

June, 2010

Claw Tappan Backpack

The Sierra Nevada, the "snowy range", is giving us some challenges with all this snow, but challenges we joyfully accept. It is through those challenges we grow, and what wonderful memories we will have of our time together. For you all - the challenge of beginning to backpack. For me - the challenge of keeping you all happy and well fed. One week to prove our mettle. Let our trip begin!

Tracy

We have all arrived at Cal Lodge. Everyone (or at least I am) is excited.

I can't speak for everyone! I now know that I packed too many clothes, but I can leave most of them here.

We had a delicious dinner + everyone is so nice + welcoming.

Jan

I am so glad to be on this trip, and am anticipating a fun adventure with some very pleasant, friendly people 😊 Julie

Such Capable, Knowledgeable
 & Volunteer group leaders! #+
 (Wish I'd had a video before
 packing for trip of Franey's tips
 on packing your back pack)

I have already learned so much
 from Franey!

Looking forward to getting on the
 trail!

Having already been on a couple of backpacking trips, I
 signed up with the general impression that I already
 knew the ropes. After Franey's discussion of gear, I
 am happy to report I have much to learn and am
 already learning it. Who would have thought to saw
 their toothbrush in half to save weight? Remarkable!
 I am a little embarrassed that I am not going to be
 packed as tightly & efficiently as Don & Franey,
 but what better way to learn. Right now, the weather
 is agreeable, the group seems upbeat if a little nervous,
 and I expect this to be a fabulous trip!

I am really excited for our overnight!
My only hope at this point is to
figure out how to drop some backpack
weight! - Laura

I'm excited and ready for the
adventure, but a little anxious
about how cold it gets at night. Jus

Looking forward to the knowledge
that Dan & Franey have to
share. I hope Franey can
share her energy with us when
we are out on the trail.
R

First evening!

- Steve cooked a fantastic dinner for us at Cal

Lodge of:

- meat lasagna

- vegetarian lasagna

- carrots with olive oil, parsley, salt, pepper baked to perfection

- salad

after dinner Tracy & Don taught us about bear canisters. Concern was expressed about whether there are insurance risks associated with some of us taking them along in rental vehicles; Leonard reassured everyone that ordinary auto insurance carries over to rentals and we all felt better.

Caught up on a months worth of sleep last night - can it get any better than this?! Whudey

Monday Evening

- we slept four-to-middling last night at Col lodge. It was warm, ventilation was sub-optimal even for the women in the women's side with open windows, and we all had to learn to share our beds with marauding giant ants. They were harmless, silent, not too numerous, probably hungry, and hence understandable. Nonetheless, from 10-12 pm, another muffled thump every 20 minutes told the doom of another hapless ant-scent.

The wedding party's music at CTL was a bit loud, so Wallace & Don mooseyed over at 11 pm and asked the happy couple to crank it down, which they readily did. Our party will have to make peace with the reality that they may not give us the wedding food they promised us.

Today we enjoyed our first hike, a 45-minute jaunt through a lovely pine forest along a logging road that traced the Prosser River (?). Don

taught us the difference between Jeffrey pine and Lodgepole pines, and most of us ventured to experience for ourselves whether Jeffrey pine smells like butterscotch or vanilla.

The weather, the abundant water threatened a mosquito assault, but either it's too soon after the snow melt or they smell our Deet because we were left unmolested. Neither did any feet come down with blisters although Jan double-checked a healed blister to be sure.

A quick lesson in the use of poles by Franzy taught us that

① poles should be extended as the hiker's arms from a 90° angle;

② the use of poles follows the natural swinging motion of the arms;



③ pole tips tend to shred the trail, disturbing the ecosystem - hence Franzy doesn't use poles unless they are necessary.

Following these lessons in technique and history, we returned to the area near where the

firefighters are housed and practiced pitching tents and eating lunch. The hot sun and one morning's exertions rendered us rather more proficient at the latter, but everyone seemed to do wonderfully with their tents as well - which come in seemingly every color and shape.

Who knew there was so much history in one small area? After dinner we took a guided walk ~~to~~ near the Rainbow Bridge to see petroglyphs, old car wrecks from the 1940s, & the old Lincoln highway.

6-28-10 9:10pm

9

Today was a great introduction.

I am certainly more comfortable embarking on this adventure.

Both Don and Franci are very patient and a wealth of useful information. But nothing beats a hot shower and a paper cup of wine out of a box! ~~Some~~

We are finally at our first destination! I am really enjoying everyone's company. Right now a few of us are gathered around UV'ing our water out of the pond. I'm curious if any of us are going to need pepto in the near future. Happy Camping!

