

Ritt Kellogg Memorial Fund Expedition Grant
Colorado Trail Post-Trip Reflection
Cassidy Craige and Skye McCrimmon

Post-Trip Report

- Itemized Budget (the amount you received and the amount you spent – provide as much detail as possible. We recommend saving all receipts to make this part easier)

See spreadsheet

- Food and rationing (what did you eat, not enough, enough, or too much, what would you change, etc.)

For the food and the rationing Skye based food off of her experience on a previous Ritt trip in Canada. As a result we had a pretty good grasp on what needed to be purchased and a good variety in food. For the first leg of the trip, we were ensuring that we were getting enough calories in, especially because our days were filled with high mileages and lots of elevation gain. By the time we got to our first re-ration in Silverton, we still had leftover snacks, and lots of lunch related foods that we didn't eat. So, overall I would say we had more food than we needed, but we would rather carry extra weight knowing we wouldn't run out of food and ensuring that we had enough calories. In the future with a thru-hike style trip, we could scale the amount of food so that we have more a couple weeks in once we have our trail hunger and so that we are not carrying as much extra food in our packs. It was also a little challenging to account for changes in appetite as a result of altitude.

Another way that we would have improved our food rationing system is by pre-portioning snacks like trail mix into individual bags as "daily snacks" rather than carrying the large bag for a couple of our snacks. Overall most were pre-packaged so this was a minor way we could have improved efficiency.

- Equipment (what did you end up not using, what did you wish you had brought, etc.)

Cass: I was pretty satisfied with my gear and the group gear we brought! Every layer and piece of clothing was used, and I didn't carry anything I didn't use. Skye and I divided up group gear evenly to try to have equal weight distribution. I brought items for my entertainment, such as cards, journals, and watercolors. Although these added weight to my packs, it was worth it to have those for camp. Food was definitely our biggest weight added to our packs, so in the future, scaling down the amount of snacks we brought (as we had plenty of extra) would be the only thing I would change.

Skye: Having been on a trail like this before, I was very satisfied with my gear. I did carry some extra layers that I didn't use as often but I was happy I had them on the colder days on trail when I had rain and snow. I brought a couple luxury items like my kindle and a zero degree sleeping bag which I was very happy with. We ended up deciding to use ursacks rather than

bear canisters as our bear storage. This worked well and helped us minimize weight. I think the biggest challenge for us was that the weight of our packs were probably a bit heavy. It probably would have been ideal if we had cut down on weight in our packs to make the start of the trail a bit easier.

- What worked, what didn't, and why

What worked:

- We had a stellar time while we were hiking together and feel so lucky for the time we had together on the trail. One thing that worked well was the number of breaks that we took. I think this helped us get through our longer days of hiking.
- Decisions around weather were made safely and in an effective way.
- Camp tasks were evenly distributed giving us both time to take care of our personal needs and also enjoy camp.
- We did a good job addressing first aid matters like blisters to make sure they didn't get worse.
- We did a good job knowing our terrain and options for water to make sure we were prepared for the day and always had water with us!
- We did a good job talking at night about our route for the next day as we consulted our map, our planned mileage, and any changes that we would need to make.

What didn't:

- I think one of our biggest challenges on the trail in the time that we were there was our pacing. We had a bit of a hard time setting a pace that was comfortable for us both, gave us adequate breaks and got us to camp at a reasonable time. We had conversations and switched up who was leading and following to shake things up and do what worked best for both of us. Ultimately this was a very minor issue but something we discussed in the first couple of days.
- Another challenge we had in the first couple of days was figuring out our communication styles and needs. This especially came to a head when Cassidy was injured. But we established the importance of clear conversations and communication. We also decided it was important to stop and address a problem before it was potentially made worse. And ultimately the day that Cassidy's injury became more problematic we refined our communication skills and were able to have a challenging but important conversation for risk management.

