

THE JOURNAL

In partnership with Mountain Designs



VOLUME 2

Volume 2

This journal is in partnership
with Mountain Designs.

Here it is, the second installment of the Journal. I hope you're all ready for it. We travelled far and wide this month, definitely covering most of our ground yet. We took a 3 week trip starting in Big Sur, turning it east to the Sierra (again), heading further east to the Canyonlands before heading back west to San Francisco to recoup. This has been by far the most we've seen yet, covering almost 4,000 miles in the van. It's been an incredibly eye opening time, seeing the wild west and a new portion of the United States. Honestly this place is so underrated. I urge people to come here, hike and explore as much as you can.



Welcome, again.

Hi all. For those of you who read the first Journal (Vol.1), thank you! I'm glad you're back for the Vol. 2 edition. It's still stupidly hot here in the states. Summer has had no sign of giving up, especially out in the desert, where we've spent most of our time. I'm not complaining though. Before we know it the temperature's going to drop and it'll be thermal and jacket weather.

If you're new to reading this, The Journal is a place where we share all of our adventures from the road. We're hoping you're liking the images and the stories that go with them.

We met up with some great people over here this month in Carmel and Yosemite. Definitely check these talented photographers out. Great people!
[@nathanielwise](#) [@christianschaffer](#)
[@destinationdame](#) [@neilbennett](#)

Unfortunately this month due to the ridiculous temperatures we didn't backpack as much, but we did see more than we ever have before.



Big Sur & Highway 1

With no real schedule or places to be, we hit the road to see where it would take us. Over the next month, we would meet some amazing people and see some incredible places.

We started our next odyssey of travels on the California coast, Big Sur.

Having no plans & what that feels like.

Being able to roam freely, I am forever grateful for. Home or abroad. This trip is an incredible opportunity to see the world and make memories. Buying a van instead of hiring one was the best decision we ever made. We're also really spontaneous people, (me more-so) so this lifestyle is sort of fitting. For the last two months, we've made many last calls to travel to a location or to meet someone, often hundreds of miles away. This lifestyle isn't glamorous. Often living out of a cluttered mess, struggling to find things, and having to search for water and public showers, it's a grind but I'm in it for the long run, if our car agrees with us. We have already put a crazy amount of miles on it. Almost 10k.

There are plenty of pros to road life, don't get me wrong, but there's plenty of cons too that would not attract the average person. Let me share.

Firstly, it's a struggle to find water and to shower. We are averaging a shower once every 4-5 days. Secondly, we're confined night and day to the car and it's crammed often smelly space. Sometimes fresh air is needed and rolling back into bed at night in the car, just sucks, haha. Thirdly, we lose stuff all the time like utensils, batteries, cables, undies and socks. They all seem to grow legs and wander off

somewhere to be found later, but if there's one thing that outweighs all of these negatives, it's the freedom. We're free to roam and drive wherever we want. That feeling of not knowing where we'll be for the night can be daunting and tiring but at the same time, inspiring and exciting. From Walmart parking lots to completely free National Forest dispersed campsites, we've seen and experienced so much. We've only booked an AirBnB once because it was too hot at night. I'm excited to see how my perspective on freedom changes the further we travel and head into this lifestyle. For now, I'm eternally grateful for these opportunities.



Everyone has heard of Big Sur. If you haven't, definitely google it. A mythical landscape of rugged headlands plunging into an impossibly blue ocean. Artist Fancis McComas once called it *'the greatest meeting of land and sea.'* I can see exactly what he meant. Driving highway 1 is almost dangerous because of the beautiful scenery and its distraction. You know, it's summer and with summer on the coast comes coastal fog, mainly in morning and evening. With fog ruining the views at sea level, and with the plenty of busy and built-up spots along the coast, we opted to head for the hills, taking the quieter option driving up an old dirt forestry road. It's sounds cliché but some of my most fond adventures have come from driving unknown dirt roads. (particularly this one - named disclosed).

Our favourite afternoon was spent above the clouds, pictured here. We ventured out into the hills above Highway 1 to find a spot for the afternoon - with the hope of seeing a "Big Sur Sunset". We found it, a beautiful little swing and with a picturesque view and no one else around. We sat for hours reading and swinging before witnessing one of the most beautiful inversions followed by the longest lasting sunset and after glow. Our perfect afternoon.

Happy vibes all round.



