

MARCH 2015

THE MOUNTAIN EAR

The Monthly Newsletter of the Rocky Mountaineers



Climb. Hike. Ski. Bike. Paddle. Dedicated to the Enjoyment and Promotion of Responsible Outdoor Adventure.

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The Mountain Ear is the club newsletter of The Rocky Mountaineers and is published at the end of every month. Anyone wishing to contribute articles of interest are welcomed and encouraged to do so - contact the editor.

Membership application can be found at the end of the newsletter.

ABOUT THE CLUB:

Mission Statement:

The Rocky Mountaineers is a non-profit club dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of responsible outdoor adventures.

Meetings and Presentations: Meetings are held the second Tuesday, September through May, at 6:00 PM at the Trail Head. Each meeting is followed by a featured presentation or speaker at 7:00 PM.

Please be sure to check out our **Facebook group** to receive the latest up-to-date news and post short-notice trip proposals:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/rockymountaineers/>

Cover Photo: The Bitterroot Mountains as seen from near Palisade Mountain in the Sapphires. Photo by Dan Saxton.

***Attention: Annual Club dues need to be paid by
April 30!***

See last page of newsletter for details on how to pay.

TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, March 7, 2015 - Sapphires Ramble (Palisade Mountain, 8,463')



The high part of the Bitterroots from Trapper to El Capitan from the summit of Palisade Mountain. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Johnathan Bardsley joined me for this exploratory foray into the Sapphire Mountains, which I've gazed at across the Bitterroot Valley for a while now but didn't make the time to get into them until today. We went into the Willow Creek area east of Corvallis, which is probably one of the nicest parts of the entire range, being unburnt and with a more distinct subalpine flavor.

The Willow Creek Road was passable all the way to the trailhead at 5,400', with some care needed for icy sections. We parked a bit lower down at a road junction at 7:30am to allow for a possible loop over Skalkaho Mountain.

The first section of the trail along Willow Creek was pretty hard-packed, and then the new snow got deeper as it begins climbing up the steep slope below Palisade Mountain. Both of us had snowshoes on at about 6,500' and kept them on the whole time up high. The snow in general was quite unconsolidated and soft, especially in shady aspects - there was about 4-5 feet of snowpack up there. Snowshoes were mandatory.



The steep slope we went across. Photo by Dan Saxton.

We passed below the striking palisade cliffs for which Palisade Mountain is most likely named, and at one point made a dicey traverse across a half-icy slope (a sunny south-facing aspect) which my snowshoe crampons couldn't handle very well - I slipped and slid about 25 feet, fortunately it was close to the bottom of the slope. That took away a lot of my energy level, but I knew I could still make Palisade!

We labored up to the top at about 3 3/4 hrs from the trailhead, and agreed that the big loop back over Skalkaho Mountain would not happen due to the uneven snow conditions, time constraints, and energy levels. It was very beautiful up there with a slight breeze, and the whole Bitterroots forming a grand panorama to the west.

Typical Sapphires terrain eastward towards Dome-Shaped Mountain. Photo by Dan Saxton.





Palisade Mountain from the slopes of Peak 8,399'. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Now that we didn't have to hurry, we could take our time to check out Peak 8,399', the next bump along the ridge from Palisade. There were lots of nice trees on the way, though the snow grew stickier as the day warmed. The top of the peak is wooded, so we

dropped off the west end, looking for a possible view to have lunch at. We found it at about 8,000' on the south end of the basin across from Palisade Mountain, a nice vista towards the Heavenly Twins and Saint Mary Peak.

The snow was quite deep going off this side, and we eventually rejoined our tracks from earlier, following the Willow Creek Trail back to my truck, which we reached at 4pm. It was definitely a good idea not to do Skalkaho today!

This was a bit more challenging of a hike than I thought due to the snow conditions, but I think this was a great introductory area to the Sapphires (in summer, you can drive up quite high.....)! *Dan Saxton*

One of the Palisades on the way down. Photo by Dan Saxton.



Saturday-Sunday, March 14-15, 2015 - Chief Joseph Weekend

The Chief Joseph Cross-Country Ski area's snow pack was holding up well, at about 2-3 feet of snow, despite our recent warm weather. Eileen and Fred S. skied in a delightfully sunny day on Fri. the 13th. Lois C., Steve S., and Julie and David K. met them at the warming hut at noon on Sat., a cloudy but warm day. There was no hut host, so there was no fire in the stove and it was as cold inside as out, about 42 degrees. We had a lunch in the hut then headed out to ski. Lois snowshoed around the area, and Eileen wandered around on skis. Steve and Fred skied up to the top of the Gold Metal trail, then Fred went back to the hut and Steve skied some of the trails in the north east edge of the area. Julie and David decided to ski Banshee, as we didn't get to do it last year when we had planned on going up on Sun. but as it was raining just went back home instead. It looked very much like that was what was going to happen this year also. The top layer of snow was soft enough to get a good bite with a snowplow, but still hard enough to get a good run if you wanted to. It was one of the nicest skis of Banshee we'd ever had, good control. Our fears of having trouble getting back uphill didn't materialize and we made good time, but it started to spit rain as we finished getting back to the hut around 3pm, the rain was right on the predicted time. Steve was returning to the hut about the same time. We saw maybe 8 other people the entire day. Lois had built a fire and we had a snack in the hut then all went back to the parking lot, now in some serious rain and wind. I realized that I had lots of gloves in my pack for if it got colder, but no waterproof ones for these kind of conditions

