The Kootenay Mountaineer

The newsletter for people with year-round pursuits.

2018 Winter Solstice

Message from the President

I've started in to my second exciting year as KMC president and am looking forward to what challenges the year will bring. Thank you to those who attended the AGM and helped make it a very successful event. Some of the highlights from the AGM are:

- approval of funding to update the web page. Tim, Abby and Dave are working on reviewing proposals.
- Chris is putting together a grant application for a summer trail up White Queen, with the support of $2000.00 from our funds, if the application is successful.
- funds to support TAWKROC and a climbing camp for KMC members headed up by Delia.
- a donation of $500.00 per year to support high school out door programs. If you know a school that you think will benefit please send your requests with contact and program information to me and I'll present it to the executive.

Thank you to all the executive for their continuing hard work.

My first challenge this term is to find a new Director for Hiking Camp, again. There has been little response to my email so I'm asking here again for someone to step forward and take on this position. The hiking camp committee is a group of dedicated volunteers but we need someone to take over the director position. Hiking camp won't run itself.

Winter trips are well under way, as is winter. Get out there and enjoy the snow and partake in one of the upcoming trips offered by an amazing KMC trip leader. Better yet, let Phil know you would like to lead a trip of your own and become an amazing KMC trip leader.

There has been an inquiry about members attending the executive meetings. Members are welcome to attend but may not participate in the meeting in any way. If you would like to attend please email me directly.

Happy Holidays to all and please make safety your first objective when you head out into the great outdoors.

Sandra

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Contents

President's Message 1
Avalanche Awareness Survey 2
Bear Spray How-To 2
Waterline Walls, TAWKROC 2
Hut Maintenance Report 3
Book an outing? 3
Trip Reports 4
- Frog's Peak 4
- Mt. Crawford 4
- Mt. Drinnon 5
- Lost Mountain 8
- Mt. Lepsoe 8
- CBC Tower 10
- Ymir and Surrounds 10
- White Queen 12
- Four Cabins 13
- Mt. Plewman 13
- Mt. Crowe 15
- Lightning Strike and Baldy Rocks 16
- Mt. Crowe 18
- Mt. Crowe 18
- Mt. Beattie 19
- Lepsoe Cabin 21
- Mt. Crowe 22

Hiking in Nepal 24
Hiking the Via Alpina 25
Winter Trees 35
Bonnington Huts Update 36

(Editor's note: The 2nd, because this one arrived 15 minutes before publishing date)

Article submission guidelines:

Plain text is great. No need for PDF or Microsoft Word files. Simply cut and paste your text into an email to newsletter@kootenarymountaineeringclub.ca. Attach your full resolution photos to the email. Lots of photos, please.

The newsletter is published four times a year at the times of the solar calendar.

Avalanche Awareness Survey

Hi there Kootenay Mountaineering Club!

My name's Henry Finn and I'm currently a master's student working in the Avalanche Research Program at Simon Fraser University with Dr Pascal Haegeli.

Our team here at SFU is currently collaborating with Avalanche Canada on a research project that's attempting to get a better handle on how backcountry users read, understand and apply the information provided in avalanche bulletins in Canada. Obtaining a deeper understanding of people's habits and challenges will be critical in our attempts to design future products that better address the needs of different user groups.

After 43 in-depth interviews with a wide range of backcountry users this summer, we are now interested in exploring some of the themes that emerged in more detail with an online survey. Even though we are still designing the survey and won't be posting it online until March, we have started the recruitment process and would love to have you on board. The link to the sign up page on our study website can be found here: www.avbulletin.avalancheresearch.ca

One of our colleagues at Avalanche Canada has recently been in contact with Barry Janyk who is keen to get as many FMCBC members involved as possible and who kindly forwarded us your email address. Would it be possible for you to add the above link into any upcoming emails that might be going out the Kootenay Mountaineering Club members? Or if you have a newsletter, it would be fantastic if some information about the survey could be included in there? If you think this could work, let me know and I will send you the necessary information, I can also forward on a promotional slide that would work well for any talks or meetings that you might be hosting.

It would also be fantastic to hear any thoughts you might have on alternative strategies we could use for recruitment. We are especially interested in getting the perspective of any snowshoers, backcountry skiers, ice climbers or snowmobilers who might just be starting their backcountry career and have limited experience using the bulletin.

Thanks for your time. Please let us know if you have any questions! We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Cheers,

Henry

Information documents can be downloaded from the website:

Survey Postcard

Survey Information

Bear Spray How-To

This link was provided by Doug Clark in preparation of next spring…

To Live Or Die In Bear Country: Counting The Seconds In Your Grizzly Moment Of Truth

Mountain Journal's In-Depth Look At:

Grizzly Attacks, Bear Spray, And What You Need To Know

TAWCROC: Waterline Walls

From the TAWCROC website:

The Waterline Walls, located off 14th Avenue, are the most popular sport climbing destination in the West Kootenay region and this past summer the private property upon which they are located came up for sale. A developer expressed interest but prominent local rock climbing couple Mirek Hladik and June Ray stepped in and bought the property in November, with the main intention of saving the cliffs. The duo now wish to subdivide the land and have asked that TAWKROC purchase the parcel that the cliffs are located on for the price of $60,000. The land includes six walls upon which about 70 rock climbing routes are located.



Long-time KMC member Hamish Mutch belays at the top of the lower of two pitches, during the recent first ascent of "Pool Boys", the newest climb at Waterline. October, 2018. Photo by Mike Curran.

TAWCROC's website does not publish the perma-links to their blog posts. To see all the details of their fund-raising, visit their website and search their "General" category for the blog post titled: "TAWKROC Starts Campaign To Buy Waterline Walls".

Hut Maintenance Report

The report made via email to the executive committee by David Heyduck

Hey guys,

We ran a production at Huckleberry today with Paul Eagles, Bruce Reeder and myself. Even though we had a strong crew and both quads it was a long day but it would have been much longer without the extra help and the 2nd quad. Thanks for approving the new quad and helping us ramp up our capacity in the field!

I spent most of the day yesterday prepping the new quad and updating the trailer to be able to carry everything.

Pics attached.



Cheers,

Dave





Leading a trip?

Try sending out a Google Form!

Hey trip leaders! Did you know you can have participants register for your trip by filling out a Google Form instead of replying to your email? Using Google Forms has a number of benefits: it de-clutters your trip leader inbox, allows trip participants to see who else has signed up, and captures all participant emergency and carpooling information in a one-stop shop! You can even limit the number of participants who can sign up with the form! You'll also get a nice graph of responses, showing you how many participants are coming from each location for easy carpooling coordination.

Another benefit? There is a button to convert the form into a spreadsheet - print it off before you meet for the trip and all you need to do at the trailhead is check off people as they arrive. You already will have gotten their emergency contact info. Time saved!

To set up a Google Form for your trip:

- Make a copy of our helpful KMC Trip Formtemplate
- Trip leaders can then rename the form, add details about the trip, and add extra questions.
- When the trip is full, you can select the button to turn off responses which will close registration.

Trip Leaders need a Google account to make a form. However, trip participants do not need an account to fill in a form!

If you need any help creating a form or have feedback about this process, please contact Abby.



Trip Reports

Mt. Wilton (aka Frog's Peak)

I have looked at and hoped to climb iconic Frog's Peak (Mt Wilton) since I moved to the Kootenays nearly 10 years ago. Its unique 'upward looking frog head' stands out as you drive southwards in the Slocan valley.

This mountain summit has not appeared on the KMC trip schedule in the time I've been here. So, determined to give it a go, I enlisted the help of former KMC president, Steven Miros, who knows his way around the West Kootenay mountains. He said Frog's Peak had been a usual summer summit for the KMC, but overgrown logging roads and dilapidated bridges had long since made access excessively difficult.

As I was motivated and Steve was willing, the two of us kicked out on July 4th. We parked near the start of Airy Creek FSR at a dilapidated bridge and walked 6 km to where we began to ascend south up the valley between Mt Wilton and the ridge that connects to the Pallisades. The map showed the topography to be steep but not overly bad. However, it had avalanched and the resulting debris made for a very tough ascent. Steve had recently had a partial knee replacement and I was wondering how he would fare on the scramble. That question was soon put to rest as he stormed ahead and I was gasping to keep up.

I'd intended to stay in the valley and continue beneath and past Wilton summit along its west side to gain the ridge and then head back north to the summit. But a very inviting snow filled couloir looked to be a good short cut to the ridge. So, over lunch, we decided to take it. But it was steeper and the snow firmer than we had anticipated and it became a slow and difficult climb (should have taken ice axes). By shimmying up the snow's edge like riding on a saddle and boot kicking steps, we eventually gained the ridge. Then onto the summit – 6.5 hours after leaving the car! We were somewhat disappointed to not find a summit register and not know when the previous summit had been made, but were quickly distracted by the great views. The Valhallas to the north and the Palisades and Kamikaze ridge to the south. Looking at Airy to the west, we wondered if it would have been a wiser choice to summit it, instead.

Not wanting to slug our way down the same route, Steve ventured that it might be better to descend the



east side of the mountain onto the old logging roads which the KMC used about 15 years ago to access Wilton. I had done a quick recce in the area a couple weeks earlier and knew the roads were overgrown, but agreed it might be easier than going the same way that we had climbed.

Wrong! we had to confront and navigate several steep, wet, moss covered rock outcrops before dropping onto the old road, which was overgrown by alders with 4 inch diameter branches. Progress was slow for the 6 km bushwhack on the old roads through the growing darkness and significant amounts of bear scat. Eventually, we reached a good road and after another 4 km, we got back to the car, about 13 hours after we had left it.

My desire to summit Frog's Peak now well satisfied, I invite some other KMC member to replace the summit register.

Doug Clark

Mt. Crawford

Early in the morning, a big group of 19 hikers gathered to catch the 6:30am ferry across to Crawford Bay. We were at the lower trailhead by 8:00 and started to warm up immediately as we ascended the steep access road and trail. Low clouds shrouded the mountains in the morning and pretty soon we were hiking along a ridge with billowing mist all around.

The weather was mixed for the day: mix of clouds, mix of rain, mix of snow, mix of sun, mix of wind, and mix of stinging ice pellets being hurdled from the sky. Mount Crawford was invisible in the clouds, so we descended through deep snow towards Plaid Lake, trying to find the trail.

