of ten Mountaineers were flown one at a time from Darrington Airstrip to a 7,800-foot camp on Glacier Peak. Local photographer Ira Spring organized and led the party of six men and three women to join the expedition, one of his many enterprising invitations to bring people together through photography and adventure. The trip took these Mountaineers six unforgettable days.

Piloted by Port Angeles pilot Bill Fairchild, the plane was a two-place Aronca Champ, equipped with wheels and retractable skis - an unusual feature for the time - that made it capable of landing and taking off on hard ground as well as snow. To assuage the party's skepticism at this novel mode of travel, Ira volunteered for the first flight. It took the pilot ten hours to get everyone to the glacier. Each passenger was tasked with reloading the plane with gear and more fuel.

Gary Rose was one of the ten who were flown from Darrington Airport to the Honeycomb Glacier. Gary had been on several trips to the mountains with Ira, so he was pleased when Ira asked him to go on a new expedition. Although he had climbed Glacier twice, he had never flown in an airplane with skis to land on a glacier. The prospect was an exciting one.

Other party members included Keith Gunnar, another talented photographer, Stella Degenhardt, widow of a former Mountaineers President and a cheerful skier and climber regardless of conditions, and John and Irene Muelemans, who became engaged on the trip and would later gain recognition for their long-distance backpacking, climbing, and skiing trips.

### Exploring Glacier Peak

Once on Honeycomb Glacier, the picture taking began. With clear weather, the climbers posed for Ira for two days. Shots included cooking around camp, setting up sleep equipment, and exploring the surrounding terrain. The group looked like





Female skier jumping off ledge, UW42256.

they had flown to the moon, surrounded by never-ending peaks of white.

On the third day, a blue-sky weather window allowed the group to embark on their climb. They got an early start for the summit. Equipped with skis, climbing skins, ice axes, crampons, and climbing ropes, the group slogged upward for seven hours. Their mountaineering skis were hickory wood and the skins were mohair military surplus.

The ascent itself was uneventful, smooth and sunny. They reached the summit around noon and enjoyed wonderful views in all directions. From Puget Sound to Lake Wenatchee and up to the Canadian border and down to Mt. Adams, the sweeping vistas extended. In the distance below, grey clouds could be seen developing. A front was coming in from the west.

During the 3,000-foot descent to camp, the skiers were greeted with untracked powder snow. A few took some headers and face plants on the way down, but the fresh powder was forgiving. They felt they were floating down the long slope.

## Singing, skiing, and soaking

The next day, Ira and Keith took advantage of the last favorable lighting to get a few more shots. Gary and Dave - skiing, backpacking, and climbing friends - were tasked with tackling Tiger Tower, a rock pinnacle near camp. Their route, while harrowing at times, made for grandiose images of the rugged rock outcrop with Glacier Peak looming in the background at 10,436 feet.

That night, the ten party members crowded into one four-person tent for dinner and singing. One of the participants, Stella Degenhardt, loved to sing, and led the climber's chorus. Tent seams were strained as party members shared in joy and laughter.

The next morning, the weather front finally reached camp. The crew packed up and left in deteriorating weather, cloudy and cool. They managed to lift their enormous packs and start downward on their skis. As they reached the valley floor, the snowbanks thinned. Hours went by and it began to rain.



Climbing Glacier Peak. Photo by Gary Rose.

Traveling through the snowbanks and heavy brush was exhausting and slow going on skis. When the group reached creeks and streams, they found no easy way across and had to either climb upward through slide alder or seek a fallen log to cross creeks.

There was no trail, so the group found their way by relying on USGS maps and compass alone. They descended the

Whitechuck Glacier and followed the Whitechuck River. On the second day of their exit, they reached Kennedy Hot Springs, a small wooden tub next to the river filled with warm, muddy water.

With only enough room for four people at a time, everyone took turns in the hot springs. The women claimed the first turn to soak and only yielded to the men when



Skiing down Honeycomb Glacier, UW42255.

they were bombarded with snowballs. When the soaking was over, the group was desperate for clean and dry clothes, which they didn't have. What's worse, they discovered that among all party members, they only had one towel for the party. Dirty t-shirts had to make do.

