

GAZETTE

Newsletter for the American Long Distance Hiking
Association West
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The Grand Enchantment Trail

Ryan Surridge

I spent the past several years living in Portland, Oregon. The Pacific Northwest is famous for long, cold, wet springs. Not wanting to delay hiking season until June, or fight off Vitamin-D deficiency any longer, my partner Purple Rain and I decided to put our belongings into storage and head to the American Southwest. Rather than biking to work in the rain this spring, we would set off on a walk across the desert.

The Grand Enchantment Trail is a 750 mile hiking route that traverses several of the Sky Island mountain ranges lying between Phoenix and Albuquerque. In essence, the trail follows the floodplain of the Gila River up through the Sonoran desert to its headwaters in the Continental Divide; it then follows a mix of tributaries down the east side of the divide to the Rio Grande, crossing that great river outside of Albuquerque, squarely set, in the Chihuahuan desert.

The GET is not this linear, however. If one were to drive a car from Phoenix to Albuquerque, using only the interstate system, it would take around 7 hours, covering approximately 450 miles. The GET is a bit more circuitous than this as it crosses several 10,000 foot peaks, fords numerous waterways, and connects a variety of forgotten roads and footpaths as it meanders. The land that lies between these two desert metropolises hides a number of secret places.

The GET takes the traveler through remote stretches of wilderness that offer a backcountry experience, while never ignoring the unavoidable history of human endeavors in the Southwest.

Whether through place-names, mining relics, old ranches, or native dwellings, the trail provides the traveler with a glimpse into the past. The GET is a beautiful mix of Wilderness and Wild West.



Saguaro cacti in the Superstition Mountains.

Often, the beauty of a thru-hike lies in discovering the secrets of a place. This article provides four highlights that were unsuspected discoveries during our hike. These are all places where

history can be re-discovered in the backcountry. I've written this article for those who like to live vicariously and for those who cannot afford the time or resources that a thru-hike requires. The reader can glean much information on the route the GET chooses to take through these areas on the GET website (www.simblissity.net/get) and, I'd gamble, given the time to sit down with a map and a strong IPA, many interesting backpacks could also be put together in each of these places.

Superstition Mountains

Only 45 miles east of Phoenix the Superstition Mountains push up out of the desert. The Superstitions are immediately familiar to anyone who has seen a nostalgic western movie. Saguaro cactus sets the scene, backed by the red of eroded canyon walls and ancient volcanic plugs reaching skyward to break up the horizon. The USFS website lists over 40 trails in the official Wilderness area. The GET provides a nice introduction to the area but by no means exhausts the options.



Holdout Canyon in the Santa Teresa Sky Island Range

Holdout Canyon

Hidden within the remote Santa Teresa Sky Island Range is one of the most remarkable places I have ever seen. It was also one of the more difficult sections of hiking we experienced along the GET.

Navigating the route through this Wilderness is supported by the occasional cairn or blue

flagging. Often the hiker must simply consult a map and then take the best line possible. But it's worth it. We rounded a corner, pushing ourselves through dense chaparral when suddenly the views opened: massive cliff faces, alcoves and pinnacles all smoothed by the elements into an endless display of otherworldly forms.

Holdout Canyon; one could get lost here forever; we had to get a bit lost just to find it.

West Fork Gila River

The area through which the West Fork flows forms the first congressionally designated wilderness area, the Gila Wilderness. There is a reason Aldo Leopold sought to preserve this land.

The trail that follows the river does so by following canyon walls until the river bends forcing the hiker to ford the river, eventually following paths on the opposite side. The river is often shin to thigh deep and can be cold when swelled by spring snowmelt. It was a constant relief to wade through the water, navigating crossings with care, yet relishing in the cooling effect on weary feet. The trail ends within walkable reach of the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, a mandatory side trip.

Manzano Crest Trail

The GET ends in the Sandia Mountains standing starkly, at 10,678 feet, above Albuquerque. The crest trail across those mountains is understandably popular and features a tram to the top as well as a ski resort. Just to the south of that range, however, lies an even greater adventure.

The Manzano Mountains spread roughly 40 miles North to South. The GET follows the crest trail across this range. Views are endless and the trail retains the sense of remoteness which the GET loses once arriving in the Sandias.

This past weekend Purple Rain and I went for a day hike in the Red Buttes Wilderness just outside our new home in Southern Oregon. The Red Buttes are prominent features on the crest of the Siskiyou Mountains. Forming the border between Oregon and California, the Siskiyou are unique and unlike either of the states which they separate. Locals call this area "the State of

Jefferson,” celebrating its rich history and current political irrelevance.