As we lost elevation, the snow melted away again and we picked huckleberries as we made our way down to the lake. Plaid Lake was a great spot for lunch - the clouds lifted slightly and the sun began to shine through! As we retraced our steps back up towards Crawford, more scenery came out beneath the rising clouds and we saw ridges studded with yellow larches and meandering valleys full of fall colours. Very scenic!



The plan was to attempt to summit Crawford if we had good weather, and as we approached the saddle again, the clouds began to pelt ice with freezing cold wind. Not good. The group hurried back down the ridge, but then fifteen minutes later the clouds broke and the sun shone and Mount Crawford's summit was unveiled as a mass of glowing quartzite beauty against blue sky. The group was tempted.

Half the hikers headed back down to catch an earlier ferry, and the other half sprinted back up the trail to summit. Crawford was a real tease, and as we scrambled up to the summit, clouds blew in again obscuring most of the view. We saw Plaid Lake far below through a gap of cloud and caught glimpses of distant snow-capped peaks.

Emmy and Andrew were very kind and waited at the trailhead so there were enough rides for the summit group to make it back. Unfortunately the MV Osprey was down for maintenance and the little MV Balfour was backlogged with a 3+ hour wait! Yikes! The trip ended with a lot of ferry logistics! Some hikers jumped on an early ferry as walk-ons with plans to hitchhike on the other side, some took the long way around via Creston, and some passed the time with beer and pizza.

Photos courtesy of Lucy Lopez.

We were: Abby Wilson, Andrew Woodward, Chaira Pretto, Whitney Mack, Emmy Vuik, Karina Gregory, Helen and Rick Foulger, Chelsea Pomar, Jessica Loucks, Kurt Young, Jun-ichi Sakata, Annie Taiatini, Gail Curry, Cameron Carter, Lucy Lopez, Tina Baldwin, David Yole, Val Utgaren



A Trip To Climb And Circumnavigate Mount Drinnon In The Valhallas

September 26th 2018

Last year Bert Port advertised a September KMC trip to climb Gregorio peak and Mt. Drinnon in the Valhallas from a camp at Drinnon pass.

This 3 day/2 night plan only attracted two 'takers' .... myself and Elena with the Charts opting for the first day only.

As it turned out we were stopped by cliffs about 100 feet from the summit ridge of Gregorio. Next day we were stopped on Mt. Drinnon because the snow slope leading to the North facing gully to the west ridge was hard ice and we had no crampons. Nevertheless it turned out to be a great trip

Not being one to give up on the original plan, Bert suggested another late September trip this year luring me with talk of a sunny few days with the fall colours and maybe a sprinkling of snow on the tops.

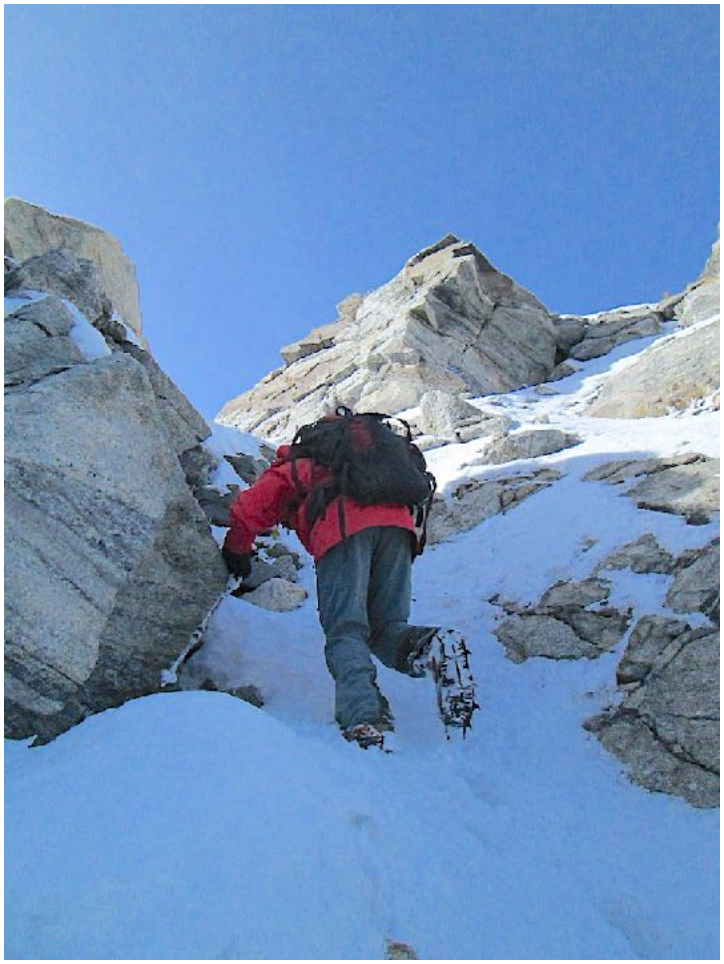
Once again we set up camp at Drinnon pass. Since the focus of this story is Mt. Drinnon, I'll leave the telling of the Gregorio story for another time



After photographing pictures of beautiful ice 'feathers' formed on the edges of the small lakes we set off for Drinnon and ascended from the campsite via grassy slopes and a grassy bench above rock slabs to the basin formed by the North and West ridges of Mt Drinnon.

Fresh snow on top of the old hard snow made the ascent of the snow slope to the North gully much easier than the previous year.





However our ice axes and crampons were essential for climbing the gully to gain traction on the snow covered rocks and dirt. We were happy to emerge from the dark gully into warm sunshine on the ridge.



We then traversed under the complex cliffs on Drinnons south side, over grass and snow patches to the South ridge. Although there was snow on the ledges, the warm rocks provided a pleasant scramble to the summit of Mt Drinnon where we had lunch.



Bert had pleasant memories of a previous trip where he glissaded down a long snow slope to the east towards Valhalla lake starting from a small lake at the foot of the South ridge. He returned through a col on the north ridge.

So with the intention of repeating this circumnavigation of the mountain, we descended the south ridge to the small lake which was still frozen. We were disappointed that there was no nice snow slope to glissade down the large gully.... Just snow covered scree slopes.

Bert's intention was to find a high level trail to the pass on the North ridge of Drinnon. (see footnote). Our first attempt at this high level traverse proved to be too high. It was also somewhat nasty going on steep grassy slopes, above cliffs, partially covered with snow. So ...we retreated back to the large gully and went lower. We could not see an obvious line through the cliffs so decided to descend below the cliff bands to see if there was a route to the pass.

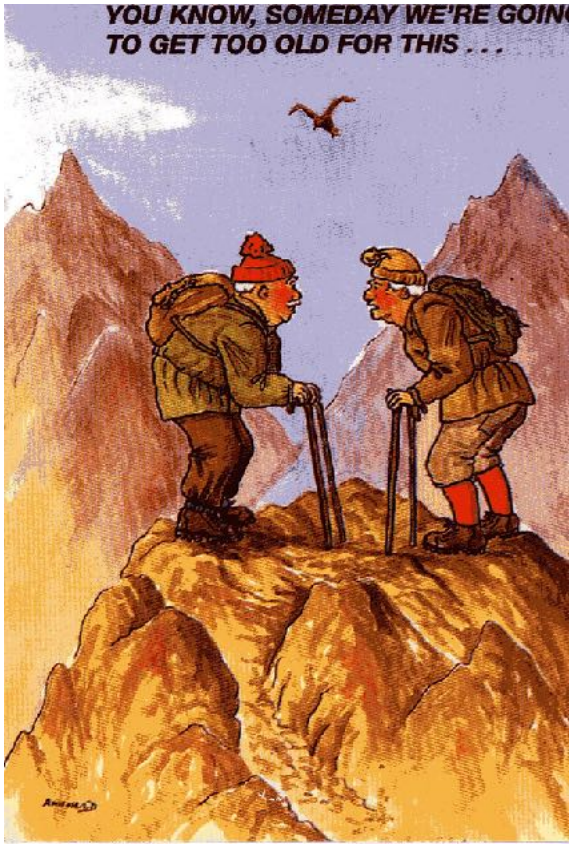
We were now below the level of Valhalla lake and although we had both traversed from Valhalla lake to the pass on a previous trip when we did the Valhalla traverse starting from Mulvey, neither of us could remember the details of the route we took ... one of the downsides of growing old!

It was about 1000 feet up to the pass with no obvious easy route through the cliff bands and rock slabs. We bit the bullet and climbed up extremely steep grass next to large rock slabs to a point where the grass ended. Our only route across the slabs was via a narrow upward sloping ledge with grassy 'moustaches' which drained water onto the slabs. Using the dry spots we did the traverse with a bulge proving to be somewhat unnerving to me with about 500 feet of slabs below my feet. The intrepid Bert led the way. Fortunately a good handhold and an under-cling hold provided a modicum of security to pass the bulge.

From there it was a straightforward hike to the pass and back to our campsite at the small lakes of Drinnon pass. It was a 10 hour day but we still had about an hour of daylight to cook our dinner and we were rewarded by the beautiful sunset colours on the summit of Mt Drinnon. A great way to end the day.



We were Bert Port and Ken Holmes



Footnote:

The history of Mulvey in the KMC website publications section mentions a mountaineers high level route from Drinnon into Mulvey with a trail cairned by Parks in 1984. All it says about the first section is... " from Drinnon Lake ascend to the pass on the north ridge of Drinnon Peak, contour and descend towards Valhalla lake". It goes on to say... "Some ill equipped hikers lacked the mountaineering experience to handle the three pass route. As a result the cairns were removed in 1995. Bannock Burn and the good trail (into Mulvey) made it obsolete as a necessary route, but it sounds like fun."

Finding a route from the pass would be a lot easier than trying to find the route in the reverse direction.

A group of 8 hikers trekked up to Lost Mountain on Thanksgiving Day. The forecast had significantly improved the day before and we enjoyed a cool, overcast day with high clouds and good views.

Lost Mountain

On the drive up, Helen announced that she "expected it to be about -3" at the trailhead, but weatherman Chris showed up in shorts which was a promising sign. We were also anticipating about 15cm of snow along the top ridges, but it had melted away to almost nothing.



The Lost Mountain trail was newly rebuilt in 2017 with support from the KMC and it's a good trail, but steep! It just goes up and up and up! With 1100m of elevation gained over 6km, we all really earned our Thanksgiving dinner.

There was some recent deadfall on the trail and Rick whipped out a massive folding saw that he admitted "even scared him a bit" and took out the trees in no time. As we reached the top, Chris ran around and nailed up more reflective markers along the route. Trail improvements!

