

Telluride Mushrooms...

...Somewhere Over The Rainbow

“No way...no (explicative) way!” I turned to see what was the source of this guy’s incredulity and watched as, down beyond the end of Colorado Avenue, down in the end of the canyon was appearing... right before our eyes...emerging from the afternoon’s drizzle, was an incredible rainbow. Within a span of about two minutes it became impossibly bright. And then, just as quickly, the Technicolor evanescence was gone. This surreal moment brought to you by the annual Telluride Mushroom Festival.

Mother Nature’s show occurred, as if on cue, about ten minutes before the start of the wild parade during last year’s 30th Annual Shroomfest in Telluride. The streets were lined with throngs of onlookers. Parade goers were in costume at the top of Colorado Ave (the main street that slices through the center of the gorgeous tiny town). The drummers were drumming. The bagpipes were set. And then Trickster, in the form of a rainbow, stole the show. Anywhere else and I wouldn’t have believed my eyes. But in Telluride, you almost *expect* this sort of thing to happen. It’s a magical place and the Shroomfest is a magical event. Been that way for thirty years. ♣

Telluride30, A Look Back

By Claudia Joyce, Missouri Mycological Society

Thinking of going to the 2011 Shroomfest in Telluride and want to know what to expect? Expect the unexpected! The Festival features a variety of activities during the four day run. Each morning participants can begin the day with a 6 AM Sunrise Foray. For the past few years, evenings have ended in the Galaxy Theatre with the movie, *Know Your Mushrooms*, featuring many Festival regulars. Between times, there are lectures, forays, cooking demos, book signings, cultivation workshops and identification tables. After forays many hunters hang out in Elks Park to meet people and share mushrooming adventures. Saturday afternoon is the legendary Costume Parade. There were many outstanding lectures presented in 2010. Gary Lincoff, author of the *National Audubon Society Mushroom Field Guide*, gave an animated history of mycology, reminding the audience that in 1950 biology departments had no resources for or information about most fungi. He traced the progress of mycology as a science that has led to today’s greater awareness. Paul Stamets spoke of his research,

chronicled in his recent book, *Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World*. One of his recent projects involved oyster mushroom mycelium and myco-filtration. His research showed that by floating large burlap tubes filled with wood chips and oyster mycelium, the ecosystem created can break down the hydrocarbons produced in oil spills. He has had great success in repairing damaged waterways in the Pacific Northwest. FUNGI Contributing Editor Elinor Shavit debunked the myth surrounding Zallouh, a unique medicinal plant found (with a mushroom partner) in the Middle East. Daniel Winkler, a regular contributor to FUNGI and mycotour leader, gave an overview of Tibet in relationship to native mushrooms. The sale of *Cordyceps*, a fungus that grows from a caterpillar, and four other species represent 40% of Tibet’s national economy. FUNGI Editor-in-Chief Britt Bunyard, presented “Beyond SOMA: How to Identify the Species of Amanita from Muscaria to Wellsii and Everything in Between.” Katrina Blair, a teacher of sustainable living, offered a workshop about wild foods, which included a walk around town where she pointed out over 20 edible plants. The Festival is known for having a strong emphasis on the entheogenic properties of mushrooms and plants. Speakers and panel discussions provided new information, including topics such as “Psychedelics as Prescribed Medicine, Magic Mushrooms That Heal Body and Soul and Psychedelic Mushroom Art.” In all there were over 20 lectures and 10 organized forays led by prominent mycologists that covered Telluride and surrounding area mountains. The rainy summer of 2010 gave birth to an enormous crop of *Boletus edulis*. The forests were full to the brim with many beautiful edible and inedible species. ♣



Planning to attend this year? Be sure to read the *Complete Guide to Telluride* article on page 53 of this issue.



Complete Guide to Telluride

WHEN

This year's Shroomfest runs from August 18 (Thursday) – 21 (Sunday). The summer rains in Colorado usually bring abundant mushrooms. In 2010, it seemed that the entire state was carpeted with King Boletes in particular, plus a profusion of other species. In fact, except for morels, you can expect to find just about every species of mushroom in Colorado during August.

