

# Rogue

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## Day 1: A beautiful butt-kicking (Grave Creek Trailhead to Meadow Creek Campsite, 13.2 miles)

It's always been my philosophy that the inaugural day of a backpacking trip should be civilized food, feeling fresh and excited to get moving.

And so we awoke at the crack of dawn and made the three-hour sprint down I-5 to the town of Merlin, continued to Grave Creek Boat Ramp and Trailhead and handed the keys to our shuttle driver with the knowledge that, yup, now there's no turning back.

That first day was a blur of beauty and pain. The Rogue slices into the Siskiyou Mountains like a green blade, throwing itself down a series of rapids while the trail tightropes the canyon face and descends into wilderness.

Among the small joys early on was the number of landmarks named for alcohol (who says miners drink a lot?). We passed Rum Creek, Whiskey Creek and Booze Creek in the first 5 miles, before eating lunch at a campsite where green pools collected below large oak trees.

As evening dropped yellow-orange hues into the canyon and our legs began contemplating rebellion, we reached Meadow Creek Campsite and made camp. Dinner was freeze-dried chili mac, something only delicious after 13.2 miles.

## Day 2: Rattlesnake diplomacy, Zane Grey and heaven (Meadow Creek to Marial Lodge, 10.7 miles)

The truth is that I've never had any problem with rattlesnakes. They might be poisonous and hostile, sure, but it's diffi-

cult to hate an animal with such an advanced warning system. In most cases, it's easy to walk around without incident.

Problem is, the rattlesnake whose acquaintance we made appeared in our path after 21 miles of backpacking. Our legs were tired. Our feet had blisters. And the heavenly relief of Marial Lodge was within striking distance.

"Hey, so how about moving?"

"(RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE!!)"

"Yikes. OK, that was my fault. Let's try this again: Mr. Snake, would you mind terribly if we walked way around you — plenty of space, no reason to get jumpy ... ?"

"(RATTLE rattle rattle ... rattle ...)"

The rattlesnake diplomacy actually wasn't the day's highlight, but in looking back, it's what we remembered most.

We'd broken camp early and hiked in cool morning air, through forested side canyons and along a river that spread out blue and gold below the mountains.

Along the way — before we met the rattlesnake — it was history that made the greatest impression, beginning with Zane Grey's cabin at mile 17.2.

Though not as well-known today, Grey was the most commercially successful American author of the 1920s, a writer of rollicking western novels about brave men and violent times. Among his lesser-known books is "Rogue River Feud," which begins with a beautiful ode to the river Grey so clearly adored.

"Deep and dark green, swift and clear, icy cold and as pure as the snows from which it sprang, the river had its source in the mountain under Crater Lake," wrote Grey.

We passed a second historic landmark — the Rogue River Ranch, an old farmstead converted into a museum — at mile 22.7. The site, once home to 100 residents in a small gold mining town, holds evidence of Native Amer-

ican habitation from 9,000 years ago.

Finally, our legs turning to jelly and the afternoon heating up, we arrived at Marial Lodge where a glorious dinner, hot shower and soft bed were waiting.

## Day 3: Lodge life, black bears and scenery (Marial Lodge to Tacoma Camp, 8.8 miles)

It's no easy thing, leaving a place that serves glazed spare ribs for dinner and bacon for breakfast to head back upon the trail.

We'd spent our time at Marial Lodge sipping lemonade on a wooden deck, conversing with a group of ladies on a raft-supported hiking trip and letting our feet dangle in the river below afternoon sunshine.

Yet if there were ever a trail to get us moving, the stretch from Marial to Tacoma Camp beach is it. The Rogue performs its most dramatic act when it squeezes into the jet-black chasm of Mule Creek Canyon (mile 24.0), where rafters flail about in Coffeepot Rapids and Stair Creek Falls drops in double-decker splendor.

"This," said my girlfriend, standing upon Inspiration Point (25.2) above the canyon, "is the most beautiful spot I've ever seen."

But while the scenery remains stunning for almost 10 miles, the canyon becomes a furnace without shade on hot days. We kicked our legs into overdrive, passed Paradise Lodge (mile 27.4) and headed for the area between Solitude Bar (31.2) and Tacoma Camp (33.2) where the best campsites are found.

We arrived early and claimed a gem of a spot, between canyon walls, along a sandy beach with a deep-green swimming hole. The afternoon's activities were simple: Lie in the sun, go for a swim and spend about 30 minutes fishing.