Mountain Designs
Lightweight Chair



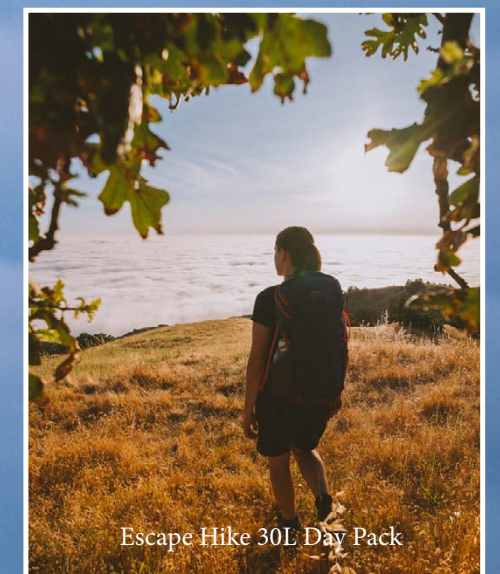
Mens Hamersley Long Sleeve



Womens Alta Softshell

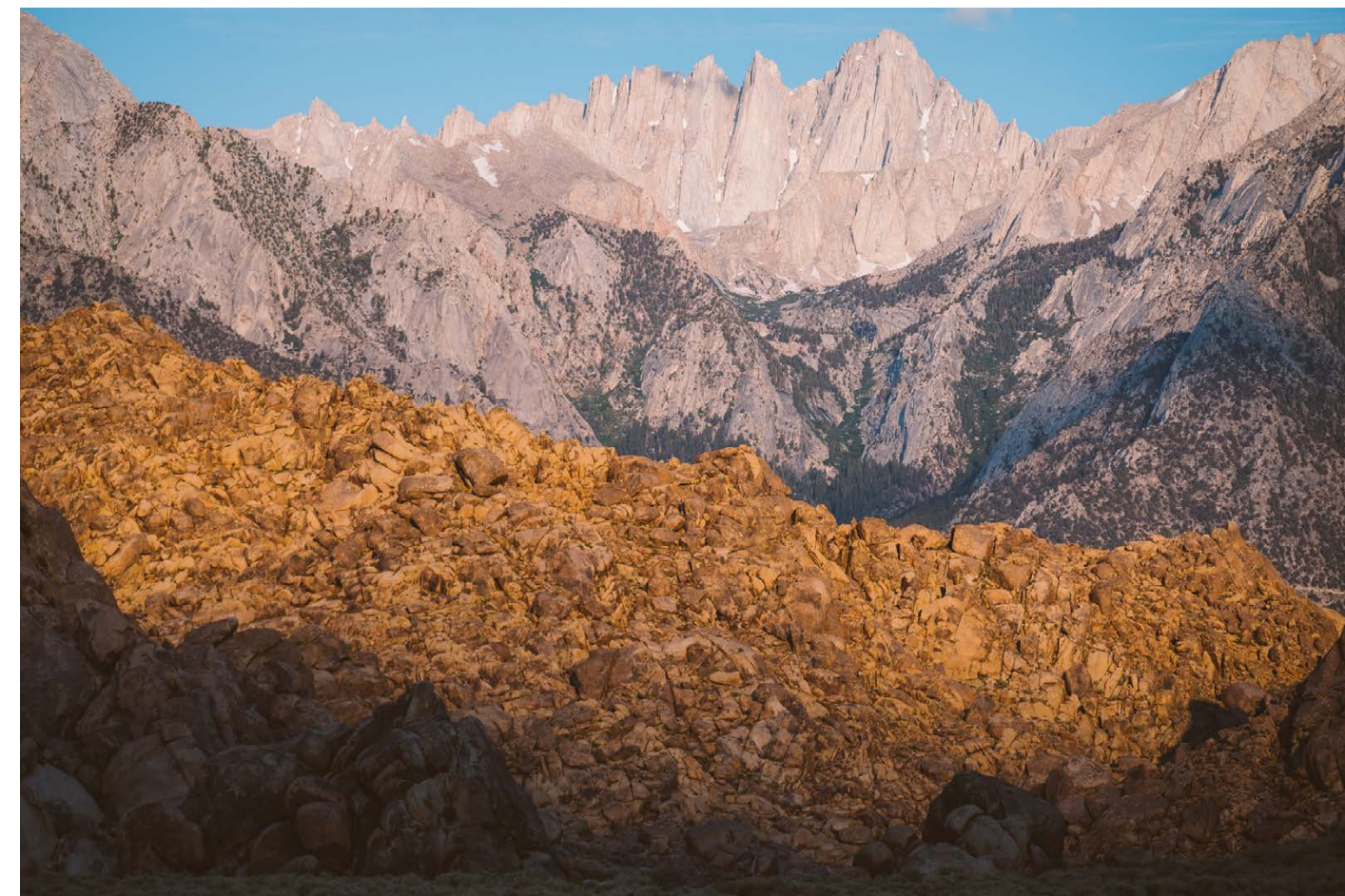


Escape Hike 30L Day Pack





‘The richness I achieve comes from Nature, the source of my inspiration’ - Claude Monet



Mount Whitney, Eastern Sierras

Leaving the Sierras (again) was definitely hard. I love the charm of the mountains here. Granite peaks have always had a special place in my heart. I’m not too sure why, but they look epic. We rolled into the Mount Whitney area before heading east to the desert and found one of our favourite campsites, and views. We’ve been using an app called iOverlander to find free camping areas throughout the whole country. The app shows coordinates, photos and details of sites as well as shower areas, wifi spots, laundromats and water refill stations. We couldn’t do this road lifestyle without this app.



Recommended app (iOverlander) if you want to try living on the road in the US.

We pulled up here for the night and watched Mount Whitney (highest mountain in the lower 48) from a distance. What’s interesting about this area is the geological diversity, from desert plants and rocks to sub-alpine pine trees and into alpine rock and ice. You can see the changing layers in the image above. So much colour and texture!



Southwest.

Featuring the Escape Hike 30L Day Pack,
Womens Merino Tee and Zip off Hiking Pants.



A favourite campsite of ours. The Valley of the Gods. Free, Quiet, Inspiring.

Campsite of the month.

Rolling through the rugged Southwest, there's not many towns, gas stations or any phone reception. It's a pretty desolate place. Not the place you'd want a flat tyre. We'd just finished up cruising Monument Valley and were driving north east towards Moab, Utah. 10 miles out of the town of Mexican Hat, a small road sign read "Valley of the Gods" and I immediately said "right, we're taking that road". We whipped out our trusty app 'iOverlander' to check if it was free camp territory and fortunately it was. The light was getting good at this stage so I put my foot to the floor, going a bit too fast at times. Out on the horizon roughly 15 miles away I could see this epic section of Buttes and Mesa's (rock formations) and it was then I decided that was our destination. We pulled up, shot some photos, flew the drone and took this amazing image (above on the right), made dinner and fell asleep to the desert breeze after a really hot day. This was honestly one of my most memorable and favourite moments of my life so far. What makes a great moment? The feelings, the place, the sounds, the people? I think it's a combination of all of them at once. This moment summed up everything I dreamed about when considering life on the road.



