

12th annual Elk Mountains Grand Traverse Results

Contributed by The Editors
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GUNNISON-CRESTED BUTTE, COLORADO - One of the most sought after and rugged backcountry ski races on the planet celebrates 12 years of memorable moments and amazing athletic feats on March 27 - 28, 2009. The 12th annual Elk Mountains Grand Traverse, presented by Mountain Hardwear, follows historic mail routes that connected the Colorado mining towns of Crested Butte and Aspen in the 1880s.

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Registration opened on Dec. 1 and sold out before the end of the day with the maximum 130 team slots filled. To acquire a team slot now, the best bet is to closely monitor the bulletin board at elkmountaintraverse.org for a team wanting to cancel and sell their slot for the registration cost of \$250 and a \$25 transfer fee.

Race Overview & Route

Kicking off at the stroke of midnight on March 27, the Grand Traverse is a one-of-a-kind test of endurance and smarts, requiring avalanche awareness, backcountry athleticism, winter camping knowledge and map reading skills all wrapped in one. This unusual start time is scheduled so entrants will reach the high point of Star Pass at 12,303 feet before the warmth of the day increases the likelihood of avalanches.

The 40-mile course starts at 9,000 feet at Crested Butte Community School and traverses to Crested Butte Mountain Resort, where cheering crowds, torches and a fireworks display will greet the racers as they pass through the base area just below the Silver Queen lift. After conquering two mountain passes, the teams finish at the base of Aspen Mountain ski area.

"The Grand Traverse is not a Nordic or downhill race, but instead tests skiers overall skills and goes from town-to-town, covering 40 miles of rugged trails in the Elk Mountains. Every event dishes up new surprises for the contestants and the organizers. When Grand Traverse began 12 years ago, it was fashioned after similar events in Europe that connect various villages," says Jan Runge, race organizer.

2009 RACE WINNERS

Mike Kloser and Jay Henry (Beaver Creek) won the men's division and overall with a time of 9:17:40.

Locals took second and third, with Ethan Passant and Travis Scheefer crossing the finish line at 9:28:30, and Pat O'Neill and Jake Jones only seconds behind at 9:35:30.

Andrew Kasting and Grethe Haggensen captured the co-ed division in 11:02:30.

Maile Wade and Jenny Hamilton led the women's division at 11:12:10, placing 18th overall.

Keeping Racers Safe

Top priorities of race organizers are the safety of all participants and a minimal impact on the environment. Because of the remote route through the Elk Mountains, each team of two is required to carry enough food and supplies to sustain themselves for 24 hours. Before the race start, the team's packs will be checked for essential gear such as bivy sacks, stove, fuel, avalanche beacons, rescue gear, and first-aid and repair kits.

More than 40 support team members are present in the backcountry during the race. Some crews are out in the backcountry for a week before the event, assessing avalanche conditions and moving supplies into remote camps. Local pilots also assist by airdropping supplies into alpine basins.

Sustainable Legacy

The Grand Traverse is continuing its partnership with Save Our Snow Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to calculating, reducing and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions and energy use, while also producing local alternative energy and stimulating economic development for the outdoor sports industry. Decisions concerning the race are aimed at reducing the carbon footprint of the event. On elkmountaintraverse.org, race participants and supporters will be able to calculate their footprint, and organizers will offer incentives for doing so.

"We've donated money to the foundation and used its resources to help us calculate our footprint and embrace solutions to reduce our footprint, and then pass along funds to carbon-neutral endeavors," Runge says. "Our goal is to undergo a progressive greening of the race over the next several years. This is really the only 'sustainable' thing to do-without snow, there won't really be a 50th annual Elk Mountains Grand Traverse and all of us involved with the race would like to pass on a sustainable legacy to the next generation of skier."

2009 EMGT RACE RESULTS

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Event Date: March 27 & 28, 2009

Media Contacts: Jan Runge, Race Director 970.349.7133;

Amanda Lindelow, Media Coordinator 970.209.9979

Website: elkmountaintraverse.org