

JPFreek

LIFESTYLES OFF THE BEATEN PATH



December/January 2006-07 • Issue 5

Expedition Discussions:

HAM'in about Radio
Communications

Discovery on the Rim

Adventure is found
in the Grand Canyon

On Belay

In California's Sierra Nevada

Gear Reviews

Oil and Water Project II

Editorial from GetBent4x4.com

**ALL NEW
JPFOTO
CONTEST**

**AWESOME
PRIZES**

America's Outback

JPFreek goes on a Walkabout
in Big Bend National Park



From the Editor

With Christmas just around the corner, the JPFreek editorial staff thought that issue #5 would be a great opportunity to add to our diverse content by featuring our first-ever adventure product gear reviews from companies such as [Adventure Trailers](#), [Garvin Industries](#), [Mountain Hardwear](#), and [Therm-a-Rest](#). We were very impressed with the gear that was tested, and we hope that our reviews will help you in choosing the perfect gift for the 'freak' on your gift list. Gear reviews will be featured as a regular part of our content in future issues of JPFreek.

This issue also features the commencement of our highly successful photo contest! As an added bonus, we have upped the ante by offering all of the camping equipment that was reviewed in this issue as a prize for the Grand Prize and Runner-up entries. Prize winners will be notified via email prior to the release of the next issue,

and the winning photographs will be featured in the February/March 2007 issue of JPFreek. Look for details in this issue for contest rules. Lastly, we have added to our news section by providing a short listing of upcoming events within the adventure realm throughout the United States and UK. Our hope is to provide adventure insight to readers around the world, and future issues will feature a listing of adventures that truly encompass what being a 'freak' is all about.

Thanks again for supporting JPFreek Adventure Magazine. From everyone on our staff, we wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and Happy Adventuring New Year!

Regards,



Frank Ledwell
Editor-in-Chief
JPFreek Publications



Enjoying the break of dawn in the backcountry of Big Bend's Chisos Mountains.

Sunrise from Big Bend's south rim in the Chisos Mountains. In the distance, the Santiago Mountains loom across the Mexican horizon.

Crew & Contributors

Editorial

Editor-in-Chief **Frank Ledwell**

Hiking correspondent **Ray Schindler**

Expedition correspondent **Mark D. Stephens**

4x4 correspondent **Mike Tinnell**

Climbing correspondent **Jeff Haley**

Photography & Design

Art Director **Richard Tinnell**

Staff Photographer **Mark D. Stevens**

Staff Photographer **Mike Tinnell**

Staff Photographer **Frank Ledwell**

Marketing & Financial

Business Development **Frank Ledwell**

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Photo by Richard Tinnell

News, Events, & Stuff

Buffalo Bayou Regatta Re-Scheduled for Spring 2007

The Buffalo Bayou Partnership has announced that the *Buffalo Bayou Regatta*, Texas' largest canoe and kayak race which was originally scheduled for Saturday, October 21, has been rescheduled for March 24, 2007. JPFreek is set to be an official media sponsor of the event and we encourage all fellow 'freaks' who enjoy canoeing and kayaking to join us at the BBR next spring. If you would like to participate in the event, contact Trudi Smith at tsmith@buffalobayou.org or visit the Buffalo Bayou Partnership website at www.buffalobayou.org for more details.

Houston 's First Annual Off-Road Expo a Huge Success!

Houston's first annual Off-Road Expo, hosted by Advanstar the weekend of November 3-5 at the Reliant Center, was a huge success with over 50 exhibitors and approximately 20,000 plus attendees. JPFreek Publications was the lone media sponsor of the event which catered to off-road and outdoor adventure enthusiasts. Exhibitors included Jeep and off-road truck part / accessory vendors and manufacturers, representatives from several off-highway conservation groups, and plenty of lifted Jeeps and trucks on display. The Off-Road Expo is a three city touring event with the flagship

event held in Pomona, California each year. For more information on an Off-Road Expo event near you in 2007, stay tuned or visit www.offroadexpo.com for more information.

Have an event that you would like fellow 'freaks' to be aware of? Send an email to editor@jpfreek.com with specifics for the event and we'll be sure to include it in a future issue of JPFreek. All news items will also be posted on the JPFreek website after the new year.

Upcoming Adventure Events:

Adventures in Travel Expo: Held in New York, Chicago, Long Beach, and Washington D.C. between January & March 2007.
www.adventureexpo.com/

Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour:
www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture/tour/

Rip Curl Pro Pipeline Masters: Oahu, Hawaii from December 8-20, 2006. www.ripcurl.com/events

Adventure Travel & Sports Show: Held in London, England January 12-14, 2007.
www.adventureshow.co.uk

New Years Day Ride and Grand Opening of Hannibal Rocks: Held in Rockport, IL on January 1, 2007.
www.rorp.com/EventsUpcoming.html

Jeep Terrain Park Challenge: Held in New York and Maine on January 20, 2007. www.jeeptpc.com

O'Reilly Autoparts Autofest: Held in Little Rock, AK January 5-7, 2007.
www.familyevents.com/eventinfo.asp?id=91

Ouray Ice Festival
Ouray, CO • 1/10/07 - 1/14/07
<http://www.ourayicefestival.com>



Sixth Annual Wheelers 4 Wishes Christmas Toy Drive

On December 9, 2006, the sixth annual Wheelers 4 Wishes event will be held at the Pasadena Fairgrounds in Pasadena, TX. The event will benefit the children of Pasadena, as well as surrounding communities, with Christmas gifts and warm wishes this holiday season.

In 2005, seventy-five Jeep rigs were in attendance for this all-day event and over \$1,000 was raised via a winch raffle give away that was presented to the Toy Run committee. The 2006 event is fast approaching and the goal is to break the one hundred

rig participation level. Final preparations are in the works to make this the most successful W4W event thus far. There will also be a 2006 Harley Davidson "Night Train" motorcycle to be raffled with raffle ticket purchases to be used to purchase more toys for the community's needy. Wheelers 4 Wishes is a very important part of the LARGEST contributing group to the Toys For Tots in Southeast Texas.

Wheelers 4 Wishes has been proud to be on the front line of helping needy children and families during Christmas. Over

the past several years, the event has played a huge role in providing a different look at the fine folks who wheel every weekend. Wheelers 4 Wishes will continue to grow its participation in the community because 'IT'S ALL FOR THE KIDS!' If you would like to participate or contribute to this fine cause, please contact Jim McDonnell at 713-305-4347, or visit the following websites for more information.

www.toysfortotstoyrun.com
www.wheelers4wishes.org



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The Future of Fuel, Part Two



In August 2006, JPFreek provided coverage of the Oil + Water Project, a worldwide tour dedicated to alternative energy and biofuels education. The O+WP consists of a two-man tour de force who have combined their passion for outdoor adventure with their concern for the environment, and JPFreek recently caught up with Seth Warren of the O+WP to follow-up on the adventures that he has encountered thus far.

JPF: Seth, the last time we checked in on you guys, you were just getting ready to kick-off the Americas Tour leg of the O+WP. Can you give us a quick update on how it has gone thus far?

O+WP: This is our greatest adventure of all time. Not only have we kayaked and surfed all of the best spots in the Americas, but we have been involved with

educating the public and youth in each country we have visited. This trip is truly an unfolding dream that doesn't seem to end.

JPF: It seems that as you've gone deeper into Central America, biofuels have really caught on as an alternative to petrol. Has this made the O+WP easier to present as a viable means of energy than it was in the States?

O+WP: Every country we have been to, south of the U.S. border, is way behind in regard to the use of alternative energy. In most of these countries, waste vegetable oil is literally poured right down the drain, straight into the rivers and oceans. The lack of education down here makes it very hard for people to break free from the binds of energy dependence. We really focus on promoting alternative energy for the economic and environmental benefits. The majority of people here don't give a damn about the environment. The biggest appeal to the general public is the idea of reducing the price of fuel. No matter what, for most people money is the bottom line, but we have definitely found a lot more enthusiasm in the States about the environmental benefits of biofuels.

JPF: Honduras has shown a significant interest in becoming a more biofuel-friendly country which is certainly a positive thing. However, how will the addition of

African Palm tree farms (used as a source of oil for biofuel) affect the wetlands and forests of Honduras?

O+WP: Great question. Honduras has a very interesting scenario. A long time ago, they over-planted massive African Palm tree plantations to make soap and palm oil for exportation. This resulted in an oversupply, and large quantities were left dormant. Honduras has the perfect environment for the African Palm, and now they have started a pilot project to use all the existing palm seed to produce biodiesel. It is a brand new project, and we found two pumps in the country that were mainly being used for government agencies and public transport. At the present time, they are using only existing African Palm tree plantations for the production of biodiesel, however they have plans to start nation-wide mass production which means expanding the plantations to a great degree. Many of their future plans involve development in wetland areas, which is creating a major controversy with environmentalists and foresters.

JPF: You guys were fortunate enough to be in Nicaragua during the recent presidential elections there. Do you see that country's recent election results as being a success for the future of biofuels in the region?



O+WP: Being in Nicaragua for this landmark election was indeed a very interesting time. Ortega was President nine years ago which resulted in a civil war. Now he has been re-elected and nobody really knows exactly what he plans to do. The people were very enthusiastic about the election, and there were ongoing parties day and night in the streets for a week after the election. It is difficult to say what this will do for biofuels in the region, but I'm guessing that Ortega's political ties with Chavez in Venezuela could mean that they will be getting increasingly cheaper petroleum.

JPF: Seth, I understand that you were recently the unfortunate victim of Malaria in Costa Rica. Having gone through that experience, what would you consider to be worse: Malaria or no more whitewater kayaking on this leg of the tour?

O+WP: I've traveled my fair share, and I have had some pretty bad illnesses including other forms of Malaria in Africa. This was by far the most sick I have ever been in my life, but I don't think that I will be making any deals to give up my biggest passions.

