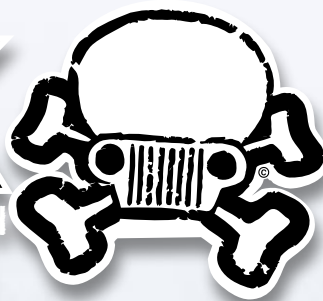


JPFreek

LIFESTYLES OFF THE BEATEN PATH



February / March 2007 • Issue 1 • Volume 2

Expedition Discussions: III

Keys to GPS Navigation

Hooray for Ouray

An Ice Climbers' Haven

Jeepin' in Paradise

Warm Up in Hawaii

Freeeks Amongst the Peaks

Extreme Winter Camping

KJ Trekkin' in KY

Getting Lost with L.O.S.T.

Gear Reviews

Concepts & Conversions

AllThingsJeep.com Contest



Winter Wheelin' with NAXJA

XJ fun in the snow-packed Northwest

From the Editor

In mid-January, I had the opportunity to enjoy a few days in the mountainous white of Colorado's Front Range. For those who haven't been to the mountains during blizzard-like conditions, the experience is not only bone-chilling but also reflective. I know, this may seem like an oxymoron but for me, pushing myself up a mountain face in subzero temperatures provided an awesome opportunity to reflect on my love for the outdoors, and to focus on my surroundings in a way that provided clarity from the stresses of everyday life.

This issue of JPFreek features a number of stories that share the writers' passion and 'clarity', if you will, for outdoor and Jeep adventure. We hope that these stories will provide inspiration to you in seeking out your own adventure, and we'd enjoy hearing all about it.

JPFreek's first issue of 2007 also features the winner of the latest photo contest, in addition to the announcement of a new contest partnership with our friends at All Things JP LLC in which JPFreek Adventure Magazine and Allthingsjeep.com are seeking out the 'Biggest Jeep Freet'. Contest details can be found in this issue, and we would like to encourage ALL of our readers to provide a 1-2 page photo essay on why they are the 'Biggest Jeep Freet'. Your essay could win you a \$500 shopping spree at the All Things Jeep © website.

2007 is sure to be a big year for JPFreek Adventure Magazine. Our upcoming 'Anniversary Issue' will feature new content that is truly geared towards the 'hardcore' Jeep enthusiast with commentary on rock crawling events and technical tips. For

the Jeepster who not only gets a thrill out of playing in their Jeep but also modifying his/her Jeep on their own, these new sections will certainly appeal to you. We also plan to spotlight one reader per month who truly epitomizes what being a 'JPFreet' is in a new section entitled 'The Freet Show'. So, look out for some cool new content in our 'Anniversary' issue due out in April.

If you have any comments and/or suggestions, send them on over to feedback@jpfreek.com. We always enjoy hearing from our readers, and we hope that our magazine will continue to provide adventure inspiration with you as it does for us.

Happy Adventuring!



Frank Ledwell
Editor-in-Chief
JPFreek Adventure Publications, LLC

A winter wonderland provides the serenity of a postcard as Frank prepares for his ascent up the Barr Trail in Colorado



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Photo submission by Matt Adair

News, Events, & Stuff

Easter Jeep Safari:

Moab, UT the week of 3/31 – 4/8. For details visit Red Rock 4 Wheelers @ <http://www.rr4w.com/safari.html> or via email at info@moabhappenings.com.

Jeep Jamboree USA 2007:

Jamboree events are held throughout the continental U.S. this year. Visit <http://www.jeepjamboreeusa.com/> for a Jamboree event near you.

Buffalo Bayou Regatta:

Houston, TX on 3/24. Texas' largest kayak and canoe race held annually on Houston's Buffalo Bayou. For more information, visit <http://www.buffalobayou.org/regattabayou.html>.

Le Tour de Langkawi:

Malaysia from 2/2 – 2/11. One of the largest bicycle races outside of Europe. For more information, visit <http://www.tdl.com.my/>.

Quicksilver Pro Surfing Championship 2007:

Queensland, Australia from 2/27 – 3/11. The first event of this year's men's World Championship Tour. Qualifying stages will take place early in the week with championship

events held afterwards. Visit <http://www.surfgaustalia.com/eventdetail.aspx?eid=14397> for more details.

Night of the Jumps:

Nuremberg Arena in Nuremberg, Germany on 3/11. An action-packed event that is a must for any extreme sport fanatic and motorbike fan. Visit <http://www.ifmxf.com/> for more details.

College Weekend @

Katemcy Rocks 2007:

Katemcy Rocks in Mason, TX the weekend of 2/16 – 2/18. A Jeep-packed weekend with plenty of wheeling for the college and older crowd. Sponsored by Texas Tech University Off-Road Club. For more details, visit <http://www.techoffroad.com/collegeweekend.htm>.

The Outdoors Show:

Birmingham, UK from 3/16 – 3/18. Exhibits on outdoor activities from canoeing to rock climbing. Visit <http://www.theoutdoorsshow.co.uk/> for more information.

Anheuser-Busch Annual:

Spring Snow Games:

Alta, WY from 3/16 – 3/18. Skiing and snowboarding programme of events aimed

towards the whole family. For more details, visit <http://www.whatsonwhen.com/events/event.asp?events/~111750.jml>.

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
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Courtesy of DaimlerChrysler

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We want to know what you think about these new concepts. Send us your feedback on these new concept designs at feedback@jpfreek.com 

Earthroamer JK Expedition Vehicle:

With all the buzz and accolades that the new Jeep JK has received over the past few months, it's no surprise that Earthroamer.com LLC's latest expedition vehicle is stirring up the same response. Although specific details aren't available at this time, JPFreeK Adventure Magazine can tell you that Earthroamer's latest expedition vehicle conversion features the new JK platform and our first response is 'Wow'! The new vehicle will feature heat in the living space, cooking, shower, and a toilet. A built-in tent system will adequately sleep two people and when the tent is deployed, there will be ample stand-up height inside. JPFreeK will keep you posted on further updates.

www.earthroamer.com

Jeep Trailhawk Concept Vehicle:

Detroit, Jan 8, 2007 - The Jeep® Trailhawk concept merges the spectrum of the Jeep brand by combining the core off-road features of the new body-on-frame four-door Jeep Wrangler Unlimited with the refined sophistication of an all-new on-road open-air concept vehicle, providing a unique and fresh expression for Jeep. Built off the new Wrangler platform, the Jeep Trailhawk is a more refined highway cruiser without sacrificing any of Jeep's legendary off-road capabilities. Specs for the Trailhawk concept include:

- 3.0 L Bluetec CRD Diesel engine producing 215 hp (@ 4000 rpm) and 376 lb ft of torque (@ 1600-2800 rpm).
- 4 wheel-drive, 5-speed automatic transmission
- Front/solid axle with 4 bar links, Rear/solid axle with 5 bar links
- 305/45R22 33" tires front and back
- Approach/Depart angle of 27 degrees/33.5 degrees respectively
- 116" wheelbase
- Estimated 3900 lbs curb weight
- 0-60 mph in 9.0 seconds, Standing ¼ mile of 15.7 seconds
- Top speed: 124 mph



Courtesy of DaimlerChrysler

Summit Unlimited 1997 TJ Wrangler:

Summit Unlimited recently unveiled their new Extended Cab Jeep Truck at the 2007 Off-Road Impact Show in Las Vegas, and it is the first turn-key rig of its kind to become available for purchase directly from the company. Summit Unlimited's focus is to enhance the outdoor adventurous family by building upon the legendary Jeep Wrangler, and their latest release offers the following standard equipment:

- Extended Cab - NEW
- Removable Fiber Glass Top Standard or Extended Cab
- 5' 18 Gauge Steel bed with 48" Tailgate post pockets and Vortex Bed Liner
- 6' 18 Gauge Steel bed with 48" Tailgate post pockets and Vortex Bed Liner

Options to add upgrades and accessories are endless, and Summit Unlimited hopes to add a number of companies to their lineup for shock, suspension, tire & wheel packages, as well as interior package options.

To find out more about Summit Unlimited and their products, please visit www.summitunlimited.com.



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KJ Trekkin' in KY

Text by Jason Sattler
Photography by
Madine and Jeff

Overview

The Daniel Boone National Forest has plenty of Forest Service roads that certainly aren't catered towards the 'minivan' crowd. In early November, and again in late December 2006, a group of Jeep KJs (Liberty) from the Liberty Owners Special Team (L.O.S.T.) Jeep club hit the trail for a one day exploratory in this National Forest.

