

Christmas is coming! Are you ready? If not, then let us help.



FRIENDS^{OF}
KANANASKIS COUNTRY

If You Admire the View, You Are a Friend Of Kananaskis



In this month's newsletter...

- Safe water while travelling
- The Great Friends of Kananaskis Christmas Gift Guide!
- The Winter Speaker's Series returns!

In keeping with the up-coming holiday season, we're going to deviate a bit from our normal newsletter format to bring you our now annual special Christmas edition full of ideas for giving. We've been doing these guides every year since 2012, and looking back through

our newsletter archives [here](#) can give you even more ideas.

Once again, if you've been a volunteer with the Friends of Kananaskis this year, helping maintain or build trails and making a difference through out K-Country, then you're on Santa's "good" list. Given the number of hours Friends members put into trails this year, there are lots of folks on the "good" list. Here are some ideas you might want to put on the Christmas list for you or your loved ones. Deviating slightly from past years, the first gift idea is a bit "bigger" than past years: water treatment options.



A closeup of a November elk. Photo courtesy Alberta Environment & Parks

Safe Water While Travelling

By Derek Ryder, Director of Communications

If you wander in the backcountry, you need water. Now, I know people who are happy to drink from streams or lakes in Kananaskis, but I am not among them. While it makes me happy to know the water out there is pretty good, I know critters live, drink, pee and poop near that water. I once watched someone drinking glacial meltwater coming right off a glacier (believing it to be "ultra pure") while not 50' above them, a herd of about 20 bighorn sheep were crossing the glacier. I was hiking a few years back in the Threepoint Creek

area desperate for water (long story) and saw some lovely streams -- with cow tracks in them and cow patties on the banks, because yes, some of K-Country is cattle country. Giardia isn't a fun thing, and neither are any of the other parasites that can live in the water.

Or perhaps you know someone who travels to far off exotic lands where drinking the water isn't wise -- even if that destination is just a Mexican beach vacation. Water treatment solutions make awesome Christmas gift ideas for them, too. There are basically three categories of treatment. MEC has an excellent writeup on these systems [here](#).

First, there are chemical treatment options, which are based on either chlorine or iodine. These chemicals kill the bugs in the water but take a few minutes to do so. You could try the chlorine option from Canadian company [Pristine](#) for about \$20 from MEC. Or there's [Aquatabs](#), also about \$20. Most people shy away from iodine, but that works, too. Chemicals are easy to use, light, take up no space, and if you have nothing else, should be in your emergency kit. The biggest complaint with chemical systems is that, in the end, the water tastes like the chemicals, and people especially shy away from consuming too much iodine. But they're small, portable and they work as a short-term measure, for sure.



Or you could try filtering. Unfortunately, filters tend to be big and bulky and can be expensive. [Katadyne](#) makes a pocket filter for a little over \$400. It filters about 1 liter per minute and will filter up to 50,000 liters, however. If that's too pricy, try an [MSR Miniworks EX](#) (*pictured at right*) at a much more affordable \$85 (and yes, Katadyne does make less expensive ones, too, including a \$100 one designed for hikers). With filters, it's good to get one that goes down to 0.2 microns, which will get rid of viruses, but around these parts, a 0.5 micron filter is probably adequate. Filter systems require some kind of hand pump or way to put pressure on the water to get it through the filter. The biggest issue with filter systems is their size and weight. The Katadyn weighs half a kilo, and the MSR Miniworks is similar. But not all filter systems need the weight of a full size pump.



I *always* carry an emergency straw filter from Pristine (the "Pioneer") that you simply stick in water (even a puddle or stream) and suck on it; it will filter 70 liters and has a 0.5 micron filter, so it will get rid of most everything other than viruses, plus it weights practically nothing and cost me just \$13 a few years ago. MEC has a [0.2 micron straw filter](#) again at the \$25 point. These types of filters weigh nothing and take up no space, so are also ideal emergency kit ideas -- but not useful for continued use.



My personal favourite, though, is the UV solution; I use a UV system for the well water for my house. UV rays kill every protozoa, bacteria and virus that lives. The only issue is



making sure the water is clean enough that nasties can't be hiding in particles in the water, so prefiltering is wise. UV systems for travel are lightweight, cheap to run and operate, and the portable systems are great. The one I have is the [SteriPen](#), pictured at left. A simple coarse (but adequate) prefilter attaches to the top of any Nalgene bottle, and the light pen, which runs on 4 AA rechargeable batteries, takes 90 seconds to sterilize 1 liter. A single battery charge will handle up to 100 liters. The whole set up (including batteries) weighs 275 g and cost me less than \$60

at Canadian Tire. I used it this past summer down in the Cataract Creek area of K-Country to treat a LOT of water right out of Etherington Creek (*that's me treating water to the right*), because in case you didn't know, you can't drink the water in the campgrounds down there (it's a lovely rust brown colour, and I'm not sure even filtering it would make it taste OK). And Etherington is in an equestrian and cattle range area.