We stayed at cabins at the Broad Axe Lodge at Sula, it was raining a little less down there as we unloaded. We had a potluck dinner planned for 5:30, Lois and Steve were trying to figure out how to get the Grizz Men's playoff basketball game. It was raining more, and there were sheep and mule deer on some of the closer hills. Lois and Steve called the Rocky Knob and Lost Trail Hot Springs, and tried the Broad Axe Bar, but no luck on getting the game. They tried Lois' pickup radio, then ours, and moving the truck a few feet brought the game in well. David and Steve listened while Lois, Eileen, and I played Yatzee with 5 of the 6 Farkle dice and a contrived score card. Lois won and went out to listen to the game as David came back in and Eileen and Fred went back to their cabin. David and I played solitaire with two separate decks of cards. Lois and Steve came back into report that the Grizz had lost. We played poker, using Qwerkle tiles as chips until 11pm. David won.

It rained all night, and more Sun. morning - we could see some of the high ridges off to the west of Sula and there wasn't anymore snow up there than there had been the night before. There was a good chance it was still raining at Chief Joseph. The sheep were on closer hills. We slept late, had a leisurely breakfast, packed and loaded in the rain and headed home.

Julia Kahl

Tuesday, March 17, 2015 - Mount Jumbo

There was a cold, blustery wind blowing and I debated to myself about doing Mount Jumbo. I was bundled up and had more in the daypack, so slowly and surely hiked up the switchbacks on the south end. When I got to the more gentle ridge, the wind died down. There were the usual great views from the top, and plants are getting green. On the way down it rained gently but didn't last long. The trail was muddy but not too slippery. When I

got back to the car it was almost pleasant and the sun was almost out. I'd be willing to go again if anyone else wants to. Soon there should be lots of wildflowers - I saw only a few Arnicas down low and a few small Pink Flocks up high. *Steve Schombel*

Saturday, March 28, 2015 - Peak 6,720+'



Heading up Peak 6,720+', looking west to Lion Point and the beginning of the Great Burn. Photo by Dan Saxton.

I had originally planned to do Piquett Mountain down by Painted Rocks Lake up the West Fork of the Bitterroot River, but the forecast worsened from the time I posted the trip, so I thought up a couple alternatives. One of them, which I chose, was Peak 6,720+', which is the highest peak in the large mass of mountains between Petty and Fish Creeks SW of Albion. It has 1,920' of prominence, which is pretty significant - yet is overlooked because it's not named (There was a trip report in the newsletter last year for Deer Peak, the highest named summit in that area, which is actually just a bit lower). This peak looked to be a straightforward climb up its west ridge from Fish Creek Road, so I decided to try for it this afternoon after the cold front passed. Todd Kaye joined me, and we reached the TH at 1pm.

The TH is about 15 miles in from the N along Fish Creek Road, between Lion Creek and Feather Gulch, and is at a gated road which leads about 100 yards to a pile of old culverts. We forked left after the culverts to go directly up the ridge - an open corridor made for

straightforward climbing up the steep slope. We continued up the ridge, using some old logging roads where they ran right along the crest. It was evident that this was an elk "superhighway" - loads and loads of elk droppings along the way. None of the famed ungulates deigned to unveil their presence, however (we did see a bunch of deer in different places along Fish Creek Road).



On the summit ridge of Peak 6,720+'. Note thin coating of snow on trees. Photo by Dan Saxton.

We had carried our snowshoes since I knew it was a wetter area that held snow longer - but the ridge was so open that snow on N facing slopes only began at about 5,500 feet, and there was basically no continuous snow until 6,500 feet. It's completely hikeable now.

There was on and off drizzle and snow showers most of the afternoon, but things stayed relatively dry. The winds picked up a bit more higher up, but we were thankfully protected by the trees along the summit ridge. On the top, there was a thin coating of new snow on the ground and on the trees - N facing slopes had considerably more snowpack, maybe 3 feet at most.



The summit of Peak 6,720+'. Photo by Dan Saxton.

The top was nice, but it was too cloudy for views. After staying a few minutes, we retraced our steps. It was quite nice coming down, with only a moderate breeze and ample sunlight lower down with balmy temperatures. We returned to my truck at 6pm, making for 5 hours of hiking, 7.5 miles RT trip, and 3,500 feet of elevation gain.

This is a good summit with relatively easy cross-country traveling - definitely recommended for those who want to get "off the beaten path!" I hear Burdette Creek to the south is very beautiful too, and the open woods may make an ascent of this peak feasible from there as well. *Dan Saxton*



Looking north down Fish Creek valley towards Williams Peak (see trip proposal below). Photo by Dan Saxton.

UPCOMING TRIPS AND ADVENTURES

Trip Notes:

Please contact the trip leader for more information regarding any listed trips. Mileage listed is round trip mileage. Elevation listed is gain only. For information on Class Rating see below:

Class Rating System

CLASS 1 – HIKING Mostly on trails, but may also include some easy cross country travel.

CLASS 2 – EASY SCRAMBLING Rugged off trail hiking, no hands required.

CLASS 3 – SCRAMBLING Use of hand to ascend some sections of rock. Little to no exposure; a fall would not likely cause serious injury.

CLASS 4 – CLIMBING Easy climbing, great exposure; a fall would quite possibly cause serious injury. Use of a rope and protection at times possible.

CLASS 5 – TECHNICAL CLIMBING Use of rope, protection and belay are a must.

CLASS 6 – AID CLIMBING Use of equipment to support your weight as you climb.

