

AN OUTFITTER'S BACKCOUNTRY TIPS DURING HUNTING SEASON

From Jen Cox with OutWest Guides

The leaves are changing, the sun is out, and it's a perfect fall day to take the doggos out for a hike in the wilderness. But why are there specs of orange moving around the hills? Why are there trucks and trailers and horses at the trailhead? Wait, it's hunting season?!

Yup. Fall is a great time to enjoy the backcountry, go for a hike, and Instagram those colorful photos. But August-November is also hunting season and that means we share the trails with many recreational users. It also means that we should all take extra safety measures that will help make our shared outdoor experiences more enjoyable for all.

We all know the basic safety measures to bring water, snacks, extra clothing, and to let someone know where you are headed but here are some extra fall pointers.

- 1. Know before you go.** It seems like a fun idea to spontaneously get in your car and head to that spot you heard the gas station clerk tell the guy ahead of you about. But what do you really know about the area? Is it private property? What is the parking like? Is camping allowed? Is there cell service, and if not, how will you communicate if you need help? Is it shared use? Will you encounter other hikers, bikers, and horseback riders? Do you need permits to access this area? The best sources to answer these questions are the local United States Forest Service (USFS) Ranger Station and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). Some areas require a day-use permit and others may require you to purchase a fishing license, even if you don't plan on fishing. Bonus Tip: There have been many mudslides that have damaged roads and trails this summer. Check with the USFS for road and trail closures before you head out.
- 2. Now that you know what kind of area you are heading, are you prepared to share the trail?** Hunters aren't just hiking around the hills. They are looking for brush movement, listening for animal calls, and glassing (viewing through binoculars) for what they are hunting. Why does this concern you? Trail etiquette dictates that we respect how others are using the trails and the accessible areas. While hunters are bound to ethics, we should all practice good manners. Don't go skipping and bounding through the woods singing at the top of your lungs and shouting at your off-leash dog to leave that deer alone. Stay on the trail, keep your dogs leashed, and know that yelling, shouting, and backwoods karaoke can not only spook wildlife but also affect other users.
- 3. Be seen.** It's a good idea to wear orange while using wilderness areas in the fall. Find a bright orange hat, at least, and add a vest or bright T-shirt if you're feeling the style of neon. Bright orange duct tape can also be used to add color to hats, clothing, and backpacks. Put an orange vest, jacket, or tape on your fur babies too. Hunters won't mistake you or your movements for



Kevin and Jen Cox of OutWest Guides out on the trail leading a string of horses.
Photograph from Jen Cox.

wild game if you're wearing orange. Also, respond if called out to by a hunter. They may need to confirm where you are if they are tracking a game animal.

4. Know the order of right of ways. Vehicles defer to all other users. It's best if a vehicle can pull over and cut the engine if deferring to horses until they pass. Bikers defer to hikers and horseback riders. If on a bike, stop and pull over as soon as you see horses approaching and/or if directed by the horseback riders. Stay still until they have completely passed. Hikers defer to horseback riders. Step aside, make sure your dog is leashed and held tight if barking and lunging. Don't forget to say hi! Horses do not like to play hide and seek, so don't step behind that tree thinking they won't notice you. If they hear your voice, they know what and where you are and can pass safely.

5. If you are really out there (in the backcountry), you may come across an outfitters camp. For the most part, leaving it alone is a good idea. Most outfitters are understanding if you have an emergency, just

leave everything as you found it. It's a real bummer to ride several hours to camp to find that your cooking stove has been broken and all propane bottles are missing. You never know when the cowgirls and cowboys might decide to hang their hats for the night in one of their camps. They may also have hunters using that camp who have yet to return.

Overall, hunters respect that we are all enjoying our mountains in different ways. Outfitters are out doing a service and will most likely tip their hats and smile while they pass you with a string of horses.

OutWest Guides has had many positive experiences with hikers in the backcountry and highly respects anyone who can climb these hills! These tips are simply a friendly reminder to all users. Here's to happy trails and a safe, happy fall!



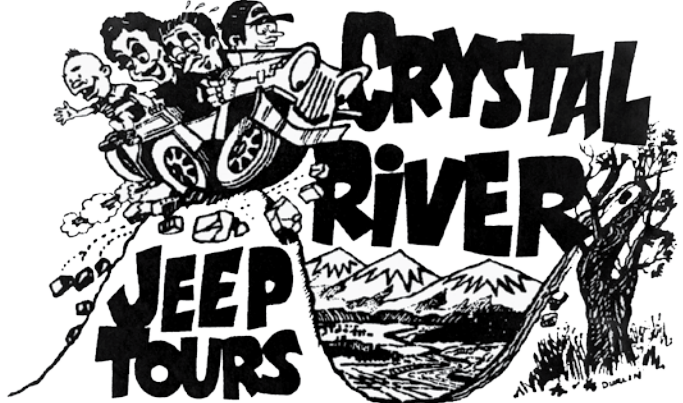
Don't forget to outfit your pooches with a splash of orange!
Photograph of Chief from Jen Cox.

OCTOBER ROAD CLOSURE

The road to the Crystal Mill and Crystal City (NFSR 314) is closed from Oct. 3-7 at Daniel's Hill (intersection of 314 and 315). The closure affects the approximately 4-mile stretch from Daniel's Hill to the Crystal Mill. The Mill may still be reached from the north via NFSR 315.

SEASONAL HUNTING DATES

1 st Rifle (limited elk)	Oct 15 - 19
2 nd Rifle for deer/elk	Oct 29 - Nov 6
3 rd Rifle for deer/elk	Nov 12 - 18
4 th Rifle for deer/elk	Nov 23 - 27



CRYSTAL RIVER
JEEP TOURS
MARBLE, COLORADO 970-963-1991
Open June thru October!
407 W. Main Street SmithFamilyColorado.com/CRJT



YOU USE.



WE DONATE.



THEY BENEFIT.



Every time you use your Loyalty Debit Card*, Alpine Bank donates a dime to community causes that are important to you.

*Alpine Bank debit cards are available with no annual fee to individuals with an Alpine Bank checking account.



Alpine Bank ALPINEBANK.COM • MEMBER FDIC