

Should you buy trekking poles for hiking?

RICH LANDERS
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Trekking poles are modern versions of staffs that date back to Moses for easing the way along difficult routes, catching your balance and prodding the occasional sheep along the way.

Although no longer used for parting the Red Sea, trekking poles that resemble cross-country ski poles are considered essential equipment by many hikers looking to make their walks more efficient and less stressful on ankle, knee and hip joints.

I've also used them to probe brush ahead for rattlesnakes and to fend off aggressive dogs as well as one insanely food-habituated marmot in Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park.

Some ultralight backpacking tents are designed to save weight by incorporating trekking poles into their structure.

Critics point out that trekking poles are just another gear item to buy and pack around, and others question the cumulative impact countless carbide tip pokes will have in trails.

But using trekking poles helps a hiker power up a hill with aerobic engagement of the arms and upper body. Then they help reduce the body-jarring impacts of descents. They're a full-body deal.

Dr. Meredith Heick, a Spokane, Washington, rheumatologist (also my wife), recommends "Nordic walking sticks" or heavier duty trekking poles to some of her arthritis patients regardless of age. Many orthopedists also recommend trekking poles, especially to ease stress on knees.

Dr. Heick also practices what she preaches by religiously using two trekking poles on all of her hikes as a hedge against becoming a patient herself.

For Christmas years ago, I bought her a pair of three-section trekking poles that could be telescoped to user height, shortened for uphill, lengthened for downhill and collapsed to fit in the side of a pack when not needed or in airline baggage for hiking vacations abroad.

But the poles became hard to find when she wanted them because our daughters kept taking them for their hikes. Before the year was out, everyone in the family was happily outfitted with trekking poles.

We've used them effectively crossing streams safely, pole-vaulting over puddles and checking the speed of snowfield glissades. Trekking poles have reduced the impact to my body from hundreds of trail miles covered in researching regional hiking trail guidebooks.

I sometimes use only one trekking pole to leave a hand free for walking a



RICH LANDERS/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Spokane rheumatologist Meredith Heick practices what she preaches about lowering impact to leg joints by packing trekking poles to Europe for her 110-mile hiking vacation around Mont Blanc.

dog on leash or when photography is a priority.

However, using two poles is clearly better for upper body workout, reducing joint impacts and maintaining side-to-side balance.

When bushwhacking or scrambling in talus where handholds are necessary, it's often best to collapse the poles and attach them to your pack.

"The first question we ask customers is what they will be doing with them," said John Schwartz, who's been studying, selling and getting feedback on trekking poles for more than two decades as manager of Mountain Gear retail store in Spokane.

"If they're Nordic walking on concrete and asphalt they'll want poles with rubber tips for traction," he said. Hikers heading to forest trails will need carbide tips.

"The biggest change since we first started selling trekking poles is the dramatic increase in what's offered," Schwartz said, noting that weight-wary hikers can find an assortment of ultralight poles, usually at the price of less durability and more cost.

Instead of fixed-length poles, Schwartz said most hikers prefer poles that can be adjusted for terrain.

Most people start with poles adjusted to form a 90-degree bend at the elbow with the tip planted by the foot.

"From there you might shorten for long uphill or lengthen for extended downhill," he said. "You might even adjust length for sidehills."

Avoid straight handles and opt for handles with ergonomic designs that are less fatiguing to the hand and wrist, he recommends.

Most of Schwartz's customers say cork handles are more comfortable to sweaty hands. Plastic handles don't absorb moisture and may be preferable in cool weather.

"Most people aren't aware that some poles have shock absorbers built in to the handles," Schwartz said. "But once they try them, they quickly become fans."

Whether you chose poles made of aluminum, fiberglass, carbon fiber or titanium, Schwartz said customers should expect to pay about \$80 to \$200 or more for good quality.

"You can get trekking poles for \$30,

but don't be surprised if they break or fall apart. The quality just isn't there."

My good-quality poles have lasted many years. The paint graphics are mostly worn off, but even the old twisting expansion-nut length adjusters still work.

"That's old school," Schwartz said, noting that adjustable poles nowadays use flick locks that are easier to use and more reliable. No more need for the pliers to twist frozen expansion nuts free, he said.

Before trekking pole customers leave the store, Schwartz said Mountain Gear staff makes sure they know how to use them.

"Cross-country skiers know how, but it's not intuitive to everybody," he said. "A lot of people try to use them as they would a crutch. You want to stride with them and swing your arms alternately as you would when walking normally."

With a little practice, trekking poles help orchestrate a hiker's stride into a rhythm with additional points of balance to put away the miles more safely and efficiently.

State may miss deadline for Real ID compliance

DIANE DIETZ
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Portland International Airport safety officials anticipate a chaotic scene

on January 22, 2018, if Oregon doesn't get a reprieve from the federal government on its Real ID driver's license requirements.