We staggered up to the summit after a solid 3.5 hours of uphill. The clouds stayed high and the views were beautiful with snow-dusted peaks all around and valleys full of fall colours.



We were: Abby Wilson, Llewellyyn Matthews, Chris Cowan, Scott Wilson, Helen Foulger, Rick Mazzocchi, Jan Osborne, and Richard Epton

Mt. Lepsoe

With fresh snow from yesterday, but not enough for snowshoes, 25 of us met at the Strawberry Pass to check out 4 cabins on the Mt. Lepsoe side of the highway. This is part of the Rossland Range Recreation Site, that is a community tenure from government of B.C., and managed by local Friends Of the Rossland Range (FORRS).

We were such a large group that we decided to split into two gangs, the "Eh Team" coordinated by Andrea Vowell and Jill Watson, and the "Bee Team" coordinated by Bob McQueen. The Eh Team did the cabins in clockwise fashion: Up the Seven Summit trail to Booty Cabin, the new beautiful Eagle's Nest Cabin, Lepsoe Basin Cabin and down the old logging road to Sunspot Cabin, and finishing via the Old Growth Trail. The Bee Team did this all in reverse.

Only one traffic jam, at the Lepsoe Basin Cabin. Since the Bees were first to the LB Cabin, we put the fire on and heated things up for the Eh gang. It all worked well.

We met 5 skiers along the trails, several families, Ken with his new chainsaw who was clearing deadfalls, and we saw some fat tire bike tracks. Also lynx, rabbit and deer tracks. The stats were, about 4 hours of hiking including 4 cabin stops, 8 kms, 300 vertical metres,

8-15 cm of snow, sun and cloud and - 8 degrees at the LBC. All in all, a good day.



The Bee Team Leaving Lepsoe Basin Cabin, so that the Eh team could get their turn for a warm up:



The new six sided Eagle's Nest:



Checking out "The Nest":

Or group was: Bob McQueen (coordinator), Andrea Vowell (co-coodinator), Jill Watson(assistant co-coordinator), Gary Beaudry, Fran Steacy, Diane Paolini, Abby Wilson, Terry Simpson, Tina Baldwin, Alison Etter, Valerie Utgaren, Dave Brackett, Janice Isaac, Judy Evans, Dylan Saunders, Chris Cowan, Linda Monea, Krista Bourke, Jan Osborne, Ron Osborne, Ed Beynon, Hazel Beynon, Robin Sheppard, Vivian Lenardon, Scott Wilson.



The gang at the start, primed and ready to go.

CBC Tower

A group of 11 hikers went up to the CBC Tower on a beautiful fall day. We met in front of Amanda's Restaurant to carpool to the busy Pulpit Rock trailhead and that is where we met a German WWOOFer who was wondering where to find Pulpit Rock. Not only did we give her a ride to the trailhead, she joined our trip as a bonus hiker and came all the way up to the towers!

There was a lid of fog sitting low in the valley, but by the time we reached Pulpit we were already hiking in sunshine. By the time we reached the Flagpole, the fog was shifting up and breaking open and it was getting hot! A cloudless sky, a beaming sun, and south-facing slopes - most of us agreed that we should have brought shorts and summer gear!



As we ascended the CBC Tower Trail, our group broke up into the speedy A team, the middling B team, and the leisurely C team. After Pulpit and the Flagpole, the next landmark is a high set of bluffs with old concrete foundations sometimes referred to as "Cherry Street Station". It was here that the C team announced that they would take a longer break and perhaps give the CBC Tower a miss.



The towers looked far away along the ridge, but we were almost at the same elevation. We started walking along a cool, forested trail and within 15 minutes we were there! The group hiked down to the big square reflector panel where there is a good view of Nelson for lunch. We'd taken 3.5 hours to hike up with several breaks at each landmark, but flew down to the trailhead in just over 2 hours.



We were: Laurie Helyer, Emmy Vuik, Andrew Vowell, Leah Methuen, Annie Taiatini, Alison Etter, Sherolyn Haakstad, Sean Armstrong, Veronika Lukacova, and Monika Morwald. Photos by Leah Methuen!

Ymir and Surrounds

A large and enthusiastic group of hikers gathered at the Wildhorse Creek bridge on a gorgeous sunny afternoon eager to explore the sights of Ymir and surrounds.

We started out along a path heading down the Wildhorse Creek to the waterfalls where a few intrepid souls actually ventured down the mostly eroded waterfall trail by rope.



We then headed along the road to Ymir turning off shortly and heading up and over the nose of Dundee mountain to Oscar Bear Rd with a stop at the old Ymir cemetery. Fortunately a volunteer rehabilitation crew happened to be on site to answer some questions about the history and recovery of this historical burying ground.



We then headed down hill to Ymir with a brief stop to look across the highway at Ymir's threatened watershed. A big thank you to those who signed our petitions against the logging of this area!



Once in Ymir we walked along the river trail, marvelling at what I think may be the largest cottonwood tree in the Kootenays and then we had a perilous stop at the Ymir Bakery & Store for snacks.

It was at this point that we somehow "lost" 3 of our hikers! The rest of the group carried on along the river trail to the old growth forest which never ceases to amaze, the largest tree being 6 KMCers stretched hand to hand around its' girth.



We then carried on up the north side of the Wildhorse Ck to where we had started 3 hrs earlier. Most people had to leave at this point but a few were able to stay for a tour of the infamous Ymir Hotel art collection, always a memorable experience.

Sharon Henderson

My apologies to those who got left behind in Ymir! And a big thanks to those who shared their photos - Abby, Nancy, Val & Alison!

Picture by Peter Oostlalnder

Mt. Irving

Time to meditate…



White Queen

By Goody Niosi

With a dozen people (included yours truly) of various level of experience and abilities set to go up White Queen on November 17, Jan Osborne volunteered to be tail-gunner – and it was a good thing that she did.



We set off at about 10 a.m. under the Silver King chairlift, following a lovely track set down by Abby Wilson and Peter Oostlander and other excellent KMC folks who had a darn good idea how to trample down the snow.



We went up (surprise!) and up. I looked back – a dozen people scattered in every direction across the hill.

Uh-oh.

Trusting implicitly in my tail-gunner, I continued up – and up – and up until I took a head count and someone yelled that one of the hikers was having snowshoe trouble down below.

I went down. Darn – I had just gained all that elevation.

Alison had a broken strap. Jan was assessing the situation. I got out my gear ties and jerry-rigged a solution. Everyone else got going and I hung back, made sure Alison was doing okay, and soldiered on.



Ten minutes later, I heard a shout from below. “My other snowshoe broke.”

Well then.

I hiked up a bit farther to fetch some car keys and then hiked back down. After a good discussion, Alison opted to shuffle back down the hill, keep herself warm in the car and wait for us to return. Okay.

Back up. Whew! The group had actually waited for me – in the warm sun of course – and up we went. The snow was deeper than I had expected, and under a bluebird sky, it was one of the prettiest days I’ve seen up there.



We went up, the group spreading out considerably. While the fast group went ahead, I stopped near the top. Another group went by. The last group noted that my amazing tail-gunner had chosen to stay back with Dave while he had lunch and to assess whether he would go to the top. Right – he was in good hands. Up I went.



And there we all (almost all) were at the top. Yay! We had lunch. We took photos. We headed back down. And down we went – and there – yes! There they were: Jan and Dave. “There’s a summit to be climbed!” Jan said. “And darn it! We’re going to go get it!”

Well I was so excited that we were all going to get to the top that of course I turned around and went back to the top with them!

Five hours later, we all made it back down to the parking lot (and Alison). “It was a bit like herding cats,” I said to Jan.

“Absolutely herding cats,” she said.

True – but a fine day to be doing it.



We were:

Jan Osborne, Alison Eter, Leah Methuen, Geoff Methuen, Vivian Lenardon, Barb Hanlon, Garry Beaudry, Scott Wilson, Dave Yole, Ingrid Russell, Art Stock, Goody Niosi

Four Cabins Lower Mt. Crowe

The response to this posting was overwhelming, even with two trips, each limited to 12 participants due to the cabin capacity for our lunch stop. Snow was lacking and only 3 - 4 people wore snowshoes on Sunday, and we all hiked in boots in Wednesday.

Sunday was a beautiful, sunny, warm day. Wednesday was cloudy, but not too cold. We travelled via the Lower Road with a detour to the Chimo Cabin where everyone enjoyed the spectacular view of Old Glory and checked out the great cabin built by the 44th Field Engineers Squadron from Trail.

On to the View Cabin via the newly upgraded Lower route to Cliff Road and up the hill to the cabin with it's beautiful door painted by local artist, Jenny Baillie. Lunch time, some sat outside, some inside cooking their cheese sandwiches on the stove. Thanks to the helpers who started the fire, chopped wood and cleaned up.

We returned via the Upper Road, where we had a view of Mt. Gladstone and Faith, Hope and Charity peaks in the Christina Lake vicinity.

Mosquito Cabin was very busy on Sunday with several groups enjoying the sunny day. Red Dog cabin, dated 1997, is a log cabin and has a new porch this year. Good work, people. We followed the road down "Maureen's Thrill" trail back to the Lower Road. These names posted on hand painted signs were created by local Rossland legend, Cookie L'Ecluse, now deceased. Last stop was the Cookie Jar cabin, now locked up, as the packrats have taken over. With it's pink paint and very long skis, it is now a historic site.

Many thanks to FORRs (Friends of the Rossland Range) for the great trails, maps and signs. Now, all we need is snow!!!

Distance travelled - 13.3 km.
Elevation gain - about 300m.
Time - about 4 hours walking +1 hour for lunch.
Coordinator - Diane Paolini

Sunday participants - Tim and Dawn Powell, Andrea Vowell, Helen Foulger, Sheila Sinkie, Robin Shepherd, Scott Wilson, Phil Best, Vicky Hart, Abby Wilson, Terry Simpson

Wednesday participants - Miriam Williams, Richard Epton, Laura Ringer, Chris Chart, Hazel & Ed Beynon, Sara Judith, Jill Watson, Gail Curry, Cameron Carter

Thank you to my friends who helped keep the groups together.

Mount Plewman

By Goody Niosi

We were utterly blessed with the most perfect weather imaginable on Monday November 19 when we headed up to Mount Plewman from Strawberry Pass. We had blue skies, sunshine, sparkling white snow and only the slightest of breezes in the pass.