JPF: Regarding whitewater kayaking, how has it compared to kayaking in other areas of the world with regard to difficulty and all-out excitement?

O+WP: Most of our other trips have been threefold: arriving in a consolidated area, paddling the classics, and then going in with a microscope and exploring the paths less traveled. With this trip, we have definitely had our share of adventurous exploration, but you can spend several lifetimes exploring only the rivers that exist in Alaska. The massive area we are traveling, combined with our time constraints, leaves us driving over hundreds of rivers wondering what we just missed out on. We have been focusing on the most difficult classic rivers in each region, and have been very successful in that regard.

JPF: Final Question: Getting back to the O+WP, y'all have been on the road now for nearly nine months! How effective do you feel the tour has been thus far, and how encouraged are you that biofuels will catch-on with the youth you have met throughout North and Central America?

O+WP: With the O+WP, we are accomplishing everything we had set out to do. What we try to show more than anything is the simple concept of thinking outside the box, accomplishing goals and dreams while making a positive impact on the people we encounter. This has been effective in every way imaginable, and our hope is that some of the kids we reach will have the opportunity to come up with some real answers to the problems the world will be facing in the future. The more we travel, the more we learn that biofuels as they exist today will only be a stepping stone to postpone our path to total depletion of crude oil reserves. They are a temporary solution to maintaining the world's post peak-oil energy dependence. Biofuels are definitely catching the mainstream eye, but the answers to the world's energy problems definitely do not exist yet. The next stepping stone is most likely the production of biofuels from algae.

Learn more about the efforts of the O+WP, and track Seth and Tyler's journey by visiting: www.oilandwaterproject.com

The Expedition Trophy is an annual drool fest for those who enjoy vehicle-dependent travel and adventure. Attracting some of the most impressively built Land Rovers, Toyotas, and Jeeps from around the country, the Trophy isn't limited to certain types of vehicles. This is its strongest quality. Participants enjoy a full symposium led by field experts with animal tracking/identification, environmental concerns, emergency medicine/first aid, technical recovery tricks, and more. An off-highway driving competition marks the highlight of the event, which includes a timed sand course and several team building exercises. In these events, competitors work as a team to build a bridge across a gorge, winch a vehicle up a tall obstacle, and test the communication between spotter and driver through an obstacle course.



A Trail Journal from the **EXPEDITION** **TROPHY 2006**



This year's Expedition Trophy took place October 18-22, 2006 in central Arizona. How's this for expedition style? Participants were simply provided with a waypoint and were expected to navigate to the location with five days' notice.

Expeditionportal.com, an online social gathering place for those interested in expedition travel, proves to be one of the fastest growing web communities and is the brainchild of Scott Brady, owner of Expeditions West.

JPFreek was there.

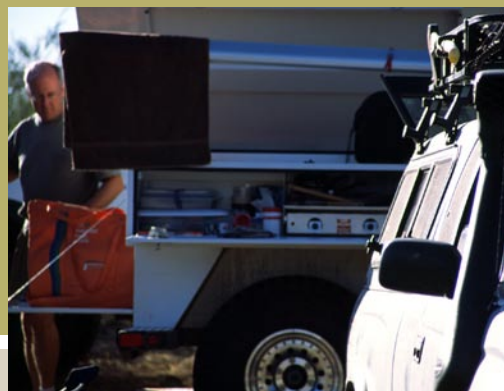
HERE'S HOW THE LAST TWO DAYS OF THE TROPHY WENT FOR JPFREEK CORRESPONDENT MARK STEPHENS:

12:34AM [SATURDAY]

I'm tired. Going to bed but I should put down that we made it out here in record time, in the dark, and by only using one waypoint. Greg and I made a good team. He drove, I navigated. Not bad.

6:37AM

Woke up to a familiar voice saying, "Good morning, Mark" outside my tent. The crunching of the gravel: the familiar voice was walking his dog. That was Jonathan, and I think he was being funny with his wake up call. That's just him. He reminds me of several of my friends. So I guess that makes him one, too.



6:55AM

It looks like something out of The Jetsons. Five or six tents in the air, on top of roof racks with ladders that stretch to the ground and everything. Everyone is pretty chipper. A guy I have never met offered me some bacon, not a strip or two but a whole package. I see Pasquale, and shake his hand. I haven't seen him in months. This time, he's driving an entirely different vehicle – a Land Cruiser FZJ80. He already has the thing tricked out with a new suspension, 35" tires, a water system, roof tent, bumpers, winch, on-board air. ... Some guys wouldn't say having a tweaked leg is a happy thing. But he pointed at his knee and said, "Dude, I was able to just research everything while I was laid up after surgery. I got all the parts for this thing at once, and just hammered down and built it within 2 months."

7:28AM

Can't help it. I've got to check out everyone's rig. How many snorkels are there? 6 or 7? An old FJ40 pulls an Adventure Trailers Horizon. Vince and his Flippac, or "The Condo" as we affectionately call it. There has to be 100 square feet of space in that thing when he has it set up. Only two Jeeps. Justin with his brother, Miles, and Brian with his happy dog, Cherokee. Every piece of aftermarket steel on Brian's Jeep was bent, welded, drilled, and installed by him.

7:58AM

Brooke said she would get the pancakes going, so I'm chatting with the boys. Scott says to be packed up and ready to go by 9:30. He thinks we'll be in Crown King by lunch. The guys told me about the competition on Friday. The sand course was the highlight. The boys got carried away. Brian may have bent an axle tube. Justin got his Jeep and trailer in the air. Someone else I don't know cooked his ring and pinion and is currently on his way home.

8:42AM

Crap. I forgot Brooke was making me some breakfast. I'm a pig, huh? She offers to make breakfast, and I leave her. Then forget. Cold pancakes, and now I definitely have to wash the dishes. At least she's forgiving. But everyone I talked to kept asking, "Did you hear about Justin? He got his Jeep and trailer in the freaking air, man!"



To Anybody who has ever used the saying;
"When pigs fly"...time to pay up.

9:40AM

All 25 vehicles are lined up and ready to hit the trail, and what do I see? Several guys rubbing their eyes and dowsing their hangovers with coffee and bagels.

10:32AM

Isaac Bradshaw's grave. Real cowboys get buried out in the wilderness, but someone wonders if his body is really here. And I'm wondering if we're really going to get to Crown King by lunch time.



Cowboy grave along the trail.

11:15AM

HA! Ed radioed that his transmission shifter is moving around a lot. Jonathan thought it might be a motor mount, so he climbed up on the fender, grabbed the air cleaner, and gave a hefty tug. He made the engine move just a bit, but we found the broken mount. Someone suggested strapping it together with bailing wire and a hose clamp. Worked like a charm.

1:33PM

After lunch, we're still hours away from Crown King.

4:20PM

We can see Lake Pleasant through the saddles of the hills.

5:16PM

Here's a steep and loose hill. This guy coming down the trail in the opposite direction is watching each of our vehicles drive the hill, which requires some good spotting and decisive driving. He's been drinking for

awhile it seems. “Damn!” He yells, spits, and slaps his knee. “Hold my beer while I drive!” Getting the punch line of the joke entirely wrong, and saying it over and over. He thinks he’s being funny, and we’re laughing all right. He opened 2 cans of Bud during the time it took the 25 vehicles to climb the hill.



When Roseanne motored to the top, she rolled down her window, popped her head out, and shouted, “Hey guys, should I put it into four wheel drive now?”

And from the bottom of the hill: “Damn!” Yell, spit, knee-slap. “That was a woman drivin’?”

5:30PM

The light is fading quickly. We’ve got at least an hour to Crown King at this point. It’ll be dark soon.

8:58PM

Shoehorned into camp with dinner cooked and campfire a-going. Kristina suggests we play a game: tell us about your earliest television memory. Vince dated himself by saying Lassie. Someone used Space Ghost. The best I could remember on the spot was I Love Lucy re-runs, but now I’m thinking an earlier memory was Bewitched. Afterwards, Kristina wanted to know more: Tell us about your favorite comfort meal. Three guys insisted that fine sipping tequila was a meal since it provides the most comfort. With that, I joined Pasquale for two servings of “comfort.”

10:12PM

Just another day on the trail, really. Good night.