I can't imagine this place in winter.



Unknown Butte in Utah standing tall at last light.



Madison weaving her way through Bryce Canyon Hoodoo's

What else can I say but woah? Even growing up in Queensland, Australia surrounded by wild desert and summer storms, I haven't come across dirt so red, rocks so rugged and desert vistas so incredibly vast and untouched. This is a special part of the United States.

Leaving the Sierra, we set off with the Grand Canyon, and Bryce Canyon National Parks in mind. From a young age I've wanted to see them both. From looking in books, to seeing them on TV and Instagram, seeing a place with your own eyes is an experience in itself. Just for some background info, Madison and I rarely travel with a plan or itinerary, so when we'd make it out to these spots or if we'd find other places in between. You could perceive this as a good or a bad thing, but we see it as a good thing. Waking up and not knowing where we'll be for the night is exciting, often a little draining but in all honestly probably the best thing we've done. Our life at home was so structured and living on the road is teaching us to live simply and go with the flow. Living in the moment has become more important than ever.

Grand Canyon

The first time seeing this place is mind blowing. The fact this place was carved solely by one river, the Colorado River, is astonishing in itself. I couldn't help but imagine what this area looked like before erosion and carving. Seeing these places opens your mind to

think about the landscape in front of you. It's great to think differently, to appreciate, to respect the past and present. In the GC in summer, temperatures are extreme, so we couldn't really hike, especially not down into valley from the rim. We took a afternoon hike from Shoneshone Point to Yaki point, roughly 3 miles each way. We had the entire trail to ourselves, meandering on the edge of the canyon, briefly looking down and feeling inspired by its size and quietness. We spotted Turkey Vultures, deer and even a coyote. This place is filled with wildlife and wildflowers. By about 6pm the sky had turned nasty and a summer monsoonal downpour was upon us. This is where the *Mountain Designs GORE-TEX jackets* were great to keep us dry.

