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Washington TRAILS

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Photo by Jessi Loerch



For More Than Fun

"Outdoor recreation is not just fun and games." — Gov. Jay Inslee's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation

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Washington Trails Association is a volunteer-driven membership organization. As the nation's largest state-based hiking nonprofit, WTA is the voice for hikers in Washington state. We engage and mobilize a community of hikers as advocates and stewards—through collaborative partnerships, grassroots advocacy, volunteerism, education and inspiration. WTA is committed to making trails accessible to everyone in Washington and protecting our state's wild places for the next generation.

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WTA was founded by Louise B. Marshall (1915–2005). Ira Spring (1918–2003) was its primary supporter. Greg Ball (1944–2004) founded the volunteer trail maintenance program. Their spirit continues today through contributions from thousands of WTA members and volunteers.

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I hike for lots of reasons—for happiness of mind and body, to take in nature's wonders, to spend time with family and friends and simply because it's a lot of fun. I'm guessing that your reasons are a lot like mine. I'm also willing to bet that neither of us have ever hit the trail because "it's good for the economy."

That's as it should be, but it doesn't change the fact that hiking is an economic powerhouse. The thousands of people on trail help to fuel a \$21 billion outdoor recreation economy in Washington state, and \$887 billion in consumer spending across the nation—that's more than the gross domestic product of all but four states.

With numbers like these, people are starting to take notice of outdoor recreation's potential to fuel the economy. Eight states across the U.S., including Washington, have established offices to champion outdoor recreation economic development.

This past January, I was invited by Gov. Jay Inslee's outdoor recreation advisor, Jon Snyder, to be part of Washington's delegation to a first-of-its-kind convening of the eight states with outdoor recreation offices. WTA was invited because we're a respected voice and we've

long touted the value of hiking beyond recreational enjoyment. The purpose of the meeting, which was held in Colorado, was to develop joint principles to guide the growth and development of the outdoor recreation economy.

Over the span of six hours, states from across the country and political spectrum—from Washington to North Carolina—hammered out shared strategies to foster a strong outdoor recreation economy, one that increases economic vitality, ensures conservation and stewardship of public lands and enhances health and wellness.

Meetings like this are encouraging because they help to increase the drumbeat of the outdoor recreation economy. It is essential that everyone understand our state's great trail system is both a lot of fun to use and a driver of economic prosperity. Only then will we see the level of investment necessary to ensure a robust and sustainable trail system for years to come.

The next time we go hiking, it won't be for the good of the economy. But, it's important that we know—and our lawmakers know—it's also not just for fun. That is why WTA will continue having these important conversations with local and national leaders.



Jill



Features

Hiking as medicine

Take two hikes and call me in the morning. Whatcom County health care providers are prescribing time in parks. » **p. 14**

Build whole-body strength

Hiking is an ideal workout. Here's what it does for your body—and how to make the most of your time on trail. » **p. 18**

Healing hikes

Three hikers share their stories of how time on trail has been a boost to their mental and physical health. » **p. 22**

The power of writing

WTA is blessed to have many authors in our community. Get to know some of the writers who support our mission. » **p. 28**

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Cover: Research has shown that spending time in nature, such as at Lake Padden in Whatcom County, improves psychological and physical health. Photo by Katie Kemp.



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Space to Heal

Trails are powerful. As hikers, we know that. Trails are connections to beautiful places and to other people. And for many, trails are also a way to heal.

Increasingly, science is proving what hikers know instinctively. Being outdoors is good for you. And health care providers are taking notice. A new program in Whatcom County is helping doctors prescribe time outdoors (page 14). The first year of the program was a success, and it's being greatly expanded this year. One of the women I talked to told me that walking is now her drug of choice to help her deal with the challenges of her life, both emotional and physical.

I know how she feels. Time on trails has made me stronger, physically and mentally.

My own story of healing on trails is deeply personal and sometimes painful. Like so many, I am a survivor of sexual abuse. Decades later, I'm still coping with it. My anger was always the hardest thing to let myself feel. It left me feeling out of control, and I desperately needed to feel in control.

In the wild, it felt like I had room for that anger—that I could feel it, yet not be controlled by it. I vividly remember a particularly furious hike to Blue Lake in the autumn. The air was crisp, and the sky was practically neon blue. I flew up that trail. When I arrived at the lake, it took me a long time to catch my breath—way longer than the exertion warranted. But when I did, I could breathe deeply. I'd like to say I let go of the anger, then and there, but I didn't. Finding room to truly feel those emotions, though, made it easier to cope.

I haven't taken an angry hike for a couple of years—but I know the trails are there if I ever need to again.

So many other hikers have found what they need on trails. Trails are powerful, and so are stories. There is a sense of release in sharing and solace in seeing yourself in someone else's story. In this magazine, hikers have shared their personal stories of how trails have helped them through hard times. Christina Hickman (page 22) told me that she feels it's important to be honest. She wanted to tell her own story of struggling with an eating disorder and her mental health. She hoped that by being brave and honest, she'd help someone else who's struggling. And Joe Hendricks (page 24) told his bittersweet and inspiring story of hiking through cancer and dealing with grief after the death of his wife.

I hope that you find inspiration and encouragement from the stories in this magazine. And I hope you find whatever healing you need on trail—even if it's just the smell of trees and relief from the day-to-day stress of life.

Jessi



Photo by Kindra Ramos

Helping Shape the Future of WTA

“Everything I loved about Washington Trails Association as a member has been confirmed as a board member. It is an organization filled with passionate hikers who want to make sure that everyone understands the value of our natural spaces, that everyone can access them and that they are around for future generations. It's not just lip service—WTA staff and volunteers are out there every day living these values.”

—Matt Martinez, WTA board member

Volunteers support Washington Trails Association at all levels—even on our all-volunteer board of directors. Our board's job is to think of the big picture, helping to set our long-term strategic priorities and overseeing WTA's financial health.

In addition to that important work, the board of directors also helps WTA tell our story. The board members share the vision and enthusiasm of WTA with hikers. They're hiking heralds who sing the praises of our work and help hikers find their place in our community.

“I've been on many hikes since moving here, and I take every chance I get to talk with someone about WTA,” Matt said. “The most recent encounter was on Rainier. I was running down from Devil's Dream camp and encountered two Wonderland thru-hikers who started their journey that very day. I reached into my backpack and pulled out a WTA patch and told them a bit about what we do. It was a quick chat, but right before I left, they said, ‘This feels like a bit of trail magic. This patch will be good luck.’”

“Sometimes I feel like a walking WTA commercial!” new board member Ashley Fontaine said. “When people ask me where to hike, the first thing I do is show them WTA's website. Trip reports are a big part of the sense of community I feel through WTA, and I encourage everyone to do them.”

A sense of community is what makes WTA so powerful. To take our work to the next level, we need to engage more people from a variety of backgrounds.

“I've only been on the board for a few months, but working on diversity, equity and inclusion has brought my thinking to a different place,” Ashley said. “I think of trails less individually. They are still a means to do a thing I love—hiking! But now I am also thinking about trails as a community resource that everyone deserves access to, and I think about how WTA can be a leader on that front. I'm excited to see how WTA elevates the voices of hikers in future policy and funding discussions and fosters the next generation of hikers to be good

WASHINGTON TRAILS ASSOCIATION'S BOARD

The 18 trail enthusiasts on WTA's board of directors serve staggered two-year terms. From trail runners to climbers, equestrians to pack goat hikers, WTA board members are all committed to helping WTA inspire people to protect trails and public lands.

Over the last year, the board has been working with WTA's staff. We're aiming to shape the future of trails in Washington and create a welcoming and inclusive community to help WTA follow our strategic direction.

stewards of the amazing places we have in Washington.”

WTA's board is enthusiastic about our efforts to create an inclusive community of hikers working together to protect trails. The board and staff are looking to the future.

“It's very clear how much everyone cares about the work of the organization and how serious they are about making a difference,” WTA board member Ken Myer said. “WTA is poised to have an even bigger impact.”

5 Tips To Stay Dry and Cozy

Cold and wet spring weather brings unique obstacles to hiking or snowshoeing. Though the weather might be less forgiving than in sunny summer, with the right planning and preparation you can ensure that your outing will be enjoyable. Here are five tips to help you stay dry and comfortable on your next hiking or snowshoeing trip:

1 Wear layers. Playing in the snow or hiking in cold temperatures means you'll probably get wet or sweaty. By layering appropriately (wearing multiple layers of clothing like a base layer, midweight layer and a jacket), you can find a nice equilibrium that won't be either too hot or too cold. Avoid cotton if you can. Once it gets wet, it tends to stay wet and will keep you chilly.

2 Warm up. There are few things more enjoyable than a warm lunch on a cold day. Bring hot soup or drinks in a thermos—they're guaranteed to boost morale midhike.

3 Take a seat. Having a sit pad in your pack is a nice luxury when it comes time to stop for lunch. If you don't have a sit pad, a piece of an old foam ground pad or even a trash bag will help keep your pants dry while you rest.

4 Wear gaiters. Gaiters aren't just for snow. They're also really handy for wet trails where foliage is brushing up against your pants and boots. Having them in your pack might save you from soaked clothing and socks.

5 Change it up. If conditions look like they'll be wet, bring a change of clothes for the ride home. At the very least, a spare set of socks and warm shoes are always a good call for a comfortable journey.

Get more tips, including information on traveling safely in avalanche terrain, at wta.org/trailsmarts.

—Erik Haugen-Goodman

» What mental and physical benefits do you enjoy from hiking?

📷 WTA's Instagram community shares their trail stories.



"My beautiful mother, two years in remission and snowshoeing Rainier! Taking her on new adventures has been a beautiful gift. She's terrified of heights, wonky bridges, bears, dying in the woods, getting lost and just about everything else that comes with mountaineering. Yet here she stands, overcoming her fears and enjoying life to the fullest."

—KIERYA MEIER, @KFACEKAOS ON INSTAGRAM



"I absolutely love being outside! Especially when life gets stressful, it's a great way to exercise and unwind. There's a saying I always think about after a hectic week: 'You can't pour from an empty cup.' Being in the mountains is how I clear my mind, recharge, and come back a stronger, healthier person."

—JEN TOBIAS, @JENTOBIAS ON INSTAGRAM



"One of the big reasons I go outside is for a break. A break from routine, from city life, from commutes and noise and devices and my to-do list. I love that feeling when you get in the swing on the trail and hours and miles melt away. But most of all I love hiking because I get to spend time with family. There are few things better than being outside with the ones you love."

—ISAIAH BROOKSHIRE, @IBROOKSHIRE ON INSTAGRAM

Check Out WTA's New Hike Finder Map

You may have noticed some recent changes to WTA's Hike Finder Map. What you can't see are the amazing volunteers who helped create this extremely popular feature at wta.org and who continue to play a key role in the map's evolution.

More than a decade ago, Andrew Gove had just started working as an engineer at Google Maps. He and his wife, Amy, were new to Washington and soon ran into WTA work parties on their hikes. They were grateful for the volunteers' work and looked for their own ways to help trails.

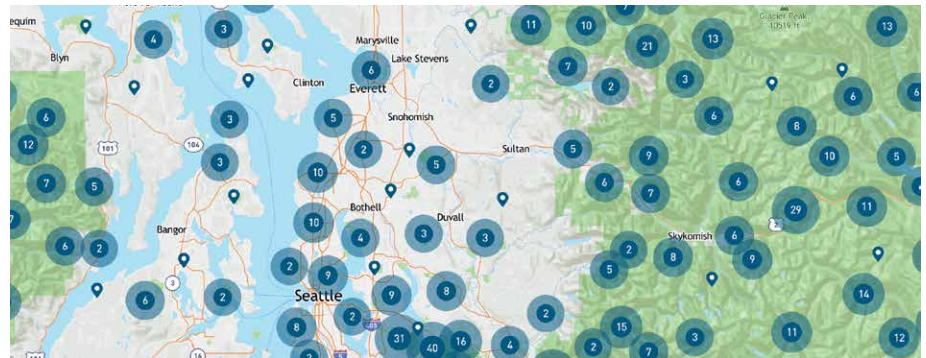
Amy found her voice by attending a Hiker Lobby Day and, on the drive, volunteered Andrew for a map project that would help hikers find the perfect hike.

"The existing hiking guides assumed you had at least a vague idea of where the 'Central Cascades' or 'Issaquah Alps' were and whether that meant a 1-hour or 4-hour drive from home," Andrew said. "More often than not, we just knew we were going to be in some place and wanted to know what was nearby."

Andrew knew that maps are powerful tools to help understand an area. He brought his professional skills and his personal passions to the project. Along with Jon Baldivieso and others from the consulting firm Groundwire, Andrew helped create one of the most popular pages on wta.org.

Now, after years of helping hikers, we've made some updates to the map, thanks in part to a new team of volunteers.

Susanne Hsu, a user experience designer at Deloitte Digital, worked with staff



to develop the updated designs. Sam Matthews and Evan Derickson have used their knowledge of cartography and online maps to refine the design. Luis Gimenez, an Intel retiree participating in the Encore Fellowship Program, researched map frameworks and helped develop new features, including trail tracks and printable reference maps. As hikers and users of the site, these volunteers extended the capacity of WTA.

"WTA is my go-to resource for finding hikes," Susanne said, "so I was excited to have the opportunity to give back."

Susanne's full-screen design realized our longtime vision for the map and makes it easier to use. Her design gives users new ways to visualize and filter the thousands of hikes around the state: Areas dense with trails show as clusters indicating how many hikes are in an area. Clicking a cluster zooms in closer. The design updates the map's responsiveness, meaning it works well across a wide range of screen sizes, including mobile phones. Volunteer hiking guide correspondents also helped collect and field test a selection of tracks.

THANK YOU

Many people helped create and update the Hike Finder Map, including WTA members. Without your support, this project would not be possible. The volunteers and board members on our IT and communications committee also helped guide the effort to balance the desire for cutting-edge technology with the budget and responsibilities of a nonprofit. Thanks to many, the resource will continue to improve and help hikers access trails statewide.

Check out the new features at wta.org/go-outside/map.

From purchasing high-quality print maps to connecting the dots on our trail systems, the new features are all aimed at helping all hikers explore the best trails to plan their next adventure.

"I hope the map inspires people to hike and helps people discover new hikes," Susanne said.

Members Make an Impact

2017 was filled with exciting milestones for WTA and trails. Thank you for your support. Members like you make this work possible! **Learn more at wta.org/accomplishments**

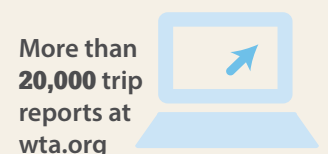


More than 5,000 trail volunteers engaged

More than 160,000 hours of trail work completed



3,500 hands-on outdoor experiences for youth



More than 20,000 trip reports at wta.org



47,500 online activists

Fairhaven Forest Saved for Future

On the south side of Bellingham lies a little slice of nature that's enjoyed by local neighbors and far-flung visitors alike. A forested utopia of cedar, willow, fir and cottonwood trees and a fern-filled abundance of wetland and marshy areas, this property acts as nature's filter, helping to moderate storm and floodwater runoff before returning it to Padden and Chuckanut creeks.

This area has been known by many names, including Hundred Acre Woods, Chuckanut Ridge and, for a time, Fairhaven Highlands, as it was considered for residential development. Through heroic efforts, local residents formed a Metropolitan Park District in 2013 to levy a small property tax to pay back the City of Bellingham, who had purchased the property, thus ending 20 years of community struggle to preserve this special place.

Recreation Northwest, a local nonprofit, worked with Bellingham Parks and Recreation to rally volunteers and a private contractor to construct a beautiful new access trail and bridge spanning a fragile wetland, connecting the existing Fairhaven Park to the forest.

WTA is proud to be part of the next step, replacing a steep and slippery "fall line" trail—meaning it runs straight downhill and erodes quickly—with a trail that has better drainage and greater durability.



