

# First hike of the season



## Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

The first hike of the season is always the hardest for me. Putting boots on the ground, with a heavy pack, and heading up the trail on an early mountain morning, never seems to end up as I planned. All winter I envision that first trip, sun shining, trails dry, smooth, and not very steep. Once on the trail, I begin to wonder if a long winter, stuck indoors, is really such a bad thing.

I would like to blame Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame, or Murph as I call him from long association, for my problems, but the real cause looks back at me in the mirror each morning. The sad truth is that my body was not ready for the big trip, and I did not prepare mentally either.

Exercising at home on the treadmill, riding the bike or doing those power walks all help keep you in shape. While it is good for you, and does help keep you ready, it is not the same. Add a few thousand feet in altitude and 40 pounds of pack on your back, on a trail that seems much steeper than it did last year, and it is a new ball game.

My first trip of the year leaves me with soreness in muscles that I never knew I had. I thought I was in good cardio shape until I headed up the trail under the weight of the pack. I say "up the trail" because all the trails I ever find go straight uphill, and for some unexplained reason, they are uphill on the way home too. There are things you should do to prepare yourself, long before the trip.

If you are doing a regular workout, you are a step ahead of the game. In the weeks before your trip, consider stepping up the pace a bit. Before hunting seasons, I elevate the treadmill to the steepest incline, put 40 pounds of weights in a pack, and walk at a steady pace for 30 minutes.

This exercise simulates what I am going to be enduring when I take to the high country. Since I maintain cardio all year long, the extra work a few weeks before the trip is really not all that much more effort. When I get to the high country, hopefully I don't look too much like a wrecking ball sucking air from the rafters.

If you have not been on a regular exercise routine, it would be better to start slowly. If you push yourself too hard in a workout, your reward will be sore muscles for several days, and you will not be able to work out again until the soreness heals. As a side note, healing time increases at a rate of double the aging time.

It is much better to begin slowly and progress in intensity over a course



The first hike of the season should be taken slowly. While it may be "summer like" in town, it can still be cold in the higher country. A little advance preparations are in order. (Photo/Mark Rackay)

of months rather than try and cram it all into a week. Start by fast walking 20 minutes a day, every other day. Add 5 minutes a day every week and you will get there before you know it. I remind myself that I didn't fall out of shape overnight, so I can't expect to get back into shape that quick either.

Before each walk, and before your hike, do a few warmup exercises. Dynamic stretches are the answer here. Double heel lifts, lunges and leg swings, just before you leave will help prevent ankle sprains and muscle pulls on the hike. A set of 10 for each exercise is plenty.

Stretches are important after the hike, run or power walk. Static stretches decrease the chance of injury

and help prevent muscle imbalance and speeds the recovery process for tired muscles. Focus the stretch on your calves, quadriceps, hamstrings and hip flexors, holding each stretch for 30 seconds.

Most people who exercise forget about their core. The core is probably the most important region to a hiker or backpacker. All movement originates from the core, which includes the muscles of the hips, upper legs, waist and abdomen.

A strong core promotes good posture, improves breathing (which is all important at altitude) and reduces the risk of ankle sprains and knee problems. Exercises like sit-ups, planks, superman's, dead bugs, and floor cobras will

help the core and improve your back strength to carry the heavy pack.

Watching what you eat is an important part of training but don't skimp on the big hike. The trail is not the place for calorie restriction. Every hour of hiking, stop and eat a one or two hundred-calorie snack. This will keep your blood sugar levels stable and give your body a break. If you are out on an all-day adventure, stop for a full meal mid-day that contains fats, carbs and proteins. You cannot live on cookies.

As with anything else we do, remember to hydrate properly when you train or hike. The doctors say we should have better than 16 ounces of water each hour for semi-strenuous activity. Drinking less than that you will run the risk of dehydration and all the bad effects that come with it.

If the big trip you are preparing for will include strenuous climbing under the weight of a pack, consider adding interval training to your workout. Interval training consists of a high intensity exercise followed by a recovery period. Intervals prepare you for the hills and the steep sections often found on the trail.

If you run or power walk, pick up the pace for 50 or 100 yards, then reduce your paces for twice the distance. Fast followed by slow, until you have fully caught your breath, and repeat the process.

My favorite part of the training is the rest part. Sleep is one thing I excel at, as my wife of many

years will attest. Most of us require a full 8 hours of sleep each night to perform at our best. Some folks get by with less while others may need a little more. Know your body's needs and keep proper sleep part of your training.

Rest days (days when you don't workout) must be an integral part of any training program. Rest periods allow your body to remove all the waste products built up from the training and allow you to be rested up for the next training session. Allow at least one or two days of rest each week. After 12 weeks of training, take a full week off to allow your body to catch up.

Getting your body ready for the trip will help make the time outdoors more pleasurable while reducing your risk of injury on the trail. Remember, Murphy is in good shape, and he will have no problem chasing you on the trail, so be ready for him.

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## PEACH

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That means Talbotts should have around 7 million pounds of peaches for sale this summer.

### June 7 delivery date for peaches is really early

Consumers should expect to see the first peaches hitting fruit stands around June 7-10.

That is the earliest peach-picking time Easter knows of in the Grand Valley where ripening dates have been creeping forward.

In 2023, Cunningham's workers first picked peaches on July 7. In 2024, the first fruit came off the trees on June 26, and in 2025 on June 20.

Those early peaches may thrill peach fans, but the downside is that the season will end early. Instead of stretching into September, the peach season will be tapering off in August.

"Plan to come early and get your peaches in July

and August," Easter said.

A box of tightly packed red peaches. The fruits have yellow stickers affixed with a bar code and a number that begins with 9 signaling the fruit is organic

A box of fresh peaches at Kokopelli Farm Market located off I-70 north of Palisade. (William Woody, Special to the Colorado Sun)

That is all dependent on two other crop-affecting factors now that the fear of freezes is behind growers. Hail can always batter peaches at all phases of growth. And, this year, water —or a lack of it — might affect the crop.

"Our big fear now is water, if we have to shut off the canals, we can't finish off the crop," Talbott said.

That fear has led to discussions in the Grand Valley about letting some field crops go dormant and transferring the water that would go to

hay, alfalfa, vegetable and corn crops to the fruit farms.

The logic behind that is that field crops can be replanted, but fruit trees that might die from a lack of water can't be so easily replaced. It takes six to seven years before a replacement fruit tree would be producing fruit again.

Easter said multiple discussions are going on each week about how those water switches might work and which field-crop farmers would be amenable to selling water to help the fruit crop survive.



Charlie Talbott wipes his brow after staying up all night working to protect the family's peach, grape and cherry crops from a hard freeze. (Shannon Mullane/The Colorado Sun)

Easter pointed out that the fact that this year's peach crop is so early is a benefit if water supplies run out as feared. He said at Cunningham's trees are typically watered through September before they are allowed to go dormant. This year, he said

he can cut off watering in August.

"It's a blessing with the water situation that the harvest is so early," Easter said.

Easter said the biggest message for peach fans around the state is that there definitely are plenty

of peaches and they should be prepared to stock up on their favorite fruits in July and August.

September, which has long been a favorite time for Front Range peach buyers to make the trek to the Grand Valley, will be too late, he said.



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