



The Newsletter of the CMC's Pikes Peak Group

November, 2026 | No. 342

The Pikes Peak Group in Photos

AdAmAn/CMC/Barr Camp "Poo Crew"



Russ, Britt, Mike and Mark (AdAmAn) Ed, Andy. Photo by Chris Mattingly. This was the third group of volunteers to tackle a mountainous backlog in Barr Camp's composting toilets.

Florissant Fossil Beds



Jim, Megan, Annette, and Christie (leader).

Dome Rock Loop



L-R: Bryan, Deirdre, Lisa, and Sue. Photo by Andy.

Take My Picture... Please!



Got photos from a class or trip?
Send them to Dave at danderso@uccs.edu.

Your PPG Council

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Interested in serving on the Pikes Peak Group Council? Please contact the Chair.

Welcome New Members!

Kristy Albonetti

Ethan Chupka

Christopher Da Silva

Elizabeth Farrell

Haiyun Lu

Bob Nordland

Kathleen Resman

Karen Suggs



Member Discounts

Adventure Medical Kits

Ajax Bike and Sport

Atrevida Beer Co (was Great Storm)

Battle Mountain Brewing Company

Bentgate

Breckenridge Nordic Center

City Rock

Friction Labs

Frisco Nordic Center

Gearonimo

Golden Bike Shop

Ken's Anglers

Lumiere Telluride

Moosejaw

Mountain Equipment Recyclers

Mountainsmith

ProMotive.com

R&W Rope

ROCK'n & JAM'n

Rocky Bob's Fly Fishing Rods

Summit Terragraphics

The Custom Foot

The Mountaineers Books

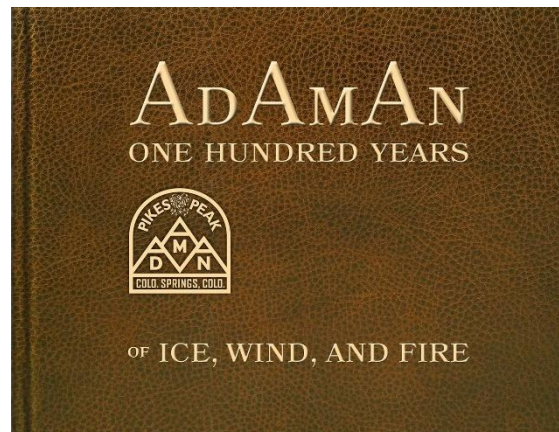
The Trailhead

TrailRunner Magazine

Vagabond Ranch Huts

Wilderness Exchange Unlimited

AdAmAn Documentary Screening



When: Thursday, November 4 at 6:00 PM

Where: Windstar Studios, 525 Communication Circle, CS, CO 80905



The Weather Between Here and There

By Rob Mayer

Clouds hung over Independence Pass, and the temperature continued to fall as we climbed. Ruby Ghost Town was still hours away, but the weather was already affecting the trip.

Rain was my main concern at Ruby. On the pass, cold and the possibility of early snow presented a different problem. The forecast for the destination was important, but it could not tell the whole story of getting there.

That drive reinforced something I have learned across several recent outdoor trips: there is rarely one forecast for the entire experience. A trip can include a highway drive, a mountain pass, a trailhead, a hike, and several hours at an exposed destination. Each stage can have different conditions—and each activity can make a different part of the forecast important.

The useful question is not simply, “Will the weather be good?”

It is, “Will these conditions work for this place, this activity and this person?”

The road is part of the trip

For much of the week before the Ruby trip, storms appeared in the forecast. Rain could make exploring the site less enjoyable, interfere with photography, and affect the unpaved portions of the journey.

Over the last day or two before departure, the forecast improved. The conditions at Ruby ultimately matched that more favorable outlook.



Near Ruby, the rain outlook shaped our planning well before we reached this mountain landscape.

That did not make the earlier forecast useless or necessarily wrong. Forecasts change as new observations become available and the time approaches. The important decision was not based on what the forecast said several days earlier,

it was based on the best information available when it was time to go.