Jackson Lee, Kristen Bottenberg and Ricky Soland admire new trail work in Fairhaven Forest. Photo by Rae Edwards.

WTA volunteers did the work of creating the trail in early February. Former WTA youth volunteer, ambassador, intern and crew leader Jackson Lee, now serving as an AmeriCorps restoration environmental educator with the Bellingham Parks Volunteer Program, has taken a key role in this project. Besides helping to design and present the project for permitting and approval, Jackson led local school groups in removing invasive species and digging up ferns and other native plants to restore the old steep trail section. The school groups helped prep the site for WTA crews and then helped with rehabilitation after the work was finished.

The project is creating a safer connection to this amazing place while providing students and volunteers with a deeper understanding of the impacts of human–nature interaction.

Fairhaven Forest can be accessed from Fairhaven Park on Chuckanut Drive. To learn more about the forest, go to chuckanutcommunityforest.com.

WTA Honors Howard Carlin's Spirit of Adventure

Howard Carlin was many things: a lifelong Washingtonian, an avid outdoorsman and a longtime WTA member and volunteer. In 2017, WTA learned that our organization was a beneficiary of Howard's estate. His generous gift will make a significant impact for trails.

Whether caring for his flower and vegetable garden at home or venturing into the wilderness, Howard loved spending time outside. He especially enjoyed difficult scrambles and wrote up some of his more harrowing adventures in trip reports that he shared with family and friends. Whether dodging flash floods on the way to Peggy's Pond or practicing ice axe arrests on a trip to Tinkham Peak above Lake Annette, Howard's write-ups make it clear he never shied away from a challenge—or let misadventures discourage him. Instead, he treated them as learning opportunities. In one report he wrote, "To the novice or newcomer to outdoor activities, my best advice is to ask lots of questions ... You can never know too much or know everything."

Howard was dedicated to public service and especially loved trail conservation, serving as a commissioner on the Kittitas County Parks and Recreation District No. 1, as well as on the Coal Mines Trail Commission. WTA is extremely grateful to Howard for



Peggy's Pond was one of Howard Carlin's many exciting destinations. Photo by Doug Diekema.

remembering our organization in his estate plans. His spirit of service will live on in our work to build and maintain trails in Kittitas County and beyond. Learn more about the legacy giving program at wta.org/legacy.



A hiker crosses brush and downed trees on the Boundary Trail.
Photo by loowit.

Coming Together for a Lost Trail

In 2015, WTA launched our **Lost Trails Found** campaign with an intent to bring more awareness to the need for funding and restoring our backcountry trail system. We set the goal of rehabilitating at least three priority backcountry trails by 2020, as well as improving a number of at-risk trails. By restoring these lost trails, WTA hopes to make them more accessible to Washington's ever-growing hiking population and potentially relieve some of the pressure on other popular backcountry trails.

The Boundary Trail, one of our three priority trails, spans almost the entire length of the Pasayten Wilderness and offers hikers miles of expansive views, 150 notable peaks and more than 160 bodies of water. The Boundary Trail is also part of the much longer Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail, joining the ranks of long trails like the Pacific Crest and Appalachian National Scenic Trails. While an iconic trail like the Boundary Trail should be in prime condition, some segments of the Boundary Trail are difficult to nearly

impossible to navigate by hikers due to decreases in trail maintenance funding and increases in catastrophic wildfires. At 80 miles in length, the Boundary Trail requires a lot of resources to maintain, making it tough for just one organization to tackle it in its entirety.

To help achieve our goal of restoring the Boundary Trail, WTA has joined forces with several fellow trail groups. In the fall of 2017, the Back Country Horsemen of Washington, the Pacific Crest Trail Association and the Pacific Northwest Trail Association came together with WTA to develop a trail maintenance partnership. Together, we are working strategically to restore trails in the Pasayten Wilderness, identifying project areas and focusing on the Boundary Trail and those trails that access the Boundary Trail and need the most work. Focusing our collective efforts on shared projects and goals enables us to coordinate our maintenance projects, combine our resources, tackle projects more efficiently and quickly and have an overall greater impact on trails.

VOLUNTEER IN THE PASAYTEN

June 29–July 4: Andrews Creek, backcountry response team (BCRT)

July 11–15: Horseshoe Basin, BCRT

July 28–Aug. 4: Middle Fork Pasayten, youth volunteer vacation

Aug. 4–11: Pasayten Airstrip, volunteer vacation

Aug. 7–12: Buckskin Ridge, BCRT

Ultimately, we hope we can extend partnerships like this with other trail work organizations to more areas of the state. We hope this first year will serve as a helpful learning process, one that will allow us to refine our partnership and develop plans for future joint projects.

For additional updates on our work on these lost trails, visit wta.org/losttrails.

Learning and Growing With WTA's Trail Crews

Pat Limberg has been a volunteer with WTA for decades, since the trail maintenance program was still a new part of our work. Over the years, she's seen many changes. But many things have stayed the same: WTA is still devoted to trails, and work parties still attract a wide range of people who care deeply about protecting the places they love to play.



Pat Limberg

Pat first heard about WTA work parties when she saw a flyer at the old REI in downtown Seattle. Pat was a hiker, and she thought trail work could be a good way to learn more about hiking and explore new trails. On Pat's first work party, the woman leading the trip talked about the first weeklong trips that were going out that summer.

Pat and her husband, Jesse Shook, signed up and went out on WTA's second weeklong trip. They spent the time in the Entiat, clearing debris from an avalanche and rerouting a trail.

"It went really well and we had a great time," Pat said.

Since then, Pat has gone out on one or two weeklong trips every summer. In recent years, since she retired, she has also increasingly volunteered on day trips. She has nearly 400 days of trail work to her name.

Over the years, Pat has watched the trail maintenance program grow in many ways. When she first began volunteering, she knew nearly all the volunteers she went out on trail with. Now, there are so many volunteers, she meets new people on every trip. WTA has also expanded the offerings for youth, something Pat appreciates.

"That's really been a plus, to see how the whole youth program has grown," she said.

She's also seen a change in the type of projects that WTA takes on. In the early years, most of the work was annual maintenance. Of course, WTA still does that, but we also tackle bigger projects, including building trails, constructing bridges and logging out sections of trail.

Pat became a crew leader early in her time with WTA but was delighted when WTA started hiring staff to serve as crew leaders. She found she prefers serving as an assistant crew leader and assisting the blue hats in charge. While Pat has learned new trail work skills over the years, she also has found that her personal outdoor skills have increased. After a number of weeklong trips with WTA, she had the confidence to go out on much longer personal backpacks.

Pat plans to head out on another weeklong trip this summer, and she'll be continuing to do day trips too. After all this time, she's still excited to get out on trail.

"I really enjoy the work, I enjoy the people, and the atmosphere is really fun," she said. "And it introduces me to places I wouldn't know of otherwise."

WTA Highlights



Shon't savage and her son, Sam, pose with her winning photo from the Northwest Exposure Photo Contest. Photographers and others members of the WTA community gathered earlier this year to celebrate outdoor photography. Shon't jokes that winning the contest has helped motivate her son to want to hike more. Photo courtesy of shon't savage.



Crew leader LeeAnne Jensen demonstrates how to square the foundation of a trail structure on the all-women's puncheon training at Squak Mountain in January. These trainings are helping create more female leaders in WTA's trail maintenance community. Photo by Anna Roth.



A great group of educators helped WTA kick off the 2018 Outdoor Leadership Training program workshops on a rare sunny and warm day of snowshoeing at Paradise in Mount Rainier National Park. Discussions focused on the skills they'll need to successfully lead their own fun and safe winter outings for the groups of youth and families that they work with. Photo by Andrew Pringle.

New Trails on Way for Yacolt Burn

The Tarbell Trail forms a 20-mile loop circling the heart of the Yacolt Burn State Forest. This winter, volunteers began construction on one of several planned connector trails linking to the Tarbell that will create new, smaller loop options for hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers.

Volunteers with WTA, the Chinook Trail Association and Back Country Horsemen of Washington have begun working on one end of the new 1.5-mile trail, while the Cold Creek Mountain Bikers have been cutting in tread on the other side.

The trail's name for now is Section No. 3, and it connects to the Tarbell near Rock Creek Campground and Kloochman Butte. Several other sections are established only by GPS waypoints, waiting to be built. In total, approximately 17 miles of new non-motorized trails are envisioned in the Yacolt Burn Recreation Plan that was adopted by state Department of Natural Resources staff in 2010.

WTA staff, volunteers and local hikers participated in the planning process back in 2009, advocated for the protection of the forest from a new Bonneville Power Administration power line corridor in 2010 and helped to design trail alignments in 2015. Additionally, we advocated for the capital budget in the Legislature earlier this year. Now that the capital budget



Volunteers have been working to construct connector trails in Yacolt Burn State Forest. WTA plans to add more work parties in the area this spring and summer. Photo by Gabe Smith.

has passed—giving agencies including DNR more ability to move forward with projects—we're looking forward to adding more work parties this spring and summer.

On the ground, WTA's southwest regional manager is working with DNR and the other trail user groups to leverage our respective volunteer forces for the greater good. While we all share

the goal of opening the trails as quickly as possible, spirited debates about the nuances of trail design are underway as the collaborators wrestles with how to build trails that are safe, sustainable and the best recreation experience that the landscape can offer.

As they say, many hands make light work!

OLD VEHICLE, NEW PURPOSE

Are you trading up, or trying out a car-free lifestyle? Donate your car to Washington Trails Association! You'll be doing your part to support the trails you love. Visit wta.org/cars or call 855-500-RIDE to get started today!

“The process was simple. All I had to do was have my title and registration—they came and picked up the car.”

—Max, WTA member and car donor

A Better Way for Recreation Passes?

Outdoor recreation is part of our culture in Washington, fueled by our diverse and breathtaking public lands. In fact, 72 percent of Washingtonians participate in trail-based recreation every year. Those outdoor enthusiasts have more in common than just a love of nature. Most also find the fee system that goes along with trail access—and the more than 20 different passes and permits that are offered in our state—as complicated and confusing as the tax code.

Recreation pass reviewed

Fortunately, legislators have heard this frustration loud and clear, and in 2016, funding was provided in the state budget to analyze the current recreation access fee system and develop recommendations to improve it.

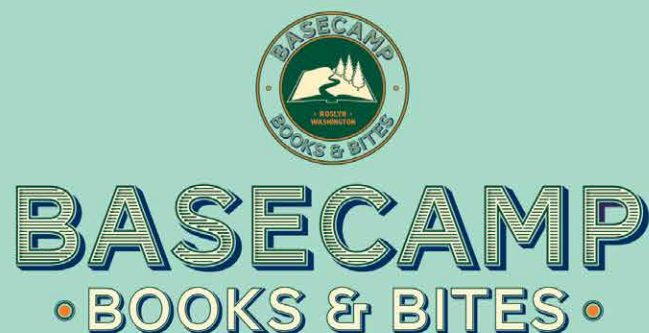
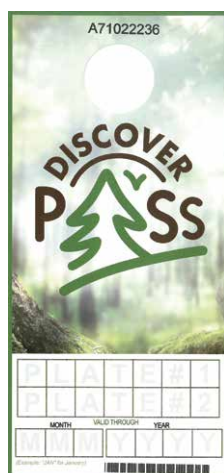
The well-respected William D. Ruckelshaus Center, which specializes in finding solutions for a broad range of public policy issues, was contracted to lead the review process. The center pulled together a mix of stakeholders, from state agencies to the U.S. Forest Service to groups like WTA and Back Country Horsemen of Washington, to review and make recommendations for improving the fee system. In December 2017, the recommendations were published in a report, "Recreation Fees in Washington: Options and Recommendations," and submitted to the Legislature.

Further analysis proposed

The report highlighted three "big idea" options for a total change in the recreation fee system, focusing on the Discover Pass. The options include

- Developing an alternate funding mechanism that could replace user-based fees (so there would no longer be a Discover Pass)
- Bundling a number of state passes and/or creating a joint pass that would allow hikers on both state and federal lands with just one pass
- Creating a single-vehicle Discover Pass to lower the cost (right now each Discover Pass can be used in two vehicles)

These options need to be explored further to see how they could be enacted and what the financial impacts might be. In his 2018 budget, Gov. Jay Inslee has included \$75,000 to conduct a more comprehensive analysis. WTA supports this budget request, and we are advocating for it during the state legislative session. Once this analysis is completed, we hope to see a recommendation for an option that would create a less complex and more equitable recreation access system in Washington state.



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April Claxton, Polly Favinger and Jessica Pursell enjoy a walk at Lake Padden Park, one of the many parks featured on the website for Parkscriptions, a new program in Whatcom County. Photo by Dallas Betz.

THE POWER OF PARKS

A new program in Whatcom County is helping doctors prescribe outdoor exercise to their patients

BY JESSI LOERCH

"If you could put the power of a park into a pill, it'd be a blockbuster," said Greg Anderson, a family doctor and outdoor enthusiast.

Greg, who practices at Family Care Network–Bellingham Bay Family Medicine, enjoys trail running and walking, often with his Weimaraner. He knows, personally and professionally, the value of getting outdoors.

"A written prescription for exercise from a doctor is really powerful," he said.

Greg knew that was true from his medical school training, from his residency and from journal articles. Yet, even with that knowledge, he didn't have a user-friendly way to prescribe outdoor exercise.

Now, however, a pilot program in Whatcom County is giving health care providers a tool to help them write prescriptions for parks.

Parkscriptions, which was created by the nonprofit Recreation Northwest, aims to help people reap the mental and physical health benefits of being outside. A website gives providers and patients access to a user-friendly tool that showcases all of the parks in Whatcom County.

When Greg writes a park prescription, he pulls up the Parkscriptions website in the exam room with his patient. Together, they look for a park that suits their needs. And then Greg prints off the park information and tells his patient how often to visit and for how long.

Greg was one of five health care providers in Whatcom County to participate in the pilot program in 2017. This year, the program will be expanded to 40 health care providers.

A NEW TOOL

That information, paired with research that showed that many people in Whatcom County weren't being active in the outdoors, encouraged Recreation Northwest to go forward with the program. When they started talking to health care providers, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

When Greg's practice manager asked him if he was interested in the program, he jumped at the chance. Now, each morning, he and his nurse look over who is coming in that day. They select candidates who could benefit from Parkscriptions. Greg says that, most often, he makes a park prescription for patients with a metabolic condition, such as high blood pressure, or a mood disruption, such as anxiety or depression.

"For anxiety and depression, regular exercise in a natural setting can be more powerful than medication," he said.

Greg says his patients know that he doesn't always reach for the prescription pad when they first bring a problem to him. And Parkscriptions is a natural extension of his approach to his practice. He says his patients appreciate a more natural approach. ▶

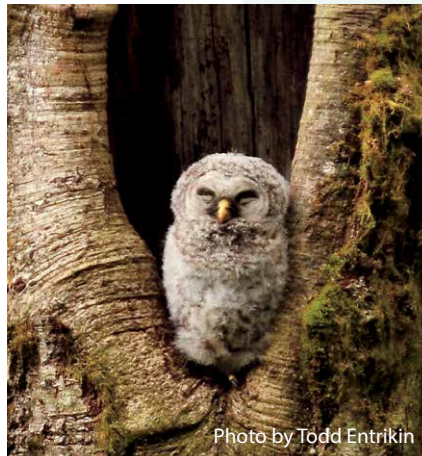


Photo by Todd Entrikin



Photo by Karla Anderson

Greg Anderson (left) is a family doctor. He regularly writes prescriptions for his patients to spend time in parks. Whatcom County offers a wealth of areas for people to get outside, such as the Stimpson Family Nature Preserve, where owls can sometimes be spotted (top), and Lake Padden (far left).

IF YOU COULD PUT THE POWER OF A PARK INTO A PILL, IT'D BE A BLOCKBUSTER.

The program was inspired particularly by Park Rx America, a successful program that began in Washington, D.C., and is expanding across the country. Park Rx's goal is to battle chronic disease and improve people's health and happiness by encouraging doctors to prescribe time in nature to their patients.

