

MARCH 2016

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.

Club Contacts

Website: <http://rockymountaineers.com>
e-mail: info@rockymountaineers.com

Mailing Address:
The Rocky Mountaineers
PO Box 4262
Missoula MT 59806

President: Steve Schombel
stephenschombel@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Paul Jensen
paulfjensen@yahoo.com

Secretary: Lois Crepeau
lcrepeau@centric.net

Treasurer: Steve Niday
seniday@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor: Dan Saxton
apologist497@yahoo.com

Webmaster: Alden Wright
rocky@wrightmontana.net

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 encouraged to do so - contact the editor. The 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: Next month's business meeting will be held on April 12, 2016, at 6:00 PM at MacKenzie River Pizza in downtown Missoula. The regular meeting with a featured presentation or speaker then follows at 7:00 PM at the Trail Head.

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: Looking south into the Great Burn from the summit of "Quartz Point" (7,770'), the highest point in Mineral County; Crater Mountain is prominent in the distance. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Message from the president:

April and May are some of the best months around here. Wildflowers start to come out, and it is time to start hiking instead of skiing. It is also the time when some things happen with the Rocky Mountaineers. **April is the month when the annual dues are due. So please join or renew by April 30.** Dues are still only **\$10.00**, and there is a Paypal account and a post office box to send a check to. See the last page of this newsletter for more info.

April is also the month when we take nominations from the floor for the officer positions. Then we have an annual election at the May picnic. The members who have paid up their dues by the end of April are the only ones eligible to vote.

It looks like most of the current officers are willing to stay on another year. Our newsletter editor is planning to get married and is moving, so we are looking for someone with some desire and experience. Actually, we do have a volunteer, but it would be better if some new people would get involved in positions of responsibility.

As for me, I'm starting some medical treatment soon. I may not be at the next meeting or picnic, nor will I be leading trips anytime soon. **If anyone wants to step forward and offer to be president next fall, I'd be happy.** It would be better for the club. I hope to see many of you as friends, especially at the Glacier Classic.

Goodbye for now, and successful climbing,

Steve Schombel



Interesting mix of light and shadows over the Bitterroots from Trapper Peak to El Capitan. Photo by Dan Saxton.

Trip Reports

Friday, February 26, 2016 - Rock Creek Tour



Rock Creek. Photo by Julia Kahl.

On this day, Steve Schombel, Lois Crepeau, Julie Kahl, and Eileen and Fred Schwanemann were given a tour of the Five Valleys Land Trust lands at the confluence of Rock Creek and the Clark Fork River, by Glenn Marangelo of the FVLT.

This is one of the few pieces of land that passes through the FVLT that they actually kept, where a nice log cabin on the property is for rent. Earlier owned and modified by a developer, who dug an illegal pond, the FVLT faced several challenges such as weed infestations and a large berm made from the dirt dug from the pond, next to a fence along Rock Creek Rd. With a heavy equipment class from Missoula College doing the work, the berm dirt had been moved back to the area of the pond, and last fall the former berm area had been replanted in native grasses. This was the first area we checked out, and we saw some grasses already coming up.

Next we walked around the south end of the pond, now about one half refilled in. It still contains some water with several ducks and mergansers enjoying it. This area will not be totally filled in but made into a wetland. A natural depression a little further to the south had been modified into a rocky ditch to seem like a stream coming into the pond. We crossed the ditch, and, a little further on, to the southwest of the pond, there is a stand of trees with a picnic table. Nearby is an old cabin that local lore says was, in like the 1930's, provided by friends for someone who today we would say "suffered from a social disability." The cabin is collapsing, and its outhouse leaned up against a tree. We were not sure if the outhouse was moved or the now large trees grew up out of the "hole."



The outhouse. Photo by Julia Kahl.