Saturday, April 4 – MT. JERUSALEM (Bitterroots)

Rating: Class 3; *Distance:* 16 miles round trip; *Elevation Gain:* 5000'

Description: Mt. Jerusalem is a remote 9355' peak north of the Nez Perce Fork of the Bitterroot River. This same trip was originally scheduled for February, but got weathered out. Trip will begin wherever I can get my vehicle to on FR 5635. Will follow this to FR 13480 then gain the ridge north of Sentimental Creek. Will follow this ridge to the NW and then north to the summit of Jerusalem. Return the same way. I intend to start hiking around 7:00am so will depart Missoula at 5:00am.

Equipment: Skis or snowshoes. Ice Axe. Crampons.

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

Saturday, April 25 – THE SHARD (Bitterroots)

Rating: Class 3; *Distance:* 14 miles round trip; *Elevation Gain:* 5200'

Description: The third highest peak in the Bitterroot Mountains (9883') sits on the ridge separating Chaffin Creek and Little Tin Cup drainages. Will start at the Chaffin Creek trailhead and hike up towards Hart Lake. From there the route will go to the north and up the south face of The Shard (intend to follow the route detailed by Mike Hoyt in his book).

Expect a fairly long day, so will plan on an early start. Possibility that this trip might morph into an overnigher.

Equipment: Skis or snowshoes. Ice Ax, Crampons.

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

Saturday, April 25, 2015 - TRAPPER PEAK

Description: Trapper Peak is the highest peak in the Bitterroots at 10,157'. The summer trailhead is at 6500' and usually we have to hike cross country for a mile or so and 1000' vertical to get to the summer trailhead. But this year there might be a good chance of driving to the summer trailhead. If it was cold the night before, one can often walk to the top without snowshoes or skis. Sometime skiing down is great with some soft snow over a consolidated base, but sometimes the snow is very soft and hard to ski at lower elevations.

You should have either snowshoes or skis with skins. If you might drive, you should have at least one shovel. A tow strap might also be useful.

Tentative departure time: 6:15 am from the northwest corner of the Brooks Street Walmart parking lot.

Leader: Alden Wright - trapper@rockymountaineers.com.

Sunday, April 26, 2015 - WILLIAMS PEAK AREA

Description: This is part of the new Fish Creek State Park, outside of Tarkio. We will explore some of the area's roads besides the ones that go to Williams Peak. This will be a go as far as you want sort of hike.

Leader: Julia Kahl - jawkal@rockymountaineers.com

Sat-Mon, May 23-25 – BLACKFOOT MTN. & MT. LOGAN (Glacier NP)

Rating: Class 4 or 5; *Distance:* 20-25 miles round trip; *Elevation Gain:* 5000-6000'

Description: If the Memorial Weekend weather cooperates (and that is a big IF), I would like to give this long planned trip another try (this is probably my fourth time listing this trip in this publication over the last 10 years). Would likely drive up to the east side of Glacier on Friday, camp, then get permits and start trip on Saturday morning. Hike up to Gunsight Lake then up onto the Blackfoot Glacier. Climb Blackfoot on Sunday and traverse to Logan, then return to camp. Hike out on Monday. This climb will require some steep snow climbing

(possibly even call it ice climbing), roped travel, and “winter camping”. Should be a good time!

Equipment: Ice axes, possibly ice tools, crampons, harness, snowshoes, winter camp gear.

Leader: Forest Dean, mtnear1@gmail.com

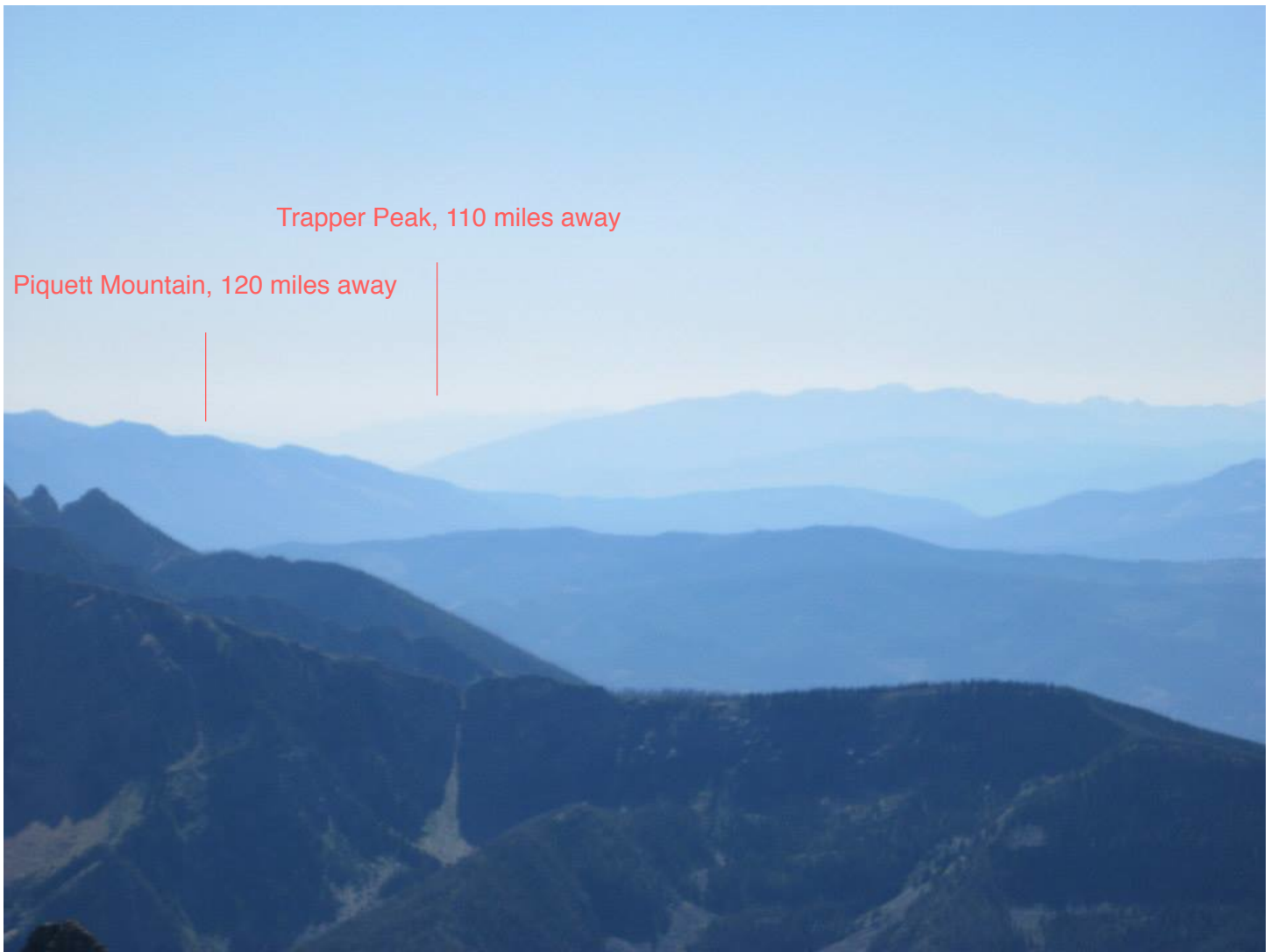
Mark on your Calendar: Glacier Classic August 28-30, 2015!