The group camped one final night, leaving the next morning to ski out the last six miles to the waiting cars. Their superb Glacier Peak ski expedition was over.

## Preserved in history

Such a trip is not possible today. Not only is Glacier Peak now in Wilderness prohibitive of motorized plane travel, but the glaciers have receded and, in some areas, disappeared. Rockslides have replaced the long expanses of new snow the skiers once enjoyed, and Kennedy Hot Springs has been buried by a land slide.

These ten Mountaineers were lucky to have seen what they did: expansive glacial landscapes, aerial views of Glacier's wilderness, soothing riverside hot springs. Thanks to Ira's photos, we can imagine what it must have been like to see it all, too. ▲▲



# Virtual Education Center and Calendar

Check out our Virtual Education Center and Calendar, your home base for accessing all of our great virtual learning tools. Find activities, events, and classes held online, and browse our educational resources for skills and more.



Conservation & Advocacy



Fitness & Performance



Gear Tips



Leadership Skills



Preparedness & Planning



Technical Skills

## How to Get Involved

### Step 1: Visit [mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center](https://mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center)

This is your first stop to find everything you need for outdoor education and exploration.

### Step 2: Choose what you want to learn

There's so much to explore! With a wide range of topics - from leadership tips to how to coil a rope - there's something for everyone. We also have a special 'Just for Fun' section if you need a laugh.

### Step 3: Decide what kind of learning experience you want to have

Would you prefer to read a blog or complete an online course? What about attending a live webinar with an open discussion? We offer multiple educational formats to choose from so that everyone can find what works for them.

18

Online Courses

## What You'll Find

200+

Educational Blogs

25

Virtual Events & Activities



## How to Sign Up for Activities

### Step 1

Visit our website

[www.mountaineers.org](http://www.mountaineers.org)  
Click on the big green 'Find Activities' button, or hover over the 'Activities' tab and choose 'Find Activities.'

### Step 2

Filter your activity search

Define your search using the filter options in the green column on the left. To view activities by location, choose 'Map' in the upper right.

### Step 3

Select an activity & register

Click on the activity of your interest to learn more. If you like what you see, select the orange 'Register' button. You'll be added to the trip roster and receive a confirmation email.

*Note: Activities **require registration** unless otherwise noted. You will also need a current waiver on file with The Mountaineers to participate.*

## How to Sign Up for Events

### Step 1

Visit our website

[www.mountaineers.org](http://www.mountaineers.org)  
Click on the 'Upcoming Events' button on the left of the main page, or click 'More' and choose the 'Events' tab.

### Step 2

Browse for local events

Scroll down to view our most popular events, or choose a branch or program center calendar for more events in your area. Browse through your options, and click on an event to learn more.

### Step 3

Select an event & register

Many events are free but require you to RSVP via the orange RSVP button. Events that require tickets will have a link for online ticket purchases.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What if I'm not a member?** Many of our activities - especially day hikes and urban adventures - are open to the general public. You simply need to sign up for a guest membership at [www.mountaineers.org/join](http://www.mountaineers.org/join). Guests can participate in two activities for free before joining.

**What are some easy ways to get started?** Sign up for an activity without prerequisites. These include day hikes, backpacking trips, stewardship activities, photography outings, and occasional sailing opportunities! Also, consider taking a basic or introductory course like Basic Snowshoeing, Introduction to Rock Climbing, Navigation, and much, much more! Visit [www.mountaineers.org/courses](http://www.mountaineers.org/courses) to see what's currently available.

**How are events and activities different?** Activities are primarily daylong outings that require participants to use skills in an outdoor setting. Examples include hikes, naturalist walks, or snowshoeing - in short, you are outside doing something. Events are open to the community, and are primarily opportunities to see presentations and socialize. Examples include summer picnics, branch banquets, and speaker series like BeWild, Walking the Wild, and the Adventure Speaker Series.