Today was the first real day of backpacking. 32 lbs on my back. Hot hot hot!! what a beautiful hike and a very relaxing lake. We had double the amount of leaders today which was very nice. Here's to hoping/wishing we don't freeze tonight!

Wendy

We were privileged to have some Sierra Club leaders from nearby join us, who knew the local flora particularly well. Aurora pointed out to us:

- California Waterleaf
- Indian paintbrush
- W. sky milk's ear
- columbine of some sort
- Sierra violet
- small purple holly of some sort
- Foxglove root
- Broomrape
- Buckbrush
- penny grass

and a few others. The hike up to Summit Lake involved >1000 feet of elevation gain, which resulted in blisters on at least two people's heels. On both occasions, the shoes had been carefully broken in, but

apparently not on constant steep grades. Don & Franey and longtime Sierra leader, nearly resident and most-welcome interloper Angela tended to these heels, and both hikers achieved the Summit Lake lunch spot with manageable pain. This emphasizes the need to break in shoes very thoroughly, bring duct tape, and use it at the first sign of difficulty.

Lunch at Summit Lake was charming, especially for Pod who had thought we had two hours to go.

After lunch, Irene, Pod, & Laura learned to use Don's UV water sterilizer and about 10 people who needed water lined up to get free water. We probably drained poor Don's battery, but it was amusing.

Don judged by the lack of popcorn clouds that we won't have storms from 5-6 this evening. Most hikers carefully rigged up their flys nonetheless.

In the afternoon, Leonard - who seems very much in his element out here for someone who has not backpacked since army training in 1967 - decided to swim

across Summit Lake. To everyone's amazement, he did, with his shirt, hiking pants, and hat. The water's cool but not ~~dead~~ cold, which meant Leonard was not numb upon climbing out the far side. The blessed sun will dry his quick-dry gear in no time.

Later on, the buzz was about what we should do when nature called. Franzy + Don designated a public toilet and a policy of

- 200 feet from the water

- 76" deep

- one at a time

And with this the question was hopefully resolved. While Leonard traversed the Lake and channeled his inner trout, Wendy fetched a couple of bottles of 7-up and stashed them in an unmelted patch of snow by the lake to cool down. Those who would turn their snouts up at the idea of hiking with soda will have their faith tested when Wendy + Irene open their sugary beverages this evening and refuse to share with the rest of us, which is their hard-earned rights.

Wallace, spurred on by Leonard's adventure, also dove into the lake for a late-afternoon cooling off. Leonard had to talk him out of doing it in his Birthday Suit.

Right now, the few people that had gathered here largely dispersed and the warm sun is accommodating our drying needs, but a cool breeze over the ridge won't let us get hot - a perfect evening. Meanwhile, Trancy teacher Jan + Cary to cook gumbo outdoors. The cooking had an unuspicious start when Jan showed up for duty and announced, "I'm supposed to cook dinner and I can't even figure out the P well pump!" With Trancy + ^{Don} ~~Pat~~ on call, however, all problems are solved in short order.

I won't forget forget-me-nots & Willy mules ears that blanketed the sides of our trail up to Horners Summit Lake. The cool breeze & cold lake water were welcome changes from the hot climb up to 7000+ ft.

So, so excited! It was a tough uphill hike, and I was the last one of the group, but I MADE it to the TOP!!!  Julie

The hike was great, and I was so relieved that I made it. The swim was an epiphany. Francie's food was awesome. Thanks for all your hard work preparing, Francie! I learned to eat small portions. Francie loaded me up w/ gumbo & it

was on a diet (my fault)
getting it all down, but I
did! First time in 55
years anybody made me eat
every thing on my plate!
So, what's in store for tomorrow?

Despite everyone's best efforts and despite the
excellent character of Franey's gumbo, there were about
4 cups of gumbo + rice + turkey sausage left after dinner;
we double-bagged it and will bury it in the snow
for a hearty, quick, leave-no-trace breakfast tomorrow
morning. We learned that Franey prepared most of
Athis' food on the East Coast and flew over with it in
a 50-lb suitcase whose wheels broke off en route,
with the result that she had to drag it through
the airport. Delta does not cover damage to the outside of
your luggage. Thank you Franey! So far the food is
a great success.

The stores were a bit of a pain - one in particular
keeps going out + Don has to re-light it.