GETTING THERE AND AWAY

Telluride (pop. 1,700) is a picturesque Old West mining town nestled among the BIG mountains of Colorado, down in the southwest corner of the state. Indeed, there are four "Fourteeners" (mountains above 14,000 feet high) in the region which is the greatest concentration in North America. For early prospectors travel must have been a struggle but nowadays travel to

Telluride is easy *and scenic*.

Telluride is about six hours from Denver by car. From Denver, take I-70 west to Grand Junction, then I-50/550 south. Telluride is about two hours from Grand Junction. About halfway between Grand Junction and Telluride is Montrose.

Bus service goes directly to Telluride (with daily direct service to and from Montrose, Cortez and Albuquerque). During the summer, Montrose has more frequent service and it's just an hour away by car. (Check times to both towns for your convenience.) Likewise, Montrose is a good option if flying as air tickets can be quite a bit cheaper than flying directly to Telluride in the summer (but check first).

Will I need a car? Everything in Telluride is within easy walking distance, so there is no need for a car. Telluride and Mountain Village both offer ground transportation, as well as a free gondola system (daily, dawn till midnight) to move between

the two communities. And there's a free shuttle bus around town. Plus, a number of shuttle and other ground transportation services offer services from both airports. But if you need a car to get into town or away, rental car companies have counters at both Telluride and Montrose airports. Forays will travel by car pool and there's always rides; some forays walk to the gondola and go up the mountain.

IF YOU GO, TIPS

The official source of visitor information is the Telluride Tourism Board. You can reach an information specialist at 800.605.2578. They are *very helpful!* Alternatively, *everything* you need to know can be found at the Telluride Tourism website www.visittelluride.com.

Elevation: Telluride sits at 8,750 feet (2,590 meters), Mountain

Continued on page 54.



moderate the use of hot tubs, saunas or steam showers during the first few days.

WHAT TO BRING

The road, sidewalk and trail conditions vary in both Telluride and Mountain Village. Comfortable walking shoes (in addition to your hiking boots) are highly recommended. Many gear/sports shops in town carry topographic maps and local trail guides. The weather in the mountains can change suddenly; layers, such as a rain shell, jacket or fleece, are recommended. August is (with luck) the rainy month which brings the mushrooms; afternoon showers are common but usually brief.

Photo courtesy of M. Smiley.

Village sits at 9,500 feet (2,895 meters). Forays on the mountain will be above 10,000 feet. Altitude sickness is a real possibility for everyone. The symptoms of altitude sickness include headaches, nausea, fatigue and/or shortness of breath. Altitude sickness generally disappears within 48 hours and, for the most part, can be minimized by: exercise in moderation during the first few days; drink more water than usual; reduce alcohol intake (alcohol has a greater effect at this altitude); eat food high in carbohydrates and avoid salty foods;



Photos courtesy of V. Till.



Summers are an alpine delight with comfortable days and cool nights. Average humidity in Telluride is 10% year-round. Average temperature (high/low) for August is 83F / 29F. I've camped in town several times and awakened to frost on my tent; soon after sunrise it was back to summer temps. *There are no biting insects in the region (no kidding).* Don't forget your mushroom basket, knife, hand lens, wax paper bags, favorite walking stick, hat to keep the sun off, reusable water bottle, sunscreen and a dryer, if you have one. If you forget your field guides, the local bookstore (one block from the Festival) has them all and usually has signings by many myco authors. If camping (even in Town Park), bring a flashlight.

LODGING AND ACCOMODATIONS

No matter your preference, Telluride has you covered, whether the charm of historic Telluride or the modern luxury of Mountain Village. Or maybe you prefer to sleep out under the stars

of southwest Colorado. The Telluride region hosts a multitude of beautiful campsites for tents or RVs. Many are minutes outside of town; some have hot springs or horseback riding. Some Festival goers camp for free at Alta Lakes about 30 minutes away. Indeed, you can camp right in town at the Town Park (\$18 per site per night), but you'll need to arrive a day or two before the Fest begins as it always fills up. In Telluride, you'll find accommodations with intimate Victorian settings, BnB's, and hotels. Check the website for a full listing of accommodations with links to hotels and a map of town.

