

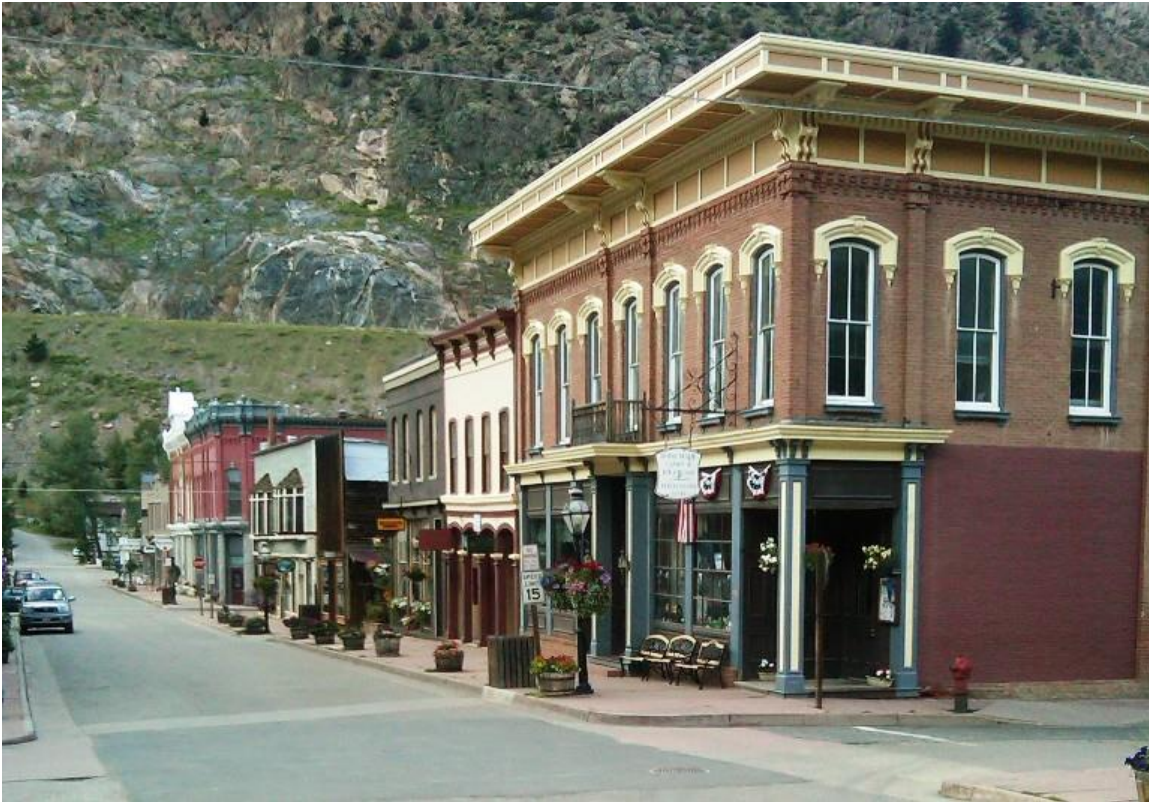
Grays and Torreys Combination

Difficulty: Class 2
Gray's Summit Elevation: 14,270'
Torrey's Summit Elevation: 14,267'
Trailhead Elevation: 11,280'
Total Elevation Gain: 3,750'
Round-trip Length: 8.25 miles

Gray's Peak is the highest U.S. peak on the Continental Divide.

Hikers: Rick Crandall; Laura Welch, Shan Stuart and Emme the 14er dog

Our objective was to do a "two-fer" in one day, with the ascent of Gray's Peak a 3000' and 3 ½ mile climb through Class 1 terrain and then a down and up Class 2 traverse to Torrey's Peak. To get an early start, we over-nighted in Georgetown which is an historic Colorado town alongside I70 not far out of Denver.