Here, Glen showed us some maps. One showed a future hiking trail that crossed the property from a Rock Creek Rd. trailhead to this area. Another map showed the land preservation of the area; another land trust company administered much of the land just west around the actual confluence of Rock Creek with the Clark Fork, and acquisition of another section also along Rock Creek was pending, probably by the other company. The land across the Clark Fork, north of Interstate 90, was mostly Forest Service land, some acquired thorough the Montana Legacy Project. There is also Forest Service land adjoining the property east of Rock Creek Rd.

From there we crossed some crusty snow in the field to a fence along what my GPS said was Stage Station Rd. It joins Rock Creek Rd. at the old stage station site and is gated there. We went through the gate, crossed the road, and went on to land administered by the other land company. There, we followed a trail down to a braided section of Rock Creek, stopped from gaining the main channel by a system of side channels and a cliff. Here, Glen explained that the new trail across the southern part of the property would connect up with this trail to create a walk-in fishing access.

We went back to the old cabin site and had lunch at the picnic table in the warm afternoon sun, then after a brief stop back at the cabin drove over to the parking lot on the east side of Rock Creek Rd. Steve remembered working on the party that set the posts for the parking area fence. In the fence was a ADA access style pass through. Two young men had just gone from their vehicle down to the Clark Fork to fly fish. We walked along the trail on the edge of a Clark Fork side channel a ways, and saw much evidence of both deer and elk use. Several thatcher ant mounds had ant activity. About the area of the old Rock Creek Rd. bridge, Eileen and Fred left us. To get past the old bridge site, you have to go up on a two track road, and there was a beaver lodge on the other side of the river there. We didn't see any beavers, but further up the bank on our side an immature bald eagle rested in a branch over the river. The road showed signs of recent use, and Glen thought that the Forest Service had brought back equipment to work on the access trails to their section of land just to the south. Looking up a steep bank, we could see a power line above us. We stopped and turned back just shy of the tree with the bald eagle, since the FVLT land ends at a gate just a bit beyond. It was a great way to spend a warm sunny afternoon and get a feeling for this special place in Montana. *Julia Kahl*



The cabin. Photo by Julia Kahl.

Friday-Sunday, March 11-13, 2016 - Chief Joseph Ski Weekend



Top of Banshee. Photo by Julia Kahl.

We hit a bonanza for skiing this weekend! For anyone that watched the slushy mix seen on the Lost Trail Pass (Bitterroot Divide) webcam, the one-mile distance and few feet of elevation gain up to Chief Joseph Pass (Continental Divide) made all the difference. Eileen and Fred S. stayed two nights at the Broad Axe, east of Sula, getting in a good ski on Friday. David and Julie K. picked up Lois C. and headed up Sat. morning. A stop in Hamilton to get something for the dessert for the evening's potluck dinner and visiting with folks at the parking lot had us running behind for our 1pm meeting time at the Gordon Reese Cabin. We pulled into the parking lot to a melting one inch or so of new snow. It was foggy and misty, but soon cleared off to a beautiful blue sky day; from the cabin we could see way east into the snow-covered peaks of the Anaconda-Pintler Mts. and the Pioneers. Eileen and Fred had waited for us at the cabin; we had lunch then they headed back to the Broad Axe, finishing up another good day of skiing. Lois was going to snowshoe around the Continental Divide, and David and I decided that now was the time to ski Banshee, with the skiff of new snow on it. I had waited all season to try out my new backcountry touring skis on Banshee; it took 10 minutes to go down and 45 minutes to 1 hr to get back up. The new snow had gotten soft and Banshee was slow compared to other years, but it was still a thrill - my new skis worked

well. Then we began the extremely annoying slog up the Joseph Creek Trail to the Timber Trail and back to the cabin for a 4pm meeting with Lois. We were actually on time, and just headed back to the truck. Lois had gone back to the parking lot with Eileen and Fred, visited with people, and enjoyed a leisurely snowshoe and rest at the cabin.

