

APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB-MAJOR EXCURSION

Colorado Ranch Vacation: Hiking the Rockies - Jul. 17–24, 2009, #0904

PROSPECTUS

Beneath a grassy mountain valley in central Colorado lays one of the richest and most diverse fossil deposits in the world. Petrified redwood stumps up to 14 feet wide and thousands of detailed fossils of insects and plants reveal the story of a very different, prehistoric Colorado. This is Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument where we will spend a day of hiking. The fossils from lake deposits of the Florissant Formation date at 34.07 million years old, and it represents the latest Eocene Epoch of earth history.

Other days will include a hike to “Top of the World” and “A-Bluff” the two highest points on the ranch. A day at Fish Creek which is 6-7 miles long, where we will have a chance to see beaver ponds and golden eagles, red-tailed hawk and hopefully a herd of elk. Early morning birding trip to Lake George to see white pelicans, cormorants and other water birds will be available, along with amazing views and the headquarters of a cattle operation.

One of the days, a van will take us for a 2-hour drive to the Leavick Valley and Mount Sherman through a beautiful part of Central Colorado – South Park, and toward Fairplay, Colorado. During the drive we will see Pronghorn Antelope, American Bison and maybe Bald Eagles. Also, we’ll see a glacial moraine that was created during the last glaciation, 12,000 years ago and drive up the moraine to the trailhead, at tree line. Here there is a choice - to hike at and just above tree line (11,200 ft.) to a beautiful glacial tarn (lake) under amazing Horseshoe Mountain. This option is a good one if you want to go at your own pace to take in the incredible views inside the glacial cirque, enjoy the alpine wildflowers, and look for ptarmigan, which is a medium sized gamebird in the grouse family. OR, you can choose to hike up one of Colorado’s famous “Forteeners”, Mt. Sherman. This strenuous hike climbs from about 12,000 ft. up to 14,036 ft., the top of Colorado’s 46th highest mountain. Along the way you can look down at Leadville, a famous mining town and see marmots. Marmots are large ground squirrels living in mountains areas.

We will be sure to spend some time hiking around the lodge: visiting “Quick’s Homestead,” an original late 1800’s homestead, “Hi-Tor,” a high point on the ranch with an amazing view, and “Witchers,” the headquarters of The Nature Place’s cattle operation. Along the way we may see red-tail hawk, culturally sacred trees by the Ute Indians and hopefully a herd of elk.

We are staying at the Nature Place. The staff there is friendly and helpful which adds to a super peaceful setting! The rooms are double occupancy with a private bathroom. Each day, we will have an optional activity before breakfast, a day of hiking, and evening entertainment. Even though we will have all these scheduled activities, there will still be time to enjoy the sauna, tennis courts and pool at the ranch at the end of the day. All meals are included in the cost of the trip. Trip participants are more than welcome to “opt out” and read a book under an aspen grove or do their own thing, whenever they choose. The ranch is in a beautiful mountain and tree setting with gorgeous views. The food is well prepared with a nice homemade slant!

The vision for the Colorado Outdoor Education Center was created in 1948 when two young enthusiastic teachers and naturalists purchased 480 acres of land to build a summer camp for boys. Over the next 60 years the Sanborns’ visions of using nature to help educate youth and adults grew into three main programs and facilities: The Nature Place, Sanborn Western Camps and High Trails Outdoor Education Center. These divisions of COEC share 6,000 acres of open pine forest and aspen groves, which is adjacent to 40,000 acres of National Forest and the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument land.

Florissant, Colorado is 8200 feet above sea level, thirty-eight miles west of Colorado Springs, Colorado. Anyone visiting Florissant should adapt to the Florissant altitude for a few days before traveling higher into the mountains. This trip does accommodate adjusting to the elevation. Resting, drinking plenty of water and eating nutritious foods are helpful strategies for acclimating.

There is a good chance that there will be a very mild thunderstorm every day in Florissant. We will take that into consideration and resume outdoor activities after the storm stops.

