

Mountaineer

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

in this issue:

Building an Inclusive Future for
Menstruators Outdoors

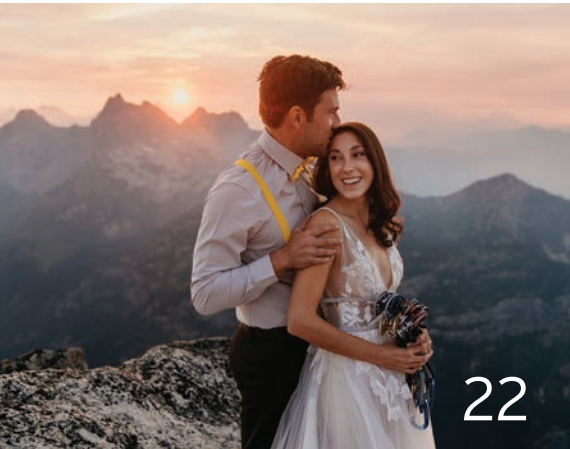
Wedding Bells at Liberty Bell

Mentorship, Menopause, and Mountaintops



Spring 2025 | Volume 119 | Number 2

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



On the cover: Angie Marie, Amanda Standley, Hannah Prather, and Katie Crafts celebrating at the summit of Mt. Adams. Photo courtesy of Angie Marie.

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Photo by Rick Meade.

I recently taught an AIARE 1 course with The Mountaineers at Baker Lodge. One of the topics I always try to cover with my field group is human factors such as “heuristics.” Heuristics are shortcuts our brain utilizes to help us assess risk in day-to-day life, including in the backcountry.

Sometimes these shortcuts are highly useful. For example, a common heuristic in the backcountry is the sense of alert we feel on snow or loose rock that signifies the possibility of an

objective hazard, like rockfall or a wind slab avalanche. Other times, these mental shortcuts can be dangerous, like when participants fall subject to the “expert halo” and defer to the most experienced person in the group, even when that person might be overlooking an important observation.

One of the ways I encourage students to counteract the potentially dangerous impacts of heuristics is by creating environments where all participants feel empowered to voice themselves – or, in other words, by respecting all voices. When participants feel like their voice and experience are valued, the group can make better collective decisions and lower their risk profile.

Listening to and valuing all voices is an important part of risk management. It’s also an important part of building a welcoming and inclusive Mountaineers culture that prioritizes safe experiences for our community. Recently, programs across the country that strive to create inclusive spaces have been politicized and challenged. In response, many members have asked me if we are going to modify or abandon our commitment to equity and inclusion in the face of these changes.

The quick answer is no. Our vision to become a more welcoming and inclusive organization is rooted in our core values – notably, community. We provide opportunities for all because every member of our community should have access to transformative experiences outdoors. And when we facilitate transformative outdoor experiences where people feel emotionally safe, heard, and respected, we make better decisions and quite literally reduce risk. As an avalanche educator, reducing risk is one of my primary learning outcomes, and reducing risk by respecting all voices is just as important as learning snow science or rescue skills.

One of the truly unique and amazing things about our community is how we come together to share our love of the outdoors and connect with people from all walks of life. Striving for this belonging is not political; it’s simply how we support one another: by experiencing the natural world in a way that brings people together. My hope is that – during a time of increased divisiveness – The Mountaineers can continue to be a place where people find unity and belonging.

Tom Vogl

Tom Vogl
The Mountaineers CEO



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

EDITOR

Skye Michel

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Bayley Stejer

PROOF READERS

Kate Regan

Tatiana Sreenivasan

DESIGNER

Sarah Kulfan, Beans n' Rice

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Tom Vogl

EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER

Tom Helleberg

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Bri Vanderlinden

PUBLICIST

Kate Jay

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A golden hour view from the top of the canyon. Photo by Skye Michel.



Skye Michel
skyem@mountaineers.org
Photo by Karen Grubb.

The canyon behind my childhood home is one of my favorite places. I've witnessed this canyon through various phases of color, temperature, time - when its spring green grasses glow like a ripe lime, when the skies above its undulating hills are brushed with the beginning of a summer sunrise, when rare winter rain turns its dry soil into inviting mud puddles. I've shared moments with this canyon during all its seasons, and this canyon has shared moments with me

during all of mine - through stages of hope when life feels full of possibility, through stages of grief as I learn how to cope with loss, through stages of existential anguish when contemplating the universe atop a nearby hill seems more important than doing my homework. When I think about who I am... I think of this canyon.

The unconditional sense of familiarity and welcome that the natural world provides has been particularly front of mind this past season. I recently experienced a health scare that involved a bit of sepsis and a birthday celebration in the ER. After being discharged, I took a trip home and paid my friend the canyon a visit. I found comfort in the familiar: the bending oak trees that hugged the road, the mauve fog that weaved between the hills. I also delighted in new observations: a refurbished barbed-wire fence, yellow lichen on a rock, a clump of trees growing in the shape of a fish. After such a confronting period of personal change, visiting the canyon felt like an invitation back to myself.

Places are always there for you. They change (sometimes egregiously so) but no matter how different they are from

when you last visited, and no matter how much you've changed in turn, they're always waiting in welcome for your return.

The stories in this edition celebrate the loyal companionship of the natural world through our various life seasons. In "Building an Inclusive Future for Menstruators Outdoors," Angie Marie offers helpful tips on menstrual management in the backcountry and encourages us that the natural world can still be a place of joy no matter our inner season. In "Wedding Bells at Liberty Bell," Skye Stoury and Garrett Arnold inspire us with the role the natural world plays in enhancing our relationships with the places and people we love. And in "Mindful Mountaineers," Lori Heath and Liz McNett Crowl invite us to understand the natural world as a participant (rather than a destination) in our outdoor trips to improve our experiences and wellbeing.

Our regular columns explore this theme as well. In Outside Insights, Mountaineers leaders share how they navigate and overcome a changing relationship with outdoor recreation amid physical, menopausal changes that alter their performance and sense of community. In Global Adventures, Amy Carlsen visits Finland's natural world during a season of inner unrest, and experiences a welcoming change of pace that she carries with her back home. And in Conservation Currents, Conor Marshall celebrates a big advocacy win that will allow our favorite natural places to continue being accessible areas where transformative memories are made.

Regardless of which inner season you're experiencing this spring, I hope these stories inspire you to embrace the natural world as a companion in life's journey, ready to welcome you - whoever and however you are.

Skye Michel



In our fall 2024 edition, scrambling instructor Glory Dole reflected on a frightening near-miss and shared a series of self-made steps called “talking in balance” (inspired by the scrambling technique “walking in balance”) that can help you stay safe by recognizing and vocalizing when you’re scared. One reader resonated with Glory’s experiences, sharing,

“I love this. Fear of others, and of being a burden on them, can be a real barrier for me personally. Thank you Glory for sharing.”

- Kelly Frievalt, 3-year member



In our fall 2024 edition, 20-year member and Super Volunteer Peter Hendrickson wrote an enlightening article on the importance of not only the contents but the accessibility of first aid kits, offering tips on how to pack essential items so they’re close at hand in the event of an emergency. Readers heeded Peter’s advice.

“Nicely written Peter! You’ve provided lots of useful information and it’s prompted me to add a small first aid kit to the top pocket of my pack.”

- Patty Ryan, 21-year member



In our winter 2025 edition, ski fanatic and thrifting enthusiast Kristina Ciari offered a handful of creative ways to give another life to your dusty winter gear. Meany Lodge volunteers were particularly excited by the idea for a snowboard bench, and are looking for donations for their next upcycling project!

“I have been looking for 2 snowboards to make a bench for Meany Lodge... if someone wants to donate one feel free to let me know!”

-Marion Plisson Rabot, 9-year member and Meany Lodge Committee member

Interested in writing for *Mountaineer* magazine?
We'd love to hear your story! Email us
at magazine@mountaineers.org.

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LAST SEASON'S TOP TRIP REPORT PHOTOS



Climbing Lane Peak, Peter Erickson.



Hiking Big Creek Falls and Otter Falls, Courtenay Schurman.



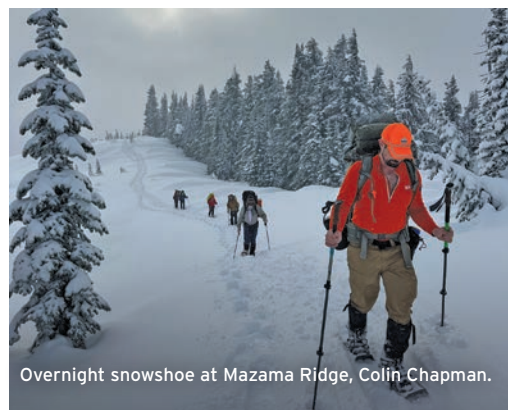
Sea kayaking Olympia to Steilacoom, Will Greenough.



Stewarding Woodard Bay, Ginger Sarver.



Naturalist trip at McLane Creek Nature Trail, Becky Andrade.



Overnight snowshoe at Mazama Ridge, Colin Chapman.



Packrafting the Skagit River, Jack McDermott.



Scrambling Higher Squire, Ananth Maniam.



Sea kayaking the Snohomish River, Doug Palm.



Hiking the Jim Whittaker Wilderness Peak Trail, Courtenay Schurman.



Snowshoing Kendall First Knob, Roseanne Lorenzana.



Urban walking at the De Leo Wall Loop, Roseanne Lorenzana.



Name Ritu Bindra

Hometown Born and raised in India, but Seattle has been home for two decades

Member Since January 2011

Occupation Software Engineer and Product Development Manager

Favorite Activities Hiking, backpacking, and long international thru-hikes and treks

Ritu descending Mt. Si during a Mountaineers trip. Photo by Ritu Bindra.

What first brought you to The Mountaineers?

The Mountaineers was introduced to me by my husband, as we both share a deep passion for the outdoors. What I love about The Mountaineers is that it provides a space to learn from others while also offering a safe environment to try new things. Every outing has reinforced a sense of community, where everyone – leaders and fellow hikers – are looking out for one another and generously sharing their experiences.

What's your favorite Mountaineers memory?

While it's hard to pick just one memory, there's one experience that stands out. I have Raynaud's, which in the past has limited me to summer activities. Cold exposure used to scare me, but I wanted to push beyond my comfort zone, to explore the beautiful places that require winter travel and high-altitude exposure.

I'm so grateful to several Mountaineers leaders who shared their experiences with similar conditions. They showed me that my condition didn't have to stop me from enjoying the outdoors. They offered practical advice – like using mittens instead of gloves, keeping my core warm to protect my extremities, and staying calm when the cold triggers symptoms. Focusing on staying composed, even when my fingers turn from white to blue, has been one of the most helpful things I've learned.

The support from this community has given me the confidence to do things I once thought were impossible. These days, I'm training and hiking through snow-covered mountains for my upcoming high-altitude trek to Nepal.

Who/What inspires you?

I'm constantly inspired by people – their stories, their courage, and their resilience. Growing up, I didn't travel alone to far-off or remote places, but in recent years, I've begun taking solo major international trips and tackling multi-day treks and thru-

hikes. The stories of others overcoming obstacles and fears gave me the courage to embark on these solo adventures.

Walking through France and Spain for 45 consecutive days a couple of years ago was a life-changing experience, and recently exploring Japan's ancient trails, with their villages and forests, left me craving more. Inspiration is everywhere, and I'm a "glass-half-full" kind of person anyway!

What does adventure mean to you?

Adventure means stepping outside my comfort zone – even if it makes me nervous. If my dreams don't challenge me, I know I need to push further. I've come a long way, but there's still so much more to experience.

Some of my favorite adventures involve exploring remote villages on foot, trekking through rugged terrain, and crossing mountain ranges in foreign countries. This summer, I'm aiming to summit my first volcano, but I'm especially excited about my upcoming trip to explore the high passes of the Himalayas in Nepal! ▲▲

Lightning round

Sunset or sunrise? Sunrise

What's your 11th Essential? SOS Device Personal Locator Beacon

What's your happy place? Home with my husband and our Great Dane, Noorie

Post-adventure meal of choice? Pizza and chai

If you could be a rockstar at any outdoor activity overnight, what would it be? Open water/ocean swimming – I have a fear of deep water and can't swim if my feet can't touch the ground

Pacific Harvest

A Northwest Coast Foraging Guide

By Jennifer Hahn



Harvesting fireweed. All photos by Jennifer Hahn.

Recognizing local edible berries, flowers, greens, roots, tree parts, mushrooms, seaweeds, beach vegetables, and shellfish is a passport to a comforting sense of place. In *Pacific Harvest: A Northwest Coast Foraging Guide*, expert forager and longtime guide Jennifer Hahn introduces both novice and experienced foragers to the Pacific Coast's ample and diverse edible species, while highlighting authentic Indigenous harvesting practices and amplifying profiles of Indigenous leaders in the traditional foods movement. Hahn's coastal foraging guide offers a sustainable approach to foraging, reminding readers of what other beings also depend on our local plants and animals as food and shelter sources.

Enjoy a sample of what *Pacific Harvest* has to offer!

Common Fireweed

Chamerion augustifolium

Family: Onagraceae (Evening Primrose)

Status: Native

Other names: Fireweed, willow herb, great willow herb, rosebay willow herb. In Britain, "bombweed" became a moniker for fireweed during World War II for its capacity to sprout in bomb craters (and begin the healing process for war-ravaged lands).

