



Expanding Horizons

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The newsletter for friends of Adventures for Women

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Adventurous Women,

This past year has been a great one for Adventures for Women. We have a membership of over 150, our events have been well attended, and we have a few dollars in our coffers. We've gone target shooting, we've orienteered, and we've backpacked. We've hiked in the Catskills, The Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania and in the Adirondacks. We've explored Manhattan's East River area, the NY Botanical Gardens, Brooklyn, and Historic Philadelphia. We've even eaten our way through Lower Manhattan. Along the way we *have* suffered a few growing pains, not the least of which was booking a trip or two and having folks pull out at the last minute. When our volunteer guides set up a workshop, city paths event or weekend trip, one of our major concerns is that we don't lose money. We at AFW have maintained our \$50 annual membership fee for quite some time now. It does not, let me repeat, it does not cover our fixed, yearly expenses - insurance, phone bill, website, database, CPR instruction for the guides, etc. In order for AFW to continue offering the 75 or so 'free' hikes, bikes and other events each year, we must bring in some revenue. So we've established the practice of including a \$5 or \$10 administrative fee for each of our 'special events.'

Our biggest source of income is from our weekend trips. When we have more than the breakeven number of participants, we are able to put some money into our treasury. We require a deposit for these with a listed non-refundable date. If people cancel at the last minute without putting any money down, we are left with the lodging cost, no chance to fill the empty spot, and although we may cover the basic cost, we make no profit. While we certainly understand that plans change and sometimes change at the last minute, most times, folks are able to give us a week or more notice so that we can inform the next person on the waiting list. That way there's a chance to fill the trip as planned, and the money goes back into the coffers so that we may continue to offer new and exciting events each year. So please, be sure that when you do sign up for a special event, you send in the registration fee where required, pay the balance when due, and if you must cancel, do it ASAP. Thanks.

Here's to another great year of AFW adventures.

enjoy the journey ... Priscilla



Having lunch and enjoying the view of Pennsylvania's Grand Canyon

Forest Bathing

No, this is not about jumping into ponds and streams in the wilderness. The Japanese call it "shinrin-yoku" ... a natural form of therapy during which we absorb the calming effects of the smell, the sound and the color of the forest, something that AFW hikers already know intuitively and from experience.

In recent years, Japanese researchers discovered an added benefit of a hike in the woods ... it can also boost our immune system. They conducted two experiments during which a group of 12 men and a group of 13 women, respectively, went on three leisurely strolls in the forest over 3 days. After the trip, they found an increase of natural killer cells (that help fight invading viruses) in the participants' blood levels that lasted for up to 30 days. They attributed this partly to the inhaling of an airborne chemical called phytoncides that plants and trees emit to protect foliage from microbes; this same chemical also stimulates our immune system.

Now, that's another very good reason to keep hiking!
For more information, visit:

- <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20080502f1.html>
- <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17903349>
- <http://www.japanfs.org/en/pages/025839.html>



Why I Hike

When posed the question, our members responded eloquently in prose and verse. Many of us were unable to contain our exuberance within the 25-words guideline but a few deftly zeroed in on point. Here are the responses (in alphabetical order by first name), each from the heart and each a testament to the joys and benefits of hiking. As you read them, you will pause, smile, and may say to yourself, "Hmmm...that's how I feel, too."

"I always enjoyed hiking. I love walking in the woods, over fields, along a brook or river. I love climbing hills and enjoy the views."

— Alice K

"You would think for someone who grew up in NYC that I would barely know what a tree looks like. Some of my earliest memories are spending summer days exploring the "wilds" of urban parks. Anywhere clusters of trees grew I could pretend all sorts of adventures. As an adult, extending my instincts into hiking came naturally. Simply put, it feels great on every level; mentally, emotionally and physically."

— Betty P

"I hike because it is a way to meet interesting, supportive people, many of whom have become friends, and most of all because I feel so good physically and mentally at the end of a long and strenuous hike."