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TRIP LEADERSHIP

Lynn Matt has led walking, biking and ski trips for the AMC Boston Chapter for over ten years. She has led Major Excursion's, including a trip to Greece and New Mexico. She has also led trips with "Outside New England" to Utah. She is certified in advanced wilderness first aid and CPR certified.

Elaine Kerrigan is an AMC Boston Chapter Leader (INTRO, Major Excursions). She has traveled to Thailand four times in the past six years...leading trips for "Outside New England" and "AMC". She is a certified in wilderness first aid and CPR. Most recently, Elaine has traveled to Sedona, AZ., Peru, Chile, Mexico, N. Ireland, Turkey, Italy and New Mexico.

TRIP COST AND CANCELLATION POLICY

The price of \$1,750 is the cost of land travel. It is based on double occupancy and includes all breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, all lodging, and transportation within Colorado, and entrances to sights that are part of the group itinerary, as well as the AMC overhead cost. It does not cover tips, beverages or personal expenses.

If you cancel after being accepted for the trip, \$100 is non-refundable, but if you cancel after March 1, 2009 minimally \$300 is non-refundable, if (and only if) another person takes your place. We will establish a waiting list. Should another person replace you, you will be charged only the \$300 cancellation fee. However, your cancellation shall not raise the cost of the trip to any of the participants or the leaders. Thus, if you cancel and are not replaced, you will forfeit the \$300 plus the per capita expenses already incurred and any other unpaid per capita expenses for which the trip cannot obtain a refund. We strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance; information on a several companies will be sent to you after you apply.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

\$500 prior to December 1, 2008

\$1000 from December 1, 2008 – February 28, 2009

March 1, 2009 and after, the entire amount of \$1750 is due.

Payment of flight costs will be determined by the airline chosen and its deadlines.

TIPPING

The trip does not include tipping and gratuity should be presented when necessary to service personnel.

REGISTRATION

A separate application is required for each person. To reserve a spot on the trip, please mail the application and the deposit made out to Lynn to:

Lynn Matt
219 Harris Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
781-455-6859
Lmatt2002@hotmail.com

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Passport Requirements

Passports are not required.

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Baggage Allowance

Please check with the Transportation Security Administration website prior to leaving to check updates for packing for travel and you airline. <http://www.tsa.gov/311/index.shtm> Most airlines stipulate that your checked baggage should not exceed 70 lbs. Since we will be using public transportation (buses) almost exclusively, however, we STRONGLY recommend only one suitcase and one daypack – and that you pack as light as possible. Take only what you want to pull or carry!!!

Altitude

Travelers need to adapt to the altitude for a few days before traveling higher into the mountains. Resting, drinking plenty of water and eating nutritious foods are helpful strategies for acclimating. The trip does accommodate adjustment to the altitude.

Acclimatization

The major cause of altitude illnesses is going too high too fast. Given time, your body can adapt to the decrease in oxygen molecules at a specific altitude. This process is known as acclimatization and generally takes 1-3 days at that altitude. For example, if you hike to 10,000 feet (3,048 meters), and spend several days at that altitude, your body acclimatizes to 10,000 feet (3,048 meters). If you climb to 12,000 feet (3,658 meters), your body has to acclimatize once again. A number of changes take place in the body to allow it to operate with decreased oxygen.

Preventive Medications

Some people may desire or find it necessary to bring some high-altitude medications. If you would like some high-altitude medication suggestions, the following medications are only suggestions from the FDA.