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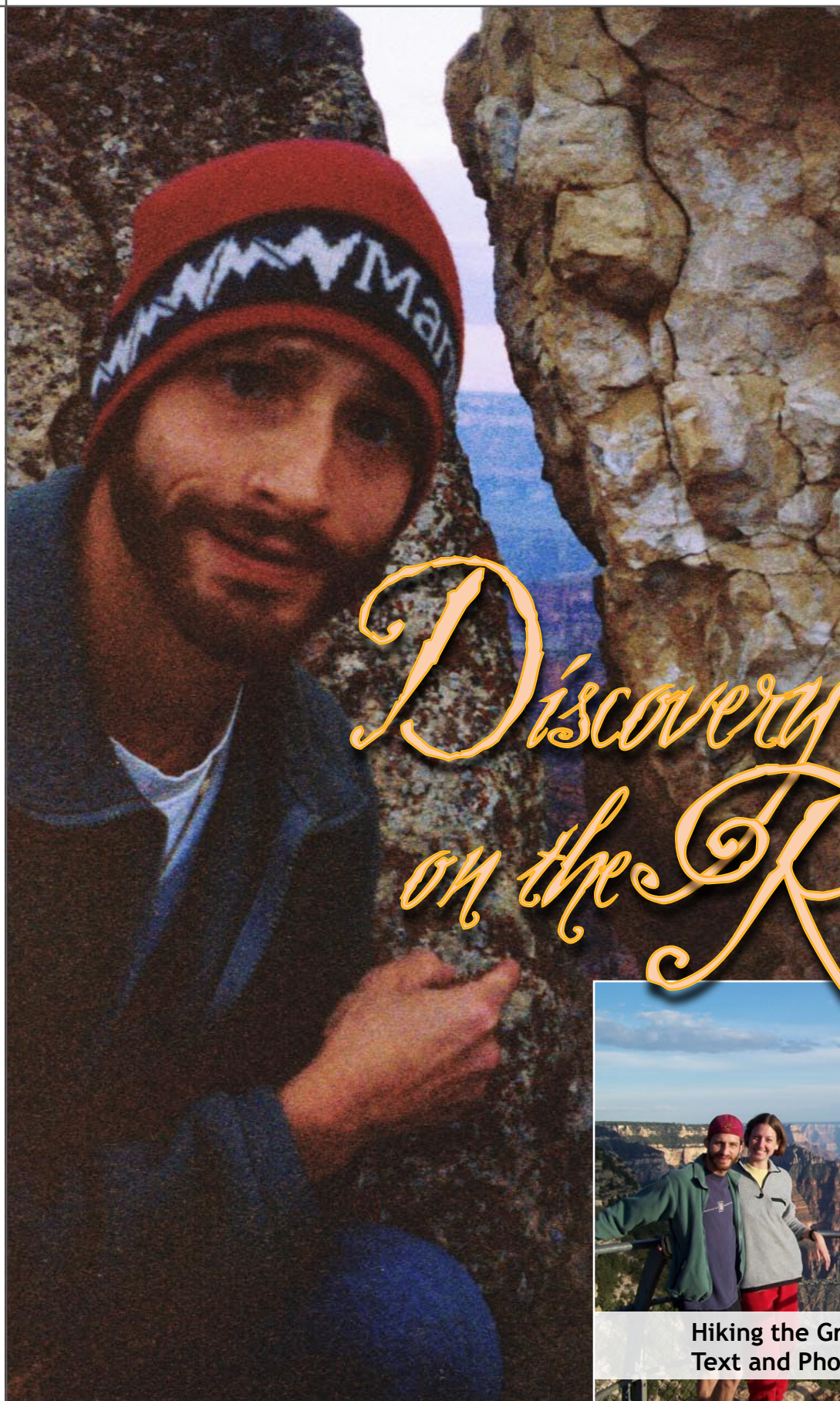
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Find out more on the Arizona Expedition Trophy and Expeditions West by visiting www.expeditionswest.com

Read more of Mark D. Stephens adventures on his website, www.markdstephens.com



Discovery on the Rim

When my wife and I were in Kauai for our Honeymoon last year, we hiked Waimea Canyon and commented on how it compared in size to the Grand Canyon. Becky had never seen the Grand Canyon while I had been to the South Rim when once when I was much younger. So, when my brother was married in Las Vegas recently, my wife and I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to go to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

One thing about Las Vegas is that it annoys me. By the time Monday had arrived, Becky and I were ready to leave 'Sin City' and head for the outdoors. The drive to the



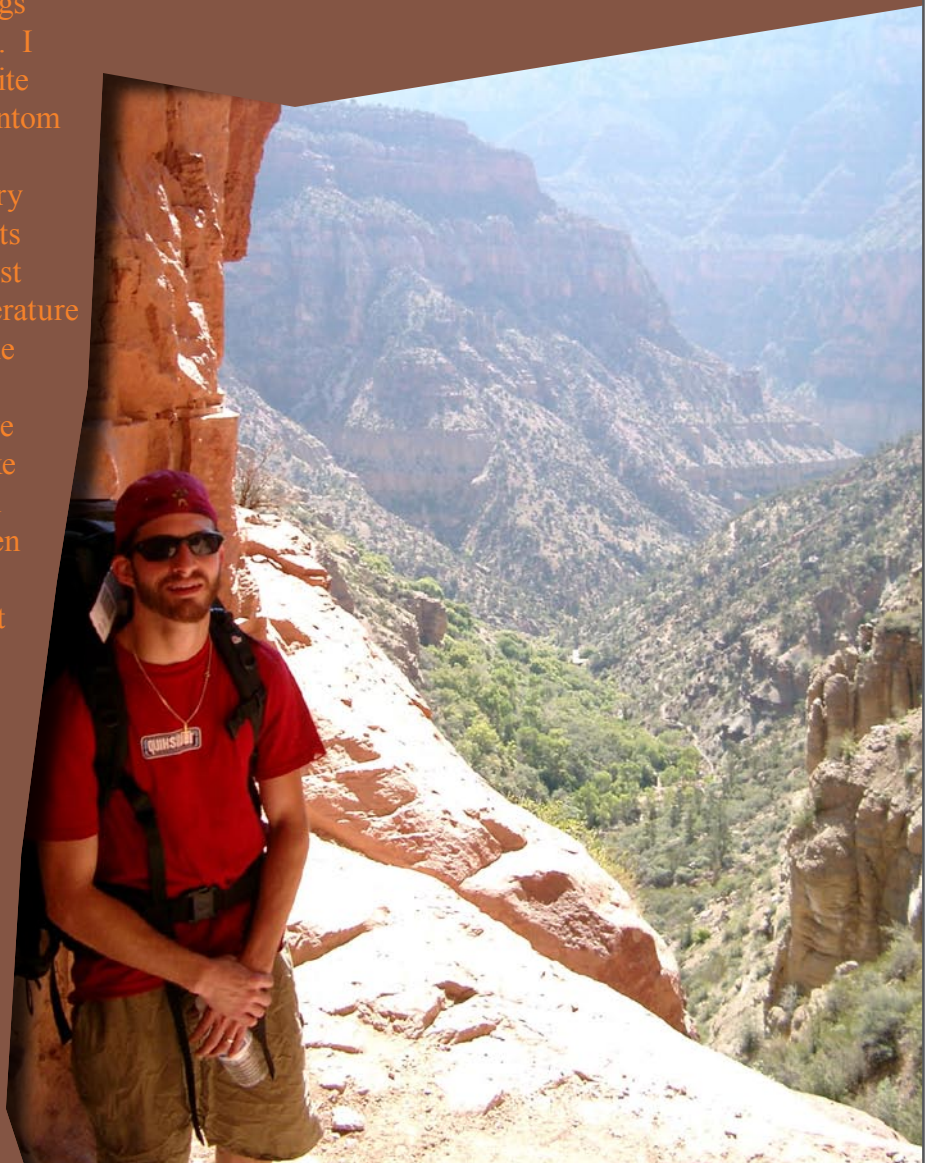
Hiking the Grand Canyon's North Rim
Text and Photos by Marco Santarsiere

Grand Canyon was diverse, following a route through Nevada, Utah, and Arizona. It took approximately five and a half hours to get to the North Rim and along the way, the towns of Hurricane (close to Zion National Park) and Fredonia were a joy to drive through. Once inside the Kaibab National Forest, the drive becomes quite scenic with pine trees and aspen dotting the landscape. Outside the forested area, the park road goes through some wonderful rolling meadows and along the way, we made a stop to allow a herd of cattle to cross the by-way.

We finally arrived at our campsite by 5:30pm but had problems keeping our time straight as we were mixed up between daylight savings time and the states we had driven through. I had tried to reserve a back country campsite three months earlier via fax for either Phantom Creek or Bright Angel Campground but unfortunately, the request for a backcountry site had been denied so I booked two nights at the North Rim Campground, and our last night at the North Rim Lodge. The temperature in Las Vegas had reached the 90s but at the campsite, the temperature had dropped to approximately 37 degrees the first night we were in the canyon. It was great! Our hike was going to be on the North Kaibab Trail leading to the Roaring Springs. It had been recommended that we start the hike early and try not to move during the hottest part of the day. As such, we started at 7am and we packed plenty Gatorade and water (eight bottles apiece) into Becky's backcountry pack since it was all that we had brought with us.

At 0.7 miles we encountered the Coconino Overlook early and were most impressed. However, being as we wanted to avoid the afternoon heat, we kept going as we knew we would see it again on the way back up. There

was a good amount of loose rock on the trail but my Vasque Sundowner hiking boots saved me, even after having rolled my ankle. After going through the Supai Tunnel, we encountered the Redwall Bridge after approximately two hours on the trail and a warming temperature in the low 80s. We had also experienced a 2150 foot elevation drop in 2.6 miles, not too shabby. After the Redwall Bridge, the trail became more exposed especially along the left side. There were some large drops, but the path was wide and well maintained. We then saw the Eye of the Needle and kept going to Roaring Springs. We finally reached Roaring Springs in two and a half hours after descending nearly 3,050 feet. By this time





Regarding rim to rim, Becky and I found out some of the best ways to be able to complete this task. My first mistake in trying to reserve a camp ground at the canyon floor was that I had only tried one time. There are people who make reservations a year or two in advance, and most of them are flexible enough to change schedules and even make cancellations which means that had I tried again for a backcountry site, I probably could have gotten one. Also, our next trip to the North Rim will likely be one where we park our car at the South Rim and take the Shuttle (70 dollars and approximately three

it felt like July in Houston and it showed as I drank one bottle of water on the descent and Becky had already drank three! Being a nurse, Becky warned me to drink even if I did not feel like it so I heeded her advice. We marveled at the water supply for the Canyon's ten million visitors a year and thanked the Roaring Springs in advance for the water we would use.

The hike on the way up was nothing short of brutal. It was hot and steep. Before the Redwall Bridge, there were large slabs of rock in the shade that I swear must have been 60 degrees or less. The sweat from my shirt, coupled with how hot I was, made for a pleasant feeling against the rock. As we lay there, we invited other passersby to share in the "cool rock".