— Dagi M

"Like many people, I work at a desk all week and miss having the connection to the great outdoors – something our ancestors took for granted because it was much more a part of their daily existence. I hike to get out and move around in nature. Being outside feels good."

— Dara M

"I enjoy hiking because it takes my mind into another place. It relaxes me into a peaceful bliss. Any negative thoughts of the day just.....disappear!"

— Deborah A

"For the calmness, the beauty, the challenge, and the camaraderie...it is energizing, sometimes exhausting, but the result is the same...it feels good, the best tonic around."

— Dolores A

"For the sheer beauty, the expansive space and because the wilderness brings me home."

— Elaine S

"To smell the clean forest, to feel the soft pine needles under my boots, to hear my crampons crunch on the pure white snow, to sense the presence of hidden animals, to see a sparkling waterfall or the vast expanse of mountains, to sweat and say I did it and to enjoy the peaceful solitude or the soulful camaraderie of my fellow hikers."

— Georgette F

"For the joy in something as simple as a babbling brook, as beautiful as a colorful mushroom, as awesome as a sunset and as humbling as a summer storm. Because it's different and the cheapest therapy you can find."

— Jackie R

"I like to hike because when I am in the woods, even for one day or one hour, I have been on a vacation surrounded by nature and to me nothing is better than that...it makes me happy; it relieves the stress of the week and I feel whole again."

— Janie S

"Hiking makes me feel at peace in times of trouble and grounded when times are good. And the like-minded women make me laugh and think."

— Jen D

"Hiking is not only invigorating, but gives you health benefits and relieves stress. I love connecting to the outdoors, absorbing as much of my surroundings as I can."

— Joan M

"It is so easy in our lives to get wrapped up in the "me" – my family, my job, my friends. However, spending time in the woods makes me realize that, in reality, I am really just a very small part of this world. Each one of us and every other living thing is part of the much larger interconnected web of existence. This is humbling."

— Judy M

"Cares drop to the ground
When my feet feel the rough rocks
And I breathe the wind."

— Justine T

"When I reach the summit and look at the beautiful vistas it gets me away from myself and reminds me that there is a higher order to the universe and it was created in 1 week!"

— Karen L

"Outdoor activities clear my mind and reduce stress from a busy corporate life. Most importantly, I love hiking in the company of amazing, interesting women."

— LeighAnn B

"Hiking is therapy for me. No matter what mood I'm in when I start, I always end a much happier person!"

— Linda S

"Because of the woods. Because of the sound of a bird singing, a tree bending, the wind blowing. Hiking is my meditation, stress relief, anti-anxiety drug and prayer all in one. Standing on top of a mountain, I cannot help but feel somehow small, yet somehow empowered – because I am a part of it. I hike because I cannot imagine not hiking."

— Lori D

"It clears my head, nourishes my soul and fills my heart."

— Priscilla P

"The trail is steep, rolling, rocky, piney, long. Laughter makes the feet fly (Watch your step!).

The view, at last, and lunch...ah, lunch.

Then descent — ache, pinch, pain
(I hate my boots!!)

The end."

— Lynne G

"For me, hiking is social, physical and meditative. Conversations are more relaxed and unstructured on the trail than when building-bound. The physical challenge and success of getting up and down and across and over are empowering. I find myself thinking, "If I can do this, then that silly little project sure isn't going to stop me!" Finally, the quietness and singularity of hiking, even with a group, allows me to be with me, free of distractions and obligations."

— Mary S

"I like challenging hikes and rock scrambles, as well as a relaxing stroll alongside a stream. I like the peaks, pines, and Indian pipes, the Mt. Laurel forests, puddingstone rocks, and the bucolic scenes and vistas just over the next hill or all the way to the Manhattan skyline. I like hiking in all seasons, which makes the same hike different. But mostly, I like hiking with AFW friends."

— Nancy M

"I enjoy hiking because it is both peaceful and exhilarating at the same time. I especially like to hike with AFW because I meet fun and friendly women who inspire me to keep hiking!"