On the way to the Broad Axe, just a short ways up the East Fork of The Bitterroot River, we saw bighorn sheep and mule deer up on the ridge above the road. We stopped to take pictures and got to the lodge a little after 5pm. We settled into our cabin, got the food heating, and I went to the restaurant to settle up our bill (I thought). David and Lois were looking for the wildlife we usually see on hills around the lodge, but there was nothing other than some deer across the field outside the cabins. Eileen and Fred joined us for dinner and we visited until around 8pm. I had to go back to the restaurant with a question on the bill and to get a light bulb as our porch light was out. David and Lois cleaned up, and just as they were finishing a strong gust of wind blew the door open. It was very windy for the next 1/2 hour or so, then quieted down. We visited with Lois until 10pm or so - it was the night to turn clocks forward, but for us it really didn't matter tonight. We had all settled in and almost fallen asleep when Lois realized there was a bat flying around in her room. She got up and looked for a broom she couldn't find and when she got back to the room the bat was "gone"; she pulled the covers up over her head and got a good night's sleep anyway. We woke up to an inch or so of snow on everything - very pretty - in the morning. There were mule deer on the ridge across the road. Eileen and Fred stopped briefly on their way back to Missoula. We loaded up and headed back up to Chief Joseph, to not only 3-4 of new snow in the parking lot, but also newly groomed trails. Lois headed out for a day of snowshoeing and visiting, agreeing to meet back at the truck at 2pm.

David and I decided to ski Banshee again in the new conditions. We headed down the road, and the next thing we knew we were at the Technique Meadows (no longer a meadow) Loop on the Timber Trail. We had missed Banshee and theorized it had not been groomed or skied down. David's skis were sticking, and before we went back to check he put paraffin on the bottom of his skis. As we guessed, Banshee had been neither groomed nor skied down, and instead of skiing it we decided to do some exploring. Our only complaint about the trails at Chief Joseph is that, like today, all we wanted to do is ski Banshee and come back up to the parking lot, and not have to go up the Joseph Creek Trail to come out on the Timber Trail a mile or so away from the parking lot. Finding a shortcut was in order. Now, granted, the 300-400 foot elevation change between the parking lot and the bottom of Banshee (The Forks) is unchangeable, but you can do it short and steep, or long and more gentle like the Joseph Creek Trail does. Sometimes we'd prefer short and steep, so to that end we investigated what would happen if we dropped from the Timber Trail down to the Joseph Creek Trail below. We went into the Technique Meadows Loop and found the Tele Trail coming off the lower end of it, evidenced by traces of old tracks. We are not telemark skiers, and its steepness was immediately intimidating, David did try to ski down and fortunately found an open soft spot to bail out into a fall when he couldn't get up a good snow plow. I just started sidestepping down and David joined me, but his skis were slick from the paraffin, and any slight deviation from the perpendicular to the slope he had sent him sliding. He fell again about the time that I got tangled up in a tree well. But we just kept going downhill, following the GPS which still had yesterday's route on it, and eventually ended up on the Joseph Creek Trail at 7000 feet, 1/3-1/2 of the way up it. We had lunch in the brief sunshine

on the trail, visited with a guy from Minneapolis who had just skied Banshee on skate skis, and started back up the ungroomed Joseph Creek Trail to the ungroomed Timber Trail. The snow was soft, and now even David was clumping up. We tolerated it as we were going uphill, but the going was slow. We were relieved when we got on the groomed track where the Gold Medal Trail comes in, and we made better time going back to the parking lot, only a few minutes late. The day had turned cold and windy, and we headed back to Missoula, stopping at the Hamilton House in Victor for dinner.

If the snow conditions were right and we had the time, I wouldn't hesitate to go up from the Joseph Creek Trail to the Technique Meadows Loop, even without skins. But from looking at maps, going uphill from the Joseph Creek Trail to some part of the Tele Trail, not too far above it, might be a better option; that would bring us out at the base the of Let 'er Rip trail, on the Timber Trail. I figure it will take us at least two more trips to get the GPS coordinates necessary to try that out. Hey, it's a tough job but somebody's got to do it! *Julia Kahl*



Looking south from "Quartz Point" towards Saint Patrick Peak, Fish Creek area, and Lolo Peak at top right.
Photo by Dan Saxton.