It was one tough hike as we passed the Redwall Bridge and we definitely had to start utilizing our energy storage. It makes a big difference when a heavy, physical effort is towards the end of a hike and I can see why there were signs and warnings everywhere about the perils of trying to make it to the canyon floor and back in one day (28 miles roundtrip). Anyways, we had returned to the Supai Tunnel and snapped some amazing photos. We also sat down and rested at the Coconino Overlook as it was a great view. From there we saw seven to eight layers of different types of rock. It was a memorable hike and I look forward to eventually going from rim to rim.

hours) to the North Rim with our extra set of clothes and camelbacks, then stay the night at the North Rim Lodge. From there, the next day would be spent hiking to Phantom Ranch and then spending the night there. Phantom Ranch has lodges and two dormitories (one for men, one for women). You can get a hot shower, dinner, and a pack lunch for the next days' hike out of the canyon. The next day we would probably spend the night at the South Rim and then go on to Zion, Bryce, Havasu Falls, etc. Phantom Ranch should definitely be booked well ahead of time. Also, rangers usually give some consideration to you when you are physically at the park begging for a spot. They are always there to help, and I have never had an encounter where a ranger wasn't friendly or helpful.





Worn and tired, we went back to our campsite, took a shower, and bought some beer and firewood from the General Store. The General Store has everything you need and while it's a little pricey, it has conveniences such as gas and showers. At 7pm we joined the crowd at the campground amphitheatre to hear a Park Ranger tell stories about coyotes. This program is the longest running of its kind in the U.S. National Park System. Our ranger, named J.H. Sprinkle, told us the type of stories (with great animation) that natives of the canyon would also have told. All of the stories were entertaining and had their well delivered messages, such as treat all animals with respect, or never take back what you have rightfully given to another. It was refreshing and we enjoyed it very much. From there we then downed some more liquid Tylenol (aka beer) and hit the sack after a nice, long, hard, and memorable day.

The next day, a ranger recommended the Widforss Trail. Becky and I made sure to take plenty of water for the hike. It wasn't nearly as strenuous as the North Kaibab Trail, but it skirted through the woods and then along the rim. We enjoyed some breathtaking views and once we passed the mid point marker,

the hike continued on through forest and meadows without the canyon in sight. It was a great hike for the day and once completed, we went to Bright Angel Point (behind the North Rim Lodge) and marveled at gorgeous views at sunset. The trail was crowded and short but well worth the effort, especially before a good meal at the lodge.

From there, we ate dinner at the North Rim Lodge (had to make reservations a few days ahead of time) and enjoyed a flat iron steak and potatoes with Night Owl Merlot, a nice contrast from two straight days of eating Backpacker's Pantry freeze-dried food. The North Rim Lodge is a wonderful piece of architecture that has one of the best views in the world. You can sit on the back porch all day and not get tired of looking at the same thing. The accommodations at the Lodge were nice and we had a restful sleep.

On the way back to Vegas for our flight home, we stopped by Zion National Park and took the scenic shuttle tour though I wish now that we had not done so since it was merely a tease. While at Zion, I discovered that the East Rim could be a fun excursion so we are hoping to coordinate a visit there on our next trip. As for the trip in itself, the North Rim of America's grandest canyon is one that any adventure seeker should someday enjoy.



America's Outback

Text by Frank Ledwell
Photos by Frank Ledwell & Richard Tinnell



The southwest desert of Texas' Big Bend region, often acknowledged as America's Outback, is a true testament to the diversity that is the Texas landscape. The region is home to an abundant array of flora such as cacti, Douglas fir, aspen, madrone, and maple as well as plenty of wildlife including rattlesnakes, peregrine falcons, and reclusive inhabitants of the Chisos range: black bear and mountain lions. The scenery is breathtaking and majestic, and with nearly 900,000 square acres of adventure, one is left wondering why Big Bend National Park is one of the least visited National Parks in the United States. The answer is probably this: driving to Big Bend from Houston took eleven hours, or roughly 70% of the time it took to drive from Houston to Colorado Springs! Once at Big Bend though, you'll realize just how fortunate it is to be in a desert paradise that is open for endless exploration and virtually no human distraction.

The trip started off from Houston en route to San Antonio to pick-up Richard Tinnell, JPFreek's Co-founder. From San Antonio we headed out to Big Bend via Highway 90, a less traveled and more scenic route that traverses along Texas' southern border with Mexico. Along the way, we made it a point to top off the tank at every gas station that we came across, considering that once you pass through Del Rio, gas stations are rare and cell phones are unusable. The irony in this was that we actually ran out of gas approximately 130 miles outside of Del Rio, and only three miles from the next small town. Fortunately, we had a full can of fuel and were back on the road in no time.

Several hours later we arrived at the entrance and we were greeted by a Park Ranger who made several recommendations of four-wheel drive trails that we



Our spare gas came in handy before we ever reached the park. Towns get further apart as you get closer to the park.



It was nice to see that our borders are patrolled with the best equipment available. This patrol jeep was even wearing skid plates and body armour.

would later visit. Our timing was perfect because we arrived at the visitor center right before the office closed, and not too long before the sunset hit the Sierra del Carmen and Santiago range to the east. From there, it was decided that our first night at Big Bend would be spent in a remote area of the park camping along Old Ore Road, a trail that had been highly recommended by the park ranger at the entrance. Little did we know that our adventure was about to commence in a 'freeky' kind of way.

Old Ore Road is mildly rocky and very easy to navigate, even without a four-wheel drive vehicle. The road itself was originally used as a causeway in the early 20th century for transporting ore from the Mexican mines to the railroad station in Marathon, Texas. Along the route, and driving at night to find our



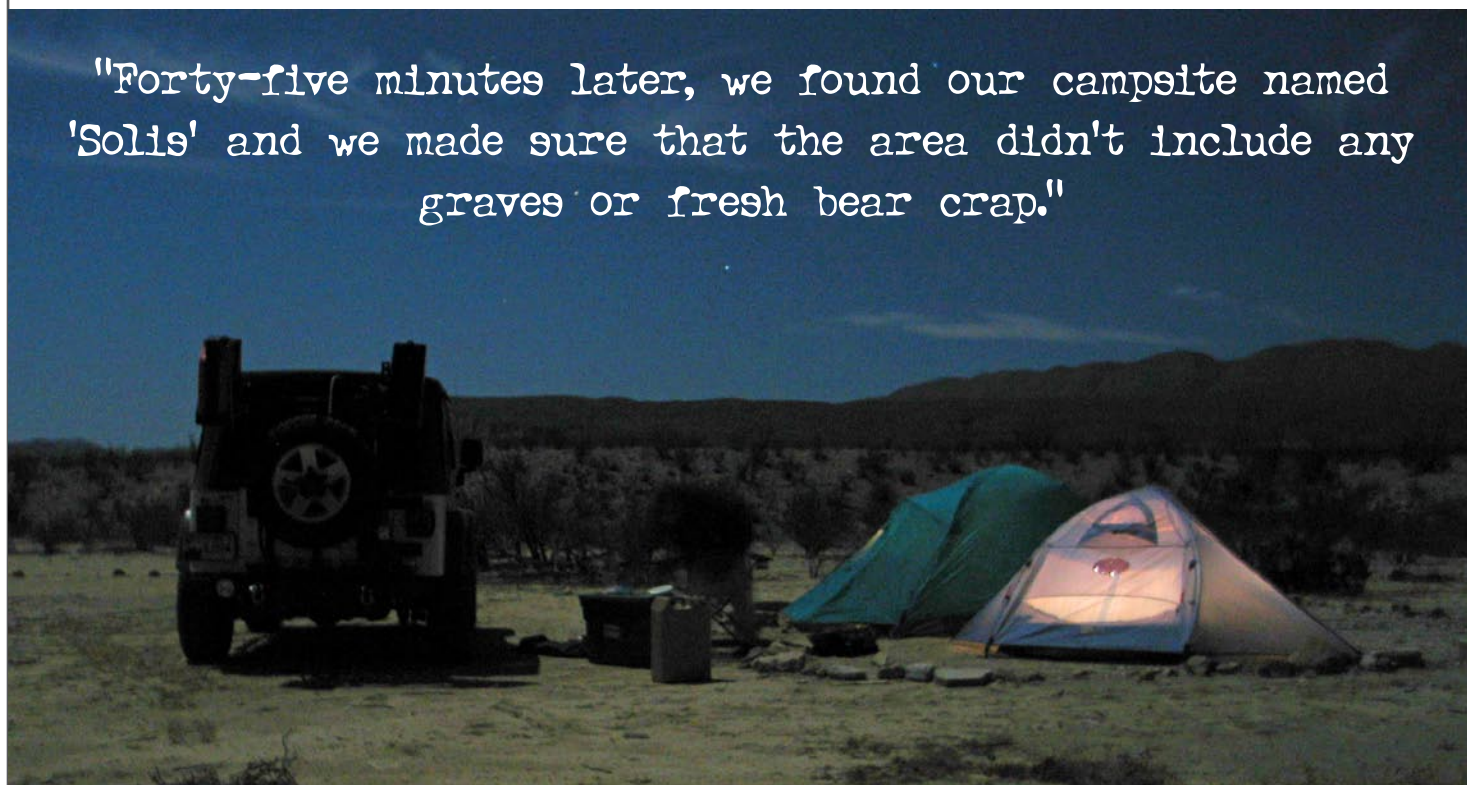
Eight hours later and still in the same state...the adventure has only begun.

campsite, we happened upon a roadside grave. Here's the thing: the gravesite happened to be located in close proximity to our campsite which made camping there a little too spooky. On top of that, the day just happened to be 'Dia de los Muertos' or 'Day of the Dead', an ancient Aztec holiday that celebrates the memory of deceased ancestors and is a national holiday in Mexico. The irony was as thick as mud, so we turned around in search of a new campsite by heading towards River Road, which runs along the Rio Grande border with Mexico. However, our luck continued to be ill-fated. Progressing down River Road, we approached the turn-off for 'Gravel Pit' but awaiting us in the middle of the road was a fresh mound of dung. We made a few light comments about it and then made the turn off towards the campsite at 'Gravel Pit' when, low and behold, another fresh pile of excrement was awaiting us but this time it was literally in the middle of our campsite! If only we had purchased the book at the visitor's center entitled 'Who Pooped in the Park?', then we would have had a reference for determining what had pooped in our campsite. No way were we going to camp where an animal, presumably a black bear, had recently been so we turned around and made a third

attempt at finding a campsite. Forty-five minutes later and nine miles further down River Road, we found our campsite named 'Solis' and we made sure that the area didn't include any gravesites or fresh bear crap. If anything, these experiences only solidified our feeling that we truly were in America's Outback.