- Travel logistics (how did you end up getting to/from the experience, what should others know)

To save on costs and make things simpler we ended up driving to Durango instead of flying. This worked better because it gave us the flexibility to make stops as needed to finalize gear but also meant that we could carry fuel and get directly to the trailhead. Skye's mom drove us to Durango and then throughout the rest of the trip, her parents met her with resupply boxes. When Cassidy got injured her dad picked her up in Silverton. Ensuring proper communication with these connections was crucial since we were using a satellite phone. We had established

clear times and locations for where Cassidy's dad was going to meet us. The infrastructure and support of trail angels makes the Colorado Trail a very easy trip to plan and execute.

- Permitting/government relations (any hang-up, what should others be aware of, etc.)

Permitting and government relations posed no issues. Because of the infrastructure of the trail and the ability to wild camp/lack of permits this trail was super easy so we have nothing major to note here.

- Leadership and group dynamics (how did your team operate, any challenges, etc.)

In the 6 days that we were together in the field we worked very well together making decisions and got along well. We had both recreated with each other on various occasions, so we felt excited and comfortable entering the field.

Given Skye's experience leading trips and previous thru-hiking she took charge on prep ahead of the trail and also provided advice throughout the trip to Cassidy.

We were able to support each other and had a great time. We worked well together and did a good job delegating tasks at camp and were able to get into a routine pretty quickly.

The biggest challenge for us as mentioned above was the pacing difference. Especially as we were finding our trail legs we were hiking at pretty different speeds. That often meant that we got a bit separated on the trail and would be waiting or stopping at intervals to make sure we stayed together. And then once Cass got injured we had a tough long day navigating a lot of downhill at a much slower pace which made for a long day. But from a risk management perspective we addressed these topics candidly in conversation. When we were walking apart, we were not too far apart and would stop consistently, especially at any trail junctions or roads.

- Safety and risk management concerns (how did you manage risk in the field, did anything unexpected come up, etc.)

In preparation for the trip we made sure that we had gear well suited to our trip including well stocked first aid kits. In addition we worked well together to make decisions about our safety especially when afternoon thunderstorms rolled in and we were at our near treeline. We were well prepared with evacuation routes and points of contact for the case of any emergency. Ultimately we ended our trip early due to an unforeseen issue with Cassidy's knee.

On day 4 of hiking we hiked 13 miles to Celebration Lakes. The shorter mileage was nice however the last mile or two of our hike were a good amount of downhill. When we arrived at camp Cass said her knee was bothering her slightly but she said that this type of pain normally resolved overnight and that she would just stretch it out a bit.

The following morning we had a lot of mileage to hike so we got a nice early start to get up and over our pass for the day. Early in the day Cass said her knee was bothering her more so we discussed taping it and she decided later that morning she would. When we stopped to filter water mid morning she KT taped her knee and we set out to keep hiking. We made it to the top of the pass at which point it became apparent that her knee was bothering her more and making

it challenging to hike. At which point we re-distributed weight and Skye took weight out of Cass' pack. The pain unfortunately escalated and as we stopped for a lunch break we had the difficult but important question about the usability of the injury. Cassidy's dad was bringing us a resupply box the next day so we decided to send him a message on our InReach asking him to come to Little Molas Lake instead of the highway to cut off a couple miles and a lot of elevation loss. Skye had asked Cass if she felt like she could keep hiking, and she said that she could make it to camp, it was just going to be a slow trek with a lot of relying on her trekking poles. We then slowly but surely continued hiking to Little Molas Lake. We decided that when we arrived to camp and the following morning we would assess pain levels and decide if Cass could keep hiking. Ultimately with pain not subsiding overnight we decided it was best to have Cass leave the field with her dad before we had a big decent the following day to the Animas river followed by a very uphill intensive day the following day.