Tuesday-Wednesday, March 22-23, 2016 - Freezeout Lake



Cow elk chewing their cud. Photo by Julia Kahl.

This trip got off to a good start with a sighting of bighorn sheep in the canyon outside of Bonner. Getting over the Divide to the front range was a little tricky though. Lois Crepeau and Zona Linderman encountered falling snow by Paws Up Ranch, but the pass was a little less tricky than when Hannah Warner, David & Julie Kahl went through a little later. We encountered snow around Ovando that got progressively worse as we got to around Lincoln. There was a snowplow in the eastbound lane going up the pass from Lincoln, but it turned off to go up to Flesher Pass, leaving us with a snowy slushy lane. A little below the pass, a semi with an empty flatbed was pulled partially out of the lane to put his chains on, but we could see enough of the westbound lane and its traffic for the vehicles, piling up behind it, to pull around. Coming down the other side, in the first turn a big pickup pulling a car hauler trailer, with several cars on it, was at a dead stop, blocking the westbound lane. Once again, with caution other vehicles could pull around it. When Steve Schombel came through not far behind us, the chaining up semi was gone, and the car hauler was being pulled by another pickup up to the pass. It snowed all the way to Simms, and through Fairfield to Choteau. Lois and Zona spent the afternoon driving around the lakes looking for geese, which we could hear but not see. We stopped to check out several ponds but saw almost no birds, and just went into Choteau to get our motel room. Steve checked in from Fairfield and told us that he wasn't far behind us.



Priest Butte. Photo by Julia Kahl.

We got settled and Steve came over for a bit, then we connected with Lois and Zona and went to the Elk Country Grill for a nice leisurely dinner. Steve decided that he would go down to the lake in hopes of catching the evening activity, and we

didn't see him again. Back in our motel room, we were sitting around reading when Lois came over to play a few games of Yatzee with Hannah and me.

The next morning, we awoke to blue skies and spent a leisurely morning, breakfast in our rooms, and went back to the lakes by 11am. Lois and Zona had gotten there earlier, and while driving around encountered a reporter from the Great Falls Tribune doing an article on the Freezeout Lake bird migration. He interviewed them and later us when we got there, while we were stopped by a pond with the largest raft of geese. David and Zona walked out on the causeway as wave after wave of snow geese came back from the morning feeding in the fields. With some low hanging clouds just to the north, it looked like the birds were just spilling out of the clouds. The official estimate was about 20,000 geese currently. Swans (tundra and trumpeter) numbering in the hundreds had just left, and we only saw three. David's favorite pelicans were numerous, as were the usual resident Canada geese, seagulls, and ducks. A harrier hawk worked the cattail stands bravely protected by red-winged blackbirds. We drove down and stopped at the south end of the lake where a meadow lark perched on a gate and sang. When we walked out on a causeway, the ducks moved away so they were hard to identify even with binoculars. We were sure there were pintails and golden eyes. The day was windy, as it often is there, and the 40% chance of rain or snow was starting to move in, in the form of drippy cells. We called it quits about 1pm and headed for home, seeing antelope on the way back to Simms as well as lots of mule deer, and stopped to photograph elk at the Upsata Lake base of Boyd Mt. (Clearwater Game Range).

On Mar. 24th, the Great Falls Tribune had both an article and a video on their website. The video shows David and Zona, who were interviewed and featured in a photo. The video is still on the site, whereas the article, that quoted Lois and Hannah, was only up for the day. Hannah's quote was something to the effect of "We live in an incredible place...I'm glad I got to see this." We all agree. *Julia Kahl*

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 hands 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.

April 17, 2016 - TICK RESISTANT HIKE - MILLER CREEK

Description: We will hike on logging roads in the Upper Miller Creek area, to stay out of ticks and wet brush. This can be a go as far as you want type hike.

