



EXTREME Jackson

The OTHER SIDE of COWBOY

WORDS KRISTEN POPE | IMAGES SHUTTERSTOCK.COM AND JACKSON HOLE MOUNTAIN RESORT

Jackson's residents embrace a challenge and are always eager to "get after it," as the locals say.

Jackson Hole is a land of extremes. From its Western cowboy heritage to its modern day extreme athletes, Jackson's inhabitants have always pushed the limits. Whether freeskiers like Crystal Wright are hurling themselves off cliffs or bullriders are clinging to a raging bull with one hand, Jackson residents are anything but tame. This isn't surprising in a land where temperatures reach the -40s and an average winter brings 450 inches of snow to the mountains. Jackson's residents embrace a challenge and are always eager to "get after it," as the locals say.



GRAND TETON'S "FASTEST KNOWN TIME"

The Grand Teton presents challenge after challenge for local mountaineers. From Bill Briggs' historic first ski descent to the race for the "Fastest Known Time" to the peak, the jagged hunk of rock known as the Grand enthalls the imagination and inspires people to push their limits. On August 22, 2012, Andy Anderson, a climbing ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park, ran the Owen-Spalding route from the Lupine Meadows Trailhead to the top of the Grand (and back) in two hours, 53 minutes and two seconds. He beat the 10-day-old record of Spain's Kilian Jornet by 59 seconds. Jornet caused controversy when he allegedly took shortcuts along the trail to break Bryce Thatcher's 29-year-old record of three hours, six minutes.

THE GRAND TRAVERSE

The Grand Traverse is a supreme Teton mountaineering achievement. With an elevation gain of 12,000 feet, this 14 mile route is no walk in the park. The route links the mountains of Teewinot, Owen, Grand Teton, Middle Teton, South Teton, Cloudveil Dome and Nez Perce. In the summer of 2000, Rolando Garibotti completed the route in six hours and 49 minutes. In the winter of 2004, two two-man teams set out for the winter record. Mark Newcomb and Stephen Koch completed the journey in three days and Hans Johnstone and Renny Jackson finished one day later.

JACKSON HOLE MARATHON

The third annual Jackson Hole Marathon is scheduled for Sunday, September 22. The race starts near the Town Square, runs by the National Elk Refuge, the Snow King ski hill and uses the community pathway system when possible as it winds over to Wilson and towards the Teton Village finish line. This "cup free" green event requires runners to bring their own water bottle or hydration system in order to reduce the environmental impact of the race. Aid stations offer beverages but no cups. Participants can compete in a full marathon, a half marathon or a two to four runner relay. >>



DOWNHILL MOUNTAIN BIKING

Anyone can ride a bike but some downhill mountain bikers step it up to the next level with bone-jarring, teeth-rattling downhill routes. Jackson Hole's mountain biking community is neither tame nor faint-hearted. Beginning and intermediate bikers can head to Teton Village for lift-accessed and mellower rides while advanced riders can head up to Teton Pass for adrenaline-packed action including technical riding and gap jumps.

LOTOJA

The LoToJa bicycle race, the longest one-day USAC-sanctioned race in the U.S., covers 206 miles and passes through three states in one day. The route features three mountain passes and travels through Utah, Idaho and Wyoming, concluding at Teton Village. This year's race is on Saturday, September 7, the 31st year of the race.

POLE PEDAL PADDLE

Each spring the Jackson Hole Ski & Snowboard Club hosts this four-event competition where teams and individuals ski a 3,500-foot vertical, three-mile-long giant slalom, nordic ski approximately three miles, road bike 19.8 miles and then paddle eight miles down the Snake River. Many contestants dress in costumes for this festive Jackson Hole rite of spring.



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TOUGH TOWNER

Billed as the “ultimate community obstacle course,” Jackson will see two Tough Towner events in 2013 – the first on Mother’s Day and the second on October 12. Participants run straight up Snow King, get soaked by the snow making machines, slink through sand and mud, scale a slimy six-foot wall, run through tires, complete the “mega-classic of all jungle-gym challenges” and conquer many more obstacles on their path to Tough Towner glory.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOWMOBILE HILL CLIMB

Every March, snowmobile racers vie to be the “King of the King” as competitors race their snowmobiles 1,500 vertical feet up Snow King’s steepest slope. The four-day event draws over 300 racers and 10,000 spectators each year. Not all competitors make it to the top – YouTube is packed with videos of spectacular tumbles and crashes. Nets are set up to intercept wayward snowmobiles before they fall into the crowds below.

U.S. SKI MOUNTAINEERING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Each January, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort hosts the U.S. Ski Mountaineering National Championships. In this competition, racers hike and climb up the mountain then ski back down, repeating this along a route that ascends a total of 8,000 vertical feet. Top competitors can finish the route in two and a half hours. If once isn’t enough, many competitors head over the hill the next day to compete in the Grand Targhee Ski Mountaineering Classic. ■