A tall (up to 6 feet), showy wildflower with a torch of fuchsia-pink 4-petaled blooms. Leaves lance- or willow-like, 2 to 6 inches long, and alternate. Blooms from bottom to top, June to September. Bean-like pods pack up to 80,000 airborne seeds per plant that drift like a gentle snowfall. One root sends up multiple plants. Shoots are high in vitamins A and C.

Fireweed is impressively adaptable: circumpolar, found across the northern hemisphere's temperate regions, including Alaska, Canada, and the Lower 48 – except Texas and the hot, humid south. A pioneer of disturbed sites – clearcuts, burns, river plains, avalanche shoots, where glaciers are retreating,



Harvesting beach asparagus with friends.

and railroad and road edges – as well as conifer and mixed forests, grasslands, aspen parklands, and muskegs.

Harvest guide

What: Shoots, leaves, flowers

When: Shoots in spring, leaves and flowers in summer

Snap new asparagus-like "shoots" off where the stem is crisp and juicy and breaks effortlessly. If it bends instead of snapping, it's too old and fibrous. Pick delicate flowers by hand and protect in a hard-sided container. Harvest leaves for tea in the beginning of July or when the plant is in full flower. Research shows this is when fireweed churns out phytochemicals – including ellagitannins (ETs) and oenothien B – associated with fighting cancer, cardiovascular disease, and neurodegenerative disorders. If plants are abundant, slide your fingers down the stalk to take off many leaves at once.

Culinary tips

Cook fireweed shoots like a sort of "wild asparagus." Saute, roast, or steam; deep-fry as tempura; add to quiche; pickle or marinate. Use fuchsia-colored fireweed petals in salad or as a garnish. Fireweed blossoms can be made into jelly or a mild-

tasting syrup. Ferment and dry leaves for Ivan Chai, a flavorful herbal tea.

Superpower

Coast Salish weavers used the silky-haired seeds as soft fiber to weave with mountain-goat wool and dog hair for cozy blankets and as padding mixed with duck feathers in mattresses.

Who eats and shelters here?

Elk, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, and mule deer eat it as a vital spring and summer food. Black-tailed deer munch fireweed during the entire growing season, while moose in Alaska, being picky eaters, prefer the greens before they flower. In fall, pikas and chipmunks nibble pods and cache seeds. Muskrats, rabbits, song-birds, waterfowl, and upland game birds seek its tasty greens and seeds. Beekeepers transport hives to clearcuts for fireweed nectar, which is also a vital fuel for migratory hummingbirds and butterflies.

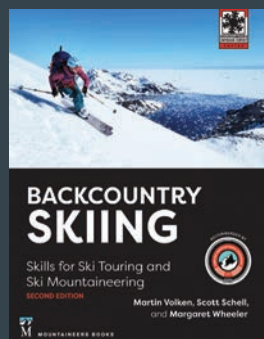
The large, stout hummingbird moth – nicknamed for its ability to hover and rapidly beat its narrow, birdlike wings as it sips flower nectar – may deposit eggs on fireweed stalks. Also called the white-lined sphinx moth, look for its caterpillar form that wields an impressive but harmless caudal thorn.

Ivan Chai is as easy as pie

Fireweed is circumpolar in the northern hemisphere and is made into tea almost universally in this region. Russian American women in Alaska taught my friend Jency how they make “Ivan Chai” tea from fireweed leaves. After picking mature leaves, allow them to wilt and roll them vigorously between your palms. With a little practice, it forms a compact pearl with the stem in the very center. Rolling bruises the leaf so it can “ferment” as it dries. Fermenting also creates a more flavorful tea with a slightly floral, green-tea note. In the UK and Ireland – where it is called rosebay willowherb – fireweed is used in tea form to treat asthma.

Dry Ivan Chai tea pearls on a cotton cloth over a wire rack until “bone dry.” Store in a glass jar in a cool, dark cupboard. Ivan Chai keeps its green-tea-like flavor for six months or more.

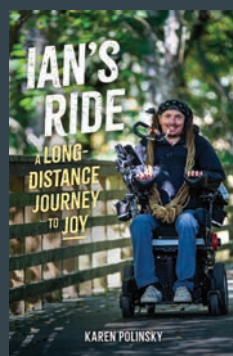
Pacific Harvest will arrive April 1, 2025. Pre-order now from mountaineers.org/books, or your local bookstore.



Backcountry Skiing: Skills for Ski Touring and Ski Mountaineering (2nd Edition)

By Sneed B. Collard III

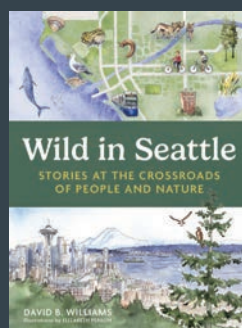
Though ski season may be coming to a close, it's never a bad time to refresh your backcountry skills and safety knowledge, and *Backcountry Skiing* has your back as the definitive guide to backcountry skiing and ski mountaineering. With major updates across the board, this new edition highlights evolutions in ski equipment, in-depth avalanche safety advice, primers on mountain weather and winter camping basics, and more.



Ian's Ride: A Long-Distance Journey to Joy

By Karen Polinsky

After a bike accident left outdoor adventurer Ian Mackay permanently paralyzed from the shoulders down, his life was at a standstill, but with the help of family, Ian's love of nature gradually pulled him outside again. In this intimate biography, writer Karen Polinsky recounts with Ian his accident and determined journey as a champion for accessible trails, including a 330-mile trip across Washington state that set the world record for the greatest distance traveled in a motorized wheelchair in 24 hours. This raw, fiercely tender, and inspiring true story examines how we exist in our bodies, adapt to and overcome adversity, and find our way back to what we love.



Wild in Seattle: Stories at the Crossroads of People and Nature

By David B. Williams, Illustrated by Elizabeth Person

For award-winning natural history writer David B. Williams, to be connected to a place you must pause and look at it deeply. *Wild in Seattle* is Williams' delightful journey of discovery in a city where nature is not only all around, but written in the stones of the urban landscape. Explore the geologic history of glaciers, tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanoes, and learn about the ways humans shape Seattle's topography. From backyards to downtown, wrap your arms around a giant Douglas fir, appreciate the unsung skunk cabbage, listen to the spring chorus of frogs, and more. Williams' lively essays, woven with Elizabeth Person's engaging illustrations, provide an entertaining and history-packed exploration of the natural, urban, and geological wonders around us.

The Magic of Mountaineers Lodges

By Christine Kler, Camps and Youth Outreach Manager & Leslie Gobel, Overnight Camps Associate Manager



Lodge campers rafting down the Skykomish River. Photo courtesy of Outdoor Adventure Center.

For many youth, nature is a realm of endless possibilities. Every summer, Mountaineers Youth Programs embrace the magic of nature with Lodge Camps, a unique outdoor experience for campers ages 9-17 held at one of our three mountain lodges. Set against the stunning backdrop of the Pacific Northwest, Lodge Camps offer immersive opportunities for adventure, personal growth, and connection to the natural world.

Our lodges are more than just buildings – they’re hubs of activity and community where campers learn new skills and form lasting friendships. At the lodges, campers can step away from screens and modern distractions to make lasting memories in some of the most pristine landscapes available. By reconnecting with the natural world under the guidance of Mountaineers staff and volunteers, campers are empowered to build confidence, develop problem-solving skills, and discover their capabilities.

Let’s take a closer look at our Lodge Camps, how they bring young people closer to nature, and what’s on the horizon for summer 2025.

Unbeatable access to outdoor spaces

Lodge Camp participants experience unbeatable access to expansive outdoor spaces. From towering mountain ranges to crystal-clear lakes and rivers, the variety of landscapes offer challenges and rewards for every interest and skill level.

One standout feature of Lodge Camp is its immersive nature. Away from the routine of home, these multi-day experiences allow campers to truly unplug and engage in the natural world. Campers wake up surrounded by towering trees in crisp morning air with forest sounds providing a peaceful yet exhilarating start to each day.

During camp, various activities are planned to safely stretch participants’ abilities and skillsets. Our camp team carefully plans each activity to maximize campers’ engagement with the natural environment, offering both physical challenges and moments of tranquility. This balanced approach is key to helping campers build a sense of connection and respect for the outdoors, while also forging new friendships within our lodge community.

Take Stevens Lodge, for example, where on any given day campers might raft the Skykomish River, hike nearby trails, climb in Index and Leavenworth, or wade in Lake Wenatchee. The thrilling rapids and breathtaking scenery of the Skykomish River teach campers the value of teamwork, communication, and respecting the power of nature. The numerous trails surrounding the lodge provide opportunities to improve physical fitness and resilience. The nearby climbing in Index and Leavenworth, with routes for beginners and experienced climbers, allows campers to test their strength and determination. And the calm waters of Lake Wenatchee provide the perfect spot for campers to cool off and bond with peers.

Feedback from campers and instructors

Don't just take it from us - campers and instructors alike had great experiences in summer 2024.

One high school camper who attended Stevens Lodge Camp told us, with immense enthusiasm, that she had "the best experience" and was happy to have had a safe environment where she could partake in her "personal favorite activities," which were rafting and afternoon free time with friends in the Stevens Pass Ski Area. Another participant enjoyed finding community and stepping outside their comfort zone, advising the next round of campers to do the same. "Try and make friends to share the experience with," they said, "and don't be nervous for any of the activities, because I can guarantee that you'll have fun afterward."

Upon completion of the summer season, we also received positive feedback from our Lodge Camp instructors. One instructor found joy in the variety of activities offered throughout summer, saying "All the activities were great. It's so fun to watch kids try something new... It was fun for me too, to go river rafting as part of my job!" Another instructor enjoyed the lake days, which "were such a hit for all campers," and had particularly fond memories of a fun day at Lake Wenatchee, recalling "We had all bonded by that point, and the weather turned out so perfect for swimming."



Campers enjoying a lunch break during a hike to Lake Valhalla.
Photo courtesy of Lucy Cowden.



Campers returning to Stevens Lodge after an afternoon playing games at the Stevens Pass Ski Area. Photo courtesy of Leslie Gobel.

Register for summer 2025 Lodge Camps

As we look ahead to summer 2025, the excitement around Lodge Camps only grows. This year, our Lodge Camps will be held at Stevens Lodge, with themed activity weeks inspired by the different adventures that Stevens Pass provides. From Water Weeks focused on rafting and swimming to Trails and Rocks Weeks focused on hiking and rock climbing, there's something for everyone. Campers will also get the chance to learn more about a variety of outdoor topics such as Leave No Trace, navigation, trail etiquette, local plant and animal species, and more. No matter the week of camp, fun-filled days, beautiful views, and new friendships are guaranteed.

Registration for summer 2025 Lodge Camps is now open. Spaces fill quickly, so don't miss the chance to give your child the adventure of a lifetime.

To secure a spot, visit the Seattle Overnight Camps page on The Mountaineers website, review available camp dates, and complete the online registration form. If you have any questions or need assistance, the camp team is available to help. Email summercamp@mountaineers.org for more information.

Scholarships are available for those in need, so don't hesitate to apply if finances are a barrier to participation. Learn more about scholarships by visiting mountaineers.org/scholarships. ▲▲

Untold Stories

Mentorship, Menopause, and Mountaintops

By Vienna Christensen, Manager of Volunteer Development



Climbers assessing their next move. Photo by Yui Tang.

Women have been summing mountains and taking the lead at The Mountaineers since the beginning. Of the 151 charter members of The Mountaineers in 1906, 77 were women. With such a strong legacy of women in leadership, we want to celebrate the stories of resilience and honor the challenges that some of our current Mountaineers leaders experience.

Change matters: Menopause and outdoor leadership

Loni Uchytel, Former Climbing Committee Chair

Menopause is a significant transition in a woman's life that brings various unique challenges. Understanding these challenges helps foster a supportive environment for women in The Mountaineers.

Menopause typically begins between the ages of 45 and 55 and can last a few years to a few decades. During this time, estrogen production declines. This hormonal shift can lead to a range of symptoms including hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, sleep disturbances, and decreased bone density. For many women, these symptoms significantly impact daily life and physical activity. As a climber and canyoneer, the decline in my muscle mass, coupled with increased fatigue caused by significant sleep disturbances, affects my performance. I tire more quickly and struggle with stamina on longer days. I

find myself modifying my goals and opting for easier routes, which can be frustrating. These changes can also lead to a loss of community as younger climbers take off on bigger objectives and older friends slowly leave the sport due to health challenges.

My biggest challenge is maintaining a consistent community of partners. Climbing and canyoning involve big risks, so having partners that you know well and are familiar with your strengths and weaknesses can be difficult. The Mountaineers is a good place to meet like-minded folks. I've met wonderful, life-long friends during my years of volunteering and am grateful to have shared my passion for climbing with this community. With increased awareness and support for women who are experiencing menopause, our community can grow even stronger.

Women in their 50s and 60s can still be strong members of a climbing team, and including them in instructing and climbing outings will further our goals to create a more inclusive outdoors.

Reaching new heights

Nomi Rachel Fuchs, Mountaineers Volunteer Leader

I used to think that climbing big mountains was not for me. I was not athletic as a kid. I didn't grow up engaging in outdoor activities. As a single, working, middle-aged mom, these sports seemed out of reach.

