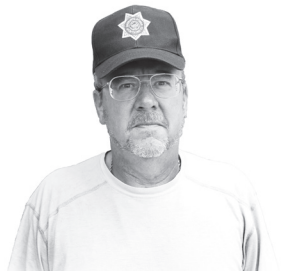


Cold Camping



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay



This is not exactly what I consider a fun camping trip, even with the heated truck camper. I choose to wait until spring. (Courtesy photo/Mark Rackay)

Along about January, when the honk of wild geese is in the air and the firewood pile is getting a little low, an outdoor person's mind begins to start thinking about camping and spending time in the great outdoors. When you feel that way, step outside and have your significant other, or insignificant other for that matter, shovel copious amounts of snow down your back, because that is what it feels like to camp in the winter.

I'm not talking about hooking up the fifth wheel and heading south for a few weeks. That is not cold camping. In the RV, you simply crank up the thermostat, mix an adult beverage, and curl up on the sofa in front of the big screen TV. I mean real, honest to goodness hard camping on the ground, sleeping in a tent, and huddling inches away from a campfire for warmth.

My first experience in winter camping was over a Christmas break from school. A handful of us kids packed up what food we could swipe from home, our tents, sleeping

bags, 22 rifles, and all of our winter clothes.

We arrived at our campsite an hour before dark. The tents were pitched, and a campfire was started. Just about the time we thought all was right with the world, snow and wind began and the fun ended. We spent the longest, coldest, most miserable night outdoors ever imagined. We awoke to a foot of snow and it was still falling.

Building a campfire was impossible, we had no cookstove, so we feasted on dry oatmeal and frozen pop tarts. We would have packed up and headed home, but the snow was blinding. At the end, my grandfather came and got us early because of my grandmothers nagging him to check on us. We were cold, wet, tired and hungry, and a little bit smarter, deciding right then and there to be a warm weather camper.

Winter camping is a great way to test your

metal. You must be a hardy soul, ready to rise to the occasion. Camping in the cold and snow for days on end, is not only a waste of time, it's no fun, and serves no real useful purpose. Sure, there is all that look how tough I am stuff, but personally, I will wait until the spring rolls around. If, however, you feel like you must, consider a few things to make camp somewhat survivable.

Choose your campsite wisely, and not with the summer camping mindset. Plan for a constant campfire. You will want a very large supply of dry firewood nearby. Avoid low spots as colder air gathers there. I like to be among the spruce trees to help keep the wind away from my camp. The best campsite is probably inside a large, heated building, but it may be difficult to drive the tent stakes through the concrete floors.

Plan all your meals around something hot.

Hot soups, hot drinks, and hot meals are the key. Ice cream, cold sandwiches, and cold fruit or salads need to stay home. Putting cold food into a cold body just doesn't make much sense. Again, this shows the importance of the campfire.

Sleeping on the cold ground is never really a pleasant experience. On my first winter campout, we threw pine boughs under the tent floor. This provided a small and almost useless layer of insulation between our sleeping bags and the cold ground. We also learned that laying on top of all those branches is not particularly soft and inviting.

In later years I tried an air mattress but can't give you a favorable review of that either. The blow-up mattress provided no particular insulation either. I finally discovered an ensolite pad. You can purchase a military surplus ensolite mattress pad for

around 25 bucks. Look for one that is surplus from an army that is used to cold weather, like Siberia or Russia. The pad can be a hassle to carry around, but it is worth its weight in gold come nighttime.

Choose your sleeping bag wisely. This is the time for one of those arctic type mummy bags. Yes, they are heavy, cumbersome, and smell like old wet chicken feathers, but they are warm. The tiny little specialty sleeping bags that fold up the size of a pair of socks should be left home for the kids when they have a sleepover.

We bought one of those portable propane heaters to use in the tent. It worked really well in taking the chill off, but you have to keep flaps of the tent open to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. The flow of cold air sort of defeats everything you tried to accomplish with the heater. Besides, I couldn't sleep with the fear of suffocating anyway.