But checking Ruby alone would not have been enough.

The drive took us across Independence Pass, where the sky was cloudy and the temperature was noticeably colder. Even when Ruby looked acceptable, an early snow on the pass could create travel problems or change the decision entirely.

The road to an outdoor destination is not just time between activities. It is part of the activity. A mountain pass, an exposed highway or a remote unpaved road may deserve its own weather check.



Clouds hung over Independence Pass, and the air was noticeably cold. We were heading to Ruby Ghost Town, but the weather along the way already deserved its own attention.

A town forecast may answer the wrong question

Remote destinations create another problem: which nearby town should represent the conditions?

A town forecast can provide useful regional context, but the town may be at a different elevation, separated by mountains or miles away from the actual destination. Terrain, exposure and elevation can produce meaningful differences over surprisingly short distances.

On my Hanging Lake trip, the trail was approximately eight to ten degrees cooler than the nearby-town forecasts I had checked. That difference was not dramatic enough to cancel the hike, but it mattered when choosing clothing and preparing for the climb.

The parking area, the trail, and the lake also represented different parts of the experience. Conditions beside the vehicle did not necessarily describe what I would encounter farther into the canyon.

An exact-location forecast still contains uncertainty. It does not eliminate the need to prepare or observe. It simply begins with the place I will actually be rather than using a convenient town as a substitute.



The Hanging Lake approach passes through changing terrain, sun and shade, another reason to consider conditions along the hike.

The same temperature does not mean the same thing to everyone

Weather measurements are objective. Their meaning is often personal.

What feels cold to me may be comfortable to someone else. One hiker may enjoy light rain, while another would rather reschedule. Heat, humidity, and wind affect people differently, and the difficulty of the activity can change how those conditions feel.

Clothing, experience, health, and access to shelter also influence the decision. Forty degrees during a short walk from the car is different from forty degrees several miles into a hike.

That is why simple labels such as “good weather” and “bad weather” are often inadequate. A useful assessment should consider the actual activity and the individual’s preferences.

Some conditions are primarily questions of comfort. Others determine whether the activity can safely or practically happen at all.

Watching storms on the plains

At Vogel Canyon, where I went to look for tarantulas, thunderstorms were the major concern.

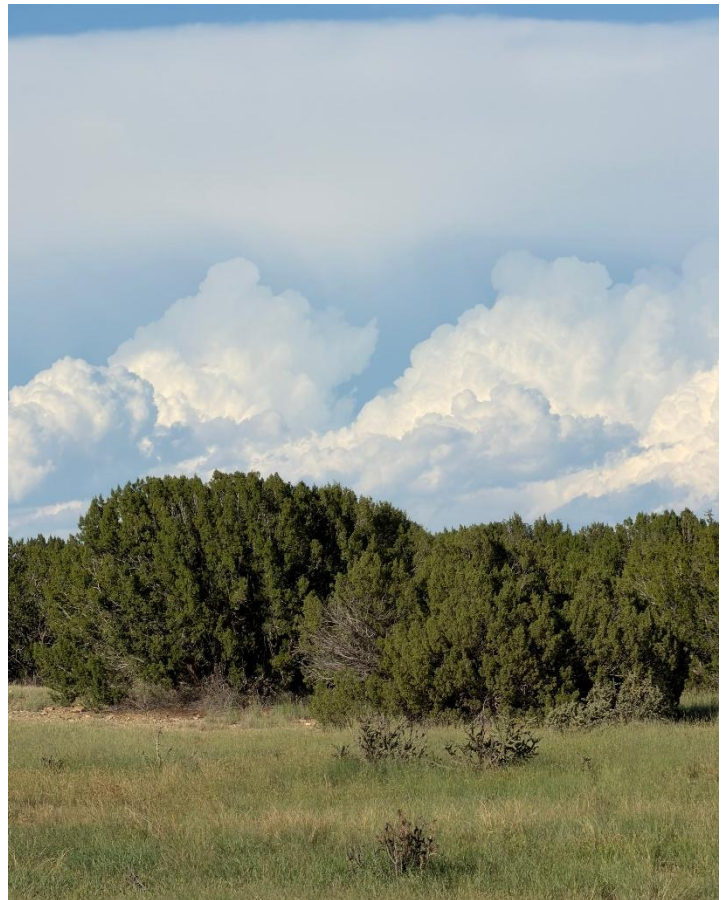
Forecasts for the nearest city showed thunderstorm chances ranging from about 40 to 90 percent. The forecast I checked for my actual viewing location showed less than 10 percent. When I arrived, the sky was clear.