— Shalini T

"for the exercise and the fresh air;
the conversations, friendships, and laughter;
the silences;
the views, both small and large (they just fill me);
the renewal."

— Sherri B

"Challenges my body...unscrambles my mind...fills my senses...leads me to that reflective "aahhh" moment after a shower, cuppa tea in hand, feeling awed, inspired and grateful."

— Sook-Kuen C

"A long climb, breathtaking view, nothing else matters, all stress is gone, I feel alive, I can handle anything. When I hike I'm at peace."

— Sue R(a)

"Hiking is a form of prayer and meditation. I hear the voice of God in birdsong and in the sound of a stream's running water. I feel His presence in the breeze and the soft rain. I experience His love in my fellow hikers."

— Sue R(i)

Expanding Our Horizons ... Beyond AFW

This continuing series lets us share in some of our members' passions and adventures outside of AFW. We have read about "hut-to-hut" hiking in the White Mountains, biking across Iowa, training for a Tae Kwan Do black belt and now

ROWING By Sue

I love to row. I'm fairly new to the sport, having been introduced to it just 2½ years ago on Mother's Day when my daughter's high school rowing coach, Gail, took her team's mothers out, as a treat, and showed us how to row. That day, I realized I had found my niche and my new passion and it was the end of my non-rowing life! As soon as I possibly could, I started rowing lessons twice a week for 4 weeks, then became a member of Passaic River Rowing Association and joined other rowers in community rowing 3 days a week, never missing a chance to row. I also learned to row a single. After the first year, I joined the competitive team to compete in regattas and have been racing at every opportunity.

Sweep or Scull?

There are two types of rowing – a sweep rower uses one long oar while a sculler uses two shorter oars. Boats (also called shells) come in different sizes. I learned to row in an "8 shell" which fits 8 sweep rowers and a coxswain. Now, I prefer to scull and go out either in a quad (4 sculler), a double (2 sculler), or a single (1 sculler).

Technique

It does not take long to learn the basic stroke.

The rower sits on a seat that's on a slide, feet placed in shoes that are attached to the boat.



The stroke consists of sliding forward in the seat, dropping the oars in the water and pushing back with the legs, all the while controlling the oars going in and out of the water like a lever. The power to move the boat comes not so much from the arms (a common misconception), but from the legs.

The challenge is perfecting the stroke and timing it to exactly everyone else's in the boat. Rowers face the stern (rear) of the boat. In a boat with a coxswain, the cox faces front and watches where they're going, steers the boat and gives commands to rowers. In a coxless boat, the person in the bow (front) seat acts as the cox, giving commands and turning around from time to time to see where they're going so the rowers don't hit anything. In a quad the bow person's shoe is attached to long poles to the rudder for steering. In doubles and singles, steering is done with the oars.

Everyone in a boat works in unison, whether it's rowing or carrying the boat, so it's important to learn the many different words and commands used in rowing to follow instructions. Here are some examples. When the cox says, "Let it run", it means to stop rowing and let the boat glide on its own. "Check it down" means to square your blades and stop the boat, "Weigh enough" means to stop whatever you're doing whether it's rowing or carrying the boat, and so on.

Practice makes perfect.

I row in the early morning at least 5 days a week. During the week we're on the water at 5 a.m.; on weekends I'll "sleep in" and

row around 7 a.m. Early morning is the best time to row – the river is calm and peaceful. It's such a treat to see an egret or heron wading in the water, or even a red tail hawk sitting on its perch watching as we row by.

The Races!

There are two types of races. Sprint races, held in the summer, are 1,000 meters long. Typically there are 5 or 6 boats in a heat racing against one another. It only takes around 4 minutes for the actual sprint race, but that's 4 minutes of using every bit of strength and stamina you have. Head races, held in the fall, can have any number of boats competing, because the races are timed. They are approximately 5,000 meters long and take around 20 minutes to complete. In head races, you need to pace yourself so you can last the entire race; around the last 500 meters you sprint and give it all you got.

