

The Highpoint

September 2006

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Go

Never too Old for Adventure

By Karen King Russo

Even broken down seniors seek new experiences and high adventure when it comes to travel. How does eating charcoal grilled grubs or roasted guinea pig, shooting a blow gun or throwing a spear, being cleansed by a medicine man, sharing your room with a four inch tarantula, crossing a 500 foot deep gorge in a basket hanging from a cable pulled by one sleepy pulley-operator, or standing up against an angry mob threatening to commandeer your airliner qualify? Those were among the new experiences shared by my group of 60ish traveling friends visiting Ecuador.

Each year, for 13 years, our group of 14, aged 50 –71 has taken an outdoor adventure trip together. This year, our most ambitious trip, was the Amazon, Andes, and Galapagos Islands, all in Ecuador.

In the capable hands of Overseas Adventure Travel, we enjoyed the most diverse geography and culture imaginable in a country merely the size of Colorado. Admittedly, to novice travelers, this trip might be overly arduous. But to us, it was one giggle or awe inspired “Aha” after another.

Canoeing up the Napo River, the Amazon’s largest tributary, for 31/2 hours in the pouring rain was our introduction to our three-day stay in the rain forest. Sloshing



through intense jungles, we were grateful for the high rubber boots and rain ponchos provided by our attractive, well appointed

Yachana Lodge. Our guide, Juan, informed us early that the difference between the rainy season and the dry season is that during the rainy season it rains all the time. In the dry season it merely rains every day. Juan, who looked as if he’d been sent by Central Casting to play Tarzan, grew up in the rain forest. Besides being deft at keeping our canoe righted despite turbulent waters, he was articulate, warm, and well informed. I often wondered if there was not just one plant, bird, bug, or reptile he could not identify and characterize with its medicinal possibilities.

After a respite from the rain, which enabled us to visit a local village and neighboring school where kids arrive by canoe, we were glad for a brief afternoon rest. Just a few hours of sun offered a hint of just how hot it can get. Each of our rooms had a balcony overlooking lush gardens with an inviting red hammock. But no sooner would I flop into our hammock, than the two resident spider monkeys would pounce on me. A mixed blessing, for they were mighty cute. You should have seen me trying hopelessly to photograph them, an almost impossible task for they never stayed still.

Our next major destination was the Galapagos Islands. To sum up the Galapagos, every one of us wished to stay there longer. The only downside of the trip was that every new destination required returning to Ecuador’s capital, Quito, for an over night and yet another flight. This is not to say that Quito is without interest. The historic district, a UNESCO site, is picturesque with magnificent churches, and some not-to-be missed galleries and museums. But for most travelers, it is the rural attractions that bring them to Ecuador.

To get to the Galapagos, we had to fly back to Quito, re-pack and rise yet again at dawn for an early flight to San Cristobal, one of the larger Galapagos Islands. We

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Getting to Know.....

Mary Ann Bryant

Secretary, Seniors Outdoors!



I am originally from Albany, New York. I grew up there and my family is still located in that area. My husband and I moved from Albany to the Ann Arbor,

Michigan area in 1977 for work purposes. I enjoyed a career in business administration at the University of Michigan for 27 years. I was in various administrative positions at the U of M Medical Center (Pediatrics) for 20 years. I then served as Department Manager in the Psychology Department for seven years. I retired from U of M, and my husband retired from Ford Motor Company, in April 2005. We then sold our Michigan home and relocated to Durango last September.

We knew for a long time that we wanted to retire in the west. We have vacationed all over the western United States for many years having first visited Durango about 20 years ago. We enjoy living here very much. We are fans of sunny days, downhill skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, birding and generally exploring the outdoors. We have met many very nice and welcoming people in our neighborhood and through Seniors Outdoors. We joined SO! immediately upon moving here since we learned about the organization on the web. My husband and I were active members of our local Michigan Audubon Society chapter, so I know how important it is for members to volunteer some of their time. The SO! activities fit right in with our interests. I am happy to volunteer with this organization so I can learn more about the group, the Durango area and meet others with similar interests as mine.