L.O.S.T. (www.lostkjs.com) is an online group of over 3,600 Jeep Liberty owners from around the world. The Midwest regional club represents nearly one hundred KJ owners from Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, and Wisconsin. The online forum allows KJ owners to share information and ideas on everything from stereo equipment evaluations to the pros and cons of different spacer and full suspension lifts, lockers, and tires. The members can also use the forum to organize wheeling events, such as this trip to Livingston, Kentucky.



The L.O.S.T. crew used the forum to vote on a trip date, list who would be in attendance, determine where the caravan would meet prior to the KJ run, and decide on what, and how much, to bring for a potluck lunch. We had started out with six KJs, but medical issues took one of the members out before we even hit the trail.



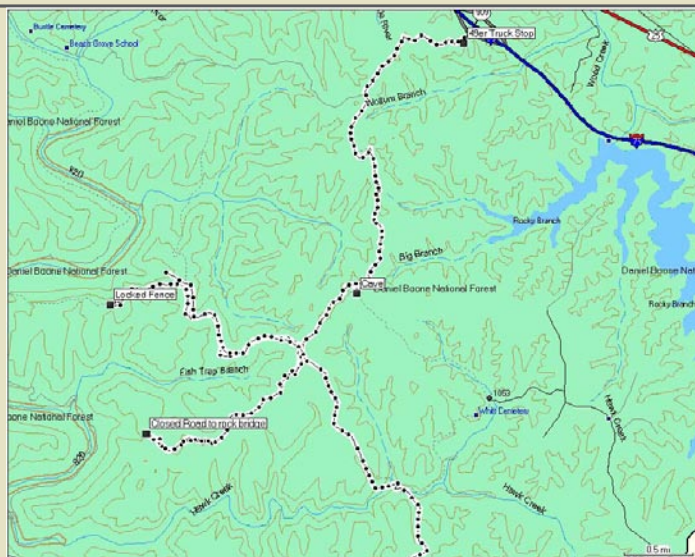
The KJ caravan approaches the entrance to Daniel Boone National Forest in Kentucky

two hundred miles away, we strived to maximize the short winter day. After joining with the caravan of folks from Dayton, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati, we got back on the road and headed down the interstate to our meeting spot – the 49er. The 49er Truck Stop is located on the west side of Interstate 75 at exit; you guessed it – 49, in Southern Kentucky. We aired down our tires, filled up our gas tanks, and purchased plenty of coffee and sodas for the trail. We ended up getting a late start due to some of the locals (one pulling a highly modified CJ in a trailer, the other driving a Bronco with a CJ body) having stopped to chat about the Liberty and the trial. By 9:30 though, we were on our way up the hill.

Route 909, the road at exit 49, ends at the 49er, but at one time it continued on. We took this un-maintained road up the side of the hill until the broken asphalt ended and the sandstone began. On our GPS maps, this road is called the Rockcastle River Forestry Road, and we continued on for less than a mile until we reached the Fallis City Road. Although we were “off-roading”, in reality the entire trail is a valid, established roadway that can be traveled by licensed, street legal vehicles. This is important, as there are no “off-road” trails in the National Forest, and only licensed, street legal vehicles are allowed on these roads.

BEGINNINGS

We awoke at 5am that morning after having packed the KJ the night before. The plan was to head out by 5:30am to make our caravan rendezvous. With the trailhead approximately



STARTING LOCATION

We had only gone about a half a mile down the Rockcastle River Forestry Road before a member of our troupe had to bail on the trip. Henry had just had his front differential replaced, and his front suspension was making a knocking noise. Since he had a lot of driving ahead in order to get back home, he opted to find a local dealer to take a look at the noise rather than chance something severe on the trail. So, the four of us that remained set off down the Fallis City Road, where it got rough.

THE STEPS

The first major obstacle on the road is ‘The Steps’. The Steps are a series of rock ledges that are all between 18 and 48 inches tall. We all took a moderate line over these ledges. Apparently, some track had been entrenched by highly modified vehicles, and some tracks were easy enough for a stock vehicle to traverse through with skid plates. We took our time and spotted each other through these obstacles, and this made for some happy Jeep owners.

The local sandstone flakes apart fairly easily, yet still provides great traction even when wet. Although everyone on this trip had all-terrain or mud-terrain tires, the previous trip had at least one set of stock tires. Those tires did fine on the sandstone, but were less impressive on the occasional mud. The other thing to note on these vehicles is that only one had a rear locker, one had ESP (an electronic LSD that uses the anti-lock break system with an open differential), and



Challenges abound as members of the L.O.S.T. KJ Midwest chapter traverse 'The Steps' at Daniel Boone National Forest.

the other two had open differentials. Although we occasionally had to pile on a bumper to add traction, the open differentials did not prevent these KJs from getting through. In fact, several obstacles presented a balancing act on two alternate tires, rocking back and forth in our Jeeps.

THE CAVE

Coming down off the ridge top, we knew we were getting close to 'The Cave', and lunch. The Cave is large enough to hold several Jeeps, and provides a nice rest and lunch spot prior to 'The Chute'.

The mud at the base of The Cave was thick enough this time that we all had to walk up and carry our lunch gear; however, in dryer conditions, even stock tires can get you all the way up. After a lunch break which was a nice time chance to get to know one another better, it was time to hit the trail once again. The trail to the east from The Cave had not yet been explored by the L.O.S.T. group, although a trip on Presidents Day weekend will correct that oversight. To the west, The Chute loomed in our presence.

THE CHUTE

The Chute is a steep series of off angled stair steps and ledges. It rises rapidly from the valley floor to the top of the ridge. This section can be more challenging than The Steps because the angles are awkward and there is a lack of wide landings in between the steps. One of the worst ledges is at least four feet high, but a slightly angled face makes it possible for a lifted KJ to get up the ledge without getting high centered. Rock rails, if you have them, are certain to be used here.

EXIT

Once over The Chute, we had only one more major obstacle on our way out of the forest. We had all gotten to take turns seeing how much stuffing our fenders could take. As you can see from the GPS track of the trip, we ventured down two side roads. They were rather uneventful and fruitless. We anticipate that the dashed road going southeast from The Cave will have much more in store for us, as it crosses several contour lines, and we're already counting down the days for our next excursion.

For a one day event, this trip had all the excitement and camaraderie you could ask for this side of Moab. By bringing our families, enjoying a potluck lunch, and going for a meal at trails' end, we were able to ensure that everyone enjoyed the Jeep lifestyle today. With plenty of spotting, slick rock, and mud, this has become our favorite spot in the Midwest. The National Forests (and State Forests as well) have a variety of roads that are ideal for jeeping but are rarely considered. So, don't miss out; check into your local State and National Forests for a free and exciting backyard wheeling adventure.



Hooray for Ouray!

A LONG WEEKEND OF ADVENTURE IN THE WORLD FAMOUS OURAY ICE PARK

Text and photography by Jeff Haley

It's that time of year again when the climbing shoes and chalk bag find their place in the gear closet while the crampons and ice tools screech with the sound of a file sharpening their steel points. Yes, winter is finally here and in full glory with plenty of snow and cold temperatures, turning the most glorious of waterfalls into true sculptures of ice that are waiting to be ascended. Every year, the Ouray Ice Park allures climbers from all over the world, as well as those who live just hours away, to climb the hundreds of natural and man-made ice routes within the Uncompahgre Gorge that is located at the south end of town.

Towers of ice, whether natural or man-made, are a main feature for all levels of climbers at Ouray's Ice Park



Ouray is located in the San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado along Highway 550, approximately thirty-five miles south of Montrose and seventy miles north of Durango. Ouray has commonly been referred to as the "Switzerland of America" because of its proximity to the steep mountains that literally rise from the ends of the streets. One glance at a photo and you will soon realize how this comparison was derived, and you will gain a feeling of urgency to experience this amazing place.

The advantage to visiting Ouray during the winter is not only the world-class ice climbing to be had but also the fact that winter is actually the off-season for this small town. Reasons for this include the overwhelming number of tourists who visit this area in the summer looking for mountain meadows filled with wildflowers and excellent camping, fishing, hiking, biking, and Jeepin' on some of the most exciting and dangerous trails in the country. Since the winter is the off-season, lodging accommodations are reasonably priced and discounts are offered if you are an ice climber. You see, the Ouray Ice Park is owned and operated by the locals and the way they keep the park open and maintained is by selling memberships to the park which in turn get you discounted rates for lodging, restaurants, and entrance to the hot springs. Oh, I almost forgot to mention that you can't have ice climbing without natural hot springs. Ouray is also known for one of the largest natural hot spring pools in the state which offers a warm retreat after a long day of being surrounded by frozen water. Many hotels and lodges in Ouray offer package deals that include overnight accommodations, access to the hot springs and even discounted lift tickets to the Telluride Ski Area which is only an hour away. For those who have burned their forearms from climbing, this is a great option to give their legs a chance to suffer in the fun.