Leader: Julia Kahl - jawkal@rockymountaineers.com

Late April 2016 - NORTH CROW CREEK FALLS

Description: This hike has been postponed from March until the end of April due to snow. This is another falls from the "Montana Waterfalls" book, and is an easy two mile hike from the trailhead. The falls are 22ft. high at an elevation of around 5200'. The trail continues up the canyon so it will be an as far as we feel like going hike. It is also on reservation land so tribal permits will be required. If interested send an e-mail to stephenschombel@yahoo.com, or look me up in the phone book. Keep tuned as I will be undergoing medical treatment so some details of this trip may change.

Leader: Stephen Schombel

Saturday, April 23, 2016 - TRAPPER PEAK

Description: Trapper Peak at 10,157' is the highest peak in the Bitterroots. The route is non-technical and there is essentially no avalanche danger. See <http://www.summitpost.org/standard-trail-133/165144>. The distance/elevation gain from the summer trailhead is 8 miles round trip and 3800' elevation gain. However, it is unlikely that we will be able to drive to the summer trailhead, so there might be up to another 3 miles and 1500' added. Plan on using snowshoes or skis with skins, although last year the snow was sufficiently consolidated that neither was necessary. Skiing or snowboarding is at most advanced/intermediate, but if the snow is very soft at lower elevations, this can make for challenging skiing. Since it is a 2-hour drive to the start, we will need to leave early, and it is an all-day trip.

Leader: Alden Wright - alden@rockymountaineers.com, 542-1966. Please let me know if you are planning on coming. **(Note: There is a chance Alden himself may not make the trip, but in that case someone else will lead; call him or monitor Facebook for the latest update)**

This is really long range.....but make plans for a ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY!
Monday, August 21, 2017

Mark your calendar - August 21, 2017, 11:30 a.m. - witness a **total solar eclipse** from the summit of the Grand Teton (i.e., where the moon totally obscures the disk of the sun, with only the sun's corona visible)! As the climb takes two days, you will need a camping permit for August 20th, reservations available January 4 - May 15, 2017 @ <http://www.recreation.gov/wildernessAreaDetails.do?contractCode=NRSO&parkId=72450>. The Grand is a technical climb, 5.4 via the Owen-Spalding Route, 5.5 on the Exum Ridge via Wall Street, 5.7+ on all other routes. The normal descent on Owen-Spalding involves a full-rope rappel. Totality will also be visible in the northern Wind Rivers, including Gannett Peak.

~Courtesy of Pat Caffrey, who is not leading a trip, but would like to spread awareness of this noteworthy event! I too have been keeping track of this eclipse opportunity and want to encourage as many people to see it as possible. See http://www.eclipse2017.org/2017/path_through_the_US.htm for more details and particularly Xavier Jubier's Google Map of the path here: http://xjubier.free.fr/en/site_pages/solar_eclipses/TSE_2017_GoogleMapFull.html. Please note that there are **many other** places to observe this eclipse, including your own private locales! The Sawtooths, White Clouds, Borah Peak, and many other spots are also in the path of totality; I highly encourage you to check the map and figure out the place you'd most like to observe the celestial wonders from, whether it be a popular place or with no one else around!

A total solar eclipse. Photo by Luc Viatour.



