

PhilSearch News for December

November proved to be a much more productive month than I had anticipated.

- Over 250 photos were added to the database
- The Virtual Tour feature was started & completed
- Composite Features were added to Trek Search
- Trek Summaries were verified vs. the 2006 Treks Book

Literally hundreds of photos have been added this month which created enough critical mass to support other planned (and some unplanned) enhancements. Of particular note are contributions from Craig Maes (Cito's ancient Totem Poles) and Calvin Grey (Autumn Adventure) which put things in a whole new perspective ... check out Beaubien under a light blanket of fall snow ... Craig also provided the last shots needed to cover each and every staffed camp on the ranch. The sheer number of photos caused me to make improvements to the Photo Album in the form of a "photo sets" feature that allows photos to be viewed based on a topic other than location or program feature (for instance infrastructure, staff cabins or Autumn Adventure). I expect more enhancements here as more photos are added.

The Virtual Tour feature debuted this month as the photos needed to support it spurred me on to develop the logic needed. This feature is available now in what I expect to be pretty close to its final form. This feature lets you walk through a trek and see photos of the campsites and program features associated with that trek, Further enhancements are planned here to add shots of the check-in process (near term) and trails between camps (longer term) as the mapping logic is improved. As you can see some treks have better coverage than others as many camps have only one or two photos in the database ... this feature relies on having a general shot and a campsite shot so if you have these please consider contributing.

A new capability in Trek Search called "Composite Features" is designed to allow trek selection using groups of similar program features rather than specific features ... for instance you might desire a trek with a program meal ... chuck wagon breakfast, dinner or Mexican dinner all being equally acceptable, but at least one being required. Previously there was no easy way to do this, the composite features selection criteria addresses this need, There are half a dozen or so composites defined including Theme Meals, 10K+ peaks, Cantina (with or without show) and more. I'm receptive to suggestions for more composites and can add them easily ... you can see the current set by selecting Trek Search and then clicking on the Composite Definition link near the bottom of the dialog box.

A big Thank You to Doug Latimer who manually cross checked PhilSearch's Trek Search output with the 2006 Treks book, I've posted most all of his suggested changes – those that were corrections to the data set – others requiring logic enhancements will take a little more time. I believe that the material errors in data entry have been corrected ... Just in time for those that got confirmed reservations for 2008.

On the personal victory front I've finally nailed a problem that I've been chasing since the beginning that resulted in a sporadic error on the home page that made the site appear to be down. As one would expect it was a coding error on my part, obscure for sure but my bad, I'm just happy for having vanquished it.

I'm still looking for more photos, probably always will be. There are activities and campsites that still have no photos and others that could use better ones. I'm always looking for the special shots as well, please think of contributing.

For the moment the focus is back on mapping and routing, I hope to make a major breakthrough this month, although as I've previously indicated mapping probably won't be in place in time for '07 but rather will be more useful to '08 crews.

As always your comments, good or bad, and suggestions are welcome.

YIS

Jim

December, 2006