Plus I used the SteriPen as my sole source of water for 6 weeks in Africa. While everyone else on my safari was buying endless bottled water, I was treating tap water everywhere we went, whenever I needed it. Bottled water in Africa isn't cheap, and I felt much better not leaving behind dozens of plastic water bottles in places that don't recycle them. Believe me, if the SteriPen works in the middle of nowhere Africa, it will work here.





We now return to the Great Friends of Kananaskis Gift Guide

I was working on Boulton Creek trail this summer and right as we were about to take our lunch break, it started to drizzle. Blech. I've got a good raincoat, but there's just something about eating lunch in the rain; I'm dry but my sandwich gets wet. I was resigned to a damp sandwich when Payte from the Alberta Parks Trail crew pulled out this tiny, pocket-sized tarp – which quickly became a rain shelter



that comfortably sat 6 of us. Using trekking poles, and a creative tie up, you can even use it as a bivouac shelter. I've seen a number of these; all around 8' x 8' x 6' and weigh between 300 – 600 grams including guy lines. Super light ones can get up to \$300, but you can readily find one for under \$50. [Integral Designs](#) offers good affordable lightweight tarps.

That day also reminded me how important it is to carry a sit-upon – a waterproof, insulated, comfortable butt-sized mat to sit on. When my daughter was younger, we simply put a newspaper inside a green garbage bag and carried that. I “graduated” to a chunk of blue closed cell foam (ensolite) cut to the shape of the inside of my pack,



and I still use it. But [Thermarest](#) makes a few different kinds of nice little ones in varying comfort and weight levels for about \$30.

One thing we issue our Crew Leaders is a folding handsaw, which is great for the kind of work we do. I know many people who carry one, though, to help tidy up trails as they hike.

Be aware that there are issues doing this; Parks staff generally appreciates clearing deadfall from official trails, but improving many unofficial routes (as I discussed last month in the article about Bow Valley Wildland Provincial Park) could actually land



you a fine. If you *are* going to carry one, make it a good one. We use [Silky Saws](#), as does Parks, and not because they sponsor us, but because they're the best: sharp, durable, well designed and safe to use and carry. I would recommend the F180 LG, which weighs just 220 grams and has a 7" blade. The Friends get ours from [Arborist Supply](#).

Saws are sharp. Use one and you could cut yourself. If you do, you should carry a first aid kit, and kits are practical gifts that tell people you care.

The Friends issue our Crew Leaders Ultralight Medical Kit .7 kits from [Adventure Medical Kits](#). They're super lightweight (225 grams), tiny, are waterproof, and contain most everything to manage local problems. We get ours from [MEC](#) for about \$24. Many Crew Leaders augment their kits with various bits and pieces (including extra bandaids or moleskin), but a good small kit is a great and inexpensive place to start.



Do you take your dog into the wilderness? On a leash, I hope? Better take some dog food. Your dog might like a [Ruff Wear Quencher](#) cinch top bowl for Christmas. The lightweight, watertight, packable fabric bowl lets you load it with kibble at home, tie it closed, then simply undo the draw cords to feed your pup out in the wilderness. Once empty of food, it doubles as a water dish. And if Fido doesn't eat all the food, no biggie; pull the drawstrings closed and the food stays inside during the hike home. Just \$25 from [Valhalla Pure Outfitters](#) in Canmore.



In past newsletters, we've talked about various useful apps for your phone that make it a valuable tool in the backcountry. But that only happens when your phone has power. If you know someone who insists on relying on battery-powered devices while in the wilderness, a solar charger is a good gift idea. Prices are dropping and today, you can get one for under \$20. [Here's](#) one that's designed for backpacking; it's even waterproof. The solar cells recharge the battery inside, then you plug your device into its USB port to recharge it. Bonus: the website has been badly translated from some other language to English, so is actually hilarious to read.



One of my favourite sites to find interesting things is ThinkGeek.com. Here's a few of their outstanding gift ideas for the outdoors person.

