







**My Journey to the Highest Point In Each of the US States**

**What is highpointing?**

By definition highpointing is the pursuit of reaching the tallest point within a specific area. However in practice it is many things – its traveling, exploring, mountain climbing, hiking, fulfillment, planning, exercise, sightseeing, self-discover, and much more.

My pursuit of visiting the highest point in each of the 50 US States is just one example of highpointing. Another example is reaching the top of the tallest mountain on each continent, dubbed the Seven Summits. Comparably, one might choose to reach the highest point of each county in his home state, or whatever region and subdivision he is interested in.

In the late 1980’s a fellow named Jack Longacre fathered the “Highpointers Club” consisting of people with the common interest of attaining the highpoint of each of the 50 US states. By the turn of the century his club had grown to over 2000 members.

Nevertheless, Mr. Longacre didn’t start the pursuit of highpointing. Apparently as far back as 1909 National Geographic did an article entitled "The Highest Point in Each State" relating to US state highpoint, and according to Wikipedia, “The first person to successfully climb each U.S. state highpoint was A.H. Marshall, who completed the task in July, 1936, when there were only 48 states.” Jack Longacre became the seventh person to achieve standing on the summits of all 50 US states.

The continental United States is 2,800 miles wide (from west to east) and 1,582 miles tall (from north to south). Plus, it is close to 2100 miles from my home town of Orem Utah to Anchorage AK, and around 2800 miles from Orem to Hawaii. As such, a lot of miles have to be covered in pursuit of reaching the highest point in each of the 50 US states, and typically it takes many years to cover all these miles and as such a relatively few number of people have reached the highest point of each of the 50 US States. From information on the Highpointers club’s website, I estimate that as of September, 2019 likely under 350 people have successfully reached the top of each U.S. state. [Footnote -The number I found on the High Pointers website is from 7/22/2018 and for that date it states 305 have obtained the highest point of each US State.] Also, it seems that on average under 25 people per year reach their 50th (final) US State Highpoint.

**About the US state Highpoints**

The US state highpoints range from landmarks as low as 345 feet to mountains as tall as 20,320 feet. Some highpoints can be driven to, requiring little or no walking effort, whereas others take skilled mountain climbers’ days or even weeks to scale on foot.

Too often people incorrectly equate the effort of reaching one highpoint to that of reaching another; unconsciously assuming that since all are highpoints all amount to equal effort. However, with the highpoints having such a wide range of geographical makeup there are many factors which influence their individual difficulty.

Traits such as prominence, isolation, type of terrain, vertical gain, weather, distance from a road, and natural dangers all influence the struggle (or lack of struggle) of reaching a highpoint. Likewise factors such as personal fitness, experience level, sensitivity to altitude, preparation, risk tolerance, time available, gear required, team size/dynamics, and mental clarity, just to name a few, also influence difficulty.  As such difficulty/effort rankings tend to be (and rightly so) mostly a matter of opinion, and personal experience.

One highpointer might avoid walking when a driving option is available, use guides to lead him up the most challenging summits, and/or only venture out in fair weather. Whereas another might tackle highpoints solo or only during winter months, and avoid driving in favor of hiking.

Adding to the confusion, the Highpointers Club offers no hard and fast rules for obtaining a highpoint indorsing “any route to the top” be it by horse, automobile, foot, helicopter, or what have you – leaving the means of ascent to personal choice.

Furthermore, one might also incorrectly assume that a list of the 50 US state highpoints ordered by elevation would suffice as a list of difficulty. Unfortunately, that too falls short. For example, Mt Marcy of New York stands shorter than Nebraska’s Panorama Point with the latter being nothing more than a spot on a prairie requiring no uphill walking and the former being a mountain rising over 3000 feet from the trailhead.

**About me**

I considered myself to be an outdoors enthusiast. Very few activities provide me with as much joy as hiking, camping, skiing, mountain biking, rock climbing, ice climbing and exploring.