That's the day that the Transportation Safety Administration will stop accepting Oregon driver's licenses as ID to board a plane if the state does not win a fourth extension on compliance with the federal ID law.

TSA checkpoints at PDX would be gridlocked if TSA document checkers deny passage to a significant portion of the 23,000 travelers who move through the airport each day, Christopher Neal, the airport's director of safety and security, told lawmakers recently.

"PDX operations and security staff will prepare to manage a potential event in the terminal (on Jan. 22) as there will likely be a significant amount of confusion and anger among affected passengers," Neal told lawmakers in written testimony.

Congress adopted Real ID requirements for state IDs in 2005 in an attempt to thwart terrorists' ability to gain access to vulnerable places (flights, nuclear power plants) by using fraudulent identification.

The law requires security features -- such as license photos that can be read by facial recognition software -- and more rigorous background checks for motor vehicle licensing staff and stricter-than-normal verification procedures for driver's license applications and supporting documents.

Until now, Oregon resisted Real ID for a number of reasons: cost, privacy concerns and a reluctance to cede authority to the federal government. On June 26, the Senate reversed course approving with a 28-2 vote removal of the ban and compliance with the Real ID law.

Senate Bill 374 now moves to the House for consideration.

Oregon officials have their fingers crossed that approval in the Senate and an upcoming vote in the House will prove to the federal government that Oregon is serious about



OREGON DMV

A sample Oregon driver's license.

complying and persuade Homeland Security to grant the state another extension.

If not, beginning Jan. 22, 2018, Oregonians wishing to board a commercial airliner or enter a federal building will have to bring along a passport because their state ID will no longer gain them entrance.

"Further extensions are in jeopardy unless Oregon can demonstrate a serious and significant effort to achieve full implementation," Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, told lawmakers June 26 as he urged passage of the bill.

If the measure passes, Oregon's Real ID license will be available in July 2020 at the earliest, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation.

ODOT's plan is to continue issuing its standard licenses but also issue Real IDs to drivers willing to pay a premium and provide additional documentation proving identity, residency, lawful status, date of birth and Social Security number.

The sum is uncertain because the agency doesn't know how many Oregon drivers will want the ID and the agency's cost of doing business is coincidentally up in the air because it's embarking on a \$90-million computer system upgrade and work process change.

The agency doesn't know, for example, how many employees it will take to do the Real ID work, how long it will take to scan in all the required documents or how long it will take to cross check each applicant with the required federal databases.

The agency issues about 177,000 new driver licenses annually and 335,000 renewals each year.

The Legislative Revenue Office estimated costs of \$579,023 for 2019-2021 to get the system up and running, but there's no estimate for the ongoing costs. Ongoing costs would include the cost of background checks on new agency employees as they are hired and continuing tolls for use of the federal data.

The Oregon licenses would have to be redesigned with a black star to signal Real ID compliance or a warning, saying "not

acceptable for federal purposes," on the standard driver's license.

Oregon to date has had a love-hate relationship with Real ID. In 2008, lawmakers took a first step toward the program by requiring drivers to supply proof of citizenship or legal presence in the United States.

The next year, the Legislature passed the law that prohibited ODOT from complying with Real ID unless the federal government covered the cost.

Lawmakers were also uneasy about the civil liberties implications. The Real ID law requires ODOT to scan drivers' documents and to hold them in a database for 10 years, which would create a major trove of personal data, according to the Oregon ACLU.

Real ID could also be a step toward a national identity card system, the ACLU warned.

If the Department of Homeland Security isn't satisfied that Oregon is making "serious and significant" progress toward establishing Real ID, Oregon's driver's license will not be good for ID at federal buildings beginning July 10 and for boarding commercial airliners beginning Jan. 22, 2018.

PUBLIC NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE COUNTY OF MARION PROBATE DEPARTMENT

In Re the Estate of LETIE MARY SHEPPARD

Deceased.

Case No. 17PB03967

NOTICE TO INTERESTED PERSONS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned has been appointed personal representative. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present them, with vouchers attached, to the undersigned personal representative at 85 The Green Lydd, Romney Marsh, Kent, England, within four months after the date of first publication of this notice, or the claims may be barred. All persons whose rights may be affected by the proceedings may obtain additional information from the records of the Court, the personal representative, or the lawyers for the personal representative, Jane Waters.

DATED: June 21, 2017.

/s/ Colin G. Andries

Attorney for Personal Representative Colin G. Andries

Personal Representative: Jane Waters 85 The Green Lydd, Romney Marsh, Kent, England

Lawyer for the Personal Representative: Colin G. Andries OSB No. 051892 111 SW Fifth Ave., Suite 1940 Portland, OR 97204 (503)417-7777 colin@slindenelson.com

Silverton Appeal July 5, 12, & 19, 2017

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