

Does anyone walk anymore?

By Larry Hyslop



End of the Road in Lamoille Canyon on a Wednesday afternoon

During this year's hunting season, I saw so many pickups pulling trailers loaded with ATVs or UTVs. There were so many ATVs that I could not help but wonder if anyone walks anymore.

This summer, Cindy and I camped in several small USFS campgrounds across Idaho, Montana and Washington. It seemed like our campsite was the only one without at least two ATVs. In the morning, a line of ATVs filed out of the campground for a day's riding, and filed back in late afternoon. I enjoyed watching the families heading out. Any time kids get outdoors is good, and if ATVs is how families do it, I think that is great.

But then Cindy and I traveled across Washington's Rainy Pass and into North Cascades National Park, past several trailheads. The parking lots were jammed with vehicles whose owners were off hiking. Also, on a recent Wednesday afternoon, we drove to the End of the Road in Lamoille Canyon to find a dozen vehicles but no people, the vehicle owners obviously away hiking.

So we decided that yes, people do still walk. Some people like Cindy and myself, enjoy the physical process of putting one foot in front of the other. We like visiting an area through the quiet and contemplative process of walking. We have no problem with ATV riders, if that is how those riders get out and about, great. It is just not for us.

I do find it humorous that today's hunters become outraged if they cannot take their ATVs off-road to retrieve their game. The last time I hunted was as a teenager, so it's been awhile. If we shot something, we dragged it out to a road. If it was too large to drag, we cut it up and dragged the parts. Of course, we did not have these fancy ATVs, and probably would have used them but we made it.

As an extreme example, Cindy and I once hiked two miles uphill to reach a Montana lake. It was a difficult but pleasant hike and we were sitting on a log, enjoying the scenery and eating our lunch when four guys roared up the trail on loud dirt bikes. They stopped near us, shut off their engines and nodded hello but did not remove their helmets or even get off their machines. After a couple of minutes, they turned around and roared off.

Now, no one traveling under their own power enjoys being passed by someone using mechanical power, but it was so absurd all we could do was laugh. We decided we would much rather spend a day hiking and enjoying not only the destination but the hike itself, than make a quick trip on dirt bikes for a two minute visit.

So do people still walk? Yes, we do and we would have it no other way.

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