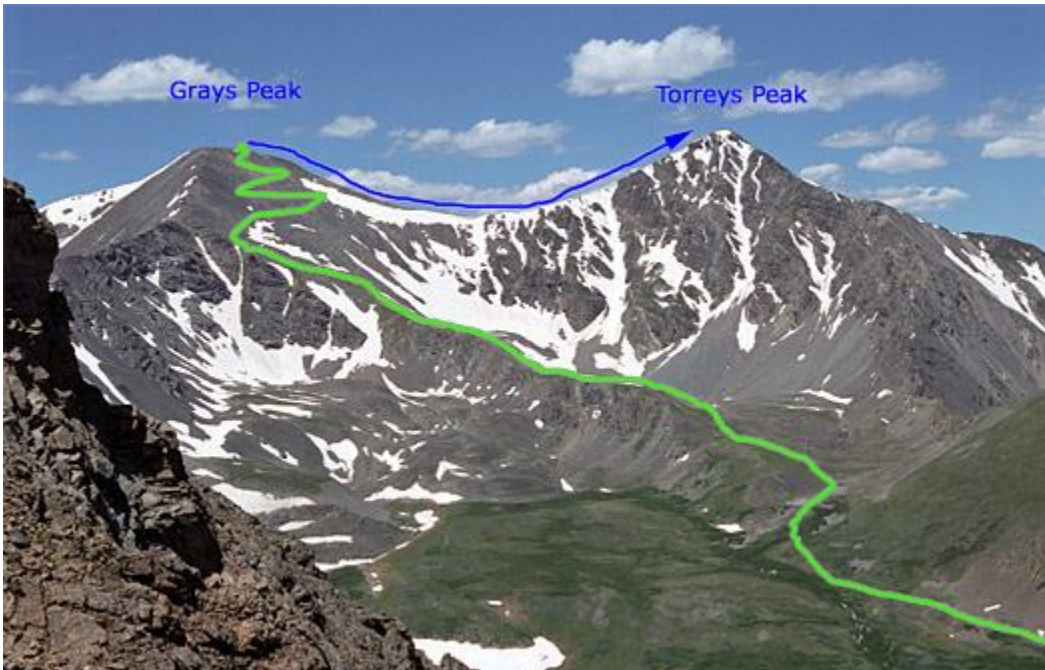


Main Street in Georgetown, CO

We were up at 5:30am and reached the trailhead at 6:30am still in the dark after about 3 miles of off-roading – a bumpy start to a very early morning.



Laura packing her “gourmet” lunch of smoked salmon, left over corn appetizer and other atypical goodies for a 14er climb!



The whole route; the return is down from the saddle between the two peaks

We started up the trail at 6:30am in cold but clear weather. About halfway up towards Grays Peak we got a fore-shadowing of the weather to come – which continued clear and sunny but with ferocious winds – stronger than any of us had ever experienced before anywhere (more on that later).

As we approached the upper switchbacks above 13,000' Rick was clearly slower and beginning to doubt he'd get to the second peak after summiting Grays. *{PS – I learned soon after I had a double hernia! Has since been surgically repaired and I'm back climbing!}* So the idea was for Laura and Shan to move ahead and get up to Grays then across to Torreys and down to the saddle by the time Rick summited Grays and met them at the saddle.



