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Discover Telluride's Energizing Trails

Hiking Travel

By

Kühl Editor

As the number of COVID-19 cases increase during the holiday season, I feel increasingly fortunate to have traveled safely to Telluride, Colorado in July for our youngest son's destination wedding. After the pandemic caused the newlyweds to cancel their traditional wedding plans, they opted for an informal mountain top ceremony surrounded by immediate family. By remaining outdoors most of the time, everyone stayed healthy and

returned home safely with wonderful memories of a joyous event.



Bride and groom celebrate in Telluride, Colorado

Overcast skies and periodic downpours did not deter us from embracing Telluride's rugged terrain. Wearing sturdy boots and [rain gear](#), we were not deterred by the elements. After spending a disproportionate amount of time indoors during the mandated Stay-at-Home restrictions, Ira and I couldn't wait to trek on conveniently located San Juan Mountain paths.

Jude Wiebe Trail

From our rented Mountain Village condo, we took the gondola, a free public transportation system, to the town of Telluride. The morning sky had yet to be engulfed with clouds, so we were able to appreciate the panoramic view offered by our moving cabin as it went uphill to the San Sophia Station at 10,500 feet and then descended into the town of Telluride at an elevation of 8,750 feet.

After exiting the gondola, we walked uphill to the Tomboy Road Trailhead, one of the two trailheads for this three-mile moderate loop trail named after a U.S. Forest Service snow ranger who planned the trail before his unexpected death from cancer in 1986. By starting at this point, we walked in a counterclockwise direction.

While the steep, unshaded ascent may be challenging for people not accustomed to a 1,300-foot elevation gain at

a mountain town altitude, our decades of residing in Colorado gave us a distinct advantage over individuals living at sea level. For this reason, we chose not to follow the recommendation for people who live at lower elevations by starting at the slightly less taxing North Aspen Trailhead.

As we walked uphill on the dirt and gravel path, we saw the carved-out areas where skiers and boarders gleefully zoom down in winter, as well as the town nestled in a valley surrounded by jagged mountains. Within no time, we were engulfed by a grove of aspen trees lining both sides of the narrow dirt path filled with an assortment of roots and rocks.



Sandy hikes through aspens. Pictured in [KÜHL hiking apparel](#)

Later on, we pranced through areas inundated with fir and pine trees. Along the way, we stopped to admire bubbling creeks and darting orange and black butterflies while simultaneously taking a respite from the intense rays of summer sunshine.

Periodically, we encountered open meadows filled with wildflowers offering photo opportunities for panoramic shots of the mountain ranges surrounding Telluride. Not far from the end of the trail, we walked on a footbridge which allowed us to cross Cornet Creek. Eventually, we reached Cornet Creek Falls for another brief stop before we headed back into town for a quick carryout lunch at Taco del Gnar.