Instead of carrying a solar charger, why not turn your camp pot into a generator? Yes, you can do that. ThinkGeek offers the [Power Pot Thermoelectric Generator](#). The pot itself generates 5 watts of power while you cook your spaghetti. Assuming you cook for 2 hours, you can fully charge that cell phone. And right now, the pot's on sale -- \$75 US instead of the usual \$150. What a bargain.



Anything that folds to take up less space is good. For only \$8 US, your heavy drinking hiking friend could probably use a [collapsible shot glass](#), made out of stainless steel and with its own carrying case. What could be more useful when hiking?



Not all emergency gear needs to take up a ton of room. Why not wearable gear? For instance, here's a beautiful outdoorsy bracelet that happens to hide... an emergency saw. Yes, the [Para-Saw Bracelet](#) helps you be (to quote ThinkGeek) "fashionably disaster ready". There's a 9.5" long hand saw hiding inside 8' of useable paracord; and it looks stylish!



And I'm amazed that ThinkGeek doesn't carry this next item; it's so up their alley. How about **shoelaces** that could save your life? Wasatch Outdoors makes shoelaces that start with an emergency fishing line inside them. One aglet (those metal tips) hides a ferro rod, which sparks when you strike it, and 4" or more of tinder cord that



instantly lights when hit with a spark from the ferro rod. All this tech and they only cost between \$9 and \$22. You can watch the YouTube video of them in action [here](#) and buy them through [the manufacturer](#). Three cheers for Kickstarter, who got this company going.

Humans on bikes are pretty fast, but a bear can run at over 50 km/hr for a long way. The [BearCozy](#) Bear Spray Holster allows you to carry a 225 g bear spray in the water bottle holder on your bike. The 2 piece top secures the spray in the bottle cage, but the nozzle and trigger are easily accessed for rapid response. Another option for mountain bikers or trail runner to easily carry bear spray safely, comfortably and readily



accessible is the [ScatBelt](#). I have one and literally don't notice it's on while riding. I wish they made them for righties or lefties, but I just wear mine upside down. You can find both at lots of retailers, including MEC and TrailSports at the Canmore Nordic Centre.

I'm religious about thoroughly cleaning my mountain bike and its chain on an annual basis -- whether it needs it or not. I have learned the only way to work on a bike efficiently is by using a bike stand. My next door neighbour is an avid biker, so I just steal his stand when I need it (and his is very high tech) but MEC sells a pretty low tech stand for only \$160 from a company called [Feedback](#). A great gift if your favourite person muds it up on a semi-occasional basis.



Almost everything we buy wears out. Something that doesn't is an investment. How would you like to invest in socks that come with a lifetime guarantee AND are made with merino wool? [Darn Tough](#) socks are your answer. Socks specifically designed for skiing or hiking or running or pretty much anything else. Available in a bewildering choice of colours and patterns. Good for life.



Reasonably priced at \$15-\$25. Available at great retailers like [Switching Gear](#) in Canmore or more than 6 retailers in Calgary, like [Norseman X-Country Ski and Hike](#).

Finally, nothing makes a better Christmas gift than giving back to your favourite playground. A tax-deductible Christmas gift to the Friends of Kananaskis helps us deliver our programs, maintaining trails where you can use all that great gear. It facilitates our educational programs, such as our ongoing work to refresh the Interpretive Trail signs in Kananaskis. Why not consider slipping a little something in the Friends' Christmas stocking through [ATB Cares](#)? The trails will thank you for it.



The Return of the Winter Speaker's Series!

The Friends are thrilled to announce that our Winter Speaker Series is back! Produced in partnership with the University of Calgary Palliser Club, this year we will have three speakers:

January: Ben Gadd, Icefield Bunnies, Gullible Bees and Why the Tallest Mountain is Not the Highest.

February: Kevin Van Tighem, author of Heart Waters: Sources of the Bow

March: Matt Mueller, Kananaskis Region - Public Safety Specialist



Keep an eye on our website's [Upcoming Events](#) page for more details as we firm up the

dates and locations.

Your Donations are Always Appreciated and Needed

We are pleased to recognize the contributions of the [Calgary Foundation](#), [TransAlta](#), [Banff Canmore Community Foundation](#), [Patagonia Elements](#), [Husky Energy](#), and the many individual donors who support our work.

There are many ways to express your gratitude for Kananaskis Country and we are always grateful for contributions that help us maintain our programs, operations and restore flood damaged trails. Friends of Kananaskis Country is a registered charity in good standing and we provide charitable receipts for donations over \$25.00. You can reach us directly by mail at the address below, through the [donations link on our website](#), through [ATB Cares](#), or [CanadaHelps](#). Thank you for your support!

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