**What if I don't meet the prerequisites for an activity?** Some of our technical activities, like climbing and kayaking, have prerequisite skill requirements. If you want to learn the prerequisite skills, we encourage you to take one of our courses. If you already have the prerequisite skills, you might qualify for equivalency. Email [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org) and we will help you apply for equivalency so you can participate at the appropriate skill level.

**Why do some activities say 'Leader Permission Required'?** All of our Mountaineers activities are led by volunteers. To ensure everyone on a trip has a set of specific skills, some volunteers require you to contact them in advance to participate. Before signing up for a trip that requires leader permission, please contact the leader by clicking on their name in the course/activity listing and send them an email. You can always email our Member Services team with questions at [info@mountaineers.org](mailto:info@mountaineers.org).

**What if the activity is full?** Sign up for the waitlist! Yes, it works. We have roughly a 10-20% drop-out rate in courses and activities, so spots often become available.



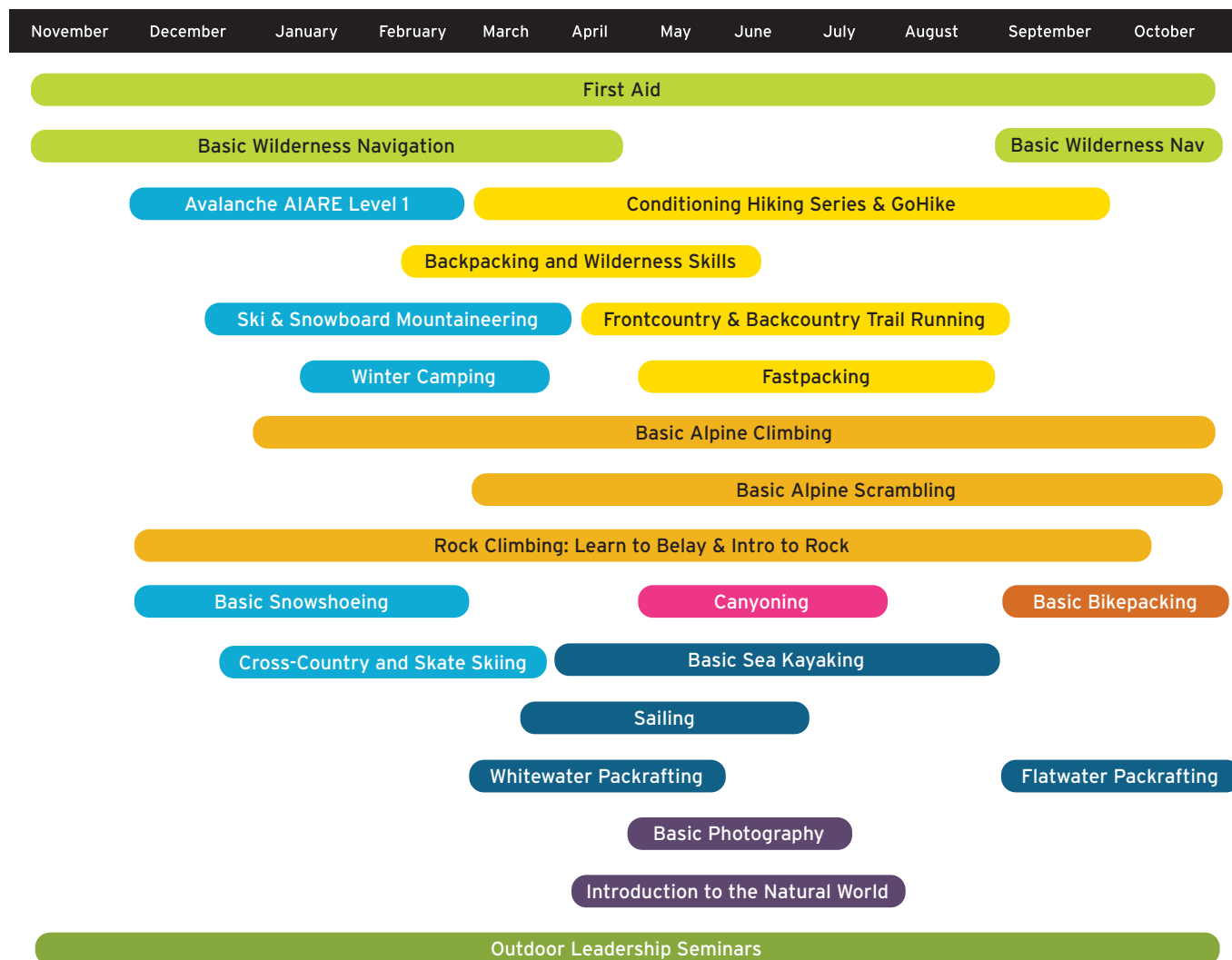


## Introductory Course Overview

Updated May 2024

The Mountaineers is a volunteer-led community built around sharing knowledge and skills to safely recreate outdoors. We offer courses every season and some all year round. The same course may be offered by multiple branches, and you can take a course with any branch. Exploring our clinics and seminars is also a great way to refine or expand your existing skills. Practice skills taught in our courses, learn about new techniques or gear, and explore new possibilities within our organization, like becoming an activity leader. Our clinics and seminars are often open to both our membership and the general public.

To learn when our courses are coming, take a look at our course calendar:



Please visit [www.mountaineers.org](http://www.mountaineers.org) to see current course listings and to sign up.

Course selection varies by branch. Registration usually opens 1-3 months prior to the start of the course.



Open to Mountaineers members and the general public, our lodges provide visitors with unparalleled access to skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and more. The Mountaineers is also home to the Kitsap Forest Theater, a historic outdoor theater showcasing two musical productions a year which are open to the public and a family favorite.