This passion began in my childhood. At the young age of 10 years, I climbed Chief Mountain in Glacier Park, MT. At the age of 12 years, with my scout troop, I did a 26 mile back-packing trek from Chief Mountain Customs (USA/Canada border) over Stoney Indian Pass to Goat Haunt at the head of Waterton Lakes Alberta. In 1981 & 1982 I camped and hiked in Kananaskis country Alberta, first at the Canadian Boy Scout Jamboree and again for the World Jamboree Hike Master Camp. As a teen I fished a lot of the lakes and streams in Southern Alberta, and Northern Montana. In college, I took a High Country Backpacking class.

Over the years I estimated I have hiked thousands of miles, and during these hikes I have encountered black bears, crossed paths with grizzly bears, met cougars, foxes, wolfs, and coyotes. I have even been charged by a moose. In 1993 I biked the 330-km Golden Triangle solo from Banff, Alberta through Radium and Golden BC. I have rock climbed at Stone Hill, MT, ice climbed in Ouray CO, scaled the Grand Teton, explored the Grand Canyon of Arizona, and visited the Copper Canyons of Mexico.

My mother, brother and myself, at the stroke of midnight, and during a snow storm, welcomed in the 21st century from the platform on Mount Crandell known as Bear's Hump in Waterton Lakes Alberta. I have white-water rafted on the Gauley River in WV and the Youghiogheny River in PA. In 2003 I completed biking the 184.5 mile long C&O canal trail from Washington, DC to Cumberland, MD. Between August 23, 2007 and August 11, 2008 I climbed 52 peaks exceeding my goal of 40 peaks in one year! It is pretty typical for me to get in more than 30 ski days each ski season. I have accomplished over 350 mountain climbs to date, and I have even been sky-driving.

Growing up in a small town I learned to do things myself. As a child I used to repair and modify my bicycle. As a teenager I worked in the summers as a construction laborer mainly in stucco, drywall, and painting. In high school I took the industrial arts class of wood shop and mechanics. In college I started out studying engineering and found that I prefer hands-on engineering over theoretical textbook engineering. I have remodeled two houses, and got to rebuild both following a fire in 2014. I am constantly doing home improvement, and DYI projects. Along with my love of the outdoors I enjoy building, creating, repairing things, and I considered myself to be a handyman.

As the Internet was just starting to take off in 1997 I taught myself how to do web development. In 2000 I went into this line of work full time, and twenty years later I'm still hard at it. The creative side of it, and the problem solving are what I enjoy.

I was born in the USA, but had the privilege of being raise in Alberta, Canada –where I spent 18 years. After high school I lived in Adelaide Australia for two years, and following my graduation from University I was blessed to work and live in South Korea for a full year.

From the time I left home, in 1985, until the time I purchased my first home in 2006 I lived what is termed today a “minimalist” lifestyle. With the difference being that I never went from having an excessive amount of things to downsizing – instead I simply just never owned a surplus of things. My way of living over those 21 years was to limit my possessions to only what was essential and to never own more things than I could fit into my car all at once – meaning I could pack up and move anytime with just an hours’ notice.

I have always been finically responsible and as such I have managed to work in phases of un-jobbing into my adult life - meaning I leave a permanent career job and go for extended periods of time (6 month or more) without major, full-time employment. During un-jobbing episodes I have traveled, lived and worked in foreign counties, remodeled houses, and explored the great outdoors. Temporary employment during these times has bounced me from short-term work at UPS, to being a house painter/drywaller, to doing warehouse production work, and even to teaching English as a second language.

I have had the privilege of traveling to many countries world-wide, which has taken me to the Eiffel Tower, the Great Wall of China, the monuments of Washington DC, the streets of Macau, Stonehenge, Sydney Harbor, Itaewon, Waikiki, Victoria Peak, the Statue of Liberty, Death Valley, Teotihuacan, Redwood National and State Parks, The Tower of London, and many more places. As a matter of interest, I never use GPS, as I have been blessed with a keen sense of direction and have a love of paper maps.