April Claxton is the co-executive director for Recreation Northwest and one of the driving forces behind Parkscriptions.

"We kept hearing about this idea," April said, "and we were excited about it as a way to get more people outdoors. We really liked the idea of the doctor being a trusted source of information. It adds an extra layer to outdoor recreation—it's something that's good for you, rather than just a fun thing. ... As we looked into this, we started seeing more and more research that confirms the mental and physical health benefits."



Photo by Bill Leskee

"Parks are side-effect free," he said.

From midsummer 2017, when he started the program, to early January 2018, Greg wrote 91 park prescriptions, which works out to about one per day. Greg says his rate has increased as he's gotten used to the program. More recently, he's been writing several a day.

"I've seen 11 of those people back," Greg said. "Five of them went to a park I prescribed, two went to a different park, and four said they hadn't had a chance to go yet. ... That's greater than a 50 percent response, which is better than the fill rate for prescriptions. When you use time in the exam room, it helps to emphasize that this is important. It's a powerful tool, and I think that if you present it in the exact same way you would give them a prescription for medicine, they get it."

Greg has also been practicing what he preaches. He doesn't work on Thursdays. Instead, each week he uses that day to visit a Whatcom County park that he's never been to.

A BOOST TO MENTAL HEALTH

Rene Laventure, a psychotherapist and licensed mental health counselor in Washington state, has been interested in Parkscriptions since the first time she heard about it. Just like Greg, she participated in the pilot program last year and will continue this year as well. She knows from her decades of experience as a psychotherapist, as well as her own personal experience, that time outdoors is vital for emotional and physical well-being.

"As a psychotherapist for about the last 20 years, I've been working in the area of what's called ecopsychology," Rene said, "which is a basic belief that we are totally interconnected with everything in the natural world and that the fact that we've really lost that understanding of that connection has added to a lot of the emotional ills and physical ills in our lives."

With that in mind, Rene was delighted to incorporate Parkscriptions into her work.

"I've used it with people who would typically be afraid of the natural world or who would be so depressed that they didn't have the energy to get out," Rene said. "I've encouraged them to get outside and made them part of the program. And it's really made a difference."

Rene says that she sees her clients making subtle shifts and realizing how being outdoors can help them. People who wouldn't normally get outdoors, after taking a walk with Rene's encouragement, begin to think about where else they could walk. Or they begin to realize that they do feel so much better after being active outside. And it's making a difference, she says, for those who do it consistently. In particular, she's seen her patients gain confidence.

"On top of seeing the mental health benefits of being out there, they're also really proud of themselves for

“
I AM IN LOVE WITH
WALKING ... IT'S MY
DRUG OF CHOICE.”



.....
Research has shown
that a 20 minute walk in
a natural setting provides
significantly better stress
release than a stroll in a
busy urban area. Photo
by Andrea Ginn.
.....

doing this," she said. "They're gaining more confidence that they can do these things and do them well. And then they can challenge themselves in new ways, whether that means doing more outdoors or doing more in social areas or other areas of their life."

Rene is excited to continue with the program and wants to see it expanded. She hopes more people will begin to understand that there are real, measurable mental and physical benefits to getting outside. And it's not just that it feels good to be outside, she says.

"There are real things happening in our bodies and to our emotions," she said.

Susan T., one of Rene's clients, was an early adopter of the Parkscriptions program. Last year, Susan had a major foot surgery that left her stuck in bed for many months. She was also dealing with mental health challenges, which she says had been exacerbated by a brain injury she received in a car crash when she was younger.

Rene encourage Susan to try walking. When she first started, Susan was only able to walk for 15 minutes at a time. Her first mile took an hour to walk. After diligent, regular walking, she was recently able to walk 2 miles in a little over an hour. She was delighted by the progress and regularly walks 2 to 4 miles a day now. She's found

that walking makes her hungry, and it encourages her to eat more regularly, something she has struggled with in the past. Rather than starving herself to control her body, she's used food to power her walks.

"I am in love with walking," said Susan. "It's my drug of choice."

READY TO GROW

With endorsements like that, it's easy to see why Recreation Northwest is working to expand the program this year to 40 health care providers around the county. The organization is also developing a basic how-to kit for new providers who join the program. In the future, it hopes to add group events and reach out to specific populations that could use help getting outdoors.

Washington state is a hub for outdoor recreation. It's a powerful driver of our economy—and it can be a powerful way to improve people's health. April has already heard from interested health care providers beyond Whatcom County, and she hopes to be able to expand the program. Hopefully, one day Parkscriptions will be available across the state. And when you visit your doctor, perhaps you'll walk out with a prescription to explore a new park. ■

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Parkscriptions provides health care providers with a tool for finding the perfect park for their patients. Providers and patients—or simply members of the public—can visit the Parkscriptions website, which features parks all across Whatcom County. Parks can be filtered by a number of features, including location, bus access, recreation opportunities such as bird watching, and amenities such as benches and bathrooms (the lack of which can be a major barrier to getting outside for some people). **For more information, visit recreationnorthwest.org/active/parkscriptions.**

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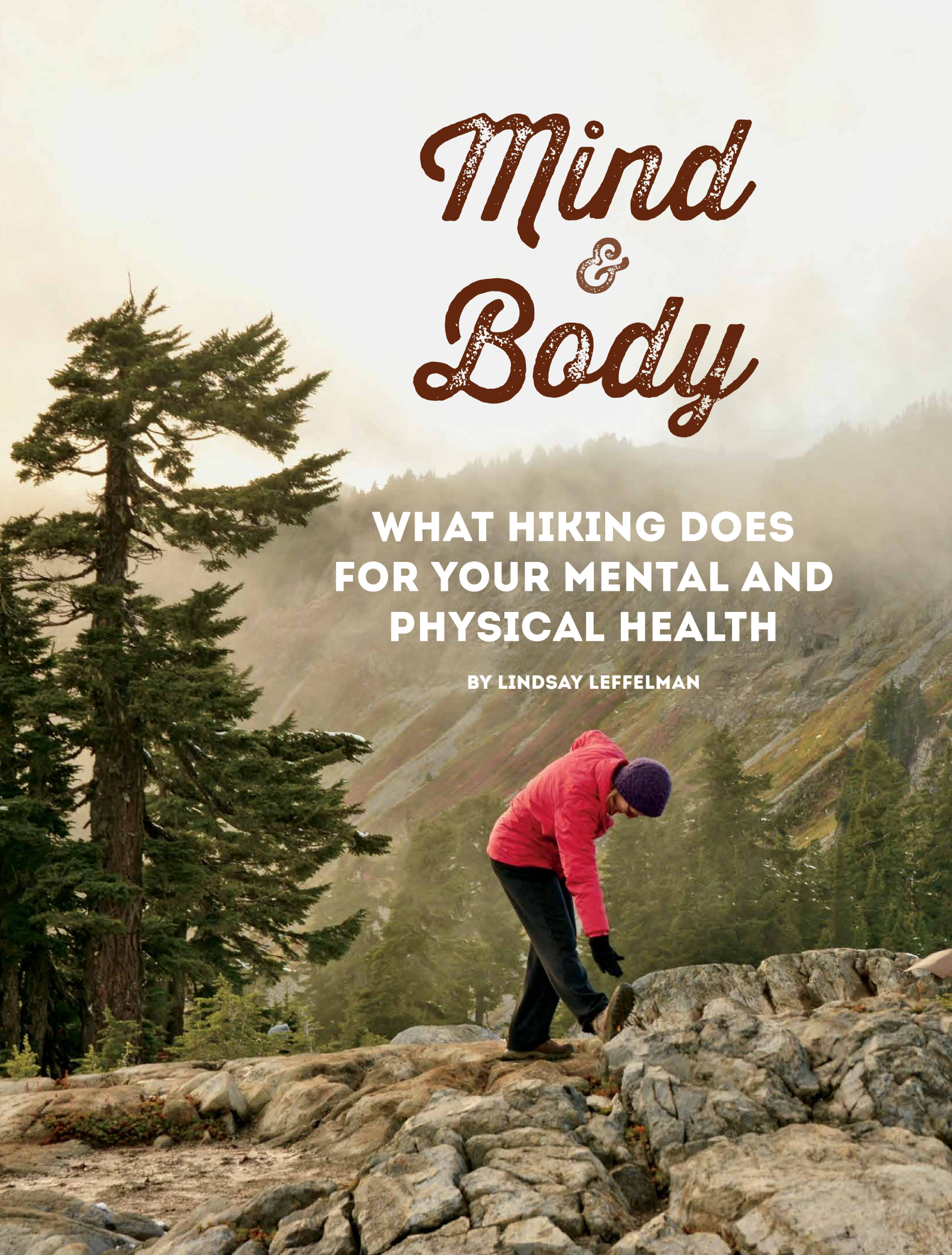
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PACK IT IN. PACK IT OUT.

A person wearing a bright pink jacket, dark pants, and a purple beanie is hiking on a rocky trail. They are leaning forward, carefully stepping on a rock. The background features a misty mountain landscape with evergreen trees and a large, prominent tree on the left side of the frame.

Mind & Body

**WHAT HIKING DOES
FOR YOUR MENTAL AND
PHYSICAL HEALTH**

BY LINDSAY LEFFELMAN



Once your muscles have had the chance to warm up, a gentle stretch will help keep you loose and comfortable. Photo by Doug Diekema near Artist Point.

If you've ever had to catch your breath on an uphill stretch of trail or if your legs have felt sore after a hike, you know that hiking is a workout. You've also likely experienced some of the health benefits of hiking: improved cardiovascular performance, more endurance, stronger muscles and a better mood. While many people hike simply for the enjoyment of it, there is no denying how beneficial a walk through the woods can be for your physical health.

In an age of trendy fitness studios, high-tech workout trackers and expensive personal trainers, it can be easy to forget that the simple act of hiking is an exercise powerhouse. However, scientific research and health professionals alike agree that hitting the trails is advantageous for all aspects of physical fitness.

Burning calories

For many people, the idea of burning calories is one of the first things that comes to mind when they think about working out. Our bodies use stored energy (calories) to support normal body functions and to fuel us during physical activity. While any type of physical movement will result in the body using its stored energy, the unique nature of hiking can result in greater calorie burn than other forms of exercise. In fact, research from the University of Florida concluded that walking on uneven terrain, like that of hiking trails, causes the body to use 28 percent more energy than walking on flat, even ground due to the subtle shifts in the way your leg muscles must lengthen or shorten while hiking.

So, exactly how many calories will you burn while hiking? That's a difficult question to answer. On average, a moderate hike can burn 300 to 400 calories per hour. However, this number can be heavily impacted by a variety of factors. The weight of your

pack, the speed at which you hike and the type of terrain you're traversing all play a role in how many calories you burn. Hiking with an overnight pack on steep, rocky terrain is going to burn more calories than leisurely hiking with a light pack on a flat trail.

Increasing strength

Working out isn't all about burning calories, though. Improved cardiovascular performance, increased endurance and toned muscles are also important outcomes of a well-designed exercise program. For hikers, the varied terrain of your favorite trails makes all of these workout goals possible.

Typically, when you're hitting the trails, you climb on the way to your destination and descend on the way back. Climbing equates to using the stairclimber at the gym; the large muscles in your legs (glutes, quads, hamstrings and calves) are getting quite a workout. However, hiking downhill is actually what will tone your muscles the most. On the descent, your glutes and quads are working nonstop to stabilize your knees and hips. These muscles are continually going through eccentric contractions, similar to lowering a heavy weight at the gym. Because your muscles are resisting the force of gravity against your body weight, the toning effects are maximized.

Predictably, we tend to think of hiking as a lower-body workout. However, Doug Diekema, a medical doctor and wilderness medicine educator, says that carrying a pack and using poles engages the whole body and builds core and upper-body strength in addition to leg strength.

Additionally, hiking on a rough, rocky or root-filled path forces the body to activate seldom-used muscles around the hips, knees and ankles. It also helps build core strength. All of this improves your stability and balance. As a result, you are less likely to stumble or fall both on the trail and in everyday life. ►



Brittany Garcia carries her daughter, **Isabella**, on the Middle Fork of the Snoqualmie River Trail. Carrying weight while hiking increases strength and endurance and gives a boost to your core muscles—especially if you're carrying a wiggly kid. Photo by Nicholas Garcia.

Boosting endurance

Any time you hit the trails above 4,000 feet, your body is adapting to using less oxygen. In a study published in the “Journal of Applied Physiology,” researchers found that male endurance runners who exercised at high altitudes twice a week for six weeks took 35 percent longer to fatigue than runners who worked out at sea level over the same time period. The same principle applies to hikers: If you hike at high elevations, your body will learn to function with less oxygen. Consequently, lower-elevation trails will be easier.

Improving mental health

Physical health can be greatly improved by hiking—and so can your mental health. Research continually shows that spending time outdoors, away from the hustle and bustle of city life, contributes to a healthy mind. A 2015 study from Stanford University found that time spent in nature calms the portion of the brain linked to mental illness and reduces your mind's tendency toward negative thought patterns. Similarly, the journal “Environmental Science and Technology” published study results showing that outdoor exercise has a direct correlation to greater feelings of positivity and energy and fewer feelings of tension, anger and depression.

Doug explains that immersing ourselves in wilderness also increases attention span, improves problem-solving skills and allows hikers to reconnect with themselves and others. The research is clear—hiking is just as good for your mental health as it is for your physical health.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Fueling and hydrating properly

In order to get the most gains from your hiking workout, it must be paired with proper nutrition and hydration. If your intake of fuel or water is inadequate, performance and results will suffer. Jessica Kelley, owner and coach at Evergreen Endurance, recommends taking in around 150 to 200 calories per hour while hiking.

Jessica also notes that nutrition is very individualized based on factors such as weight, how hard you're working and personal tastes. For some, energy bars and gels satisfy hunger, while others prefer real foods, such as dried fruits or nuts. It is important to try different strategies and figure out what works. Regardless of strategy, Doug and Jessica agree that consuming calories before, during and after a hike will give your body the fuel it needs to function effectively.

Hydration is another critical component of any workout plan. Doug suggests that hikers hydrate well before heading out on the trail, drink frequently along the way and continue to rehydrate after the hike. Jessica emphasizes the need to carry enough water to respond to your thirst without carrying so much that the weight creates the need for more water because of increased effort. Finding that balance is key, but it is better to err on the side of having too much H₂O.

Getting the most out of your hiking workout

There are other things to consider so that you can get the most out of your hiking workout. First, Doug urges hikers to remember that an occasional hike is not an exercise plan. Since most of us are able to lace up our boots and hit the trails once per week (or less!), relying on hiking as your primary source of exercise won't offer significant results. However, a regular exercise program, which includes hiking, can lead to weight loss and improved strength.

Additionally, your hiking workouts (and all forms of exercise) should begin with a warm-up and end with a cool-down. Jessica and Doug recommend starting your hike at a mellow pace. This allows your muscles to warm up gradually. At the end of your hike, slow your pace to allow your heart rate to return to normal before hopping in the car. Gently stretching the quads, glutes, hamstrings and calves may also be beneficial before and after the hike—just be sure not to stretch cold muscles.

Variety is another key to successful workouts, Doug says. Hikers can vary their trail experiences in order to maximize results. Hiking long, flat trails will build endurance and stamina, while hiking short, steep trails will tone muscles and develop a strong cardiovascular and respiratory system.

Finally, don't forget about the importance of recovery. Hiking breaks down muscle fibers, which the body then has to repair through a process of fusing the fibers together to form new protein strands. Strength is built during the repair process. Jessica reminds hikers that if you never give your body a chance to repair and rebuild, you are likely to end up sick or injured.

Remember: Any opportunity to hike is worth it. Any chance to breathe in fresh mountain air, plod along a series of switchbacks or stroll past wildflowers is valuable. Whether long or short, steep or gentle, any hike will benefit your mind and your body.