Lastly, if you feel like you really must go on that winter camping trip, consider some type of religious act before you go. You might make some kind of sacrificial offering to Boreas, the Greek God of the cold north wind and the bringer of winter and snow. He might take a few bucks to grant you an unseasonably warm and dry weekend, but I wouldn't count on it.

My wife went on a number of near winter campouts with me in our younger years. She was in attendance on several late season elk and deer hunts that sure were cold and snowy. We both used ensolite pads by then, but they were not to her liking. She said she prefers something much wider and heftier between her and the cold ground, something like several floors of a 5-Star Caribbean hotel with a balcony overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. I can't really say I disagree.

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Rider safety is a top priority at Telluride Ski Resort

Trail Safety team educates more than 75,000 riders per season

By MIA RUPANI
TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET

You might have seen them on the mountain, wearing bright orange jackets emblazoned with "Trail Safety," positioned at slope intersections warning down speeding skiers.

They are members of Telluride Ski Resort's (Telski) Trail Safety team, and they're committed to creating a safer mountain experience for everyone, regardless of age or experience.

According to the National Ski Areas Association, there are an average of 44 serious injuries per year related to skiing and snowboarding, including paralysis and serious head injury.

Trent Phillips was recently appointed as the director of Trail Safety for Telski. He describes himself as being passionate about ensuring that all skiers and snowboarders

have an enjoyable and safe time while on the mountain.

"This initiative started long before me, and it is something that all resorts have," he told the Daily Planet on Tuesday. "It's usually considered part of ski patrol, but (Telski principal owner) Chuck (Horning) split it out where it's its own department because he feels so strongly about it."

Phillips oversees the Trail Safety program and its initiatives, which include the new "Sunday Safety Tips" video series published weekly on the mountain's social media. The videos cover topics such as reckless skiing, closed terrain, navigating chicanes, slow zones and more.

"It (the video campaign) targets any and every skier throughout Telluride, as well as other communities," Phillips said. "Skiing is inherently a dangerous

sport, and we all know that. We can't prevent every accident, but we can have a presence on the mountain to remind folks to slow down."

Horning said Phillips' background in the insurance industry gives him a "unique understanding" of the importance of reducing reckless activity.

"Safety is our top priority at Telski, so Trent will be focused on educating and communicating with our skiers," Horning said in a statement.

The Trail Safety team consists of 35 members who monitor the mountain every day to identify recklessness and any potential hazards. Phillips said on any given day, there are 14 Trail Safety members on the mountain, starting in the morning before the resort opens.

"We go out every morning and place signage," he said. "We also strategically place ourselves through-

out the mountain in spots where collisions might occur and where speed might be overexerted."

If an accident does happen, they're on hand to assist ski patrol and help with traffic mitigation. If one of the team members spots someone who is being unsafe, they will pull them aside for an educational chat. They also ride the lifts about 15 times per day, striking up conversations with riders.

"We take it (skier safety) seriously because it can be deadly," Phillips said. "If you're in an area that's roped off, you're not only putting yourself at danger, but others. There's a reason we have speed limits when driving a car, and slow zones on the mountain are there to protect others."

Phillips said it's important for people to understand that the Trail Safety team is not there to penalize them.



According to the National Ski Areas Association, there are an average of 44 serious injuries per year related to skiing and snowboarding, including paralysis and serious head injury. Telluride Ski Resort's Trail Safety team works to create a safer mountain experience for everyone, regardless of age or experience. (Photo/Jason Hatfield)

"We are not out there to pull passes," he said. "We're not there to be party poopers. We are there to make sure the mountain is safe and enjoyable to all kinds of riders, from experts to beginners."

Phillips estimates that the team spreads the safety message to roughly 630 riders per day, totaling more than 75,000 riders in a single season.

"Reducing accidents on the mountain is a collab-

orative effort," he added. "We can't be everywhere at once, so we urge guests and locals to play an active role in maintaining safety by reporting reckless behavior to the safety hotline at 970-728-7569."

The "Sunday Safety Tips" videos can be viewed online at Telluride Ski Resort's Facebook and Instagram pages.

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