**LODGE WEBPAGES** Information about schedules, availability, meals, group rentals, and special events can all be found on

the lodge webpages. You can also book your stay online. To access our lodge webpages, visit the direct links listed below or go to [mountaineers.org](https://mountaineers.org), click on 'More' in the top menu, and then click on 'Locations & Lodges' in the dropdown menu.

**VOLUNTEER** Our lodges and the Kitsap Forest Theater are run by dedicated volunteers, and they can use your help! Visit their webpages to learn how you can contribute to the teams that keep our outdoor centers running.



Baker Lodge



Stevens Lodge



Meany Lodge

## Baker Lodge

[mountaineers.org/bakerlodge](https://mountaineers.org/bakerlodge)

Mt. Baker Lodge, above Picture Lake and near Artist's Point in the North Cascades, is a gorgeous place for a get-away. The lodge is located within walking distance of the Mt. Baker ski area as well as numerous hiking trails.

Friends of Baker Lodge are invited to the celebration of Bill Woodcock's life on Saturday, July 20, 2024 from 11am-5pm at the lodge. Overnight stay is available. Bill was a vital part of the Baker community; a dedicated host and trainer for many years who loved sharing his knowledge and life experiences with others.

## Stevens Lodge

[mountaineers.org/stevenslodge](https://mountaineers.org/stevenslodge)

The Stevens lodge will not be open in August and September due to renovation work. We will be scheduling work parties throughout the season to improve the lodge - please check our webpage and sign up to help! During winters, Stevens Lodge is open Wednesday to Sunday when the ski area is open.

## Meany Lodge

[mountaineers.org/meanylodge](https://mountaineers.org/meanylodge)

Meany Lodge is The Mountaineers oldest winter sports resort, located approximately 60 miles east from Seattle off I-90 near Stampede Pass and surrounded by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Meany Lodge provides a warm family environment for all - perfect for winter and summer adventures alike. During the ski season, the lodge operates a rope-tow on our ski hill for ski lessons, cross-country skiing, and snowshoe excursions. Join us in March for our annual Patrol Race.