After dinner the group split up a bit - enjoyed the last ~~bit~~ rays of sun on the rocks, or walked to the lake - while waiting for the dessert to chill on an obliging snow bank. It's about an hour before sunset (15° above the horizon), but so far the mosquitoes aren't too bad.

Licking the dishes clean was a little bit too much for me. The Black bean soup & veggie gumbo was delicious. It's funny that the challenges and obstacles I thought I would face are nothing like what I really had to overcome: for instance drinking pond water and licking my dishes :)

Wednesday Morning

- it did get cold last night, so once everyone had crawled into their tents they sure weren't coming back out. The bugs never got bad, as so far no one has reported tick or mosquito bites (though last night there was a lively discussion about nail polish versus screwing them out clockwise or counterclockwise, with Rod concluding that the correct solution was regional).

By 7:30 AM nearly everyone was up and hovering cozily about the cooking area for warmth, society, and Don's coffee. The heavy demand for hot beverages necessitated multiple trips for water to Summit Lake. Most seemed to have slept OK although many learned a great deal about how to fit mat, sleeping bags, gear, and possibly spouse under 30 square feet of canvas. The question of what to put into the tent versus under the vestibule will generate some discussion today. Franey advised securing bondages, hiking poles, and axes in the tent to prevent their being nibbled by night critters, who are attracted to sweat. But did

everyone really have space for shoes & gear in their tent? I've camped plenty of times & never had my shoes growed upon. Synthetic and leather shoes? Admittedly, if it happened once that would be one time too many.

An American Robin woke us up as it greeted the sun at about 6 AM - a familiar sound for East Coast natives. No roosters in these parts.

Wed. a.m.

1st night out was successful! Not very cold & no bugs. I'm continuing to learn much new, valuable info re: backpacking.

Franco's breakfast of bulgar, almonds, raisins, & dried cranberries was hearty, delicious, & healthy, and the toasted quinoa w/ honey was totally novel. Wendy announced that she likes bulgar more than oatmeal and is converted. Unfortunately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of uncooked bulgar per person was a little much especially with some people continuing to eat last night's quinoa.

Maybe $\frac{1}{3}$ cup would be better.

Following breakfast everyone was eager to help with the kitchen area cleanup, as it was soon shipshape and clean. With leftover gumbos and leftover budger available, I wonder what Trancy will produce for lunch today! I wish, though, we'll have to earn it with a morning hike.

Dear Trancy + Don, 6/30/10
AM

Time to pause and breathe deeply after my first backpacking adventure at Summit Lake.

I think that I carried almost 35 lbs. So that is a goal accomplished. As luck would have it, the weather is perfect - which means the trip has been perfect. I learned a lot about packing. A few adjustments will be made, and I'm good to go.
Cozy m.

11:40 AM

20

A party consisting of everyone except Cary + John took a morning hike up towards Frog Lake or Frog Pond. Leaving our tents up, we just packed water, gorp, + cameron, so the steep climb up over numerous small snow patches was not too treacherous. At times the snow obscured the trail and Rod, Leonard, + Don had to resort a bit to find the trail - in these cases Leonard tied a red piece of yarn to a branch to mark our route. (Following goby, we cleaned these on our way out.) At other times melting snow created rills along the path, making the paths a little mucky. We did not achieve the summit overlooking Frog Pond owing to slippery snow fields, but we had a lovely hike + found many great views along the way.

A beautiful day for a (pack-free) hike!
Great views - including snow! The rest of
the day is downhill, sounds easy?
I guess we will see. Ha ha. WJudy

Key Learnings from Don's mistake:

Jan lead our hike back from Summit lake and I did not notice when she made a wrong turn resulting in a $\frac{1}{4}$ mi. detour. Key Learnings were:

1. Trip leader should tell hike leader NOT to follow Yogi's advice and when there is a fork in the road Do Not Take It.
2. Trip Leader should be looking for trail markers and not thinking about the schedule for the nights program
3. You should test all functions on a new GPS before using it on a trip when I recorded a track it was black when I asked to follow it the color was blue and fire roads were black
4. Don't assume that if you are headed down to a highway that a trail in that direction is the right one

Now that I have experienced
 the real outdoors, I'm proud
 to say that I can do this!
 Although, the supported
 trekking the Sierra Club
 also offers! Irene

Whose woods these are
 I think I know
 My bed is in
 the village though
 The grounds so ~~hard~~ hard and
 my back hurts so.
 But the vistas I see
 Make my heart + soul glow.

