

Stepping Out of Bounds

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As you look around you, knowing you will be gone for the next two weeks, everything is good. Jump in the car and get on the road to South Dakota. The Crazy Horse Memorial volksmarch has been an annual event for 30 years. Join your 10,000 closest volksmarching friends for the 31st edition of this notable event. Get in free with a food donation, then walk all the way up onto the arm, enjoy the tremendous view, visit the gift shop, have a really good time.

Then, back on the road. Next stop is Buffalo, Wyoming. Get there early and do the three seasonal events in town. Sunday night the convention folks are hosting a huge party at the Occidental Hotel in downtown Buffalo (Durant to you Longmire fans!). On Sunday and Monday, you can visit the Jim Gatchell Museum for free, hope to see Craig Johnson of the Longmire show in town, and enjoy all the amenities of a true old western town.

Monday morning park at the ball fields off Prosinsky Park, walk across the street to the south side of City Park where the first pre-convention event begins. Stop at the pre-registration table and pick up your Start Card for the week, drop off your books to get stamped, get your card punched as you jump on the bus for the short ride to either the 5K or 10K trailhead for your most enjoyable walk along Clear Creek on the Mentock trail. When you are done, the bus will take you back to the Start/Finish to pick up your books. Enjoy the rest of your day.

Departing Buffalo on Tuesday, head up I-90 to Hwy 212 and the entrance to the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Flash your Senior Access Pass at the entrance and turn right into the Stone House parking lot. Check in to get your Start Card punched (remember, you picked it up yesterday! Don't lose it!), leave your books to get stamped, and head out on the trail through the Custer National Cemetery, out and back to the Deep Ravine, UP to Last Stand Hill and out along the access road. Turn around at the check point and head back to the Indian Memorial and back to the Finish. Don't forget to take some time to enjoy the Visitor Center and listen to some of their amazing programs. Next stop – Billings, Montana.

Check into your room at the Red Lion Hotel and Convention Center, Billings. Stop by the Registration area near the Convention Center entrance to pick up your convention packet – local information, your convention Polo Shirt, gAVAn, your convention plush bear mascot, get any questions answered, and relax for the start of the convention in the morning.

Morning already! Head down to the Convention Center at Walk Central and check-in for the Yellowstone River walk. Get your Start Card punched, leave your books to get stamped, and get on the trail. You will head out from the Convention Center through a business and residential area on the way to the Yellowstone River trail, walk around Norm's Island, then into Riverfront Park. Follow the trails through the park, around Lake Josephine and back to the hotel. Pick up your stamped books, and relax. Grab a coffee, or breakfast at the restaurant. Enjoy the sun (or snow as the case may be!) in the Courtyard. If you are a delegate, you have until 1:00pm today to get credentialed for the General Session meeting this afternoon.

While you have been out enjoying yourself, our volunteers have been working hard to prepare the vendor area, the silent auction, the AVA Tech Bar. Don't forget to show up for your volunteer shift, where your free volunteer T-Shirt (NOT black) will be waiting for you. Convention Registration and Credentialing have been open since 8. If a State Association has requested, they may be having a meeting between 9 and 11. The candidates for AVA national office will be having an Open Forum to answer any questions you may have.

The National Executive Council will be holding the final meeting of this NEC at 11. It is open to everyone. At 2:00, the first General Session opens. The candidates will be presented, the Bylaws amendments will be voted on, and Lynette will read the Necrology. After we close for the day, President Michele will host an invitation only VIP Reception in the Presidential Suite.

By 6:45pm, make your way to the Courtyard where the Meet & Greet social will start at 7. We will be serving a local favorite, Huckleberry Pulled Pork, a choice of the majority of our attendees. Enjoy the meal and cash bar, then wander around and look up your old friends you have not seen in ages. "Hey Fred, how are you?" "Louise, really good to see you again. How are the grandkids?" And a good time will be had by all.