At left:
A mixture of
rock and ice
provides ample
challenge
for Jeff as
he makes his
ascent.

At right:
Ice tools adorn
the packed
snow after
a hard day's
climb.



So Many Activities, So Little Time

Now you're probably starting to wonder, with so many attractions, how can it all be done with limited time? Well, for the past three years my wife, several friends, and I have made it a tradition to visit Ouray for a long weekend trip. From our home in Colorado Springs, it's about a five hour drive across the Sawatch Range and the trip usually involves climbing, snowshoeing, and enjoying ourselves in the mountains. Ouray is surrounded by national forest and the Mt. Sneffels Wilderness Area, named for the 14,000' peak Mt. Sneffels which derived its name from the Nordic word meaning "snowfield". Mt. Sneffels is located just south of town and is accessed via the Camp Bird Road which offers many miles of snowshoeing and cross country skiing in addition to beautiful winter scenery.

The main attraction, however, is the Ouray Ice Park which boasts several hundred different ice climbing variations ranging from easy to expert, mixed lead routes, and everything in between. The ice routes are formed by a series of pipes that carry water along the top of the gorge and then spill over the edge through valves that are turned on each evening to keep the ice in excellent shape. There is no admission to the park but contributions are encouraged in order to keep this amazing resource open. The main attraction of the park is the fact that you can climb multiple routes of varying degrees of difficulty all within a day's time without having to face a long approach to a remote and desolate area. Most of the routes have anchor options in the form of trees or anchor bolts and most areas within the park have trails to access the base of the routes. Since the park is situated in the gorge, climbers typically set a rope and rappel or hike to the bottom to access the climb. The park has strict rules regarding the mandatory use of helmets and crampons to access the climbing areas, but it also has many viewing platforms for non-climbers to watch the climbers below. As mentioned earlier, the park is on the south end of town and can be easily accessed by simply walking from your hotel or taking a short drive to the parking area. There are also port-a-lets available at the entrance to the park for your convenience, and with a short walk back to Main Street, you can take as many coffee breaks as you want to at any number of restaurants and coffee shops located in town.

Lynda Haley shows no fear as she places an ice tool into the frigid, rock-solid ice.



Overall, the park is an exciting adventure that accommodates any skill level, from beginners to well experienced professionals who want to test their skills. Every year the park hosts the annual week long Ouray Ice Festival which attracts top climbers from all over the world. The festival is usually held in mid January and has competitions and events throughout the week that are sponsored by leading companies in the industry. Most of these companies offer prize giveaways and free gear demonstrations. Furthermore, many top climbers offer instructional classes and workshops during the week that aid all skill levels.

After a long day in the park, Ouray offers plenty of excellent restaurants that feature affordable meals, as well as fancy establishments for special occasions. Of course, don't forget to save some time for the naturally fed pools of the Ouray Hot Springs to end the evening.

So What Are You Waiting For?

As you can tell, winter has much more to offer than sitting inside to drink hot chocolate by the fire, and with a quick flight or road trip, Ouray can change the meaning of a winter wonderland. Of course, the internet has a wealth of additional information about the area and all the specifics to plan an amazing adventure to the Ouray Ice Park. With so much to see and do in Ouray, the question isn't what can you do but rather what can't you do. So what are you waiting for? Visit Ouray for a winter experience that you'll soon never forget.

Keys to GPS Navigation

Text and photography by Mark D. Stephens

*Rollin' me down the highway
rollin' me down the highway
movin' ahead so life won't pass me by*
-Jim Croce



I've heard this hundreds of times: "I have a GPS but I don't know how to use it." If you're in the same position, perhaps I can help. For running Jeep trails and doing extended trips, GPS navigation can play an integral role to the success and satisfaction of your trip.

Let's get this part out of the way: a GPS does far more than show you where you are and where you've been. Let's also get this out of the way: GPS is short for **G**lobal **P**ositioning **S**ystem. Now on to the good stuff . . .

SAFETY

To a young and spry individual, safety can seem overstated. So I'll try to emphasize the importance of safety and how a GPS helps.

For instance, with GPS mapping software, you can plot your anticipated route before you go and then give it to a contact at home. Should you not return at a specified time, this person will have a good idea where to look for the body (just kidding . . . sort of). I know it's not nearly as adventurous as hopping in the Jeep and not looking back – going wherever the wind might take you without a leash. I'm guilty of doing it, and I'm guilty of breaking down alone, miles from help, in the very situation where I didn't tell anyone where I was going or when I'd return.

It happened to me twice. It sucked...both times.

Here's another good point about your safety: in the event of a breakdown or medical crisis, you can provide specific coordinates to authorities and emergency teams. Let's say you and I are on a trail. Let's also say that we're both driving brand-spanking new JK Rubicons. You know, since we're imagining here. Ten miles from the highway on a rocky trail we exit our JKs to hike to an Indian ruin. You slip, damage your spine – you're in such screaming agony that you simply can't walk. I know it's cruel, but I need to leave you behind to get help. I can't put you on my back and carry you to the brand-spanking new Jeeps because that could be detrimental to your back. Maybe mine too. Even then, with a spine injury, it could be more dangerous to have you bouncing around on the trail for the next 10 miles.

I need to get up, drive out, go to the sheriff's office and get you a helicopter. So I whip out the GPS unit, make a waypoint, and take off like a hero. With this waypoint the cavalry knows exactly where to find you. Pretty slick, huh?

The point here is not that you and I have new JKs or that you'd get hurt on a trip with me but rather that a GPS offers a certain level of advantage in a crisis when location is vital.

CHALLENGE

Now, go back to the route you planned at the beginning. You use this data while on the trip, too. I'll show you about how to plot a route and get it onto your GPS at the end.



Which GPS should I buy?

This is a very common question, but I won't tell you that it depends. Seriously.... I don't think it matters which one you buy – they all do the same thing, more or less. An important thing to decide is how you would like to use the GPS: on hikes, on bike rides, just in the Jeep? You can get units in many sizes; some fit in your pocket, others are up to the size of a book.

One with a big screen is high on my priority list. The unit I currently have is a Garmin GPS MAP 76S. This one is likely unpopular with the masses because it's designed for marine use. It won't navigate by addresses, which many new units will do. However, this is not an important feature to me. The 76S does give me cool features such as, heading, average moving speed, barometric pressure, and current elevation.

Extra Curricular Activities

Are you familiar with geocaching and confluence hunting? Check out these websites:

www.geocaching.com and www.confluence.org. Both are centered on recreational GPS use.

Another scenario: It's getting dark, you're hungry, your team of six brand-spanking new JK Rubicons is only four miles from the highway after a long day on the trail, and you're not going out the same way you came. So on the way to the highway you find that the forest service closed the final road that gets you out as it was damaged in a severe storm. You need to navigate your way to another trail.

Question: Would you like to undertake this task half-cocked, without a map, without a real clue, but armed with just your manly sense of direction? Well, I do admit that has a certain element of challenge of its own . . .

But it's almost dark and you're hungry, so think about your answer. In this circumstance, I'd want to form a solid plan: whip out the maps, verify a route on the GPS, and execute the plan.

Things can be different out there after you've plotted your course – the trails can change, or they may not

exist at all even though the map says they do. It happens. WARN has a clever ad slogan: Go Prepared. They mean, "Buy one of our winches," but in this situation (remember – it's getting dark and you're hungry) a winch won't help. Go prepared to navigate. You've been "warned."

Some trips, though, are all about navigation particularly expedition-style routes. Let's say you've decided you want to travel along the Continental Divide from Albuquerque, New Mexico to the Canadian border. To maintain this route, you're going to need to know something about mapping and route planning. You'll want to sit down to plot a course, inspect the terrain, plan camps and fuel stops, and that sort of thing. If you have a GPS unit to upload this information into, you can have a live tracking system at an arm's reach during the trip. You'll know when you're approaching a crucial fork in the road, or how far your anticipated campsite is, or perhaps the distance to your next reliable gas station.

GPS Mounting

I find this to be a crucial matter, mainly because I've broken several GPS mounts while driving on trails.

My mounting failures ended when I found RAM Mounts out of Washington. They manufacture heavy-duty mounting solutions for GPS units, PDA's, cell phones, laptop computers, and more.

I picked up a double ball joint mount for the 76S and attached it directly to my dashboard with rivets. The ball joints allow me to swing the GPS into any position and lock it down quickly – so I can have the GPS facing the driver or the passenger at any moment. If you're not too keen on putting holes in your dash, RAM was clever enough figure out a superior suction cup that grips your windshield and doesn't let go until you want it to do so.