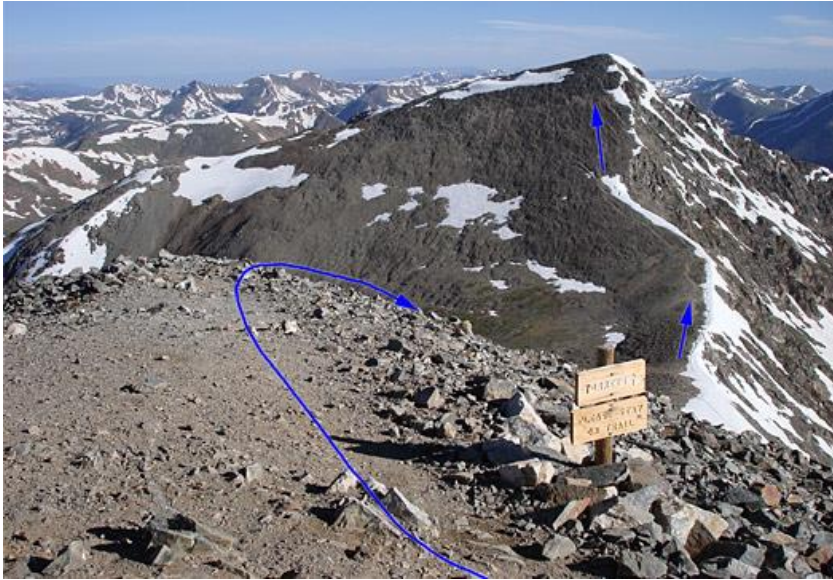
Rick was to keep Emme with him, but hadn't brought a leash (which usually he has).

That's where an adventure started. Emme is used to climbers getting separated and her self-appointed "job" is to run back and forth connecting them, especially when they get out of eyesight of each other. So she proceeded to run forward to Shan and Laura, then back to me – a few times until apparently she lost track of both of us when we got too far apart. I was approaching the summit of Grays and the others were already down towards the saddle to Torrey's – this is all above 14,000' in rugged terrain.

Emme: C'mon Dad – you're almost there! I gotta go check on the others.



Well, when I got to the summit of Grays, there was no Emme, but I wasn't worried, I figured she went ahead with the others. The winds were amazing, so I took refuge for a while behind the stone structure at the peak.



I headed down off Grays toward the saddle where I expected to meet Shan and Laura coming down from Torrey's.

When I got to the saddle I saw Shan literally running down from Torreys – in extremely high wind with his cell phone in his ear. I was surprised to see cell phones worked up there, but it was almost impossible to hear in the high winds –

they were so strong they literally knocked Laura down on the rocks at one point, and then Shan got knocked down as well when he was on the phone – it was Pamela – who had gotten a call at home from some climbers on the top of Grays that they had Emme (her collar has our phone number)! Shan got the cell number of the climber and shouted he had to get off because he was getting blown away by the double-gale-force winds – at which point he got knocked down – Pamela was convinced all hell had broken loose on top of those mountains.



So Shan humped back up from the saddle to Gray's summit to get Emme, (yes his third 14er that day) while I decided I was feeling pretty good after all and started up to nail the Torrey's summit. Laura was freezing in the below-freezing temps and high winds and so she headed down the mountain to relative warmth.

Shan found Emme at the top of Grays but couldn't get her to come down – she was going to wait for me and no one was going to thwart her – but somehow I'd gotten past her and down to the saddle. Shan had no leash and so improvised by tying one leg of his extra fleece pants to her collar and the other leg to his belt and dragged her all the way down Class 2 rock to the saddle where we met up.

Meanwhile, I'd summited Torrey's (yay!) and now was re-united with Emme (double-yay!).



Spot from Gray's summit

Ricks Spot Date/Time:09/01/2010 10:43:29 MDT

Message:Rick's SPOT Check. Going for 2 14ers today Grays Peak and Torreys Peak near Georgetown. We're OK.



Spot from summit of Torrey's

Ricks Spot Date/Time:09/01/2010 11:44:51 MDT

Message:Rick's SPOT Check. Going for 2 14ers today Grays Peak and Torreys Peak near Georgetown. We're OK.



That's wind!



Behind Rick is the whole valley of our 3000' climb

So, after 3750 vertical feet, 8.5 miles roundtrip and two 14er summits, we got back to the car at 2:30pm (8 hours after we started) where we found Laura entranced in sunning.

Actually, Shan had a bigger day – 4600' vertical and three peaks – what a guy!



Grays (left) and Torrey's (right) under a "big moon" that we see more than one time/year here in the mountains.