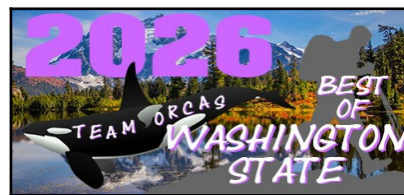


TO: Team Orcas
FROM: Coach Gunn
DATE: July 31, 2026
574.215.4779

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PACIFIC NORTHWEST TRIP UPDATE

I just returned from Washington state to finalize our plans for our two trips in September. I am really fired up for this hiking tour and I appreciated Kathy Flynn's wonderful help.

My biggest goal was to scout the *Enchantments Traverse*. Up to a few years ago every hike I've suggested that required a Test Hike was one that I had done personally. It's actually more challenging for me to develop a training plan for a hike that I cannot personally experience. The *Enchantments Traverse* is another of these very challenging hikes worth doing. It has been described as one of the most stunningly beautiful hikes in the Pacific Northwest. It is considered a *bucket list* hike. This hike is so popular that there is a full time shuttle service operating to the trailheads. From our hotel you will be shuttled to the trailhead and returned when you finish.

I had Kathy do this hike to gain valuable information for our hikers. The hike was a difficult challenge taking her 14.5 hours to complete. She said, "it was as beautiful as it was tough!" Now with two first hand experiences, Kathy and my son Jake, I can better set the Test Hike standards. The trail offers beautiful views of five Alpine lakes and fresh water stream crossings for easy water filter refills. However, the trail is very challenging with some steep ascents and descents. It has a lot of non-technical scrambling and one has to be careful as the trail is often rocky.

Kathy is in good shape but was not prepared for this course. In fact, it took so much out of her legs that she was not able to do the *Heather Maple Pass* hike the next day. This is a wonderful 7.2 mile hike that I want all of you to enjoy and experience. It is my daughter Emily's favorite hike! The *Enchantments Traverse* is tougher than I first thought and the qualifications for the Test Hike must be upgraded. I want each of you to enjoy and be successful at all the hikes you take on. I know we have several Cairn Stone hikers that can be successful but I am going to be a nervous wreck at the *Snow Lake* trailhead waiting to greet all of our *Enchantment Traverse* finishers.

A smart alternative hike with an *Enchantments* experience would be the first section to *Colchuck Lake*. This hike is 9 miles out and back with 2,500' elevation gain in 4.5 miles. Your reward is an Alpine view of Colchuck Lake. This is a challenging but safe choice for many of our Team Orcas trekkers because it is an out and back course. From our hotel the shuttle service will take you to the *Stuart Lake* trailhead and pick you up when you finish.

The *Colchuck Lake* hikers will have a 9:00 AM shuttle so will start and finish in the daylight. However, the full *Enchantments Traverse* hikers must have everything recommended in the *Day Pack Checklist*, and definitely a headlamp and water filter. They could both start and finish in the dark. Though it's listed as optional in our *Day Pack Checklist*, I want all of the long hikers to have a **stub pencil and waterproof paper** in case of injury to pass a note to me with a passing hiker.

I'll be waiting at *Snow Lake* trailhead where you finish. If I receive a note I will contact



CAIRN STONE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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the Chelen County Sheriff's office and they will assemble a volunteer rescue team. Please be prepared to spend the night on the trail. [The *Day Pack Checklist* includes a mylar blanket. Some Cairn Stone Vets upgrade to a mylar bag.] An overnight rescue will require a car rental to catch up with the tour. I will have details available before trip departure.

I am confident that our elite Cairn Stone hikers can complete this course successfully but I want everyone to not underestimate this unique challenge. The 20 mile hike distance does not concern me. What does concern me is the scrambling and rocky, rough footing on this trail. Injury prevention will be a major priority. The course is incredibly beautiful but a price has to be paid to enjoy it.

This is going to be a wonderful hiking tour with lots of beautiful hikes, dynamite sights, delicious food, great lodging and memorable fellowships. I want this to be a trip of a lifetime for each of you, whether a casual, moderate or elite hiker.