RAM Mounts are rock solid, fully adjustable, and otherwise just damn nice. For off-highway driving, these are the mounts to use. Check them out: www.ram-mount.com





USING MAPPING SOFTWARE AND YOUR GPS

Understand that GPS usage doesn't start or end in the Jeep. It starts at home with a map or two, and you're not done navigating until you get back home or to your neighborhood bar to tell the stories of the day's adventure.

Here's what I do when plotting a course:

- Open a physical topographical map for general reference – makes it easy to get a broad idea of the area and search for unique features, other roads, nearby towns, etc.
- Open mapping software on the computer (Mapsource and National Geographic Topo) to mark interesting sites, crucial turns, trailhead, etc.
- Use the route tool to create a route that follows the road(s) and points
- Select the detail maps that include and surround the route
- Upload the route, waypoints and maps to the GPS

Now that my GPS has all of this information, I can initiate the navigate function. The GPS will start to calculate distance and ETA to the next waypoint, and any other information I've asked it to gather. As I travel the route, the GPS will notify me with a beep as I approach each waypoint.

Now it's time to roll on down the highway and let the fun begin.



Ask Mark any questions about navigation and GPS use at:

mstephens@jpfreek.com

Find Navigation Gear and Resources at:

www.garmin.com

www.ram-mount.com

www.4x4rockshops.com

Check out Mark's site for more Jeep and adventure content:

www.markdstephens.com

WINTER WHEELIN' WITH THE NORTH AMERICAN XJ ASSOCIATION

Text by Matthew Adair;
Photography by Lonnie
Abronski, Jay Syc, and
Ryan Barrett

Jeeping. It's a love hate relationship. It consumes money and time with the ferocity of a Kansas tornado. It leaves you up to your chin in cold water, buried in mud, replacing broken parts in sub-zero temps, baking on sandstone, and presents a myriad of other unforeseeable perils.

For me, the worst hardship of four-wheeling is the morning of the trip. Almost always it's a Saturday or Sunday morning, and without fail it follows on the heels of some epic adventure the night before. So, on the morning of December 30th, 2006 as my alarm went into its 11th snooze cycle, I promised myself that there would be coffee and a hot shower waiting, if I

could only get up. Apparently I'm a habitual liar, as my water heater had been dead for three days (no hot shower), and I was too late to brew a pot of coffee (see the 11 snooze cycles). Even Starbucks was out of the question because of my tardiness, a rough deal for a native of Seattle.

Luckily, I had the clarity to pack the Jeep the night before. Well, I hope it was clarity, I really couldn't remember. I did make sure to include the most important elements: Lots of warm clothes, food (in the form of MREs), water, assorted survival gear, sleeping bag and pad. Perhaps the most useful for the wheeling aspect is Gore-tex. Gore-tex pants, gaiters, jacket, gloves and whatever else you can make water proof. Staying dry is paramount to enjoying yourself (not to mention



surviving) on one of these expeditions into cold and inclement weather.

Speaking of "the Jeep," I have a 1994 Jeep Cherokee, a model referred to as an "XJ." I could use

up every page of this issue going into the details of how it was built and using what kind of parts, but I'll spare you the details. One of the most important elements is the fact that Cherokees came with solid front and rear axles, something near and dear (if not necessary) to any hard-core four-wheeler's heart. These "straight" axles are one of the big reasons so many people have discovered XJ's as remarkably capable 'wheeling rigs'.

There's even an international club devoted to these unassuming, boxy looking SUVs, of which I am a member. It was with the Northwest chapter of the North American XJ Association (NAXJA) that today's trip was organized. Our little outpost in the top left hand corner of the country is one of the newest chapters of this big club, but we already have great esprit de corps and a core group of us are very involved in wheeling on a regular basis.

I should mention that to many of our group, four wheeling or off-roading is not just about testing our vehicles to the limit or instigating heart stopping adrenaline rushes, fun as they are, but being out in nature and getting to places that would otherwise require a helicopter. Or twenty-seven Sherpas. The scenery and locations we can access are breathtaking, and a vast majority of people in the 4x4 community are devoted to keeping it that way. 'Tread Lightly' is not just a motto at the bottom of truck ads for us; it's our modus operandi.

Back to our intrepid Jeepers, head under a cold shower trying to wake up. After shaking loose the cobwebs and getting on the road, I rendezvoused with a few other club members who live near me. We made our way northeast to the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. Our goal? SNOW!

In the Northwest we have a whole season devoted to "Snow Runs," which can run from September to June. Basically it comes down to this; we are surrounded by mountains and most of our wheeling trails are in said mountains. In the winter those trails become either impassible or that much more challenging. It was with that in mind that 17 four-wheel drive vehicles assembled in Index, Washington, a little town in the North Cascades, to see just how far we could get along a forest service road up to a mountain pass simply called "Jack Pass."

A variety of ORVs including Grand Cherokees, Land Rovers, and Jeeps, trudge through the snow of Washington state's Jack Pass.





Matt enjoys a pit stop before continuing on through the snow and rock.

For the record, 17 is an immense number of rigs for a snow run of this type. Not only was it huge but it was seriously diverse. We had everything from a bone stock Grand Cherokee to a Land Rover Discovery to a Wrangler running Dana 60 axles, 5.38 gears, 38" bias-ply Super Swampers, and every conceivable flavor of XJ in between. Who needs affirmative action?

At the trailhead we all aired our tires down, which we've learned is one of the most important things you can do to improve the effectiveness of tires in snow. It allows them to "float" on top of the snow, rather than cut through it. In five feet of snow, cutting through it means you're stuck. Most of us were running between 5 and 12 psi. Public Safety Announcement: DO NOT DRIVE ON THE STREET THIS WAY.

Around 11:00 a.m. we all made our way up the trail. I was elected to lead the convoy for a number of reasons, chief among them were the size and state of my tires. I had only put about 200 miles on a new set of 34x12.50 Interco TrXus M/Ts, tires that are ideally suited for Northwest snow. The group made good time despite our number, quickly gaining altitude. With every foot we ascended the snow became deeper and deeper. The day began around 1000 feet, and we were gaining consistently the whole time.

For me there's a "re-learning curve" to driving in snow. After months of wheeling on surfaces that basically

require the same techniques, the first snow run of the year can leave you wondering why you're stuck. It took a few miles for me to remember that wheel spin is your enemy in the powder. What I've found works is an adaptation of threshold breaking. When you feel the tires lose traction, letting off the throttle allows the tires to regain their hold.

Of course that's not to say there aren't times when rev-limiter bouncing isn't needed. Another challenge is that the roads we're on are totally snowed over, and it is nearly impossible to tell if your Jeep is in the middle of the road, or too far to either side. In the front, all I had were a pair of faint snow-mobile tracks as my guide. These tracks led me wrong more than a couple times, one time resulting in me winding up in a ditch. A very deep ditch.

I tried backing out a few times, but the nose of the Jeep just kept getting further over. Oh, well; when in doubt, throttle out. The new tires did their job and rather than just clogging with snow and turning into slicks, they cleared out and grabbed and I was able to pull my way out. At about 4900 RPM. And third gear.

Our system worked well, me blazing a trail with progressively lower trucks clearing the way for the vehicles behind them. We made sure to space the vehicles out so those winches were evenly distributed within the group, should disaster strike.

Matt's XJ blazes a trail of powdery snow along the ascent of Jack Pass.



The trip had always been envisioned as a family trip with a long lunch break and time for kids to do some sledding. We stopped around 1:00 p.m. for a few hours to let the sizable car seat contingent stretch their legs and expend some energy, much to their parents' relief. The sleds came out and much giggling ensued. The kids had fun too, whenever they could get the sleds away from their parents.

Those of us single people in the group occupied ourselves with seeing how evil and ice-packed a snowball we could rocket into the back of some unwitting victim's head.

With the short NW winter day well into the latter part of its life we decided to push on. Jack Pass, the destination of our snow run, is something of a unicorn for us as we've never reached it in our previous attempts. We were making such good time and the snow was so ideal we all thought we might be able to make it all the way over the Pass.

That dream was dashed after about a half mile. We came around a bend into a clearing and a wide spot where the sun was reflecting brightly off the snow. All of a sudden my progress was halted. No problem, I

thought, I can do no wrong today. Reverse, try again. Get stuck. Again, and again, not moving more than a few inches forward at a time.