## Kitsap Forest Theater

[foresttheater.com](https://foresttheater.com)

We're thrilled to set the stage for another enchanting season in 2024! Prepare to be swept away by the boundless imagination and storytelling of two lively and funny musicals - Roald Dahl's *Matilda, the Musical* and *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella* (Broadway version). These mesmerizing, family-friendly shows promise to light up hearts of all ages, and what better way to experience them than under the verdant canopy of the Kitsap Forest Theater?

Don't miss a single note! Secure your spot today with our exclusive two-show package. This is not just another theater outing; it's a tradition, an enchanted experience that brings families and friends together year after year. Make sure you're part of the magic! Let's make this season a celebration of imagination and wonder like no other.

**Volunteer opportunities:** property upkeep, cooking, helping with sets, costumes, ushering/parking during shows. We offer an Adventure Camp for grades K-4 and a Theater Camp for grades 5-8.



The Mountaineers is home to seven branches, each offering a number of courses and seminars. Our branches also host a variety of events like picnics, film screenings, and guest speakers. Regardless of which branch you join, you can sign up for offerings with any branch. Learn more at [mountaineers.org/locations-lodges](http://mountaineers.org/locations-lodges).



## BELLINGHAM

**Chair:** Nathan Andrus, [nathan.andrus@gmail.com](mailto:nathan.andrus@gmail.com)  
**Website:** [mountaineers.org/bellingham](http://mountaineers.org/bellingham); [bellinghammountaineers.com](http://bellinghammountaineers.com)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, navigation, climbing, first aid, hiking, scrambling, stewardship and conservation.

You'll find the Bellingham Branch tucked alongside the upper craggy expanse of the North Cascades. We enjoy easy access to the peaks that drain into the Nooksack and Skagit River basins. Our close-knit community offers climbing courses, hiking trips, and backcountry adventures in a diverse, inclusive, and supportive environment. We're also home to one of the most popular Mountaineers getaway destinations, Mt. Baker Lodge.

**Branch Council meetings** are on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## EVERETT

**Chair:** Nick Mayo, [nicholas.e.mayo@gmail.com](mailto:nicholas.e.mayo@gmail.com)  
**Website:** [mountaineers.org/everett](http://mountaineers.org/everett)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, backcountry skiing, climbing, cross-country skiing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and stewardship.

Founded in 1911, the Everett Branch offers several programs. As a smaller branch, we value companionship and are excited to restart in-person events including our Salmon Bake, Gear Grab & Potluck, Annual Awards Banquet, and more. Check our branch calendar for details. Our branch is also known for our unique Lookout and Trail Maintenance Committee, which restored the Mt. Pilchuck Lookout and continues to maintain the historic Three Fingers Lookout.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and are open to all. We host a combination of hybrid and fully remote meetings depending on the month. As we ramp up our in-person events and programs, we are looking for talented and passionate volunteers to make an impact. Please reach out to Nick Mayo (email above) for details.

## KITSAP

**Chair:** Melissa White, [melissa.white@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.white@gmail.com)  
**Website:** [mountaineers.org/kitsap](http://mountaineers.org/kitsap)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** climbing, exploring nature, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and youth & family.

The Kitsap Branch draws members from throughout western Puget Sound, from Gig Harbor to the Olympic Peninsula, including Pierce, Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam counties. Join us at our program center, conveniently located in Bremerton.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held in January, April, July, and October. Our annual branch celebration is in December, please join us!

## SEATTLE

**Chair:** Craig Kartes, [c.kartes@outlook.com](mailto:c.kartes@outlook.com)  
**Website:** [mountaineers.org/seattle](http://mountaineers.org/seattle)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, backcountry skiing, bikepacking canyoning, climbing, first aid, folk dancing, hiking & backpacking, naturalists, navigation, outdoor leadership, night sky, packrafting, photography, retired rovers, sailing, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, stewardship, and urban walking.

The Seattle Branch began as the sole club location in 1906 when The Mountaineers was founded. Our Meet The Mountaineers open houses are held about once a month and are a great way for new and prospective members to learn about our many offerings. Our branch is also home to the Seattle Program Center, which features a bookstore, indoor and outdoor climbing walls, event spaces, and more.