- **Diamox** (Acetazolamide) allows you to breathe faster so that you metabolize more oxygen, thereby minimizing the symptoms caused by poor oxygenation. This is especially helpful at night when respiratory drive is decreased. Since it takes a while for Diamox to have an effect, it is advisable to start taking it 24 hours before you go to altitude and continue for at least five days at higher altitude. The recommendation of the Himalayan Rescue Association Medical Clinic is 125 mg. twice a day (morning and night). (The standard dose was 250 mg., but their research showed no difference for most people with the lower dose, although some individuals may need 250 mg.) Possible side effects include tingling of the lips and finger tips, blurring of vision, and alteration of taste. These side effects may be reduced with the 125 mg. dose. Side effects subside when the drug is stopped. Contact your physician for a prescription. Since Diamox is a sulfonamide drug, people who are allergic to sulfa drugs should not take Diamox. Diamox has also been known to cause severe allergic reactions to people with no previous history of Diamox or sulfa allergies. Frank Hubbell of SOLO recommends a trial course of the drug before going to a remote location where a severe allergic reaction could prove difficult to treat.
- **Dexamethasone** (a steroid) is a prescription drug that decreases brain and other swelling reversing the effects of AMS. Dosage is typically 4 mg twice a day for a few days starting with the ascent. This prevents most symptoms of altitude illness. It should be used with caution and only on the advice of a physician because of possible serious side effects. It may be combined with Diamox. No other medications have been proven valuable for preventing AMS.

Clothing

Colorado temperatures will vary depending on location. The best strategy is to dress in layers. Colorado is known for a daily rain shower, so rain gear must be brought. A good pair of walking shoes is vital and hiking boots are recommended. Dress is casual at The Nature Place.

Food and Drink

The Nature Place supplies all the meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner. If you have any specific dietary needs, please contact one of the leaders of the trip before the start of the trip.

Time

Colorado is on Mountain Standard Time (MST). Colorado is 2 hours behind Eastern Standard Time (EST).

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Health

There are no specific health risks in Colorado. You could, however, get high altitude sickness. We will make sure that you get acclimated to the high altitude before traveling to a higher altitude. If you take prescription medicine it is recommended that you bring information, including the generic name of your prescription, in case it should be necessary to replenish your supply at a pharmacy.

Wireless Internet Service

The Nature Place has WiFi Service and it is complimentary for all their guests.

Cell Phones

Cell phone use is limited because the quality of cell service also depends on which service provider you have. The Nature Place does have landlines available for personal or professional needs. Most carriers provide a bar or two in certain on site locations.

Laundry Service

The Nature Place has a washer and dryer on site and guests are welcome to use these to take care of personal laundry needs.

Equipment

You provide your own daypack, hiking shoes, rain gear. We will send a packing list for your personal gear prior to the trip.

REQUIREMENTS - Each participant must fulfill these requirements:

- Have the proper physical strength and stamina to participate in daily activities, which include moderate up and downhill hiking over moderate terrain. Regular physical conditioning is necessary to prepare for this trip. Strength training (nautilus, free weights, etc.) is helpful. Remember that, the better condition you are in, the more enjoyable the trip will be for you. You should be able to hike several days in a row at a pace of two miles per hour. Our goal is not to bag mountain peaks...but, to enjoy the scenery along the way.
- Adaptability: An important criterion for this trip is the ability to be flexible. Our itinerary could change from day to day, planes can be delayed, and vans can break down. Everyone is expected to be able to “roll with the punches” as much as possible, be cooperative, abide by leader decision and add to the total group experience while enjoying themselves.
- Understand Purpose of Trip: This trip is designed for everyone to experience the natural wonders and history of Colorado through hiking and sightseeing. Although each person comes with his or her own expectations, this is primarily a group trip and everyone is expected to be a cooperative member of it.
- Although, enjoyment and appreciation of Colorado is our purpose, our main objective will be a safe trip. Safety will always take priority in the leaders’ decision.
- This is a “Non-Smoking” trip.