Bryce Canyon

Like pretty much all the National Parks we have visited, Bryce Canyon was filled with tourists, parking was a nightmare and the trail was always packed. On our first morning, we decided to walk the Queens Garden trail to see the Hoo Doos (Rock pillar formations that were formed by water and ice erosion). The hike started well, although it was hot. The scenery was breathtaking and we enjoyed listening to all the people we passed speaking in their languages (mostly German and French) - we were struck by the sheer amount of international trouists, this country really attracts people from every part of the world. The final stretch of the hike was through a slot canyon, which is exciting for a lot of people.

For us, standing at the bottom and looking up to the switchbacks filled with people, it was overwhelming. When we finally reached the top, past crowds of other people, we swore that we were going to find a trail with no one else on it for sunset. Lucky for us and my sanity, we stumbled across the Peekaboo trail which to our surprise was dead quiet and 4 million times more epic. The light in the afternoon on this trail was so gorgeous, I couldn't stop shooting (above image). We really took our time on this walk, we weren't in a rush we just wanted to really take in the unique scenery enjoy nature.

There were so many squirrels and chipmunks on this track so watching them scavenge and then dart across the tracks was another thing we enjoyed in Bryce. Some other nature we got to enjoy was our first encounter with a rattle snake. If you know me, you know I'm petrified of snakes. The little guy was sitting right on the edge of the trail - we either had to turn back or carefully get around him, we chose the latter. Which was lucky because the light got even better and I got so many nice shots just around the corner.

So far this has been one of our top 5 hikes. Sometimes the shorter stints have the biggest bang for your buck. We've learn't to never expect too much from a location. A lot of the time, it can be disappointing, so going into it with an open mind and no prior research can make the experience a whole lot better. Often we'll stumble across a trail or view we've never

seen before or even planned on doing, and what's cool about that is most of the time it's even better than the other spots.



We got caught in a summer monsoonal downpour right after sunset in the Grand Canyon. We were parked 3 miles away. It was either make a dash for it down the highway or hike the 3 miles on the rim and risk slipping or lightning strikes. We chose to hike the road and did so confidently in the Mountain Designs GORE-TEX jacket range.



The Womens and Mens Cumulus Gore-Tex Rain Jackets have a great feature that came in handy in this rainy and potentially dangerous situation - walking 3 miles along a busy highway. It has reflective strips on the hood, back and front. We didn't even know! That being said, the waterproofing worked exceptionally well too and they dried quickly once we got back into the car.



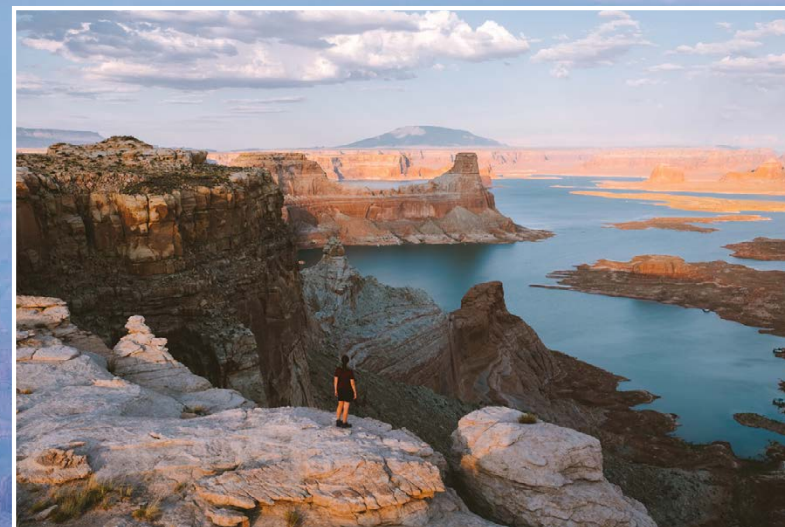
**Gear item
of the month.**

Escape Hike 30L Day Pack

This pack has been an all round great bag for our adventures. It's come on almost all of our day hikes through the Sierra, Utah and Arizona. I can't say enough good things about it. It's so light! So comfy, and holds a tonne of gear. The adjustable padded mesh straps are contoured and feel super comfortable on the shoulders. The padded hip belt features two zippered pockets where I can put small things like camera batteries and hand sanitiser. Additionally the top zipper is a great compartment for sunscreen, powerbank and other items. It's even been used as a pillow for reading.