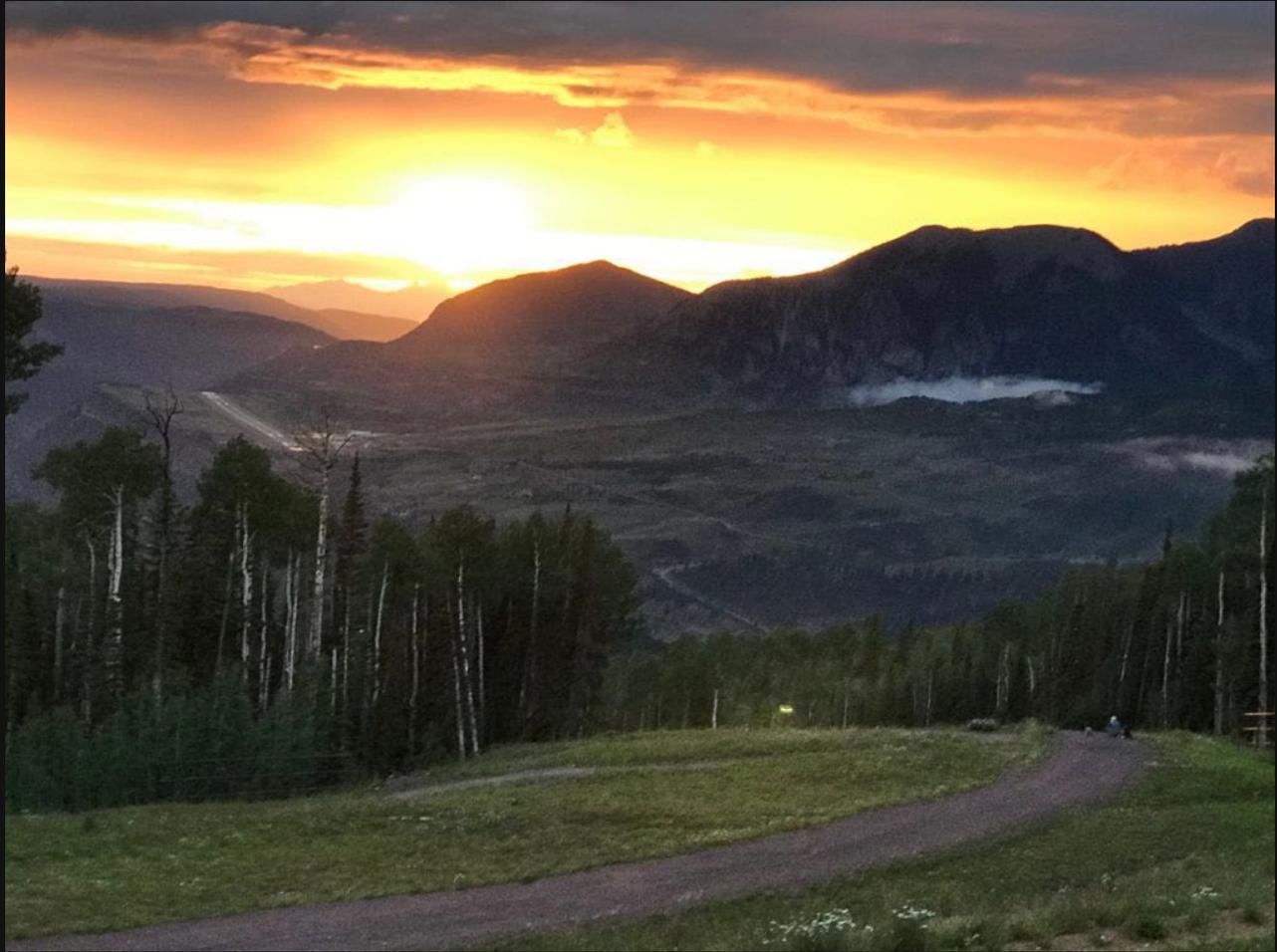


Creek along Jude Wiebe Trail

San Sophia Overlook

After an outdoor dinner in town, we exited the gondola at the San Sophia terminal so that we could observe a

mountain top sunset. Our sentiments were shared by dozens of other nature lovers who scampered to find the best vantage point.

