

Local BSA Scout Troop backpacks across Continental Divide on Colorado Trail



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Local scouts who participated in a backpacking trek across the Continental Divide on the Colorado Trail included (l to r): Lucas Santiago, Seth Santiago, Tristyn Capps, Jake Smagur, Brayden Dominick, Dax Blanchard, Addison Carroll, Camden Torgesen, Jonathan Potts, Justin Elliott, Chase Cockrell, Isaiah Strehle, Ty Green, Austin Barker, Breton Guice, Hayden Sonnier, Colin Christensen, Ephraim Mills, Landyn Lansdale, Bailey Morgan and Christopher Spicer. Leaders included Doug Capps, Chris Dominick, Wordie Carroll, Terry Togstad and Marcia Rogers. Leaders not pictured include Jamie and Tommy Carroll, James Saul, Perry Strehle and Donnie Carroll.

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Boy Scouts of America Troop 321 from Long Beach, along with friends and family from Troop 211 of Ocean Springs and Troop 97 of Sumrall, recently completed a high adventure backpacking trek across the Continental Divide on the Colorado Trail. The scouts were joined on the trail by Michael Roytek, a photographer of Boys' Life, the national magazine for Boy Scouts of America.

The young men have been training together before and after quarantine - and on their own during quarantine - in order to be prepared for their memorable hike. The participating scouts hailed from Long Beach, Diamondhead, Gulfport, Biloxi, Ocean Springs, Poplarville and San Antonio, Texas, and range in age from eleven to seventeen.

To be well prepared and physically conditioned for the demanding task, the scouts backpacked in parking garages, in nearby parks, on the sea wall in Bay St. Louis and on trails such as the Tuxachanie Trail and Black Creek Trails. Techniques and gear needed for the trek were developed over the last year-and-a-half of the troop's existence and included backpacking, meal preparation and water filtration for getting water while hiking on the trail.

While hiking across the Continental Divide, scouts melted snow to supplement their water supply, camped under the Milky Way, and chased away a bear that wan-

dered into their camp during one of the nights on the trail. Each day on the trail brought new surprises, from grand vistas to tunnels through what looked like tropical foliage. The scouts hiked across snowdrifts and explored creeks and ponds created by beavers.

Roytek documented the journey, often capturing scouts doing things that they would be naturally doing, such as exploring a beaver site or melting snow. Occasionally during portions of the trek and during breaks, Roytek would have the scouts re-do a certain segment of the hike or would have them pose in a certain position in order to capture a specific thing that would best emulate "what scouts do." In addition to the still photography and video that were captured, he also set up in a few settings to do interviews with leaders and scouts. In addition, he had a drone that he flew in a few settings to capture the scouts as they did certain things, including crossing a creek and hiking up the summit to the Divide.

Scouts completed a forty-one-mile hike through the Rocky Mountains of the Colorado wilderness, including climbing an 1,800' summit for a maximum elevation of 11,876' as they crossed the Divide.

A separate adventure was created for the younger scouts and scouts not able to tackle the Divide, allowing scouts to participate at the beginning and end of the trail but also to do some cave exploring and local hiking. For all scouts involved, the adventure taught self-reliance and built confidence in their growth and maturation.



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Scouts from Troops 321, 211 and 97 hiking through snow drifts crossing the trail as they hike Segment 6 of the Colorado Trail.



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Michael Roytek, a photographer of Boys' Life, the national magazine for the Boy Scouts of America, traveled with Scouts BSA troops as they backpacked across the Continental Divide on the Colorado Trail, capturing their adventure and daily activities.



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Eagle Scout Seth Santiago is pictured preparing to capture mountain vistas with photographs, while his cousin, First Class Scout Addison Carroll, takes a break as the scouts backpack through Jefferson Valley on the Colorado Trail. Scouts from three different troops from South Mississippi hiked across the Continental Divide on Segment 6 of the Colorado Trail.



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Scouts not yet ready to travel the full forty-one miles and climb the 1,800' elevation under heavy load were given the opportunity to have their own adventure going cave exploring and doing local hikes in the Colorado Springs area, as well as participate on a portion of the big trek with the other scouts. Pictured exploring in Cave of the Winds in Colorado Springs are the scouts who hiked the Jefferson Valley portion of the trek, where they carried their own camping and sleeping gear. Pictured (l to r) are Terry Togstad, Landyn Lansdale, Brayden Dominick, Chris Dominick, Christopher Spicer and Marcia Rogers.