

Camping mysteries



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

The more time someone spends in the great outdoors, the more strange and eerie encounters they will experience. These experiences, sometimes borderline supernatural, will lead to great storytelling opportunities during future camping trips. Some of these stories might even be true.

A story I happened across involved a camper in the Rabbit Valley area, west of Grand Junction. The campsite was a good 15 miles off the highway, and there was only 1 other camper in the area, a fair distance away.

The tale continues with the camper being suddenly disturbed by odd sounds on the tent walls, like someone, or something, dragging their fingers up and down the tent walls as they were walking around the tent. Our camper responded in a way that seems odd to me, sitting in silence hoping the situation would end. After 10 minutes, it did end, leaving the camper afraid and confused.

But wait, there's more. Suddenly the tent collapsed around the camper, which was the last straw. The camper fled the scene at Mach 2 and ran for the security of their truck. Said camper locked themselves in the back of the truck, inside a camper shell, where they had a firearm for protection.

The camper stayed put in the back of the truck until the sun finally came over the mountain. Walking back to their collapsed tent, the camper found distinct shoe prints in the dirt and snow around their



When you are a hundred miles northwest of nowhere, and the sun begins to leave the scene, strange things can happen. (Courtesy photo/Mark Rackay)

campsite, circling their tent. According to the story, the interloper was clearly human.

I immediately called bovine defecation to the story when I read it. For starters, who would just sit there, in the tent, while someone or something is circling the tent causing mayhem? Secondly, when you made the escape to the truck, piles into the back of the truck, under the security of a camper shell. Seems to me, panic would have caused to person to make a hasty escape from the scene by depressing the accelerator to the floor, spraying a shower of pinecones, rocks, and boulders with the tires.

The last little tidbit was that the camper had a firearm along for protection but left it in the truck. Might have just as well left it at home. Perhaps this person suffers from a garden variety of stupidity and figured that the firearm would protect the truck while the camper slept in the tent. I would have seen if the tracks went to the other occupied campsite in the area. The mystery

might have been solved rather quickly.

Before I could dismiss the story completely, I stumbled across another encounter. The second incident occurred in the same vicinity as the first one, near the Colorado and Utah border.

The second camper told a tale of arriving to a dispersed camping area with a small group of fellow campers. The group included children. The group noticed an abandoned campsite, littered about with moldy food and no signs of humans around. They left the area briefly, to notify local law enforcement telephonically of their findings at the abandoned campsite.

Apparently, the new batch of campers were not particularly frightened by the scene, as they returned to the same area to bed down for the night. During the night, the campers reported that something sounding like a coyote was in the area of their camp. This group obviously suffered from the same lack of intelligence as the first group because they

opted to sit the night out behind the security of nylon tent walls, hoping the situation would resolve itself.

The next morning, as the group emerged from the security of the tents, a discovery, similar to the first encounter, was made. They found boot prints and dog prints all around the campsite. Clearly, they had a pair of visitors, one being 4 legged.

With humanity moving further into our wild areas, we come across more of these type of encounters. Many of the persons involved are semi-homeless, vagrants, and even a certain number of criminals who just dropped out of society, so a good amount of caution on your part when in back of beyond is called for.

In keeping with the story telling phase of eerie outdoor encounters, I will share an experience with you. This eerie encounter takes place about a century ago, or so it seems, when my wife and I were first married. We had loaded up the truck with camping gear and blew out of town

late Friday night after work. Willow Creek Campground, near the town of Jefferson was our destination.

We turned off Hwy. 285 shortly after midnight, onto the 2-track that led to the campground. A fresh snow of about half a foot covered everything and we followed a single set of tracks into the woods. We figured there was at least one other group of folks that had the ridiculous idea of camping and fishing for the weekend in the fresh snow.

Several miles in, we discovered a truck in front of us, driver door open, blocking any further progress up the 2-track. I grabbed flashlight and walked up to the truck to help but found the vehicle empty of any personnel. The engine was cool, indicating it had been there for an hour or thereabouts.

