

DOUBLE DIPPING IN LEADVILLE:

Twin Lakes and Turquoise Lake

By Patricia Lee

(Photos by Matt Lutkus)



Tom Barnhart and Patty Lee, Bobbi Belmont and Casey Dorfield and Mike Forbes.



Matt at Turquoise Lake

S a t u r d a y , J u n e 29

The early start time made for sleepy eyes and good-natured grumbling. But when we saw the clear, almost-glassy water mirroring the high peaks south of Twin Lakes, those same eyes popped open. The low talk bubbled into anticipation, and the fog of sleep lifted. Mike Forbes, Tom Barnhart, and myself -- all new club members and recent converts to kayaking -- paddled into the new morning. One or two fishing boats, a canoe, and a sailboat briefly rippled the blue pool's surface as they passed by, but other than that we had the place to ourselves.

With only three of us at this point, we could afford to cruise leisurely, examining anything we wanted to. I marveled at how I could see bottom, careful not to lean over TOO far; the water felt like it was in the mid-50's. Mike was eager to test out his new drysuit and rolling skills. As we paused near a cozy scallop of clean beach, I heard a subdued splash and saw the flash of paddle blades, followed by a wet head swinging up from the water: mission accomplished! Later, we beached the kayaks to explore some

new "landscape" exposed by the lowered water level. The wind kept mum during our circuit around the larger, eastern lake, and I wondered if it was saving up its fury to spring on us later.

As we headed into the former Victorian resort of Interlaken, Mike and Carol Napier paddled up in their double to join us for the combination historic-tour-lunch-break. The Interlaken Trail runs right by the old resort, a stone's throw from the water. With access limited to only trail or water travelers, we savored the same peaceful lack of crowding we found on the lakes. We returned to our boats, ready to paddle around the smaller, western lake. That was when the wind rose...to all of maybe 15 mph. It merely made us work harder for a while, cooled us off in the increasingly hazy heat, then obligingly pushed us back to our launch site. We had paddled about 12 miles and still had the whole afternoon for other pursuits.

S u n d a y , J u n e 30

The Forest Service's ban on open fires and smoking brought with it an unexpected benefit: a quiet campground on a Saturday night. A couple

of RV generators marred the serenity, but without campfires there was a conspicuous lack of groups staying up late drinking. Still, smoke loomed thickly; I awoke in the wee hours eyeballing a shockingly orange moon. My throat and lungs told me the reason for the orange wash. The smoke kidnapped the sun, and the morning dressed in a sickly gray, with the air temperature sitting in the low 50's. Matt Lutkus (another new club member), Tom, and I pulled on warm paddling clothing and drove to Turquoise Lake.

Bobbi Belmont and Casey Dorfield were waiting at Matchless Boat Ramp, and Mike Forbes arrived soon afterward. A ranger told Tom that a new fire had sprung up between Twin Lakes and Independence Pass. There was no wind to speak of, and it dawned on me that the smoke pall might prevent the usual afternoon land-heating and consequent wind.

The six of us sliced through the pure glass of Turquoise Lake, paddling in double file. Again, only a few other craft (one or two fishing boats, a waterskiier, and a fisherman in a rec kayak) shared the lake with us under

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continued

the eerie, smoky sky. And again, the lowered water level revealed "new" land for us to set foot on.

We gingerly paddled through a muddy, shallow section to access a campground pit toilet. Bobbi and I had been talking about kayaking in Baja, or rather, I had been picking Bobbi's brain about it, when a woman standing by the restrooms waved me over and asked if our group was "just practicing or on a trip." Being the good PR person (ha!), I told her ours was a club weekend trip. The woman then asked, "Have you paddled in Baja?" and proceeded to tell me a horror story about

going on a commercial trip which included "an obnoxious 300-pound drunk." But she raved about the paddling in Baja.)

After munching some snacks, we were greeted by a headwind. We steeled ourselves for what might be a grind back to the boat ramp, but as at Twin Lakes, the wind ran out of breath after a few minutes.

Two days in a row of calm pad-



"The Interlaken Trail runs by an old resort, a stone's throw from the water (Tom Barnhart on the trail)."

dling near the Continental Divide...must've been beginner's luck on this new trip.

Twin Lakes and Turquoise Lake

A few words

By Matt Lutkus

I was taking a lesson with Ray on Saturday morning, 6/29 so I didn't get to kayak with the group on Saturday. I arrived at the campsite late in the day and joined the group on Turquoise on Sunday morning. Other than a light headwind on the return from our trip around the lake, the air and water were quiet. The air was warm, the water was frigid. Our Eskimo roll expert, Mike Forbes, did a half dozen practice rolls for us. With his drysuit on, this was one way to

stay comfortable with the steadily rising air temperature. While the rest of the group headed back home, I went back to the Twin Lakes Campground and after a short break, headed out on my own on Twin Lakes. One of my hobbies is reading and researching early tourism in Colorado so I spent a good hour hanging out at the restored 1890's Interlaken Resort. This is a three mile plus hike-in according to the folks I talked with there, but it's only a 15 minute paddle from the Camp-

ground. No crowds and beautiful weather- the only detraction from the beauty was the thick smokey haze (from the Gunnison Fire) that took away the otherwise spectacular mountain views to the north.

As a new member, the one surprise I had was the small number of Club members who were there for the weekend. It was a great time just the same and actually the peace and quiet was really what I needed.