

## Buffalo Trails Cavalcade November 2006 Trip Log



Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup> our High Adventure group headed out to Buffalo Trails Scout Ranch in the heart of the Davis Mountains, for a 30 mile Cavalcade trip. Most of you remember we did this same trip last year at Thanksgiving, except it was with a 35+ pound backpack strapped to our back. Boy what a difference riding a horse with only a gallon size baggy worth of gear and a bedroll can make. We had 8 incredible horses that carried us with our gear, over the roughest west Texas terrain you can imagine. Probably the most noticeable difference from our last year of backpacking was the ability for all of us to simply view the countryside as we traveled by horseback. Unlike backpacking, you did not have to constantly watch where you put your feet; and you did not have to stop in

order to enjoy the beautiful scenery. Our horses knew exactly what to do and we were fortunate enough to have not one, but two Wranglers to guide us through the Davis Mountains.

Our Cavalcade group was made up of Alex Berno, Fletcher Counts, Catherine Counts, James MacLean, Chase Williford, James Wright and Doug and I. We arrived at BTSR around 5:00 pm on Saturday. We unloaded our few belongings into Buffalo Hall, where we were to spend our 1<sup>st</sup> night. We got a taste of what Cavalcade was all about, when we assisted in the nightly feeding of the horses. BTSR's Ranger Dan Damon and his very experienced right hand Cavalcade Wrangler, Logan Foust, gave us the layout of what to expect during our next few days on the trail. Sunday morning consisted of feeding the horses and then heading to the



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dining hall for our breakfast which was served by Logan's grandfather, Assistant Ranger Billy. You notice the order of feeding here is very important. The Scouts learned very early in this trip, that the horses' needs came first. They were always fed, watered, and taken care of before we were able to sit down and relax.



As our lessons continued on Sunday morning, Ranger Dan and Logan made the comment that we were a "quite bunch". Now, when has our High Adventure group been known as a "quite bunch"? But, they were right. We were not sure what came over all of us. We arrived at BTR with our usual loud, laughing, kidding around group. But as we were matched up with our horses (or mule in my case), a real quietness came over the entire group. I think we all realized we had a lot to learn, and also we were sharing this trip not just with each other, but with our horses. Each of us was solely responsible for our horse's well being over the next couple of days.

After a hearty lunch, and learning how to pack a bedroll and tie a Cavalcade knot, (hey, how many of you know that knot?) we waved farewell to the BTR base camp and headed off for Forbidden Mountain Cabin. For those of you who



know BTR, Forbidden Mountain is the impressive, massive, sheer sided mountain, which borders the north side of base camp. It took us about two hours to get to the top of Forbidden Mountain, where there was a cabin for us, and corals for the horses. The horses were fed and bedded down for the night and Ranger Dan served up a great pot of Cowboy Stew. Believe it

or not, the Scouts did not even bring out the cards that evening. I think we were all in bed by 8:30!

Our Monday ride was fueled with breakfast tacos warmed up and served outside around the campfire. While cooking breakfast, Ranger Dan also threw in extra ground meat and potatoes for some great lunchtime burritos. I think we foil wrapped about 24 burritos for the 10 of us. These burritos were packed in our saddle bags and ready to eat when lunchtime came. One thing for sure, we did not go hungry on this trip. All the food was well thought out and very hearty. As we had been warned, Monday was a FULL day of riding.



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By now we were all figuring out our horse's personality, and as Ranger Dan put it, we were "starting to bond" with our own horse. I know if you asked each of us to give you one word or phrase, which would describe our horse; we would have 8 completely different descriptions. All the way from lazy to sweet, to escape-artist, each of our horses had a personality all their own. The Cavalcade group rode a solid 7 hours on Monday and arrived at Jenkin's Cabin around 5:00 in the evening. Once again we hit the sack after settling the horses and a hearty dinner for ourselves.



Tuesday travels took us to see the Indian Paintings. What a treasure these paintings are, which lie deep in the most inaccessible parts of the Davis Mountains. These canyon bluff paintings consist of different layers of Indian artwork. The earliest of the works dating back to 800 BC and the later works, around 1000 AD. Ranger Dan, along with Buffalo Trail Boy Scout Ranch has worked closely with Sul Ross State University to develop a long-range plan for the management and protection of this incredible archeological find. As Ranger Dan explained, these finds were "Pages in History". Each layer of the dig and of the wall of art showed us how these ancient people lived in this rugged land. It was a really awesome site.



After leaving the Paintings we headed on down Little Aguja Canyon, passing many familiar landmarks. I say this, because we have hiked this canyon while backpacking and while at summer camp. The trail is well known to all BTSR Scouts and Scouters as the Green Trail. As it winds it's way back to the Scout ranch, you lose count how many times you cross the creek, you pass the Blue Hole, the Notch, and most famous of all, Needle Rock. By

this point, everyone started noticing that James Wright had stopped kicking Bob. In fact, Bob was trotting! No one had to tell Bob that his stall was just around the corner. All the

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horses knew the end of the ride was coming to a close. We arrived back at BTSR base camp around 4:30 and patted our horses' farewell. After their evening feed, we headed off to the Bear Cave Restaurant with Logan and his Grandfather for a great meal of Mexican food.

It was a group decision to leave at the crack of dawn early Wednesday morning to travel home, and we arrived in Clear Lake City around 4:30 pm. We were a tired bunch as we said our goodbyes, and we were all glad to have a few days left of vacation to relax at home. As always, Doug and I feel very privileged to be able to take these incredible adventures with the Scouts. Alex, Fletcher, Catherine, James M, Chase and James W, thank you all for making this trip a lot of fun and such a success.



Yours in Scouting,

Jody & Doug Williford