We were four intrepid folks, determined to make it to the top of Mount Plewman the long way (from Strawberry Pass). We strapped snowshoes to our packs because the trail was beautifully packed for the first hour and a half or so. We made pretty good time. As the snow got deeper, we strapped on the “shoes” and kept up a good pace.

We did take time for photos and to thank the "A" team (Peter Oostlander and company) for creating such a stellar track a couple of days previously. About three hours after leaving the parking lot, we topped out at Plewman where we lollygagged in the sun, ate our sandwiches and took tons of photos.



After that, we made a beeline back, taking the old growth (AKA tall cedars, AKA Avenue of the Giants) back to the parking lot. Chris Cowan did look longingly at Sunspot Cabin as we passed by, extolling the virtues of a roaring fire and a brief rest. In the end, though, he admitted that getting back before dark might serve us well. And we did get back to the parking lot well before dark.

We figured the A team probably made it to Plewman and back in 45 minutes. We were pleased with ourselves for completing in 6 hours and 15 minutes.

Yay us!



We were: Laura Ringer, Val Utgaren, Chris Cowan, and Goody Niosi

What the world looks like from up there…







Mount Crowe

By Goody Niosi

Two prizes were on offer on November 24 during our club hike to the top of Mount Crowe. First prize to the person who managed to actually find the Crow's Nest cabin. Second prize to the one that face- (or bum) planted most often.

And so we set out, our goal firmly in mind – namely getting to the top of Mount Crowe of course.

We had ideal weather and were de-layering quickly in the sunshine. About 30 minutes after setting out someone fell into a tree well. A few minutes after that auspicious beginning, someone else splatted head first into the snow. So far so good. Contest number two was on!





The snow got deeper and deeper but happily we managed to follow the faint trail outlined about a week previously. We skirted the base of the mountain and headed up the far ridge. No – don't ask me if it was a south or east ridge – it was the ridge farthest away from the highway on the track to Mount Neptune.

The good news is that with nine people tramping along, we made a truly excellent track. The last push to the top of the ridge was steep but thanks to great trail breaking, especially by Heidi and Jamie, we heaved ourselves over the top, along the ridge and to a sun-soaked lunch spot overlooking Mount Lepsoe.

And that is where I had my first fall – backwards – on a slope – head down feet up. Yes – it took two people to pull me upright again.

After lunch we headed down through the trees – steeply down. This is where I took my second, third and fourth falls.



I won contest number two. Hurray! (I think). Jamie bumped into Crow's Nest cabin so he won contest number two! Hurrah!

And then we crashed down the mountain until we found our up-track and waltzed back down like it was a walk in the park.



We were: Dylan Saunders, Scott Wilson, Abby Wilson, Andrew Woodward, Andrea Vowell, Jamie Joseph, Heidi Joseph, Sheila Sinkie, Goody Niosi.



Lightning Strike and Baldy Rocks

By Goody Niosi

You haven't seen a crestfallen face until you've witnessed Peter Oostlander preparing himself and his troops for a full-on trail-breaking assault on Lightning Strike only to find a superhighway all the way to the top.

To say he was perturbed is the understatement of all time.

It started like this: we met at Kootenay Pass at about 8.30 a.m. on November 25 and set off up the road to the trail about 15 minutes later. The snow was fine. The sky was a tad cloudy with a half-hearted promise of clearing up later in the day.

When we arrived at the trail, Peter consulted his GPS. He pulled out his two-way radio. He instructed us in detail about the winter route. He prepared us for rotating back from our trail-breaking endeavours every 10 minutes so as not to get too exhausted.



I thought perhaps I should mention that I'd just seen a small group of skiers heading up that way and there appeared to be a fine trail, but I thought better of it. He was having such a good time anticipating the gruelling trip ahead.

Off we went. ""It's a superhighway!" he said 10 seconds later.

I refrained from saying, "I could have told you."

And so we happily followed the lovely trail all the way to the top with great ease – except perhaps for the "Hillary Step" that saw a few us sliding down with a considerable lack of grace.

And then it happened: the sun peeked out just a bit and we got some lovely photos.

We turned, headed back down and had a quick lunch at Ripple Ridge Cabin. Next on the agenda: Baldy Rocks.

Peter said. "Here we will absolutely have to break trail. No question!"

Right. We were prepared. Once again, Peter was excited. Until we arrived at the foot of Baldy Rocks and found a lovely skier's up-trail heading exactly where we wanted to go. Well – gosh darnitall. It was not be countenanced. So after following the trail (which the rest of us were delighted about), Peter plunged off into the deep soft snow – only to join up with the trail again a few minutes later.

At least he did go in front to break trail. And then it happened: a fork with a good trail to the left and a sketchy barely-there trail to the right. Guess which one Peter took?

After a few minutes, Peter rotated back – at the exact place where the track began to climb steeply. I began to break trail, noting in a loud and slightly peevish voice that whoever had made this poor excuse for a track hadn't believed in switchbacks. How steep was it? Well, imagine scrambling on snowshoes but with nothing but sliding snow to hang on to.

So – up and up until – hey! What's that? Oh – the trail we didn't take. This rather nice trail had clearly switchbacked beautifully to this point and the track we'd been following uphill was a skier's downhill run!

I turned around and gave Peter a look. (Hint – it was not a look of love).



"Well," Peter said. "It is called a mountaineering club after all."

I told him I'd get my revenge. This trip report is it.

So – we made it up to the top of Baldy Rocks. Our view was clouds – well, not really. We were actually inside a cloud so “Nothing to see here folks.”



And then down. We made a democratic decision to head down through the trees. This was great fun. For the most part. There were some interesting tumbles and one open glade that gave us great snowshoe-skiing and then a most excellent drop-off to the road. I think only one person survived it in an upright position.



And then we had nothing left to do but drag our sorry (and wet) butts down to the car park. It was on the way down that Peter suggested another snowshoe trip later in the week. Given the location he suggested, I can only assume that he’s desperately looking for a steep slope that will require determined trail-breaking.

What I don't understand is why I volunteered to accompany him.



We were:

Ross Bates, Peter Oostlander, Tina Baldwin, Phil Best, Helen Foulger, Cathy-Ann Glockner, Heidi Joseph, Jamie Joseph, Kelly Toole, Goody Niosi







Mt. Crowe

When Ken Holmes asked if he could join the "band of optimists" for this ski trip, of course I said yes. So for the first official KMC ski trip of the season, a we became the Band of Optimists. Actually I had skied a couple of days earlier and knew we'd be ok. Snow depth about 25 cm at the Strawberry pass weather station, but not a lot of snow under any canopy of trees. So ski conditions were fine for the open roads and trails we were using.

Just as we were leaving the parking lot, I was chatting with another skier who was just heading out by herself, so Angelica became our seventh member of the Optimists. Our route was to the Chimo Cabin, with it's new stairs. We had a quick check of the cabin, then out the Rock n' Roll trail to Cliff Road. We took the Lower Route, also known as Rob's Trail. It has been widened this past summer, which made it easier for early season skiing. Part way along, we took a little 300 metre diversion on the right, through a small frozen waterway that is always interesting. Back to the logging roads and into View Point Cabin for warmth, hot sandwiches, tea, and some ski adjustments. Andree and Francois had brought their AT ski gear, but Andree's bindings hadn't been adjusted for her new boots. Our intrepid ski mechanic Ken, pulled out his ski tool kit which just happened to have the right torx driver and spacer, which did the job.

After the hot sandwiches, chit-chat, ski tuning, we left the cabin to let the next group in, also KMCer's. We took the High Route out (Cliff Road, connecting trail, Crowe Road, etc.) and had some mild downhill skiing to Mosquito Cabin, Red Dog Cabin and finally back to our vehicles. This link is to the map (high resolution): Friends of the Rossland Range north trail map



Our "Optimists" were (left to right): Jill Watson, Francois-G Castaignede, Andree-Anne Cromp, Terry Simpson, Angelica Baur, Ken Holmes and Bob McQueen (photographer, coordinator).

Mt. Crowe

We had some good snow precipitation leading up to this trip, however the day before, we had rain in Rossland, and much of the way up to Strawberry Pass. So it was a relief to arrive at the parking lot, test the snow and find out it was all good, no crust. After some quick introductions, we decided to take a different route than Sunday's trip. We skinned up, all but Jessica that is, and headed up White Owl Pass to Mosquito Cabin. Jessica was using her Madshus skis with fish scales, which worked just fine. At Mosquito Cabin, we de-skinned and skied down Crowe Road to the first big corner. That's the start of the Midline Trail which hadn't been tracked, but we found had good coverage, even through the thicker forest.



This route comes out on Cliff Road, a forest service road. A short distance to the north along this road you turn off to the right, and onto a short trail into View Pt. Cabin. We met two other skiers and dogs in the cabin, who had kindly lit the fire and left shortly after.

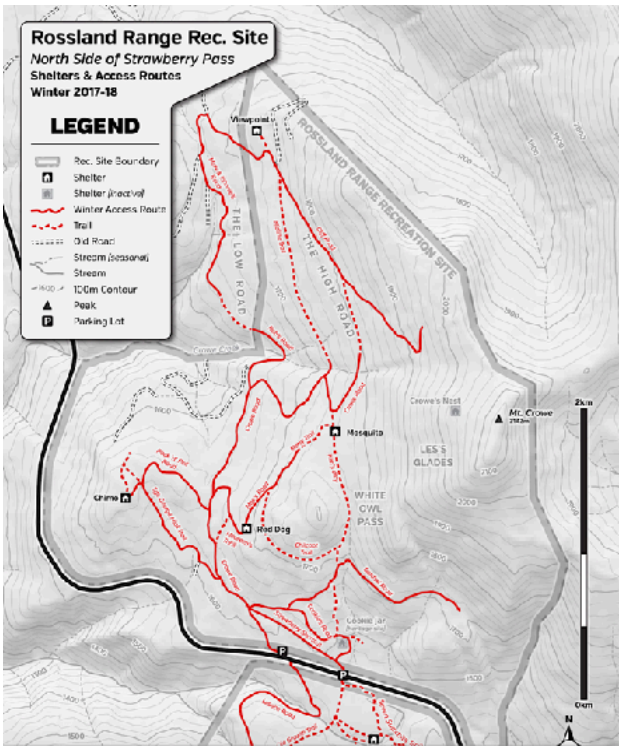
The prerequisite foil sandwiches came out and we had an early social lunch.