Seniors Outdoors! is an outing and social club providing organized year-round outdoor activities and related educational opportunities

To Join Seniors Outdoors!
Contact Bill Cagle 385-4566
or e mail: cagle81301@yahoo.com
Membership forms are available on the website:<http://www.seniorsoutdoors.org/>,
at the monthly meetings, and on outings.

Board Briefs

Treasurer's Report: As of Aug 25, 2006

Income-----\$5,512.50

Expenses-----\$441.86

Balance-----\$6,832.73

Board Members

Co-Presidents:

Bill Cagle, 385-4566

Tom Rebbin 247-0551

Secretary: Mary Ann Bryant 259-4278

Treasurer: Dick Reitz 375-1870

Outings Committee Chair:

Sharron Chambers 259-9271

Board Meetings are OPEN to all members

Other Positions

Circulation: Dianne Rebbin, 247-0551

Sandy Bauman, 375-9589

Email Message Coordinator:

Wally Schmidt 385-1804

Ruthanne Gartland, 382-0736

Hospitality: Letha Cagle, 385-4566

Aggie Owens, 247-0463

Membership: Anne Rendon, 884-2729

Newsletter Editor:

Inge Silton, 259-6881

Outings Schedule Publisher:

Sharon Kinton, 375-1152

Olin Kane, 375-0060

Phone Tree: Susan Beck-Brown,

375-0948

Programing Chairs:

Tricia Bayless 375-2618

Susan Mapes 764-4096

Public Relations:

Grace Deltscheff, 259-3040

Trip Equipment Coordinator:

Travis Ward, 247-1310

Diana McMichael, 764-4190

Website Manager:

Bob Chaput, 247-9332

Seniors Outdoors! Sub-Groups

Downhill Ski: John Montle, 259-9469

Horse Riders: Dell Manners, 382-9967

Road & Mountain Biking:

Walt Axthelm, 247-8520

Single Seniors: Carol Milliet, 259-0496

Welcome New Members

Richard and Shirley Franklin

Reg and Bev Graham

Lora Hartmann

Jim Mohle and J.M. Jones

*Our total membership is now 363
since the renewals of July 2006
Lets keep growing!!!!*



Welcome Coffee

We want to welcome you new members and tell you all why we think our club is great. If you have joined SO! since May, expect a phone call inviting you to a get-acquainted coffee. We hope you will find this an opportunity to meet board and committee members, to learn more about the numerous activities of SO!, and to mingle with other new members. We want you to feel like you are an important part of our group and are able to take advantage of all the benefits this membership provides.

Come join us for coffee and friendship.

If you have any questions,
please contact

Letha Cagle (385-4566) or
Dianne Rebbin (247-0551).

New

SO! Bulletin Board on Google

There is now a bulletin board on Google at <<http://groups.google.com/group/durango-so>>. In order to become a member, click on "Join this group" and follow the rather easy instructions. For more information about groups, go to <<http://groups.google.com/support>> On the SO bulletin board web site, you will find current member announcements of impromptu outdoor activities. Anyone who wishes to participate should contact the member directly. Anyone who wishes to post an announcement can do so. However, please be responsible for removing the announcement post date so that the site does not become too littered. The site is easy to use. You can choose to have e-mail notification of newly posted announcements or to merely browse if interested.

Please note that these events are not Seniors Outdoors sponsored events. The usual safety equipment (medical supplies, radio, satellite phone) may not be present. Anyone wishing to participate should speak to the person who posted the event and feel comfortable with the plan. Obviously, caveat emptor. But have fun.

Check it out! You might be surprised and find it useful.

For information contact
Michael Lubin at 946-1030

Deer and Elk Hunting Season



Please be aware and take extra precaution during the deer and elk hunting season.



Wear bright orange, a hat, vest or jacket, and put bright orange on your doggie during the posted season. If you're in doubt about the dates, wearing an orange hat anytime in the fall is not a bad idea. Our outings on public lands in hunting season have a "Wear Orange" statement. Get out your old orange hat and/or vest or buy a new one; they're not expensive. Be fashionable and be safe on SO! outings as well as your own this fall.

