

Junction Creek

Durango, Colorado, U.S.

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July 6, 2017 by [Scott Gilbertson](#)

If you hang your head back over the edge of the chair you can stare straight up at the pine needles overhead, which form a great canopy of thin black fingers reaching into the soft glow of the new moon, which just rose up from behind the western ridge.



That was what I was doing when Corrinne and I decided that Junction Creek would be a good place to pass the month of July. The campground was nice and spread out, with relatively secluded sites tucked in among a forest of towering Ponderosa pines with a few gambel oaks in the understory. across the dirt road from our site was an open field, something of the meadow that was home to endless flutter of flycatchers and vireos snatching up insects and retreating back to their trees.

Back down the road, which starts paved and ends up dirt here in the National Forest, is Durango. While tourist-filled and mountain-kitschy to some degree, it nevertheless has some cool stuff to do — a wonderful public library where the kids got to see the U.S. National Yoyo champion (yes, really), a really cool indoor water park masquerading as a rec center, complete with a three story water slide, a science

museum, and a host of other fun stuff — as one of the camp hosts we befriended put it, in Durango they really know how to do it.

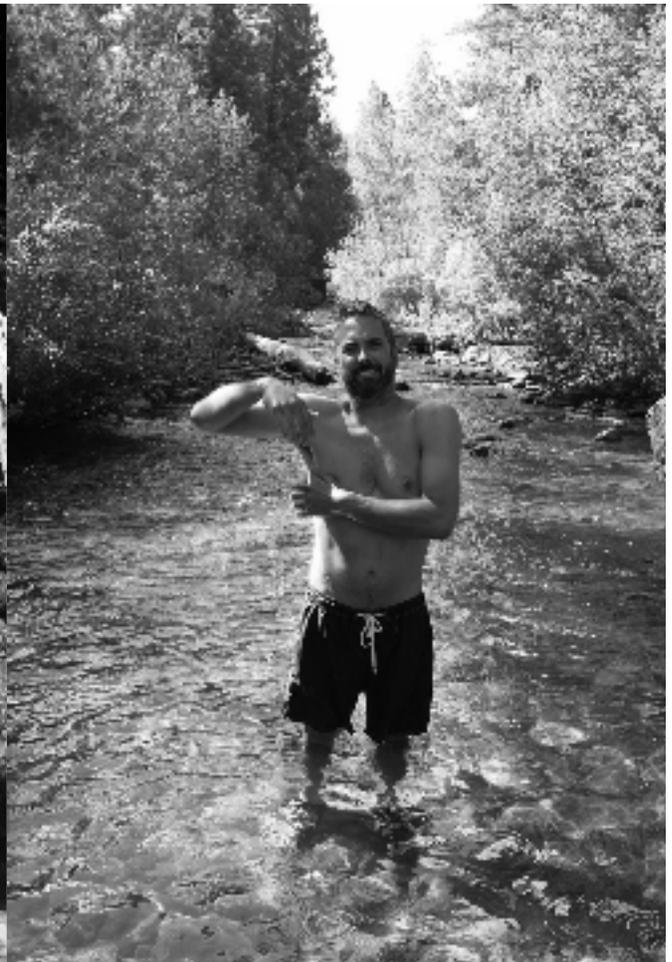


Some really nice people we met. Not a travco, but same engine and a surprisingly roomy interior.

We also needed to have a semi-plan for the near future because my parents were coming to visit us, somewhere in Colorado (thanks for being flexible), and to be honest we were all feeling like we'd been moving a bit faster than we like. It's always enticing to see what's around the next bend, as it were, but sometimes you want to stop somewhere and just sink into the soil a bit. Junction Creek seemed like a good place to do that.



There's spigots, but no other water at the campground. Bathing in the river was cold, but it got the dust off and left you refreshed at least.





A good part of the reason it seemed that way was because we met some really great people camped next to us. You meet a lot of people traveling, especially if you have a vintage motorhome that draws people to your door on a daily basis (just last night we had dinner with a really great couple who first stopped to admire the bus). Every so often though you run across fellow travelers whom you immediately click with and we were fortunate enough to have that happened at Junction Creek.

What I enjoy about these friendships is that long term travel¹ acts as a kind of crucible in which the mundane is quickly melted away, you can skip past that and get straight to the really fun part where you're all sharing a room with a bathroom that has no door and everyone has dysentery. Wait, no. That's not it. Or it is, but not this time. That was last time.

I can say though that if Kate and Josh and their family and ours ever find ourselves in say, El Salvador, and we all have some sort of intestinal parasite it will just make for a lot of laughter. Because that's how it goes when you're traveling. Travelers above all seem to just not care about the proprieties of life and get straight to what Thoreau, dramatic man that we was, called the marrow. Still, it's an apt metaphor though. It helps that our kids were fast friends almost instantly. Kids know what's what.



“My crayons”

There’s something more grounded in the here and now about these friendships born of the road. We’re all a little more like children perhaps, exploring the world and knowing a little bit more what’s what. It’s rare to have a conversation like you have when you meet strangers in your home town. There’s very little of the “what do you do?” sort of thing because out here no one cares what you do. We tend to talk about that things around us right now. The forest, for instance. The dead pine full of fledgling pygmy chickadees. Our plans for the next few weeks, what we’re doing for dinner, should we hike to the swimming hole, should we check out the rec center, could we live here, for a year, for two, forever, not at all.

I have a few of these friendships nurtured over the years and I feel lucky to have them, I want more, but these things, you cannot seek them. Maybe they come, maybe they do not. It is not for us to say. But when you find them, stop what you’re doing, even if you’re in Vang Vieng, and enjoy them.

So we did, for two weeks, which is the longest you can stay in any one campsite in America’s national forests (or anywhere really). We went to the rec center, we rode the water slide, we drove up and down the mountain, we watched birds, we swam in the ice cold creek for a bath and we had a blast, doing nothing and everything.

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1. To me long term travel is really more a mindset of “I don’t know when I’m going ‘home’” than any length of time. [↔](#)