Over the next hour, large clouds developed on the horizon and began moving closer. I watched their direction and growth as I continued exploring. They never reached me and eventually moved south.

The low probability at my location proved useful, but it was not permission to stop paying attention.

On the open plains, there is little protection when a thunderstorm develops. I needed to know how far I was from the vehicle, watch what was happening around me, and be prepared to leave.

That afternoon was only one observation. It did not prove that one forecast source will always outperform another. It demonstrated why location and timing matter—and why observation remains essential even when the forecast looks favorable.



Clouds developed during our Vogel Canyon visit and later passed south. The forecast informed the plan; watching the sky remained part of it.

A mild breeze can change the entire activity

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta presented a completely different weather decision.

The early morning temperature mattered to me as a spectator, but I could dress for the cold. Wind was different. Even a breeze that felt mild while standing on the ground could affect whether the balloons launched.

Temperature changed what I wore. Wind could change whether the central activity happened at all.

The final launch decision belonged to the pilots and event officials assessing conditions at the field and above it. From a planning perspective, however, wind deserved more attention than whether I personally considered the morning comfortable.

This distinction applies to many outdoor activities. A photographer may tolerate cold but need a clear view of the sky. An astronomer may dress for low temperatures, but cloud cover can make observing impossible. An angler may accept rain, while nearby lightning overrides every other favorable condition.

The weather does not change. What changes is which part of it matters.



At Albuquerque's Balloon Fiesta, wind was central to the activity. I could dress for the cold; launch decisions belonged to the pilots and event officials.

Forecasts are rarely as wrong as we think

It is easy to say that a forecast was wrong when rain was predicted and we stayed dry. Sometimes we are comparing two different things.



A regional forecast may describe conditions across a broad area. Our experience occurs at one location during a limited period. Rain can occur elsewhere in the forecast area or at another time of day without ever reaching us.

A probability of precipitation also does not mean that rain will fall continuously or everywhere. It describes uncertainty, not a promise.

Before deciding that a forecast failed, it helps to ask:

- Was the forecast for the place where I actually went?
- Did it cover the time I was there?
- Was it predicting a possibility or a certainty?
- Did terrain or elevation separate my location from the reporting point?
- Did I check the forecast again as the trip approached?

Forecasts will never remove uncertainty from an outdoor trip. They can help us recognize that uncertainty and prepare for it.

From forecast to decision

Across these trips, different conditions shaped different decisions.

At Ruby, rain affected the destination while cold and the possibility of snow mattered on Independence Pass. At Hanging Lake, the temperature along the trail differed from nearby towns. At Vogel Canyon, the low local storm probability was useful, but watching the horizon remained critical. At the Balloon Fiesta, I could prepare for the cold, but wind could determine whether the balloons flew.

The lesson is not that we need more weather data. It is that we need to apply the available information to the trip we are actually taking.

Check the route as well as the destination. Recheck the forecast as departure approaches. Consider what the conditions mean for the activity and for your own tolerances. Once outside, keep observing.

A forecast tells us what may happen. The location, the activity and the person give that forecast meaning.

Rob Mayer is a Colorado Springs-based engineer, outdoor enthusiast, and founder of My OWL Tech. His My OWL Field Reports document how forecasts, onsite observations, and personal preferences affect real outdoor decisions.