COST PARTICULARS - The cost is **\$1750 excluding airfare**

Included in the price

1. Accommodations in Colorado Springs and The Nature Place
2. All group entrance fees
3. All breakfasts and dinners provided at The Nature Place
4. All sack lunches
5. AMC Committee Fees
6. Emergency Evacuation Insurance (i.e., if you break a leg and have to be flown home or to a distant hospital, this covers air for you and a companion)

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Not included in price

1. Flights to and from Colorado Springs
2. Transportation to and from home to airport
3. Personal charges, such as wine, liquor, laundry
4. Any pre-trip costs, including books or anything else not in the above list of “included in the price”
5. Optional tours or activities at The Nature Place, i.e. mountain biking, rock climbing, horseback riding, tennis, etc.
6. Transportation other than with the group (i.e. if you decide to do something on your own)
7. Trip cancellation insurance (in case YOU need to cancel due to illness, etc, also has lost luggage allowance)
8. Tipping

The estimated airfare of \$400-600 is from Boston or New York. Individual fares will be adjusted based on your departure airport and the actual airline fares at the time the airline reservations are made. The leaders' expenses for the trip and administrative costs in organizing the trip are included in the overall trip costs to be shared among the participants. This is strictly a non-profit excursion conducted by the leaders on a volunteer basis. Any unforeseen increases in costs will have to be shared by all participants. Any funds remaining after all expenses are paid will be divided among the participants in accordance with AMC rules.

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ITINERARY

Friday July 17, Day 1:

You're on your own to get to Colorado Springs Airport. Get the airport shuttle from the Colorado Springs Airport to the La Quinta Inn – 719-527-4789. Your room is already reserved. Garden of the Gods is 8 miles away if you want to get a ride there.

Saturday July 18, Day 2:

Continental breakfast is included at La Quinta. Bus will pick us up from the La Quinta Inn at 2:00 pm and take us to The Nature Place. You'll settle into your studio apartment & explore the grounds. Evening official welcome in a meeting room by Lynn Matt, Elaine Kerrigan, Rob, Director of The Nature Place, and Terry Hayden, Assistant Director. We will cover: staff & participant introductions, housekeeping items and an introduction to the week's events. (B,D)

Sunday July 19, Day 3:

Hike to the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. This 4 mile hike will be mostly flat to undulating on a single-track trail along a mountain stream, through meadows and aspen groves. We'll spend some time at the "Maze Caves" where large room sized Pikes Peak Granite boulders have eroded onto themselves with the stream running through them. (B,L,D)

Monday July 20, Day 4:

Hike to "Top of the World" and "A-Bluff", the two highest points on the ranch. This 5 mile round trip hike, is gradually uphill (one way) through meadows full of wildflowers and aspen groves. Those with high interest and energy can climb "A-Bluff", a steeper walk up with an incredible view of Pikes Peak, our property and the surrounding areas. (B,L,D)

Tuesday July 21, Day 5:

Depart for Fish Creek, 10 minute van ride to trail head. This hike is 6 – 7 miles long, mostly undulating or gradually downhill. There is a chance to see beaver ponds and golden eagles along the way. (B,L,D)

Wednesday July 22, Day 6:

Many chances today to see wildlife at Lake George. White pelicans, cormorants and other water birds, red-tail hawk, culturally sacred trees by the Ute Indians and hopefully a herd of elk. Total hiking today will be 6 to 7 miles. (B,L,D)

Thursday July 23, Day 7:

Vans depart for Leavick Valley and Mount Sherman. This 2-hour drive to the day's hiking location travels through a beautiful part of Central Colorado – South Park, and toward Fairplay, Colorado. During the drive we will see Pronghorn Antelope, American Bison and maybe Bald Eagles. Toward the end of the drive we will arrive on a glacial moraine that was created during the last glaciations, 12,000 years ago. Welcome to the sub-alpine! Here there is a choice - to hike at and just above tree line (11,200 ft.) to a beautiful glacial tarn (lake) under amazing Horseshoe Mountain. This option is a good one if you want to take your time to take in the incredible views inside the glacial cirque, enjoy the alpine wildflowers, and look for ptarmigan. (B,L,D)

Friday July 24, Day 8:

8:00 AM Breakfast in the lodge

Departure at noon for the airport and bye to good friends! (B)