When I moved to Seattle in 2015, I began several outdoor sports, mostly following my kids in snowboarding and downhill biking, then dragging them along on small hikes. Eventually, I took on harder and longer hikes. In 2022, I took a big chance and signed up for an all-women climb of Mt. Baker with Alpine Ascents International. I feel tremendous gratitude for that first mountaineering experience because the women guides were supportive, encouraging, and incredibly strong climbers.

Standing on the summit at age 52 was an amazing feeling. Inspired by my experience, I started rock climbing in preparation for a Mt. Shuksan climb the following year, and then eventually I joined The Mountaineers. While it might seem strange that a woman in her 50s started taking on new sports, I felt that as long as I could safely train, I could continue climbing mountains.

I experienced many symptoms during menopause that impacted my athletic performance and shook my confidence. Initially, it was hard to find women leaders and trainers who knew how to support individuals experiencing menstruation or menopause. I felt like I needed to keep up with the 35-year-old dudes to be successful. But when I joined The Mountaineers as a scrambling student, I met amazing women leaders who were mindful of the range of students' age, ability, and experience.

However, both within The Mountaineers and across my friend group, I also found women self-selecting out of activities and losing confidence as they struggled with menopause symptoms that impacted their ability to participate in certain activities.



Nomi Rachel Fuchs and Erica Chao on a winter scramble at Cowboy Mountain.
Photo by Nomi Rachel Fuchs.

The outdoors are for everyone, and The Mountaineers can continue to build more inclusive and equitable communities by improving awareness and support for individuals who are going through menopause or who are menstruating. I'm embracing my postmenopausal self, listening to my body, and telling leaders when I don't feel comfortable or when I might need more time... but this doesn't mean I don't belong on the mountain. I've found that if I'm gentle with myself, I can climb - both literally and figuratively - to new heights.

Empowered by affinity groups and allyship

Danielle Graham, Mountaineers Board Member

When I think of my experiences as a woman and leader at The



All-women SIG participants on their snow overnight field trip at Blewett Pass.
Photo by Yui Tang.

Mountaineers, two concepts come to mind: affinity groups and allyship. I was fortunate early in my Mountaineers career to experience both. When I took Basic Alpine Climbing in 2018, I was in an all-women Small Instructional Group (SIG), created by women who were inspired by their own positive experiences in an all-women Intermediate Alpine Climbing mentor group. In my SIG, I experienced a great amount of empathy and understanding between students. In addition to demonstrating peer-to-peer patience when learning new skills, the women were very encouraging, creating an environment where I felt safe and empowered to test my fears and try new things.

Years later in 2024, I instructed in the all-women cohort of the Winter Mountaineering and Advanced Crevasse Rescue (WMCR) course. Given the "pay it forward" nature of affinity groups, it's not surprising that my fellow cohort leaders were the same women who led my SIG in 2018. When I saw the waitlists to instruct in the women's cohort of WMCR, I realized that affinity spaces at The Mountaineers are important to students *and* instructors.

Recently, I helped create the first Women's Alpine Scrambling course. During the course, our cohort supported one another through experiences that would have otherwise been challenging to navigate. For example, we were able to support a nursing mother by reaching out to other Mountaineers moms who provided helpful recommendations, such as a light-up breast pump for pumping on an after-hours conditioning hike. I continue to hear positive feedback from students who were in that group, especially around our conversations about managing menstruation and other bodily functions in the mountains.

Thank you

To all the women in Mountaineers leadership, thank you. We appreciate the ways you engage in and contribute to the world of outdoor adventure. If you are someone who resonates with these stories or would like to learn more, watch the recordings from our recent Leadership Development Subseries - Your Body and the Outdoors: Menstruation and Menopause at mountaineers.org/your-body-outdoors. ▲▲



Beyond the Book

By Jackson Gutierrez, Development Officer

Mountaineers Books staff with *Freedom of the Hills* 10th Edition contributors at the REI Flagship launch party. Photo by Alfe Wood. Right: Various Mountaineers Books titles.

Imagine yourself as a novice alpinist, poised for a journey of discovery, opening *Freedom of the Hills* for the very first time. Or picture yourself sitting by the fire in a cozy mountain lodge, captivated by stories of Sherpa and Balti climbers in Bernadette McDonald's *Alpine Rising*. Books are powerful tools, teaching skills to unlock new landscapes and experiences. They can also be an adventure in themselves, transporting readers to distant summits.

These are the kinds of experiences that Mountaineers Books has fostered for generations. More than just a publisher, Mountaineers Books is a gateway to adventure, a source of inspiration, and a champion for the natural world. As a mission-driven nonprofit, Mountaineers Books embodies our shared values – leading innovation in outdoor education, engaging a vibrant community of outdoor enthusiasts, and advocating on behalf of the natural world – by publishing essential guidebooks, compelling narratives, and illuminating publications that deepen our connection to the landscapes we cherish.

Connecting to place through publishing

Our commitment to inspiring adventure and advocating on behalf of the natural world through publishing is rooted



in a deep connection to place. This connection begins with an understanding of the shared experiences we have in the landscapes that define us. From the Pacific Northwest's rugged coastlines to the Cascades' towering peaks, Mountaineers Books seeks out stories rooted in our community that explore diverse environments and reflect the outdoor opportunities that bring us together.

Whether through practical guides like the popular *Urban Trails* series that helps readers discover hidden gems in our backyards or personal narratives like Graham Zimmerman's *A Fine Line* that explores the complexities of a life intertwined with mountains, Mountaineers Books amplifies voices that arise from and speak for places they know, places they love, and places that have shaped them. Each book offers more

than just information; it shares stories that inspire us to expand our relationship with the natural world and motivate us to protect it. These books become companions on our journeys, encouraging us to explore, protect, and appreciate the places we hold dear.

Publishing with purpose

Being a nonprofit publisher allows Mountaineers Books to prioritize mission over profit. Unlike commercial publishers driven by the bottom line, we can ensure that important stories and knowledge reach the people who need them most. Imagine a literary landscape without Fred Beckey's *Cascade Alpine Guides*, a cornerstone of mountaineering in the Pacific Northwest, or without Paul Bannick's *Owl*, whose stunning photography prompts urgent conversations around conservation. These essential works (often overlooked by commercial publishers) are championed by our publishing house, allowing us to embody The Mountaineers core values of adventure, advocacy, community, volunteerism, and education. Our unique ability to publish mission-driven stories impacts the outdoor community in profound ways and ensures that empowering books remain accessible to everyone.

Empowering authors, inspiring change

As an award-winning and world-renowned publisher, Mountaineers Books amplifies vital voices in the outdoor and conservation communities. By supporting authors passionate about these topics, we ensure that important stories reach a wider audience. This support extends beyond the publication world, standing up for causes such as protecting endangered species, advocating for public lands, and promoting sustainable outdoor practices. Mountaineers Books commitment to elevating diverse perspectives and telling stories that inspire positive change is evident in our work with authors like Graham Zimmerman, who shares:

"As an author who has had the privilege of working with Mountaineers Books, I can personally speak to their exceptional expertise and their eye for high-impact, relatable stories from both the wildest corners of the world and the natural spaces closer to home. Their team is remarkably talented, and their dedication to fostering a deeper connection between people and the outdoors is unparalleled. By amplifying diverse voices and promoting stewardship, they inspire adventure and ignite action to protect and preserve our wild places. I'm proud to support their work and the critical role they play in enriching our understanding and appreciation of the natural world."

A legacy of education and conservation

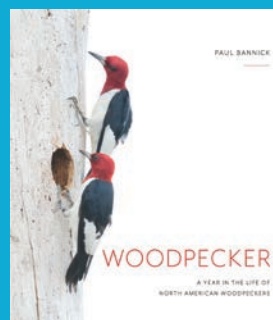
The impact of Mountaineers Books ripples through the outdoor community in tangible ways. With over 650 titles in print, we've helped countless individuals explore the mountains, forests, and waterways of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Last year alone, Mountaineers Books sold and distributed over 475,000 books. Additionally, Mountaineers Books titles have been used as a resource by local and national leaders, playing a paramount role in helping pass conservation legislation such as the EXPLORE Act.

Benefiting everyone from seasoned explorers to those just beginning their outdoor journey, the impact of Mountaineers



Books resonates throughout the entire outdoor community. Our books equip and inspire people to connect with nature and ensure that everyone in our community can see themselves reflected in the stories we tell. By supporting Mountaineers Books through book purchases and donations, you become part of our legacy of adventuring with purpose and directly contribute to our mission of inspiring outdoor connection, conservation, and appreciation of our natural world. ▲▲

SUPPORT MOUNTAINEERS BOOKS AND GET YOUR NAME IN AN UPCOMING BOOK!



We're thrilled to announce an exciting opportunity for you to support our mission. Award-winning author and photographer Paul Bannick is set to release his newest work, *Woodpecker: A Year in the Life of North American Woodpeckers*, later this year, and we're offering a unique chance to have your name included in this remarkable publication. With a gift of \$250 or more, your name (or a name of your choosing) will be listed in the acknowledgments section of the new book.

Getting a name printed in a book is a great way to leave a lasting impression and legacy, whether for yourself or in honor of someone else. For more information, visit mountaineers.org/donate/support-books.

Celebrating Passage of the EXPLORE Act

Improving Recreation Management and Outdoor Access on Public Lands

By Conor Marshall, Advocacy & Engagement Manager



Mountaineers climbers on Mt. St. Helens. Photo by Ida Vincent.

Making a difference for conservation and recreation through advocacy can take several years. A campaign can consist of thousands of individual actions by grassroots advocates and policy experts alike who call or email lawmakers, meet with members of Congress, and testify on behalf of legislation. All these collective advocacy efforts add up to create a lasting impact through policy.

In the long game of advocacy, we occasionally reach a tipping point where collective momentum with elected leaders and their staff converges with the politics of the moment to culminate in a landmark legislative victory. At the end of December 2024, we achieved a big win for public lands and outdoor recreation: the passage of the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act through Congress.

The recreation community played a pivotal role in helping secure this historic victory for the outdoors during the final days of the 118th Congress. This first-of-its-kind package of bills to improve recreation and increase and enhance outdoor access on federal public lands was signed into law earlier this year.

Enhancing outdoor access on federal public lands

Over the last ten years, The Mountaineers and our partners at

Outdoor Alliance and the Coalition for Outdoor Access have advocated together and activated outdoor enthusiasts from the human-powered recreation community in support of the EXPLORE Act. The legislation includes the SOAR Act and the PARC Act, top Mountaineers advocacy priorities to improve the federal permitting process and protect wilderness climbing, respectively.

The Simplifying Outdoor Access for Recreation (SOAR) Act will simplify and improve the unpredictable recreational permitting system that creates barriers for those who want to experience the outdoors through facilitated group experiences like those offered by The Mountaineers. We helped lead advocacy efforts for the SOAR Act because its permitting improvements will benefit our programs that utilize permits to take groups on federal lands like national parks and forests.

SOAR Act passage was truly a decade in the making: the genesis of the bill started with conversations spearheaded by late Mountaineers member and Washington conservation leader, Doug Walker. After seeing growing permitting challenges for our volunteer-led programs, past Mountaineers conservation staffer Katherine Hollis helped draft the original bill. "It's a testament to the power of The Mountaineers voice, strong partnerships, and years of advocacy, that federal legislation on this issue has been signed into law," Katherine shared.



Left: Mountaineers youth climbing in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Right: Mountaineers youth enjoying a sunny group hike on public lands. Photos by Mountaineers staff.

The Mountaineers helped develop the bill with the Coalition for Outdoor Access – a national advocacy group made up of nonprofit outdoor education organizations, outfitters, guides, and other recreation providers. Current Mountaineers Conservation & Advocacy Director Betsy Robblee has worked on the SOAR Act her entire time on staff and testified before Congress about the importance and impact of the legislation.

In addition to simplifying the permitting process, the SOAR Act will provide more flexibility by allowing The Mountaineers to engage in other activities that are similar to those specified in our permits. For example, if we already have a permit for snowshoeing, that same permit could be used for backcountry skiing. The bill will also create a process that allows for multi-jurisdictional trips under the same permit and will ensure that permit days aren't lost due to unforeseen circumstances like weather or wildfire.

"The Mountaineers ability to speak to on-the-ground challenges in the Pacific Northwest was pivotal in garnering support for the SOAR Act, and it was a critical component of the Coalition for Outdoor Access advocacy effort," shared American Mountain Guides Association Executive Director, Matt Wade.

While the SOAR Act was our top priority, we're also excited about other aspects of the EXPLORE Act, including the Protect America's Rock Climbing (PARC) Act, which will help protect wilderness climbing on federal public lands by reiterating Congress' position that fixed anchors are appropriate in Wilderness Areas. Additionally, the EXPLORE Act will designate new long distance mountain biking trails, improve access to nature, and expand recreation opportunities for youth, traditionally marginalized communities, and veterans.

The power of our collective advocacy

We're deeply grateful for everyone in our community who joined us in advocating for the SOAR Act and the EXPLORE Act over the years. This win is proof again that our voices can move the needle, and that lawmakers are motivated to secure wins for the outdoors when they hear the importance

of recreation to their constituents.

The passage of the EXPLORE Act is the result of years of hard work and many conversations with members of Congress. To give you a flavor of what it takes, here's a deeper look into the direct and grassroots advocacy actions taken by The Mountaineers in support of the EXPLORE Act and the SOAR Act. Since 2020, we've:

- Sent over 4,000 messages to members of Congress.
- Sent or signed 16 letters, including testimony to Congress.
- Published over 10 blog posts, *Mountaineer* magazine articles, and action alerts.
- Conducted over 50 meetings with members of Congress, including several trips to Washington D.C.
- Participated in countless coalition meetings to coordinate advocacy efforts.