Our group decided to return south-east along the High Road, which consists of Cliff Road, a connecting trail and Crowe Road back down to Mosquito Cabin. We took skins off to get down to Mosquito and on past Red Dog cabin. These trails are called Merry Trail and Moe's Trail. The snow was starting to become glazed from the day's ski tracks, so we opted not go down the aptly named shortcut called "Maureen's Thrill". Everyone made it back to our vehicles via the Strawberry Shortcut, with only a blister or two

We were, left to right on the photo above: Cathy-Ann Glockner, Mike Kew, Jessica Kew, Dave Toews, Ken Holmes, Sandra Fuller, and not shown, Bob McQueen photographer and coordinator.



Screen shot of the Mt. Crowe Rec. Site trails, north side of Strawberry Pass

Mount Beattie

By Goody Niosi

It was a beautiful day on Dec. 2 – the sun burning off low-hanging mist, blue sky overhead, the trees covered in blankets of snow and a group of 13 KMCers eager to conquer Mount Beattie.



I explained that this would be a straightforward, simple in-and-out trip to the top. I failed to take into account my penchant for looking at side trails and shouting, "Squirrel!"

It started at least a week prior when Peter Oostlander helpfully put down the first track to the top. A few days later, Peter, Helen Foulger and I followed that track as best we could. It had snowed heavily in the meantime and Peter's lovely track was a slight indentation in the snow. We broke trail – a lot. In fact, the going was so heavy that when we finally did reach our destination, Peter was in shock to discover it had taken us three hours!

But not today – today the track was clear and beautiful. I figured maybe two hours – a touch longer? Perhaps, given the size of the group.



We went up and up and took photos and admired the views. And then came the fatal curse of a rather good ski track veering off our trail as we approached the top. "Well," I said to myself. "This looks good! Maybe it's a faster route!"

Not.

I realized pretty darn quickly that this was not going to take us where we wanted to go. One option was to turn back. The other was to forge on to see what would happen. Obviously I opened door number two. And we had a bit of a steep go at one point but then – ta-da! The top! Or perhaps not quite the top. It was top-ish and there were no more tracks.

What to do? Well, keep going of course – in the direction I figured would get us off this ridgey-bumpy thing and to the actual top. So, breaking trail (yay!) we went on to another bump.

“This doesn't look familiar,” Vicky said helpfully.

Phil and I pulled out our GPS trackers. We said, “Well the GPS says we’re right on it.”

We zoomed in – ah – 200 metres that way. And so a bit of a down and another bit of a steep up and bingo! There we were! We had lunch, we admired the view, we headed back down the “right” way. And while I freely admitted that I had taken us for a bit of a drive, shall we say, I also think it was kind of cool to find an upper loop on Beattie.

That’s my story and I’m sticking to it.





Our wonderful, patient, irreverent and total fun group included:

Phil Best, Vicky Hart, Gail Curry, Cameron Carter, Andrea Vowell, Mark Su, Val Utgaren, P’nina Shames, Abby Wilson, Andrew Woodward, Scott Wilson, Tina Baldwin and Goody Niosi.



Lepsoe Cabin

Seven of us showed up for this ski trip in a snow storm, meeting at the Strawberry Pass Summit parking lot. I think all three of our vehicles had been held up due to snow plows, so we were pleased with the new snow, about 6 - 8 cm. We didn't really need our avi gear for this trip, but did a transceiver check anyways. Good to get into the habit, and there was a special avalanche bulletin at the time, due to an unconsolidated snow pack.

Our path was through the gravel pit on the Mt. Lepsoe side, onto the Alzheimer Loop, up the Flying Mile logging road, and onto the Seven Summit trail. A quick photo (below), and we were off to the Old Sunspot cabin site.

From the old Sunspot cabin site, we followed Berry Ridge Trail, which is flagged and follows the ridge up to the old Berry Ridge Cabin site (now gone). The trail from here heads west, and comes out onto the upper field where the Lepsoe Basin Cabin is located. By this time, Andrea was having trouble with a pinched nerve in her foot, so with fire on, she held the fort so to speak, while the rest of us took one or two runs down to the Seven Summit trail and back. Snow was "re-freshed" powder which made for easy turns. Another large group had showed up at the cabin when we returned, with their 3 dogs. Andrea kicked the dogs out, politely I'm sure, and the rest soon left as well. There is a no dog rule in all of the cabins in the Rec site, but the irony of course is that when we were building the cabin, our unofficial cabin name was "The Doghouse". That was because we were in the doghouse at home for spending so much time building the cabin.

Andrea wasn't sure how she was going to get down with her hurtin' foot, so to help, we divided up here gear to lighten her pack. After she made a few turns on her skis, it looked like a down ski for her would work, so off we went. The upper field, the lower field (below Seven Summit trail), and back via the Old Growth trail. A nice trip, a few tales told, some politics discussed; a good day overall. About 300 plus metres vertical and 8 km.



Our group was: Doug Clark, Judy Evans, Janice Isaac, Dave Brackett, Terry Simpson, Andrea Vowell and Bob McQueen coordinator.



Here's a photo from Chris Cowan of our trip last Sunday.

There were 10 of us that skied 19.5 km at the Castlegar Nordic Ski Club.

Dan Derby

Mount Crowe

By Goody Niosi

Rick Mazzocchi studied the long range forecast in October, picked December 19 as his perfect day for snowshoeing up Mount Crowe – and darn – he was totally right. Note to self – find out which weather map he uses.



And so a dozen hearty souls set off shortly after 9 a.m. from Strawberry Pass. There'd been a lot of snow but we weren't concerned. We'd gone up there just two weeks or so previously – a dozen of us as well – and made a great track going exactly where Rick planned to lead us – along the slope of Crowe below the trees and then climbing gently to the ridge – then up the ridge to the top. Simple.

In short order we arrived at the junction signed to Mosquito Cabin. Our route lay the other way. And that is where the track stopped. I mean stopped. Not even a slight indent.

We contemplated the trail breaking that lay ahead of us especially after we stepped onto the new snow and sunk in to our knees.



We went up. The going was slow. I developed a new trail-breaking technique – if you are going up and you hit a place where you sink up to your thighs, make a switchback. It will look deliberate and well-planned. No one will know you're just looking for the easiest way to get on with it.



At the point where we were hoping to traverse below the trees, we headed into the trees. Bushes and blowdown be damned – what's the easiest route?

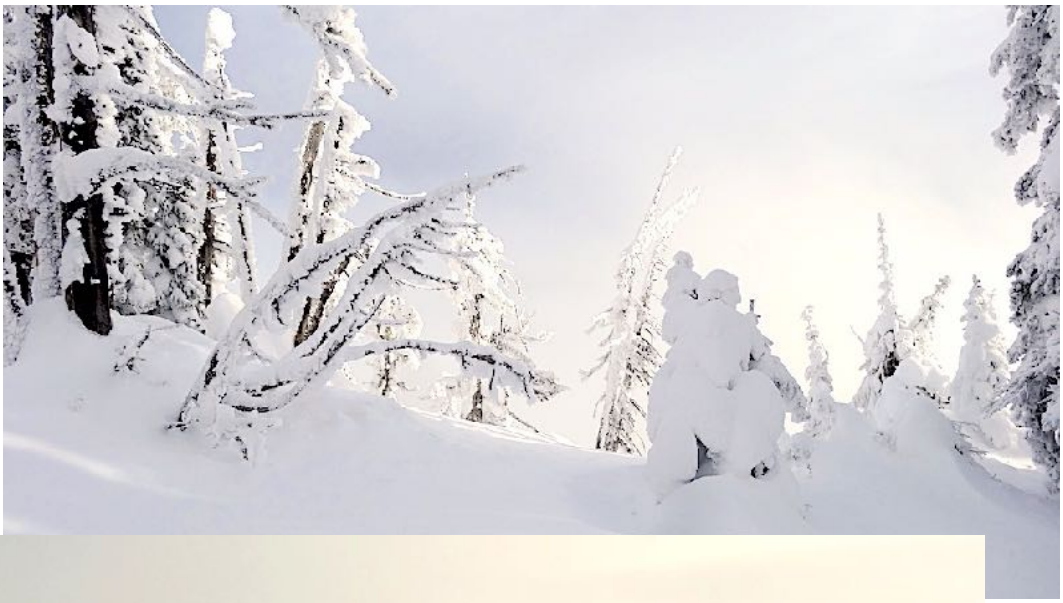
Do I need to say that the going was slow? Painfully slow? On occasion it was "take three steps and stop – for as long as you possibly can before the ones in the back get restless."

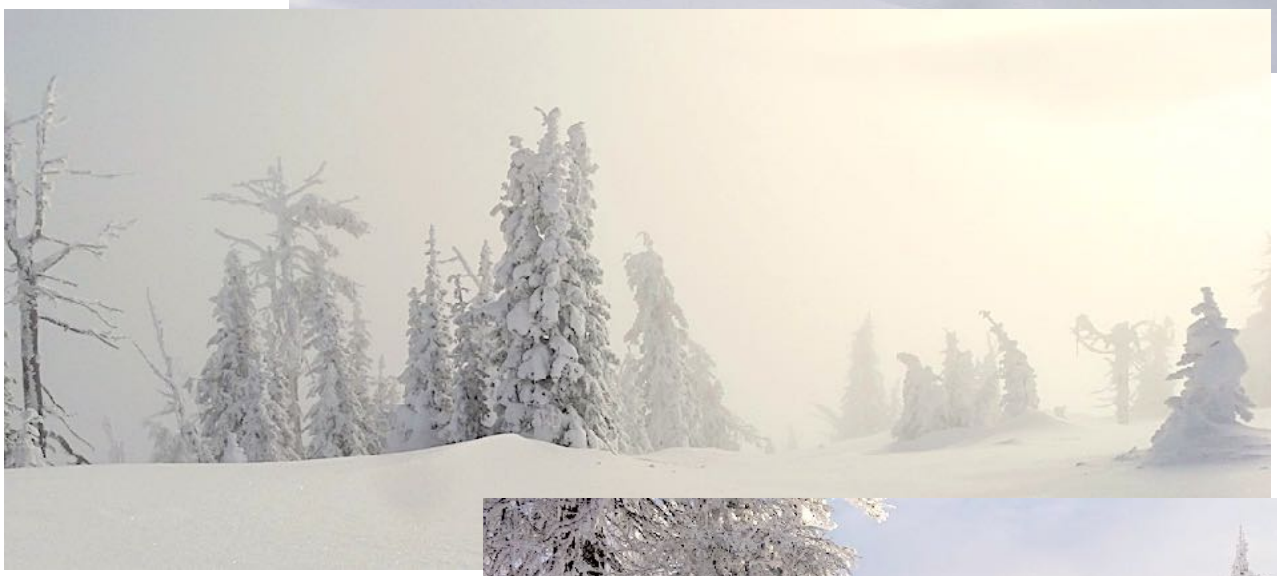
The going was tough in the trees. I can't imagine how much harder it would have been in the open. Kathryn was leading when she was all like, "Hey – here's the cabin!" Yes – the Crowe's Nest! We found it. And from there, one lone ski track making its way to the top. It should be noted that the ski track didn't help. While he (or she) had floated gracefully on top of the snow, we crashed through and plodded up. Oh the elation we felt when we finally made it to the top – in under 3.5 hours, which we thought was pretty darn miraculous all things considered.



