
Bob Riess, San DiegoPCT Hiker Host 2017

1 message

Robert E. Riess <robert.riess@cox.net>
To: Jackie McDonnell <yoghikes@gmail.com>

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My name is Bob Riess, your humble trailhead hiker host, pioneer of the concept in 1999. I will once again be hosting hikers in San Diego for the 2017 season. I will pick up hikers at the airport, train station or bus terminal, house them for as long as they need, make runs to REI, post office and grocery stores, and get them out to the trailhead for a start at first light. During the height of the season, there will be some social events with the other San Diego trailhead hosts as well. As I write this, on January 9, I am unsure of the status of the ADZPCTKO for 2017. I certainly hope the dedicated people associated with this remarkable event are able to pull it off. In the event the ADZPCTKO becomes a reality, I will attend as a volunteer, so there will be no airport runs from Friday morning till Sunday afternoon, ADZPCTKO weekend. In order that I may get my organization together, please post me your complete arrival information, ie, airline, flight number, departure city and arrival time, desired start date, and any other needs such as fuel, and look for a confirmation from me that your data has been received. I will receive packages from hikers or vendors. Once scheduled with me, you will have my address and phone number. Hikers from overseas who need to buy a cell phone or a sim card will need a half day in San Diego to get that done. It's easily done, but it takes some time. You should familiarize yourselves with what is available from Sprint, Verizon, ATT and others, so you can minimize driving all over town finding the plan you want. For the past 2 seasons, every single overseas hiker, save one, went with Cricket prepaid at \$35/mo. But the cell phone market is changing rapidly, so hikers are encouraged to do some diligence in finding their service.

There are just a couple of details hikers need to follow. First, I would prefer to correspond with hikers only, in other words, no third parties, and the correspondence should be email. robert.riess@cox.net Phone calls are lost and forgotten, but emails leave a record. I have never lost a hiker, at least not for very long, and it is the emails that help me keep things straight. If you are part of a group traveling together, only one person needs to make contact, but I would like to have all the names. If your hiking group is meeting in San Diego, then I need data for each one who I am meeting. BTW, we use NAMES, not trailnames or email logons. I need to see your NAME in the subject line of every email. In coordinating arrivals, logistics and trailhead runs for over 170 hikers last year, it took over 1300 emails in my Trailhead 2016 folder. You can imagine my nightmare if they all have Ride to Campo or San Diego Hiker Host 2017 as the subject line. Second, I can't host smokers, and that is a hard requirement, even if you don't smoke in my house or vehicle. I was sick for 4 days when a smoker spent 48 hours with me, despite not smoking in the house or vehicle. The smoke on his clothes was enough. I have to be completely serious and honest with you. No Smokers means No Smokers. Cigarettes, cigars, pipes, ecigarettes, vapes and marijuana all fall under the description. This year I am adding smokeless tobacco to the list. If you are stubbing out your last cigarette when I roll up to you at the airport, I will leave you at the curb. Just as I have done in the past. For nonsmokers, I promise a smoke-free experience.

If you are still reading, you must think I am some kind of troll. Not so much. 2017 section- or thru-hikers are enthusiastically welcome here. Hikers and host always have a great time. I have hosted over 900 hikers, some of them multiple times. One more thing. I do not operate a shuttle. None of the San Diego hiker hosts do. We host hikers. Understandably, some hikers might think that just asking for a ride from the airport to the trailhead somehow minimizes the impact on the hosts. This is contrary to the hiker hosting concept, so please do not ask me to meet you at the airport and run you directly out to the trailhead. There is public transportation for that. Go to www.sdcommute.com The Campo busses are routes 888 and 894. They do not run on weekends. As a practical matter, I make one trailhead run every day, departing my house at about 500AM in order for hikers to start walking at first light. My van carries driver plus 6, and is often full. During the busy part of the season, I may make 5 runs to the airport in a day, and I am just one guy. There are no relief drivers, so a special mid-day trailhead run is out of the question.

There are several of us in San Diego who are enthusiastic hiker hosts. Please do not email each host separately requesting their services, and then confirm with the one you chose. This leaves the others not knowing what you are doing. Our worst fear is having a hiker at the airport awaiting pickup and no host there. Second worst fear is orbiting the airport parking lot for an hour expecting to meet a hiker who has been met by someone else, or has canceled and not told us. As you would expect, all correspondence between us should be off-list. If there is an emergency such as missed flight, lost luggage, or panic attack you will have my cell phone number once you are confirmed with me. BTW, I am old school. I do not Tweet. I do not have a Facebook account, so looking for me there is just a waste of your time. I do not have a smart phone. When you email me, I get it only on my laptop at my house. If I am away from the house, voice or text are your only choices.

2017 is going to be a very special year for many reasons. Scout and Frodo will be hosting, having hosted an incredible 650 hikers in 2016. The number of hikers has increased dramatically over the last 4 years. Dependent upon snow in the Sierra, it is probably prudent to plan on more than usual numbers, even following last year, which was probably the all-time record for bodies moving up and down the PCT. I am guessing just like everybody else, but my guess is the number of hikers will be very high. Two years ago the PCTA initiated a 50 per day limit on the number of long distance permits issued to start within 100 miles of the southern terminus during the height of thru-hiker season, about mid-April to mid-May. As of now, it is expected that the quota will be in place this year. Keep checking the PCTA website for the latest information. If I were thru-hiking this year, and competing for one of those 50 permits per day, I would be asking the PCTA and the US Forest Service exactly what they are doing to accommodate the increasing number of hikers. There will be more hikers, quota or no quota. If the PCTA and the Forest Service are concerned about the environmental impact of large numbers of hikers, ask them what they are doing to harden the busiest campsites so more hikers can camp without damage to the ecosystem.

I am just your humble hiker host here in San Diego. I am not a permit enforcer, and I will never ask to see your hiking and campfire permits. Hikers should not make the mistake of thinking that they need some agency's permission to hike. The PCTA long distance permit exists solely for the convenience of hikers so they do not need a permit from each agency through which the PCT passes. The long distance permit is not now and never has been an instrument for regulating when and where hikers are allowed to hike the PCT. I am neutral and libertarian on the matter of hiking with dogs. I have a dog, and your dog is welcome here.

Good luck to the Class of 2017. I'll be seeing you in America's Finest City or at the ADZPCTKO, or on the trail. Bob Riess at the Trailhead. San Diego, CA. Hike on!