

# In defense of finding adventure alone

Local  
Columnist

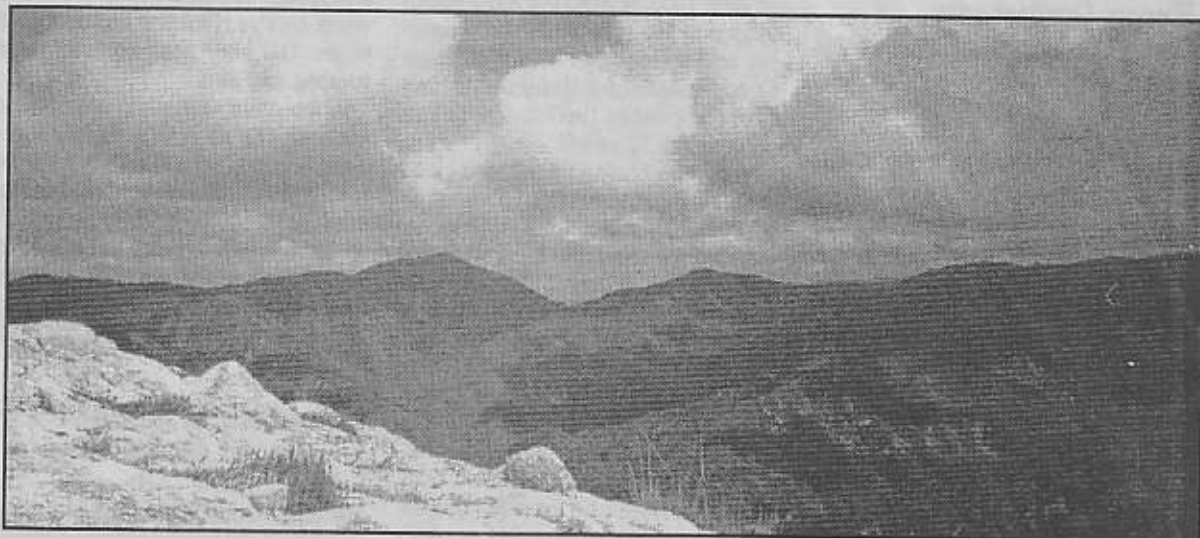


**M.L. Fischer**

Since Aron Ralston's back country ordeal and amputation, the media spotlight has been turned to solo hiking, kayaking and other outdoor activities. The conventional wisdom is that it isn't wise to go it alone, and that even very experienced outdoors people should be monitored. There is another side to this story.

I really started my solo activities in my late 40s, primarily because I got tired of waiting to find someone else who had the same desire and the same schedule. My thinking was, "Sure, I'd love company, but I'm not going to sit home waiting." Since starting to take solo hikes and backpacking and kayak trips, I've discovered something about myself. I like it that way.

To begin with, the natural, uncivilized world is an awesome place to experience. Having a gang of people constantly jabbering about their jobs or relationships only diminishes the experience, along with people shaking their cell phones and shouting, "Can you hear me now?" Alone, one can have something rarely found in busy, daily life: peace and quiet.



A view of the mountains at Pico Blanco in Big Sur.

M.L. Fischer/For the Register-Pajaronian

Alone on the water or in the back country, a person can get closer to the life that abounds there. A quiet, solitary person doesn't scare away all creatures big and small, and it's common to meet usually shy animals along the way. Then, being alone, one can sit down and observe creatures involved in their daily routines.

Modern life is hectic and leaves little time and space for introspection. We are so busy dealing with others, we become strangers to ourselves. Out on the water in a kayak or on some mountain trail, a person has the time to become reacquainted with him/herself. There is a tendency to sort out priorities and to appreciate the simple pleasures

that make life worth living.

Naturally, it's wonderful to set one's own pace and schedule, and the sense of daring adventure is always a rush. Knowing there is no one else to rely on makes a person's senses sharp. The world suddenly comes into focus, and one is fully in the moment.

Are these solo activities safe? That's hard to answer. Safe is relative. Crossing a busy street isn't particularly safe, but we do it cautiously. In the long run, fast food isn't safe, but most of us eat it. If we have some sense of what we are getting into and a realistic view of our limitations, solo adventure can be safe enough. On a recent hike up a mountain with another person who often solos,

that subject came up. We ended up agreeing that, considering all the urban crime, it is probably safer to be alone on a mountain than to walk into an inner city convenience store at night.

Ultimately, we are fragile beings. We can and will become injured and sick at times in our lives, and we are not immortal. While we are here and healthy, we deserve nothing less than to taste the fullness of our lives. One way to do that is to go it alone.

...

*M.L. Fischer is resident of Corralitos and a frequent contributor to the Register-Pajaronian. The opinions of columnists are not necessarily those of the Register-Pajaronian.*