The next morning we awoke before sunrise to view the morning light radiating against the Sierra del Carmen and Santiago ranges. The view was magnificent with an array of colors lighting up the horizon. After breakfast, we packed up our gear and loaded up the Jeep for a full-day of four-wheel adventure. From 'Solis' we continued down River Road until we arrived at the Mariscal Mine, a pretty impressive site that featured the ruins of a mercury mine that had seen its days come to an end in the early 1940s. After hiking to the ruins, we hopped in the Jeep and made our way to Glenn Springs Road where the terrain was easy to moderate and the surrounding scenery was nothing short of spectacular. Glenn Springs eventually made its way towards the Black Gap Trail, the only trail in the park that isn't maintained and probably the only trail that requires an infrequent use of four-wheel drive. The Black Gap Trail is certainly the highlight of

"Forty-five minutes later, we found our campsite named 'Solis' and we made sure that the area didn't include any graves or fresh bear crap."





driving trails in the park and was the most enjoyable drive we had while in the outback with the Jeep. After wrapping up a day on the four-wheel trails of the park, we made our way to the Chisos basin to prepare for the second-half of our adventure: backpacking the south rim along the Chisos Mountains. The south rim hike, following the Pinnacles Trail which is the steeper route up the basin wall, is a fairly moderate to strenuous hike that is approximately fourteen miles long and is widely regarded as 'the classic hike of Texas' with its sheer quantity of views. If there's one hike you do in Texas, this should be the one. We had originally planned to leave the trailhead at 1pm to provide ample time to reach our primitive campsite. By 3:45, we were finally getting away from

the trailhead and we knew that there was a high likelihood that we wouldn't make it to our campsite before sunset. We had also been warned, by park rangers and by posted signs, that the Chisos range is black bear and mountain lion country and at this time of year, these animals tend to be pretty active in

Above: Got Quiksilver? This old abandoned mine warns visitors of potential Mercury poisoning. The mine was once a booming business along the border and a source for jobs for early immigrants.

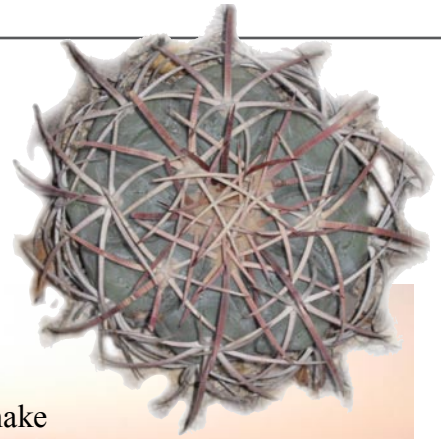
Big Bend offers over 100 miles of off-highway adventure coupled with abundant scenery.



anticipation of the winter season. Lucky us: not only were we looking at the prospect of hiking in the dark but we were also looking at the prospect of becoming some animals' hearty meal. Things weren't looking good but in the end, we had decided that we would be prepared for anything.

As sunset finally arrived, we still had about two miles to go before reaching our campsite so we pulled out our headlamps and tried to make as much noise as possible in an effort to scare off any shadowing predators. Any animal with an inkling desire to make us prey must have been either too scared or

embarrassed for me and Richard as we hummed the theme to 'The Andy Griffith Show', yelled as if we were Mariachi singers, and whistled several elementary school limericks that make me laugh just thinking about them. All of these antics must have worked though because after nearly two hours of wandering in the



"I'd rather be broke down and lost in the wilds of Big Bend, any day, than wake up some morning in a penthouse suite high above the megalomania of Dallas or Houston."

— Edward Abbey

dark, we finally had reached our campsite and plopped ourselves, and our gear, happily on the hard, cold ground. From there, it wasn't long before we had our camp setup and were ready to hit the sack, exhausted from the long hike to 'base camp'.

The next morning, we awoke well before sunrise and found a vista overlooking the Chisos Mountains. The eminent beauty from this vantage point had made the hike well worth it with miles upon miles of outback wilderness stretching as far as the eye can see. In a setting so withdrawn from the hustle and bustle of the big city, it brought to mind the Environmental essayist Edward Abbey's words on Big Bend National Park when he said, "I'd rather be broke down and lost in the wilds of Big Bend, any day, than wake up some morning in a penthouse suite high above the megalomania of Dallas or Houston."

After about thirty minutes of inspiration on the south rim, we headed back to camp and packed our gear for the remaining haul back to the trailhead. Inspired and rejuvenated, we trekked along the Laguna Meadow trail where we ran into a fellow backpacker that we had met two days earlier at the very gas station in Sanderson where I had filled up after having run out of gas. After a cordial conversation, we continued on until we were back at the trailhead where we enjoyed a cigar before loading the Jeep for our return trip back to civilization.

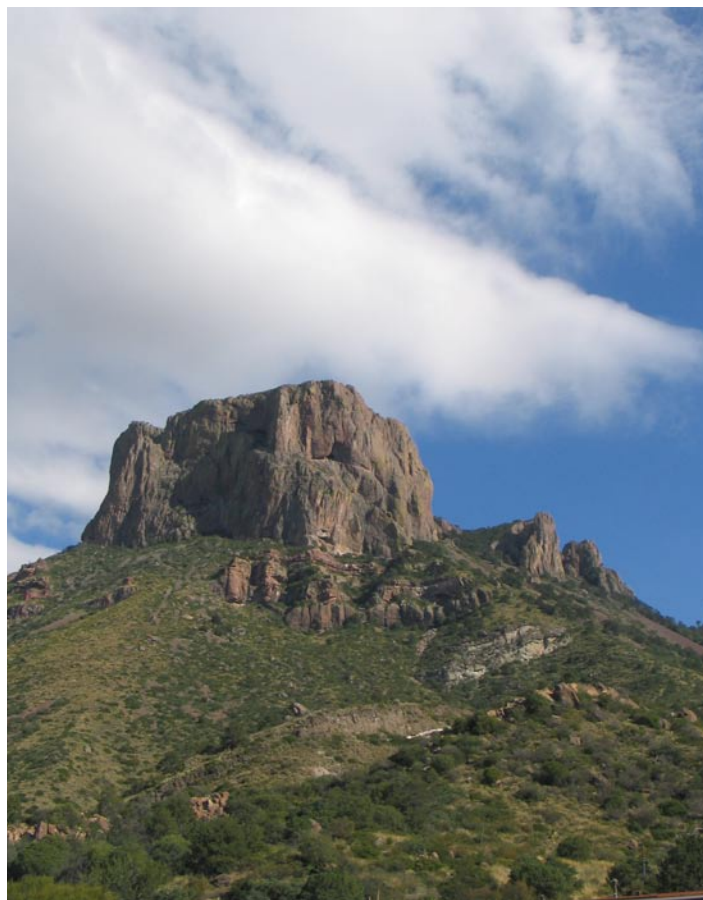
The beauty and splendor of Big Bend is one that can't truly be appreciated until you actually visit the park. It's true that the trek to Big Bend is a long one but half the adventure is just getting there. Once at the park though, you'll understand why its visitors become so enamored by its setting, and you'll realize that America's Outback is one that is very much a reflection of the splendor that makes 'America the Beautiful'.



◀ One of the many indigenous cacti found amongst Big Bend's rocky terrain.



Successful completion of backpacking the south rim means only one thing: celebration...cigar-style!





On Belay

in California's Sierra Nevada

Text and photography by Kevin Mokracek

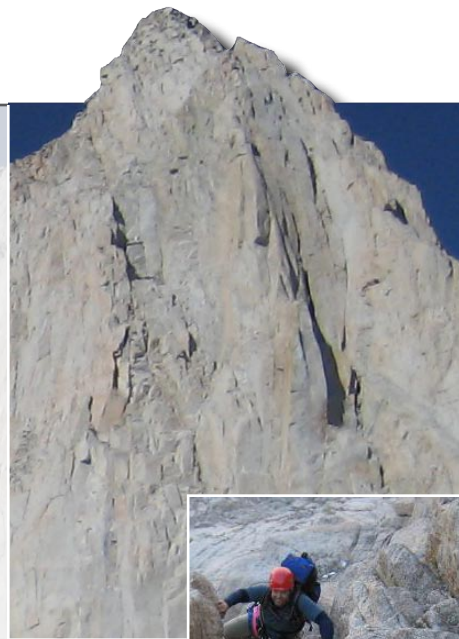
A tug on the rope awoke me from my fitful slumber. We had been on the move for almost twenty-one hours and it was 2:00am, twenty five degrees and windy.

The climb started with a request I had made on my Land Rover club's website forum, www.sclr.org, for a climbing partner to tackle Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in the lower 48 states which stands tall at 14,496 feet. I had climbed Whitney several times over the past twenty years and I had been on this route, The East Buttress, twice before. My usual climbing partners had been lost due to new jobs and parenthood, and I was desperate to do some climbing before the autumn season snow began to fall. I soon received two replies from club members who were excited to give it a go; Doug and Huston. The good part was that I now had climbing partners however the worrisome part was that both of them had ZERO climbing experience. No problem, I thought. I had done this route before, and I had taught the basics of climbing in the past, so how hard could it be?

We met in the town of Lone Pine which sits in the shadow of Mount Whitney. The night before the climb, we discussed over dinner that we would start our hike toward the East Face at 4:00 am, figuring that this would give us plenty of time to hike the five miles to the base of the climb, eat lunch, climb the route, hike down, and be back at Lone Pine in time for dinner. Plenty of time, right?

