Editor’s Notes

Happy New Year fellow hikers! I have to apologize for lumping the summer, fall, and winter news together in one newsletter. My 2019 year was busy with wedding planning, getting married, and moving. This major life transition left little time for hiking, much less writing.

Perhaps my resolution for the new year will be to hike more with the club. After all, in 2019, members took some fabulous trips—from the Colorado mountains to the Florida beaches. Some members even hiked internationally (as you’ll soon read)!

The club gained many new—and wonderful—members in 2019. In usual Hiking Club style, we pulled off a successful Campfest, persevered a hot summer, and celebrated the year’s end with a festive Christmas party. Here’s to another year of beautiful adventures and friendship!

—Corinne

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One member takes his family to vacation in Cloudland Canyon State Park

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Member Jo traveled across the globe to hike ancient Greece

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The Caribbean island of St. Lucia offers more than just beaches

Also included in this issue: The sights of Rocky Mountain National Park; endless trail options in Asheville, NC; exploring Mammoth Cave
CLOUDLAND CANYON STATE PARK IN GEORGIA

By: Jonathan Trumps

For our summer vacation, my family and I decided on a change from the usual beach trip. A few years ago, one of my coworkers told me about Cloudland Canyon and I couldn't wait to get up there. I finally made it this year and it did not disappoint!

We camped in the East Rim Campground. It had plenty of shady spots and looked down into the canyon. Our first day there, my wife, kids, and I hiked down the Waterfalls trail to see the falls. The first fall you see is the Cherokee Falls (pictured) and it was just a lovely as my coworker said it would be.

It was Saturday so there were about 40 weekenders down there enjoying the cool water and shadiness of the canyon. We hiked back up the main waterfall trail and headed down "a much steeper 1/2 mile" trail to Hemlock Falls. That's how the trail map described the trek down to the Hemlock falls!

It also says "included 600 steps!" I laugh as I write this because I didn't read the trail guide prior to heading down! After the easy down and back up of the Cherokee Falls, my guard was down. We made it to the bottom of Hemlock and it was a lot less crowded! It was a peaceful area, which is good because you’re going to want to delay the trek back up the 600 very daunting steps! Luckily, there is rock at the base of the falls with just the right angle for relaxing and viewing the falls. See picture above.

After many breaks and the possibility of having to carry my wife up the stairs, my crew declared they were never going to see that fall again! We hobbled back to our travel trailer and rested! On Monday, we
went back to the Cherokee falls and had the place to ourselves for most of the morning. We went in and out of the water and played and swam. It was a wonderful morning.

The next day, we went to look out over the east rim of the canyon from the interpretive center. It was very beautiful. I could see a single hiker on an outcropping across the canyon. I had to go over there! I dropped off my wife and kids at the camper so they could rest and I had just enough daylight to get there and back.

I brought a light day pack with a few bottles of water and set off. It was a pretty easy hike. The trail goes down into the valley and crosses over the top of the Cherokee falls and then climbs back up the other side of the canyon. It was a slow steady incline up to the canyon rim. Once you get to the top, there are large boulders that you can hop across or walk next to. The view from the West Rim is magnificent. You can see around the bend of the East rim to see the rest of the canyon. Very spectacular. It was so peaceful, all you hear is the wind in the pines. There is no one else around. I can’t wait to go back to do it again.

HIKING IN GREECE
By: Jo Shriver

Patty Jumonville and I spent the first 2 weeks of May visiting historical sites including Athens and hiking along the way in beautiful Greece. We ferried from Athens to the tiny island of Tinos then on to one of the larger and greener islands, Naxos. We ended our adventure on popular Santorini. The ferries were a very affordable and timely means of transportation. They were very large and could accommodate huge numbers of passengers, autos and eighteen wheelers. We learned quickly to be on the lower deck with our suitcases by the time we were at the port ready for a fast departure.

On Tinos with a trail map in tow we were able to discover three hiking trails from our rental which was located between the villages of Berdemiaros and Triantaros. The first led us to weeds with thistles and wildflowers up to our necks. It was obvious the trail had not been used for quite some time. We ventured on and found others less challenging where we passed tiny churches, ancient mill
Though Patty breezed along my biggest challenge was Mount Zas (Zeus). We took a local bus to the village of Filoti and started our trek. It is the tallest point of the Cyclades at 3290'. It is considered a strenuous hike. We started with some shade out of the village but much of it was on rock and eventually the trail was marked with cairns. According to Greek mythology this is where Zeus was born and raised. It was delightful seeing several large herds of goats, often heard by the tinkling of their bells before actually seen on the paths.