July 1st

The Sierras Nevadas have been very
 welcoming again today as we completed
 our 7 mile hike to Watson Lake
 above Lake Tahoe at 7800'. Wildflowers,
 blue skies, views of crystal clear

Lake Tahoe & temperatures in the '70s.
Everyone pitched tents, some put
"adult beverages" in a snow bank
that remains & some collected broken
glass & trash from this car accessible
camp ground. The lake will soon
be visited by some hot & dusty
backpackers - namely, US!
~~Another~~

We made it to Watson Lake.
What a great hike. Time to
stop and smell the flowers ☺
our "refrigerator" is perfectly placed
in our campsite. Now - we
relax!!

Wendy

The hike up to Watson Lake was a slow, steady grind - less steep up + down than on our previous trips as easier to establish a rhythm. In principle.

In practice, our list of things to break for was more varied than ever before. Blisters. Backpacks shooting bungee cords onto the trail. Water breaks.

At one point not 1000 yards onto the trail, one party had to send a messenger back to the car

to lock the car door; upon his return, the twisty seat/unreal mechanism for one hiker's

camelbacks had to be worked out. New hikers, new gear, good times. Fortunately, CTC had us

up + at 'em packing our sandwiches at 7:30 AM and we were on the trail by 10:30 AM, with

plenty of time and perfect weather - 70° and sunny.

Just when the heat was growing intolerable, we started passing little ice patches - the air above these was very refreshing.

Occasionally a lone bicyclist would pass. I remember, we all broke into spontaneous applause as we parted to let 3 bikers pass on their way up a hill; today we applauded for one and for another we stood

on either side of the trail and raised our poles in salute, like a row of swords for some sort of military thing.

Watson Lake is idyllic - a lovely little pond sitting in a bowl at 7500 feet. It is also reachable by car so not quite as isolated as Summit Lake or Frog Pond. The flip side is that we delivered our commissary gear by car instead of packing it up. This allowed everyone to pack more clothing against what is likely to be our coldest night, and - we packed beer & wine in that Subaru Outback too. So take more creature comforts with a little less magic.

I wish fewer rednecks would avoid themselves of the road between the campsite and their homes, because the campsite is littered with their artifacts: broken glass, beer bottle caps, random bits of plastic, bullet shell casings, and up in the slopes behind our camp kitchen, mounds of TP as long as discovered. Not very leave-no-trace. Or, as Wendy colorfully put it, "People suck!"

Several campers spent some time gushing this contamination age, but many years of abuse cannot be corrected in one hour.

Exhausted hikers threw up tents at the first reasonably flat spot, then disappeared inside for maps. Wendy, Irene, & Rod installed the beer in a convenient ice patch before retiring themselves and it wasn't long before Jennifer, Willie, & Franey were hard at work whipping up yet another of Franey's masterful camp dinners. In the menu this evening:

- French onion soup with bagel chips and shredded mozzarella
- spaghetti with veggies and garbanzo
- chocolate pudding with cookie crumbles.

And whether it's because we hiked harder or Franey cut back, this time we ate more of the food than ever before. In fact cheer went up when we completely polished off the soup.

After the dinner bell was rung (via a ladle & a pot), Wendy got to work building a fire in the fire pit from dried pine pulled down from the slopes. When the

wood was assembled and a couple of paper bags were in place for starting it, Don started the fire with magnesium chips and flint. It took a few tries - considerably more than suggested at the REI rep's gear demonstration at CTL last night - but it eventually got going. Practice practice. Laura asked innocently, "Why not use matches?" To which Don, "Because this starts a fire in the rain." Turning back to his efforts, Don added thoughtfully, "Gee, they make waterproof matches now too."

About a half hour into our report, a couple of yahoos in bandanas drove up in a VW bug, got out, and waded directly into the lake.

"Hey!" Leonard shouted. "That's our water supply!" After a couple of beers and a few bad tracks on their ante sters, they decided not to stay and be motored away again. I don't remember what we yelled after them, but it probably wasn't too decorous.

Right now it's 8 p.m., those who are drinking are halfway through their second beer, and everyone is chatting pleasantly around a robust fire, expertly tended by Don & Wendy. We'll see who stays up till 10 p.m., when it will be much colder and the stars will come out. Looks to be a glorious night.

What a Thursday! I'm still exhausted from the overnight hike on the days before, and have to pack up yet again for an even longer, higher hike! Everyone was so nice, making sure, along the way, that I was all right. And you know what?