Archery Season: Aug. 26 - Sept 24

Muzzleloading: Sept. 9 - 17

Rifle Season: Oct 14-19, Oct 21-29

Nov 4-10, Nov 15-19

The



EXtra
Mile

Many Senior Outdoors! Members go the distance in contributing the time and the expertise that is so vital in moving our group forward - SALUTE

September Trip Leaders: Clark Lagow, Ray Walker, Bill Millener, Ed Osterman, Liz Brown, Susan Beck-Brown, Margie Padgett, Jim O'Brien, John Montle, Travis Ward, Brooks Taylor, Dell Manners, Harry Hance

September Hosts: Lydine Hannaia, Joan-Huntley

September Clean-up: Carol Cowan, Carol Hansen

(Never Too Old, continued from page 1)
had to make a stop enroute at Ecuador's largest city, Guayaquil. It was there, upon deboarding for refueling, that we were confronted by an angry mob of locals, whose flight to Cuenca had been delayed 15 hours. By the time we landed, they had had enough and were determined to commandeer our plane. With nary a policeman in sight (all the more interesting in that there are usually 4 or 6 armed guards on every corner in Ecuador), our Nicolas, who is fluent in Spanish, spoke out trying to quiet nerves and abate a catastrophe. He conceded that they could take our plane (it seemed that after the 30 minute flight to Cuenca, the plane could return for us) but that we needed to be allowed to get our hand luggage. The fact that our plane was too large to land on Cuenca's short runway despite all the emergency gear they were tossing off, seemed to be overlooked. So off we trekked across the tarmac when the president of the airline, a petite but commanding woman arrived on the scene. Announcing that she refused to be hi-jacked, the pilot ordered us to remain on the plane as our flight would indeed continue to our destination, with us on it. We were assured that another plane had been found to take the waiting people to Cuenca. We hoped so, for in good faith they had trusted Nicolas.

OAT's ship in the Galapagos, Carina, was beautiful with kingsize beds, a friendly and efficient crew, and food so delicious that we hounded the chef for recipes. But it was life on the white sands, pristine islands of the Galapagos that captured our souls. Even my husband, John, was surprisingly hooked. He came with a jaundiced view based on the movie "Master and Commander," which was filmed there. He expected little but "rocks and bird shit."

Our charming guide for the whole tour, Tatiana, was raised in the Galapagos, thus in her element, explaining all aspects of the wildlife there. Baby sea lions frolicking with snorkelers, soaring pelicans, prehistoric looking marine iguanas, blue footed boobies unabashedly engaging in mating dances, 600 pound tortoises enjoying carnal pleasures despite gender, all made us sad to leave. Three and a half days was not enough. I was already hoping to return some day soon.

However, another highlight awaited us in Otavalo, about one and a half hours from Quito, a market town high in the Andes. Here we hired a car and driver to travel on our own.

Though no one in all of Ecuador appears to live as well as anyone in Durango or its surroundings, there is a beauty there all its own. Otavalo with its weavings, wall hangings, paintings, bountiful fruit and vegetable markets, and the native garb of the indigenous people struck me as



one giant paint pallet, or photo op. Cabbages the size of Volkswagens, bushels of raspberries the color of rubies, heads of broccoli each large enough to feed a family of six, hundreds and hundreds of pineapples and melons, racks of pork with the poor pig's head looking right out at me, assured me the people, however poor, must be food sufficient. With the backdrop of the green Andes, cultivated small farms, blue skies and puffy clouds, bountiful flowers (Ecuador, the rose capital for the world, supplies the Tournament of Roses), the atmosphere was ethereal. While men worked in construction, the beautiful indigenous women and girls tending the market place in long shiny black braids, bands of gold colored glass beads, long black skirts and shawls, and peasant blouses led me to idealize the life there as I often do in colorful ethnic communities.

