

Penticton club has Grand adventure

By JP SQUIRE
The Okanagan Sunday

A dozen members of the Penticton Adventurers Club recently travelled to Arizona for the adventure of a lifetime: a 16-day, whitewater rafting/hiking trip through the Grand Canyon.

After almost 18 months of planning and anticipation, 12 members of the club gathered at Lee's Ferry, Ariz. to begin their rafting/hiking excursion.

Including women from New York, two men from Vancouver and Hawaii, the group numbered 17, said club president Sue Mavety.

"We were one happy and excited family when we met our guides from Canyon Explorations, and got our first look at the Colorado River and our modes of transportation," she said. "We would be travelling in 18-foot inflatable rafts rowed by a guide, paddling a 14-foot inflatable boat with six paddlers and a paddle guide, or risking a swim in a 'Ducky' which turned out to be a nine-foot inflatable kayak."

The rafts were also carrying all of their personal gear, bedding, tents, food, kitchen supplies, toilets, etc. for the full 16 days.

"At this point, the Colorado — a native word meaning red — was a beautiful, clear dark-green colour being fed water from Lake Powell just behind the Glen Canyon Dam 15 miles upstream," she said.

"But very shortly, and for the rest of the 225 miles to the Diamond Creek take-out, we would be floating on water that looked much like chocolate milk, and covered our bodies and clothes with a reddish hue.

"The Paria River just a few hundred yards south of Lee's Ferry quickly turned the river a milky green and from then on, our 'whitewater' rapids became 'brown-water' rapids."

While rapids in the rest of the world are rated on a scale of one to five, those on the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon are rated one to 10, she explained.

"With over 75 rapids to run, we had our share of 'whitewater.' Two rapids, Crystal and Lava, are rated 10 no matter how much water is being released from the dam. Others become larger in high water, and still others more treacherous and technical in low water. It makes for some very exciting days."

Since this was the "hiker's special," when they weren't floating lazily in the hot sunshine, or running rapids, they were hiking into the many side canyons and trails that can only be accessed from the river.

"Many of these had lovely warm, clear water pools and waterfalls to entice us to bathe. And although soaps and shampoos are not allowed in these streams, it felt wonderful to just rinse off the Colorado silt," said Mavety.

"Other than erecting our own tents and helping to unload rafts by way of a 'bag line,' everything was done for us. It is unbelievable what meals can be prepared in this remote and rugged wilderness. None of the freeze-dried fare for us."

Breakfasts included, bacon, eggs, sausages, French toast, pancakes, fruit, and the usual cold cereals and yogurt.

Many lunches were prepared with cold cuts, lettuce, tomatoes and avocados, and involved chick-



Submitted photo

Members of the Penticton Adventurers Club recently participated in a 16-day, whitewater, rafting and hiking adventure in the Grand Canyon. The intrepid travellers took a break from the water to hike up to the Granaries from Nankoweep Delta.

en or tuna wraps.

Dinners were even more spectacular: steaks, chicken, pork chops, salmon, salads, pastas and always a dessert of freshly-baked brownies or pineapple-upside-down cake made in a Dutch oven over coals.

"And did I mention appetizers every night before dinner? All this is stored in coolers on the rafts from day one and we were still having fresh salads on day 15. (Someone should tell the grocery stores how to handle their produce.) One of the highlights of the trip was a rain storm on day four," she said.

"The monsoon season normally ends at the beginning of September but it has been a particularly wet monsoon season this year and we caught the last storm of the season with two to three hours of heavy rain, thunder, lightning and wind."

Guides who have been running the river for 15 years said they had never seen it rain so hard. This huge amount of water draining from high above on the canyon rim caused hundreds of massive waterfalls cascading down the canyon walls, she said.

"Water of all colours from white to brown to red poured off the rocks and plummeted sometimes hundreds of feet to a plateau, only to gather more moisture and momentum and continue over the next ledge. It was one of the most amazing sights to witness."

"The next day, the sun was out and hot. Very quickly, everything was dry again.