Okay, so finesse wasn't going to work. Time to bring out the horse power. And this is where I got utterly, completely, totally and terminally stuck. No big deal, I'll just have the guy behind me pull me backwards, and we can continue. Out came the tow straps, shackles and shovels.

Ryan, the guy behind me, gave a couple of pulls before he sank into the snow and got utterly, completely, totally and terminally stuck. No problem, Cody, the guy behind Ryan could just pull Ryan backwards. But Cody sank trying to get to Ryan and me. No problem, John, the guy behind Cody, can get him out. Then John got stuck. See a pattern?

With the sun threatening to dip behind the mountains and turn the top layer of the snow to ice, the decision was made to extract the stuck rigs and beat a hasty retreat down the mountain. Extracting ourselves turned out to be easier said than done with 17 rigs on a single lane road. After about 45 minutes with shovels, tow straps and some pushing, we were all pointed downhill again and started to make our way back to civilization.

It was a firsthand reminder how much of a role gravity plays in the snow. Coming up we had all sorts of minor problems and getting stuck, but going down it was almost totally uneventful. At the trailhead, portable air compressors, CO2 tanks, and those with on-board air pulled out hoses and got everyone aired back up to street pressure.

This gave us ample time to look back on the day, laugh with friends about various hi-jinks, near misses and the beautiful weather we were blessed with. Above all, we were all planning the next trip. Where would we go, who can get which days off, who's willing to scout out a new spot? Everyone was enthusiastic about our next adventure.

Okay, so maybe it's not a love-hate relationship. At the end of the day, these kinds of events remind us just how uneven the equation is. Maybe there's not much hate after-all.





Freeks Amongst the Peaks

Text and Photography by Frank Ledwell

The brisk, calm air reveals snow and ice blanketing the surface as far as the eye can see, and whittled layers of rock that have stood the test of time.

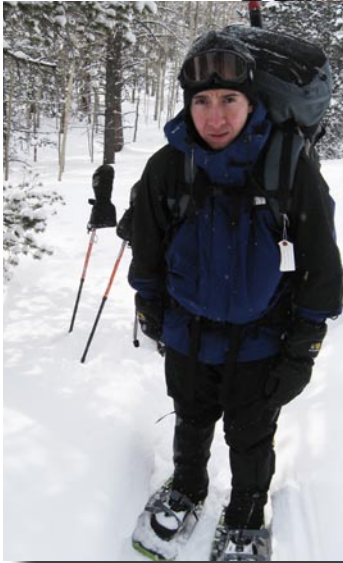
America's Rocky Mountain range is an adventure haven that is home to an immense number of plant and animal wildlife. It is also a 'home' of sorts for those who carry the adventure flame deep inside, yearning for an alternative from the daily grind. The Rocky Mountains have been a center point for adventure-seekers who cherish its breath-taking views, enjoy the excitement of its endless challenge, and connect with its dominance in a very personal way. In short, the Rockies are an inspiration to push one's limits.

When I flew to Colorado in mid-January, my motivations were clear and straightforward: to enjoy a 'home' away from home. I had been planning this trip for months, hoping that once I had arrived, my love for the mountains would excite my soul if only for a few

short days. I arrived in Colorado Springs during one of its coldest times in years; in the end, it was a welcome change from the up-and-down weather I had grown accustomed to back home.

The trip in itself would be an adventure of 'firsts' for me: a winter backpacking ascent of the front range's fourth largest mountain, Pikes Peak, that would test my mettle, as well as the new joy of climbing the ice crags of Helen Hunt Falls outside of Colorado Springs. Armed with loads of cold weather gear, fellow 'Freeks' Ray Schindler and Jeff Haley led the way as we began our ascent up Barr Trail.

Barr Trail leads the way up to the summit of 14,110' Pikes Peak and, at over twenty-six miles, is also one of the longest roundtrip hikes of a 14er in Colorado. Hiking at the peak of winter is much more strenuous than during the summer, primarily because of the additional gear that is required to stay warm and be



Subzero temperatures didn't stop these 'Freeks' from enjoying the serenity of Barr Trail in the Pike National Forest.

safe. Coupled with layer upon layer of snow powder, thick ice, blazing wind, and subzero temperatures, one might be more inclined to skip the adventure and relax near a fireplace with hot cocoa in hand. However, the point was to endure the elements and enjoy the serenity of the Rockies, so instead of fireplace and hot cocoa, we welcomed Mother Nature with arms wide open.

This is the beauty of mountaineering: being able to challenge oneself in a setting that is atypical of the daily grind, as well as to explore one's soul by reflecting on the surrounding grandeur. That, in itself, is what has made me such a 'Freek' for the mountains. As we trudged our way up the peak, from camping at 10,000' amongst the snow-encrusted pine and the open air of Colorado, to ascending the mountain just below tree line, the theme was constant and the joy insurmountable.

One note about camping at elevation during the winter: the obvious forewarning of blizzard temperatures does not do justice until you are bundled in goose down clothing while melting snow in a stove for use as drinking water. Seeing layers of snow that have blanketed a mountain paradise in a postcard does not come close to experiencing a winter wonderland in

person. The brisk, refreshing mountain air is a breath of fresh life, almost as if the mountains have bestowed their own energy upon you.

Another note to comment on is to be weary when a friend tells you that his supper will include a six-year old pouch of freeze-dried 'Wild West Chili'. Fortunately for all of us, our all-season tent featured plenty of air vents that did a nice job of sweeping out the aftermath. Other than the condensate that had collected along the inner walls of our nylon cave, our 'home' away from home was more than adequate and the quiet solitude provided the setting I had sought since my arrival. Further up the trail, another solitary domicile awaited at Barr Camp.

Barr Camp is located at the halfway point of the Pikes Peak ascent. Nestled below tree line, the 'camp' is a cabin that is operated by volunteers who take joy in spending some extended time away from the regular hustle and bustle of city life. It is a nice pit stop en route to the summit to take a breath, enjoy that warm cup of hot cocoa, and rest up before continuing along one's journey. For us though, Barr Camp would be the final stop before our snowy return to the trailhead. Upon our descent, I was appreciative of the inviting weather that Pikes Peak had afforded us in our travels.


Back in the Springs, we recouped before heading out the next morning to Cheyenne Canyon for a relatively easy ascent of Helen Hunt Falls. Again, the jagged ice and color combination of whites and blues within the ice and snow provided me with a fulfilled yearning for the outdoors. While my hands and feet were numbingly cold from the reflected fridity of the ice I had climbed, I would not have traded the 'pain' of having climbed the frozen ice for anything at the time. For me, this was the culmination of an adventure-packed trip that



Ray Schindler exerts all his strength as frigid air reflects off of an ice wall at Helen Hunt Falls.

truly provided a cherished opportunity to enjoy friendship and reflect on the grandeur of creation.


Back home, it soon became apparent to me that my yearning for outdoor adventure will continue to be a lifelong passion. The joy of exploring the abundant natural resources that we are entrusted with, and respecting them to the fullest extent possible, is what makes life so exciting to the outdoorsman. Along with this excitement and freedom, though, comes a sense of responsibility: a responsibility to maintain and cherish our surroundings to the greatest degree possible, as well as to share the adventures that we enjoy with those whom we care most about. The Rockies certainly proved their connection with me in an inspiring way, and as time continues to pass, the marvel of these whittled layers of rock and the snow that blankets their surface, will continue to be a reminder of all that is grand.



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The Biggest Jeep Freek Contest runs from February 1, 2007 through March 15, 2007. Contestants can enter by sending an essay of no more than 1000 words explaining why they qualify as the biggest Jeep fanatic out there. Entries may include photos, graphics, collages, etc.

Full entry details can be found at: <http://www.allthingsjeep.com/jeep-freek-contest.html>.



Jeepin' in Paradise

As if you needed another reason
to visit Hawaii

Text and Photographs by Mario Santarsiere



My wife and I were recently married and as newlyweds, we decided to honeymoon on the glorious islands of Hawaii. We visited three of the islands in the chain: Oahu, Kauai, and Maui. Each island offered us new and exciting experiences and plenty of picturesque scenery; however we still reminisce more about our stay on the island of Kauai.

Kauai is the oldest of the existing islands in the chain and boasts terrific scenery and countless thrilling adventures and activities. The interior of the island is mountainous and fairly inaccessible to humans. The wettest spot on Earth is found in the middle of the island at Mount Wa'ale'ale, which receives over 400 inches of rainfall a year! The northern and eastern parts of the island receive an abundance of rainfall which makes for areas that are very lush and packed with beautiful waterfalls. Many of these falls can be seen in the various Hollywood movies that have been made on the island. In opposite form, the southern and western sides of the island receive low rainfall totals and are considerably arid.