Then the reality was awakened in me. A young mother stands outside her wood shack, without glass windows, combing the hair of her 7 year old daughter, dressed in Pendleton skirt and sweater, the school uniform, waiting for the school bus. I glance into her house. There is nothing. Just a broken down table and chairs and a couple of sleeping mats. No warm comforters, no books or music, no medicines. Despite the beauty of the mountains, colorful art, and handicrafts, as in most third world countries many people do not have enough. It is important to see that too.

A welcoming, friendly people, they are a mix of Mestizos flocking to the cities in hopes of better pay despite some urban blight, and the indigenous people in the Andes proudly retaining traditional dress and identity that make Ecuador such an intriguing place to visit.



Updates

1. Closed trails in Hidden Valley:

Portions of trails in the Hidden Valley area, located off Forest Road #065 south of Falls Creek, will be closed for short periods of time over the next six weeks as work continues to reduce hazardous fuel in the area. Contractors will be hand thinning and using a hydro-axe to thin trees and shrubs along and near trails. Debris cut by the hydro-axe may be thrown several hundred feet.

2. McPhee Reservoir-Sage Hen Area:

The Sage Hen Area on the west side of McPhee Reservoir is now limited to day use only and motorized access is restricted, because of increased damage from illegal vehicle activity and parties. The area has sustained damage to archaeological resources, vandalism to recreational facilities, unacceptable levels of erosion, and large amounts of trash and litter. Because of health and safety concerns, public use is now restricted to between dawn and dusk.

3. Harvesting mushrooms:

With wet conditions in the San Juan National Forest, wild mushrooms are prolific this summer. Harvesters who collect more than one or two pounds of mushrooms for personal use should carry with them a free use permit available from San Juan National Forest offices in Durango, Bayfield, Dolores or Pagosa Springs. Harvesters who collect mushrooms for commercial purposes must first purchase a permit from the San Juan National Forest. The minimum permit costs \$20 and is good for up to one week. Contact Gretchen Fitzgerald at 264-1535

4. Travel Management Process:

The San Juan Public Lands are beginning travel planning which will determine **which roads and trails will be designated for motorized use**. The first meeting on travel planning will be hosted by Dolores August 17, from 7-9 p.m. A similar introductory meeting will be held in both Durango and Pagosa Springs in the future. Dates have not yet been set for those meetings. Public input and participation is crucial in helping the Forest Service and BLM develop a sustainable and adequate supply of quality designated routes in a healthy natural environment into the future.

For more information contact:
Pamela Wilson at 385-1230

Interested in Cycling?



If you are interested in cycling, either onroad and/or off road (i.e. trail riding), you will be interested to know that Walt Axthelm is a Seniors Outdoors Cycling subgroup leader. Walt not only enjoys biking himself, but he also likes to share his love of cycling with others of all skill levels.

If you are interested in joining a group of fellow SO members on a cycling outing, please contact

Walt at 'waxthelm@yahoo.com'
or phone him at 247-8520.
He would love to hear from you!

Membership Renewal Form

The membership renewal form is available electronically.

Next Meeting October 10
6:30 Social 7:00 Meeting
Rec Center

SPORTING GOODS TRADE SHOW
Backcountry Experience, Pine Needle and Gardenswartz stores will "Show and tell of what and how to choose items for your activities". SJMA Bookstore will have items for sale.

DISCOUNTS

SO! members receive a 10% discount on regularly priced merchandise at Gardenswartz, Backcountry, Brown's Shoe Fit for hiking products, and Brown's Sport Shoe on hiking and athletic products.. At Pine Needle you will be able to purchase their \$15 discount card for \$5. Cut out this article and present it to the clerk checking you out.

For more information contact
John Montle 259-9469.

CORSAR
Colorado Outdoor Search and Rescue
cards
for sale by your co-presidents
every month at SO! meetings

Changes

When changing email address, phone number, or mailing address please alert our membership chair Anne Rendon at TRTRendon@mydurango.net or 884-2729 as soon as possible to ensure that you continue to receive your newsletter, outings schedule, emails, etc.

Want to save SO! some money?
Get the newsletter on the Web
www.seniorsoutdoors.org
Contact Anne Rendon at 884-2729
to have your name removed from the mailing list.



Seniors Outdoors!
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