**Branch Council meetings** are held every other month to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. We're growing rapidly and actively seeking people to support our community. Visit our branch calendar for details and reach out to the branch chair if you are interested in volunteering.

## FOOTHILLS (I-90/I-405 CORRIDORS)

**Chair:** Brad Peacock, [bmpeacock@aol.com](mailto:bmpeacock@aol.com)  
**Website:** [mountaineers.org/foothills](http://mountaineers.org/foothills)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** AIARE avalanche safety, backcountry and downhill skiing, climbing, conservation and stewardship, cross-country skiing, first aid, GoHike, hiking & backpacking, navigation, scrambling, snowshoeing, urban walking, and trail running.

The Foothills Branch is the club's newest branch, founded in 2004 and encompassing the eastside communities along the I-90 and I-405 corridors. In addition to our educational and activity programs, we host film screenings, guest speakers, and stewardship events with the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, Shadow Lake Nature Preserve, WTA, and other

conservation-minded partners. We are also excited to be a close partner with Meany Lodge!

Our branch is growing rapidly, and we are actively seeking people to support our community - no prior experience required. We invite you to get involved in branch leadership and committees to get our communities outside. Contact the branch chair if you might be interested.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held every other month (except summer) to discuss new and ongoing initiatives. All branch members are welcome! Visit our branch calendar for details.

## TACOMA

**Chair:** Curtis Stock  
[curtis@tacomamountaineers.org](mailto:curtis@tacomamountaineers.org)  
**Website:** [mountaineers.org/tacoma](http://mountaineers.org/tacoma)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, climbing, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, photography, sailing, scrambling, sea kayaking, snowshoeing, and youth & family.

The second largest of all seven branches, the Tacoma branch maintains its own program center in the Old Town neighborhood of Tacoma, as well as the Irish Cabin property located near Mt. Rainier. A great way get involved is our Meet the Tacoma Mountaineers event, consisting of a meet-and-greet and a 90-minute interactive presentation giving you opportunities to learn about our history, our website, and how you can get involved.

**Branch Council meetings** are held every six weeks to discuss new and ongoing initiatives and general branch business. Visit our branch calendar for details.

## OLYMPIA

**Chair:** Mandy Maycumber, [manda\\_jo@live.com](mailto:manda_jo@live.com)  
**Website:** [mountaineers.org/Olympia](http://mountaineers.org/Olympia)

**COURSES & ACTIVITIES:** avalanche safety, backcountry skiing, climbing, cross-country skiing, exploring nature, first aid, hiking & backpacking, navigation, outdoor leadership, scrambling, sea kayaking, stewardship, snowshoeing, wilderness skills, and youth & family. Our branch is known for its robust stewardship program.

**Our Adventure Speaker Series** will return in November for another great season.

**Branch Council Meetings** are held at 6pm on the second Tuesday of the month, alternating in-person and Zoom, though Zoom is always available. Members are encouraged to attend. Contact Mandy Maycumber.



# Get Involved With Your Branch

**Visit Your Branch Page** Go to mountaineers.org and click on 'More' in the top menu; then click 'Locations & Lodges' and select your branch from the dropdown options. On your branch home page, you'll find branch news, upcoming events, contact info, and more. You can also access your branch page using the direct links listed in the branch summaries.

**Browse Branch Courses & Activities** To see what's available, visit mountaineers.org and click the big green 'Find Courses' button or 'Find Activities' button. You can then narrow your search by branch using the filter options in the green column on the left. Remember, you can sign up for courses and activities offered by any branch.

**Branch Events** With picnics, open houses, banquets, guest speakers, and more, our branches host an array of events for you to get involved. To check out what's next, visit mountaineers.org/events. From this page, you can select your branch calendar.

