

I used to say “I Can Never
Get Enough Volkswalking”
by Darrell Neily



1 Freestate hat worn proudly at the summit



2 Lake Quinault 4,400 feet below



3 World's oldest (1,000 years) and tallest (19 stories)
Sitka Spruce

4 On the Lake Quinault Trail - Rated 2B

5 On the Kalaloch Beach Trail - Rated 1C

6 Panoramic photo from summit of Colonel Bob

Like many of you, I love volkswalking. I used to believe that I could never get enough of it. To put my belief to the test, I pre-registered for two extreme events at the Quinault Walking Festival in early September, sponsored by an AVA club in Olympia, Washington. My first event was a 23K hike up and down an Olympic National Forest mountain named "Colonel Bob," rated 5D, featuring a 4,400-foot elevation change. The second event, the next morning, was (supposed to be) a volks-marathon (42K) rated 2B. Both walks were unsupported, meaning I had to provide my own water and food.

I arrived at the Colonel Bob trailhead at dawn, and waited a while hoping to find walking partners. None showed. In fact, only one other volkswalker hiked the trail, and he started 3 hours after me. The steady incline caused my heart to beat rapidly much of the way up. I was "pretty used up" when I reached the top at 1 p.m.

For me, the descent was more of a challenge, since balance was necessary and that's not my strong suit. The more fatigued I got, the worse my balance became. At sunset, I still had 1-1/2 hours of hiking left. My depth perception suffered as I hiked by flashlight. Eventually it was difficult putting one foot in front of the other. Not having a good idea how close I was to the finish, I sat down on the trail, turned off my light, and collected my thoughts in the dark. I was totally spent, but for reasons I can't explain, I felt at peace. After a few minutes, I resumed walking, and shortly after reached the finish. The logbook at the trailhead showed that I was the only person on the mountain for the last few hours.

The second day, I canceled my plan to do the marathon. Instead, I did a 14K walk around the lake, and a 5K walk along the Pacific Ocean beach. It was great to have company on the trails and enough energy in my tank to finish comfortably. I finally had "enough" volkswalking for one weekend. I now know more about my limits, but I love the sport more than ever.

P.S. After I returned to fully hydrated, I weighed 4 lbs. less than before this event. So I lost 4 lbs. of muscle/fat in 2 days!