A little about Kauai: Kauai is known as the more adventurous island in the chain and is a favorite for anyone who really appreciates the outdoors. Some activities that may be found on the island include Sea Cave / Catamaran tours of the Napali coastline, plenty of great snorkeling and diving spots, ATV tours to remote areas, hiking, horseback riding, surfing, zip line tours, and an abundance of helicopter tours to choose from. We found that the helicopter tour was the best way to really see all of Kauai because many of the islands' magnificent features are inaccessible by car, boat, or even by foot. The tour was pricey (we toured with Jack Harter Tours who did a fantastic job) but in retrospect, I think you would be hard pressed to find someone who didn't find it to be money well spent. Kauai also has more hiking trails than any of the other islands, many of which are found in Waimea Canyon. For an unparalleled adventure, there are trails that follow along the famous Napali coastline and these trails offer a chance to view the island's beauty up close and personal. A hiker can expect to see jaw-dropping coastline views as well as majestic waterfalls. These trails are mainly for serious

hikers and should not be taken lightly, so be prepared.

While on Kauai it was recommended that we should rent a four-wheel drive vehicle for exploration. The natural choice? A Jeep! I would highly suggest the same to anyone as Kauai has a lot of remote areas

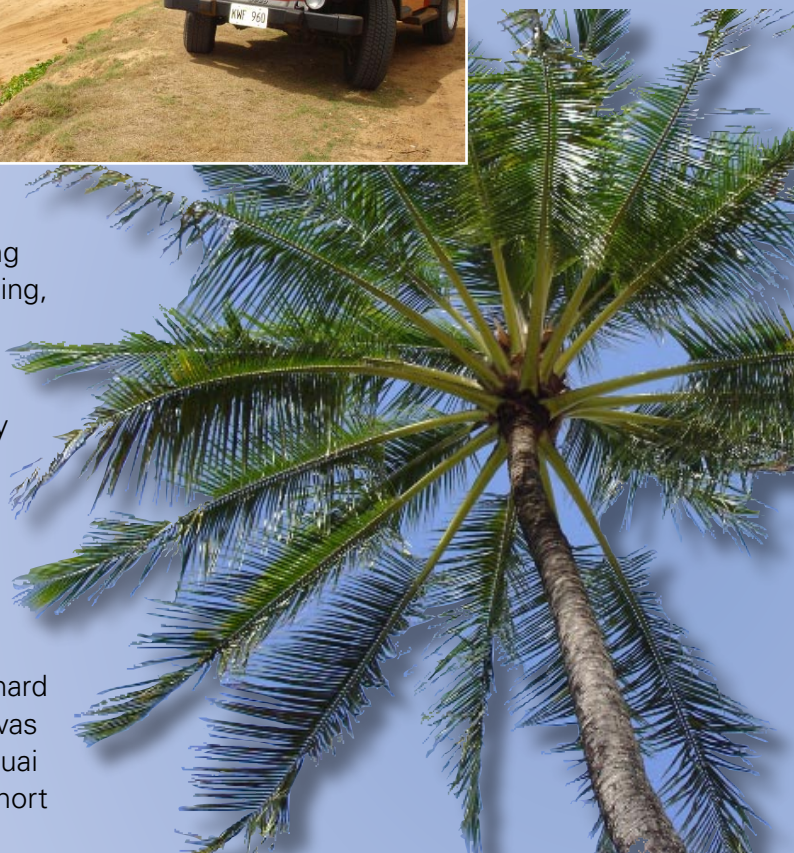


that are only accessible by dirt or sand roads. I would also suggest purchasing a guidebook for the island. We bought 'The Ultimate Kauai Guidebook, Kauai Revealed' because it had been highly recommended by two people we knew who had also visited the island. After using this guidebook, we know why it came highly recommended as it has a wealth of information that helped shape our trip. The authors do a fabulous job of outlining everything on the island from activities to food, lodging, recommended beaches, snorkeling spots, and key waterfalls of interest.

So, after all this we were set. On a beautiful sunny day in paradise, my wife and I hopped into our Jeep and set out for an all day excursion of the western side of Kauai. We stayed in a cottage that was owned and rented out by a local family, and it was situated on the east side of the island right behind the beautiful 'Opaeka Falls. The cottage sat right in the middle of an exotic fruit orchard and gave us a tranquil, secluded atmosphere that was much different than the popular tourist resorts. Kauai is a small island and it can be explored in very short time.

Our first destination was 'Spouting Horn' near the town of Po'ipu. The 'Spouting Horn' is an amazing blowhole and a must see on the island. Waves crash through an opening on the lava shelf that forces ocean water to spray into the air. It is very impressive. After viewing the blowhole for several minutes, we headed back on the road for our next destination, Waimea Canyon. Waimea Canyon is an extraordinary canyon and another 'must see' on the island. Mark Twain once dubbed Waimea Canyon "the Grand Canyon of the Pacific." The canyon is accessible by two roads with the main road leading up from the town of Waimea via a 4,000 foot elevation increase. Expect the temperature at the canyon look-out point to be quite cooler than on other parts of the island. Many of Kauai's hiking trails are scattered throughout the canyon and they offer various levels of hiking from short easy trips to more

experienced longer trips. At the look-out point you will be in awe at the different levels of erosion along the canyon walls as well as



the spectacular waterfalls still shaping the canyon today. Also, expect to come across Kauai's unofficial state bird: the wild chicken. Although the chickens can be found all over the island, the canyon seemed to be a hot bed for them. After spending some time at the look out point, we headed back down the canyon road to the coast for our next adventure. In our guidebook we had read about the area of Polihale and we decided to check it out. Polihale State Park is only accessible via a five mile dirt road that has its fair share of bumps along the way. After cruising with ease in our Jeep over this dirt road, we arrived at the entrance to the beach. The beach is a remarkable sight as it is fifteen miles of uninterrupted sand with marvelous sand dunes. The beach is extremely wide, up to 200-300 feet in most areas. The end of the state park is the end of the road as the Napali coastline begins. This is also the spot that native Hawaiians believe is a jumping off point for their spirits to enter the spirit world. It is a very sacred locale in their culture and it is well protected by the government.

The Polihale State Park beach is one-of-a-kind in that it is hardly visited by tourists, making it easy to drive up and down the wide beach and enjoy its full beauty in peace. Along the way we encountered only a handful of people, all of them were very nice and welcoming to us. However, we noticed that all of them were local people and that they were pleasantly surprised that non-locals had actually found this hidden gem of a beach. The water here is extremely rough due to the high surf and intense rip currents. The water should be avoided on most days unless you are an extremely good swimmer who has experience in the ocean. We saw a number of surfers along the way and they looked to be riding some wicked waves. People can also camp anywhere along this stretch of beach as we saw a few tents scattered here and there. However, at one point it seemed that the only other living creatures around us were the crabs running to and from the ocean edge. The state park offers several amenities such as rest rooms, showers, picnic tables, and a water fountain. The park is fairly remote and visitors should keep this in mind by packing plenty of water and food.

After a wonderful day of exploring the western side of Kauai, it was time for us to head back to our cottage but not before watching a magnificent Hawaiian sunset. As we sat on the beach and took in the entrancing Hawaiian sky, I couldn't help but think of the natural splendor of this island and all of the different aspects of Kauai that truly make it an island paradise.



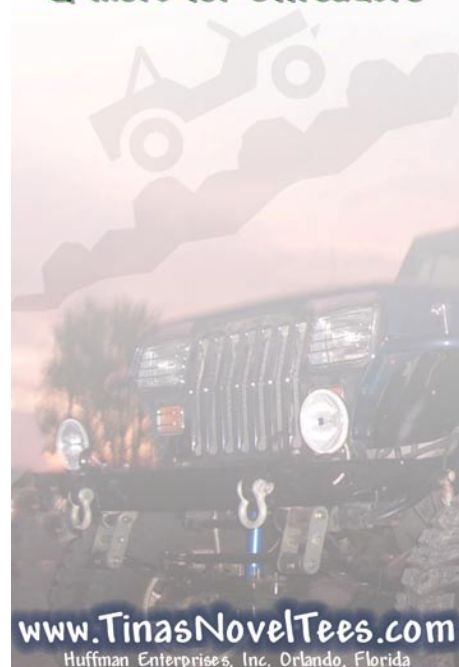
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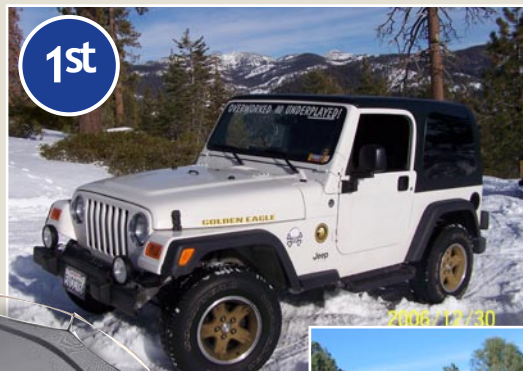
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JPFoto Contest Winners