Getting the EXPLORE Act across the finish line was also a testament to the dedication and years of advocacy by Outdoor Alliance. Securing one of the most impactful wins for recreation policy is a fitting way to cap off Outdoor Alliance's tenth year of uniting recreationists across the country.

What's next for the EXPLORE Act?

Now that a federal recreation package has been signed into law, the EXPLORE Act joins the Great American Outdoors Act as another historic investment in outdoor recreation by Congress and the next success story in the rich conservation history of The Mountaineers. We'll continue to track implementation of the EXPLORE Act and share more on our blog about how various pieces of the EXPLORE Act will expand, improve, and enhance recreation in the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

Washington's congressional delegation, including Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, were strong champions for the EXPLORE Act. Celebrate EXPLORE Act passage by personalizing a thank you letter to your lawmakers using our online action tool: mountaineers.org/explore-act-passage. ▲



BACKPACKING THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA'S WILD COAST

By Charles Bookman, 25-year member

A family of river otters catching breakfast. All photos by Charles Bookman unless otherwise noted.

Peeking my head out of my tent one damp morning on the wild Olympic coast, I spot a mother otter leading three pups into the surf. As dawn touches the nearby offshore rocks, I watch with Mountaineers companions as mama teaches her babies how to swim and catch breakfast. Above, bald eagles swoop low, their curious gargles providing constant entertainment. Other gulls, terns, and sanderlings dot the shore in abundance.

What else can be seen while walking miles along the Olympic coast? Rainforests lush with towering cedars and Douglas firs; free-flowing salmon streams and mossy glens; gorgeous sea stacks, coves, and headlands; sea lions barking on offshore rocks; and bleached whale bones. If you're lucky, you may even spot sea otters in kelp forests, or a baby seal parked on the sand while its mother fishes for breakfast. And there is history, too – rock carvings made by ancestors of today's Makah people, and memorials to sunken ships and dramatic rescues.

Fifty miles of wilderness backpacking is accessible year-round on the wild Olympic coast. Hardly anywhere else in the United States can you so quickly and completely immerse yourself in true wilderness.

Coastal walking

Hiking a remote coast is a commitment. Once you start, there is no escape until you reach the other end. Navigating the varied terrain involves all manner of scrambling techniques – from rock-hopping to arm-rappelling on fixed ropes – and the sandy beaches and cobbled terrain can be hard on your calves and quads, testing your balance. There are boulders to hop, rivers to ford, and headlands to clamber over. But you'll be rewarded with pristine views as you pass flowering shrubs and swamp laurel, forested glades with fern floors and towering trees, and clementine sunsets that sparkle over the Pacific Ocean.

When backpacking on the coast, pay attention to the tides. Carry a printed tide table (your cell phone won't work) and plan your daily hike accordingly. The Custom Correct map of the Olympic coast indicates the tide levels necessary to safely walk around headlands. When the tide is in, you must go up and over the headlands. The National Park Service has marked headland trails with large, red and black disks, but the climbs are almost always rugged.



A rainbow over the Wildcatter Coast. Photo by Joel Bea.

Coastal walking may seem fairly straightforward, but navigation becomes increasingly important when the tide is high. Once during a trip, my group got caught by the tide after making a wrong turn. Yes, you can make a wrong turn on the coast! By the time we noticed our mistake and returned to the correct headland path, we'd consumed a precious 45 minutes. Eventually the tide rose and trapped us at the base of a muddy, tangled landslide slope, leaving us unable to round the next headland. We found a small area above the tide line and settled in to wait for the water to recede.

Logistics

The Olympic coast breaks neatly into three sections from south to north: Oil City to Third Beach (just south of La Push) (18 miles); Rialto Beach (just north of La Push) to Cape Alava (22 miles); and Cape Alava to Shi Shi Beach (14 miles). Through-hiking requires a lengthy car shuttle, which can be arranged within your hiking group or by hiring an outfitter for about \$75 per person.

Camping requires a backcountry permit obtainable through the recreation.gov website or from the Olympic Park Wilderness Information Center. While access is controlled, some permits on the shore are more readily obtainable than others. Perhaps the most accessible backcountry permit is for Sand Point, an easy-to-reach (three flat-trailed miles) scenic area with offshore rocks, a magnificent beach, and abundant campsites.

There are more footwear options for coastal walking than for mountain trails. I've hiked in mud boots, hiking boots, and running shoes. With mud boots, I rock-hop and tide-pool with abandon. With hiking boots, I stay safely away from the deepest tide pools but am more sure-footed on slippery rocks and steep trails. With running shoes, I move more easily along stretches of beach. Beach footwear is ultimately a matter of personal preference.

Keep in mind that fresh water is sparse (except for the rain!) and creeks can be brackish or tea-colored from the tannins in cedar roots. Like everything on the shore, your skin and equipment will be salty. While on a warm day you might be tempted to cool off in the ocean, without a sizable body of fresh water nearby, it is difficult to wash off the salt.

Planning your adventure

Wildcatter Coast: Oil City to Third Beach, 18 miles

The Wildcatter coast north of the Hoh River got its name in the early 1900s when real estate promoters sought to attract investment after finding petroleum in the area. First peoples and early settlers would dig hand wells and skim tarry goo that rose to the surface. In a local memoir, an early settler recalled skimming the oil and burning it in his Model T (he probably would have had to clean his spark plugs).

After enjoying a dinner in vampire-friendly Forks, leave your car at Third Beach and spend the night at Cottonwood



A baby seal.

Campground, just off Oil City Road. The next morning, take the trail to the ocean, which follows the Hoh River a short half mile. From the river mouth, a log-strewn beach leads to an algae-covered boulder field, then cobbles stretch a mile or more to the first headland. A handline assists your journey up and over the headland. Then, the trail stays high above the rocky shore for three-and-a-half miles until descending to the first night's camp at Mosquito Creek. This gorgeous site rests on a bluff overlooking a two-and-a-half-mile beach. Despite the name, I didn't experience any bugs, and the creek is deep enough for swimming.

The next day, walk along the coast's golden strand for an hour. Just before climbing a headland, you'll reach a rocky cove where you may be able to spot sea otters. In my experience, they couldn't care less about being observed, as long as you safely respect their distance.

With the headland behind, the trail dips and climbs. You'll have to cross Goodman Creek - which may be deep enough to swim in depending on when you visit - before encountering another mile-long beach. In the distance, headlands rise above where you'll camp that night. Notice Toleak Point jutting dramatically out to sea, the seals that lounge on nearby rocks, the eagles perched in tall trees, and the cedar waxwings singing in the shrubbery. There's a spot to camp just behind the tree line on the sunset side of the point, amid all the splendors.

Driftwood fires are one of the great pleasures of beach camping. Wood is plentiful near this campsite and fires on

the sand are about as safe as you can get, especially in the evening after the offshore breezes settle. Tell stories with your group around the fire as you watch the sun melt into the sea. Don't forget to put out your fire before retiring for the evening.

The third and final day on the Wildcatter Coast involves a beach walk from Toleak Point, then a climb up and over another headland. Using a handline, drop down the bluff onto Third Beach. (Note that this beach gets its share of daytime tourists.) On Third Beach, pick up the one-and-a-half-mile manicured trail to the trailhead. Be prepared for it to feel a little unreal to reclaim your car and turn your cell phone back on.



Kids love the Ozette Triangle.

Shipwreck Coast: Rialto Beach to Cape Alava, 22 miles

The Shipwreck Coast was a great hazard to navigation before the invention of radar. Ships that couldn't find the Straits of Juan de Fuca ran the risk of running onto a very inhospitable shore. The walk on this fogbound coast passes memorial sites of early 20th century maritime disasters, the Chilean Memorial, and the Norwegian Memorial. When visiting this area, take care to find, visit, and honor the memorials.

I like to do this route by camping at Lake Ozette the first night (the end point for this section) and hiring a commercial shuttle to reach the Rialto Beach trailhead. The drive takes about 75 minutes.

The route begins at mile-long Rialto Beach. At the north end of the beach, an

arch within jutting rock known as Hole-in-the-Wall marks a headland. There follows a succession of coves and headlands with stretches of difficult walking that traverse cobbles and boulders. The Chilean shipwreck memorial is near Cape Johnson, about four miles into the hike. Beyond Cape Johnson, the coast remains rocky and rugged until late in the day. After negotiating a steep, difficult headland, you'll reach a glorious beach strand at the end of which lies Cedar Creek, a reliable fresh water source and a good place to spend the first night.

The walking eases on the second day, though there are still headlands to cross and cobbles and boulders to negotiate. There are, however, more stretches of sand, including the delightfully named Yellow Banks, and the extensive beach just before Sand Point. The distance from Cedar Creek to Sand Point is just under nine miles. The campsites and water source are in the trees south of the point.

The third day of this trip negotiates the popular coastline from Sand Point to Cape Alava, and then follows an easy trail back to the cars at the Lake Ozette trailhead. An hour north from Sand Point, just to the left of a large, red and black disk marking an up-and-over headland trail, look for petroglyphs of whales spouting and other designs. A Native village at nearby Cape Alava was abandoned after a tsunami in 1700. Relics from the site are kept at the Makah Museum in Neah Bay.

The Makah Coast: Shi Shi Beach to Cape Alava, 14 miles



A whale petroglyph at Wedding Rocks.



Sunset at Mosquito Creek.

Walking the northernmost section of the wild Olympic coast, you need a permit from the Makah to enter their reservation for recreation and a permit from the Olympic National Park to camp along the shore. In addition to arranging a car shuttle for a one-way hike, it is advisable to park on private land near the Shi Shi Beach trailhead, which involves a daily fee. (Because of the logistics, I usually hike this section north to south, whereas the other sections have been described south to north.)

After a short one-and-a-half miles, the trail to Shi Shi drops over the coastal bluff to the beach. Shi Shi Beach runs for two-and-a-half miles and is girded with sea stacks. Walk south for less than an hour, then camp in the driftwood beside Petroleum Creek. Stoke a fire and watch the sun set over the mile-long headland, Point of the Arches.

The next day's hike begins by rock-hopping around Point of the Arches. (Here is where we made the previously described wrong turn, got out of sync with the tide, and spent an unplanned couple of hours waiting to complete the walk to our next campsite.) The trail will eventually lead you to the Ozette River, which drains a large lake. The campsites along the river are lush green with dark, silent water, and the distant surf provides a pleasant background as you settle in for the night.

On the last day of this hike, you'll need to cross the Ozette River. The water runs swift and deep, so time your crossing for low tide. I like to cross this river at the mouth, where the river is wider and the water is knee deep. From the river, it is an easy couple of miles to Cape Alava, and then a three-mile walk out to the trailhead. A lot of the trail is on boardwalk or puncheon.

Ozette Loop: Lake Ozette to Sand Point to Cape Alava to Lake Ozette, 9 miles

If car shuttling is not for you or you have less time, you can still experience the wild Olympic coast in a nine-mile loop hike. An easy, three-mile trail takes you to Sand Point. If you're camping, permits are easy to get here as there is so much space. From Sand Point, follow the coast north for three miles past sea stacks and headlands. About an hour north, look for the previously described petroglyphs. When you reach Cape Alava, turn inland. Walk through the camping area and you'll find the easy three-mile trail back to Lake Ozette. I have done this walk several times. Once, I saw a baby seal perched on the beach at Sand Point. Another time, I watched with my grandchildren as a bear foraged in the sand just beyond our campsite.

The wild Olympic coast is a destination for all seasons. Plan well, pay attention to the tides, and you, too, can leave your footprints in the sand. ▲



A full-page background image showing a couple eloping on a rocky mountain peak. The woman is wearing a white wedding dress and the man is in a white shirt and dark pants. They are holding hands and looking at each other. In the background, there are jagged mountain peaks under a warm, orange-hued sunset sky.

WEDDING BELLS AT LIBERTY BELL

A Mountaineers Elopement

By Skye Stoury (@skystoury) and Garrett Arnold (@theadventurearnolds), 10-year members and Super Volunteers
All photos by Adventure and Vow (@adventureandvow)

When two climbers who met in the mountains get married, it only makes sense to tie the knot in the alpine. Last August, I eloped with my now husband Garrett on the summit of Liberty Bell in the North Cascades for an intimate, sunrise ceremony. Eloping in the mountains where we fell in love was an exciting and special way to celebrate our love, our relationship, and our commitment to each other.

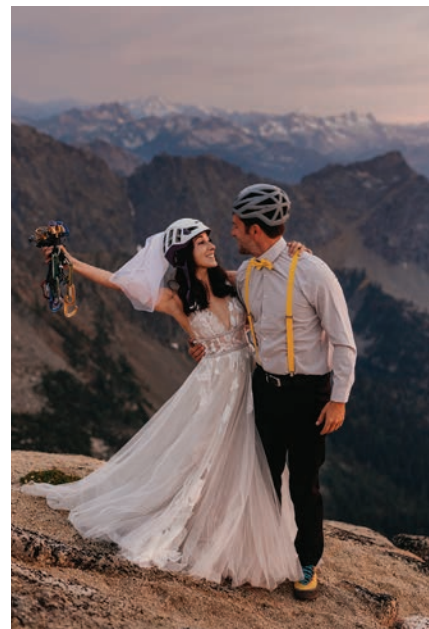
Garrett and I met in 2017 as students in The Mountaineers Basic Alpine Climbing course during a climb of Sahale Peak. We didn't talk much during the climb, but continued seeing each other at events, and then matched on a dating app. Months later, we connected at The Mountaineers Seattle Leadership Conference. After chatting for an hour, we decided to go on a date and, being us, had to do something more than just coffee. We settled on snowshoeing at Artist Point.