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A PATH TO HEALING

OCD, anxiety and eating disorders once controlled me. Discovering hiking showed me a way back to myself.

By Christina Hickman

I don't remember a time when I wasn't anxious and obsessive. Even as a child, I had quirks, like locking and unlocking the front door seven times before bed. When a boy threw up repeatedly in my third-grade classroom, I was so upset that I, a perfect-attendance stickler, missed 16 days in one quarter. In eighth grade, I developed a stomachache and then barely ate for two weeks out of fear I would be sick. I'd later learn I had emetophobia—the fear of vomit. At 17, I was having 12-hour-long panic attacks, leading to a diagnosis of obsessive compulsive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder. By the time I went to college, I was taking 13 pills a day. The prescriptions brought on weight gain—30 extra pounds on my 5-foot, 1-inch frame in less than a year.

The prolonged panic attacks did subside with the medication but they left in their place an unfeeling shell of a human. I decided I hated being controlled by those

meds more than I hated being out of control of my mind and stopped taking them—all at once. After a harrowing episode of hallucinations, my doctor and I settled on weaning me off of all but one medication.

During college, I channelled my anxiety into average college-kid concerns: grades, making friends, meeting a partner and figuring out what to do with my life. I had less time and brain space to dwell on my obsessive thoughts. For a while I felt, well, normal.

But my brain seems to need to cling onto at least one obsession. For much of my life, it's been the emetophobia. Phobias commonly coincide with pre-existing OCD. The two feed off each other. I ended up avoiding many things—parties, bars, roller coasters, airplanes and sometimes even food—anything where I or someone else might get sick. This practice of avoidance allowed me to escape the more potentially terrifying experiences I could face.

Avoidance only gets you so far, though.

Several years later, a food borne illness resulted in the start of an eating disorder. Consumed by the thought of getting sick again, I ate very little and lost weight. The incident transformed unassuming parts of daily life like colors, numbers, sequences of events, clothing and specific foods into unexpected triggers, causing continual episodes of avoidance, fear, isolation and constant anxiety for several years. When I started to eat more normally, I gained some weight back; this reminded me of those 13 pills a day and that uncontrolled weight gain. Soon calorie counting and over-exercising became my way of having control over something in my life.

My eating disorder took root as I transitioned into my first full-time job and started applying to master's programs. After getting accepted to graduate school, I moved to Seattle from Massachusetts in the summer of 2014 with my now-husband. On our road trip out, we passed through national parks and new landscapes, and we went on our first real hikes. After settling in Washington, we started hiking regularly. The alpine lakes, volcanoes, summits, old-growth and wildflowers were new and exciting. I loved them and was ravenous for new adventures.

I was silently struggling, though. The move was lonely. Dan started working full time, and in the few months before school, I was by myself nearly every day. Money was nonexistent. The moving company lost all of our belongings (which they eventually found). I was trying to navigate a new city. My grad program started. Everything overwhelmed me. Then five months after I moved here, my grandmother unexpectedly passed away. I was an only grandchild. Her home was my second home growing up, and she'd lived with my family for the past 14 years. I often describe her as a soulmate.

I was lost. I sunk deeper into my eating disorder and food obsessions, desperately clinging to something I could control.

During one of my daily weigh-ins shortly after my grandmother's death, I saw something on the scale that shocked me: a number I'd last weighed when I was 10 years old. For the first time, the low number didn't make me proud; I felt disgusted. I thought of my grandmother. How would she have felt to hug my skeletal frame? It was a small turning point. I slowly started eating more, adding a slice of bread here, a bit of peanut butter there. Serendipitously, a knee and hip injury forced me to run less, so I began to hike more.

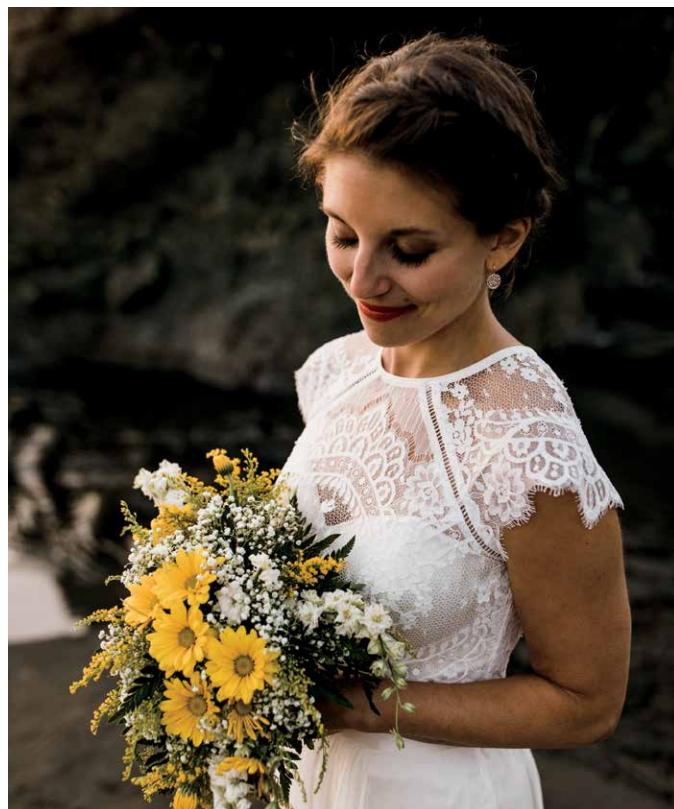
I didn't realize, as I struggled on the trails, that my body was undernourished—my eating-disordered mind didn't think that hiking was exercise; therefore, I rarely ate during or after hiking. Despite feeling weak and being sore for days after, I kept at it for the views.

Up to that point, most of my hikes had been with my husband. But that spring, I completed my first solo hike. Although I was slow and sweaty and contemplated quitting, my determination pushed me to the top of Mount Si. I had someone take some triumphant photos of me. Later that night, I flushed with pride when I told my friends. It felt freeing to have this new part to my identity.

By this time, I was well into my grad program and often overloaded with work. I started hiking alone to mull over my assignments. The steps became meditative; my brain could only focus on putting one foot in front of the other. I thought less about my eating disorder, less about the things that stressed me out. I thought less, period.

I began to hike for the calmness that radiated into me with every step. To not think—what a foreign concept. On trail, I could focus on the moment and my current feelings. Not even years of yoga or running had done that for me. Hiking became a moving meditation. The trails became an escape. Instead of staying cooped up in my tiny apartment, I was exploring. Breathing in fresh mountain air. Using my body in a way that wasn't punishment.

At first, I only hiked on nice sunny days. But soon, in the doldrums of Pacific Northwest winters, I found myself yearning to be outside. So I began hiking on cloudy and rainy days. I hiked the same trails over and over. I found solace in those familiar trails, in my camaraderie with the ferns and old growth. I learned to recognize the raven calls and western red cedars. I learned about Leave No Trace and the Ten Essentials. I wrote trip reports and joined an all-women outdoors group. Even on days that I couldn't get out of town, I hiked in city parks. The trees comforted me like old friends, listening to my complaints and my crying. I continued to push my limits with more miles and elevation gain. Food was the fuel that pushed me farther and higher, no longer my mortal enemy that I sought to destroy. There was room for both of us on the trail.



Christina and her husband found such joy in the natural world in Washington, they chose to get married in Olympic National Park. Photo by Hearnes Adventure Photography.

My first full year on the trails, I hiked 350 miles. In 2016, I set a goal of 500 miles and completed 650. And this past year, I hit 808 miles and just over 250,000 feet of elevation gained. When I look in the mirror, I can choose to see my thighs as thunderous or as what propelled me hundreds of miles and up to mountain peaks. How could I hate them? My body sometimes failed and usually struggled. But it was mine, only mine, the only thing getting me from A to B, from base to summit. Hiking had transformed my body into an amazing vessel of accomplishment and pride.

While my physical health has drastically improved, I still struggle with the mental aspects of an eating disorder. My anxiety certainly hasn't vanished. I expect it to take time; I never envisioned my journey to health to be a flat, straight path. But without the woods, I don't know where I'd be. These days, I'm on half of the lowest possible dosage of my (single) medication. I don't have (as many) prolonged bouts of panic-induced insomnia anymore. I can (usually) ride a bus or plane without a meltdown. And when I do experience terrifying moments and times of helplessness and complete fear, I handle them better. I use breathing techniques. I refocus my energy. My baseline overall is a lower stress point, so it's harder to get to my worst. And now I know where to go to decompress. I have an outlet.

I think the woods made me into a better person. Or at least a calmer, more sane person. And I know they are always there when I need them, never judging and always cheering me on. Once, alone in the woods, a feeling struck me that can only be described as belonging; for that moment I was exactly where I was meant to be. I smiled and exhaled, my thoughts dissipating into the mountain and replaced with a feeling of comfort. I was alone with myself, and I was everything that I needed. ■



HIKING THROUGH GRIEF

Joe and Heidi Hendricks rest at the top of Granite Mountain. It was a wonderful hike, despite Heidi dealing with the side effects from chemo. Photos courtesy Joe Hendricks.



Heidi teaches Joe to waltz on Mount Zion, three months before her death.



Heidi receives treatment at Seattle Cancer Care Alliance.

Joe and Heidi Hendricks were diagnosed with cancer within three months of each other in 2008.

Each diagnosis, Joe says, was like getting kicked in the gut by a mule.

"You can't breathe; you can't move; you just can't believe it," he said.

Joe and Heidi met while they were both working at the intensive care unit at the University of Washington where they were both registered nurses. Their profound love of nature was one of the things that attracted them to each other. They married in 1991.

So, when they were diagnosed with cancer, they were determined to hike while they battled their respective cancers.

"We had both gotten overweight and out of shape during the preceding years," Joe said. "Seeing research showing the value of being physically fit in fighting cancer, over the next two years Heidi lost 40 pounds and I lost 100 pounds by limiting calories and exercising daily. Amid the surgeries, scans, labs and chemo, we slowly started adding hiking back into our lives. We eventually became a sort of poster couple at Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, often leaving directly for a hike from the chemo rooms with the staff cheering us on."

"We often took breaks during a hike for me to empty a surgical drain or for Heidi to relieve her chemo nausea—but we kept going and loved each hike. Plus, we danced up there! Heidi taught me to waltz on top of Mount Zion and how to swing dance on a Slab Creek Trail bridge."

The hiking was powerful emotionally, spiritually and physically.

"I believe God coaxed us out on the trails," Joe said. "We both had strong but simple Christian faiths and prayed together often. Neither of us were pushy at all about our faith and have many family and friends of other faiths or no faith at all. But out there, despite the cancer, we felt God's love even more than at church or at home. It's hard to explain, but our hope and courage got recharged on every hike. In the last year of our battle, I began to notice that although Heidi's chemo side effects were much worse on most days, within the first mile of a hike she'd rate each side effect as significantly improved."

"The doctors gave Heidi a year to live, and she made it four years and hiked her final (steep!) trail (Little Quilcene River Trail to Mount Townsend) six weeks before she died at home, holding my hand."

After Heidi's death, Joe had to find a new way forward without his beloved wife and favorite hiking companion.

"After Heidi's death, I almost stopped hiking altogether," Joe said. "A week after she died I tried the Upper Dungeness River Trail and turned back in despair. Then I tried the Lower South Fork Skokomish River Trail a few weeks later but turned back halfway, too sad to go on. I think the third hike was the Gray Wolf River Trail, and I completed it. The hikes got easier over time, but I still notice tears when hiking one of her favorite trails today. ... Even now, over five years later, I have to say it is tougher to go out my front door alone to hike than it was with Heidi. It's just something

I have to plow through."

Joe has found new ways to get out on trail. Since Heidi's death five years ago, he's gone on more than 260 hikes. His own cancers are both in remission.

Something new that Joe began after Heidi's death is making videos of his hikes. Many of his friends in the cancer community had long enjoyed his photos from his and Heidi's trips. The videos were a way to give his friends a more immersive experience. Filming and editing them gave him something to look forward to. He shares the videos on YouTube and in his trip reports.

"I also began doing trail crew work the year after she died and that brought a new appreciation for switchbacks, boardwalks, bridges, etc.," Joe said. "And I love the crew chiefs and other volunteers I meet on trail crews!"

He's also created new traditions that help him cope with his grief. Heidi and Joe used to love hosting holiday feasts. But he found that, after her death, he couldn't handle it.

"So on the second Thanksgiving after Heidi died, I hauled a chair and table up Cedar Butte, where I made a full turkey dinner from scratch with my JetBoil stove—leaving no trace, of course," Joe said. "When other hikers reached the summit, you should have seen their faces when I stepped out of the trees, offering them a gourmet cheese tray! That Christmas I made a ham dinner along Copper Creek next to a waterfall."

It's been a fun tradition for Joe ever since. Last year, he made turkey legs at Indian Island County Park for Thanksgiving. Then, for Christmas, he cooked a gourmet seafood dinner at the Anderson Landing Nature Preserve, overlooking the water.

Over time, Joe has made new connections on trails. He's met many crew leaders and volunteers on work parties. He even gets frequently recognized on trail.

"I'd say on about every third or fourth hike, someone comes up to me on the trail to thank me for the videos, which is a chance for me to meet great folks out hiking. My orange World Vision cap makes me recognizable from the videos, I guess."

Joe encourages others who are dealing with illness or grief to find time to get outside. Joe and Heidi used the hike descriptions on wta.org to help them find trails they could handle, even through chemo and surgeries.

"There is a lot of research in recent years showing the powerful impact of both nature and a positive attitude on many diseases, including cancer and depression," Joe said. "Out there you get both, at least in my experience."

Joe, who celebrated his 65th birthday earlier this year, is not slowing down at all—and he has a clear plan to keep moving.

"I have a very specific long-term goal," he said. "To still be hiking and doing trip reports, trail crew days and hike videos on my 100th birthday! And in order to reach that goal I will continue the weightlifting and high-intensity interval aerobics at home on nonhiking days." ■

"Our hope and courage got recharged on every hike."



Angelina Boulicault used trails to help her recover from a major illness and long hospitalization. Photo by Nick Martinson, @boundless.journey.photography.

BACK TO STRENGTH

After a major illness, trails were how I recovered

By Angelina Boulicault

When I woke up, I was in the ICU.

I had a serious chest infection. My left lung had collapsed, and my right lung was partially full of fluid. For a week, I'd been in a medically induced coma. When the doctors had attempted surgery to improve my condition, I lost so much blood that I needed a blood transfusion. And, under all of this stress, my only kidney was failing. I was breathing via a ventilator and was hooked up to countless tubes.

When I woke up, I felt like I hadn't slept in a month and like I had been hit by a train. I ached all over. I was acutely aware of my diaphragm moving with each breath.

My very first day awake, a nurse asked if I was ready to start physical therapy. She said it was important to get moving since I had been completely sedentary for a week. That first day, I think I took about six

steps. Then, I had to sit upright in a chair for 30 minutes. It was excruciating, and I wanted nothing more than to curl back up on my hospital bed. Everything hurt, even breathing.

Recovery was slow, and every setback made it harder to stay positive. After more than a month in the hospital, I had to come to terms with not returning to school that semester. I filed paperwork to drop out of school. I felt like such a failure and saw such a long road of healing ahead of me. I went home and worked on recovering as I struggled with depression.

Both of my parents went back to work, and my sister was at school. I sat at home, alone. I was in such a bad place. My family was so grateful to still have me in their life, yet I was so angry to be stuck at home recovering. I felt like I wasn't making progress. I only weighed about 75 pounds—I'd lost 20 pounds after a month in the hospital. Much of my recovery focused on getting stronger and increasing my activity.

A few weeks went by, and I began to go outside and walk. My walks grew longer, and I got stronger. During a routine checkup, my doctor asked if I was doing okay mentally. I paused and thought about it.