Southwest Gallery



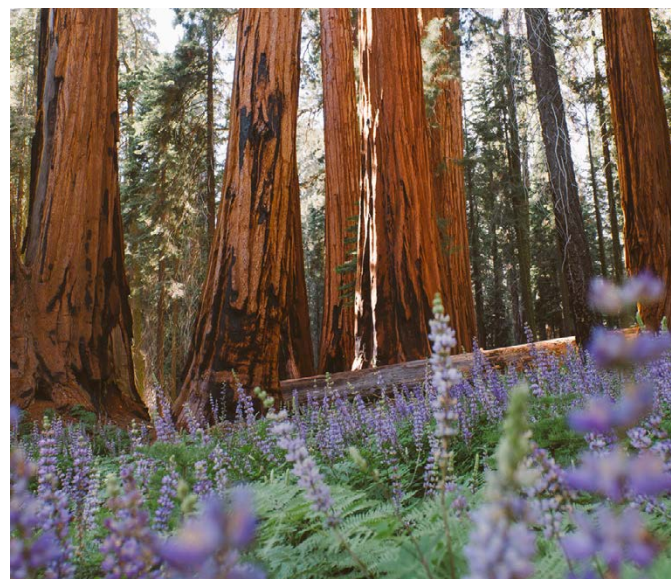
Backpacking Sequoia National Park

It had been about 3 weeks between backpacking trips. You could say we were itching to be back on the trail and in my tent. After Big Sur we knew the time had come to head east towards the desert, but we made a pit stop first in the Sequoia National Park. We arrived in the afternoon and headed to giant trees. This park has since become one of our favourites with it's gorgeous sequoia trees and accessible wilderness areas. The first afternoon we took it easy, and went for a leisurely walk around some Sequoias, stopping to read all the signs and learning a little about them.

The next day we headed to the ranger station to get a permit for an overnight back country hike. We chose the Alta Meadow trail as we were told that there are some beautiful mountain views at the end. Soon after, we packed our bags, grabbed our poles and headed for the trail. Though there weren't any sequoia trees to admire on the track, we did encounter a pair of bears. Luckily they were just off the trail and didn't seem to be bothered by us. Even still, it definitely spiked our heart rates! A few hours later, with tired feet we came to a beautiful view and set up our Mountain Designs Expedition 2-Person tent and ate our dinner with a view (as you can see on the next page, Madison was very happy to be eating). Another successful and stunning hike for the books!

Sequoia NP is home to the biggest tree in the world; a sequoia named the General Sherman (measured by volume), with a base circumference of a whopping 31.1 meters. It also weighs 6157 tones. Imagine 6000 small cars. Huge scale.

These trees thrive on fire and they actually depend on wildfires to grow and reproduce. They are incredibly resistant to fire damage. It's honestly humbling and completely awe-inspiring to walk beneath them, looking up at over 3000 years of history. Oh the things these trees would have seen.



Under the Sierra Nevada Range.



Mountain Designs Expedition 2-Person Tent



Alta Trail. 22km
Elevation Gain 720m
Bear Encounters 2



Happy days on the trail.





Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument

To see a slot canyon is on my bucket list. Especially one that you don't need to pay to hike through. We took a 4 hour round drive over the bumpiest road of our lives to get here. 92km round journey over corrugated washboard road, we arrived in the Grand Staircase Escalante - a true desert wilderness area. Signs all around warned us of dehydration and flash flooding warnings, emphasising that the hike through the slot canyons are a lot more strenuous than expected. I'll keep this Slot Canyon's name anonymous to help keep it wild. We learned that hiking through in the middle of summer with 40 degree temperatures and only one bottle of water was not the greatest idea. I got light headed, nauseous and needed to start heading back ASAP to avoid dehydration. Fortunately some local legends gave us a 2 mile ride in the back of their truck, back to our car at the trailhead. Be safe out there everyone - listen to the warnings!



The 12 foot high entry and exit climb to the canyon.

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