Rob officiating the ceremony on the summit.



Skye's bouquet of cams. Instead of flowers, we used climbing gear.



Post-wedding smiles in our climbing and wedding attire.

As our relationship grew, our mutual passion for remote peaks and long trails deepened our connection. Sharing the emotional highs and lows of alpine climbing pushed us to reveal our true selves and learn how dependable we could be as partners, both in adventure and in life. Managing fear and long days in the mountains taught us more about each other and the type of people we wanted to be – it was a level of intimacy neither of us had experienced before.

During our first year of dating, we tackled numerous basic-level alpine climbs together and advanced our adventures through the Intermediate Alpine Climbing course. Each section of the course honed our skills as a team, providing a foundation that strengthened our trust in one another.

As our relationship grew, so did the trips we planned. All our favorite memories together happened in the mountains, from backpacking off-trail routes to running aquatic canyons to having date nights at the climbing gym when we couldn't get outside. We became more than a "relationship." We were true partners with a deep trust in one another built through climbing.

After years of hiking, climbing, traveling, and moving into our van together, we got engaged on a backpacking trip to Mt. Assiniboine in British Columbia and started planning a wedding that would reflect our love for each other and the outdoors.

Planning a technical climbing elopement

We both knew from the beginning that we didn't want a traditional wedding. Our love was formed in the mountains, so we wanted our commitment to each other to be made there. Liberty Bell in the North Cascades was an easy choice. An iconic peak, combined with its manageable 5.6 trad rating on the Beckey Route, large summit, and stunning views, made it the perfect location. Plus, it was also the first intermediate level climb Garrett and I did together.

When planning an alpine elopement, it helps to have a community of fellow Mountaineers adventure enthusiasts. To bring our plan to life, we asked Rob Busack and Jessica

Dyer, two Mountaineers and close friends, to join. Seasoned alpinists, Rob and Jessica had the climbing skills necessary to complete an alpine climb and support our summit ceremony goals. Rob, a climb leader who conveniently happened to be an officiant, agreed to marry us and Jessica served as a witness.


The next challenge was finding elopement photographers capable of climbing a technical route. We knew of Traci Edwards and Bill Young of Adventure and Vow, an elopement photography team, through social media and reached out. Not only were they thrilled about our idea, they suggested we bivy (sleep in open air) on the summit and get married the next morning at sunrise.

The climb

The adventure began on Saturday, August 3, at the Blue Lake parking lot. To avoid crowding the route during peak hours, we waited for climbing traffic to ease while organizing gear and dividing group weight. We formed three rope teams: Rob and Jessica as the haul team, me and Garrett, and Traci and Bill as the photographers. Rob and Jessica went first to account for their anticipated slower pace (given their gear load) and allow the rest of us to pitch in if needed. Our primary goal was to get everyone up safely, so not many photos were taken during the climb to minimize risk. We all stayed close to one another during the ascent and kept our radios accessible to communicate progress or issues.

What is usually a two- to four-hour climb to the summit took the six of us a lot longer to complete. Climbing with overnight packs, which included trad climbing gear, camera equipment, overnight sleep systems, food and water for six people, and wedding clothes, added a unique challenge. (If you're wondering about the wedding rings, they were clipped on a spare carabiner in Garrett's backpack.) An ideal climb for hauling bags is a clean vertical or overhung face, whereas our approach, the Beckey Route, featured a blocky chimney section, as well as tricky slab climbing near the top. Rob and Jessica carried a 50-pound pack with a haul system for the



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white lace wedding dress, stands on a rocky mountain peak. She is smiling and looking to her left. In her left hand, she holds a bouquet of climbing gear, including ropes and carabiners. The background features a vast mountain range under a sunset sky with warm orange and pink hues.

"To love a person or a place is to take responsibility for its well-being."

-Kathleen Dean Moore

tougher pitches (Rob even followed the first pitch with the pack on). We dragged the haul bag up the route and, with amazing teamwork, summited before sunset.

Liberty Bell not only has stunning panoramic views of the North Cascades, but ample flat spots for an overnight stay. After summiting, we picked our sleeping spots and made a quick dinner of freeze-dried Mountain House meals. With the ascent complete and the summit clear of other climbers, we could finally focus on our elopement.

The first look

We decided before the climb to do a first look (the moment when the bride and groom see each other for the first time in their wedding attire) on the summit the night before our wedding, so we could get sunset and sunrise photos. Yes, we wore a wedding dress and suit, and yes, it was a lot to carry. But the extra weight was worth it. I packed a flowy, white dress that I kept neatly rolled in a garment bag and draped over the top of my pack during the climb. Being made mostly of tulle, it thankfully wasn't too heavy and didn't wrinkle. Garrett wore suit pants, a button up shirt, and a yellow bowtie and suspenders to match his yellow approach shoes. Our outfits were elegantly traditional for such an untraditional wedding.

Just after dinner, Jessica helped me and Garrett into our wedding clothes. Garrett positioned himself on a rock outcropping, facing away from the group. I walked toward him, my dress sticking to the surrounding rocks with each step I took toward my soon-to-be-husband. I tapped Garrett on the shoulder, took his hand, and turned him around to face me.

Seeing each other in our wedding attire for the first time, surrounded by the beauty of the orange sky and towering Cascades, was almost more special than the actual ceremony. We watched the sun set over the mountains while our photographers captured the special moment.

Sleeping with a view

After sunset, we settled in for a night of restless sleep. If you've ever wondered what it's like to sleep on the summit of an alpine peak, it's both amazing and uncomfortable. Most of the group slept with just sleeping pads and bags or quilts, but a couple of us used lightweight bivies to keep out the bugs (the bride can't wake up on her wedding day with a face covered in mosquito bites). We enjoyed clear views of the stars, and the aurora even put on a show.

Not every part of sleeping in open air is as romantic as it sounds. Sleeping the night before your wedding is already challenging, but add loud sleeping pads, wind, and bushy-tailed woodrats scampering around your site, and you're lucky to fall asleep at all. Regardless, being together beneath the open air and twinkling aurora felt like a promise of what adventures we had to look forward to.

We "awoke" just before sunrise on the morning of the wedding. True to our style, the formality of the day didn't prevent us from enjoying routine alpine moments, like pooping in wag bags, before proceeding to get ready for our ceremony.

Since every ounce of weight mattered, I brought only the essentials, which meant that getting ready consisted of washing my face, dabbing on a little concealer and mascara, and undoing





Jessica and Rob with us the morning of our ceremony. Rob is holding his mini *Freedom of the Hills* officiant book.

my hair which had been curled with a bandana overnight.

Our photographers picked the perfect spot for our ceremony: a rocky outcropping near the edge of a cliff that provided a dramatic backdrop for photos. Rob officiated with his speech written in a mini printout of *Freedom of the Hills* (the “bible” of alpine climbing and a book Garrett and I both read in our climbing courses). Surrounding us were numerous peaks we had climbed together over the years. We said our vows at sunrise on August 4.

Post ceremony, we enjoyed more dehydrated meals, soaked in our last views, and prepared for the rappel. We changed back into our climbing clothes, this time with rings on our fingers and my wedding veil glued to my helmet.

Key takeaways from a technical elopement

Having a weekend dedicated to each other and our shared passion for the outdoors was the best decision we could have made. If you’re contemplating an alpine elopement, we can’t recommend it enough for outdoorsy couples and climbers. Here are some things to consider as you plan the perfect day:

Find the right photographers. They need to be technically skilled enough to get up the climb safely while also focusing on photos. We were so thankful that Adventure and Vow were involved in our planning and scouted the route and summit in advance. We could not have taken photos on our own and are so happy we hired this team.

Find the right support team. You’ll need help on the climb, not just to haul gear up but to provide supportive attitudes and a willingness to adapt to anything that may happen.

Be flexible and have a backup plan. If you hire professional

photographers, you must be ready rain or shine on the date you’ve secured. We lucked out with good weather, but we were prepared to pivot to a hike if it rained. Keep in mind that during summer, wildfire smoke can impact plans.

Do your research. Investigate your location, route, summit, and whether permits are necessary for the ceremony and photographers. All national parks and some national forest lands require permits. Depending on location, some permits are easy to acquire. Liberty Bell is outside of North Cascades National Park, which made permit planning a lot easier. If you hire an elopement photographer, they’ll help you understand the permit process for your location.

Plan ahead with your team. Distributing weight and setting clear expectations is key to making alpine elopements work. Have group meetings in advance to go over logistics and packing lists, and make sure everyone is on the same page.

Prioritize safety. We wanted photos on the summit but weren’t worried about getting photos during the climb because we knew summiting would take longer if we posed for photos during the ascent. Traci and Bill still got photos of us organically, but we didn’t stop or stage any while climbing. We also wanted rappel photos, but after learning how much my dress stuck to the rock, I knew repelling in my dress would add unnecessary risk.

Consider one day versus two. Bivying on the summit was a special experience, but it also added more difficulty to the climb. Hauling overnight gear, food and water for six people, and wedding attire was a lot of work. A single-day elopement would have been easier, but wouldn’t have given us as much control over what time we’d reach the summit to say our vows. ▲▲



MINDFUL MOUNTAINEERS

Enhancing Outdoor Experiences Through Mindfulness

By Lori Heath and Liz McNett Crowl, Foothills Super Volunteers

A gentle drizzle begins to fall as Foothills hike and urban walks leaders Lori Heath and Liz McNett Crowl gather with Mountaineers for a Mindful Outdoor Experience at Saint Edwards State Park. The activity begins with a yoga-like warm up, breathwork exercises, and a poem before starting down the trail. Walking at a slow pace, Lori encourages participants to pay attention to the feeling of their feet on the trail and notice more subtle sensations – the weight of each step, the stretch of each muscle, the tickle of rain on the skin – to increase awareness of their physical bodies. The goal is to observe with curiosity, as if seeing something for the first time.

One participant, Andrea Mueller, is captivated by the gorgeous maple leaves that float in the wind like a river among the canvas of fall colors. “I felt refreshed, renewed, and invigorated,” she would later recall. “Instead of focusing on other things that were not relevant in that moment, I was able to connect with nature in a more vibrant way. My mind really slowed down. I realized even more how intricate nature is and how interdependent we are with nature.”

What is mindfulness?

Rooted in Buddhist and Hindu tradition, mindfulness is the practice of paying purposeful attention to the present moment without judgement of what arises in the mind. By practicing mindfulness with patience and compassion, you train your mind to be less distracted by thoughts, feelings, or worries that arise. Over time, this practice improves health and performance, and you may notice an increased ability to focus, relax, and experience calmness and contentment.

Mindfulness can be practiced during formal meditation or everyday activities like cooking, cleaning, and recreating outdoors. Appreciating the cool breeze against your face as you hike, noticing the sunlight reflecting off a windowsill as you do laundry, or focusing on your breath as you prepare a meal are all examples of mindfulness.

While mindfulness can be practiced anywhere, the natural world provides a compelling environment for mindful experiences. Exploring mindfulness in nature is a healing practice that nourishes both ourselves and the environment we move through. One popular form of mindfulness that



Left page: A cloudy hike in Olympic National Park. Photo by Nate Derrick.
Right: Calming trailside scenery offers the perfect opportunity to take a few mindful moments and check in with your body. Photo by Skye Michel.



inspires Mountaineers activities is the Japanese practice of Shinrin-Yoku, or Forest Bathing. This process of therapeutic relaxation involves focusing on sensory engagement to connect with nature. By cultivating a connection to nature through mindfulness, we discover that when we respect and protect the planet, we respect and protect ourselves.

Mindful Outdoor Experiences at The Mountaineers

Mountaineers Mindful Outdoor Experiences blend the benefits of time in nature with those of physical activity to increase self-awareness. Rather than focusing on distance or pace, Mindful Outdoor Experiences prioritize your body, breath, and surroundings, allowing you to increase bodily awareness and deepen your connection to the natural world.

During Mindful Outdoor Experiences, we advise against letting concepts such as “mindfulness” or “walking meditation” trick participants into forcing a particular experience. There’s no expectation to accomplish a certain number of miles, identify a certain amount of flora, or achieve a certain level of calm. Instead, participants are simply encouraged to settle into the present moment and notice what it has to offer. For any given Mindful Outdoor Experience, there is no agenda. We may not go fast, and we may not go far - there is no other objective than to simply “be.”

There are many ways to incorporate mindfulness into Mountaineers outdoor activities. Lori likes to start with a land

acknowledgement and expression of gratitude, reminding participants of the importance of honoring Indigenous lands, appreciating nature’s inherent value, and embracing reciprocity. Participants are encouraged to consider nature as a partner rather than the setting for an activity, and remember that we are all a part of the ecosystem, not just visitors. Lori suggests participants go beyond Leave No Trace by honoring the lands, waters, and other living things as loved ones, referencing the guidance of Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh: “Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet.”