I told her that I kept waking up in the middle of the night with nosebleeds. Sometimes, my mind would drift and I'd be back at the hospital. I would feel the pains I had felt while I was hospitalized. My hands hurt all the time from the memory of all the needles. After I would have one of these flashbacks, I would often throw up or have a nosebleed. I told her I hadn't talked about it because I just thought it was part of the recovery.

My doctor explained post traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, to me. She said that many people who go through a traumatic experience end up suffering from PTSD. She suggested therapy.

The flashbacks were so vivid. I kept thinking I was in the hospital. It was a

nightmare. It was time to try therapy.

I was also on medication for my heart, kidney, pancreas and lungs, in addition to an anti-anxiety medication. I was severely underweight and over-medicated. I was slowly getting better but becoming so dependent on the medications. I felt like life was on pause and I was just waiting on the doctors to tell me I could take my next step. I felt so out of control; I hated it.

The only time I felt strong was on my walks. I was making good progress, but I soon grew bored with the same old flat streets. So I started going on short trails, which added some elevation gain and were more interesting. At first, the hikes felt difficult and I had to stop to catch my breath a lot; my lungs and heart were still recovering from the stress of infection. I was worried about being able to finish even a few miles on trail. Soon, I could walk up and down hills, breathing the fresh air into my re-inflated lungs. I could get my heart beating faster and harder; it felt stronger. I felt stronger.

I found that I loved the serenity and the views out on trail. I was still in a dark place, and the hiking was therapeutic. I wandered around the pines and watched squirrels chasing each other. I could think more clearly when I was hiking—and the effect lasted after the hike too. I noticed that, if I didn't get my time out on trail, I was more likely to have a flashback. I really began to need trail time—both mentally and physically. I felt so at peace out there.

I eventually stopped having flashbacks. I was able to get off the medications.

A few years after my illness, I moved to the Northwest from the Midwest. Before I even moved, Enchanted Valley in the Olympics had been on my list to hike—it looked like a perfect backpack trip. It's hard to even express how happy I was to live somewhere I could hop on a trail so easily. I worked through a number of hikes, further building up my strength and endurance; the Midwest doesn't offer the elevation gain that you find in the Northwest.

Then, a few years after waking up in the ICU, and about six months after moving to Washington, I was able to hike 30 miles in a weekend on a trip to Enchanted Valley. It was the longest I had ever hiked, and I'd worked up to it by hiking other trails in the state.

Along the trail I heard a noise and I slipped into a fallen tree to watch. After a few minutes a herd of about 25 elk roamed right by the tree I was hiding in. Calves and their parents were only feet from me. I felt so alive and so in tune with my body. My heart was beating so hard from the excitement, and I felt so in control of my body. I was stronger than ever; I wasn't waiting for a doctor's permission and I wasn't relying on medications to keep me healthy. I was making my own memories to look back on.

The elevation wasn't huge, and the hike wasn't too advanced, but I was pushing myself. I hadn't been much of a hiker before my health worsened. I was no longer reliving the past. I was moving on to bigger and better things.■

Angelina Boulicault and photographer Nick Martinson share stories and photos from their adventures at boundless-journey.com.

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BY AARON BREDL

EXPERT VOICES

Meet some of the vibrant community
of authors who help support WTA

Washington Trails Association started out as **Signpost, a grassroots newsletter founded in 1966 by Louise Marshall.** From its inception, Signpost was written by hikers for hikers. Soon it evolved from a small grassroots network of hikers into a statewide community of advocates dedicated to protecting trails and public lands.

Signpost is now Washington Trails magazine. Over the years, many hikers and mountaineers have shared their stories and love for trails. Many of those writers have also been—or become—authors of the guidebooks that help us explore the trails we love. From the beginning, with Louise, a guidebook author herself, WTA has claimed many authors as a key part of our community. Here are just a few of our outstanding contributors who have gone on to create publications of their own.

TAMI ASARS

"I feel that there is a sense of calm, wonder and peace that happens when folks set foot in quiet forests, visit mountain lakes and overlook panoramic vistas.

Everyone benefits emotionally and physically by this natural soul salve, and I'm happy that I can share my knowledge of these places with others," Tami said.

Over the years, Tami has been a regular contributor to Washington Trails magazine. For a while, she wrote a column called Nature Nook, which educated readers about Washington's flora and fauna. Of the many pieces she has written, her favorite is a short narrative entitled "Here It Is" about lost-and-found items in the backcountry.

Tami says that the hiking community that surrounds WTA and the resources provided on wta.org have helped guide her writing.

"WTA's trail-focused efforts are first class, and I love contributing to such a dedicated community of hikers," she said.

Tami's most recent book, "Hiking the Pacific Crest Trail: Washington," is a hiker's dream guide to hiking the PCT in



Photo courtesy
Tami Asars

Washington. She is currently working on her next book, "Day Hiking Mount Rainier," a guide that features 80 hikes inside and outside Mount Rainier National Park; the book will be available in June.

For more on Tami and her books, visit tamiasars.com.

NATE & JER BARNES

Nate and Jer are the co-creators of the website *Hiking With My Brother*, which they started after summiting Mount Rainier and tackling many of the hikes in Harvey Manning and Ira Spring's "55 Hikes Around Snoqualmie Pass."

For the brothers, "Taking time to scale a ridge or trek through the woods allows us to reconnect with each other and our childhood while disconnecting from our hectic adult lives."

Their first book, "*Hiking Through History Washington*," published by Falcon Guides in 2014, is an extension of their blog. While the blog format allows them to showcase more of their photography, the book is a concise educational resource that uses the historical elements of each region to draw hikers in.

Over the years, Nate and Jer haven't just written for their blog and books. They've also contributed to the Hike It section of *Washington Trails* magazine. They got their start with the magazine after presenting at WTA's Hike the State event.

Currently, Nate and Jer are working on two books for Mountaineers Books, both of which are scheduled to be published this year.

For more information on the brothers and their books, visit hikingwithmybrother.com.

■ "We almost always have a historical bent to our work, because it's our goal to inspire and help people connect with a hike." Photo courtesy Nate Barnes.





Photo by
Mitzi Sugar

CASSANDRA OVERBY

Cassandra's first article for Washington Trails magazine was a review of a book called "Beyond the Bear," the firsthand account of an Alaskan man who learned to live again after being blinded in a grizzly bear attack.

"It was so fun to write about something I was interested in for a change—professionally, at the time, I was doing a lot of boring (but well-paid) corporate writing," she said.

The experience ultimately led Cassandra to change the direction of her writing career. She gave up corporate work and joined WTA's communication team for a time before settling into a new role as the remote copy editor of and a regular contributor to Washington Trails.

She also expanded her freelance work to include other travel and outdoors publications. Her first book, "Explore Europe on Foot: Your Complete Guide to Planning a Cultural Hiking Adventure," will be published by Mountaineers Books in September. The Explore on Foot series also includes companion route guides, three of which will be made available in 2018.

"At the end of the day, I hope that through my writing other people discover what I know to be absolutely true, that exploring a foreign country on foot is hands down the best way to travel and the best way to hike," Cassandra said. "I really hope to create a revolution of more authentic travel, one trail at a time."

For more information on Cassandra and her books, visit explore-on-foot.com.

■ **It is never too early** to train a new generation of writers for WTA. Photo by Craig Romano.



CRAIG ROMANO

Craig is an award-winning author and outdoors writer who has authored or co-authored 20 books—and in his spare time somehow manages to write for WTA. He regularly writes the Trails Less Traveled column for the magazine's Hike It section. It's all part of what he sees as his moral obligation to give back to the community that allows him to experience the places that give him joy.

"As an author, I have always emphasized community—that is, being part of a large and active community of trails and public lands advocates! Being part of the Washington Trails community is important to me, and it is important that I give back," he said.

Over his 20-plus years as a WTA member, Craig has contributed extensively to the organization, and not just as a writer. He's an avid Hike-a-Thoner and helps WTA raise money for trail maintenance and

other programs. He's so active with WTA that he's often mistaken for an employee. He thinks of himself as an ambassador.

"My intent is to get as many folks as possible connected to our public lands and to live healthy and fulfilling lives—and it is my intent to get as many folks as possible to protect, defend and fight for more public lands," he said.

Craig is currently working on a series of urban trails books for Mountaineers Books. The research has been a lot of fun for him because he's been able to bring along his 3-year-old son. He is also continuing to work on the second editions of "Day Hiking North Cascades," "Day Hiking Central Cascades" and "Backpacking Washington."

For more information on Craig and his books, visit craigromano.com.

BRANDON FRALIC & RACHEL WOOD

Brandon and Rachel are the collaborative authors of *Beers at the Bottom*, a blog that highlights the best pairings of hiking trails and breweries in the Pacific Northwest.

During their blog's early years, Brandon and Rachel often looked to WTA as a hiking resource to plan their adventures. After regularly writing content for their blog but not seeing a major increase in readership, Brandon and Rachel looked to WTA for more exposure. They reached out to WTA's magazine editor with an offer to write and were given their first story, which was a Northwest Weekend feature on Bellingham, called "From Boots to Brews." Since then, they have become regular contributors to the magazine.

"Washington Trails magazine was our first venture into writing for print publications. Over the years, we've had the opportunity to meet and network with other writers, build editor relationships and learn the ropes of print journalism," Brandon said.

Their first book, "Beer Hiking Pacific Northwest," is available this month. It features 50 hiking trails and 50 craft breweries across Washington, Oregon and British Columbia. **For more information, visit beersatthebottom.com.**



Photo courtesy Brandon Fralic

SUSAN ELDERKIN

"Some of my happiest childhood memories are of hikes in the Rocky Mountains with my parents," Susan said, "and that early exposure really shaped an entire career of working for environmental nonprofit organizations and advocating for public lands."

Susan's involvement with WTA started in 1995 when she moved to Seattle. She had just finished six weeks of hiking the Colorado Trail and wanted to give back to trails. She started by volunteering on a few work parties. Eventually, she joined the WTA board of directors and then the WTA staff. In the early years of her tenure, she worked a lot on the trails database, spending months researching and writing about trails.

"I couldn't have gotten that kind

of experience anywhere else," she said. "WTA provided me with an encyclopedia of hikes and helped me develop my voice as a guidebook author."

Once she had children, Susan also gained a following at WTA for her tips on getting outside with kids. She finds a lot of joy in helping parents introduce their children to the outdoors. She even wrote a book about it, "Best Hikes with Kids: Western Washington," which is being published by Mountaineers Books in April.

"My two kids, now 9 and 12, helped guide the way—and their voices were definitely in my head as I wrote the book," she said. "I really hope that this book inspires families to hike with their kids like mine did with me," she said.



Photo by Jon Stier

For more information on Susan and her book, visit facebook.com/susanelderkinguidebook.

ELI BOSCHETTO

Eli is the author of "Hiking the Pacific Crest Trail:

Oregon," a Mountaineers Books guide that opens up the world of backpacking the PCT to casual hikers. His writing allows him to enjoy his favorite places and share them with future explorers. Eli says that, too often, society gives us the message that you have to be extreme or you're not a hiker.

"I suggest the opposite," Eli said. "I emphasize that the outdoors is for everyone, at any pace. I'm a big fan of the motto 'Hike your own hike.'"

Shortly after moving to the Pacific Northwest, Eli became a member of WTA. He started as a regular contributor to

the magazine. His first piece was about Washington's geology and trails that showcase geological features like moraines, lava flows and cirques. Over the years, Eli took on more responsibility and eventually became magazine editor.

"Not only did WTA show me all the amazing places to hike in Washington, it was a real eye-opener with regard to how forests and wilderness areas are managed and funded and why it's vital for the outdoor-loving public to take an interest and get involved," he said.

Eli is currently working on two more Oregon guidebooks, "Urban Trails: Portland" and "Day Hiking Mount Hood," due out this year. **For more information on Eli, check out PCToregon.com.**



Photo by Mitzi Sugar

MELISSA OZBEK



Photo by George Saul

Melissa joined WTA in 2009, shortly after moving to Washington. She initially used wta.org as a hiking resource to explore the state. Eventually, Melissa worked up the confidence to apply to be a

hiking guide correspondent. She felt compelled to give back to the community that had helped her find her way.

"Organizations like WTA create a bridge for folks to access trails and hike them safely, especially folks who are new to Washington and new to hiking, like I was," Melissa said. "It means a lot to me to write for WTA—it's a way of saying thank you for everything I've learned."

It also helped her become a professional writer.

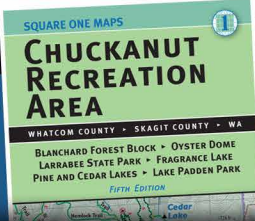
"When I became a hiking guide correspondent with WTA, I learned to answer the question, 'What makes this hike special?'" Melissa said. "I developed this mindset that every hike had something special to offer, and it became my mission to find out and tell its story."

In 2017, Melissa published a book, "75 Great Hikes Seattle." **For more information on Melissa and her book, visit melissaozbek.com.**

We are lucky to have so many dedicated volunteers who share their knowledge with hikers by writing for this magazine and our hiking guide. And we're delighted when they're able to use their skills as guidebook authors, creating books that help even more hikers. We can't wait to see who writes the next great guidebook! ■

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STEVE PAYNE

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Take Care of the Places You Love

By Kelsie Donleycott



CoastSavers events are an excellent chance to work with others to clean up the places you love to play. But you don't need an event; anytime you're outside, you can make a difference.

All photos by Kelsie Donleycott, except top left, by Nancy Messmer.

Washington's north coast beaches are beautiful, remote and wild. Massive Sitka spruce tower overhead and salal rises high alongside trails. The surf roars, eagles chatter in treetops and seagulls cry offshore. Sun-bleached driftwood lines the beach, slightly obscured by a salty mist.

This stunning beauty, however, is contrasted by small bits of plastic forming a continuous line at the high-tide mark. Larger pieces of marine debris—plastic and glass bottles, chunks of Styrofoam, rope half buried in the sand and more—are sprinkled in among the smaller detritus. In some locations, the wind can collect an unimaginable amount of debris, sometimes including broken-up Styrofoam several inches deep.

Marine debris—any man-made material that ultimately finds its way to the ocean—is ugly, but its negative environmental and economic impacts make it far worse than a simple eyesore. It is a global problem. Once in the ocean, buoyant debris travels far and wide by way of ocean currents and atmospheric winds. It is not uncommon to find objects from China, Japan, Russia and beyond on Washington's beaches.

Marine debris is a threat to ecosystems, wildlife and coastal communities. It is, however, largely preventable through changes in attitude, behaviors and individual consumption habits. And many opportunities exist to get involved and make a difference by giving back to your favorite beaches.

One such opportunity is participating in Washington CoastSavers cleanup events. Three cleanups are coordinated throughout the year. The next event is April 21. During this event, hundreds of volunteers will descend on Washington's outer coast and Strait of Juan de Fuca beaches to pick up marine debris and leave the beaches better than before.

At the 2017 Washington Coast Cleanup, more than 1,300 volunteers collected more than 20 tons of debris from 60 beaches.

The practice of leaving a place better than you found it need not be limited to organized cleanup events. If you love and care for a place—be it at a beach, mountain, forest or urban location—great reward can be found in focusing your efforts on helping that spot.

Here are some simple steps you can take—both on and off trail—to care for the places you love to hike:

Add garbage bags to your backpack. Once on the trail, pick up and pack out what others have left behind. Ask your family, friends and hiking partners to join you. Make it a competition, and see who can pick up the most garbage.

Become Leave No Trace aware and encourage others to do so, too. Whether you are hiking, camping, snowshoeing or simply taking a walk at a local park, Leave No Trace applies.

Cut down on the amount of waste you produce by reducing, reusing and recycling. Simple actions—such as switching to reusable coffee cups and water bottles, bringing your own shopping bags, avoiding nonrecyclables and skipping the straw—help create a cleaner and healthier world.

A cleaner and healthier world is a good thing for us and our trails. After a hike to the beach, we all want to enjoy a pristine stretch of coastline. While climbing to a spectacular alpine vista, the last thing we want to see is food wrappers, cigarette butts and used toilet paper along the trail.

