

Troop 794

High Altitude Adventure

A Parent's guide to the 14er outing
May 2017 – Carl Dubler



Agenda

- 14er Rationale
- Troop 794 High Altitude Rules
- 14er Dangers and Mitigation
- Clothing and Gear
- Training Hikes



Troop 794 14er rationale

Why we do this

- Teach how to handle a challenge
- Build confidence through success
- Build resilience through failure
- Teach mountaineering skills
- Because Colorado!

But be aware of the downsides

- Perhaps the most dangerous outing
- Summit Fever
- Exposes a wide skills and fitness gap
- Patience will be tested



Troop 794 14er rules

General rules

- You are not entitled to the summit
- Our primary goal is to teach (previous slide) and return safely. The summit is a secondary goal.
- When the SM, OC, or AIC* says it is time to return, do so without complaint
- Change trail groups only with permission of the SM, OC, or AIC
- Obey the Scout Law and Outdoor Code
- Always use the buddy system
- Always use common sense
- Class 1 or 2 routes only

For scouts new to 14er with our troop

- A parent or guardian must accompany the new scout
- If the scout must turn back, the parent/guardian must go with him
- If the parent/guardian must turn back, the scout must go with him or her
- This is necessary to maintain YPT compliance. A scout without parent/guardian that must turn back means we also lose 2 adults on the trail. This could mean an entire group has to return!
- Prepare your scout ahead of time with this understanding

What is summit fever?

The compulsion to reach the summit of a mountain, leading to poor decisions and risky behavior or causing hikers to push themselves beyond their physical capabilities. It can lead to serious injury or death.

Summit fever increases in intensity the closer you get to the summit.

Summit fever increases in intensity in the afternoons.

Summit fever is contagious and spreads quickly throughout a group of hikers.

Summit fever is most likely caught by those keeping lists of their 14er summits.



September 1999. My 5th summit of Longs Peak. Minutes after this photo was taken, summit fever claimed the life of a man as he fell down the ledges behind us.

14er Dangers and mitigation

Listed in order of concern

Danger	Mitigation
Driving to/from the outing	In addition to standard safety, watch your fatigue level
Summit fever	Get your priorities straight, discuss with your scout, trust the leadership
Dangerous weather	Early start, willingness to turn back, proper gear
Altitude sickness, dehydration	Hydration, training, nutrition, intervals, buddy system
UV radiation	Proper gear, sunscreen use (don't forget lips), sunglasses
Injuries	Common sense, pace, good footwear, trekking poles, training, prepping for the downhill (when most injuries occur)
Fatigue	Training, rest, nutrition, good footwear, intervals
Hypothermia	Proper gear, hydration, buddy system
Animal attack	Buddy system, common sense, don't feed them. Insects, rodents, and goats are more likely than bears or moose.

Safety gear we carry: wilderness first aid, InReach satellite messenger, cell phones, VHF/UHF transceivers

14er clothing & gear

Clothing

- We will be on the mountain for a long time. Anything can happen, including snow.
- Think of it this way: at some point I will need to cover every part of my body
- Layers for warmth and outer jacket/pants that protect from rain/wind
- Wear the “safety orange” class C uniform
- No cotton!

Gear

- Scouts should bring at least 64 oz water. Adults 64-96 oz. Water treatment can substitute if we know water is available.
- A well fitting pack big enough to carry everything—about 30 liters. Small packs slow everyone down and frustrate the scouts as gear falls out or flops around. **By far the most frustration we see on the trail is with ill-fitting and small packs.**
- Scouts should bring their 10 essentials and allergy meds they might need
- Adults may find trekking poles useful, especially on descent

14er nutrition & hydration

Before the hike

- Your intake the day before is as important as your intake the day of the hike
- Focus on hydration the day before
- Dinner before should be plenty of carbs (rice, pasta, potato) and lean protein

On the ascent

- Eat and drink before you need it. Start intake early on.
- Consider a sports drink with carbs and electrolytes
- Most of the calories should be carbs. Avoid fats.
- Sugars are carbs, too, but burn quickly. “Power Bar” foods are better than candy.

On the descent

- Keep eating—you are not done
- This is when you add more lean protein to the carbs (jerky, for example)

Be careful with allergy foods (nuts, peanuts, eggs, etc). If you bring these, do not share. If you are a “cook” do not include these in trail meals.

Thoughts on training

- You need *climb*, *time*, and *similarity*. Doing the Manitou Incline once, for example, is not good training (not enough time). Same for Mt. Sniktau on Loveland Pass (good altitude, but short).
- Withstanding many hours on your feet is the most important aspect. A long, flat hike is probably better training than a short, steep one.
- Train with the clothing and gear you will use on the 14er, especially footwear, backpack.
- Work your way up to a 13er in mid-July
- Do summit hikes (instead of loops or lakes) to help with the psychology of summits like false summits, steep last pitch, long & tedious descents
- A last-ditch training hike the weekend before will likely do more harm than good (blisters, fatigue, injuries, etc)



On the summit of James Peak (13,301), a mountain structured like many 14ers.

The psychology of difficult hikes

- This is actually important
- Only positive words
 - This is time for roses and rosebuds only—no thorns!
 - For example, instead of “Wow, this is so steep (tough, long, etc)” say “What an accomplishment it will be to gain that ridge (view, etc).”
 - *Gain, achieve, summit* instead of *reach, push, climb, finally*
- Keep the focus on goals close by and in sight, celebrate getting there
- Avoid contemplating on the summit from far away. If the boys ask, “We have to go all the way up there?!” respond with, “Wow, that is a beautiful mountain. Let’s get it!”
- Final 500’ of elevation will require frequent rest intervals. That is OK! Don’t “push” at this point.
- Like with anything else, confidence is achieved through practice, training, and experience



Sure, he’s smiling now on the way back. Turns out, though, the hill behind him is not actually the summit and nearly caused a psychological breakdown. It also changed his life.

Example training hikes

- Mt Herman trail 716 near Monument (9,100 ft)
- Staunton State Park near Bailey. Various lengths, elevation.
- Twin Sisters near Estes Park (11,428)
- St Vrain Mtn near Allenspark (12,162)
- Almagre Mtn near CoSpgs (12,367)
- Pawnee Pass & Pawnee Pk near Brainard Lake (strenuous 12,900)
- James Peak near Idaho Spgs, highly recommended (13,301)
- Guyot Mtn or Bald Pk near Breckenridge—maybe! (~13,500)