To incorporate mindfulness into her trips, Liz likes to include breath techniques, such as deep breathing and walking exercises that activate the parasympathetic nervous system and invoke feelings of calm and relaxation, or seated meditations to practice while taking a trail break. During her activities, participants are encouraged to engage their senses by observing the landscape and noticing how certain features - like the changing shades of a leaf in shadow and light, or the tone and clarity of a nearby sound - make them feel.

Mindful experiences in practice

Although there is always a planned route during a Mindful Outdoor Experience, what is most important is to enjoy the journey. Our pace is slow, allowing participants to awaken their senses and notice the details of their surroundings. After walking or hiking for a certain amount of time, we decide as a group whether to complete the planned route, turn

back the way we came, or take a shorter route. When the activity is complete, participants are free to leave, but most choose to stay for a brief outdoor meditation followed by an opportunity to voluntarily share reflections or insights.

On a recent mindful walk, participant Carol Johnson experienced a great sense of peace after paying attention to the sounds of her footsteps, the fluttering of the leaves, and the soft kisses of the breeze. Another participant, Kay Shi, came to appreciate trees in a completely new way, noticing how their entwined branches resembled a loving embrace akin to a hug between humans, as if the trees have relationships to each other just like people. "Because we are together, the wonder can be shared," noted Deepti Scharf, who, after a Mindful Outdoor Experience, felt a stronger connection to her fellow hikers. "The connection to nature is so much deeper when we are also connected to each other."

Andrea Mueller applies learnings from her Mindful Outdoor Experiences to daily life. Whenever her mind creates an overwhelming whirlwind, she takes deep breaths and imagines those beautiful maple leaves floating down the river, while her thoughts flow with them. "Connecting with nature is a holistic medicine," she shared. "Being in nature rejuvenates me."

Often, just a few moments of mindfulness can help you feel calmer and more connected to the world around you. You don't need to spend hours walking through the forest. Just a few moments of awareness of your body, breath, or senses can bring peace, contentment, and relaxation to your daily life. ▲▲



A mindful moment in Magnuson Park. Photo by Christina Buckman.

In addition to Mindful Outdoor Experiences, the Foothills Branch is incorporating mindfulness into other activities, including sound baths, yoga hikes, and yoga walks. Learn more about how to incorporate mindfulness into the trips you lead by watching the recording of our Leadership Development Series seminar, "Facilitating Mindful Outdoor Experiences": mountaineers.org/facilitating-mindful-experiences.

TIPS FOR BEGINNING YOUR MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Start small. Even five minutes a day of deep breathing can make a difference in your stress levels, decision making, and ability to focus. Start by bringing awareness to your breath, focusing on your inhale and exhale. Slowly add a few minutes each week to deepen your meditation practice.

Make mindfulness a habit. Think of mindfulness as a non-negotiable part of your routine. Find a time within your day to dedicate 5-10 minutes to yourself. It could be in the morning, on your lunch break, or before you go to bed. If you try mornings and it doesn't work, don't give up; try a different time. Liz meditates in the morning for 10-20 minutes and again before bedtime. Lori finds it helpful to incorporate mindfulness into daily activities. For example, when washing the dishes, she makes a point to be aware of the sensations of the water, soap, and dishes in her hands.

Use a guided mindfulness or meditation app. Guided mindfulness and meditation apps help you learn the basics and see which styles of practice you prefer. Liz recommends the HealthyMinds Innovation app, and especially likes meditations that focus on breathing techniques and body scans. YouTube also has a wealth of guided meditations to explore.

Take your practice outside. Incorporating mindfulness into your hikes or walks can be simple. One way to start is by focusing on your senses. Notice the colors and textures along the trail. Listen to the birds and wind in the trees. Feel the rain, sun, or wind on your face. Notice the sensations of your feet as you walk or your breath as you move. Another way to incorporate mindfulness is by adopting a slower pace. Stop often and observe your surroundings. Sit in silence. Allow yourself to relax.

Don't give up. If at first you find it hard to stay focused, don't be discouraged. With regular practice over time, you'll find it easier to concentrate. Avoid judging any thought or emotion that arises. Be patient with yourself as you develop your mindfulness practice.



A GUIDE TO MINDFUL MOMENTS

Move with awareness

What does it feel like to “walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet”?

Pay attention to how your body moves through your environment. As you lift and lower your legs, notice the weight of each step and the feeling in your foot as it connects with the ground. Then, bring your attention to the stretch of the muscles as you walk, the strength in your legs as you stand, and the way your arms move at your sides. What else do you notice about your body as you move?

Focus on your breath

As you breathe, feel the air as it moves around you and within you. Spend a few moments just noticing how the air fills your lungs and moves through you.

With each breath, consider Thich Nhat Hanh’s words:

Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in.
Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out.
Breathing in, I know that I am alive.
Breathing out, I feel the joy of being alive.

Invite curiosity

Nature is brimming with displays that evoke awe and curiosity. As you walk, notice examples of nature’s complexity, like a tree stretching straight and tall toward the sky, a carefully constructed bird nest, or an intricately woven spider web. What else sparks your curiosity?

Befriend the trees

Find a tree that is calling out to you and sit with it like it is a friend. Listen with all your senses. What might the tree

have to offer you? What might you offer the tree?

Like a mirror, observe the tree and use your body to imitate its shapes. Feel free to move from tree to tree, befriending new lifeforms and mirroring their shapes.

Mind your senses

Notice which of your senses feels an impulse to explore, and go with it.

Smell: Wander about and use your sense of smell to explore your environment. How many smells do you notice? Experiment with other senses as you explore smell. Many things become more fragrant when you touch them. Try smelling with your eyes closed. Where are these smells taking you?

Listen: Pay attention to the sounds of your environment and notice if there is a particular sound that is calling to you. Follow that sound and spend some time with it. You don’t need to analyze the sound or identify its source. Just listen.

Look: Wander around and use your vision to notice even the littlest details. What marvels can you find? Move through areas of dappled light, exploring any sensations that arise as you move between light and shadow. Hold out your hands and notice the light and shadow moving across them. What does it feel like to see light and shadow intermingling in your hands? Observe the subtle movements around you. Can you see light dancing on water or leaves shimmering on trees? What else around you is in motion?

Feel: Explore the textures of your surroundings. Be curious. You might think you already know what something feels like, but allow yourself to be surprised by nature’s touch.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE FOR MENSTRUATORS OUTDOORS

By Angie Marie, Leadership Development Speaker

Angie on the summit of Mt. Adams. All photos courtesy of Angie Marie.



Friends helping Angie cross the Lewis River on a backpacking trip.



Discussing terrain on the South Climb of Mt. Adams.

When I was 14, I got my period while canoeing to an island with a bunch of boys at summer camp. Moving outdoors was my favorite thing to do - but at that moment, I felt panicked and ashamed of my body.

Half the world experiences menstrual periods in their lifetimes, and 100% of the population exists because of them. Yet, our culture teaches us to hide, neglect, and even suppress our natural cycles. Outdoor adventure culture is no exception. I've heard countless stories of menstruators hiding tampons up their base layer sleeves, periods coming unexpectedly on mountaintops, and leaders cracking jokes about participants being cranky during "their time of the month."

As outdoor leaders and enthusiasts, we have the power and responsibility to remove the stigma around menstruation. After all, menstrual cycles are intricately linked with nature. If we claim to honor and respect outer nature, we need to normalize and celebrate our inner nature, too. By empowering menstruators to confidently manage the processes of backcountry periods, we foster a more inclusive outdoors.

Tips for period management in the backcountry

Build your backcountry period set-up

If you love spending time outdoors and also have periods, both will inevitably happen at the same time. Use these four steps to prep your gear for a period in the backcountry:

Learn your product options

Take time to try different period gear for different outdoor activities, and see which ones feel best for your preferences and sports.

Period panties: Underwear designed to absorb several pads' or tampons' worth of blood.

- Pros: An environmentally sustainable option, many cuts and styles are available with different absorbency options.
- Cons: Can't be washed thoroughly on expeditions, and dirty panties need to be separated from clean. They're heavier than other options, and not watersport friendly.

Tampons: Absorbent material that's inserted into the vagina with an applicator or clean fingers.

- Pros: Convenient to use and can be found at most retail stores. It's easy to separate used products from new, and disposal is simple with a trash baggie.
- Cons: Produces waste that must be packed out. Requires clean hands for insertion, and the string can cause uncomfortable chafing.

Menstrual cups or discs: A flexible vessel inserted through the vaginal canal that sits below the cervix to catch blood until emptied.

- Pros: An eco-friendly option with a long use life (some disposable options exist). Lightweight and compact, and doesn't cause chafing or distracting sensations.
- Cons: To use effectively takes practice. Blood needs to be disposed of in a low-impact way, and the product is harder to clean in the backcountry.

Pads: Blood-absorbing material attached to underwear.

- Pros: It's easy to tell when the pad needs to be replaced, and using pads overnight (in conjunction with another product) provides additional protection from leaks while camping. Reusable options are available.
- Cons: Can cause chafing. Not water friendly, and creates waste that must be disposed of responsibly.

Organize your backcountry kit

A great outdoor period kit will help you keep items together and clean. No matter what period products you use, your kit needs:

- **A container to store everything.** Try using a reusable, sealable bag or plastic container with a lid to avoid generating waste by using plastic baggies.
- **A way to keep used and new items separate.** Use one bag for clean supplies such as fresh toilet paper, pads/tampons, hand sanitizer, etc. Use another bag to store the used products. If you're using a clear plastic bag for used products, you can make the bag opaque by covering it with tape or marker. Adding baking soda, aspirin, or coffee grounds to the bag helps absorb odor, if that bothers you. When you get back from your trip, restock all items in the supplies bag, and dispose of or wash the contents of your used bag.
- **Consider pre-made kits (especially if you're a trip leader).** Some small businesses make pre-assembled period kits. These are great for people who don't want to find all the pieces themselves, or for leaders who want to be prepared if a participant forgets to bring supplies.
- **Going eco-friendly.** If you choose to use a cup in the backcountry, your kit might consist of that supply baggie, a little squeeze bottle of biodegradable soap, and an extra bag to hold your cup or period panties when they're no longer needed. To avoid generating toilet paper waste, you can attach a squeezable backcountry bidet to your water bottle.

Practice tools at home

Let's be real: every outdoorsperson has had an awkward experience with pee, poop, or periods. Like all outdoor learning opportunities, there's no shame in an accidental mishap.

Practicing how to use your kit at home will relieve a lot of stress when you're in the backcountry. You want to feel familiar and comfortable with your system before heading out, so consider these tips before you go:

- **Check supply stock:** Make a list of what you'll need for your kit and save it in an easily accessible area (like your phone), so you have something to reference that will remind you what supplies need restocking.
- **Repackage supplies:** Gather all your supplies and select the amount you need for your trip. Repackage these supplies into your kit to cut down on weight and space.
- **Test new tools:** If you haven't used any of the items in your kit, try them at home first.
- **Final pre-trip check:** Before leaving on your trip, mentally and visually check you have everything you need to stay comfortable and clean.



Angie feeling right at home next to Elliott Glacier on Mt. Hood.



Exploring Ross Lake in the North Cascades by sea kayak.



Creating memories on a very windy day in the Goat Rocks Wilderness.

Be a steward

When dealing with fluids and disposables, it's important to minimize our impact on the environment. Being a mindful outdoor recreator means understanding an outdoor area's guidelines and following Leave No Trace principles.

Wildlife considerations: There is no evidence that bears are attracted to menstrual fluid. Still, menstrual products are considered "smellable items" in bear country. Store any toiletries that have a potential scent in a bear-proof hang or container, including menstrual supplies and waste.

Trash disposal: Never leave anything in the backcountry. All menstrual products, including tampons and toilet paper, must be packed out with your trash. Don't put pads or tampons into vault toilets - they take hundreds of years to decompose and could be found by animals or require removal by a ranger.

Emptying cups or discs: The best option for blood management is to pack it out, if possible (or if the area requires), in which case you can use a wag bag or sealable container. You must pack out your blood in alpine environments, like glacier or snow climbs. Where allowed, you can empty your cup into a cathole 6-8 inches deep and 200 feet from water sources, trails, and campsites. Fill your hole back in and mark it with a stick.

Washing period underwear and cups: Wash underwear and rinse cups at least 200 feet from water sources, trails, and campsites, and make sure to use biodegradable soap and broadcast used water (meaning, cast your water across a large area so it spreads out). Bring another pair of underwear that you can wear while your wet underwear dries. Always use clean, decontaminated water for washing.

Preparing for premenstrual and menstrual discomfort

Many menstruators feel discomfort in the week before their period starts. The time between ovulation (when the ovary releases an egg) and a period is called the "luteal phase." During this phase, the body produces more of the progesterone hormone, which elevates body temperature (making it harder to cool off during energy expenditure) and slows digestion (making you potentially feel bloated or constipated). Increased progesterone levels also increase the body's heart rate and respiratory rate (so your breathing may feel more labored), as well as metabolism (so you may feel hungrier and need to intake more calories).

To minimize premenstrual discomfort during the luteal phase, you can:

- Make sure you're taking in enough calories, and prioritize eating protein within 30 minutes after exercise to maximize muscle and energy recovery.
- Get enough sleep each night and avoid overconsuming caffeine.
- Pre-load electrolytes and hydration before a trip.
- Ease premenstrual cramping with magnesium, zinc, and omega-3 fatty acids the week before your period.