Going to the races is an all day affair and more. On the day before, we de-rig the boats and load them on a trailer or a pickup truck, depending on the number and the size of the boats we're bringing. A trailer can take up to 10 boats, the large 8's and the quads. A double or a single can go on a rack in a pickup truck.

We frequently race on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia, but we also have been to New York, Delaware and Connecticut. Races usually begin around 8 a.m. and end by 6 p.m. After the races, the boats have to be de-rigged and loaded for the drive back to the boat house where they are unloaded ... again. It's not unusual on a race day to leave home at 5 a.m. and not get back until 9 p.m.

Why do I do it?

Rowing is not just continuous motion. It's not just a passion. It's my life. I started rowing on a whim and that whim has grown into an obsession to strive, to perform my best while being able to forget the complexity of my life. Through rowing I am able to sit back, relax, and feel comfort in the pain of performance. My life is rowing. I love to row.

Thanks, Gail, for opening this door.

If you would like to try out rowing, sign up for our Rowing Crew Workshop on Saturday, May 30. You can read more about the workshop in the Adventure Menu.



On a fall hike in Norvin Green

A LESSON LEARNED – The Importance of Water

By Judy

On a very hot day last July, an AFW strenuous hike was aborted half way through. The reason? Not enough water. But we did learn a good lesson, a reminder about the importance of water on hikes and early symptoms of heat exhaustion:

- On hot days, take extra water, three liters or more, including at least one sports drink or powder.
- Take frequent sips of water instead of waiting until you are thirsty. This is when a water bladder and hose are especially helpful.
- Be alert for the first symptoms of heat related problems, such as leg or abdominal cramps and fatigue. If this occurs, rest, drink, stretch and gently massage the area. If the symptoms continue, it is best to cut the hike short.
- Be aware of other hikers and their condition. It's always good to remind each other to drink.

Heat cramps, if ignored, can lead to heat exhaustion and potentially more serious medical problems. So never underestimate the importance of water on hikes. It's better to be safe and well hydrated.

MacEvoy Trail Spring Clean-up

Put on your hiking boots, bring a pair of gloves, garbage bags and water and join other AFW volunteers on an easy hike to clean up the MacEvoy Trail in Ramapo Mt. State Forest. Date: Saturday, April 25. Meeting Place: Ramapo Mt. State Forest, Lower Lot.

HELP WANTED

AFW volunteers have been maintaining the MacEvoy Trail in Ramapo Mountain State Forest in NJ since the early 1990s. Jen led this effort ably for many years and is now looking to pass the baton on to the next volunteer leader.

Position: MacEvoy Trail Maintenance Leader

Responsibilities: Twice a year, in the spring and fall,

- Lead AFW volunteers to pick up litter and clip back plants to keep the trail passable
- Blaze the trail with new markings where the old ones have faded or dropped off.
- Write a report for her trail supervisor at the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference

Compensation: High emotional satisfaction from volunteering and "giving back"

Questions? Interested? Please email Priscilla at ppogie@aol.com

Updates and Alerts

Be sure to check the Home Page of our website regularly for changes and additions to the Adventure Schedule.



On City Paths hike at Guss' Pickles in lower Manhattan

Membership Privacy

AFW does not allow the use of its membership list for anything other than AFW business. For more information on how we protect our membership directory, please see our Privacy Statement on the "Join Us" page of AFW's website.

Save Your Spot

Our weekend trips are popular and often have a waiting list. Sending in your deposit by the required date is the only way to guarantee your registration. Without payment, AFW will have to release your spot to the next person on the waiting list.

Sign-ups & Cancellations

Registering for an event is easy ... just go to the "Event Sign-up" page on our website. To cancel out of an event, please either send an email to contactus@adventuresforwomen.org, call 973-644-3592, or contact the leader of the event.

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