

Adventure to Arches

A Spring Break Saga of Eight Intrepid UW-RF Students, Two University Staff, and a Land of Inspiring

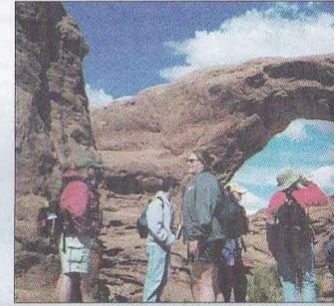
There is a three-hundred-foot drop to the canyon floor below on her left and a sheer rock wall on her right. The ledge is only five feet wide in some areas. This is no place for someone with a fear of heights. However, UW-River Falls senior Hillary Hanson cautiously makes her way along the dangerous precipice as senior Becci Kruger encourages her from behind. Seventy-five yards later, the ledge and view widen to include one of the grandest geological formations in the natural world—Delicate Arch.

Shunning conventional spring break party destinations, eight UW-River Falls students opt to challenge themselves by spending a week on one of America's most beautiful and inhospitable terrains. The University of Wisconsin-River Falls outdoor program, Kinni-Connections, provides the opportunity.

The program began under the direction of UW-RF recreational leadership coordinator Lance Ross in 1999. Named after the Kinnickinnic River that bisects the city of River Falls, the program gives students an opportunity to immerse themselves in exciting outdoor activities. The challenges of back country camping on Cumberland Island, Georgia, and swooshing down the slopes of Big Sky, Montana, have been experienced by numerous UW-RF students on previous trips. Week-long trips such as these occur once or twice a

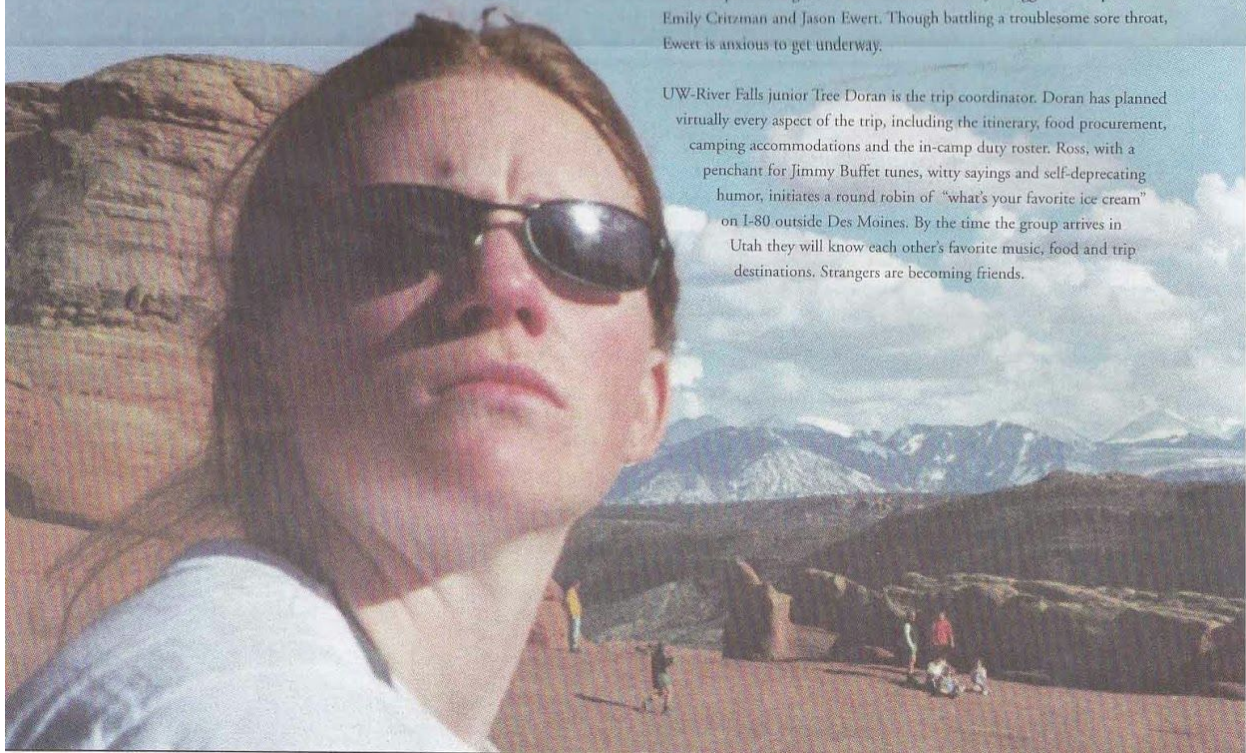
year while shorter day trips occur more often. Roller coasters, outdoor baseball and nature hikes are common day-trip adventures.