Repeat. I caught a pair of half-

pound steelhead on spinners and spoons, while dinner was pasta and pesto with dried cherries for dessert.

The night's entertainment? That came in the form of two black bears lumbering out of the forest, on the opposite side of the river, looking mildly perplexed.

Black bears are common in this area. My friend, a rafting guide, tells a story of waking up one morning to see a black bear sitting a few feet away, looking him in the eye as though saying: "Good morning sunshine. Now, do you have any food for me?"

That evening, sleeping without the rain fly, the nighttime sky was a river of stars.

## Day 4: Swimming and home (Tacoma Camp to Big Bend Trailhead, 7.8 miles)

On the final day of a long backpacking trip, there's an impulse to sprint toward the finish. There are no more campsites to find, no more lodges to explore. And the thought of riding in a vehicle, where hundreds of miles disappear without breaking a sweat, begins to sound pretty good.

The Rogue River Trail brought one final highlight, however, at mile 35. Flora Dell Falls is a 30-foot waterfall that drops into a deep emerald pool to create one of Oregon's great swimming holes.

Despite it being 9 a.m. — and not exactly warm out — I couldn't help but dive into the water and swim below the waterfall, the final act of immersion on the Rogue River Trail before it was time to say goodbye.

The trail makes it pretty easy. In the final miles, the river exits the canyon, those thousand-foot walls drop into rolling hills and the sense of being swallowed by a place altogether separate from the outside world begins to fade.

We weren't exactly sorry to finish the Rogue River Trail — that would come later, once the blis-

ters had healed.

But a melancholy feeling arrived with the starting of the engine and the trip down the road toward Gold Beach and turning north, a final farewell to the state's most beautiful river.

## Rogue River lodges

**Note:** Prices per hiker, per night and typically includes dinner, breakfast and bag lunch

Black Bar Lodge (mile 9.3): \$130, (541) 479-6507, blackbarlodge.com

Marial Lodge (mile 23.9): \$110, (541) 474-2057

Paradise Lodge (mile 27.4): \$160, paradise-lodge.com, (541) 842-2822

Clay Hill Lodge (mile 33.2): \$150, clayhilllodge.com, (503) 859-3772

## Rogue River National Recreation Trail breakdown

**General location:** Wild and Scenic Rogue River canyon (outside Grants Pass) and Foster Bar (outside Gold Beach)

**Distance:** 40 miles

**Difficulty:** Moderate (although long, the trail is mostly flat)

**Small car access:** Yes

**Campsites:** There are many primitive campsites along creeks and the river, none of which have pit toilets

**Campfires:** Depending on the time of year, fires may be banned. Campfires within 400 feet of the river must be confined to a fire pan.

**Bears:** Black bears are common, especially the lower third between Paradise Lodge and Tacoma Camp area. Always hang food 10 feet high and five feet out. Many campsites have bear-proof facilities.

**Maps:** Maps are available at the Grave Creek Trailhead and Smullin Visitor Center outside Galice.

**Shuttle:** Setting up a shuttle with one of the outfitters (see list) is highly recommended.

**Trail log:** BLM has a detailed trail log here: <http://www.blm.gov/or/>

resources/recreation/rogue/trail-log.php

**Information:** Smullin Visitor Center, Rand: (541) 479-3735; Gold Beach Ranger district, (541) 247-3600; Grants Pass Interagency Office (541) 471-6500.

## Trailhead directions

**Grave Creek Boat Ramp / Trailhead:** Follow Interstate 5 south and take Exit 61 to Merlin. Continue straight on Merlin-Galice Road for 3.2 miles into Merlin and then another 8.5 miles toward Galice, a popular river town on the Rogue. From Galice continue another 6 miles, cross over the bridge and turn left down into a large boat ramp and trailhead. The trail begins on the RIVER RIGHT side. (N42 38.924 W123 35.133).

**Foster Bar Boat Launch:** From Grants Pass (only in summer, after Memorial Day): At mile 15 on Merlin-Galice Road, just before Galice, turn left onto Forest Road 23, the road to Gold Beach. It's 37 magnificent blacktopped miles, over a 5,000-foot pass, to Forest Road 33, the road along the Lower Rogue, on the coast, to Agnes and Powers. Turn right on FR 33 and proceed 2 miles, over the bridge, to the Foster Bar turnoff on the right (N42 38.317 W124 03.338).