It was still dark when we started up the trail towards the East Buttress, using headlamps to guide the way. As we ascended, we all began to feel the effects of altitude. At sea level, this would have been a difficult hike but at nearly 12,000 feet, it was downright brutal. The hard work started to pay off though as we watched the sun rise over the Inyo Mountains with the East Face of Whitney radiating with a beautiful alpine glow.

We finally arrived at the base of the East Buttress route at approximately 2:00 pm which was much later than I had originally anticipated. After a quick lesson in rope handling, I began the first pitch (a pitch is a length of rope, in this case approximately two hundred feet) and after ten minutes, I found a nice roomy ledge to set up a belay and to belay Doug and Huston up to my position. Normally, if it takes me ten to fifteen minutes to climb a pitch then it will take ten to fifteen minutes for the second climber to follow the pitch upwards, and another five to ten minutes to sort out our gear and start the process again. Thirty to forty-five minutes is about an average amount of time for this process. Over an hour later, all three of us were finally done with the first of quite a few pitches. Always the optimist, I figured we could still make it to the top by dark. Three pitches later, we watched as the shadow of Mount Whitney disappeared into the darkness of the eastern horizon. The summit was still almost one thousand feet above us so we continued to climb. With our headlamps on, we continued up the wall in complete darkness which caused our progress to slow down even more. Scanning a twenty foot radius of the wall with my headlamp, I searched for the path of least resistance. The temperature had already dropped to approximately twenty-five degrees, making the belay hangover time of nearly an hour after each pitch absolutely miserable. Fatigue also began to affect us but in varying ways. For me, it was falling asleep while sitting on the edge of a 1,500 foot drop. For Doug, it was muscular fatigue and for Huston, it was the non stop questioning of "How much further to go"? We all were on edge, both literally and figuratively.



By 3:30 am, I looked up to see only stars and no rock wall. We had finally made it! After twenty-three hours of tough climbing, we had finally reached the summit. We were cold, tired, hungry, and dehydrated but we were all elated to be standing on the summit and standing on solid ground. After enjoying our triumph, the group headed to a small stone hut on the summit that was built by the Smithsonian Institute in the late 1800s. Once inside, we warmed up a bit and ate some food before the long eleven mile hike back down.

We certainly had not anticipated this trip turning into the epic that it had become though we had all decided that we would not have changed a thing. We had climbed Mount Whitney with the hope of enjoying a grand adventure. What we had endured was much more adventure than we had planned on but the exciting memories will never be forgotten.

Expedition Discussion II:

HAM'in about Radio Communication



Editorial & Photography by Mark D. Stephens

I think you enjoy the game more if you don't know the rules. Anyway, you're on the same wavelength as the referees. - Jonathan Davies

I made a dumb assumption. A friend of a friend agreed to show me a new trail I'd never traveled before, and we kept the group small: Me in my Jeep, Russ in his Rubicon, and our fearless leader in his Sport. The trail wasn't supposed to be incredibly tough, but it did cross through a rocky streambed loaded with some sizeable boulders. 3.0 out of 5, the guide book rated it.

Somewhere along the trail, we had to squeeze between two truck-sized boulders and make a sharp right turn. My narrow 10.5" tires left me with about 2" on both



sides of the Jeep as I passed through. So I picked up my CB mic and called the chief. "Hey Dave, uh, will you give me a quick spot on my passenger side?"



"Hey, Mark" I heard Russ pipe in. "Dave doesn't have a CB."

"You're kidding me right? He's got that decked out Jeep and didn't bother to spend another \$70 for a CB?"

"You're kidding me right? He's got that decked out Jeep and didn't bother to spend another \$70 for a CB?"

"Seriously, he doesn't have one."

"He's your buddy. You get up here and give me a spot then."

So, what did I learn? That's right, not everyone has a radio. This got the JPFreek team thinking: Maybe others need a guide through the world of radios. I called the best guy that I know for the job: Andy Keels, an Electrical Engineer and a serious Jeep 'Freek'.

Our conversation went like this:

JPF: Andy, radios for communication in Jeeps. Why should anyone bother with them?

AK: Well, would you like to get high-centered while you watch your buddies drive away? No way!

JPF: Good point. So, what are the options?

AK: Well, the most popular radio is a standard CB. An economical radio is FRS. And I like HAM radios.

CB RADIOS: KEEPIN' IT RUGGED & SIMPLE)))

JPF: Tell me about those. What should we look for in a CB?

AK: Rugged simplicity. Bigger and fancier radios with lots of knobs and buttons may look great, but they're difficult to mount in a Jeep, especially in a TJ where the dash is already cramped for space. Besides, features like MIC Gain, Clarifiers, Delta Tune, & Single-side-band only become impediments when you're trying to negotiate an off-camber situation for your buddies to spot for you.

JPF: Okay, you lost me. Single-side-band? I just want to crack some jokes and be able to call for a little help if needed.

AK: Go right ahead. All I'm saying is "Keep it simple, stupid" but not cheap. The cheaper radios on the market are often not built well enough to stand up to the dust, moisture, & vibration of being in an off-road vehicle.

Andy's CB SUGGESTIONS:

1. Simple.
Fancy radios aren't needed
2. Rugged.
Get a good radio like Uniden, Cobra, or Radio shack
3. Easy-to-reach mounting location
4. Get a good ground



Radio Shack, Cobra, and Uniden all make mid-grade radios that offer rugged construction, compact size, and simple operation.

JPF: So I can hop onto eBay, search for any of these, and be okay?

AK: Sure! Buy a model with a digital tuner and 40 channels. CB channels 25-40 usually a little quieter than 1-19. You don't want to be the one guy in the group that forces all of your trail mates to listen to Tijuana all day because you couldn't find a CB built after 1980.

JPF: Do you have any other points that you'd like to share?

AK: Definitely. Mount your radio somewhere in your Jeep that will allow you to operate it while you're strapped in place by your seat belt. I once had a situation where a guy on our trail run fell back and got stuck where his nose was up in the air and his seat belt retractor locked up, pinning him in the driver's seat. He sat there for over an hour before we noticed he was missing. The problem was that he had mounted his radio on the passenger side of the Jeep, so he couldn't reach it. Also:

- Consider an external speaker; off-road driving can be noisy
- Make sure both your radio and antenna have very good ground connections; it will make a noticeable difference.
- Wire your radio directly to your battery; ignition and alternator electrical noise are usually present elsewhere in the vehicle's wiring.

JPF: What should I look for in a CB radio antenna?

AK: An antenna is to the radio what your speakers are to your stereo. A nice CB coupled with a poor



antenna installation and you would be better off with a couple juice cans and some string. Mounting an antenna of a Jeep can be a difficult thing. I've seen far too many poor installations. I'd recommend going with one of the commercially available mounting brackets found in one of the Jeep accessory warehouse catalogs. There are several good ones out there such as the behind the tail light or the antenna bracket that doubles as a spare tire bump stop. Unlike most vehicles, a professional looking CB antenna installation will actually add value to a Jeep. Don't be afraid to drill holes if necessary.

1. Magnet mount antennas work well on Cherokees and the Liberty, but not so well on Wranglers. You generally end up routing the antenna cable through a door, which weakens the wire every time you shut the door on it. Also, trees just love magnet mount antennas. I would recommend a magnet mount antenna only for a temporary solution.
2. The 102" whip antenna is going to be the most efficient, however its reliability isn't that great as it is unmanageably large and will hit every tree on the trail. Anything shorter than about 36" and you'll get greater range out of a megaphone. I've found that fiberglass whips in the 42" to 54" length range are the best compromise.

FRS RADIOS: FUN FOR THE FAMILY)))

JPF: What do you think of those small Talk-About style radios?

AK: The short answer is they have their place, but they are a poor choice for expedition communication. These are known as FRS radios. It stands for Family Radio Service. They are small handheld radios that use a special set of frequencies allocated by the FCC, and operate on the UHF radio band and are FM (frequency modulated). This makes them much quieter than CB radios or the old walkie-talkies we use to play with as kids, which operate on the HF band and are AM (amplitude modulated). FRS radios are best suited for use around the campsite or where short-range communication is needed.

JPF: What are the upsides and downsides to FRS?

AK:

Pros:

1. They are cheap to buy and easy to operate.
2. They are small, lightweight, easy to carry, and do not require any type of license to operate.

Cons:

1. They are severely limited in their range due to the output power they are allowed to transmit with.
2. The ability to operate or use a repeater on the FRS band is prohibited to make sure they are used for short-range communication.
3. An FRS radio would do you little to no good if you broke down in the backcountry and needed to call out for help.

HAM ISN'T JUST FOR SANDWICHES)))

JPF: I've recently been introduced to HAM radio. Tell us about that. Is it a viable choice for use in a Jeep?

AK: You bet! Amateur radio, or HAM, is a great choice. In some ways it's the best choice. Amateur Radio has been used for decades for search and rescue and emergency communications during natural disasters. It is ideally suited for maintaining communication in remote areas.

JPF: So, how is amateur radio the best choice?

Andy's HAM RADIO SUGGESTIONS:

1. Simple. Fancy radios aren't needed
2. Rugged. Get a good radio with MIL SPEC-810 rating
3. Get a good ground

AK: Transmitter output is allowed up to 1500 watts, whereas a CB uses 4 watts. Your range is significantly better than a CB or FRS. Yet, there's more. Amateurs are allowed to use Repeaters. This single fact can make the distance a person can talk with amateur VHF/UHF radio virtually unlimited. Example: I have the ability to talk as far away as the International Space Station or Sydney, Australia sitting right

here in the driveway.

JPF: Okay, so you get great range with this type of radio. So, what are the disadvantages to it?

AK: The disadvantages to amateur radio are what you make them to be. It does require a license, which means you have to pass an exam about procedures, FCC rules, and some simple electronics. Another disadvantage is that with these increased privileges comes equipment with far more abilities than other radios. This can be quite overwhelming for the novice who just wants to turn on the power switch, pick up the microphone and talk. For that person, the FRS radio might be better suited.

JPF: Now that we've covered all of this, what would you recommend when it comes to outfitting a Jeep with a ham radio for a multi-day journey?