***Trip Proposals needed - inform Forest Dean (mtnear1@gmail.com)**



The other side of the Rattlesnake, from the slopes of Pistol Creek Lookout north of Arlee, MT (McLeod Peak at left). Photo by Dan Saxton.

Lines of Sight



Looking south from the summit of Mount Calowahcan in the Mission Mountains to the Bitterroots - a long view! Photo by Dan Saxton.

Many of us have scaled a majestic peak on a perfectly clear day and, looking off into the distance, see a striking summit far, far away. What peak is it, we wonder? In the past, one could only use maps and geographical expertise to make a good, educated guess on the identity of these mystery summits. Now, with the advent of the Internet, terrain and satellite data, and savvy computer programming, all doubts can vanish.

I will admit that line of sight research is one of my obsessive hobbies, and I always research the potential view from a summit before seeking to replicate it on a (hopefully) nice day. But I think it is a resource many other people can benefit from, and there is just something wonderful about knowing that such and such a peak is close to 100 or even 150 miles away. And it's an even greater challenge to bring excellent, precise photographic equipment to "capture" the line of sight to share with posterity!

There are many factors one must take into consideration when planning a trip to observe a good line of sight - weather forecast, humidity, position of the sun, atmospheric refraction, etc. Thus, a weighty element of both prudence and providence plays into this type of endeavor. That is one reason observing a quality line of sight is an occasion for great joy for its enthusiasts.

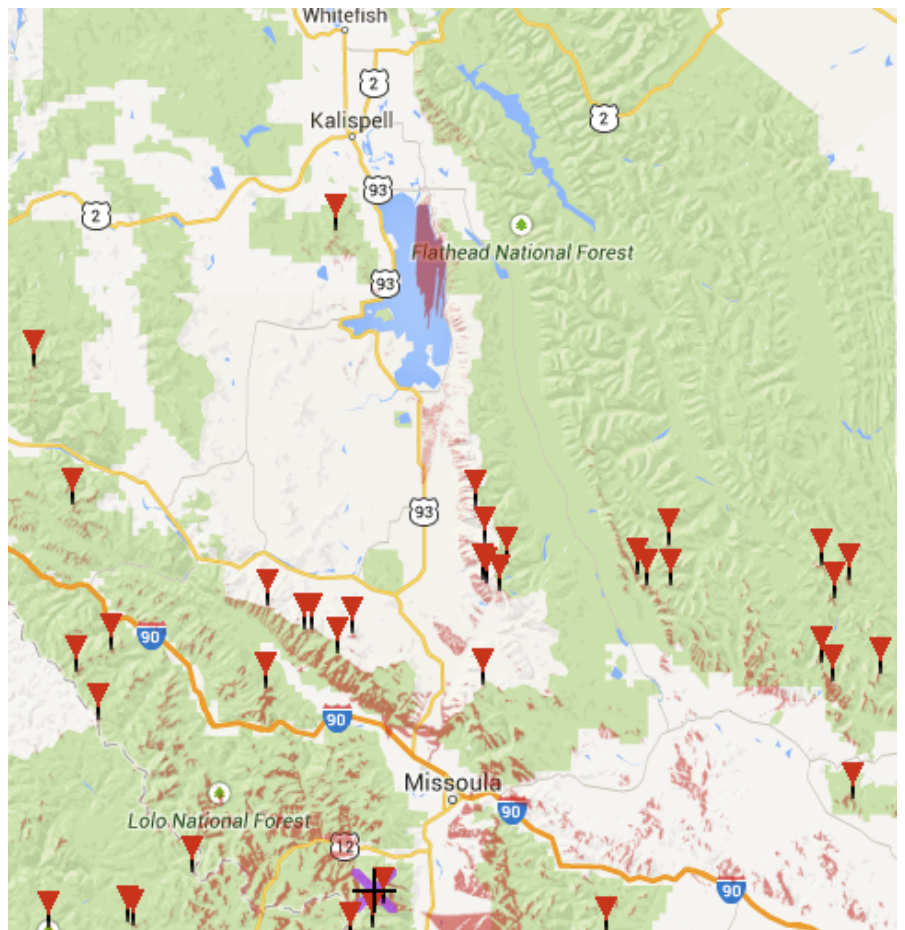
My primary purpose in this short synopsis about line-of-sight viewing is to demonstrate the best Internet resources one can use to figure out “what I am looking at.” I will use the three best websites to illustrate the long view many of us will be most interested in: seeing Glacier National Park from Lolo Peak (the true summit, not the 9,096’ north peak visible from most of Missoula). They are heywhatsthat.com, peakfinder.org, and udeuschle.de/Panoramen.html.