- Eat foods rich in nitric oxide (like beets, pomegranates, watermelon, and spinach), if you're prone to menstrual headaches.
- Ask a doctor about magnesium supplements or additional ways to increase fiber intake if constipation is an issue.

When your period arrives, you might notice other symptoms such as cramping, fatigue (especially if you have heavy periods), or "period poops" – which are a real thing due to hormone fluctuations. Noting what is and isn't normal for you and planning ahead can help you prevent or manage symptoms when they arise.

Research shows that you can perform your best during *all* parts of your cycle – so prepare for a great adventure, no matter what. If your period is going to happen while you're in the backcountry:

- Track your patterns, signs, and symptoms ahead of time. Understanding your body and your cycle can help you distinguish between a normal bodily response and medical issue. There's no proven healthy and natural way to delay a period, but tracking it can help you prepare.
- Avoid tight waistbands that aggravate stomach problems.
- Wear period panties as a backup if you're worried about leaks, or wear dark, patterned bottoms that can hide any visual signs of leakage.
- Pack a clean, plastic glove in your first aid kit. In a pinch, the glove is helpful if your hands are dirty and a quick product change is needed.
- Check the regulations of the area you are visiting to figure out what the best products are to bring.

How outdoor leaders can support people with periods

Getting your period in the backcountry shouldn't be shameful. Unfortunately, embarrassment is common, and many people suffer in silence rather than ask a leader for supplies.

When trip leaders and guides bring menstrual cycle empowerment into their orientation materials and trip supplies, people with periods feel more comfortable and included. Remember, half the world has periods, so embracing and supporting menstruation is essential to creating a welcoming outdoor culture.

Planning for and accommodating periods on trips

Welcome packets, pre-trip emails, and website FAQ's often cover topics like pooping and peeing but rarely discuss periods. Menstrual care is a crucial topic in pre-trip orientation materials. When planning your trip, here are questions to consider:

- How does the location of the trip influence how menstruators will manage their period?
- What supplies will be provided? What supplies does the menstruator need to bring? Where will a menstruator find supplies during the trip?

- What is the expectation for pack in/pack out of bodily fluid and supplies?
- Who should menstruators talk to during a trip if they need something?

Stay period-aware in the field

Outdoor leaders manage safety, comfort, and happiness for a group, and menstrual health is related to all three. Guides and trip leaders can build their leadership skills by considering these tips:

- When demonstrating Leave No Trace practices such as catholes and where to urinate, address menstrual periods, too.
- Use clear leader language. No "Aunt Flo," "time of the month," "curse," or "special feminine needs." Just say, "If you're changing a menstrual product..."
- Remember that menstrual products may be "smellable items" in bear country.
- A full menstrual cycle may bring cyclical changes in how menstruators feel, think, act, and perform. Manage these fluctuations just as you'd manage any other group dynamic.
- Review wilderness medicine training to know what is and isn't normal during a period, and when to evacuate for a potential medical condition.

Embracing all our seasons

As adventurers, we appreciate the dynamic nature of the wild. Just as we encounter changing winds, rain, rivers, and terrain, a menstruator's physiology is dynamic and constantly shifting.

I view the menstrual cycle as a set of four seasons. Why not embrace the adventure of each? Your period might be an inner winter, a time to slow down and reconnect with your roots. After it ends, you might feel an inner spring, with increasing energy and a buzz of inspiration. Ovulation might feel like an inner summer, when you can crush long days and perform in your brightest colors. And the premenstrual week might feel like an inner autumn, a time to prune back to what's most important to you.

Nothing blooms year-round. A garden, the tides, animals hibernating... Nature's cycles ensure that the planet has periods of high and low, push and pull, create and rest. We must remind ourselves that humans are the same way.

Since I decided to look at my period as a connection to nature, I've had my period at the top of Mt. Hood, in the depths of the Grand Canyon, and across the finish line of a 100-mile ultramarathon. In these moments, I feel connected to half of the other adventurers out there who know exactly what I'm experiencing.

Removing the stigma around menstrual cycles is just one way we can empower communities in the outdoors and reduce barriers to adventure. Together, Mountaineers can shift the way we think and talk about menstrual cycles so that our community feels prepared and empowered to get outdoors during all phases of life. ▲▲

CHASING THE LIGHTS

My Unexpected Journey to Witness the Aurora and Why 2025 Could Be the Year to See Them Again

By Nathaniel Rees, Associate Manager of Policy & Planning

I was first introduced to the northern lights (or aurora borealis) through *The Golden Compass*, a fantasy book in which parallel universes abound, talking polar bears stalk the icy landscape, and the aurora dances overhead. At eight years old, talking polar bears sounded a lot more plausible than the northern lights. *What do you mean the sky shimmers with vivid ribbons of red, green, and magenta?* As soon as I confirmed with my parents that the aurora was, in fact, real and viewable on Earth, seeing the lights vaulted to the top of my bucket list.

I figured that my best chance to see the northern lights would be booking a flight to somewhere cold and distant - Norway, perhaps, or Iceland. After all, Aurora-Chasing 101 is basically: travel north. But life had other plans. I didn't catch the aurora on some desolate snowfield near the North Pole. The first time I saw the lights, I did travel north, and I was on a snowfield that you could describe as desolate - but I was less than 90 miles from downtown Seattle.

What causes these celestial light shows?

According to research published in the journal *Nature Communications*, the aurora is caused by the "precipitation of very energetic magnetosheath particles from the magnetospheric boundary layer on the dayside... [by] quasi-static, field aligned currents... [or by] energetic electrons accelerated by Alfvénic fluctuations." If you're a physicist by trade, congrats on knowing what a magnetosheath particle is. Personally, that sentence nearly gave me an aneurysm.

A simpler explanation is that the aurora forms when charged particles from the sun collide with Earth's upper atmosphere at incredible speeds. That process begins when a triggering event - such as an explosion from the sun's surface - releases charged particles into the atmosphere. These particles are then carried by solar wind (a continuous flow of particles away from the sun) toward our planet.

"Flow" is a bit of an understatement - particles carried by solar wind surf along this cosmic highway at speeds up to 45-million miles per hour. When these charged particles reach

our thin upper atmosphere, they collide with nitrogen and oxygen, creating the dancing reds, greens, and magentas that we call the aurora.

That's how a normal aurora forms. But the most impressive and vivid light shows occur after a coronal mass ejection - essentially, a massive sneeze by the sun (like a Dad Sneeze, but less violent). These ejections can send up to a million tonnes of particles barreling toward Earth's atmosphere.

Last May, a stunning seven coronal mass ejections occurred in the span of four days (again, like a Dad Sneeze, one is never enough). According to NASA, the resulting auroras were probably the strongest display in 500 years. Folks in unexpected places, such as Florida and Northern India, even reported sightings.

In Washington, it seemed as though everyone and their mother saw the dancing lights. But if you missed the show, or just want another bite of the apple, fear not: 2025 is shaping up to be an even better year for aurora sightings.

An unexpected light show on Mt. Baker

Confession: even as a self-proclaimed aurora-chaser, I had no idea that Washington was poised to experience a once-in-500-year northern lights viewing experience last May. On the day of the strongest lights, May 10, I was busy ascending to 7,000 feet on Mt. Baker as part of the final field trip for The Mountaineers Winter Mountaineering and Advanced Crevasse Rescue course.

That evening, as our crew boiled snow and prepped our dehydrated dinners, the conversation inevitably turned to bucket list trips. (Mountaineers love nothing more than talking about other adventures when they're smack in the middle of one.) I mentioned that my dream was to travel to see the northern lights. Our trip leader looked up from his Mountain House lasagna and said: "You won't have to travel far. Just step outside your tent tonight, dude." Everyone but me laughed - clearly, I'd been living under a rock when the aurora storm was forecast. It had never felt so good to be the butt of a joke.



Clockwise from top: The light show unfolds over The Mountaineers camp, nestled just below the Easton Glacier on Mt. Baker. Photo by Nathaniel Rees. The northern lights dance over Sherman Peak, a sub-summit of Mt. Baker. Photo by Manny Pacheco. A skier ascends the Squak Glacier after an unforgettable night of aurora-gazing. Photo by Manny Pacheco.

I won't forget the moment I stepped outside my tent at midnight and saw the northern lights for the first time. The sky was awash with threads of ephemeral greens, magentas, and reds, thrumming through the night as though they had a life of their own. I journaled afterward that the lights were "transcendental," "magical," "hypnotic" - but no words could adequately capture how I felt. What I will say is that the experience moved me to tears. And that I now have a new line in my bucket list: see the aurora again.

Turns out, I may not have to wait very long.

2025: A blockbuster year for auroras

While we probably won't see another once-in-500-years event, the 2025 aurora season is shaping up to be the most active in over a decade.

That's because of heightened solar activity associated with the current solar cycle. The sun operates on an 11-year cycle, and scientists believe we're near or just past the peak of that cycle: an especially busy phase called the Solar Maximum. In other words, the sun is wide awake and feeling energetic,

which means there's a high probability we'll see supercharged displays of the northern lights this year.

So, how can you maximize your chance of seeing the aurora? If you live in northern parts of the U.S., you may not have to travel further than your backyard. And while November through February offer the darkest nights, scientists say March and September could be especially breathtaking months for auroras.

Chasers be warned, though: auroras are fickle creatures. They often appear at a moment's notice and fade to nothing within a blink of an eye, so be prepared to stand outside for hours in the hopes of catching a glimpse. That's why it's a good idea to follow aurora alerts. Ever since I nearly missed last May's auroras, I've used the Hello Aurora app to track the likelihood of seeing the lights in Seattle. And if you are lucky enough to catch a glimpse, help track the aurora by reporting your sighting at NASA's [Aurorasaurus.org](https://aurorasaurus.org).

Scientists expect 2025 to be a historic year for aurora sightings - one we'll be talking about and reminiscing upon for generations. Happy chasing! ▲▲

A full-page photograph of a man, Robert Long, climbing a large, textured tree trunk in a forest. He is wearing a light-colored shirt, dark pants, and a cap. A blue scent dispenser is attached to the tree above him. The background shows other trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy.

THE WOLVERINE'S RETURN TO THE NORTH CASCADES

By Melissa Lutz Blouin, 2-year member and science writer

Robert Long, Senior Conservation Scientist and Director, Living Northwest Program, Wildlife Conservation, at the Woodland Park Zoo, climbs a tree to deploy a scent dispenser designed to attract wolverines. All photos courtesy of Robert Long.

The chances of seeing a wolverine in the North Cascades are low but no longer zero, thanks to the intrepid animal's return from Canada.

Wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) disappeared from the Cascades in the early 1900s after being hunted, trapped, and poisoned into extinction in the lower 48 states. For the next 100 years, the animal appeared only a handful of times in the Cascade mountains until 2012, when researchers discovered an active wolverine den in Washington state, suggesting that wolverines are re-establishing territory in the Pacific Northwest. With the wolverines' return, scientists are eager to learn more about these elusive creatures.

Wolverines are the largest land-dwelling member of the weasel family, which includes European badgers, stoats, and otters. Adults weigh between 20 and 55 pounds but can take down a deer or elk under the right circumstances. They dwell in high alpine environments and thrive in deep snow, which females use to build dens for birthing their "kits" in late February to early March. During spring, a persistent snowpack is essential for the dens, which keep kits insulated and safe from predation. To find food, wolverines travel extensive distances until their keen sense of smell detects carcasses (either on the ground's surface or buried beneath snow, depending on the season) or small mammals such as squirrels, marmots, and hares to catch and kill.

An important piece of wolverine research is observing how they move across the landscape. "Wolverines are built to move," said Robert Long, senior conservation scientist at the Woodland Park Zoo. "They are tenacious and tough and avoid people at all costs." At least one wolverine has a range the size of Rhode Island and regularly travels between Washington state and British Columbia.

Observing the movement patterns of wolverines can help researchers understand how best to support the return of these rare carnivores, which were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2023. However, due to their elusive nature, observation can be challenging.

"Wolverines live in rugged, hard-to-access places," said Long. To gather information on wolverine behavior, he and conservation specialist Paula MacKay work with a network of local, state, and national governments; nonprofit organizations; Native American tribes; and other groups to study wolverines in their natural habitats.

"We've collected hundreds of wolverine observations, which we hope to use to show people how alive the wilderness is, even in the winter," said Stephanie Williams, a mountain guide and field biologist who co-founded the Cascades Wolverine Project in 2017.

Most of the observations come from camera "traps" in remote, high alpine regions. The traps consist of bait, such as animal carcass parts enhanced with other smells to attract wolverines. Williams and her team (who have collective experience as backcountry mountain guides and avalanche forecasters) spend winters trekking into the backcountry with animal parts to re-bait traps.



A wolverine attracted by a scent bait lure is captured on film with a nearby, motion-sensitive camera set.

More recently, Long, MacKay, and others worked with Microsoft to develop automated scent dispensers for the camera traps. The ingredients for these scent dispensers include liquid beaver castoreum oil, pure skunk extract, and fish oil, as well as propylene glycol and water which reduce the freezing point to -40 degrees Celsius so the lures function throughout winter.

The population of wolverines in the North Cascades is currently estimated to be around twenty-five. According to Long and Williams, Mountaineers interested in wolverine conservation can help in significant ways:

Report sightings or tracks. Wolverines have five toes on their front and hind feet. Sometimes mistaken for lynx, wolf, or pine marten, wolverine tracks can range from 3.5 to 7 inches long and 3 to 5 inches wide. If you see a wolverine or encounter tracks, you can contribute to science by submitting your wildlife observation at CascadesWolverineProject.org or by emailing info@CascadesWolverineProject.org. Be sure to record the time, date, and location of your sighting, and take a photograph of the trail pattern and the tracks with something to compare for scale, such as a ski pole or your hand.