**Branch eNewsletters** Branch eNewsletters are a great way to stay up to date. To opt into these emails, visit mountaineers.org/profile. Login, then scroll down and make sure the box next to 'Branch Communications' is checked.\*

**Volunteer** Our branches draw on people with a range of skills and interests to power their programs. Instructors, event planners, admin help, and more are all needed. Volunteering is a great way to plug into our community. Reach out to your branch chair to get started.

*\*The Seattle Branch doesn't have a branch-wide eNewsletter, but several activity committees publish eNewsletters, including climbing, navigation, photography, and naturalists, and many activities have a Facebook presence. To learn more, contact the committee chairperson. To find a committee, input the committee name into our search bar at the top of our website.*

## membershipmatters

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# Moon Snails

By Bayley Stejer, Communications Associate

A Moon snail. All photos by Bayley Stejer.

Scientists have only explored five percent of the ocean, estimating that 91 percent of marine species are still unidentified. Naturally, we wonder about the unknown creatures lurking in the deep. But don't let curiosity kill the... snail. Right in our own backyard are the waters of the Pacific Northwest, homing a diverse ecosystem of marine species. Among them lives a glorious, potentially terrifying, viscous, and only slightly cannibalistic species: the moon snail.

## What are moon snails?

Moon snails, part of the Naticidae family, earned their name from the shape of their shell opening - a half-moon. Their shells are spherical, ranging from the size of a blueberry to a baseball. While shell colors vary by species, they typically include an assortment of purples, creams, blues, greys, tans, and pinks - making each shell artistic and unique.

Mainly preying on other mollusks like clams and mussels, moon snails are predatory marine gastropods (a class of snails and slugs) with cannibalistic tendencies, occasionally exercising the right to consume their own kind (hungry times call for cutthroat measures). Despite this troubling truth, moon snails are still subjectively adorable.

## A moon snail's lunch

When it's feeding time, a muscular but gooey foot extends from the shell. The foot has critical functions, including navigating the ocean floor, digging into the sand, and engulfing prey. To eat, the foot grasps its food - typically a fellow mollusk - as its radula (a toothed tongue) drills into the prey's shell. The drilling is a tedious and time-consuming process, taking four days on average. Once the hole is complete, the moon snail will release hydrochloric acid and other enzymes to liquify the meat inside. Then, the moon snail enjoys its delicious and refreshing mollusk smoothie.



A partial moon snail collar found at Carkeek Beach.

## New moons

In winter months, moon snails move into deep water, burying themselves under the sea floor to avoid crashing waves. In spring and summer, they return to the intertidal zone for breeding season, laying hundreds of thousands of eggs.

Before laying her eggs, a female moon snail sinks to the ocean floor to create the beginnings of her sand collar. Using her large foot, she grabs grains of sand to cover her entire shell and secretes mucous, cementing the sand in one connected layer. Following this, she lays thousands of eggs, using the cilia on her foot to distribute the eggs between herself and the sand layer. To complete the collar, she creates another layer of sand and mucous, sealing the eggs and detaching the collar from her shell. Mother moon snail moves on to continue hunting, knowing her eggs are protected within the collar. After only a couple of weeks, the eggs hatch, the sand collar disintegrates, and another generation of cute but killer moon snails is born.

Legend has it that moon snail shells are often found after a full moon. Scientists agree, explaining that higher tides from a full moon will carry seashells to shore. On your next walk along the Salish Sea, keep your eyes peeled for these colorful shells. Whether it's your first or hundredth sighting, it's safe to say you'll be over the moon. ▲▲



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**Annual Gala**  
Adventure with Purpose

**650,000 THANK YOUS**

On April 6, 2024 The Mountaineers community gathered in person and virtually to celebrate our efforts to transform lives and protect the outdoor experience. Thanks to you, we raised more than **\$650,000**, elevating the way we **LEAD** innovation in outdoor education, **ENGAGE** a vibrant community of outdoor enthusiasts, and **ADVOCATE** on behalf of the natural world.

**Thank you for making a difference for our people, places, publishing, and programs.**

For the full Gala recap, pictures, and video recording, visit:  
[mountaineers.org/2024gala](https://mountaineers.org/2024gala)

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