One way to change this is to be the change. Get involved, take action, and give back to the places you love.



Help a Beach

The next Washington Coast Cleanup is April 21. The family-friendly event is open to all, and there are a variety of beaches to choose from, with access ranging from easy to challenging. Those unable to pick up or carry bags of debris are still encouraged to participate. Volunteers are needed to run check-in tables at beaches too.

Participation also has its perks. Several beaches host after-cleanup barbecues, and camping at Olympic National Park's coastal campgrounds is free on Friday and Saturday nights of the cleanup weekend. Additionally, backcountry camping fees are waived for volunteers who choose to stay the night at wilderness beaches in Olympic National Park.

Registration for the event opens in mid-March at coastsavers.org.

The Leave No Trace Seven Principles

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

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www.LNT.org.

Should You Try a Quilt?

6 things to consider before you make a switch

By Beth Macinko

Enlightened Equipment's **Revelation quilt** features a footbox that can be closed tight or opened up flat. Photo courtesy Enlightened Equipment.



Over the last decade, sleeping quilts have become increasingly available as an alternative to sleeping bags. With a traditional sleeping bag, the down beneath you is compressed, making the insulation underneath ineffective—taking up space and adding unnecessary weight to your pack. A quilt, on the other hand, lies on top of you and wraps around your body, using an attachment system to fit it tightly around you. Without the bottom insulation, quilts can be lighter and pack smaller than sleeping bags of the same size and temperature rating.

Most quilts are made by smaller gear companies, so while there are the standard sleeping bag choices of temperature ranges and down or synthetic filling, there are even more customization options like foot boxes or flat quilts, extended length and width options, different fill types, custom colors and overfilling.

Here's an overview of some of those options to consider if you're ready to make the switch to a quilt.

Footbox or open quilt?

Maybe the biggest question when looking at a quilt is if you want it to fully open into a flat quilt or have a sewn-shut footbox. The permanent footbox is warmer but not as versatile. An open footbox allows you to easily use the quilt like a blanket, letting you

wrap it around your shoulders on cold mornings or even toss it over you when crashing with friends.

Attachment system and pad type

Most quilts come with a set of straps that wrap around your sleeping pad and then clip in to your quilt. You can slide the clips farther under you on cold nights to create a seal. On warm nights, move them to the edge of pads or leave them unclipped. If you get up frequently in the night, a quilt may be frustrating because you have to unclip at least one side to get out. Look at manufacturer websites for explanations and videos of how their attachment systems work; one may be more intuitive to you. Whatever system you have, make sure to set up your pad and quilt and test out how you'll use it for cold and warm nights.

Quilts are compatible with most pads but they work better with inflated styles than closed-cell foam pads. Since you'll be lying directly on your sleeping pad, you might want a pad with a high R-value. (A high R-value corresponds to better insulation from the cold of the ground.)

Baffle type

If you tend to have hot or cold spots when you sleep, look at the baffle patterns of different quilts. Some have vertical baffles that

allow you to shake more of the down to a certain area, like your feet or core. Other companies sew their baffles horizontally across the body; on a hotter night you can push the down off to your sides.

Side sleepers

If you sleep on your side or roll around frequently, you might want to buy a wide quilt for extra room to move. Look at manufacturer measurements and see if your shoulder width fits.

Add-ons

It might take a bit of experimenting to perfect your sleep system. If you can't get a good night's sleep without a warm head, consider a down or synthetic hood to wear on colder nights. Synthetic or down booties are also available from gear makers to increase the temperature range of your quilt. A sleeping bag liner is another useful add-on. It adds a layer between you and your pad, keeps your quilt clean and can add a couple of degrees of warmth.

Test it out

Before you head out for your first night, you'll want to be sure to test out your quilt. The attachment systems can be tricky to figure out—and having that dialed in is particularly important if it's a cold night.

Beth Macinko is an avid backpacker and has spent five years doing professional trail work, including as a crew lead for WTA's backcountry trips. She made the transition to a quilt after years of using a standard bag. Now, more than 50 nights later, she's never going back.

KATABATIC GEAR

Katabatic Gear makes the Flex, which comes in four temperature ranges, from 15 degrees to 40 degrees. (The Flex 22 is shown.) It is offered in a variety of lengths, with wider options for the longer lengths. The footbox completely unzips, making a completely flat blanket. We found the Flex 22 to work well in a range of temperatures. It was warm enough for 30-degree nights and easily dumped heat on warm nights. Like all quilts, adding more layers and a hat can extend its temperature range lower. We appreciated the 900 fill power, water-resistant down. It packs small and can withstand a bit of moisture. **\$260-\$345; katabaticgear.com.**



ENLIGHTENED EQUIPMENT

The Revelation quilt by Enlightened Equipment is a favorite in the WTA office. Several of our staff members use it for their backpacking trips. The Revelation opens up flat into a blanket, but the bottom can also be cinched closed. It doesn't have a zipper. We found that it has an excellent warmth-to-weight ratio. It packs down tiny. The Revelation can be made to a wide range of specifications: three weights of down, four widths, five lengths and six temperature ratings. All of our quilt users agree that if you're on the fence on what size to get, opt for larger rather than smaller. Weight ranges from 8.8 to 35.6 ounces. **\$250-\$400; enlightenedequipment.com.**



ZPACKS

Zpacks is well respected for making lightweight gear for backpacking and other outdoor adventures. Their Solo Quilt comes in three lengths and three widths. They also offer three temperature ranges, from 5 degrees to 35 degrees. The quilts range from 12.5 ounces to 26.9 ounces, depending upon size and temperature rating. They also offer this quilt with a 3/4-length zipper, which cold sleepers might prefer. Check their bargain bin online; they occasionally offer lightly used or slightly imperfect bags for sale. **\$279-\$419; zpacks.com.**



Be a Champion

Take your volunteerism to a new level as a champion for trails, hikers and public lands. Become a WTA ambassador! You'll work on WTA's priority campaigns, unlocking the power of the hiking community through advocacy, outreach and leadership. No experience is necessary.

Learn more and apply at wta.org/ambassador

Photo by Jenna Ridgeway





Stone Age Bread is a great hiking snack to make in advance. Photo by Shannon Cunningham.

Cook Now and Hike Later

Does winter's weather have you stuck indoors and dreaming of the warmth of the summer sun on a mountaintop?

Don't despair. This is the perfect time to start thinking about nutritious provisions for the trail. If you prepare them now, you'll be ready for adventures all year long. Here are two healthy and flavorful recipes that you can eat even if your diet skews paleo, vegetarian or Whole30.

Whip these up now to have on hand when it's time to head out the door on your next outdoor expedition.

Stone Age Bread

Ingredients:

- ½ cup pumpkin seeds
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup walnuts
- ½ cup sesame seeds
- ½ cup flax meal
- ½ cup olive oil
- 5 eggs
- 1 tsp caraway (or favorite spice or herb of choice)
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tsp black pepper

Directions:

Mix all the ingredients together in a mixing bowl. Line a bread pan with parchment paper or grease with coconut oil, and pour in the mixture. Bake at 320 degrees for 60 minutes. You will know it's done when the center doesn't wiggle and it cracks a bit. Let cool completely before slicing. Store in an airtight container in the freezer for six months to a year.

Makes 10 servings.

Horseradish Mushroom Jerky

Ingredients:

- 16 ounces portobello mushrooms
- 3 Tbsp coconut aminos (soy sauce or tamari will also work)
- 2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 4 tsp prepared horseradish
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ½ tsp garlic powder

Directions:

Cut the mushrooms into strips about 1/2-inch wide. With the exception of the mushrooms, mix together the ingredients. Then add everything, including the mushrooms, to a gallon-size resealable bag or other sealable container. Let marinate overnight until mushrooms are well saturated. Lay out on open racks in your dehydrator. Set the dehydrator for 110-130 degrees and leave mushroom for 5-6 hours until dry through and chewy. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to three months or in the freezer for up to six months.

Makes 4 servings.

How to Capture Color

Many photographers plunk down the cash for expensive cameras, software and lenses but still find deep and vibrant color lacking in their images. While good equipment is certainly important, it's not the only factor when it comes to producing beautiful imagery. A few simple tips and photo habits will ensure that you're always getting the best from your camera.

Light: Great light is the essence of powerful colors. But great light isn't easy to find. Sometimes photographers make the mistake of assuming that brighter sources of light translate to better images. Of course, a certain amount of light is needed to properly expose a picture, but much more important is the type of light. Photographing during the early morning and late evening hours of a sunny day is the easiest way to naturally boost the vibrancy of your pictures. During this time, sunlight takes on an orange and reddish glow. The resulting photographs are often rich in color because of this unique light. Other opportunities for interesting light come just before the sun rises and just after it goes down. At this time, the light is soft and diffused—perfect for separating and defining the subtle differences of greens in the forest or the dark navy and aqua tones of an alpine lake.

Exposure: Even the most promising picture taken in the best light conditions, though, can be ruined with an improper exposure. Automatic camera modes continue to improve, but these settings will never be as reliable as learning to properly set your exposure manually. The easiest tip to dramatically improve the quality of color in your images is to err on the side of underexposure. Overexposure leads to “washed out” colors that lack depth and nuance. Lighter colors may even come out completely white. To combat this, photographers can make sure to expose for the highlights (the brighter areas) of a scene as opposed to the shadows. Doing this can lead to a lack of detail in darker areas of a picture, as shadows remain black, but colors will appear deep and saturated. Of course, pictures that are heavily underexposed can take on a “muddy” look. To best capture color, a photographer needs to identify the specific tones of a scene that they're interested in portraying and then carefully shoot so as to not overexpose them.

Concept: Rich tones are an important aspect of photography, but learning to combine and mix certain colors, while omitting others, is perhaps the real mark of a great photographer. Colors and composition work in concert to produce images that convey emotion. By manipulating the palette of colors visible in your pictures, you can give them certain moods. For example, an early-morning forest scene of greens and blues will have a different impact on the viewer than a high-desert trail full of oranges and reds. Sometimes color can be used to highlight specific parts of a picture too. A sea of blue flowers is pretty, but finding an angle that shows off just one flower, amid otherwise drab surroundings, can really place an emphasis on the color.

Camera Tips

Filters: Some filters can provide benefits for capturing color. A polarizer will help cut down on reflections and give skies a deeper and darker blue tone.

Lenses: Unfortunately for your wallet, the quality of your lens makes a big impact on the color in your photos. As a rule of thumb, lenses make a greater impact on color quality than cameras and their internal sensors do.

Settings: Properly dialing in your camera's settings is vital. Pay attention to your white balance, as this controls the “temperature” of your picture. A higher white balance will give a warmer, orange look, while a lower white balance will provide a cooler, bluer look.

Tripod: A tripod can be a valuable tool. A motionless camera means you can shoot with a slower shutter speed and thus lower your camera's ISO sensitivity adjustment. Lower ISO settings translate to better color, less grain and better image quality.

HIKE. PADDLE. REPEAT.

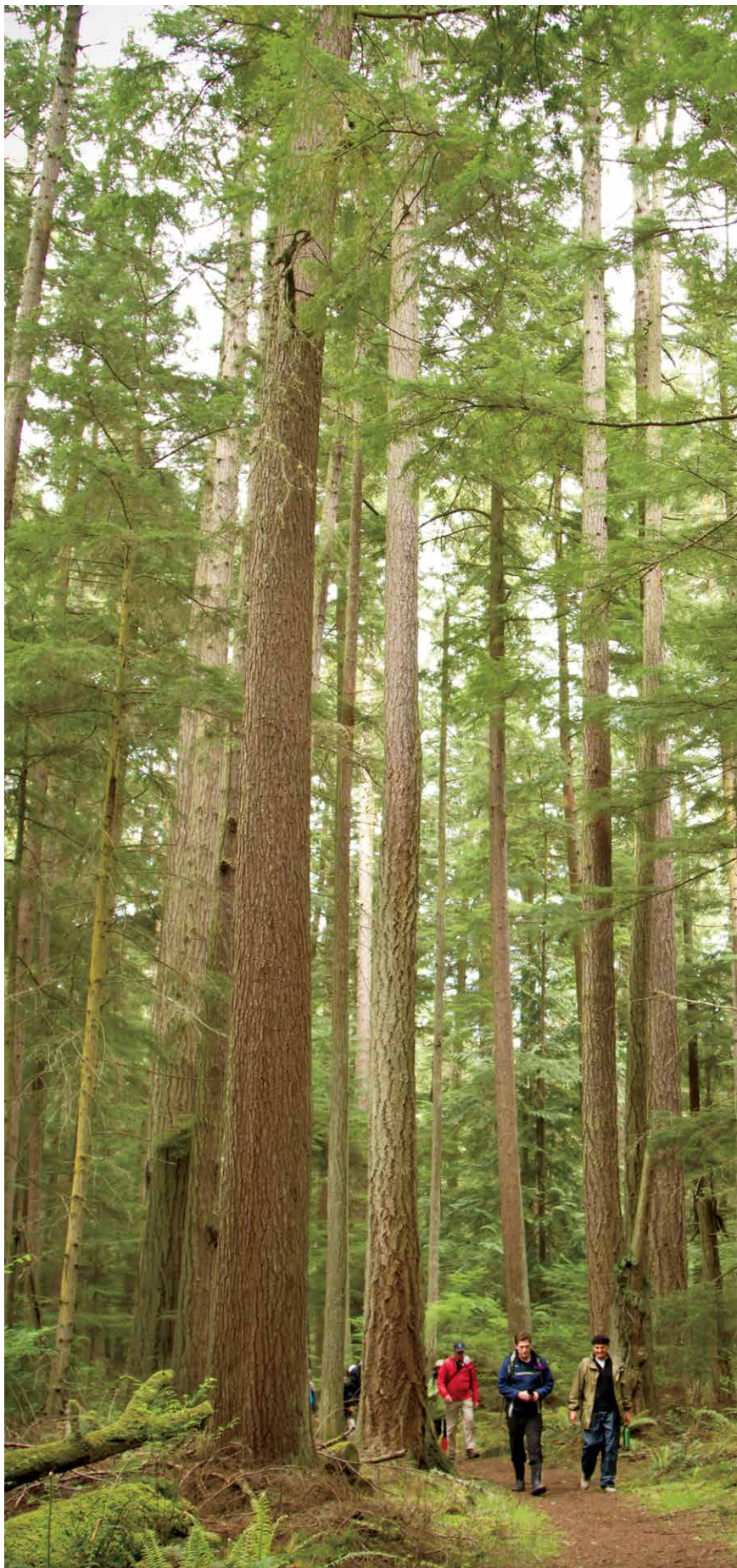
DISCOVER THE BEST OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST ON AN ADVENTURE CRUISE

By Cassandra Overby

I sat at the knobby summit of Eagle Cliffs on Cypress Island in the San Juans in a warm spot of sun, enjoying a moment of solitude away from my hiking group and looking down at the water far below me. It was an incredible sight, the deep blue of the Salish Sea broken only by a series of small, picturesque islands as far as the eye could see. I counted my blessings but didn't bother counting the islands. I knew the stats by heart—there were 172 named islands out there. Only four of them had ferry service, but I'd already explored more than that in the last week, making a small dent in the 168 that are only accessible by water taxi or private boat. I'd paddled their rocky shores and hiked their woody interiors with abandon, and in the process I'd gained a far better appreciation for this landscape that I'd always somehow taken for granted. And it was all thanks to an adventure cruise.

Like many of the 43 other guests aboard UnCruise Adventures' Wilderness Discoverer, a relatively small cruise boat traveling through the San Juan Islands and down to Olympic National Park, I was on my first adventure cruise. I'd signed up for it months before after falling in love with the concept. It offered enough active outdoor opportunities—hiking, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding—to scratch your adventure itch and enough creature comforts—hot tubs, happy hours, three-course gourmet meals—to give you a relaxing vacation. It seemed like the best of both worlds, even for a logistics junkie who normally likes to have her hand in everything related to trip planning. The thought of tackling several bucket-list adventures while letting someone else take care of the details was enticing—and ultimately, that's what sold me.