1. [www.heywhatstthat.com](http://www.heywhatsthat.com)

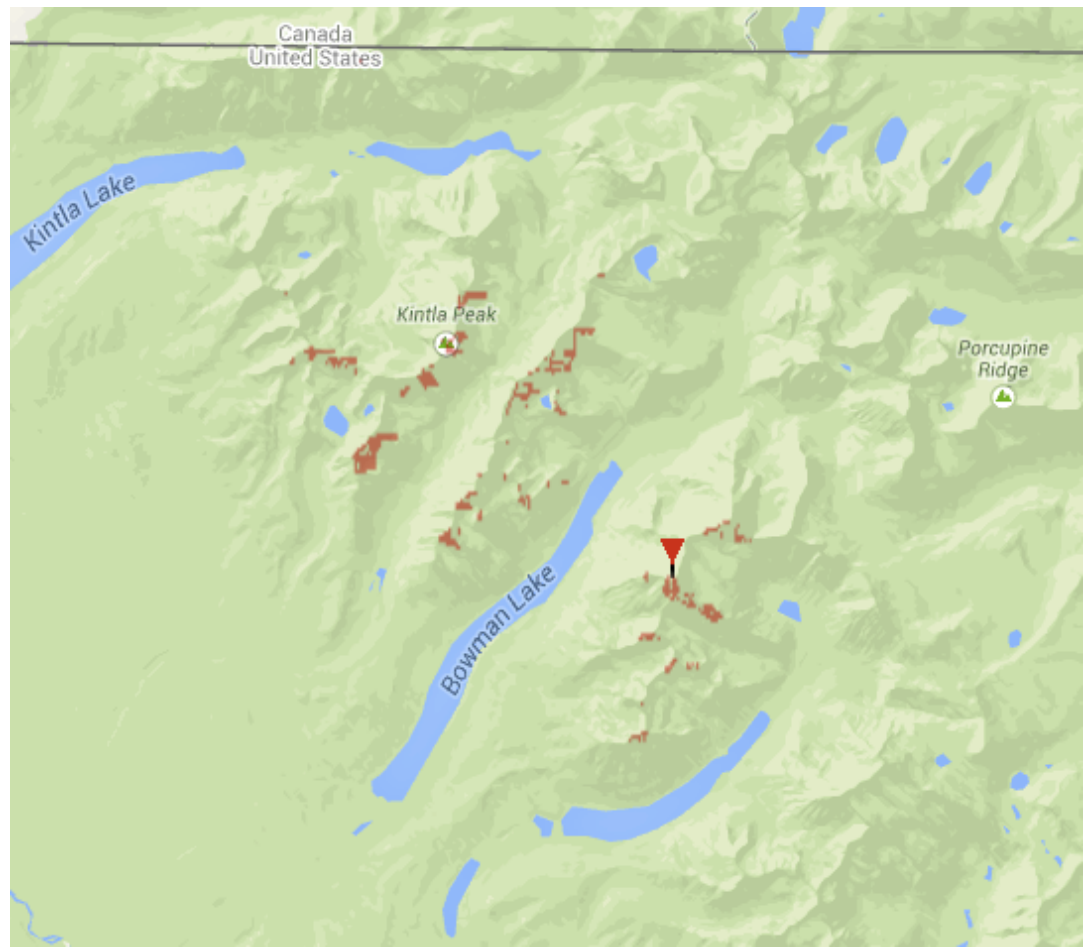
This is the oldest of the three websites and the most limited in terms of functionality, but it has an important advantage in one respect: *it overlays what you can see upon a map*. This is most useful if you are in one particular location and are wondering if you can see your house from the top of a mountain, such as Lolo Peak. It also works for valley locations, which don’t show up well in the other two websites.

To use the website, use the “New Panorama” function, find your desired summit/place on the map, and then create the panorama. After a minute or two, a small snapshot of the full view appears; this is not what you’re looking for. Rather, look at the map below, where everything you can see is shaded red. For example, here is the view north from Lolo Peak (the purple “X” at the bottom):

The inverted triangles represent summits that heywhatstthat.com identifies specifically. It shows the distance to these peaks too, but you can also click on the map and it will show how far the place you clicked on is from Lolo Peak. Perhaps the most interesting thing you can see on the map here is that a good chunk of Flathead Lake is visible from Lolo - up to almost 100 miles away from the peak. Of course, Missoula itself is not visible since most of it lies behind the north peak.