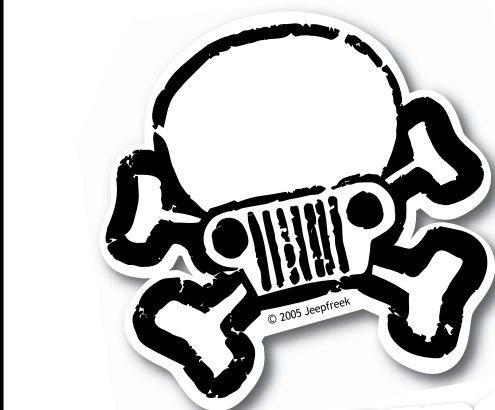
JPFreek Adventure Magazine recently completed its latest photo contest, and we would like to thank each and every one of you for your photo submissions. We received some truly amazing photos but in the end, the winning entry came from Gregory Hansen whose 'Golden Eagle' photo included the JPFreek logo decal. Greg's 'Grand Prize' entry will be rewarded with a Mountain Hardwear Meridian 2 tent, as well as a JPFreek t-shirt.



Our second prize winner, Jason Sattler, will receive a Thermarest Trekker Lounge Chair & Thermarest Luxury Camp mattress pad, as well as a JPFreek t-shirt, for his KJ in KY photo.



Thanks again to our generous vendors and everyone who participated in the JPFreek Photo Contest. Happy Jeepin'!



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Zero Degrees means catchin' some Z's

Mountain Hardware Lamina 0 degree Thermic Micro sleeping Bag

On a recent trip up Barr Trail in the Pike National Forest, fellow 'Freeks' and I set up camp for a long winter's night at about 10,000'. I must say that I am a warm sleeper and I had no concerns about the bag handling the cold. The bag is comprised of a synthetic fill material that acts like goose down but weighs much less. It also comes with an excellent mesh storage sack and a space saving compressible stuff sack for backcountry trips. I was amazed that I was able to compress the 5'10" sleeping bag into a shape the size of a small basketball. Furthermore, at just over 3 lbs., I hardly felt the weight as we hiked the snowy 5.5 miles in to camp. Once at camp, I laid out the bag on my sleeping pad and it immediately regained its loft. The construction is in a standard mummy format with an adjustable hood, draft collar drawstrings, and a Velcro © enclosure to fit snugly around the head. The mid-section of the bag provides enough room for tossing and turning while the foot box is snug enough to reduce dead space for wiggling your toes. The only recommendation that I have is the addition of a hood flap to stuff a jacket in for a pillow. Overall, the bag was a success and I slept soundly except for the few times that I awoke to bump off snow that had collected on the sidewalls of the tent. The temperature rating seemed quite accurate, and I never experienced a chill. I would certainly recommend this bag so when you're out on your next winter campout, remember to fill your gear toolbox with the Lamina 0 bag from Mountain Hardware.

RATING: 

Temp. rating	0 F / -17 C
Insulation	Thermic CF™
Weight	3 lbs, 4 oz / 1500.00 g
Size	SHRT, REG, LONG
Shell fabric	40D Nylon Ripstop



MSRP (Long): \$175.00
MSRP (Reg): \$165.00
MSRP (Shrt): \$155.00

Mountain Hardware Lamina -15 Degree Sleeping Bag

The Lamina -15 degree bag by Mountain Hardware was developed for cold weather expeditions where every degree of warmth is the difference between a comfortable night's sleep or a frigid nightmare. With compressible, lofty Thermic © insulation and an extra-wide mummy cut to allow movement within the bag, I was impressed with the Lamina's warmth-to-weight ratio and it's welded construction. For those who don't know what 'welded construction' is, the idea is this: Most bags are constructed by stitching the outer shell to the inner layer with the loft insulation in between. When this happens, 'cold spots' can form between the stitching and insulation. Mountain Hardware has gone one step above this by 'welding' the layers, rather than stitching them, to reduce the chance of 'cold spots' forming in the bag which ensures that every inch of your body will stay warm. As mentioned in our review of the Lamina 0 degree bag, a built-in stow pocket in the hood for a pillow or stuffing clothes for use as a pillow would have been nice.

Overall, the compressibility of this bag and its warmth-to-weight ratio (the bag weighs 4 lbs 4 oz.), along with an accurate temperature rating, make this an excellent choice for any cold weather excursion. The Lamina -15 degree bag worked wonderfully for us at 10,000 feet, and at \$210 retail for regular length (5'10") and \$225 retail for the long version (6 ft 6in), Mountain Hardware has done a great job at providing a high quality bag at a great value.

RATING: 

Temp. rating	-15 F / -26 C
Insulation	Thermic CF™
Weight	4 lbs, 4 oz / 1930.00 g
Size	REG, LONG
Shell fabric	40D Nylon Ripstop



MSRP (Long): \$225.00
MSRP (Reg): \$210.00

Mountain Hardwear Phantom 0 Sleeping Bag

Mountain Hardwear's Phantom 0 is the perfect sleeping bag for a person looking for a super lightweight yet warm bag. With the temperature forecasted to drop below zero, I was a little hesitant to rely on this bag alone however with only a pack weight of 2 lbs, 10oz, I could afford to carry my normal winter bag along with this one. As it turned out, my extra load was unnecessary. With three guys inside the tent, the temperature stayed well above the zero degree mark (10-20 degrees Fahrenheit). The internal temperature of a four season tent in winter is usually about 10 degrees warmer than the outside temperature.

For a casual weekend hiker or car camper, this bag would be overkill. It costs nearly \$400 (regular length) and it lacks a lot of the features in a heavier bag. The Phantom 0 includes a $\frac{3}{4}$ length zipper that saves weight but limits the venting options which may be important if you tent to sleep warm. The fit is also tight which is great for saving weight but not ideal for someone who moves in their sleep or carries a few extra pounds.

For someone that is a minimalist or counts every ounce though, look no further for than the Phantom 0.

RATING:    

Temp. rating	0 F / -17 C
Insulation	800-fill Down
Weight	2 lbs, 10 oz / 1190.00 g
Size	SHRT, REG, LONG
Shell fabric	Superlight 15D™



MSRP (Long): \$405.00
MSRP (Reg): \$390.00
MSRP (Shrt): \$375.00

MSR Lightning Ascent Snowshoe

Unmatched traction for all conditions makes this snowshoe a JPFreeK favorite!

These snowshoes rock! What else can we say? MSR's lightweight traction design of the Lightning Ascent is a true testament to what a snowshoe should be. The Barr Trail along Pikes Peak in Colorado provided a more than ample testing ground with varied terrains that really put these snowshoes to the test. A teeth-grabbing frame and a very secure, easy to use binding system made these snowshoes feel like a rigid extension of our feet. Plenty of contact points and a well thought out blade design made these snowshoes work very well, even in conditions where the snow went from being very powdery on steep ascents to more compact in the flats. These shoes do it all with two size options (22" and 25" depending on the weight load), two color choices (lime green as tested and orange), and a price very comparable to the competition at \$259 retail. Overall, you can't go wrong with choosing the MSR Lightning Ascent snowshoe when traction matters most.

RATING:     

22" Lightning Ascent
Weight: 3 lbs. 8 oz. (1587 g) per pair
Size: 8 x 22 in. (20 x 56 cm)

25" Lightning Ascent
Weight: 3 lbs. 10 oz. (1655 g) per pair
Size: 8 x 25 in. (20 x 64 cm)



MSR Denali Evo Ascent Snowshoes

Making Tracks with the New MSR Denali Evo Ascent

Hiking five miles into the backcountry can go from fun to exhausting without proper flotation. On a recent trip up Barr Trail in Pike National Forest, I had the pleasure of testing the MSR Denali Evo Ascent in snow that covered the trail several inches below. I was first impressed with the lightweight construction; at 3lbs 13oz, I hardly noticed that they were on my pack during the approach and when we encountered the fresh snow further along the trail, it was a snap to get them on. The binding system utilizes a series of rubber straps that easily adjust to any boot size. Simply slide your foot into the binding and secure the heel strap to position your foot over the crampon; then adjust the upper straps to secure your foot in place. The straps are large enough to negotiate while wearing gloves but not so large that they get in the way while hiking. Plus, with a larger boot hole, you don't have to worry about large boots getting caught on the frame while hiking. The construction features tapered ends that allow great movement, while the steel traction bars keep you secure in any conditions. On the descent, I enjoyed the traction that was comparable to a crampon, and I didn't miss a step while moving across varied terrain of slick hardpack and powdery snow. The Denali Evo Ascent also comes with a 6" adapter on the back to provide extra flotation with heavier. In the end, this was definitely a shoe that is versatile enough for a long winter slog or a relaxed walk through a winter landscape. I would definitely recommend the powder blue color for a stylish addition to your winter gear stash. Great job MSR!