AK: Easy. The same recommendations I made for the CB radio also apply. Keep it simple, stupid. Radios with lots of knobs and buttons are just not necessary for operation while bouncing down a trail. For example, the radio I use in my YJ has a grand total of three knobs (channel, squelch, volume) and two buttons (power on/off, and TX output power). Also, I think it's important to get a mobile radio with a large heat sink that does not require a cooling fan. The vents on a radio with a cooling fan will just suck in a ton of dust and will eventually choke your radio to death.

JPF: Good points. Is there anything else you think is worth sharking?

AK: Yes. If your Jeep is a daily driver, you can enjoy some conversation with other "hams" while driving home from work. It beats sitting in traffic with nothing to do. But a very important thing to note about range with a ham radio is that you can call for outside help if you're trapped in the boonies.

* * * * *

ABOUT ANDY KEELS:

AK might be his initials, but it also stands for 'All Knowledgeable'.

He has been licensed as an amateur radio operator for 17 years in addition to holding an F.C.C. commercial radio license. Even better, Andy's worked for the Jeep Jamboree USA organization for over 10 years as a trail guide and has organized radio communications in and out of the Appalachian Mountains for the Appalachian Jeep Jamboree. He worked for seven years as Repeater Manager for the Atlanta Radio Club and has installed and maintained VHF & UHF repeaters for the club.

Interested in the products I mentioned?

CB Radios and other communication gear is available through:

www.4x4rockshop.com



Be sure to tell Mark what you think by contact him at mstephens@jpfreek.com



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Want some SWEET gear? Enter the JPFoto Contest!



So you think you've got what it takes to be a true 'freak'? After receiving such a positive response to our first photo contest in issue #3, the JPFreek staff thought it would be a great idea to challenge our readers once more, and this time we've got some super sweet gear to give away! As in the past, the requirements for will be as follows:

- 1) Photo **MUST** include the JPFreek logo, either in the form of a logo and/or masthead decal, or the use of a JPFreek t-shirt, both available at

<http://www.jpfreek.com/gear/index.html>

- 2) Photo **MUST** capture the essence of adventure, whether in the backcountry in your Jeep or hiking in the mountains
- 3) Photo **MUST** be submitted in one of two formats: High-resolution digital file or slide film Submit your entry at myphoto@jpfreek.com or mail slides to:

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- 4) Photo may **NOT** include a digitally inserted version of the JPFreek logo

The Grand Prize winner will receive a **Mountain Hardware Meridian 2 Tent** (valued at \$200), and the Runner-up will receive a **Therm-a-Rest LuxuryCamp self-inflating mattress** (valued at \$100), as well as a **Therm-a-Rest Trekker Lounge Chair** (valued at \$45). Both items were reviewed earlier in this issue, and both prize winners will also have their winning photographs published in the February/March 2007 issue of JPFreek. Contest winners will be chosen by the JPFreek staff.

JPFreek Publications are not obligated to return slide film and are not responsible for damage to entries send through the mail.



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ADVENTURE TRAILERS GAS & WATER CAN HOLDERS

Adventure Trailers' fuel / water can holders were designed under the premise that not all can holders are created equal. Made from heavy duty, 10 gauge galvanized steel and powder coated for durability, these can holders are rugged enough to handle any of the elements that Mother Nature might dish out while on a weekend trip or cross-country excursion. JPFreek tested these can holders while on adventure at Big Bend National Park and boy did they come in handy!



Pros:

What impressed me most with AT's can holder system is the durability and attention to detail by AT's engineers. The use of heavy duty galvanized steel, along with the 10 gauge galvanized steel straps for holding the cans in place, was fabricated in such a way that not only provides functional use with nearly any setup but also provides a very aesthetically pleasing gear item. I can't say how many nice comments I've gotten from fellow Jeepers who have told me that these can holders look super cool, and their durability while out at Big Bend was incomparable as we bumped and jumped over rough terrain all weekend long without a single rattle or movement.

AT designed these can holders knowing that different applications would call for different mounting needs, and those needs were answered with the predrilled holes provided within each can holder. You can mount each can holder separately, according to your setup, or they can be mounted side-by-side. Another nice feature is the connection at the top of each can holder for the strap that works not only as a mechanism for containing each can within the holder but also provides a predrilled hole for use of a padlock to secure the cans in place. Unless someone either attempts to steal the carrier that these can holders are mounted on, or attempts to steal the vehicle itself, these can holders aren't going anywhere. Did I mention that these can holders are rugged enough to take on any elements they encounter? From rough off-highway

trails to windy desert settings, these can holders don't flinch when Mother Nature beckons.

Cons:

It's hard to find anything faulty about AT's can holders but there were a few items to note. First off, each can holder weighs nearly 20 lbs. With a filled 5-gallon can in each holder, you're looking at an excess of 70 lbs per can holder which adds up. Another point to note was with regard to our test vehicle. The cans were mounted to a Garvin EXT series bumper/rack system (reviewed in this issue) which actually required me to drill three new holes on each can holder in order to mount them correctly on the rack. This wasn't a big deal and the can holders worked very well however there was no other 'clear' way to mount them on this setup.

Overall, I can't say enough about the quality that AT put into these can holders. I would recommend them without a question to anyone in need of a durable, rugged, and effective setup for providing fuel / water support on their next adventure. They worked tremendously under extreme driving conditions, were easy to mount, and look cool. What else could you ask?!

For more information on Adventure Trailers products, please visit: www.adventuretrailers.com

RATING:





GARVIN EXT SERIES SWING-AWAY BUMPER/RACK SYSTEM FOR TJ

Garvin's EXT series swing-away bumper/rack system was designed for the casual to extreme off-roader, as well as the adventurer who needs a system that is both durable and rugged enough to carry all the essentials on a weekend trip. The system is matched and serial numbered individually at the factory, and from what we found while on adventure at Big Bend National Park, this system was no let-down.

Pros:

First off, the craftsmanship of this system is unparalleled. The welds on all the square tubing of this setup are meticulous and smooth, coupled with the black powder coating, made for a very aesthetically sound bumper system. The install time was approximately 4.5 hours but very straightforward and once installed, it was obvious that Garvin's commitment to durability wasn't a question.

The bumper system included a 2" x 4" x 3/16" heavy duty bumper with a 2" receiver for towing, clevis mounts for times when you've managed to get yourself stuck in the mud and/or rocks, a hi-lift jack mount, optional swing-away basket, and optional fuel/water can mounts as well as axe/shovel mounts. JPFreek tested the system with the optional swing away basket, hi-lift jack mount, and axe/shovel mounts loaded with approximately 200 lbs worth of gear (including separate fuel/water can holders filled to capacity) along the rugged terrain of Big Bend, and the system felt as if it were capable of handling at least another 50-100 lbs. No squeaks or rattles were heard at all which was a good sign of the system's ruggedness, and items loaded on the swing-away basket were easy to load and unload.

For more information on Garvin Industries products, please visit: www.wildernessracks.com

Cons:

There were a few small items about this setup that could be considered 'cons' but definitely wouldn't keep me from making my recommendation.

First, the stabilizer bars from the swing-away basket to the bumper were designed to go in front of the spare tire, instead of along the sides, which makes for a few extra steps in removing the spare tire from the system. Also, the system doesn't offer a universal adapter for mounting can mounts by other manufacturers other than the optional can mounts offered through Garvin. This isn't a problem if you use the Garvin mounts designed for the system; however it can pose a problem for mounts built by other manufacturers (which will be reviewed separately in this issue). Lastly, the optional swing-away basket is limited in space and smaller than other baskets which might necessitate the use of a roof-rack system if planning an extended trip.

Overall, this system is highly durable and can best be likened to a Swiss-Army knife in that it is truly a multi-use system. Other than the few 'cons' I encountered, I would highly recommend this system for its ruggedness, durability, and ease of use. The Garvin EXT Series swing-away bumper/rack system for TJ Wranglers is a nice setup that will be sure to please, and is a great idea for the Jeep in mind this upcoming Christmas season.

RATING:





THERMAREST CAMP & COMFORT SERIES LUXURYCAMP SELF-INFLATING MATTRESS

Cascade Designs' Thermarest LuxuryCamp mattress was crafted for the avid camper who seeks a comfortable and warm night's sleep while enjoying the great outdoors. This self-inflating mattress is the best of both worlds, combining a luxurious stretch-knit fabric for comfort and 2.5" of thickness for plenty of warmth and easy sleeping. This mattress was just what we needed while camping in the backcountry of Big Bend National Park.

Pros:

Quality and Comfort: I have used Thermarest products for years and I have to say that this particular model was by far the most comfortable and well made mattress pad that I have ever slept on! The mattress' surface is contoured with a velvety-soft material that provides a seamless night's rest, and the quality is unmatched with a urethane foam core. I slept like a baby!

Ease of Use: Basically it's a three-step process. Step one: Unfold the mattress and lay it flat on the ground. Step two: Open the air valve. Vouala! In less than two minutes you have a completely self-inflated mattress pad to crash on. Step three? Enjoy a great night's sleep!

Size Options: Cascade Designs realizes that people come in all shapes and sizes so they have accommodated this by offering their Thermarest products as such: Three sizes are available in the LuxuryCamp model: R (regular) which is what we tested and will accommodate a person 6' tall or less; L (large) which accommodates people up to 6.5' tall or less (and is slightly wider at 25"); and XL (extra large) which is even wider at 30". Weight ranges from 3 lbs 2 oz with the size R mattress to 5 lbs 1 oz for the size XL mattress and all three mattresses inflate to 2.5" in thickness.

For more information on Thermarest products, please visit: www.thermarest.com

Cons:

Price: They don't call this the LuxuryCamp model for nothing. Starting at \$99 retail for the size R mattress and jumping to \$149 retail for the size XL, these mattresses aren't the cheapest on the market but then again, not all mattresses compare to the LuxuryCamp model. If you're on a tighter budget but still want a comfortable and warm mattress that's not quite as thick or plush, consider the Thermarest BaseCamp model.