Luckily, the execution was as good as the idea and I slipped into the adventure cruise life like I'd been living it—and letting someone else do the heavy lifting for my adventures—all along. There was a lot to love. Each day consisted of two big adventures, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. There were a variety of enticing options to choose from, both on the sea and on land,





A trip on the Wilderness Discoverer offers guests many chances for outdoor adventures, including kayaking and hiking. Photos courtesy of UnCruise Adventures.

everything from guided kayaking to small skiff tours, snorkeling, stand-up paddleboarding and open paddling. There were easy hikes, intermediate hikes and challenging hikes, all of them guided. I felt like I was at an adventure buffet. Not only were there numerous choices, but because the ship moved to a new location each day, you could do the same two activities over and over again and still see—and experience—different things each time.

I quickly settled into a routine that I relished, getting out on the water in the morning and exploring on land after lunch. There was no better way to start the morning, after loading up on hot bacon and even hotter coffee, than with an early paddle, when the water was flat and big bundles of dense fog suffused everything with mystery and moodiness. We'd always spend the first several minutes in near-silence, crossing the open water in our kayaks with strong, sure strokes and relaxing into a more leisurely pace once we sidled up to the shore. There was so much to see: gigantic masses of sea kelp, pretty purple and pink starfish, crabs scurrying about on the sea floor below. One morning, two Pacific white-sided dolphins casually swam by us. Another time, we watched from a distance as 300-pound harbor seals hauled themselves out on tiny rocky islands, holding yoga-like poses as they strained toward the sun.

There was something enthralling about getting to know the edges of each island by small boat in the hours before a hike. It was a new experience, to linger on the edges of a place I couldn't wait to explore, to let the anticipation of all I might see slowly build. How many times on land had I moved from the car to the trail as quickly as possible, not bothering to look around me until I was deep in the trees? How many times had I let the broader context of my hike go unnoticed?

It wasn't just the buildup to the island hikes that I quickly grew to appreciate. It was the knowledge—and stories—of the enthusiastic naturalists who guided them and helped me slow down and really see what was around me. All of a sudden, I did see things—a lot of things. There were rough-skinned newts that blended into the dirt trail at my feet and turkey vultures that circled high above. But it wasn't just seeing the fauna that was interesting; it was learning about it. I'd never known that rough-skinned newts are some of the most toxic animals on earth. I was floored that the brown slugs I'd always seen in my parents' garden and on trail were an invasive species, engaged in a glacially paced territory war with endemic banana slugs.

There was so much to soak in as my feet pounded the trail. I learned how to tell the difference between a hemlock and a Douglas fir (the Douglas fir has ridged, bacon-like bark and much bigger cones). And I listened rapturously to a Native American legend I'd never heard about how the Douglas fir cone got its shape thousands of years ago, in a great fire, when the tree welcomed mice to take shelter in its branches from the heat of the flames. (If you look at one of these cones, you'll see what looks like little mouse butts sticking out, as if the mice are inside.)

There were plenty of opportunities for bigger sights as well. On Orcas Island, we took a break at a long, serene lake (one of my favorite spots of the entire trip) on our way to the lookout of Mount Constitution—and an amazing view that rivaled the one from Eagle Cliffs. On Sucia Island, we ambled past more than a dozen remote pocket beaches and a series of dramatic cliffs that were unlike anything I'd ever seen in the San Juans. And at our last stop, in Olympic National Park, we walked alongside the North Fork Skokomish ►



Guests spend the day exploring outside and then enjoy evenings and nights relaxing on board.

River in a verdant tunnel of chartreuse leaves and towering cedars—one was 14 feet across! I couldn't believe that a place could be so green.

Late every afternoon, I'd return to the boat exhausted, amazed—and ready for all of the little luxuries that ship life entailed, from the cocktail-and-appetizer happy hour that greeted us on arrival, to the hot tub that warmed me up when I was chilly. Most afternoons, I greedily combined the two, sipping a drink from the full bar as I soaked my sore muscles and watched the world go by. This was the time we were normally en route to our next destination, and there was no telling what we'd see. One day, it was a pod of five orcas that I got great close-up views of, thanks to the binoculars that were thoughtfully stashed in each stateroom and a captain who took us off course for half an hour to watch the whales from a respectful distance. Another day, it was herds of hybrid animals on a private island that was once used for big game hunting and is now the peaceful home of the offspring of exotic animals—including mouflon sheep from Corsica, fallow deer from Europe and sika deer from Asia—that bred with the indigenous wildlife. There were engineering marvels to watch for as well; during our trip, we passed through the Ballard Locks, under the Deception Pass Bridge and through the Hood Canal Bridge.

After a drink and a good, long hot tub soak, it was time to slide into the next big event: dinner. There was always something tasty on the menu—a land option, a sea option and a vegetarian option—but what I enjoyed most about the meal was sitting with someone new every night. There was a couple from the United Kingdom that was enjoying their very first trip to America; a group of women solo travelers from all over the U.S. who had signed up to travel together; and lots of folks from the Pacific Northwest. As different and interesting as everyone's story was, we all had something in common: We loved the outdoors. And that, just as much as our shared experience of the cruise, is what bonded us. We'd share stories of

our favorite adventures around the world as the wine flowed, the courses stacked up and the sun hit the horizon beyond the boat's big windows.

After dinner, everyone slowed down, our bodies happy-tired from all of the activity and readying themselves for a long and restful sleep. There was always a short evening activity in the lounge, typically a presentation on something related to our excursions, from the breeding customs of birds to traditional foods of the Native Americans. One night, there was even the opportunity for a night paddle. It turned out to be my favorite experience of the entire cruise.

Sliding through the water at night was like entering a different world. Sounds were amplified—I could make out the muted conversation of a couple sharing a late meal on a sailboat nearby and the laughter of friends playing cards on a raft made of three different boats. We paddled until their lights and sounds couldn't reach us and we were bathed in blackness near the shore of Sucia Island. I started to notice a faint glow every time I dipped my paddle in the water; it got brighter as my eyes adjusted to the dark, until it was a glittering mass of burning embers. I'd only seen this—bioluminescence—once before, on an overnight sailing trip when I was a child. I felt the years melt away as I ran not just my paddle but my fingers through the cold water, making glittery trails under the surface. It was magical. I played in the water, entranced, until at last, nearly an hour later, the guide signaled the group to make our way back to the homey lights of the cruise ship.

That night, like every night of the adventure cruise, I fell into a deep slumber thinking of my kayak gliding smoothly through the deep water, my feet hitting the trail on a remote island and my heart falling for an area that only days before I'd thought of as just my backyard. It's amazing what you can discover when your life becomes as simple—and full—as paddle and hike, rinse and repeat. ■

TRY IT YOURSELF

A trip with **UnCruise Adventures** is a bucket-list adventure. Trips are available in the spring and fall. For this trip, the author took a 7-night trip, Explore Olympic Wilderness and San Juan Islands, which departs from Seattle. Trips begin at \$2,095 per person. The Wilderness Discoverer is 176 feet long with 38 cabins and can accommodate up to 76 guests and 26 crew members. All ages are welcome.

uncruise.com.

OTHER TRIPS

Puget Sound Express:

A three-day cruise in the San Juans features lots of wildlife viewing and chances for exploring some of the islands. The cruise leaves from Port Townsend and lodging is on San Juan Island. Breakfast, lunch and lodging is included. \$950 per person for double occupancy or \$1,100 for single occupancy. pugetsoundexpress.com.

North Cascades

Institute: NCI teams up every year with the crew of the Orion, a beautifully restored 1934 wooden sailboat, for a two-day trip to explore some of the lesser-known San Juan Islands. A trip in May has already sold out, but check back for a trip planned for September. Food is included, and guests camp on the islands. \$395 per person. ncascades.org.

LEARN • LEAD • INSPIRE



HIKING WORKSHOPS FOR EDUCATORS

March 10 and April 14
Tiger Mountain, near Issaquah

Did you know that WTA's Outdoor Leadership Training program supports hiking trips for schools and youth-serving organizations? If you're an educator or plan youth group activities, sign up to join WTA staff for a fun-filled workshop with adult peers. Learn how to plan and lead a safe and fun outing for the youth that you work with. We'll bring all the easy-to-use gear you'll need to stay warm and dry. No previous experience is necessary. Once you're trained up, you'll have access to mini-grants to cover trip costs and the gear library to borrow everything your youth group needs.



Learn more and sign up at wta.org/olt

Photos by Shane Welch



Hiking for Health

Whether you're recovering from a physical injury or seeking solace from a frenetic schedule, these trails promise an escape into nature, where you can find energy for mind, body and soul.



Photo by Eric Jain

Barlow Point

Mountain Loop Highway

Hiking historic railroad grades is a great option if you're trying to get back on trail after an illness or injury. Like many former rail routes, Barlow Point is an easy grade, with lots of historical points of interest, but still offers beautiful views.

Many hikes along the Mountain Loop Highway are steeped with history, and the trail to Barlow Point is no exception. The trailhead is the former site of a mining warehouse and later a Forest Service guard station. A short spur off the main trail follows the path of the Everett-Monte Cristo Railway, and Barlow Point itself housed a fire lookout tower from the 1930s through 1960s. To truly appreciate the history of this area and ease back into your trail pace, take your time, and spend a few minutes reading the information kiosk at the trailhead before starting out.

Once on the trail, the route starts flat with a good workout in the middle. At the signed junction, stay right to continue toward Barlow Point or head left to follow a short detour along the old Everett-Monte Cristo Railroad grade. Soon reach two more junctions; the first is the railroad grade spur trail reconnecting with the main trail, and the second is the beginning of the Old Government Trail.

After these junctions, the climb toward the former lookout site begins. This is the perfect set of switchbacks for getting into hiking shape. The climb is not overly steep and the distance is short, but your lungs and legs will have the chance to get used to climbing (and descending) again.

Before long, the rocky summit of Barlow Point is reached. When the lookout tower was constructed in 1935, the surrounding forest was still recovering from the 1905 Buck Fire, so views extended in all directions. Today, the forest has regrown, and the views are limited in some directions, but hikers can still savor the unobstructed views down the Stillaguamish and Sauk valleys beneath a long line of Cascadian peaks.

Tip: The trailhead for Barlow Point is beyond the winter closure point of the Mountain Loop Highway, so verify the gates are open before venturing this way in the spring.

DISTANCE: 2.4 miles roundtrip
ELEVATION GAIN: 800 feet
PEAK ELEVATION: 3,200 feet
MAP: Green Trails 111: Sloan Peak
PERMIT: Northwest Forest Pass
DOGS: Leashed

INFO: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/barlow-point

TRAILHEAD: From either Darrington or Granite Falls, follow the Mountain Loop Highway to the signed parking area for Barlow Point on the north side of the highway.

HIKE: Lindsay Leffelman

MORE HIKES

STEP IT UP

Ashland Lakes: To try a slightly longer hike, the trail to Ashland Lakes makes a good option for an extended outing on a trail of moderate difficulty. Over the course of 2.75 miles, pass three tranquil lakes on forested trail and boardwalks. The elevation gain is moderate, and there are a number of campsites and other break spots along the way to rest as needed.

5.4 miles roundtrip, 800 feet elevation gain

PUSH YOURSELF

Independence and North Lakes: When you're ready to challenge yourself with a more difficult trail, make your way to Independence and North lakes. Though Independence Lake is reached in less than a mile, the true challenge is making it to North Lake. Climb over rocky talus and rough trail before reaching a saddle and descending steeply on narrow trail to reach the shore of North Lake.

7 miles roundtrip, 2,200 feet elevation gain



Photo by Linda O'Rourke

Pinnacle Peak

Seattle-Tacoma area

Reward yourself with this short but steep trail after a long recovery period, or challenge yourself—how fast can you reach the summit?

Also known as Mount Peak or Mount Pete, this is a mount of many names, but one thing everyone can agree on: It's steep. The Cal Magnusson Trail, which takes you to the summit, is named for a mountaineer who made his home in Enumclaw. Many hikers train here for Rainier. But you don't have to be planning a summit attempt. It's also a good route to challenge yourself to hike faster, more rugged terrain—you climb 1,000 feet in just 1 mile, making for a healthy workout.

Set off from the trailhead in thick forest. After 0.26 mile, stay left, avoiding a junction with the Goat Trail. Continue another 0.41 mile to a "T" junction, turn left, and proceed straight on to the summit, avoiding side trails along the way. Near the top, take a look at the basalt outcroppings, formed by the rapid cooling of lava tubes. Though relatively common in the South Cascades, these are an interesting sight and a good place to stop and catch your breath.

Once you've achieved the summit, take a look around—it's a former lookout site. You can see old concrete footings that supported the lookout. Now logs have been placed across these to serve as benches, where you can take a load off and enjoy the view, including Mount Rainier and much of the surrounding valley.

Tip: If you want to make this a thru-hike, take the South Trail down from the summit. This accesses a different parking lot, so plan for that. The South Trail is open to and graded for, mountain bikes, offering a more forgiving grade; those with creaky knees may prefer this route.

DISTANCE: 2 miles roundtrip ♦ **PERMIT:** None
ELEVATION GAIN: 1,000 feet ♦ **DOGS:** Leashed
PEAK ELEVATION: 1,800 feet
MAP: <http://bit.ly/2h0Gki8>

INFO: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/mount-peak-pinnacle-peak

TRAILHEAD: Pinnacle Peak is 1 mile south of Enumclaw. From Highway 410, head south on 284th Avenue SE at the King County Fairgrounds and then west on SE 472nd Street. The Cal Magnusson trailhead is at 276th Avenue SE and SE 472nd Street.

HIKE: Anna Roth

MORE HIKES

MIX IT UP

Island Center Forest: If you're not quite ready for the challenge of Pinnacle Peak, head to Vashon Island and the Island Center Forest. With 10 miles of trails over varying terrain, it's an excellent place to try a longer, more varied hike and experience myriad landscapes, from the Valley of the Firs to Mukhai Lake with its many birds.

10 miles of trails, elevation gain varies

FIRST STEPS

Clarks Creek Park Loop: WTA has been assisting in the creation of this loop, which links six parks and open spaces in Puyallup by connecting pre-existing trails into a 5.5-mile loop. Trip reporters say it's a good option for a first step into training or for simply getting a dose of wilderness close to the city.

5.5 miles, minimal elevation gain



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Photo by Holly Weiler

Centennial Trail

Spokane area

For hikers just warming up to the return of spring, walkers coming off an injury or those using a wheelchair or walker, Spokane's paved Centennial Trail is the perfect beginning to the hiking season.

Begin at Mirabeau Parkway's Centennial Trail trailhead and follow the river upstream, heading east. This portion of the national recreation trail begins at the site of the defunct Walk in the Wild Zoo, now converted to a park along the river. The paved trail is wheelchair- and stroller-friendly, making it ideal for the entire family. Featuring both ponderosa pine forest and open fields in this section, the trail hosts a wide variety of native plants. Watch in early spring for flowering shrubs like serviceberry and chokecherry, but stay on trail to avoid the occasional poison ivy plant. Although the trail continues all the way to the Idaho border (it's 37 miles long), a logical turnaround for this section is the underpass at the Sullivan Road Bridge near the Spokane Valley Mall.

After you finish, be sure to check out Mirabeau Park, located just across the road from the trailhead. It's an ideal spot to try some yoga in the park—stretch your body and relax your mind.

Tip: As the weather warms, the Centennial Trail becomes a popular place for cyclists and trail runners; remember to keep right and watch for other trail users. Visitors with children should check out the nearby Discovery Playground.

