



*August 25, 2021*

## **Adventure Trips for Older Boys**

After doing Adventure Trips with older boys for over ten years and looking back, I see how the boys have grown through them. Every boy craves adventure and fun. While these trips are not all easy, in fact some have been very challenging, it has brought meaning to them and has prepared them for life as a man God will use. We have hiked in the Rocky Mountain National Park, the National Buffalo River Trail, and multiple trails in Colorado's Weminuche Wilderness, and we have canoed the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. This is an account of the most recent adventure trip taken by Praise Assembly (outpost 5 in Springfield, MO) in June 2021.

After months of planning with the Adventure and Expedition Rangers, the day had arrived. The boys and men had prepared the gear and packed the food for this trip of a lifetime. The plan was to drive to the Colorado Rockies and to meet with God as we trekked a rough forty-one-mile trail that runs across the mountains of Southwest Colorado.

After driving what felt like two days, we arrived at the trail head. A beautiful valley of trees, a pristine river, and gentle breeze awaited us. It was nice to take a breath and see God's handiwork. We grabbed our packs, filled our water bottles, and made final adjustments to our loads. Then, we started on our quest not knowing the challenges that lay ahead but excited to rise to the trail that was before us.

The trail started at 7,900 feet in elevation and winds through the heart of the Weminuche Wilderness. After a long drive, getting to our first campsite was the goal. It was six miles and just over a 500-foot climb in elevation. We were excited for this first leg of the journey after being pinned up in a vehicle for so long. The relatively easy hike went by in what seemed like in no time. Soon we set up camp, ate dinner, and enjoyed some backpacker cheesecake. Finally, we listened to a devotion to set us thinking about who our God is.



The next morning was cool but beautiful. After a good night's rest, this day ahead looked to be a nice walk in the woods, and we were ready to conquer the mountain. After a great breakfast and a devotion, we broke camp and started up the trail. You might wonder what I consider a nice walk in the woods. Well, we had to carry our packs, weighing thirty-five to fifty pounds, up six miles of trail and 2000-foot climb in elevation. Along the trail, we could not resist the allure of dropping a line in one of the beautiful pools along the river. With the first cast, we had a nice fourteen-inch river trout on the line. After releasing the fish, we continued up the trail. After three hours on the trail, we stopped for a snack break, filled our water bottles, and enjoyed the sound of the river running through the valley. As we neared the fourth hour on the trail, the afternoon thunderstorms began to roll in, and we started to look for a campsite. This evening brought cold rain and sleet, but it could not dampen our spirits. With warm food in our bellies and the richness of God's Word in our hearts, we went to bed.





Day three of our hike started with warm sun and the warmth of reading God's Word. After a quick breakfast, we were off on another six-mile hike with about a 2000-foot climb in elevation. It was nothing we couldn't handle. After a short distance, the trail became challenging with one fallen tree after another. One hiker we encountered said it felt like three hundred downed trees on the trail. More realistically, we had to climb over, crawl under, or walk around about seventy-five downed trees. After an arduous eight hours of hiking, we had travelled eight miles with a 2,100-foot climb in elevation. We were all exhausted and found our beds quickly calling us after camp was setup. After a quick snack and a prayer, we were off to bed.



Day four had a wet start. It was only supposed to be a four-mile hike with an 850-foot climb in elevation. This would be an easy day considering what we had already conquered. This would be the hump day of the trip with the remainder of our

journey being mostly downhill after this. The lake we were to stop at for the night has had great fishing in the past, and we were looking forward to a nice trout dinner. After devotion time, we started hiking through some valleys and then headed up over the pass.

We had cloud cover while on the trail, which kept the temperatures down, so we didn't even break a sweat while we were hiking this beautiful part of the trail. As we started up the pass, the wind began to gust. Before we had travelled much further, there was a cold driving rain pounding our faces. Within 200 feet of the summit, the rain turned to sleet, which made traversing the granite rocks treacherous. The thermometer was reading just over forty degrees, and with some encouragement, we pressed on to the other side to find the wind had died down and the rain stopped. We only had to hike a little over a mile down from the ridge to arrive at our camp. We quickly setup up our tents and found dry, warm clothes and sleeping bags. After warming up, we went down to the lake to see if the fishing was still as good as last time. We were not disappointed. Within minutes, we were at our limit. Dinner was amazing with fresh lake trout, stuffing, and chocolate pudding. After a time of reflection, devotion, and prayer, we were off to bed for a well-deserved night of rest.



Day five would be a day of drinking in the beauty of our surroundings. This day was dry, thank the Lord. We had a six-mile hike with an almost 2000-foot descent. The beauty of Emerald Lake glistening ahead made for an alluring stop for our fifth night on the trail. After a quick breakfast, devotion, and prayer, we were off. On this trail, we would see beautiful waterfalls, deer, and the amazing views that most people never get to see. We nearly covered the six miles by lunch time, so we were able to spend more time looking for a nice camp site and fishing. We had a great time around the cold campfire and talked about how great our God is. We knew the trail ahead and discussed where we wanted to stop for our last night on the trail. The trail ahead was eleven miles downhill, and the logical plan was to go six miles to our next camp and enjoy another night by the river.





With a beautiful sunrise on our sixth day, we decided we were up for the challenge of making the entire eleven-mile hike back to the trail head that day. We had done this before and knew we could do it again if we wanted to get on the road a day early. After breakfast and communion and with loads of enthusiasm, we were on our way down the trail, which was a 2500-foot descent. We wandered through meadows, crossed streams, and listened to Lake Creek as it rambled down the valley. We stopped at the Lake Creek bridge for lunch, water, and a nice rest. For the last five miles, we hiked along the Pine River and enjoyed our last few minutes in the beautiful mountains of Colorado. We watched and listened as the breeze moved through the valley, giving off an aroma you will not find anywhere but in the mountains surrounded by aspen trees. As we approached the trailhead, we looked up to see storm clouds rolling in for yet another round of wet weather.



If it weren't for the storms, I would be remiss in saying I would have liked to stay another night in those beautiful mountains. This set of storms turned nasty, so we

were glad we were not out on the trail. It reminded us of the God who rides the clouds and is master of all the storms. It also reminded me of *A Guy's Journey to Manhood* by Doug Marsh. He says, "When God builds men, He starts with ADVENTURE. . . . We dream of adventure—going places, testing our limits, doing things that matter, and having fun! Do you realize God made you to enjoy adventure? He did!"

What adventure is in your future? What challenges will you face with courage? Will you be able to shout into the wind that with God's help you can accomplish anything God sets before you? Do you inspire a walk with Jesus in the boys you mentor?

(**Note:** The editor chose to keep all elevations as numerals instead of spelling them out for ease of reading.)



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