On the drive to the trail head we passed ranches with windmill wells, took a left at a stop sign in an historic mining town, and parked off a wash-boarded forest service road dominated by manzanita and scrub oak.

As we climbed alongside Cook and Green Creek the flora slowly became more Cascadian; large conifers and berry bushes dominated the landscape as we reached the pass and the PCT.



Windmill well in the Siskiyou

The return trail was a bushwhack requiring close navigation down steep, overgrown terrain; it was reminiscent of several descents on the GET and we felt at home.

During this afternoon hike I began to draft this article, inspired by the Siskiyou, a range which seemed to offer a marriage of our Southwest adventure and the Northwest we’ve always loved. Let the enchantment continue.

ALDHA-West Tax Status

Naomi “The Punisher’s” Hudetz

The Board continues to investigate changing to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization from our current **501(c)(7)** status. A big, giant thank you to the hard work of Rick “Hoov” Hunt in preparing the necessary documents and helping us navigate the process. Before we can change to a 501(c)(3), ALDHA-West must make a few official changes that must be voted on by the membership. The changes include:

- adding purpose and dissolution provisions to our bylaws

- adopting a "conflict of interest" policy
- removing all references to lobbying in all of our official documents (as a 501(c)(3) organization, we can inform congressional and legislative folks, but not advocate for specific legislation)

We will keep you updated about our progress. We plan to have the updated documents to the membership in August and then we will vote at the Gathering in September. In the meantime, please feel free to contact any Board member with your questions or concerns.

A Big Thank You, McIntyre

Thanks and best wishes to Gazette Editor Mike “McIntyre” Johnson.



Mike "McIntyre" Johnson, Gazette editor 2012-2015

ALDHA-W wants to extend our deepest thanks to Mike “McIntyre” Johnson for all of his work as editor of the Gazette the past two years. McIntyre has asked to step down from his position to attend to some family issues. He has always been fun to work with and brought some serious professional editing and writing experience to our organization. He will deeply be missed by the Board and our members.

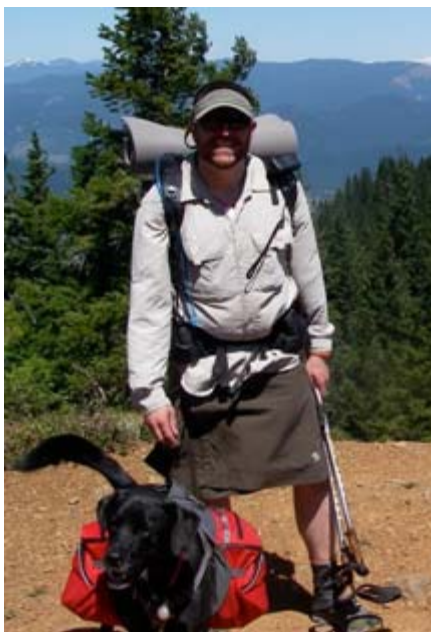
Looking for a New Gazette Editor

In the meantime, we are looking for a new Gazette editor to last us until the Gathering. The estimated time commitment is about 2-4 hours per month. If you are interested, please send an email to liz@eathomas.com and the Board will walk you through what it entails and set you up.

President's Letter

Whitney "Allgood" LaRuffa

Spring has finally arrived and with it comes the beginning of hiking season for our members as they dust off their packs and get ready to hit the trail. The board of ALDHA-West is no stranger to this and in a few weeks' time some of us will be



setting off on our own thru-hikes. I am leaving in a few weeks to thru-hike the CDT and will be joined by fellow board members "Freefall", "SoFar" and "Snorkel" for a few sections of my hike. With this hike comes a shift in leadership, from now until the Gathering our very capable Vice President "Snorkel" will be running the show while I am away. All questions can be sent to her at vp@aldhawest.org going forward.

The past few months since the Gathering have been a particularly busy time for all of us at ALDHA-West and here are a few highlights:

Post Gathering we took some downtime to relax and gather our thoughts, get through the holidays and fix some things on the technology front to make all of our lives easier. "Drop N Roll" worked with "Beaker" to get our new website launched. She then spent many hours organizing the membership records. We are fortunate to have "Drop N Roll" on our team to help us all get organized and efficient.

January kicked off the New Year for us as an organization. "Snorkel" and I traveled to Outdoor Retailer to meet with our business sponsors and we have a few special items being made for the Gathering this fall for those getting their triple crowns. Two weeks later the entire board had a retreat in Trout Lake, WA where we worked on long-term strategic planning and also short term

goals. The annual board retreat is a very valuable event as it gives us time to think about where we have been, where we are going and where we want to go in the future. We now have a committee working on what needs to happen to shift to a 501c3 non-profit status and will be updating membership with our findings. Read Naomi "The Punisher's" article in this Gazette to learn what we've discovered since the Retreat.