"When it became too hot, the guides found their water guns amidst all the gear on the rafts and we had a rip-roaring water fight at the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

"Our guides were impressed that this group of 'older' guests - everyone was over 60 on our trip - could act like children again," said Mavety."

"On the last morning, as is the custom, we floated silently towards the take-out, each reflecting on what they had seen and experienced in this phenomenal place.



Submitted photo

It was not always smooth sailing for members of the Penticton Adventurers Club as they travelled down the Colorado River, as white water rapids made for some exciting moments.



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While the accommodations were rather rough, the scenery was spectacular.

"Our guides had successfully instilled in us their reverence and love of this wonder of the world."

About 30 members of the Penticton Adventurers Club go on a hiking trip of a few days every summer. Destinations in recent years have included Cathedral Lakes, Hope, Radium Hot Springs and Leavenworth, Wash.

"But we have never done any-

thing like the Grand Canyon trip before," said Mavety.

"I know at least one of our canyon group is planning on going again. This was my fourth time and I am scheduled to go again next July with my daughter and grandchildren."

She admitted she is "not really excited" about the whitewater rafting part.

"But I am totally enamoured with the Grand Canyon and the hiking trails at the bottom. I have always used Canyon Explorations for my trips and they have exceeded my expectations every time."

Club members are now in the planning stages for next year's trip. And the anticipation is building again.

Regional district, UBCO create eco cultural centre

Deep in the woods behind Woodhaven Nature Conservancy Regional Park in South Kelowna, something unique — and up to now, secret — has been going on.

On Tuesday, the Regional District of Central Okanagan revealed a unique partnership with the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies at UBC Okanagan to create the Woodhaven Eco Culture Centre.

On property recently added to the park, they have teamed up to implement a unique eco-art program that builds on a highly successful eco-art project held in the main part of the park during 2010.

It involved student artists creating multiple works of eco-art within the park.

The key principles of eco-art are: it doesn't harm the park environment in any way and utilizes the natural surroundings in the creative process. Earlier this year, the faculty hosted a number of public events at Woodhaven involving the eco-art theme with a visiting artist from Newfoundland.

Graduate students and visiting artists



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Making Tracks

can now reside in and use buildings on the new property as they explore eco-art projects, and provide activities, events and workshops.

The 3.5-hectare property is still closed to the public, pending a management plan and trail development, but it will be accessible and open for publicized special activities and events related to the eco-art and culture centre partnership.

"Woodhaven's unique natural setting

was preserved, thanks to the vision and environmental activism of Joan and Jim Burbridge many years ago," said regional district chairman Robert Hobson.

"The Eco-Art projects with UBCO have been a huge success and show that creative endeavors can take place with total sensitivity to the natural environment.

"We look forward to expanding the artistic horizons of graduate students by providing them with a unique natural canvas and inspiring residents across the region through the eco-art creations and programs offered through the Woodhaven Eco Culture Centre."

"It is vital that our students have opportunities to learn and express their creativity beyond the classroom," said UBCO deputy vice-chancellor and principal Deborah Buzard.

"The Woodhaven Eco Culture Centre provides a wonderful new opportunity for artists, writers and poets to study in a stimulating, natural setting."

For Nancy Holmes, poet, creative writ-

ing professor and associate dean for UBCO's faculty of creative and critical studies, the Woodhaven Eco Culture Centre is the culmination of a long-held dream for an innovative multi-use space where visiting artists, scholars and graduate students can live, work, create and research.

"This has been on our wish list for a long while. The Woodhaven Eco Culture Centre provides facilities to focus on art, research and culture.

"Students can delve ever deeper into their studies and stroke their creative process without distraction."

The faculty plans to develop summer artist and research programs at the centre, and is promoting partnerships with local groups for activities, events and educational opportunities.

J.P. Squire, aka the hiking, biking, horseback riding and kayaking sheriff, is an Okanagan Saturday/Sunday reporter and an avid outdoors enthusiast. His column appears every weekend.