"I hope the students challenge themselves and meet new people," says Ross, a 1997 UW-River Falls graduate. "We try to draw students with interesting destinations. This place offers some awesome features," adds Ross, of Arches National Park, Utah.



The trip begins on a crisp Saturday morning in late March. Ross is at the helm of a large, red, fifteen-passenger van towing a U-Haul full of camping gear and food. Aboard are eight students and two university staff who will travel 23 hours across the level land of Nebraska, over America's continental divide, to reach a land rich in geological oddities. On the journey are friends—seniors Becci Kruger, Anne Keim, Hillary Hanson and junior Teri Girolamo. They are joined by three students who throw caution to the wind to spend a week in the desert with complete strangers. These include freshman Jon Eggers and sophomores Emily Critzman and Jason Ewert. Though battling a troublesome sore throat, Ewert is anxious to get underway.

UW-River Falls junior Tree Doran is the trip coordinator. Doran has planned virtually every aspect of the trip, including the itinerary, food procurement, camping accommodations and the in-camp duty roster. Ross, with a penchant for Jimmy Buffet tunes, witty sayings and self-deprecating humor, initiates a round robin of "what's your favorite ice cream" on I-80 outside Des Moines. By the time the group arrives in Utah they will know each other's favorite music, food and trip destinations. Strangers are becoming friends.



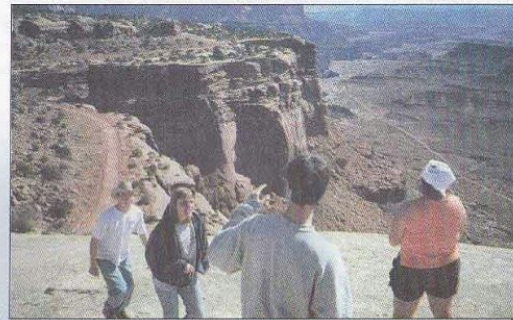
ological Oddities. Article by Michael Woolsey.

Large photo
Emily Critzman contemplates her surroundings in the presence of Delicate Arch.

Small photos (from left to right)
UW-RF hikers explore "The Windows" area of Arches National Park.

Kinni-Connections coordinator, Lance Ross, demonstrates the finer points of campfire cooking.

John Eggers, Anne Keim, Jason Ewert and Teri Girolamo (left to right) take in the sights at Grandview Point.



Eleven hours from Moab, the road stretches to the setting sun. Heads nod and bob, fighting off the tendency for slumber, but the driver is steady and sure. Throughout the night Green Day, Alanis Morissette, Muddy Waters, Neil Young, and Sugar Ray add to the all-star line-up of music buzzing from the van's factory speakers. Stocking feet, corn nuts, beef jerky and livestock in the

distance all play an odiferous role as the hours pass. The last more so in Sterling, Colorado, where the group stops for a home-cooked meal at a downtown diner.

The beauty of the Colorado Rockies is veiled in darkness as van and trailer, now dubbed the "Moab Mobile," makes its way into western Colorado. Hours later, as the sun rises, smirks and smiles form on passengers faces as some wake to the spectacle of being surrounded by 500 feet of towering red stone. The "Moab Mobile" wends along the breathtaking Colorado river road and reaches the town of Moab safely.

With tents erected and sleeping bags unfurled, weary passengers become giddy campers as they take in their surroundings. Moab Rim Campground on the south end of the Moab Valley is surrounded by red cliffs and, in the distance, the La Sal mountains refreshed with a new blanket of snow. The group's first visit is sand flats recreational area. A landscape of narrow rolling sandstone walls referred to as "fins" stretches before them. These waves of rock reach heights of more than 80 feet. Hiking to the apex of

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