Be aware of your environmental impact, in the mountains and at home. "Wolverines are a species we could lose if

humans don't slow down the effects of climate change," Long said. "We can make choices that make their disappearance less likely." In the mountains, lessening our impact could involve avoiding areas where wolverines have dens. At home, it might involve advocating for policies that protect wolverine habitats and reduce the impacts of climate change. "We can all play a role in correcting course," said Williams. "You just need to take the small steps that you are able to do." ▲▲

Melissa Lutz Blouin is a science writer, hike leader, outdoorswoman, and RYT200-hour yoga instructor based in Mill Creek, Washington. Visit her online at MelissaLutzBlouin.com and follow her on Instagram @melissimawritesandmoves.



Top: A wolverine examines a scent bait lure in the North Cascades. Like a human fingerprint, researchers can identify individual wolverines by the unique pattern of light-colored fur around the neck and chest area. Bottom: A researcher sets up an automatic scent dispenser. These dispensers allow more time in between researcher revisits to wolverine dwelling sites.



Finding a Slower Pace

A Global Adventure in Finland

By Amy Carlsen, Global Adventures participant

Looking out over the fells. Photo by Betty Bollert.

Lying in the tundra miles north of the Arctic Circle, the sun shines warmly on my face. The autumn air smells fresh and crisp. If I listen closely, I can hear the distant tweet of birds and wind whistling over the fells. This is what I've learned to look forward to on every hike: a slow moment to rest.

Around me, others lie flat on their backs, spread out across the ground. In the U.S., passing hikers might assume something was wrong with our group and pause to check in. But in Finland, lying quietly in the tundra after your noontime meal is perfectly normal. I drift off to sleep, feeling miles away from my hectic life in Seattle.

The journey

Before finding myself in Finland, I had been feeling a gnawing sense of unrest in my life. This Global Adventures opportunity felt like my chance at a reprieve. The trip met all my criteria: moderate daily hikes of seven to 12 miles with low elevation gain, a warm bed to sleep in every night, and a chance to unplug from the world. And so, with my passport, sturdy boots, and ample gear, I embarked on the adventure.

After sixteen hours of travel and a day of recovering from jetlag in Helsinki, our group of Mountaineers came together. When the bus pulled up to our cabin in Hossa National Park, our guide, Petri, was waiting. A calm and quiet man, Petri would be with us for the entirety of this ten-day trip, serving as our hike leader, naturalist, breakfast chef, and informer on

the culture and ways of the Finnish people. As twelve chatty Americans landed in the cabin that first night after a very long day of travel, I wondered what he thought of us. The group's lively energy, and the beautiful scenery, made me hopeful that these ten days in Finland would assuage my unrest.

Hiking in Finland

Over the next few days, I discovered the joys of Finland's unfamiliar landscape. Most of Finland is at sea level and north of 60 degrees latitude, roughly the same latitude as Anchorage, Alaska. Instead of towering mountains, Finland is covered with rolling hills and over 168,000 clear-blue lakes. You can't go far without encountering one of these lakes, and Finnish lore has it that drinking directly from their streams brings good luck. Four of us indulged. The water was clean, cool, and refreshing.

More than 10,000 years ago, glaciers carved through Finland, their slow retreat leaving ridges of rock and debris called *esker*. Hiking along the top of these *esker* ridges in the Hossa National Park was a new experience. On both sides of the ridge, land sloped downward, marking paths where the glacier made its retreat years ago.

As we traveled north of the Arctic Circle, we also hiked over fells, which literally translates to "mountain roots." These fells are the result of gradual erosion of the mountains over thousands of years. Hiking the fells proved more challenging



Blueberries and lingonberries. Photo by Amy Carlsen.

than expected as their appearance was quite deceiving. They looked like they had low elevation, but we kept summiting one fell only to be met by another.

I was used to hiking in the Pacific Northwest for the incredible views attained through hard work, steep elevation gain, and rocky paths. In Finland, the trails were soft and boggy amid scenes of peaceful lakes, curious reindeer, and sweeping plains. The pace set by Petri was slow, so the hike was more about the journey than the destination. We experienced this slower pace in other aspects of the hike, too: while eating lunch around the fire, watching free-range reindeer meander, and enjoying moments of silence as we stopped to listen to a babbling stream. What we experienced was *beauty in simplicity*.

A lesson in slowing down

All in all, we hiked approximately 70 miles through three of Finland's forty-one national parks. I came to Finland frazzled and lacking the joy I once found through hiking. What I discovered was an opportunity to slow down.

Everything about hiking in Finland is a lesson in appreciating slowness: the lakes encourage you to take the time to enjoy a cool drink or a dip after a hot sauna; the berries and mushrooms along the trail inspire you to pause and pick them; even the terrain is the result of the slow process of time.

I was forced to embrace this slowness on an even deeper level when I tested positive for Covid halfway through the trip. After three days of total rest, I joined the group for the last hike.

The final miles

There is a Finnish saying, "Happiness is not found by searching, but by living." And so, I heed these words as I find myself totally relaxed, asleep in the autumn sun. After a restful moment, Petri calls us back for the closing miles of our final hike together.



Top: Resting in the tundra. Bottom: Hiking Hossa National Park. Photos by Kristy Glaze.

As I prepare to head back to my hectic day-to-day life, I vow to remember this lesson learned in Finland. So much of nature reminds me of the unhurried process of time. I see it in the changing of the seasons, smell it in the fresh scent of the pines, and feel it in the soft earthy soil beneath my feet. May I appreciate this beautiful simplicity. There is so much to experience when we slow down. ▲▲

Interested in your own international experience? We have a number of Global Adventures trips led by experienced volunteers to help you explore the world. For more information, visit mountaineers.org/globaladventures.

The Mountaineers is a volunteer-led community built around sharing knowledge and skills to safely recreate outdoors. We offer courses, activities, and events every season, and members are encouraged to participate in programs offered by any branch.

How to Sign Up for Activities

Step 1
Visit our website
mountaineers.org

Click on the big green 'Find Activities' button, or hover over the 'Activities' tab and choose 'Find Activities.'

Step 2
Filter your 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
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
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.

How to Sign Up for Courses & Clinics

Step 1
Visit our website
mountaineers.org

Click on the big green 'Find Courses' button, or hover over the 'Courses' tab and choose 'Find Courses.'

Step 2
Filter your course search

Define your search using the filter options. You can also search key words in the left hand course search bar, or at the top of our webpage.

Step 3
Select a course & register

Read the course overview to learn more about course objectives and expectations. Once you register, you will receive a confirmation email.

Note: Most courses require that you register a few months before the course start date.

Virtual Education Center

Check out our Virtual Education Center and Calendar, your home base for accessing all our virtual learning tools. Find online activities, events, and classes, and browse our educational resources for outdoor tips and skills. Visit mountaineers.org/courses/virtual-education-center to learn more.

Volunteer With Us

Interested in helping others find community and safely enjoy the natural world? There are many ways to get involved as a volunteer, such as instructing a course, hosting at one of our lodges, or helping at an event. Reach out to your branch chair to learn more about volunteering with The Mountaineers, or visit mountaineers.org/volunteerwithus.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I'm not a member? Our courses and activities are open to the public. You simply need to sign up for a guest membership at mountaineers.org/join. Guests can participate in two activities for free before joining, and unlimited courses at a higher course cost.

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, or Navigation.

How are events and activities different? Activities are primarily day-long outings that require participants to use skills in an outdoor setting. Examples include hikes, naturalist walks, or snowshoeing. Events are primarily opportunities to see presentations and socialize. Examples include summer picnics, branch banquets, and speaker series like BeWild and the Adventure Speaker Series.

What if I don't meet the prerequisites for an activity? Some of our technical activities 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 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 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. For any questions, email our Member Services team at info@mountaineers.org.

What if the course or 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.

Course Calendar Overview

Updated May 2024

Please visit 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.



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.



BELLINGHAM

Chair: AJ Schuehle, ajschuehle@hotmail.com

Website: mountaineers.org/bellingham;
bellinghammountaineers.com

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.

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

Website: mountaineers.org/everett

Founded in 1911, the Everett Branch offers several programs. As a smaller branch, we value companionship and are excited to meet new members at our in-person events including our Spring Happy Hour, Beer & Gear evening, 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 for details.

KITSAP

Chair: Melissa White, melissa.white@gmail.com

Website: mountaineers.org/kitsap

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

Website: mountaineers.org/seattle

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, friction slabs, 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: Travis Vermeer,
travisvermeer@gmail.com

Website: mountaineers.org/foothills

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.

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: Natalia Martinez-Paz,
nataliamp@gmail.com

Website: mountaineers.org/tacoma

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 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: Bob Keranen, bobkeranen@gmail.com

Website: mountaineers.org/Olympia

The Adventure Speaker Series returns on November 5 and continues on the first Wednesday of the month through March.

Branch Council Meetings are held at 6:00 PM on the second Wednesday of the month, alternating in-person and Zoom, though Zoom is always available. Members are encouraged to attend. Contact Bob Keranen for details.

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.

Sign up for Branch News

Branch eNewsletters are a great way to stay up to date. To opt in to these emails, update your Notification Preferences in your online profile.

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, 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

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.

Stevens Lodge

mountaineers.org/stevenslodge

Tired of the hustle and bustle of the big city? Come for a quiet respite to a cabin in the woods, with bunks for the whole family. Several trails are a short walk or drive from the lodge. The lodge is open Wednesday to Sunday during the winter when the Stevens Pass Ski Area is open.



Meany Lodge

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 March 15 for our annual Patrol Race.

Kitsap Forest Theater

foresttheater.com

We're thrilled to announce our enchanting 2025 season with three shows! Be swept away by the boundless imagination and storytelling of two lively and funny musicals: *Annie* and *Big Fish*, plus Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These mesmerizing, family-friendly shows promise to light up hearts of all ages, and what better way to experience them than at the Kitsap Forest Theater. More information, including tickets and audition dates, can be found on our website. Tickets make great gifts - consider buying season tickets! We also have volunteer opportunities and offer summer camps for kids.





Aligning Identity and Habits for Trail Success

By Courtenay Schurman, MS PN2 NBC-HWC

Photo by Skye Michel

When spring hits, hikers turn their sights to alpine adventures. As we welcome the new season, it can be easy to jump too quickly into activities without proper preparation. But how do we make sure to not overdo ourselves in our eagerness to visit favorite trails? And how do we maintain training programs when motivation is low, or life is distracting? Below, I share training tips inspired by writer and speaker James Clear's philosophy on identity-based habits.

Applying identity-based habits to hiking

One way to create a strong mental foundation for training is by shifting how we frame our objectives. Instead of focusing on outcomes, align habits with your identity to increase the likelihood of success. For example, instead of saying "I want to hike more" (an outcome), reframe your mindset to establish hiking as an identity by saying "I am a hiker."

Identifying yourself as a hiker then begs the question: *what do hikers do?* They move their bodies regularly, both on and off the trail. They fuel themselves to maintain energy and successfully perform during their favorite activity. They prioritize sleep and recovery to manage stress and keep their bodies strong and healthy. And they employ smart training techniques like gradually increasing elevation gain, mileage, and pack weight rather than jumping too soon into a hike they're not prepared for.

Introducing these hiking habits into your routine may seem daunting, so it's important to incorporate strategies that make these habits achievable. Consider doing things that make training seem attractive and easy to accomplish, such as placing your boots by the front door so they're easier to grab for an afternoon walk or starting your hiking journey with short, local trails and building your mileage by less than 10% per week. You could also organize hikes with friends,

track your mileage in a journal to experience the reward of steady progress, or use an app to log your trip reports and get excited for future outings by researching other trails.

Practical tips for trail success

To maintain training momentum, incorporate these actionable tips into your routine.

1. Create a pre-hike ritual that builds excitement. I like to pack my bag the night before, which notifies my dog an adventure is afoot. His unwavering enthusiasm helps get me out the door the next morning.
2. Enlist an accountability partner, class, or small group of hikers within The Mountaineers to help you stick to your plans. Join a hiking group such as GoHike or the Conditioning Hiking Series whose leaders will provide you with the support you need to thrive.
3. Attach your new hiking habits to your existing routine. For example, tell yourself that after brushing your teeth, you will do ten squats, or that before breakfast, you will do five lunges to start building your hiking muscles. Linking a hiking habit to a pre-established habit helps build momentum toward a sustainable routine. Once you have the habit established, expand it gradually to the desired length (for example, 30 minutes twice a week).

By cultivating your identity as a hiker and setting achievable goals, you can create a strong mindset to prepare and challenge yourself for the season ahead. ▲▲

Courtenay Schurman is an NSCA-CSCS certified personal trainer, Precision Nutrition Level 2 Certified Nutrition Supercoach, and co-owner of Body Results. She specializes in training outdoor athletes. For more how-to exercises or health and wellness tips, visit her website at bodyresults.com or send a question to court@bodyresults.com.

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Virtual ticketholders can participate in the online auction and view the live broadcast. All proceeds from our Annual Gala support The Mountaineers commitment to ensuring every individual can find inspiration and belonging outdoors.

Secure your virtual ticket today: mountaineers.org/gala2025