We hosted a talk in Portland in January at the Mazama Center where we had Cam "Swami" Honan present on his *12 Long Walks*. It was great event that brought awareness about who ALDHA-West is to our local community and we gained a few new members from the event. Then we rolled right into Ruckin' Season.

I personally now have the Triple Crown of Rucks, as I attended all 3 this winter. The Inland Ruck in Idaho was a great success, and I was blown away by how many folks in the area came out. The "Inland chapter" as I refer to them is an active and enthusiastic lot and I look forward to watching them grow their events in the future. This issue of the Gazette features Beaker's article on the on-the-ground experience of being at a Ruck. The Cascade Winter Ruck was well attended and the food by "Shroomer" was out of this world. The two day event allowed for some trail work and breakout sessions on Sunday. The final trip was to Colorado for the Rockies Ruck that we host in conjunction with the Continental Divide Trail Coalition. The Rockies Ruck had a good turnout and the panel format allowed past hikers a chance to share their knowledge in a fun setting. At the end of the event, we had a few folks step up to help us plan the 2017 Gathering in Colorado.

It's been a busy winter and early spring for me and the board. We can always use a hand at events like the upcoming PCT Days in August at the marine park in Cascade Locks and The Gathering in September in Nevada City, CA. I personally look forward to seeing everyone this fall in California and celebrating the end of 2016 hiking season. In the meantime you can follow along my hike at thedagodiaries.com and I know things are being left in good hands with "Snorkel" running the show until I return.

The [Tōhoku Nature Trail](#) – 2,718 miles (4,374 km) is the longest completed hiking trail in Japan.



Martin Papendick Award

It's that time of year to nominate your favorite trail angel for the Martin Papendick Award, which is given out for the outstanding trail angel of the year. We made things easier for nominations this year with an online form so please take 5 minutes and honor that special person who came and helped you in your time of need when you were on trail.

[Link for Nominations](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15HpSTuLLjfbnXfhfrdB80ZQi9_LdxcXua6DRv6MrrM/viewform)

Or, type the following link into your browser

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15HpSTuLLjfbnXfhfrdB80ZQi9_LdxcXua6DRv6MrrM/viewform

2nd Annual Inland NW Winter Ruck

Bob "Beaker" Turner

The 2nd Annual Inland Northwest Winter Ruck was held in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho February 13, a great prelude to Valentines Day! An enthusiastic crowd of seventy four folks, from teens to Social Security plus, spent the day with us.

After introductions and thank yous Whitney "Allgood" LaRuffa, ALDHA-West President, kicked off the day with an introduction to Lightweight Backpacking. He finished his presentation with an explosion of his planned CDT gear, awing the crowd with how little he packs.

The agenda for the day covered the usual backpacking light, safety, re-supply, trail and town etiquette, and navigation.

Our guest presentation was on the Pacific Northwest Trail. Triple Crowner, Melanie "Lemstar" Simmerman, shared in pictures and story her experience hiking the PNT.



Melanie "Lemstar" Simmerman at Cape Alava the western terminus of the PNT.

We tried a new format at our Ruck this year. We had two sessions of Trail Breakouts. These two 45 minute sessions gave folks an opportunity to talk with experienced hikers about specific trails in a more intimate small group setting. Here, we were able to talk about specific re-supply logistics, unique navigational issues, and more specific seasonal conditions they might encounter. Although the process needs some refinement, the idea was well received.

This brings up the importance of participating in the post event surveys we do. All of ALDHA-West's activities are driven by the needs of long distance hikers. Surveys help us see the needs. Case in point was feedback from last year's survey for more trails information, not just the PCT, AT and CDT. We tried to meet this with the Trails Breakout. This year's feedback has given us great information to fine tune the TB process. So, to all of you that participated (40% of the attendees!) in the Ruck Survey, thank you!

One of the surprise hit topics of the Ruck was an informal Shoe and Foot talk by Tribhu. During the first Trail Breakout Session many people had concern for the right footwear and foot care. That being right up Tribhu's alley he offered a discussion group during the second breakout.

I think we'll add his shoe talk on next year's agenda.

Business Donors

For your convenience, in the online copy of the Gazette, each logo is a link to the sponsor. Remember, **Luna Sandals** is giving ALDHA-West members a 10% on new sandal purchase! Use ALDHA10 code.



Non-Profit Partners