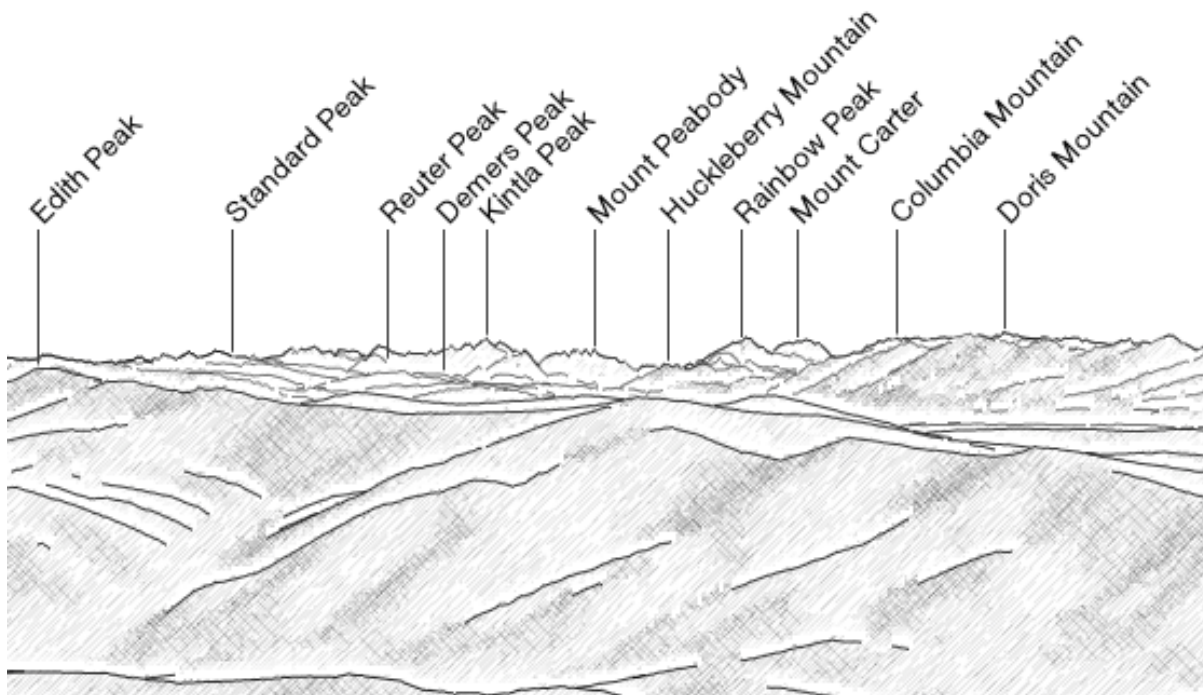
Here, the map shades what you can see of Glacier from Lolo Peak - Rainbow Peak is the lone summit marked with a triangle, but it is obvious that Mount Carter, Mount Peabody, and Kintla Peak are also visible.



2. www.peakfinder.org

Peakfinder is in my opinion, the most convenient resource overall to use for line of sight research. That is because it is sufficiently detailed yet minimal enough to quickly load the panorama. It is zoomable and labels the mountains, showing everything up to a distance of 200 miles. In actuality, there ARE views exceeding 200 miles, but the chance of these happening in real life is rather minimal, so the website sacrifices maximum distance for maximum usability. The website also works best for medium and long-distance views; it is rather “clunky” with the way it shapes mountains if they are viewed close-up.

To use Peakfinder, you can use a map and place the cursor on the point you want to generate the panorama from, choose the peak name from the directory, or enter in precise coordinates. So you can get both mountain and valley views from this website.