This decision was challenging and very sad, however necessary for safety. It was as a result of making the decision best for our bodies in Silverton that we likely didn't need assistance on an evacuation. Cass' knee has been healing and she went to the doctor upon leaving the field. She learned that the problem was likely due to Bursitis. Although in the moment, Cass wanted to push through, it was clear that after she left the field and had to rest and heal, we had 100% made the right call to have her stop hiking.

Overall we made the risk management decisions best for us on the trip and we are proud of that.

- Specific route descriptions & concerns (did you have to make in-field changes, did anything unexpected come up, etc.)

We followed our plan and had no issues. The route is well marked and very well maintained. Hiking such a nice trail was lovely!

- At least two photographs of the trip participants, more photos are appreciated



- A detailed daily course log (we encourage you to keep a daily log while you are in the field to make this part easier to include daily starting and ending locations, what you did, anything significant to note, etc.)

Day 1: August 26th, 2025

Start: Junction Creek Trailhead

End: 10 miles in to nearest water source

Today we hiked 10 miles and began our journey! It was raining for most of the morning but it began to clear before we got to camp for a few hours. We spent today figuring out our paces, making sure we were fueling ourselves enough and also getting into a routine for setting up and taking down group gear at camp.

Highlight: starting the trail, yellow leaves, excitement of beginning the adventure

Challenge: heavy rain at camp, adjusting to pack weight

Risk: slick trail, limited water supply, rain

Day 2: August 27th, 2025

Start: 4 miles south of Junction Creek

End: Taylor Lake

Today we hiked 12.6 miles to Taylor Lake. Today's biggest challenge was climbing over our first pass. It was hard to time it right with a storm coming in, and we didn't want to stop for lunch until we had cleared it. This was a good lesson in pacing and understanding how and when we need to take breaks based off of longer miles or obstacles. The sun cleared after we went over the pass and we had a beautiful evening at Taylor Lake.

Highlight: stretch between Kannebec Pass and Taylor Lake, watercolors at dinner

Challenge: climbing Kannebec Pass and battling physical and mental challenge

Risk: going over the pass trying to beat a rain storm

Day 3: August 28th, 2025

Start: Taylor Lake

End: Corral Draw Road

Today we hiked 17 miles to a great spot on Corral Draw Road. We started this morning very early since we traversed over Indian Ridge and wanted to beat any potential weather. We stopped today and met some other northbound hikers at our last water source before a dry stretch. We stocked up on enough water to get us through our dry camp that night as well as for another 5 miles the next morning.

Highlight: watching the sunlight hit the peaks on Indian Ridge, meeting people on the trail

Challenge: Last 3 miles of the day were tough with water carry and feeling tired

Risk: dry camping and carrying water, long miles, dehydration

Day 4: August 29th, 2025

Start: Corral Draw Road

End: Celebration Lakes

Today we hiked 13.3 miles to Celebration Lakes! We were working around a lot of weather today and we were setting a good pace to get to camp at an earlier hour. We cleared Blackhawk Pass before the rain rolled in, but had a very wet lunch break! We spent the evening hanging out by the lake, enjoying dinner and playing games.

Highlight: Getting to see the San Juan mountains close to Cass' home!

Challenge: Cold rain at lunch

Risk: slippery trails with the rain, getting over mountain passes before rain storms

Day 5: August 30th, 2025

Start: Celebration Lakes

End: Little Molas Lake

Today we hiked 20 miles, our biggest day yet. We started hiking before the sun rose to get a good early start, hiked with one of our northbound buddies for a few hours, and made it over a large pass. Today was the first day it didn't rain and the views were fantastic.

Highlight: first day without rain, beautiful views

Challenge: knee pain

Risk: Today was the day we made the call that Cassidy would need to leave the trail after assessing her overuse knee injury. We talked through options and made the decision together for what would be the safest. We ended up sending Cassidy's dad a satellite message to meet us where we were camping the next morning rather than at the road. We had some tough but

necessary conversations about risk management and ultimately decided that the trip would need to end to make sure we were taking care of our bodies.