Nearly 7 miles up to 7800 ft, and Watson Lake... I MADE IT!

(☺) Julie

Wid be remiss if we did not mention the 2½ hr presentation Dave Hess of the Reno RBL gave to us following our hike out of Donner Lake on Wed. Don was enthralled with magnesium ~~by~~ fire starter & negotiated to buy it on the spot. (He did not fall asleep as a few hikers did). The fire starter worked on our fire Thurs. day.

Dave Hess had many backpacking stories to share - the one about getting lost, falling & breaking his leg & taking the wrong way down the mtn. stood out. Okay, the story about waking up w/ a large red-eyed creature staring at him in his sleeping bag was also memorable.

& he did not contradict any/most of backpacking advice given to us by Franey & Don

Friday afternoon

- The temperature was quite cold last night - most folks slept in 2 layers and their sleeping bag and tent with fly, and some were still cold. A delicious breakfast of fruit ables + oatmeal was ready at 8 am, and the ladies got summoned those who weren't already gathered for tea, coffee, or hot spiced cider.

Following breakfast, 6 hikers + both leaders hiked out to the Tahoe Rim Trail. The sun was warm, but the wind was chilly. The trail itself is a lovely meandering ~~and~~ path lined with Woly Mule's Ears, ground holly, manzanita, and other wildflowers, but the real goal is the spectacular views of Lake Tahoe, with snow-capped peaks, the Heavenly Ski Area, and various other developed sites. We paused at the first view for a half-hour history lesson from Don, who is quite the font of Lake Tahoe knowledge. Another 20 minutes of hiking and it was time to return to camp for a lunch of whole wheat tortillas with

roasted red pepper hummus or almond butter & jam. Delicious yet again. We'll see what the afternoon brings!

In the evening, dinner consisted of minestrone soup and Babyparkers' Pantry meals, with the labor expertly provided by Wallace and Rod.

The food was in no wise superior to Tracy's meals which we all agreed to with 3 cheers led by Don, but it was certainly easy if maybe expensive.

Following dinner, Don + Tracy asked for tips for leading future trips. Suggestions included:

- more hands-on practice with map + compass
- more guidance regarding chores at Clavi

Tappan Lodge

- Organizing day-off activities more clearly so that people know what their options are

Generally, however, everyone is extremely happy with the trips - 3 trips, a day trip, an overnight trip, and

a 2-day trip was an excellent introduction, offering opportunities for hikers to adjust what they bring & what they leave behind each time. Some were clearly underchallenged physically by the hikes, but others were not, and everyone agreed that they had a much better sense of what it means to live outdoors for 3 days, to carry everything on your back, and whether they were up for more challenging trips.

One thing that some people did today - a gentleman materialized and invited some of our party who were loitering around the computer to have a look at a "cave" nearby with some cave paintings in it. The hikers were a little sketched out by the proposition, but went along with him and it turned out to be very cool. Talk to the locals!

Another detail of our camp life: Don dug up a latrine, which was 10" wide by 4' long and 1' deep, about 100 feet up the slope behind our kitchen area and separated visually by a blue tarp 5' high and suspended on a string between two trees. The way to

was it was to:

- (1) grab the roll of TP + travel from a rock behind the cook area; the absence of the TP indicated to all that the latrine was in use;
- (2) take care of business;
- (3) put used TP in a plastic bag to be packed out (Leave No Trace!)
- (4) sprinkle a bit of dirt

It turned out that our latrine was visible from another couple's campsite. However, because it was unclear who was more inconvenienced by this arrangement, we didn't bother changing it. The experience of using the latrine gave rise to much spirited discussion around the campfire - some things just crop up naturally after you've sweated and toiled together in the great outdoors.

Our trip is almost over except for tomorrow's final hike.

It has been a challenging week, but a lot of fun. I was pleasantly surprised by how wonderful everyone has been this week! I have learned so much.

I think I will investigate another Sierra Club trip - maybe 3-5 days of camping out. Of course, it could be the wine talking!

fw

This is our last night under the stars so to speak. I'm excited to get back to civilization w a shower and a bed, but I can see the allure of these trips. After another night on top I could get used to the lack of facilities, but we'll never know! Mine

It's Saturday morning and it's cold! I think I shivered ^{myself} to sleep. My sleeping bag is a 20° , but I don't think that's an accurate survival rate. Besides the cold nights, I really enjoyed the trip. Backpacking for me will probably be a P or 2 night event for the future. I had a great time, and I got away with not having to drink any lake water (except what was in dinner)! Laura