Our last hike was on beautiful Santorini where we followed the caldera (volcanic rim) at Oia. Had we had more time we could have hiked from Thera to Oia in about six hours but we opted for the bus up to Oia. It then took us an hour to actually find the rim trail but the views of the crystal clear blue water, the unique houses, occasional churches and landmarks were gorgeous and so worth the trouble.

We flew home from Santorini through Athens with an overnight stop in London. It was a long trip but every day was wonderful! Patty and I would definitely recommend this European adventure. There are thousands of Greek isles but we were pleased with the ones we chose to explore.
HIKE WITH US!

WEBSITE
hikelouisiana.org

MEETINGS
1st Thursday of every month at the Baton Rouge Bluebonnet Library

FACEBOOK
“Like” us @ Hike Louisiana

EMAIL
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CLIMBING IN THE CARIBBEAN: ST. LUCIA’S GROS PITON HIKE
By: Corinne Duplan

Just a few hours after our wedding, my new husband Nick and I were on a plane to St. Lucia, an island in the southern Caribbean. We chose this destination because not only does it have great beaches, but it has mountains, volcanoes, and rainforests as well. It’s best known for the Pitons, twin volcanic spires located on the southwest coast near the town of Soufrière; Gros Piton can be hiked with a guide while Petit Piton is steep and rocky, and not often climbed.

Our first day on the island we met up with a guide to hike Gros Piton (the island’s 2nd highest peak). The hike, though only a few miles, was extremely steep. Some parts of the trail were nothing but rock. Our guide told us nearly half the people who start the trail don’t finish; we wondered how true this was, as we didn’t have too much trouble reaching the top.

Along the trail we took many breaks, marveling at the views of the endless ocean. We reached a 300-year-old mango tree, the last landmark before the trail gets really difficult. The view once we reached the summit was worth the effort, as we could see the whole island.

Other than some gigantic lizards and a glimpse of a parrot, we didn’t see much wildlife on our hikes. One local said the reason for this was because the sulphur springs were nearby, and most of the wildlife avoids it by staying inland. I was a little glad we stayed near the springs, because St. Lucia is habitat to one of the deadliest snakes in the world, the Fer-de-Lance.

However, we did see hundreds of marine species in the coral reefs at Anse Chastanet beach—home to some of the most impressive reefs in the Caribbean. These reefs were so close to the beach that no scuba gear was needed; we just put on our goggles to reveal an underwater world of colorful coral and fish of all shapes and sizes.

Another popular hike we did is the Tet Paul nature trail, a short and easy hike that boasts the best view of the Pitons on the island. Our resort, Ladera, had its own hiking trails on property. A trip to St. Lucia is a great getaway for those who love hiking and adventure as much as relaxing on a beach.
Above and Right: It was a beautiful day for the Bogue Chitto State Park hike in November. While there, the group utilized a bridge that club members built earlier this year!

Left: The LA Hiking Club at Port Hudson this November. Below we see the cleaning of the cannon before loading the powder.

Right: Members Debbie, Judy, and Brenda backpacked the 23-mile Shockaloe trail in Bienville National Forest September 22-24. The trail was an adventure and the three of them had lots of fun!
FALL TRIP TO MAMMOTH CAVE NATIONAL PARK

By: Emelise Cormier

During the first week of November, sixteen members of the club spent a week at Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky. Members who arrived early were able to participate in a free, special tour of Onyx Cave using Coleman gas lanterns. This cave has numerous formations and has been preserved in its natural state.

Later in the week the group did two cave tours: the River Styx Tour and the Domes and Dripstones tour. Both were very interesting, with our tour guides providing information on both the geology and history of the caves. On-the-ground hikes taken included: First Creek Trail, Cedar Sink Trail, Green River Bluffs Trail, Echo River and River Styx Spring Trail, Heritage Trail, and Sand Cave Trail. These trails lead into and around the numerous large sink holes within the park boundary.

While the early arrival of some Arctic air made for some very cold camping nights, the colors of fall enhanced the beauty of the area during our time there.
BIG SOUTH FORK NATIONAL RIVER RECREATION AREA

This spring, club members took a trip to the Big South Fork National River Recreation Area. Left, members enjoy a meal at the campground. Below, members navigate the rocky Spring Honey Creek Loop Trail.