From Gold Beach (in off-season): Just before the bridge over the Rogue River in Gold Beach, turn right onto Jerry's Flat Road (Forest Road 33) and continue 21 miles. Turn right on Agnes Il-lahne Road for three miles to Foster Bar on the right (N42 38.317 W124 03.338).

*Zach Urness has been an outdoors reporter, photographer and videographer in Oregon for 12 years. Urness is the author of "Best Hikes with Kids: Oregon" and "Hiking Southern Oregon." He can be reached at [zurness@StatesmanJournal.com](mailto:zurness@StatesmanJournal.com) or (503) 399-6801.*

# Obituaries

## Charles "Chuck" Fredrick Chambers

**SILVERTON** - Born March 19, 1939 in White Sulphur Springs, Montana to Charles and Ruby Chambers. Served in the US Marine Corps 1956-1959. Chuck often said that he got out of the service on August 21, 1959 and into a much bigger service on August 22, 1959 when he married Sharon Lee Brady. Chuck and Sharon moved to Silverton, Ore. in 1961. Chuck worked for Wilco for over 35 years. He spent the last 2 plus years at Marquis at Silver Gardens then most recently at Marquis Marian Estates where he passed away on April 25, 2020. Chuck was preceded in death by his parents, his wife Sharon, his older brother Frank, and younger sister Peggy. He is survived by brothers Lee (wife Linda) and Wayne (wife Maria), sons Charles Jr. (Rick) and David (wife Lori), 6 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren, as well as his nursing home family at Marian Estates. Chuck was a beloved father and a friend too many. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. Private interment at Valley View Cemetery. Arrangements with Unger Funeral Chapel - Silverton.

## Philip Wayne Pomeroy

**MT. ANGEL** - Philip Wayne Pomeroy age 63, a resident of Mount Angel passed away at home with his family on April 29th 2020 after a long struggle with cancer. Phil was born in Portland Oregon on October 20th 1956 to Ray and Charlene Pomeroy and grew up in Happy Valley alongside his two brothers. Phil married Ruthie Annen on October 13th 1990. They had two sons together, Nick and Doug.

Phil graduated from Clackamas High School in 1974 and pursued a career with Portland General Electric beginning as an apprentice. Phil worked with PGE from 1977 to 2017 at which time he retired as a Journeyman Line Foreman. Phil was a proud member of the IBEW Local 125 Union throughout his entire career and beyond. Phil was respected and admired by his fellow brothers as a man of kindness and integrity; he was someone you could truly count on. In his free time Phil enjoyed playing golf, with his two boys and his friends, water skiing, hunting and playing ice hockey in his younger years. Most importantly of all, Phil cherished whatever time he could spend with his family whether it was camping or enjoying their company. Phil was a one of a kind father, husband and friend and he will be dearly missed.

Phil is survived by his wife Ruthie, and his two sons Nick and Doug Pomeroy all of whom reside in Mount Angel. Due to current circumstances a private service will be held for Phil, Tuesday May 5th at 11:00 a.m. at Calvary Cemetery in Mount Angel.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Mary's Catholic Church or Legacy Oregon Burn Center. Assisting family is Unger Funeral Chapel - Silverton.



# Miller

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wearing heavy boots and ski gloves.

## Why 'stay home' is like fishing

A lot of people in the fishing fraternity, me included, have been practicing for the COVID quarantine most of our lives.

After all, sitting around for hours on end waiting mostly in vain for something to happen becomes second nature after the first dozen years or

so. The major drawback being the lack of scenery.

## A mustard foot bath?

Bogus treatments and cures for the coronavirus are not a unique feature to the current pandemic.

An online article about the lethal 1918 worldwide flu epidemic included "What You Should Know About 'Spanish' Influenza," a poster issued by the office of the superintendent of Schools in Manhattan.

Among the tips under treatment were:

"Soak the feet in hot mustard water for ten

minutes, using one tablespoonful of mustard in two gallons of water."

And "drink a large cupful of hot lemonade; then go promptly to bed."

A lot of the other tips, such as hand-washing and avoiding "parties, moving picture shows, and similar assemblies," are right out of the current protocols.

**FISHING THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:** If wishes were fishes, we'd all have our limits every day — our limits (so I'll claim it)

Contact Henry Miller at [HenryMillerSJ@gmail.com](mailto:HenryMillerSJ@gmail.com)



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