The sun was shining, the trees were marvels of white and we fell on our lunch like a pack of wolves. Wonderful!

Rick suggested we take the same track down. A genius idea. The snow was so heavy that coming straight down wasn't a good option. Rick was also justifiably conservative with our route, given the snowpack.









We made it back to the parking lot just as a new weather system kicked in. Another awesome KMC trip!

We were: Kathryn Kimmerly, Francis Pelletier, Ben Aubin, Goody Niosi, Art Stock, Andrea Vowell, Wayne Hohn, Alison Etter, P'nina Shames, Janis Gilbert, Glenn Wallace, Rick Mazzocchi

Hiking in Nepal

Hiking in the mountains is an experience not all of my friends can live. Therefore I think of them when I'm on a long walk, if it is for a day or for 2 weeks. This November 15-30th, they accompanied me on my journey in Nepal to the foot of the 8th summit in the world, Mt Manaslu. At 4009m I sat below its 8163m peak and watched its glacier breathing. A 1.5 avalanche was triggered by an ice fall, and the whoupfs and crakings were loud and powerful. The sky hasn't been seen to be more blue than on that day.

My walk started at 700m of elevation and through moraine and frozen ponds, I crossed the highest pass at 5109m, marked with numerous prayer flags. That morning started at 05h15 with headlamps, and bright stars slowly faded when the sun rose. By 09h the pass was done and at 18h I reached the last mountain village of the trail, 10 min before dusk. Next day was a short 4h walk to where I could catch a bus to the city.

Along the way, I slept in unheated rock tea houses of Nepali families or Tibetan refugees. Many villages



were under reconstruction after the 2015 earthquake. When I was the only guest, with Laura whom I met online in Kathmandu on trekkingpartners.com, the family invited us inside their house, beside the wood fire cook stove. Our guide translated their ways of living, sometimes closer to what I know of my grand-parents lives in the early 1900's than any thing we know from our modern 21st century. But aside from any of these differences, we're very similar in the love we share for mountains and the unique people who appreciate them.

Rene Marceau



Picture of the lake below Mt Manaslu, in Samagoan, Nepal.

Hiking the Via Alpina

By Goody Niosi

The boots: seams fraying, insoles permanently stinky, and every square inch of the outside covered in cow poo, goat muck and sheep s$%t – yup it was time to trade them in for new ones. And I did, leaving the old ones in the boot shop in Vevey. For a mad, fleeting moment I thought of having them bronzed – but no. I had 604 photos to prove that I'd just trekked 19 days over 360 kilometres with more than 20,000 metres of elevation over the high passes from one end of Switzerland to the other – solo. My feet were taped up, my left knee was giving out, but darn it, I'd done what I'd set out to do. And it felt pretty darn good.

It was not this summer's smoke that drove me to Europe. No – it was simply a browse through Facebook and a post from a friend of a friend with a link to the Via Alpina home page. I've hiked a lot in Switzerland and love it – so for me this was prime click bait. I read it: hike from east to west, climb over the passes; start in Sargans on the border with Lichtenstein and finish in Montreux. Eighteen days! Carry a light pack and stay in village inns or mountain huts every night!

It was irresistible.

A week later I was flying to Zurich.

I'd packed adequate clothing for all sorts of weather, a bare minimum of toiletries and my iPad in my multi-day pack. Still, it weighed in at about 25 pounds. Light enough, I told myself. And of course, I'd left enough room for chocolate at the end of the trip.

My connections went smoothly, I bought a train ticket to Sargans at the Zurich airport and was whisked away to my start point on the eastern border of the country.

Hotel reservations or hut reservations along the way? Who needs them? Plans might change… I'll probably want a rest day somewhere.

One hotel was open in Sargans at 6 p.m. and it was full. I wandered the town. I talked to locals. Surely there had to be a bed somewhere.

Apparently not.

After an hour of plodding, I decided I would sleep in the train station. Feeling dejected I tried The Post one last time – a cancellation maybe?

Yes – a cancellation! Happy dance – or at least there would have been if I'd had the energy. My "single" room was the cancelled suite. Lovely. A hot shower, laundry (a daily must), a hearty Swiss meal of eggs, potatoes and cheese, because the Swiss put cheese on everything. And bed.

Stage 1: Sargans – Mels – Weistannen

The idea of stage one is to start you off easy – say about a 5-hour hike of 13K crossing a pass with an elevation gain of only 650 metres. What my Cicerone guidebook didn't take into account was severe jetlag. Nor did it say anything about 30-plus degree heat and a fair amount of humidity.

Sargans is a sizeable town. Happily, finding my way through it was a cinch thanks to brilliant Swiss signing. At every corner and intersection, a yellow arrowed sign plus the Via Alpina green flashings.



I walked through pretty Swiss countryside, loving the chalets and the jingle of cow bells and of course, the cows – so photogenic. (I think they know about tourists and spend their time at the side of the trail posing).

I wandered over the gentle pass and drifted into my next lodging (rooms available!) in the tiny village of Weistannen at least an hour ahead of the guidebook schedule and opted to save money by sleeping in the dorm.

Jetlag was still with me, not helped by prolific snoring from another occupant. Oh well!

Stage 2 – Weistannen – Foopass – Elm

I was prepared – today the real work would begin – 1300 metres up to the Foopass and 1320 down to the next village – Elm. Getting up early was not a problem. At 6 a.m. every church in the village decided it was time for us to rise – all of us. The clarion call continued

for a good 15 minutes – no snooze buttons. We were awake and ready to go.

The first directional sign out of the village indicated 5.5 hours to the pass. Well then. Does that time take a 25-pound pack into account – a pack that was leaving bruises on my hips bones and tailbone?

The trail was steep in spots, lovely in many ways, shaded in places (whew!) and open and hot in the alpine meadows. The views opened up almost immediately and my camera came out.

And after slogging uphill for almost 6 hours, there I was! Foopass!



Lunch: a sandwich that contained half a pound of cheese from the neighbouring farm plus pickles and tomatoes from the innkeeper's garden and all of that on freshly baked brown Swiss bread slathered with fresh Swiss alpine butter. Yes – this could well rank as the best part of the day.

After that came the long, long downhill. By the time I limped into Elm my feet were hurting in places that have never hurt before, like between my toes. That night – a private room in a small guesthouse with a shower down the hall.

Stage 3 – Elm – Richetlipass - Linthal

Day 3: one of the big ones: 24.5K, 1490 metres elevation and 1820 metres straight down. Time estimate? Nine hours.

I was on the trail by 7.30 trying to escape some of the heat of the day.

Fat chance of that happening. By 11 a.m. I had wolfed down a power bar thinking, the pass can't be that much farther.

It was. I went through my two litres of water and filled up at a farmhouse – cold and fresh straight from a mountain spring. When I finally caught sight of the pass it seemed impossible – but you just keep putting one foot in front of the other. And then, hurrah! There I was. But not there. A couple of hikers who had just crested the pass from the other side set me straight – oh no – there are two passes today and that one you see way over there across the valley? That's the pass.

And so down and down all that painfully won elevation, across a gorgeous valley and then up and up and up and finally – hurrah! The pass!

Going down was steep, arduous, beautiful and, toward the end, a race against time: black thunder clouds moving in fast. I squeaked through the hotel door in Linthal 5 minutes before the heavens opened. Two couples hiking about an hour behind me were not so lucky.

Stage 4 – Linthal – Braunwald, Urnerboden

With only (!) 1010 metres of ascent on the schedule, it was going to be and easy day – easy enough for me to reflect on my experiences to date. First, Swiss hospitality is awesome. When I asked the hotel owner where I could buy a sandwich for lunch, he waved me away and presented me with a monster cheese sandwich and said, "no charge." Another example, I started the day going 600 metres straight up out of town. A Swiss woman with legs the size of tree trunks barrelled by me, stopped, asked where I was going and proceeded to give me every tip she knew about how to make my day flow smoothly. Mind you, she did all this in Schweizerdeutsch, a dialect that might as well be Swahili. I understood every third word (maybe) and nodded along, smiling like an idiot and saying "Danke" an awful lot.



There was a lot of uphill to the pass. I alternated dripping sweat, gasping for breath and thinking I was going to keel over with being in awe of the views.

However, more important were my reflections on lunch. My sandwich: a pickle and huge hunks of alpine cheese from a local farm and again, that remarkable sweet butter that is so fresh it actually is sweet. The hotel owner had slathered butter on this bread so thick he may as well have put the entire brick in it. I could write a poem about this butter. Maybe I will. It is the food of the gods.

I limped downhill into Urnerboden, a tiny village with one guest house and a miniature store that is part of the

church(!) My feet had numerous hot spots. Band aids were not doing the trick. Neither was moleskin. Duct tape was my best solution but not perfect.

I'd been noticing that fellow hikers on the same route were doing a bit of "cheating" – taking the odd gondola up a hill or the bus to avoid some of the walking and elevation. I was beginning to think – maybe it's not the most awful idea.

Stage 5 – Urnerboden –Klausenpass – Altdorf

A nice, easy day this one: 26K and only 700 metres up and 1610 metres down (!). Okay – but still. Pretty good. So good that I decided to take the alternate route into a side valley that had a pretty waterfall and was highly recommended by the guidebook.



What the book failed to mention was that the alternate was like a shortcut (longer) and that it would require going up a second pass.