DINING OUT

In general, prices are higher for food and lodging than for elsewhere in the USA. That said, Telluride has everything from world-class dining to brewpubs; from Thai to Tibetan and everything in between. There are NO fast food chains (nor most other chains, e.g. Walmart). Most regulars to Telluride head to Baked In Telluride—

the food's quite good, with vegetarian options, and they serve all day until very late; the coffee and pastries are fantastic and prices on everything are about the best in town. Right next door is the best bet for groceries including hot food to go. Additional recommendations are Steaming Bean, for coffee, Rustico, for Italian, Sheridan Chop House, for anything meat, and Brown Dog Pizza for burgers, pizza, and beer. Besides Baked In Telluride, the best place in town (according to the FUNGI staff) is La Marmotte, set in one of the oldest buildings in town—the historic 125-year old Ice House, serves elegant bistro fare.

FREE WIFI

Pretty much anywhere in town, but best bets are the Wilkinson Library and Baked In Telluride.

OTHER THINGS TO DO

Telluride is kid (and dog) friendly;

Continued on page 56.



many Festival goers bring their entire family. There are hands-on activities for the kids most years (for 2011, there is a tentatively planned drawing workshop with FUNGI illustrator “Inkling”). So what else? Here are a few ideas—all are great for kids, all are FREE, and all a short walk from the Festival. Must-do is a Scenic Gondola Ride on the free gondola that provides the only transportation of its kind in North America. Connecting Telluride and Mountain Village, locals commute via gondola and visitors take in the 360-degree views. The gondola runs daily, 7 a.m. to midnight and features dog-friendly and handicap-accessible cabins, and bike racks. From the top of the mountain, there are trails for hiking and biking in every direction and the view is incredible. While at the top, visit the San Sophia Nature Center just a short walk from the gondola and filled with all sorts of natural wonders, the center is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily in the summer.



The Telluride Historical Museum has displays of the mining history of Telluride from the boom days (970.728.3344); closed Mondays. Besides the end point for the famous Festival Parade, Telluride Town Park serves as the center of all things fun in the summer. Find the trout pond—where fishing by kids is encouraged—along with the skate park, Imagination Station, basketball courts, sand volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, disc golf course,



an outdoor swimming pool, plus the aforementioned camping sites right on the river. Showers are coin operated. Telluride’s award-winning Wilkinson Public Library is another sanctuary for young people, featuring a great kid’s section, offering creative activities, such as daily story times, Yoga Story Time, Bilingual Story Time and Alternating Currents, a science and arts club. The library is two blocks from the Festival at 100 W. Pacific Avenue (970.728.6613). For those in town a few days before the Festival, check out the Mountain Village Summer Sunset Concert Series. These free concerts run all summer (yes, including August), every Wednesday evening 6 - 8 p.m., in the Sunset Plaza up in Mountain Village (take the gondola up and back). Bring blankets, chairs and a cooler of snacks. Kids and dogs are welcome; dancing is encouraged. Mountain Village Climbing Rock located beside the Telluride Conference Center in Mountain Village—the climbing rock is a challenge for all ages and is open daily during sunlight hours. Supervision is onsite. And finally, there’s plenty of Biking and

Nature Hikes. Well-groomed, smooth paths follow the San Juan River through town and are very easy. From Town Park, head up the 1.5-mile (one way), relatively flat Idarado Legacy Trail for clear views of Bridal Veil Falls. Also accessible from town, Bear Creek Trail is a moderate 2.5-mile (one way) hike to the falls.

One other option for those in town the week leading up to and during the Festival: with this year’s Festival being moved up two weeks earlier than previous years, it coincides with the Telluride Chamber Music Festival (August 11-20). As this issue went to press we had no details but suggest you check the tourism website for details if interested. 🐾

Photos courtesy of V. Till.