Heading away from the truck, directly into the woods, was a single set of footprints. I followed these tracks for several hundred yards until the tracks abruptly stopped. There was no sign of where the person

who made the tracks had gone, not up nor down. It was as though the person was abducted into thin air.

I left the scene with a haste that a casual observer might have described as "blinding speed" because I was suddenly reminded of business I had elsewhere. My wife and I drove another 50 miles to a different area to camp. If I recall, we slept in the truck cab that night, with the dogs and 2 rifles.

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Eleven Colorado destinations named among the USA's best spots in new book, 'Go See America'

Author Matt Tory crisscrossed the country to find America's "greatest hits" – now he's taking readers on a funny, heartfelt tour of them all.

Special to the MDP: A new travel book, "Go See America: 118 of the USA's Greatest Hits (According to a Guy Who Visited Them All)," is shining a spotlight on a stunning eleven Colorado destinations, ranking them among the must-see spots in the country.

With his new book,

writer and filmmaker Matt Tory aims to take readers on a humorous, heartfelt tour of the most unforgettable spots across the USA – all places he actually visited. Colorado's Rocky Mountains National Park, Million Dollar Highway, Garden of the Gods, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Maroon Bells, Independence Pass, Glenwood Springs, Colorado National Monument, Last Dollar Road, Great Sand Dunes, and Mesa Verde National Park were

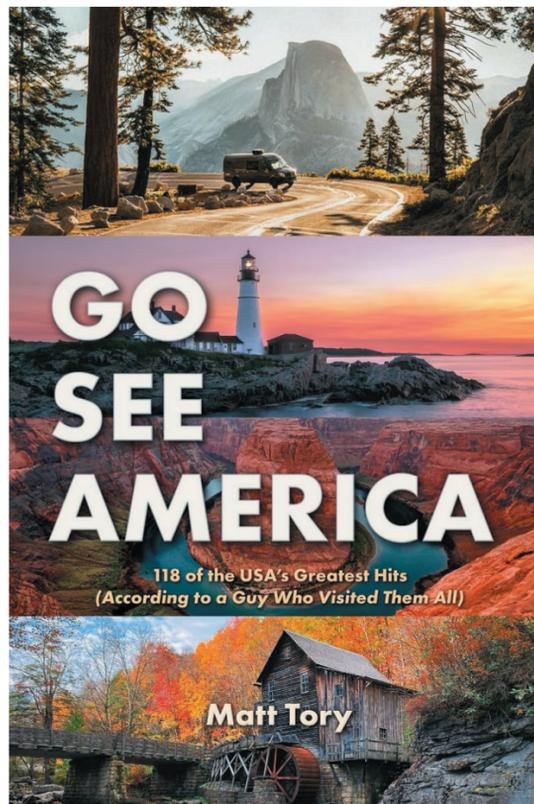
all chosen for their incredible views and adventure opportunities. "[Colorado] is where America unapologetically shows off," Tory writes in the book.

After exploring all 50 states and every national park in the contiguous United States, Tory decided to share tips, stories, and personal photos he collected along the way. The result is a travel book that's not just another boring bucket list.

"This book is a nudge to get out there, let

yourself be wowed, and remember there's something worth seeing in just about every corner of the USA... It's an encouragement, basically, to go see America," says Matt Tory in the book's introduction.

Blending iconic destinations with overlooked gems, "Go See America" is a fun, lighthearted journey through the most wonderful, wild and weird corners of the country you thought you knew.



Colorado's Rocky Mountains National Park, Million Dollar Highway, Garden of the Gods, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Maroon Bells, Independence Pass, Glenwood Springs, Colorado National Monument, Last Dollar Road, Great Sand Dunes, and Mesa Verde National Park all made it into Matt Tory's book "Go See America: 118 of the USA's Greatest Hits (According to a Guy Who Visited Them All)." (Screenshot)