Upcoming PPG Classes

PPG AIARE Avalanche Level 1

Wed, Jan 20, 2027 - Sun, Jan 24, 2027

AIARE Avalanche Level 1 is a 24-hour course focusing on avalanche hazard management by using the AIARE Decision Making Framework. A 3-day course designed to give you a proven approach in planning, executing and reviewing your backcountry ski, snowshoe, mountaineering and other snow adventures involving travel in avalanche terrain. Topics include building trip catalogs, tracking the season, observing and understanding the changes in the snowpack, recognizing avalanche terrain and travel options, improving your situational awareness while in the field, and evaluating the day's decisions when finished. Cost: Members \$445.

PPG AIARE Avalanche Rescue Course

Sun, Mar 7, 2027

AIARE Avalanche Rescue is a one-day stand alone course that is intended to be retaken on a regular basis. New participants will learn the basics of companion rescue, while returning participants will expand their skill set with advanced topics and realistic scenario practice to help improve their skills. Each participant will have the opportunity to receive professional coaching on their rescue skills, and will receive a rescue card acknowledging the completion date. AIARE Avalanche Rescue is a prerequisite for AIARE 2. AIARE recommends that all backcountry travelers keep their skills current by taking an Avalanche Rescue course and receiving a rescue card at least every other year. CMC requires it at least every 5 years to refresh and update skills CMC leaders and instructors use in the field. Cost: Members \$125, Guests \$175.

ARC Pro Traditional Gear & Anchors

Sat, Mar 20, 2027 - Sun, Mar 21, 2027

Students will learn about the various types of rock protection to include natural protection, passive protection (nuts, hexes) and active protection (cams); and how to place and incorporate pieces of protection into anchors. We will discuss climbing anchors, to include top-rope, belay and rappel anchors. Cost: Members \$105, Guests \$150.

Crack Climbing Clinic – North Table Mountain

Sat, Apr 17, 2027

We will discuss and demonstrate basic crack-climbing techniques for the various crack sizes and spend the day practicing on top-rope. Cost: Members \$35, Guests \$50.

ARC Pro Traditional Lead Climbing

Sat, May 1, 2027 - Sun, May 2, 2027

Over the course of two full days at an outdoor crag we will review traditional gear and anchors then will focus in detail on the protection system and leading strategies. Students will mock-lead single-pitch trad climbs (on a separate belay) with instructor evaluation of the entire process. We will cover lead belaying and follower belaying skills. Cost: Members \$105, Guests \$150.

ARC Pro Basic Anchors

Sat, May 29, 2027

Students will learn climbing anchor fundamentals that can be applied to rock, snow, and ice anchors, but focusing on setting up anchors for top rope rock climbing. Cost: Members \$50, Guests \$75.



To register for classes or trips,
go to www.cmc.org

Pikes Pique

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Pikes Pique is the monthly newsletter of the Pikes Peak Group of the Colorado Mountain Club. It is a forum for enhancing skills for backcountry travel in the Colorado mountains and communicating information, news, and upcoming events to members and interested parties.

The purpose of the CMC is to unite the energy, interest, and knowledge of the students and lovers of the mountains of Colorado; to collect and disseminate information regarding the Rocky Mountains on behalf of science, literature, art, recreation; to stimulate public interest in our mountain areas; to encourage the preservation of flora, fauna, and natural scenery; and to render readily accessible the alpine attractions of this region.

PIKES PEAK GROUP CONTACT INFORMATION:

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[CMC PPG web page](#)

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Members:

- Text: \$2 per line, \$10 minimum
- Ads: ¼-page - \$25, ½-page - \$50

Non-members:

- Text: \$3 per line, \$15 minimum
- Ads: ¼-page - \$30, ½-page - \$60

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Have a fun story or trip you want to share? Please submit your articles, along with pictures, to be considered for publication in the next *Pikes Pique* newsletter.

Please send to:

Dave Anderson, editor
danderso@uccs.edu

The deadline for submissions is the 14th of each month.

Use the above contact information for corrections and comments as well.