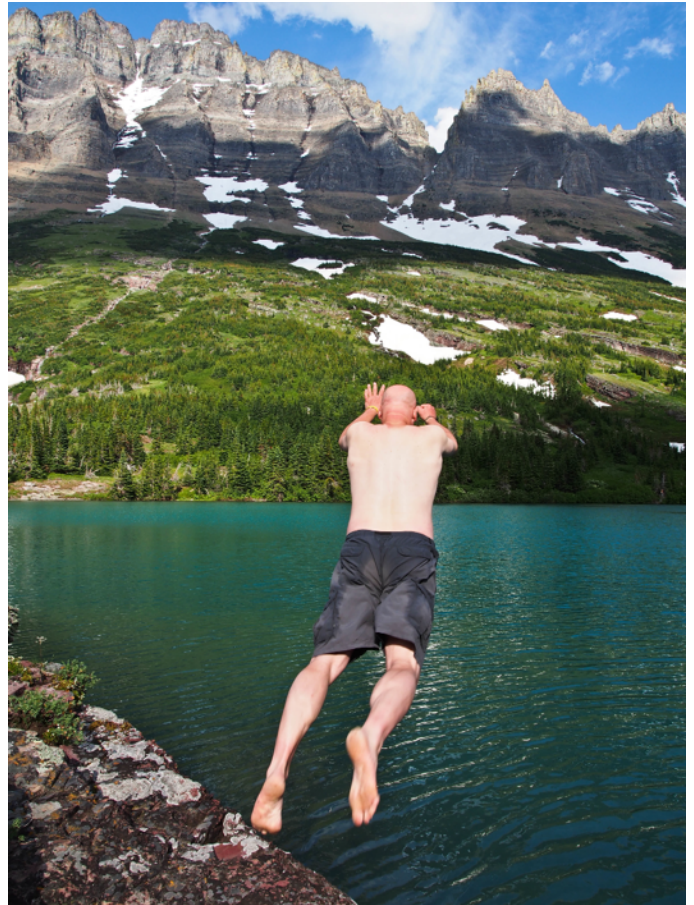
Looking ahead.....

The Rocky Mountaineers will **meet at the Trail Head**, 221 E. Front St., Missoula, at **7pm on Tuesday, April 12, 2016** for the following presentation:

Marc Ankenbauer - Jumping into All Named Lakes in Waterton-Glacier

Marc spent 10+ years attempting to be the first person ever to jump into all of the 168 named lakes in the [Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park](#) (more commonly known as [Glacier National Park in Montana](#), and [Waterton National Park](#) in Alberta, Canada). This is the wild mountainous area where the Rocky Mountains run over the U.S./Canadian border.

It is over a million acres of enormous mountains, dense forests, and abundant wildlife which includes the king of the forest, the grizzly bear. The glaciers and snowmelt in the region have created hundreds of frigid, crystalline lakes for him to jump into. He's been doing this to raise money for childhood cancer. Marc jumped into Fishercap Lake on September 8th, 2013, to complete his project.



Marc is also a photography nut, and has hundreds of photos from his travels. He will have a few dozen of the best for the show on April 12th, plus some interesting stories along the way. So come to the Trailhead at 7 PM and prepare to be entertained.

Marc in Gyrfalcon Lake, the very heart of Glacier.

Rocky Mountaineers' Meeting Minutes 3/8/2016

I. Call To Order: 6:15, MacKenzie River Pizza

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

III. Treasurer's Report: \$791.28, reflects some dues and Glacier Campground fees - also, the main account doesn't accrue interest, but the GMAR account does. Steve Niday isn't sure why.

IV. Discussions:

A. Speakers: Marc Ankenbauer, who jumped in every lake in Glacier, in April. Alden will get info.

B. Picnic in May in Pattee Canyon: yes, but may have to change venue at last minute.

C. Alden and Dan need to get out the word that dues are due in April.

D. Officers: Steve S. thinks he can stay on as president another year, Julie said she would take over the newsletter if necessary.

E. Discussed recent Facebook posts by Tim Bombaci, club member from WA, who wants to lead some trips over the summer. Alden asked him for more background information before we back him.

F. Discussed the issue of tonight's presenters having bicycles in a proposed wilderness area (Great Burn) briefly - we all felt they had done the best they could to get appropriate information before they went.

G. Trips:

1. Julie: Miller Creek logging road hike, 4/17/2016

2. Alden: Trapper Peak, 4/23/2016

3. Steve will probably postpone a Mission Mt. waterfall hike

V. Adjourn 6:30 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.