The only other 'con' to speak of is the lack of a stuff sack with Thermarest mattresses and the LuxuryCamp model was no exception. It's not that big of a deal as you can purchase a stuff sack to accommodate your mattress for \$10.95 retail but still...

Overall Rating: Cascade Designs' Thermarest LuxuryCamp mattress is definitely the most comfortable and warm mattress that I have ever slept on, aside from my bed at home. At 2.5" thick, you'd be amazed how well you can sleep on the mattress' velvety-soft, contoured surface. While a little pricey, Cascade Designs has done an amazing job at providing the highest quality mattresses on the market so if you're looking to enjoy a good night's sleep while enjoying Mother Nature, look no further than the Thermarest LuxuryCamp self-inflating mattress.

RATING:





THERMAREST TREKKER LOUNGE

Cascade Designs' Thermarest Trekker Lounge is a chair sleeve that converts a Thermarest self-inflating mattress into campsite chair. This combination works wonderfully while car camping or in the backcountry, and provides a very comfortable way to relax after a hard day on the hiking trails.

Pros:

Quality and Comfort: The quality of the Trekker Lounge is what we've come to expect from Thermarest. As was the LuxuryCamp self-inflating mattress that we tested, the Trekker Lounge sleeve provided unparaled comfort in a durable and compact design. The material is soft which makes the chair sleeve a nice addition to the self-inflating mattress when used as a bed (includes a built-in fleece pillow sleeve), yet durable enough when the mattress is folded and the sleeve is used to convert into a chair.

Size Options: There are two size options for the Trekker Lounge: 20 and 25. We tested a size 20 which works very well with a regular sized Thermarest LuxuryCamp self-inflating mattress, while size 25 will fit the same mattress in a size large.

Ease of Use: Setup is a snap with the Trekker Lounge. All you do is slip the Trekker Lounge sleeve over the length of your mattress, open the air-valve of your mattress to allow it to self-inflate, fold the mattress into three equal parts, and then strap the connections to make your chair. The sleeve doesn't need to be removed and works well as an extra layer of warmth for your mattress.

* Please note that our first night at Big Bend didn't work quite as easily as I mentioned but this was merely due to the fact that we were tired, we were in the dark, and we were morons (hopefully

at least the first two of these are no longer the case).

Cons:

It's hard to find any 'cons' for the Trekker Lounge since it's a simple item that provides additional benefits to Thermarest self-inflating mattresses. With that said, the only item that we can note is possibly the price. At \$40 retail for size 20 and \$45 for size 25, one might be inclined to just use a camp chair if most of your adventures are car camping based. However, if you plan to use the Trekker Lounge in the backcountry, price may not be an issue.

Overall Rating: Cascade Designs' Thermarest Trekker Lounge is definitely a cool add-on that provides quality, comfort, and multiple uses in a very compact design. Setup is a snap (unless you're on the JPFreek staff), and because the sleeve doesn't have to be removed from your Thermarest self-inflating mattress, you'll never have to worry about misplacing the Trekker Lounge unless you happen to misplace your mattress.

For more information on Thermarest products, please visit: www.thermarest.com

THERMAREST®

RATING:



MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR: MERIDIAN 2 [3 SEASON TENT]

Mountain Hardwear's Meridian 2 tent is a three-season backpacking and camping tent designed for two campers. The lightweight and compact design makes it easy to carry while in the backcountry or while car camping on a weekend trip.



Pros:

Ease of Use: One of the highlights of the trip to Big Bend National Park was the first night setting up camp. I was immediately blown away with the engineering genius of this tent. The first thing I pulled out of the sack was the tent pole system and with that I was practically done. The rugged brass colored poles immediately began snapping into position on their own, and I was ready to move on to the next step without a hitch. The tent connects to the poles with quick clips making the act of setting up camp almost effortless.

Special Features: The tent is well ventilated with mesh window material comprising a majority of its form. There are also two large doorways on either side which provide easy access in and out of the tent from either side. A large vestibule provides plenty of protection when facing inclement weather, and there is plenty of space between the outer edges of the vestibule and the entrances to the tent that provide abundant space for placing shoes and other gear items. Lastly, at under 5 lbs., the Meridian 2 tent is plenty light enough for backpacking or car camping.

Price: If you're in the market for a quality tent at a low price, then you won't be disappointed. This tent is priced very competitively with a retail price of \$199.

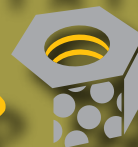
Cons:

Size: If you're over 6 ft tall, be sure to pay attention to the length of this model. At 6'4", I was barely able to fit as my toes and the crown of my head were literally against the edges of the tent. Mountain Hardwear suggests the use of their Light Wedge 2 or Hammerhead 2 model tents as an alternative for those of us that need a little more room.

Overall Rating: Mountain Hardwear's Meridian 2 tent model was the most impressive tent I have used in many years. I would love to have used this tent in warmer weather without the vestibule so that I could enjoy the skylight experience, however it worked very well in the cool climate of Big Bend's Chisos Mountains and has plenty of special features for the price.

For more information on Mountain Hardwear products, please visit: www.mountainhardwear.com

**MOUNTAIN
HARD
WEAR**



RATING:





AUTHENTIC WHEELING ADVENTURES

3 Things All Jeep Enthusiasts Should Do

Editorial by Duane Smith, www.getbent4x4.com

We, the American People, collectively own well over 600 million acres of land, which by some estimates is nearly 40% of the total American land mass. These public lands are managed by:

- The U.S. Forest Service (FS)
- The U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- The U.S. National Park Service (NPS)
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

It is my belief, as well as that of those governmental management agencies, that no singular type of recreation is exclusively appropriate for all public land, but rather that there are many types of valid recreational activities, and that within the vast public land holdings there are at least SOME areas which are appropriate and legal for motorized recreational OHV use. But RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT is a must! It's good for everyone because it specifies which of those areas are appropriate for what kinds of recreational use, minimizing user conflicts and ensuring that no one has their chosen recreational experience "ruined" by anyone else.

As Jeep 4x4 enthusiasts, we should be doing THREE (3) things to improve our public image, especially with the folks we share our trails with:

#1 - SELF-POLICE

- Make sure our image isn't dominated by the few "bad apples" out there. If you see someone doing something that's wrong (for example, driving off the trail), TELL THEM! 9-times-out-of-10, they probably don't even know it's wrong!
- If YOU want to know what's "right" and what's "wrong", consult your handy-dandy TreadLightly! Guidebook, which you should carry in your Jeep. If you don't already have a TreadLightly! guidebook, go to their website and order one (or several, and give them out to your wheelin' buddies and fellow club members); the guidebook is FREE and full of great info.

#2 - MINIMIZE USER CONFLICTS

If you see other non 4x4 users on a trail, be as courteous as humanly possible.

- Give them the right of way.
- If they're on horseback, shut off your engine so you don't scare the horses!

Basically, make sure that the NON-JEEPERS you meet on the trails have a POSITIVE experience dealing with us.

#3 - ADVOCATE FOR OUR RIGHTS

- That means support the organizations that support us.
- If you haven't done so already, join the Blue-Ribbon Coalition. Join TreadLightly. Join United 4WD. They only exist because of the MONEY they get from the membership dues we pay.
- For heaven's sake, JOIN the ARRA (it's free!) and take part in their email letter campaigns; because every letter you send counters a complaint letter that some other upset user or radical Environmentalist sent to try and close our trails.

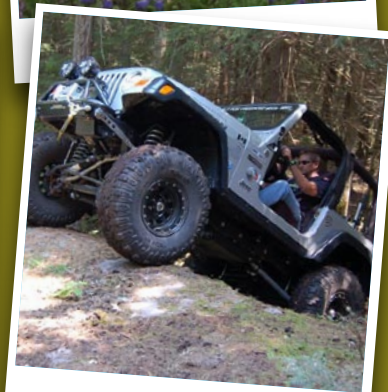
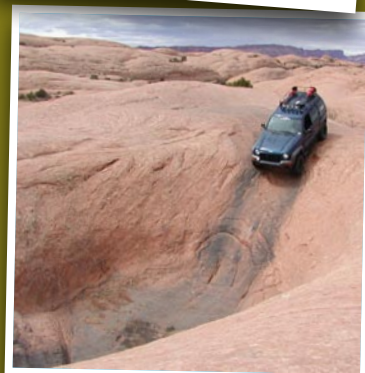
ASSOCIATED LINKS:

Blue-Ribbon Coalition (BRC)
www.sharetrails.org

TreadLightly!
www.treadlightly.org

United Four Wheel Drive Association (UNITED)
www.ufwda.org

Americans for Responsible Recreational Access (ARRA)
www.arra-access.com



Just a few of our fellow
JPFreeks out having fun!

COMING UP IN ISSUE No.6:

- The FREEKSHOW-JPFreek's new "Reader Highlight" section
- Expedition Discussion: Part III
- Sub Zero Camping at 13,000 ft.
- Adventure on the Rubicon Trail
- Winter Gear Reviews
- JPFoto Contest Results



Americans for Responsible Recreational Access

JPFreek Camping Tip #1: Edible Napkins

The big trip is soon approaching and you're in need of an efficient way to clean your cookware, as well as your hands, that doesn't require packing out in a trash bag while on adventure. Well, the folks at JPFreek recently discovered the perfect solution to an important part of camping. The answer? Flour tortillas! Yup, not only do flour tortillas provide an excellent source of carbohydrates while on the trail, they are also easy to pack and make use as an excellent item to wipe your hands and clean used pots and pans. The great thing is that once you've finished wiping your pots, pans, and your hands, no disposal is required as you can eat your napkin and save pack space! So, the next time you're planning a fun weekend getaway on the backcountry trails, think environmentally-friendly; think space saving; think Edible Napkins!