DISTANCE: 3.48 miles ♦ **PEAK ELEVATION:** 2,000 feet
ELEVATION GAIN: 54 feet ♦ **MAP:** spokanecentennialtrail.org
PERMIT: None for this section (Discover Pass required for some parking lots) ♦ **DOGS:** Leashed

INFO: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/spokane-river-centennial

TRAILHEAD: From I-90, take exit 290. Go north on Evergreen to Indiana, then west on Indiana to Mirabeau Parkway. Follow Mirabeau Parkway to the Centennial Trail trailhead, across from Mirabeau Park.

HIKE: Holly Weiler

MORE HIKES

LEVEL UP

Antoine Peak east trailhead to summit: WTA has been hard at work on the Canfield Gulch route to the summit of Antoine Peak, and hikers looking for a workout should try it. Start from the eastern trailhead on Lincoln Road. Reward your workout with views of Liberty Lake and Mica Peak to the south and Mount Spokane to the north. Look for yellow fawn lilies, blue matchstick flowers, spring beauties and shooting stars along the way. Plus, if you're lucky, you may even find morels in mid-April.

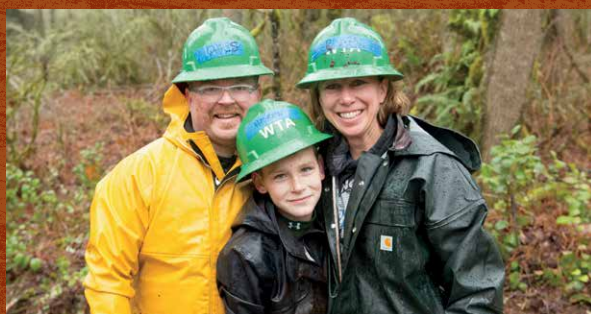
5.1 miles roundtrip, 1,208 feet elevation gain

KEEP CLIMBING

Mount Spokane hairpin-turn trailhead to Mount Kit Carson Loop: A successful spring trip to Mount Spokane requires the right footwear. Depending on conditions, the steep trail can be bare ground with wildflowers, icy and requiring traction devices or a snowshoe. Start at the hairpin-turn trailhead at the Lower Mount Kit Carson Loop Road to try the approach to Mount Kit Carson and some of the best views in the park. Ascend via Trail 110 to Saddle Junction, then take Trail 160 to the park's second-highest peak. Take in the views of the Chattaroy area, then return to Saddle Junction and descend via Trail 140 to Smith Gap. Take the Lower Kit Carson Loop Road to complete the loop.

6.5 miles, 1,500 feet of elevation gain

Youth & Family Work Parties



WTA's Puget Sound-area youth and family work parties are for youth volunteers ages 10 or older and their friends and families.

March 17: Tolt Macdonald Park

April 14: TBD Seattle park

Join us from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

No experience necessary.



Sign up at wta.org/volunteer.



Photo by Craig Romano

Similkameen Trail

North-central Washington

Recover both body and soul on this relatively flat but visually stunning trail in north-central Washington.

Slated to eventually become part of the long-distance Pacific Northwest Trail, the Similkameen Trail offers a beautiful and easy nearly-year-round hike in north-central Okanogan County. With very little elevation gain, the trail is ideal for first-time hikers, older hikers and hikers recovering from an injury or a long period of inactivity.

Most of the way is along an old rail line that once transported ore from the mines of Hedley, BC, and the now ghost town of Nighthawk, down a deep canyon cut by the Similkameen River. The trail is graced with several interpretive signs on the area's fascinating and hardscrabble past.

From the trailhead, start walking on the old rail line that once connected Oroville to Princeton, BC. Built in 1909, it remained in use until 1972. Pass apple warehouses and a couple of pines and cottonwoods. There isn't much shade along the way, so summer heat and winter winds can make it downright uncomfortable. But spring is a lovely

time to be on this trail. Savor apple blossoms and wildflowers. The Similkameen River, which originates in British Columbia's Manning Provincial Park, eventually comes into view.

After bypassing a vineyard, the trail comes to the Taber trailhead, offering an alternate starting point for a shorter hike. The way continues west, winding down to the impressive Girder Bridge, which replaced the original trestle in 1952. Cross the 375-foot span hovering 86 feet above the churning river in a tight chasm. It's an impressive sight.

Then start traversing open range and continue upstream, passing rapids and good views of Kruger Mountain across the river. Old mines pock the surrounding hillsides. Pines and firs shroud the north-facing slopes to your left, contrasting nicely with the shrub-steppe ridges to your right.

Pass through a cut displaying glacial till left behind from the ice age. Then at 3.6 miles, come to a gate and the end (for now) of the line. A good viewing area to the right allows you to see the 1907-built Enloe Dam with river water thundering over it. Trail advocates hope to open the next phase of this trail, which includes a tunnel to Nighthawk, sometime in the future.

Tip: This trail is also an excellent option in fall.



DISTANCE: 7.2 miles
ELEVATION GAIN: 245 feet
PEAK ELEVATION: 1,060 feet
MAP: USGS Oroville
PERMIT: None
DOGS: Leashed

INFO: "Day Hiking Eastern Washington" (Mountaineers Books)

TRAILHEAD: From Tonasket, follow Highway 97 north for 16.8 miles to the city of Oroville, turning left onto 12th Avenue. Proceed one block west and turn right onto Ironwood Street. Proceed one block north (passing Old Oroville Depot Museum and Visitor Center) and turn left onto Kernan Road. Continue 0.3 mile past soccer fields to the trailhead on your right.

SCOUTING CHALLENGE

Our site (wta.org) offers thousands of hikes, but not all of them have current trip reports, so potential visitors looking for a hike to suit their ability might not be able to discern what current conditions are. To help inform your fellow trail users, we're asking responsible, confident hikers to do some on-the-ground research for us and report back.

JACOBSON PRESERVE

WHERE IT IS: Wenatchee

WHAT WE KNOW: Of our four trip reports for this trail, three are from wintertime. But the land manager for this area (Chelan-Douglas Land Trust) says that this area is an excellent choice for springtime. Most trip reporters say it's a good one for a workout close to home, but it can be muddy in winter.

RECON REQUEST: We want to know about winter trail damage, and we'd love to see some wildflowers! Go to Jacobson Preserve as the snow melts and send us a report that gives an idea of how the trails are holding up in early spring. Take some photos. If you need hints on how to spot trail maintenance needs, head to our blog, wta.org/signpost, and read our story "7 Signs Your Trail is in Trouble and What You Can Do About It."

WHEN YOU'RE BACK: Head here to file your trip report: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/jacobson-preserve.



Photo by andrea

TRAIL TO THE TOP

Kaf Adventures and Washington Trails Association are teaming up again to raise funds for hikers and trails while challenging you to take the next step in your outdoor adventuring.

Three different climbs in August 2018 will offer the chance of a lifetime to summit one of Washington's signature peaks. **Registration opens March 1.**

Last year's Trail to the Top team summing Mount Rainier. Photo courtesy of Kaf Adventures.



Learn more at wta.org/charityclimb



Kaf Adventures
Dream it. Do it.





Photo by Brian Gratwicke

AMERICAN DIPPER, aka water ouzel (*Cinclus mexicanus*)

Where to see them: Fast-moving, clear-water streams and rivers throughout most of Washington. Also occasionally found along lakes or ponds. Dippers can be found at any elevation, as long as there is clear, cold water.

You do not have to be a great birder to try and spot the American dipper.

Although rather small (6 inches) and nondescript in color (grayish), the American dipper's acrobatics are impressive to watch and make them relatively easy to identify. You will typically find this bird standing on a rock protruding from the stream, rapidly dipping its head in the water to find insects. What may surprise you is watching it dive headlong into the rushing waters, submerge itself and swim bravely against the current or even walk on the stream bottom to rustle up something good to eat.

Dippers are specially equipped biologically with an extra eyelid that allows them to see while underwater. They also have nasal flaps, which allow them to close their nostrils when submerged. Large oil glands allow dippers to keep their feathers waterproof.

The American dipper is considered an important indicator of clean water; the species has declined or vanished in some polluted waterways.

John Muir called the dipper's song "refined and spiritualized (with) deep booming notes of (water)falls, trills of rapids and gurgling of eddies."

For nest building, the dipper prefers cliff edges or ledges behind waterfalls along rocky but protected stream banks, high enough to avoid floods and predators. Often you will find their ball-like nests beneath a roadway built across a mountain stream to keep the dippers safe and their nests close to food.

SKUNK CABBAGE (*Lysichiton americanus*)

Where to see them: Wet areas; most common on west side of state

After a cold and dark winter, there is often nothing better than taking a hike to inhale the fresh smells of spring: wet dirt, musky leaf detritus and the sweet smell of budding flowers. If you are walking near a wet place, you might be lucky enough to encounter western skunk cabbage, with its bright yellow appendages (called spathes—think of spades, as they resemble a spade or cowl in shape) and deep green, large leaves.

Skunk cabbage has an odor reminiscent of a skunk, which is a useful tool to lure pollinators to its flowers. One of the earliest plants to flower, in late winter to early spring, skunk cabbage can be found in wet areas of the state, such as along lakes like Lake Angeles in the Olympics and near Mount Rainier (pictured at right).

Eating the plant is not recommended, but it is reported to have been a "famine food" for Native Americans; also, its waxy leaves were used like wax paper, and the leaves were used medicinally as a poultice for burns.

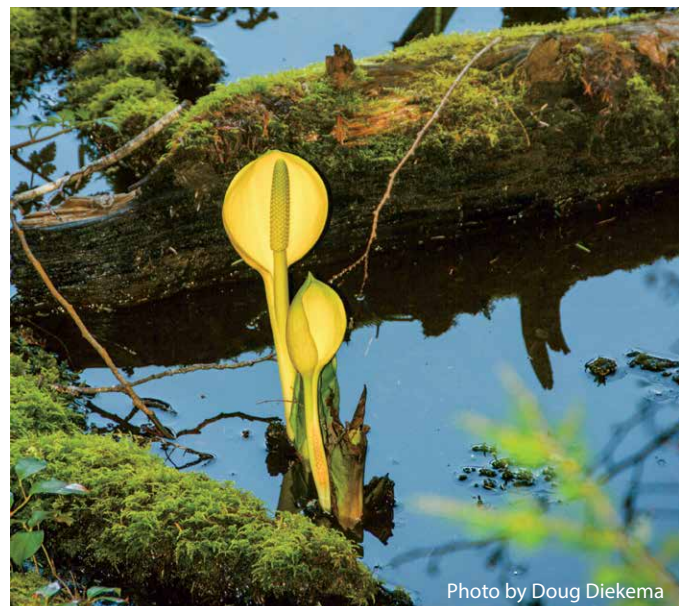


Photo by Doug Diekema

In the Clouds



Jared Nordin watches a storm roll in during a late-season summit attempt of Mount St. Helens. Photo by Sherri Nordin.

A simple iPhone photo perfectly captured this quiet moment as Jared Nordin paused on a trip to Mount St. Helens. Sherri Nordin took the photo of her husband on a hike in late September.

Sherri has loved the outdoors for as long as she can remember. As a child, she spent hours exploring the nearby woods and traipsing around the trails that wove through her family's farm.

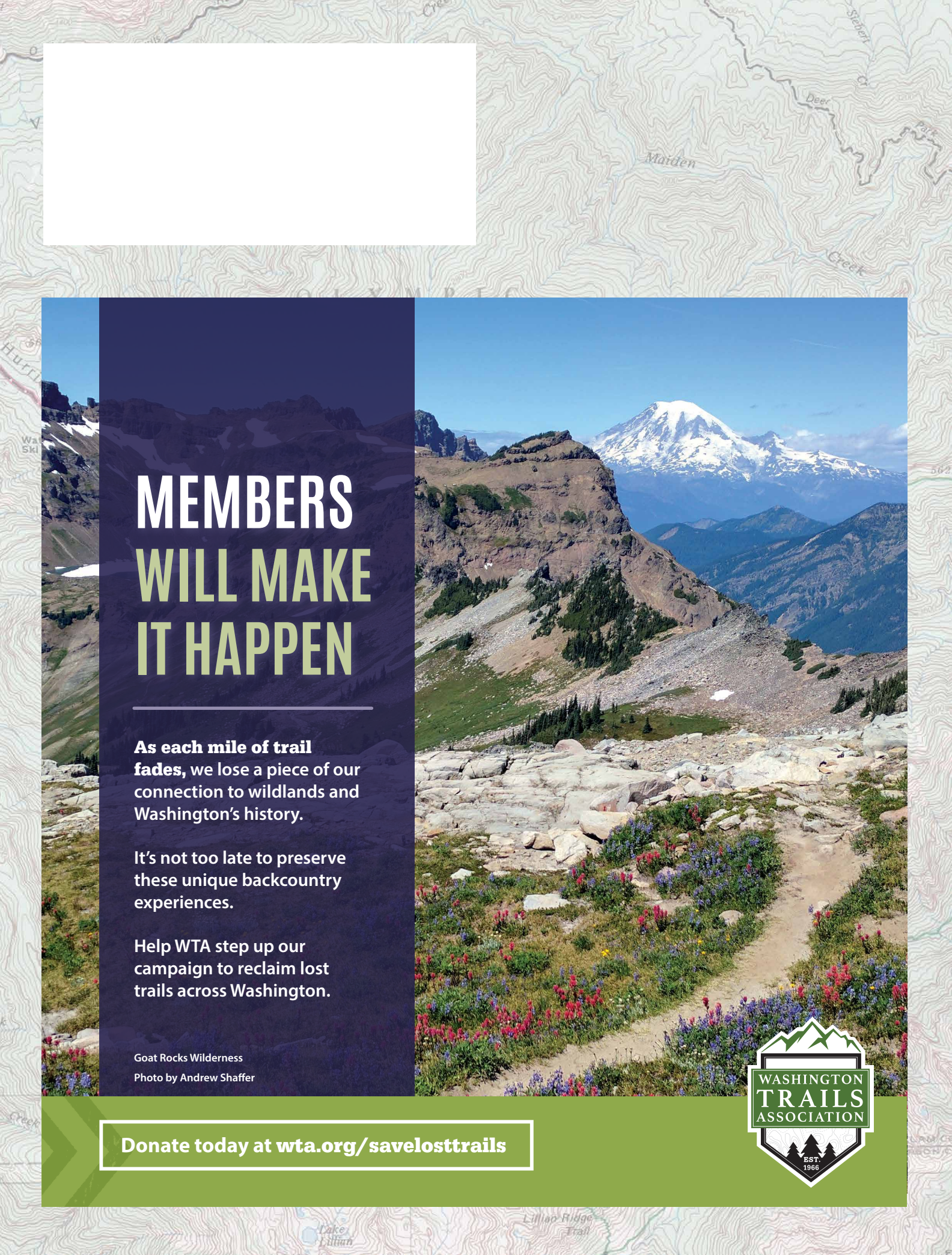
As an adult, not much has changed—Sherri still has a love affair with the forest. And even though her adventures have led her across states and countries, Washington still holds a special place in her heart.

"Washington offers so many hiking options, our bucket list is never short of opportunities for adventure. ... Home is where the trees grow tall and the waters run deep, where there are endless trails leading to endless possibilities lending themselves to endless stories," she said.

Sherri found an adventure partner in her husband, Jared. The pair headed up Mount St. Helens with their daughter and her boyfriend. Taking advantage of a break in the clouds, they made it to Kiwi Camp and settled in for the night. In the morning, a bout of altitude sickness forced Sherri's daughter and partner to turn back, but Sherri and Jared marched onward.

As they continued up the mountain, the weather took a turn for the worse. Thick clouds and rain caught up with them, eventually causing the duo to turn back. Before their descent, Sherri snapped this shot. The clouds rolling across the landscape made for a breathtaking view.

Even though they didn't reach the summit, Sherri considers the trip a success. They learned about the terrain, learned a bit about themselves and feel prepared to try again.



MEMBERS WILL MAKE IT HAPPEN

As each mile of trail fades, we lose a piece of our connection to wildlands and Washington's history.

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Goat Rocks Wilderness
Photo by Andrew Shaffer

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