It did, however, meander through a pretty village and it did give me a lovely close encounter with goats. But after that, in the heat of the afternoon, I had to climb up again – and up and up and then down. It was when I arrived in a small village and realized I still had a lot of kilometres to go to reach the town of Altdorf that I hopped on a passing bus. Yes – I cheated. And I'm glad I did. It was 15 minutes by bus to the centre of town – a large town – home of William Tell – and no room in any hotel anywhere.

No problem. I hopped another bus to the small suburb Attinghausen where there was a room in the basement of a hostel. Whew! Maybe it was time to re-think reservations.

Stage 6 – Altdorf – Surenenpass – Engleberg

There was never a doubt in my mind that this was going to be a cheating day. Distance: 29K, elevation gain – 1900 metres – time 10 hours and 30 minutes.

I could cut off a good hour by taking a small gondola up to Brusti – a ski hill, thus cutting off a tiresome climb through a forest.

So I did that without a pang of guilt.

It was the first day I pulled on layers. It was wet, windy and wild but through the drifting clouds and showers, there was amazing alpine beauty – and a host of rare black alpine salamanders. I had to keep my eyes firmly fixed on the trail for fear of stepping on them. Rare? Really?

After a long, hard hike to the pass, cresting it was one of those "wow" moments – higher and higher peaks revealing themselves as I headed closer toward the Berner Oberland and its famous mountains.



After the wow? Four hours down to Engleberg on increasingly sore and blistered feet. I walked into the first hotel – yes they had a room and yes it was private and yes it had a hot shower and a comfy bed – in other words, everything I could possibly ask for – well, expect maybe a masseuse and a foot doctor.

Stage 7 – Engleberg – Jochpass – Engstlenalp

Again – wet, and foggy – again – just do it! Hey! It's only 1230 metres up and (even better) only 400 metres down to a mountain hut for the night.

And the mountains are getting big.

I plowed on and on, carefully searching for those very excellent trail markings (usually painted on stone) that the Swiss are so meticulous about – but which are a bit hard to find when the clouds and fog are so thick you can't see more than a foot in front of you.

How thick was the soup? Well, I hiked up and up and up and finally noticed a building looming out of the fog. Had I taken a wrong turn? Did I miss a sign? I walked to the far side of the huge building – it seemed to be all downhill from there. Well, where was my trail up to the pass? I walked up the meadow thinking maybe I'd find the trail. Nothing. And then – voices! I hurried down toward them and encountered a group of Swiss hikers. Where is the Jochpass please?" I asked. "I seem to have lost it."

"This is it," they said.

"?"

"Yes – this is a restaurant and you just go around to the other side, head downhill on the trail and you'll be at Engstlenalp in no time."

Well! How about that! I'm at the top!



And down I went to Engstlenalp – a huge hut that has been there forever it seems. Warm, welcoming, and a wonderful place to dry out my boots and myself.

And then the next morning dawned, with clouds lifting and drifting across the face of the mountains, the morning sun burning holes in the air, gold light glinting – walking out into pure magic.

Stage 8 – Engstlenalp – Planplatten – Meiringen

The guidebook had warned that hiking across Planplatten was to be done only in good weather. If there was any doubt, take the valley route. I trusted the morning sun and headed out to the ridge and the pass.

And this is where words fail me. Frost coated the grass and as I rose higher and higher, snow all around me. I was alone in a world that might have been the fantasy work of some mythical ice queen. And I was glad my camera battery was fully charged. I was also glad I'd done minor surgery on my blisters, which had turned into blood blisters – popping them made a difference!



And this was the first day I fell – twice! Once in a giant field of cow patties – I will spare you the details.

This was also the day that proved for the millionth time that every time you look far ahead (and usually up) and think to yourself, "Well, this is hard but at least I don't have to hike on that trail!" – you always have to end up hiking on that trail.

This was also the day that I decided I'd had it with cows. No longer cute – just in-your-face pooping machines.

Arriving in Meiringen was one of those arrivals – after 1870 metres of downhill, it was all about, thank goodness I'm here! Just give me a bed, a shower and a plate of potatoes and cheese!

Stage 9 – Meiringen – Grosse Sheidegg – Grindelwald

Piece of cake today – only 1410 metres ascent. But what really made it easier was the fact that I was now in familiar territory. For the next couple of days I'd be in the part of Switzerland I'd hiked so often. The weather was fine. The sky was blue and I climbed up to the Grosse Sheidegg in awe of the north face of the Wetterhorn and soon – the north face of the Eiger.

I admit to taking a slightly wrong turn and coming up too high on the ridge (pass) and having to come back down – so what's another 50 - 100 metres right?

Because I was sick of cows, the fates sent me goats – but not just any goats; very strange alien goats with ibex-like horns that regarded me as though I was the one who was odd.

Once again, it was a long, long walk down to Grindelwald. But this is a good-sized little alpine town. My first stop: the drug store where I spent a small fortune on foot –related items: Band-Aids, second skin, padding – and then played doctor again in my very nice little hotel room.



I comforted myself with knowing that I had one more big pass the next day and then a rest day.

Stage 10 – Grindelwald – Kleine Scheidegg – Lauterbrunnen

Another sunny day – another footsore day – another day with spectacular views opening up. By this time, the pack was sitting perfectly and my hips and tailbone were good. It had become a routine: get up in the morning, eat breakfast, pack, heave the pack on my back, go outside and start walking. Reverse it at the end of the day. The beauty of walking: everything is in the now. No decisions to make – nothing to do but walk. Follow the trail.



Now, in the centre of the Berner Oberland, the views were constantly startling, beautiful, breath-catching. At the top of the Kleine Sheidegg, mayhem. This is where the trains from both valleys arrive to spill people out to restaurants, a huge hotel and, most importantly, the train that burrows through the mountains to arrive at Jungfraujoch high up on the shoulders of the Jungfrau and at the top of the Aletsch glacier.

This was fine because that left the trails free for odd people like me who like to hike. And so I hiked, through beautiful meadows with inspiring views until my feet said: "No more!" I cheated. I took a train from Wengen to Lauterbrunnen, cutting of the last hour of descent. Did this help? Well – I had taken the precaution of booking a room in this busy place – but the room was in a guest house that was decidedly not the advertised 300 metres from the train station. When I finally found it, I'd been walking for nearly an hour and it was closed!

Another hour to backtrack and find another lodging place. And that's when I made my decision. I'd been planning to hike to Murren the next day and then take the rest of the day off. Choice number two: take the gondola to Murren and take a full day off.

No guilt.

Stage 11 – Lauterbrunnen – Murren – Sefinenfurke – Griesalp



And so, after taking the gondola to Murren and spending a day wandering around the village in my oh so comfy "camp" shoes and napping and eating a monster veggie burger and enjoying the warmth and sun, I set off for Griesalp (having wisely reserved a room in the mountain hut) on a day that was less than stellar. I was about to cross the three highest and most photogenic passes. The clouds were so low to the ground I could almost not see the grass.

But when you're walking across a small country, you take what you get – and you make the most of it. So I revelled in the beauty of swirling clouds and mist and rippling streams and – well – cows.

The Sefinenfurke was not an easy pass: the last steep scree slope came with rope assists, and the ridge: a sharp notch in the giant rock walls – the down trail on the other side eased by steps with cable assist. Although why the cable would be at ankle height was a mystery I couldn't quite solve.

Late that afternoon, dripping wet, I arrived at the mountain hut above Griesalp. It was lovely and old and charming and warm. The only other occupants: the

young British couple I'd been hopscotching with on the trip and two Swiss couples who were doing a truncated version of the VA.

We chatted over dinner about the joys and tribulations of through-hiking – and of course the weather. The next day we would attempt the Hohturli, the big one – the pass that everyone anticipated and feared in equal measure. The guidebook described it as thrilling, airy, scary and definitely not for the faint of heart. At almost 3,000 metres it was the highest and toughest of the trek. It was also not to be attempted in bad weather.

The hut's keeper shook her head. "Snow," she predicted.

Stage 12 – Griesalp – Hohturli – Kandersteg

I woke up early – opened the window in my room – low clouds but no rain. I ate breakfast. The Swiss couples were unsure. Should they go for it? The women said "no." The men thought perhaps they should try. The hut keeper shook her head.



I shouldered my pack, walked out the door and looked up at the sky. I shrugged. "I'm going to do it," I said.

And I walked off down the trail. I was 20 minutes into the beginning stages of the climb when the heavens opened.

I sighed, regretting my own common sense, and turned back. There I found my travelling companions strapping on packs on the porch. "We're headed to the village to catch the bus," they said.

"Me too," I said.

And so we caught the bus to the nearest train station and then boarded the train to Kandersteg. It rained all morning. Snow on the pass. After a nap, I assessed the situation. I had missed seeing the Blumlisalp Massif and the magnificent peaks above the village. But – I could still partly make up for this. The trail I would have been on winds down past the Oeeschinensee, reputed to be the most beautiful lake in all of Switzerland. I could still hike up in the drizzle and rain, see the lake in about two hours, and then come back down.

I did that. The only real issue was that I wasn't quite sure that I had actually arrived at the lake. I stood at the edge. Yes, I could hear water lapping at the shore. I took a quick photo – it was a grey blank. Was the lake beautiful? Possibly – I had no proof.

Stage 13 – Kandersteg – Bunderschrinde – Adelboden

Another day – the third "big" pass of the trip – 1300 metres elevation – destination – Adelboden. Yes, it was raining. I had faith it would stop. I set off. In retrospect, it was rather cute that when the trail wove its way through a farmer's field I took care to lift my feet high so as not to get my boots too wet. Half an hour later I feet were squishing inside my boots.



It rained all the way up – four hours. The rain clouds parted for a total of 20 seconds at the very top. I whipped out my camera, took a photo to prove I'd been there and then it rained. All. The. Way. Down.

Ironically, the last half hour to Adelboden involved a steep uphill climb because the village was not exactly in the valley but clung to the opposite side.

And only one hotel had a room. That said, the hotel keeper was a prince – an angel. He looked at my dripping, footsore, tired form – gave me a double room for the price of a single. He cranked up the heat so I could dry out because no matter how much Goretex you wear, it will not stand up to eight hours of downpour. And he assured me – tomorrow will be an easy day. I spent the evening doctoring my feet.

Stage 14 – Adelboden – Hahnenmoospass – Lenk



As it turned out, the innkeeper was right. I walked out of the hotel the next morning to sunshine – and a clear look back at the notch in the mountain I had walked through the day before.