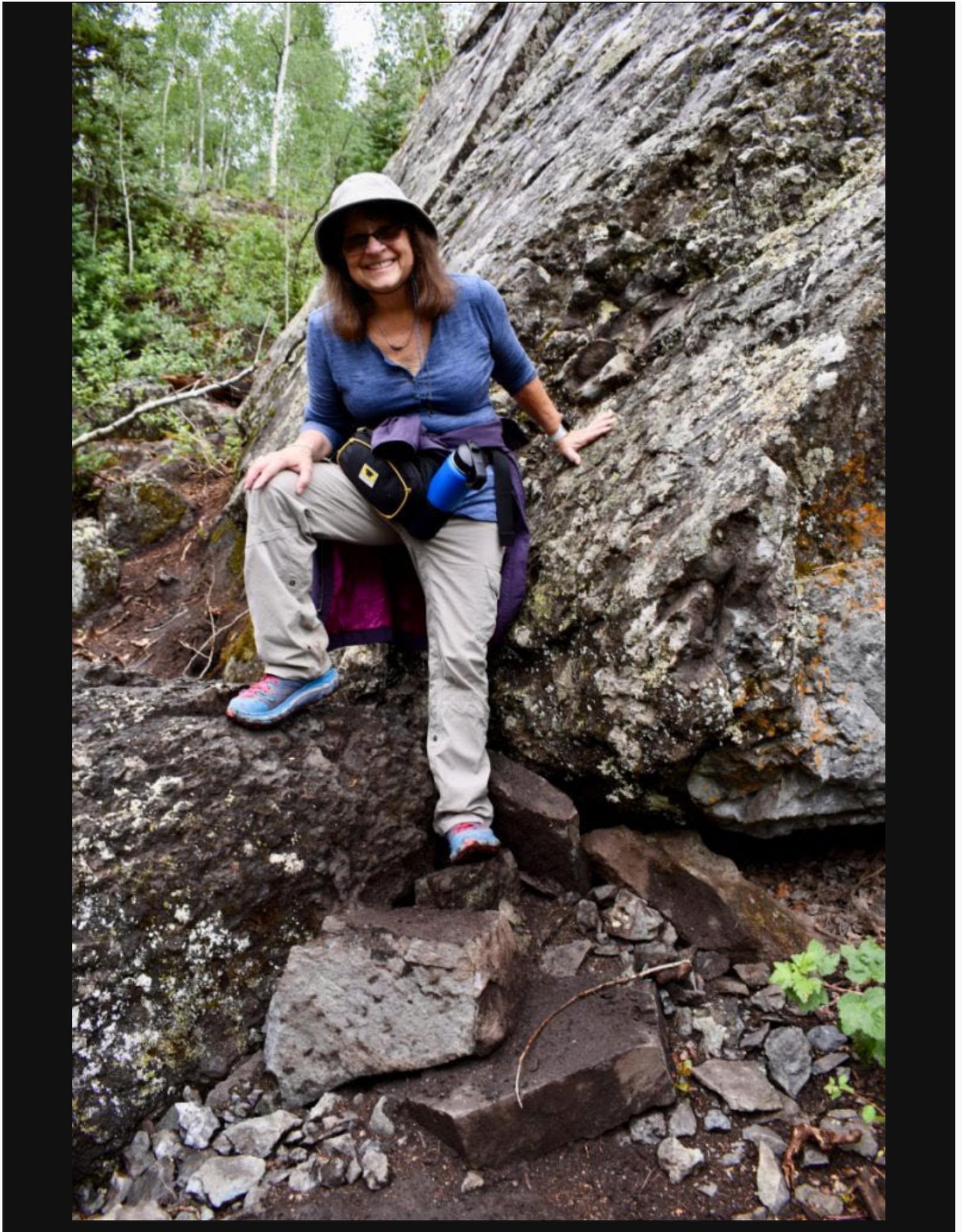


Sunset from San Sophia Overlook

Bridal Veil Falls Trail

We drove a little more than a mile from the town with our son and his bride to the Bridal Veil Falls Trailhead. Our son wanted to show us the romantic location where he had proposed the previous year. Threatening skies did not stop hordes of hikers from taking the primitive trail zig zagging up a steep slope. Other trekkers opted to compete with vehicles on Black Bear Road, a dirt and gravel road leading to the top.

From the lower parking lot, we saw a hydroelectric power plant and Colorado's tallest free-falling falls measuring 365 feet. The early 20th century power plant is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and remains operational. Slippery conditions on the muddy, steep trail coupled with a previously injured knee prevented me from reaching the end of the trail.



Sandy is all smiles as she takes a break on Bridal Veil Falls trail

I was disappointed that it was not possible to reach the dramatic base of the waterfall known for its micro-climate of humid and cool. While I missed out on this unique experience and the impressive view, I did enjoy the segment where we scrambled through large boulders and rocks on a trail engulfed by vegetation.

Town Park

After our abbreviated time at Bridal Veil Falls, we had extra time to spare. On the way back to town, our son parked in the Town Park parking lot where we followed him to a mini waterfall. The easy Telluride River Trail runs through this area. This flat four-mile walking path is ideal for people who can't handle moderate or difficult terrain and for families with small children.



Sandy & Ira at mini waterfall near Town Park, Telluride, Colorado

Bear Creek Preserve Trail

We had two options on our last day, stay inside or hike in the rain. We didn't hesitate. Staying in our condo was

not an option. Once we were back in the town area, we walked to the end of South Pine Street to pick up the Bear Creek trail.



Fog rises up the canyon walls on Bear Creek Preserve Trail

Pelting raindrops greeted us as we began our five-mile round trip journey on a reddish-brown dirt path mixed with jagged and smooth rocks. Again purple, pink, orange, yellow and white wildflowers grew in clusters throughout the fertile, green landscape. Steep mountains topped with rocky crags formed the canyon walls. In between the sound of raindrops, we frequently heard rushing water. Distant waterfalls fed a fast-flowing river that snaked its way through the canyon floor.



Waterfalls tumble down the mountain on the Bear Creek Preserve Trail

Meanwhile, we carefully navigated the path which had streams of water running down it. At times, our main objective was to simply keep walking. It was raining too hard to stop for pictures. As we approached the apex, the trail became narrower and slicker. Despite the rain, crowds lingered at the small base area. Instead of waiting for these hikers to leave, we headed back and found a place farther down the trail to take photos.



Wildflowers abound near Bear Creek Falls

With muddy shoes, damp clothing, and a bag filled with innovative tacos, we returned to our condo. Despite unfavorable weather conditions and COVID restrictions, our family came together for our youngest son's modified wedding celebration, and Ira and I found time to hike on a handful of local trails. Feeling energized by our getaway, we returned to Denver ready to face life's challenges.

When Sandy Bornstein isn't trekking in Colorado or writing, she's [traveling with her husband Ira](#). After living as an international teacher in Bangalore, India, Sandy published an award-winning book, [May This Be the Best Year of Your Life](#), as a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. Among other things, Sandy writes about family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences.



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