RATING: 

Outdoor Research Celestial Gore-Tex Gaiters

Light, waterproof, compressible. These are just a few of the features that can be found in OR's Celestial Gore-Tex Gaiters. Designed to protect lower legs and feet from water, snow, and ice, these gaiters provide plenty of protection from the elements and are guaranteed to keep you dry with Gore-Tex Paclite © technology in the leg section. Durable Velcro © front closure and cam buckle top closure makes using these gaiters a cinch, and at a mere 6.1 oz, the only thing lighter to pack in your hiking bag might be your matches. Pricing is definitely a bonus at \$38.95 retail, and these gaiters are not only great for use while hiking and backpacking, they are an excellent compliment to your winter Jeepin' needs.

For a quality pair of gaiters, look no further than OR's Celestial Gore-Tex Gaiters. Your legs will thank you for it.

RATING: 



Asolo Summit Mountaineering Boots

Asolo's Summit series mountaineering boots have put Asolo back at the forefront of the mountaineering boot realm.

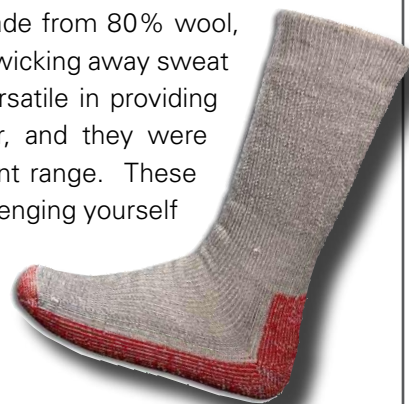
These boots were, simply put, remarkable while out in the field on Pikes Peak as they were extremely comfortable and quite warm, with plenty of Thinsulate © insulation that kept my feet warm even in sub-zero temperatures. Built with an innovative Asoframe © constructed from Carbon-Kevlar, these boots are surprisingly light and stabile compared to other boots in this niche, and a gusseted tongue with toe-to-collar lacing kept these boots in place without any blister-forming rubbage. The soles are low-profile Vibram Lavaredo with a crampon-compatible micro-porous midsole. Due to their rigid design, these are not the type of boots you want to use for winter hiking or shoveling your Jeep out of the snow. However, should your adventures entail glacier ascents and vertical ice climbing, this boot is an excellent choice. Pricing is steep at \$385 retail but then again, this is pretty consistent for mountaineering gear.



RATING: 

Smartwool Mountaineering Socks

As Smartwool states on their packaging, these are 'seriously comfortable socks'. Made from 80% wool, 19% nylon, and 1% elastic, the Smartwool Merino fibers provide incredible efficiency in wicking away sweat and water, as well as maintaining an uncanny ability to control odor. The socks are versatile in providing superior regulation of body temperature by keeping feet plenty warm in the winter, and they were clockwork while we trudged through a significant amount of snow in the Colorado front range. These socks were built with extra heavy cushioning in mind, a feature that is a must when challenging yourself on a winter mountaineering ascent. Color and size options are abundant, and for \$20.95 retail, they may seem pricey but your feet will be thankful that they were wrapped in these babies.



RATING: 

Mountain Hardwear Elevation Glove



The Elevation glove by Mountain Hardwear is a 3-in-1 mountaineering glove that was tested in the bitter cold of Colorado's Pikes Peak National Forest, as well as Helen Hunt Falls outside of Colorado Springs. The glove features Mountain Hardwear's Conduit © waterproofing technology with abrasion resistant palm and Kevlar © reinforced sidewall shell, as well as an inner glove fleece liner. There's no doubt that this glove works well in wet situations, as it was quite nice while building the snow encampment on Pikes Peak and climbing the ice falls at Helen Hunt. However, extreme winter weather would probably suit the mitten version of this glove more comfortably as my fingers tended to get very cold at sub-zero temperatures. Functionality was very good, and there's no doubt that gloves, particularly the Elevation glove, works better than mittens when handling tasks such as knot-cinching, boot-tying, etc. Size options vary from extra small to extra large, and at \$75 retail, it is moderately priced as an entry-level mountaineering / alpine climbing glove. Overall, the Elevation glove works well in the alpine however if warmth is what you require, check out the Elevation Mitten by Mountain Hardwear.

RATING: 

Mountain Hardwear Sub Zero Down Jacket

Whether you're striving for the summit of a nearby peak or relaxing by a cozy campfire, Mountain Hardwear's Sub Zero down jacket is the perfect compliment when faced with bone-chilling winter weather. Filled with 650-fill goose down with Taslan © reinforced abrasion areas on the sleeves and shoulders, this jacket offers unsurpassed warmth-to-weight ratio (weighs in at a mere 1 lbs 11 oz) and awesome compressibility. As Mountain Hardwear puts its: "The fabrics provide options for the hostile cold of the Himalaya and Arctic to the more moderate chill of the lower forty-eight". A zip chest pocket, interior zip pocket, fleece lined hand pockets, adjustable Velcro © cuffs and lower back draw cords make the Sub Zero our choice as an excellent winter jacket. For \$165 retail with numerous size options, this is a jacket that stay's true to Mountain Hardwear's heritage in providing top-notch gear at a competitive price.



RATING: ★★★★★

REI Taku Pants

Whether you're sloshing through a mountain runoff creek or ascending the peaks in full winter, REI's Taku pants will get you to your destination. Constructed of 100% Nylon/Polyester shell fabric, 3 layer waterproof, breathable Elements © laminate, and weighing in at a mere 17 ounces, these pants beg to be used in nearly any weather condition. Coupled with a close-fitting, thermally efficient cut, as well as seam sealing and airy thigh vents, the Taku worked wonderfully while above 10,000 feet in Colorado's front range, and they work equally as well while Jeepin' along that snowy mountain-side. Size options include a 30" inseam and 32" inseam with waist sizes from Small to XX Large, making these pants an option for just about anyone ready to conquer the outdoors. Overall, this is a fine selection for a quality waterproof pant, and for \$159 retail, you won't find a better multi-sport pair of pants out there for the price.

For more details or to purchase REI's Taku pants, visit www.rei.com

RATING: ★★★★★



MSR Superfusion 3 All-Season Tent

I must say that I was a little concerned when I read the forecast for my recent winter camping trip in Pike National Forest. Temperatures were expected in single digits with blizzard like conditions. However, the all-season rating of the MSR Superfusion stood up to the snow and cold temperatures. Weighing in at 11lbs 8oz, this tent isn't exactly the lightest shelter but its added comfort and versatility made this tent a great choice for winter excursions. Setting up the tent was fairly straight forward, given that the dome configuration is pretty self explanatory; three poles are slid through sleeves and then secured by fastening the ends in the loops along the floor. The freestanding construction is great in the snow, plus the added benefit of lightweight stakes secure the shelter against the wind. My favorite aspect of the Superfusion is the large vestibule that allows plenty of room for gear storage and cooking during the inclement weather outside. The interior of the tent allowed for 3 of us to sleep comfortably, and several pockets, including a handy gear loft, accommodated plenty of storage space. In addition, the tent is well ventilated and has several options for windows and regulating moisture build up. We did encounter quite a bit of condensation build-up though I believe that this could have been mitigated by taking advantage of the ventilation options that exist inside. The rain fly kept out the four inches of new snow we received during the night, and the dome construction kept the snow from collecting too much on top. This is a great tent for car camping with a family or a weekend winter camping excursion. After packing up and dismantling the tent, it fit neatly inside the storage bag and compressed to a reasonable size for packing. Great tent and easy to use; this would be my recommendation to others who are looking for a dependable home in the snow.

RATING: 



Capacity:	3 People
Floor + Vestibule Area:	55.5 + 12 sq. ft./5.1 + 1.1 sq. m
Interior Peak Height:	49 in./124 cm
Minimum Weight:	10 lbs. 6 oz./4.6 kg
Packaged Weight:	11 lbs. 8 oz./5.2 kg

Thanks to our generous vendors who provided their products for these reviews.

**MOUNTAIN
HARD
WEAR** 





Just a few of our fellow
JPFreeks out having fun!

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