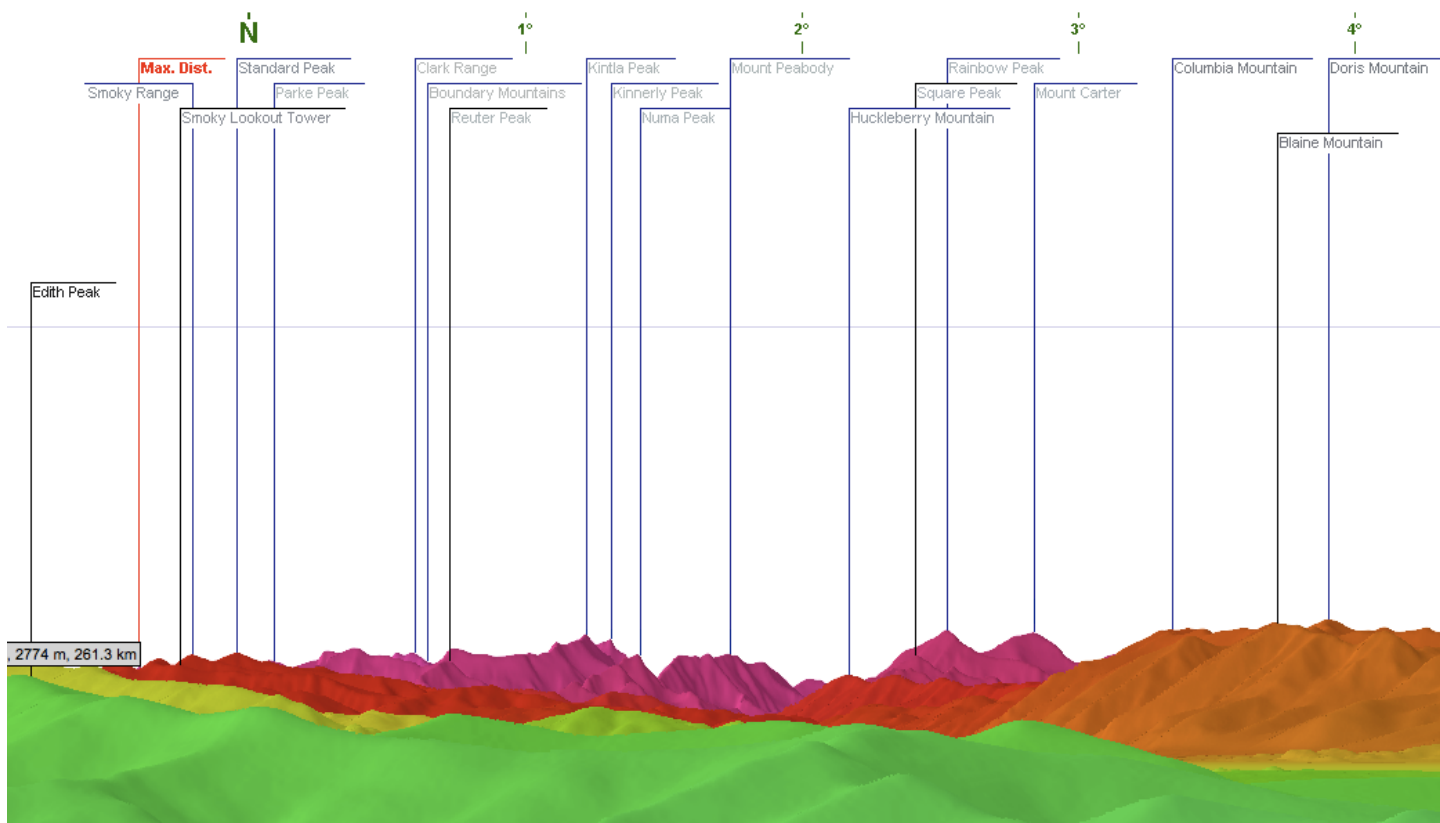


Above, you can see the view north from Lolo Peak to Glacier, with the peaks labeled (if you click on the names, it will show the distance, and you'll even have the option of jumping to a view FROM that peak!). The perfectly straight length of the Flathead Valley makes such a view possible; the peaks of the Swan Range block views of most of the other Glacier summits. Mount Cleveland is actually visible further to the right, off this panorama section, poking above the Swans.

3. <http://udeuschle.de/Panoramen.html>

I just recently started using this website; it was developed by a guy in Europe. Without doubt, it is the **best** resource for calculating precise, exact lines of sight. But the caveat is: it is hard to master because there are so many tools to use in generating the panorama you want, and it takes a long time and a lot of memory to load the view. However, once you figure out the website and can handle the slow loading time, **you will not be disappointed.**

To begin, when the panorama generator opens and shows the map, place the cursor upon the summit/location you desire, and then set the direction you want to see the view at. You can use all types of variables, such as height above the ground, zoom level, the width of the panorama, the distance, etc - an enormous range of possibilities. And best of all, *the distance is mathematically unlimited*. I prefer to use a zoom function of 10x for the distant lines of sight, which is most useful for showing the faraway peaks up close; **but do not use this zoom for a 360-degree view!** The server cannot handle that! Use "N," "S," or any other portion of the panorama, even setting the edges of the panorama by degrees of the circle if you so desire. One small area of regret is that the distances are apparently not convertible to miles yet.