Early, early Thursday morning the workshops begin. You signed up for three of them, and they start at 7am. Follow your provided map to the location of your first workshop. You might want to get there just a wee bit early, as there is no competition for attendance – the workshops have been thoughtfully scheduled as the ONLY activity. One starts at 7, one at 8:30, and one at 10. There are seven to choose from in each session. There are club related workshops – Hq Operations, Trailmaster Training, Club Operations Handbook Training with ESR and Treasurer information and club recordkeeping. Information on News Media Relations with Glen Conyers, on the AVA and Navigators with Deb Kreup. Experience an Event will be hosted by Bob and Suzanne Wright. There will be information on the Ice Age Trail Alliance with Jerry Wilson, sessions of Taoist Tai Chi with Joel and Lisa, Use your Passport by Scott Isom of Walking Adventures International, Pole Walking – probably in the parking lot, the History of Billings with Kevin and Elisabeth from the Western Heritage Center, Author Christine Handy will be hosting a Q&A and book signing, Frank doing a talk on Volksmarching in Self Defense, Margie explaining the Couch to 5K program in the Northeast, and Doris discussing how to use Meetup to increase your participation.

Of course, the Vendor area, Silent Auction, Convention Registration, Credentialing, AVA Tech Bar (continuous presentations on the new technology we are implementing at the AVA), the Swim and Bike Events are available as well. At noon join us in the Courtyard for a sit-down Deli Lunch. Build your sandwich your way. The General Session begins at 2:30. Presentation of the Distinguished Achievement Awards, Hall of Fame inductees, and the President's Award happen. Today our Keynote Speaker is Kevin Kooistra, Executive Director of the Western Heritage Center. Enjoy his talk of the rich history of Billings and get your discount ticket to the Western Heritage Center.

At 6pm, head down to Walk Central and check in for the President's Walk, a Brewery tour through downtown Billings. Drop off your books, get your Start Card punched as you get on the bus for the short ride to the Western Heritage Center start. Enjoy your walk as it is getting dark past multiple historic buildings, many breweries (check out their volksmarch specials), through many parks. Your bus will be waiting for you at the 5K point, or continue walking UP to Rocky Mountain College for your 10K bus. Get plenty of sleep for your big day tomorrow.

Friday morning back at Walk Central, drop off your books and get on the bus headed to Boot Hill Cemetery, start of our Swords Rimrock Park walk. Check out Billings from above in both directions, see the grave site of Yellowstone Kelly, commune with the Indians at Skeleton Cliff. Then back to the Convention Center for your Box Lunch and to pick up your winnings at the Silent Auction. The Friday General Session begins at 2pm and we will elect our new AVA National Officers, hear from Russ Palmer representing the VFW and the Montana Warrior Run coming up in Billings, and choose the location of the next AVA Biennial Convention.

Whew! After all that work, we are ready for our Friday evening Out of Bounds Bash. Get ready for an outstanding dinner, good company, our guest speaker Christine Handy, music and dance lessons, and auctioning off the centerpieces. Another Outstanding AVA Biennial Convention, thoroughly enjoyable.

Saturday morning dawns bright and beautiful in the mountain town of Red Lodge, Montana as you wake up at the Yodeler Motel. Enjoy your incredible walk through downtown and on the trails around the city, walk past the Whispering Giant, partake at the Red Lodge Café, see the Carnegie library. Then either today or tomorrow morning, travel the Beartooth Highway to Cody, Wyoming.

Cody has a lot to offer. After our walk starting at Riley Arena, through residential and business areas, around the lakes, there is much to see and do. The Buffalo Bill Center of the West houses five different museums, from firearms to natural history to Native American collections. Take in the 'every night' rodeo. Visit the Trail Town Cemetery, get your T-Shirt perforated with bullets YOU fire from an 1861 Gatling Gun! Whooo Hoooo!

On your way home do the specially sanctioned Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park seasonal events. Perhaps join up with Susan. Enjoy a plethora of events all the way back to your house. All in all, a most excellent way to spend some time Out of Bounds in the Beautiful, Bountiful state of Montana