With only 710 metres to climb, this day was as close to a walk in the park as I was going to get. The trail was broad and easy, populated with trottibikes (imagine a cross between a scooter and a bike) and mountain bikes – and on the other side, massive groups of walkers aiming for the tavern. Lenk was a sweet little village with a cute hotel and not much open because it was Sunday. But I did enjoy the fair with a carousel and a Swiss blues band (really!) and a lot of beer drinking in a big tent.

And I was beginning to anticipate the end of the trek.

Stage 15 – Lenk – Truttlisberg - Lauenen

It was at this point, that I veered off the main route and chose the alternate version of the VA. The main route goes through Gstaad. I chose the original route that avoided the more touristy areas and tended to drop into tiny villages. Was it longer? Oh yes – with more elevation but it sounded so much more appealing.



Although the approach to the Truttlisberg pass was gentler than the more recent passes – and tended to stay in high meadows, it was still a long, climb of more than 1,000 meters. The landscape had changed. Gone were the mighty glacier- covered mountains – these were more benign peaks – but still beautiful. And Lauenen was a charming tiny village. I'd emailed ahead for a room. The owner emailed back; "Yes, I have a room for you – but I'm out most of the day. I will leave a key for you in the box by the door."

And what a room! A suite! With a deep tub! Bliss.

Stage 16 – Lauenen – Krinnen Pass – Gsteig

The day dawned full of sun and warmth. And an easy day! Just a few hundred metres over a low pass and

into the small village of Gsteig before attempting the next two days, which promised to be challenging. One problem – it was now September and the hotels were closed. What to do?

When I mentioned my issue to the hotel proprietor, she promptly called a friend who operated a little B&B in her farmhouse – only an hour's walk from Gsteig, she said. And yes, there was a room for me.





And so I walked over the pass and down to Gsteig, where indeed, the doors to both hotels were locked up tight, and continued my walk through farm fields and along a pretty little creek to the farmhouse – a huge, century od timber frame structure where I had the use of a kitchen and where my room was furnished with hand hewn tables and a bed with a ladder leading up to a loft. And there were geraniums at my window. it was as charming as a Swiss farmhouse should be.

Stage 17 – Gsteig – Blattipass – Col des Anderets – Col des Mosses

My guidebook told me: distance 25K, elevation, 1310 metres, time – 8 hours. What it did not take into account was the extra hour from the farmhouse plus an extra 100 metres in elevation. It also didn't mention that Blattipass was only the first one, lofting me up to a stone wall that separates the Canton of Bern from French-speaking Vaud – and that there would be three more passes after that.



That said, this was high mountain walking at its best – the landscape was wild – different for the cow-dotted alpine meadows of the Berner Oberland. Here, much of the alpine was ungrazed – filled with azaleas and rhododendrons, streams and rock-strewn grasses.

The rule of trails held firm throughout the day – If you see a trail that you're grateful you don't have to climb – you will definitely have to climb it. And climb I did – over and over. What the guidebook described quite often as a lovely belvedere around a mountain, I called unnecessary side hilling. But I also told myself to buck up and enjoy the scenery.

It was here that I encountered my first barbed-wire gate. Naturally, I walked through many gates each day – simple things you opened and closed to keep cows where they should be. It seemed that the cows in Vaud were a good deal more intelligent than their German speaking counterparts and required electrified barbed wire that I could not manage to open. I tried. I almost wept in frustration, finally giving up, detouring mightily, crawling under a fence, bushwhacking up a mountainside and crawling under another fence to get back to the trail.

This was not easy. It was time consuming. It was hard. I pouted. And then I put one foot in front of the other.

By the time I rounded a mountain corner and spotted Col des Mosses below me, I had been hiking almost 10 hours. I was never so grateful to pry my feet out of my cow-dung spattered boots and climb into a hot shower.

One more day. Was it really going to be only one more day? Was it possible? By now I was beginning to feel like this was my life for the rest of my life. My feet, however were telling me – stop! Celebrate! One more day!

Stage 18 – Col des Mosses – Col de Chaud – Montreux

The challenge for this last day was clear: not the distance – 28K, nor the ascent – 520 metres – but the descent – 1600 metres.



But it was the last day. I was determined to make the most (or the least) of it. I started early, dawn just breaking, and hiked through a chilly, cloudy morning. Gradually, the sun burned off the mist and I walked on a road (!) for a long time around a man-made lake, past a dam, through a wet, long, dark tunnel and then around a mountainside. Then up – a steep relentless climb. The rain had come and gone and come again but finally cleared when I laboured to the top of the pass and had my first "wow" look at what lay in front of me: Lake Geneva, Mont Blanc and Montreux far below.



"I made it!"

Well – not quite.

The way down was long and steep – steeper and longer than any guidebook could possibly prepare you for. My toes hurt. My knee was giving out. My feet were burning. I gritted my teeth. I went on and on and on. I can do this, I told myself. And then I reached Glion – the upper suburb of Montreux. From here – a twenty minute walk or – a five minute funicular ride to city centre.

I chose the funicular.

No guilt.

Tired; happy; stunned.

The next day, I bought new hiking boots.



The day after that, on the train to Zurich to fill up on the best chocolate in the world, I thought, "I would do this again – or maybe the Tour de Mont Blanc or maybe the Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt.

The day after that I understood that I am quite, quite mad.



And here: important statistics for the trek:

- Number of days to complete: 19 (that includes one rest day)
- Kilometres covered: 360 plus an additional 2 0r 3 0r 4 for those few inevitable wrong turns and wee backtracks and shortcuts (otherwise known as alternate routes) that added a few K.
- Elevation gained: 20,000 plus a few metres – according to the guidebook but actually more – see short cuts/alternate routes above.
- Slices of cheese eaten: 121
- Number of four-letter words issued from my mouth (see shortcuts/alternate routes above) 12
- Number of ***f%^ks*** spoken aloud in the Canton of Vaud where many gates are barbed wire and occasionally electrified. 5
- Number of same ***f%^ks*** said silently: 1,876
- Number of pounds of chocolate eaten: 34
- Pounds of chocolate brought home: 9 or 10 or maybe 12 – whatever I could stuff in my pack and still be able to (barely) lift it.
- Number of hiking boots that died on the trail: 1 pair.
- Number of WTF! moments experienced while observing where the trail was about to take me: 6
- Number of people who admired what I was doing: 8
- Number of people who thought I was bat-shit crazy: 89,765
- Number of cows encountered: 740
- Number of goats encountered: 62
- Number of goats who tried to eat my stuff: 3
- Number of cow patties hiked through: 1,344
- Number of times hiking boots were cleaned: 0
- Number of newspapers used to dry boots: 15
- Number of Band-Aids used on feet: 22
- Number of trains taken: 3
- Number of buses taken: 3
- Number of gondolas taken: 3
- Number of funicular railways taken: 1
- Number of hairs shaved off legs on returning: 6,400
- Number of falls: 2
- Number of slips, slides and near misses: 82
- Number of salamanders not stepped on: 66
- Number of ***f%^ks*** not given about the state of the world: 1,000,000,000

Some More of Goodi's Winter Trees













Bonnington Huts Update

David Heyduck, Huts Director

We've had another fine year maintaining the KMC huts in the Bonnington Range, and while it's been hard work, the mountains have rewarded us with many memorable days. Now we can hang up our axes and pick up our skis knowing that the chores are done for another season!

During the 2017-18 season, the four huts were booked a total of 544 days, accommodating 1909 skiers, snowshoers and hikers, generating $30,270 revenue for the Club. To maintain the huts, 8 members contributed 352 hours of work over 17 days, stacked a total of 7.5 cords of firewood, and brushed several access trails.

Grassy Hut

Early in the season we spent 30 hours with an excavator improving the trail into Grassy. This has made servicing the cabin via a quad much safer than it has been in the past. We cut and and heli-transported 30 standing dead trees to the backside of the hut which should provide sufficient BTU's for a few years! And finally, Grassy was serviced on Sept 21 with a few simple repairs, a good cleaning and stacking of 2 cords of firewood.

Steed Hut



As an early Christmas present from the Ministry (RSTBC), a new high efficiency stove was flown in and installed during the hut servicing on Sept 22. The old stove was removed, the cabin cleaned and the front porch loaded with 2 cords of firewood from the timber pile created in 2017. Measurements were taken of the back wall in preparation for next year's replacement of the siding on that wall.

Copper Hut



Copper hut was given a facelift by an army of great builders on July 7. Graham Jamin, family and friends spent 3 days making significant upgrades to Copper including a new porch, new stairs and new foundation supports among other vital maintenance items. Wood was stocked, cabin cleaned and checked off the list early this year.

Huckleberry Hut



Interestingly, we intended to do a basic service at Huckleberry hut this year, but ended up spending a lot of time here with plans for more in the works. The hut was serviced on Oct 13. In record time, we piled 2.5 cords of firewood in the shed and under the porch. At the end of October we replaced the roof and brushed the access trail. The hut is dressed up for another season!

Equipment and supplies

This year, KMC acquired some hand and power tools, safety gear and a 2nd quad for assembling larger work parties. The storage space was improved and the shelves are stocked with everyday supplies to make prepping for outings faster: fuel, oil, mantles, stove parts, lanterns and parts, soap, bleach, dishes, first aid, brooms, axes and handles, mousetraps, etc.

Planning, Tracking and Reporting

It's challenging to remember everything that each hut needs during the next visit, sometimes 12 months after the last. So, Dave has adopted a system of detailed photos, notes and data entry such that subsequent trips to the huts can be more efficient, with less left to memory. After each outing, a work report with photos is prepared, and with the help of Sheila Achilles, posted to the KMC Facebook site. Check it out!

New Developments

Plans for hut replacements have been in the works for some time. The Club will seek input from our engineering consultants on cabin design and submit a funding proposal to the Ministry (RSTBC) and other potential funding bodies in the coming year. We have been working closely with the Ministry in our approach to upgrades and new huts, composting toilets, improved trails and more responsible shared use of the mountains we love. Big thanks to Justin Dexter for his continued support and impressive drive to make good things happen for us!

Above all else, we want to recognize and thank everyone who volunteered for hut chores this year, and those who offered support in every other way. These fine ladies and gents stepped up and were a tremendous help with physical, on-site tasks this year: Graham and Fresia Jamin, Jude Stralak, Bruce Reeder, Jamie Joseph, Doug Clark, Paul Eagles, and Joel Rooke. You brought the heavy lifting we needed for a record year!