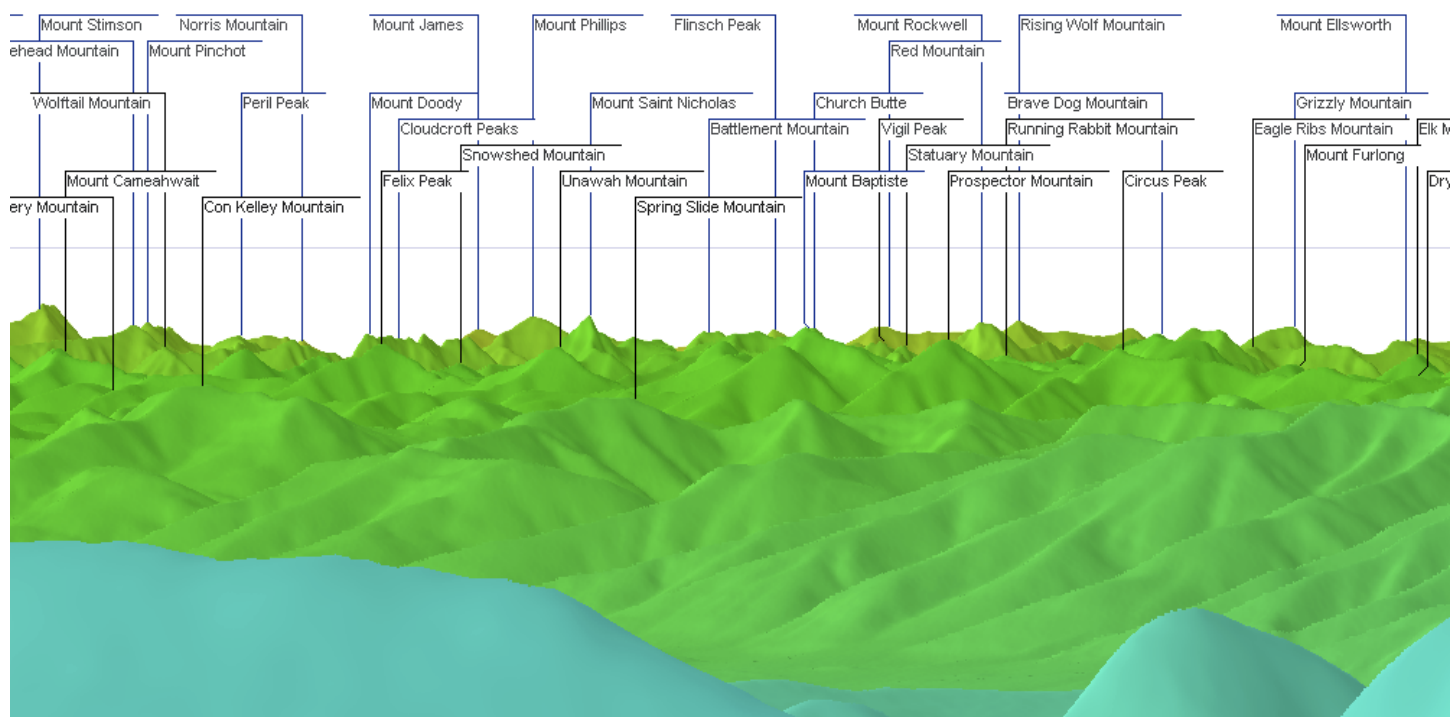


Here is the view of Lolo Peak to Glacier at a 10x zoom; it shows up larger on the actual website so you can read the labels. Note several neat things: you have the option to toggle the color scheme so distant peaks can be in certain colors. And the resolution of the peaks is much better than with Peakfinder. The “Maximum Distance” is even shown as a courtesy, to aid you in discovering the furthest possible view in that direction from Lolo Peak.

So, some of you want the numbers.....how far is it? Well, Kintla Peak is 157 miles away, and Rainbow Peak is 154 miles. The top of Long Knife Peak (marked as “Boundary Mountains”) is 160 miles away and you would almost certainly need a very good pair of binoculars to make it out. That is a very respectable view for Montana.

And you’re asking.....do I have a photo? Unfortunately, I do not. Nor can I find a photo on the Internet of Glacier from Lolo. The best bet of capturing this line of sight would be to go up on a crisp, clear winter day, have a camera with a good zoom lens, and point it north towards the white spires scraping the azure expanse.....If anyone takes up the challenge, I will happily publish such a photo in a future club newsletter and give proper recognition!

I'll close this section by posting a photo of Glacier from Mount Calowahcan and the computer-generated panorama version (5x zoom).....



Looking ahead.....

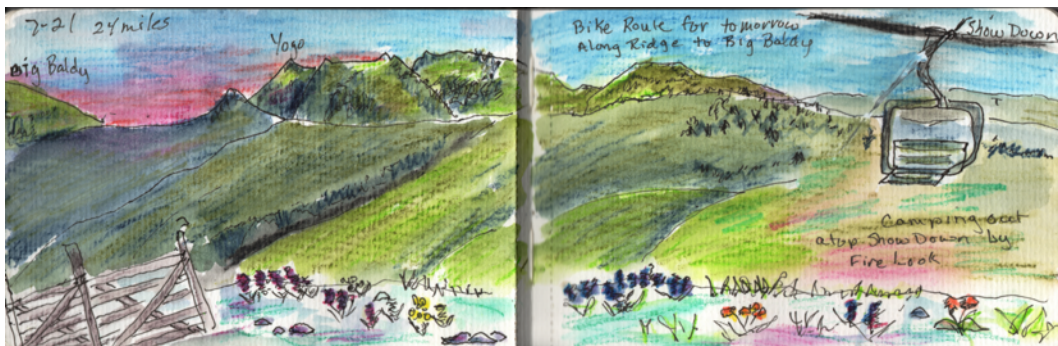
The Rocky Mountaineers will be meeting on Tuesday, April 14th, 2015, at 7pm at the Trail Head, 221 E. Front St, Missoula, to host the following presentation:

“Mountain Bike Exploration in the Little Belt Mountains” by Laurie Stalling and Kate Hasterlik



Did you ever want to cover more ground in the backcountry and not carry the weight on your back? Come hear about a 5-day exploration of the Little Belt Range by mountain bike. Julie, Kate and Laurie have been mountain bike touring together for the past six years. The tours have included portions of the Great Divide Route and the Gravelly Range outside of Virginia City. They will be presenting their latest tour of the Little Belts outside of Great Falls.

The presentation will also include a how-to Nature Journal along the way with watercolors. No artistic talent is needed, just a motivation to journal with few words.



Rocky Mountaineers' Meeting Minutes 3/10/2015

I. Call To Order: 6:20, MacKenzie River Pizza

II. Attendees: Alden Wright, Julie Kahl, Dan Saxton, Steve Schombel, Lois Crepeau, David Kahl

III. Treasurer's Report: \$597.01

IV. Discussions:

A. Glacier Classic need trips

B. Speakers - April, Bike Packing Ladies

C. Club dues due in April

D. Trips

1. Julie: Chief Joseph and Freezeout Lake, something for April - maybe Spotted Dog

2. Steve, Point of Rocks Mar. 28th

V. Adjourn 6:35 PM

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINEERS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00

Note: Membership includes all members of a family or household.

Make checks payable to 'The Rocky Mountaineers' and send to: The Rocky Mountaineers, PO Box 4262, Missoula, MT 59806

Name: _____

Additional Family Members' Names:

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone (optional): _____

Email: _____

Additional Email (optional):

Joining or maintaining your Rocky Mountaineers membership has never been easier!

PayPal is now available on the Rocky Mountaineers website. Click on the membership link on the main page.