A THREE-DAY WEEKEND IN ASHEVILLE
By: Corinne Duplan

This April, my fiancé and I visited Asheville, North Carolina. This used to be a small town with nothing but a Denny’s—but in recent years it has grown into a hip brewery and arts scene. It’s most well-known attraction is George Vanderbilt’s Biltmore mansion, but we discovered countless hiking trails that left us wishing we had all week to spend there.

The woodsy, hilly area where we stayed was only a mile from the Biltmore Estate, and adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway. The blooming redbuds, dogwoods, and cherry blossom trees gave off an ethereal effect. Our first morning, we wandered to a segment of the Mountains-to-Sea trail for a 3-mile trail run/hike before exploring downtown Asheville—where we walked in and out of art galleries, local craft markets, and breweries.

The following day we toured the magnificent Biltmore Estate.
Our third day was designated for hiking and exploring the Pisgah National Forest south of Asheville. Riding along the Blue Ridge Parkway, our first stop was the Pisgah Inn, where we enjoyed a scenic overlook.

Our next stop was the Mount Pisgah Trail; this 3-mile round trip hike took us to the summit of Mount Pisgah, where a large news tower was hailing down icicles every time the wind blew. Our next hike was the Graveyard Fields Loop Trail, where we stopped to eat a picnic lunch on some boulders at the foot of a waterfall.

The next stop was Cradle of Forestry, a National Heritage Site which houses what was the first school of forestry in the country. George Vanderbilt recruited German forester Carl Schenck to come up with sustainable practices for this forest land (which, at the time, was being logged at unsustainable rates). Schenck then founded the school, where forestry students spent long days in the classroom and the field, and roomed in abandoned houses left behind by settlers.

Our last stop in the forest was Looking Glass Falls, where we saw a double rainbow. Then we headed to the town of Brevard, known for its white squirrel population, for some urban hiking in the quaint downtown district. We saw some white squirrels, as well as a groundhog. Feeling satisfied with the day, we drove back for dinner and flights at the huge Sierra Nevada Brewery.

There are so many reasons to visit Asheville—the farm-to-table restaurants, breweries, the arts scene, endless hiking options, and the Biltmore. We had a wonderful three days there and will definitely be back.
SUMMER TRIP TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK
By: Emelise Cormier

In mid-July, twenty-one members of the Louisiana Hiking Club traveled to Colorado to spend a week in Rocky Mountain National Park. The west side of the park near Granby was chosen as base camp because it is less crowded than the east side near Estes Park. For the same reason - that is to avoid the summer crowds - the group hiked trails on the western side of the park.

The elevation at base camp was over 8,000 feet. In order to allow everyone to get acclimated to the altitude, the first trails hiked were short with little or no elevation gain. One of these was the Coyote Valley Trail, in the Kawuneeche Valley of the Colorado River. Here some spotted a female moose with her calf grazing along the bank of the river.

On Monday, July 15, we hiked the first challenging and perhaps the most beautiful trail, the Ute Trail. For this one-way hike, we started near the Alpine Visitor Center at 11,796 feet elevation, reaching the high point along the trail at 12,700 feet. Beyond this point, we hiked down approximately 5 miles to Poudre Lake at Milner Pass. Along this route we had fabulous views of the Cache la Poudre River, a national Wild and Scenic River, and the 12,000-foot peaks above it. We also encountered ice patches, marmots, and grazing elk along the trail.

On Tuesday we hiked a 7.6-mile loop following the Green Mountain Trail and Onahu Creek Trail. This route had an elevation gain of 1,100 feet traversing the rocky montane ecosystem with pines and fir trees. A section of the trail runs along the perimeter of a vast meadow, named Big Meadows, providing a view of the meadow. On the third full day of hiking, we hiked the scenic and interesting North Inlet Trail to Cascade Falls, out-and-back, for a total of 7 miles. Most in the group spent a lot of time at the Cascade Falls taking in the various views of the falls and taking lots of photos. On Thursday we hiked the Colorado River Trail, which parallels the Colorado River, to the Lulu City site which was at one time an active mining community. Along this trail some members of the group were excited by the sighting of bighorn sheep and moose. One member did some fly-fishing on the Colorado and caught some trout, including a beautiful cutthroat trout!

Finally, on Friday, the members of the group split up into smaller groups, pursuing different trails and points of interest within the park. Throughout the week, we shared meals and many laughs, enjoying camaraderie with our hiking friends as well as the awesome scenery and pleasant weather.
A SNAPSHOT OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK