

All about pack loops

I was working my way uphill, on a bunch of switchbacks, that seemed like would top out somewhere in the clouds. Whomever designed this trail must be laughing himself silly, thinking about a pudgy, irascible old man, trying to reach the top, with a 4,000-pound pack on his back. There was a sound, coming from above me. It sounded like a runaway circus wagon, or a peddler's cart. I could hear pots, pans, tools, bells, and whatever else as this rolling accident was coming down the trail. Not sure whether to turn and run, climb a tree, or look for a pull-off, I decided to wait and see what was making the ruckus. And then, it came into view. A walking, breathing, lifelike version of a modern-day Jeremiah Johnson. This guy had everything imaginable clipped to the outside of his pack. Rattling along were metal coffee mugs, a pot, a pan, two water bottles, an axe, multi-tools, and a pair of shoes. I'm still not sure whether he had too much garbage in his pack that he needed the extra room, or if he didn't want to waste two seconds opening his pack to retrieve something. Either way, the wildlife all heard him coming from a mile away, and he probably wonders why he didn't see anything. Depending on what pack you chose, there can be a wide assortment of loops, scattered about haphazardly, on your pack. Do not confuse these loops with MOLLE. Gear with MOLLE webbing, also called PALS (Pouch Attachment Ladder System) allows you to attach components



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

to each other using a series of woven straps, creating an incredibly strong bond that doesn't bounce or come loose while in motion. Very useful in military and tactical situations. Backpack loops are used for external load bearing, so that you can increase the capacity of your pack by carrying things outside of it. Accessories such as clips, straps, cords, or carbineers can be used to attach camping gear or external bags to the gear loops outside of your pack. My packs have loops all over, some are even inside a zippered compartment. I have no idea what the intended use of some of these loops are for, but I will attempt to identify some of these for you, and their possible uses. Backpack loops are very handy for expanding the capacity of your pack because you can carry extra things on the outside of it. For me, I like to use the loops for keeping at hand, items I want quick and easy access to, and things I don't want to spend all afternoon rummaging around for in all the pack pockets and compartments. A compass, GPS, multitool and pocketknife, all come to mind as things I want at hand. Each loop on your pack has an intended

purpose. For example, loops on your shoulder straps enable you to carry small items, like those mentioned above. My compass and GPS both clips nicely to a loop on each side of my straps, and I can reference them all day long, by just glancing down. Directly above the loops on my straps are carry loops. These are somewhat stronger loops but are not intended for gear attachment. Their only purpose is to help lift the bag. I have used them to hang my pack from a tree branch before, when I am sitting in a tree stand. Depending on the type of pack you have, there might be just a belt to strap around your waist. These usually do not have carry loops. The packs with a waistband, come with pockets as well as loops. I carry my flashlights and headlamps in the pockets, so they are accessible when dusk approaches. The loops are great for attaching a knife, cell phone in a case, maps, or a water bottle. Be careful with anything that will bounce on your thigh and hip, thereby irritating the snot out of you as you hike all day. Most of the larger packs come with at least two, usually four, back loops. These loops are placed horizontally or vertically, and are used for securing bulky, round type items, like a rolled up sleeping bag or a tent. You will want to buy accessory straps or small bungee cords to be able to strap the two sides together securely. The most useful loops to me are the bottom loops located at the very bottom of the backpack. These are designed to carry heavy and bulky



I always wondered what all those loops on my packs were for. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

items, like those mentioned above. For me, I strap in my jacket or heavier clothing. When I shed outerwear because I might be climbing, and probably will work up a sweat, my jacket gets strapped in here. Once I stop climbing, and I have a pretty good sweat going on, it does not take long for the wind to cause a chill, this strap keeps that jacket handy, because I may put it off and on multiple times throughout the day. If you do intend to attach heavy gear to the outside of your pack, such as tents or other heavy gear, make certain they are properly secured. It is best to store hiking gear inside the pack, placing

the center of gravity closest to your back. Heavy items strapped to the outside of the pack, can pull you down, and at times, cause you to tip over. These outside items can destabilize you, especially when they are heavy. Rocky terrain, steep inclines, or river crossings can be extremely dangerous when your pack is widely overloaded. Walking through thick brush and undergrowth can be a new experience in aggravation when you have things strapped all over the outside of the pack. If you are going to carry things outside the pack, keep it tight, secure, and as closely wrapped up as possible, for ease

of maneuverability and safety. Besides, you don't want to sound like the 20-Mule Team plodding down the trail. *Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a Director and Public Information Officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org*

Equity for all in the outdoors — a noble goal

Friends of Youth and Nature

By Anita Evans

The Colorado Outdoor Equity Grant Program (COEGP) was created in 2021 when Governor Polis signed House Bill 21-1318, funding over 2 million dollars of awards each year to organizations dedicated to leveling the playing field for getting underserved youth connected to healthy outdoor activities. As reported by Colorado Parks and Wildlife in July of 2023, the Colorado Outdoor Equity Board adopted

official guidelines to respect each community's values in defining their own priorities to identify and obtain necessary resources to achieve their goals. In addition, they value opportunities to instill a sense of wonder, excitement, and responsibility for the environment in Colorado youth and families. Research has indicated repeatedly that getting outdoors is vital for the health and wellbeing of our youth, building resilience while they gain new confidence through nature immersion.

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Students enjoy a day exploring the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest during a celebration of Public Land Day (Courtesy photo/Paul Kimpling)



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