

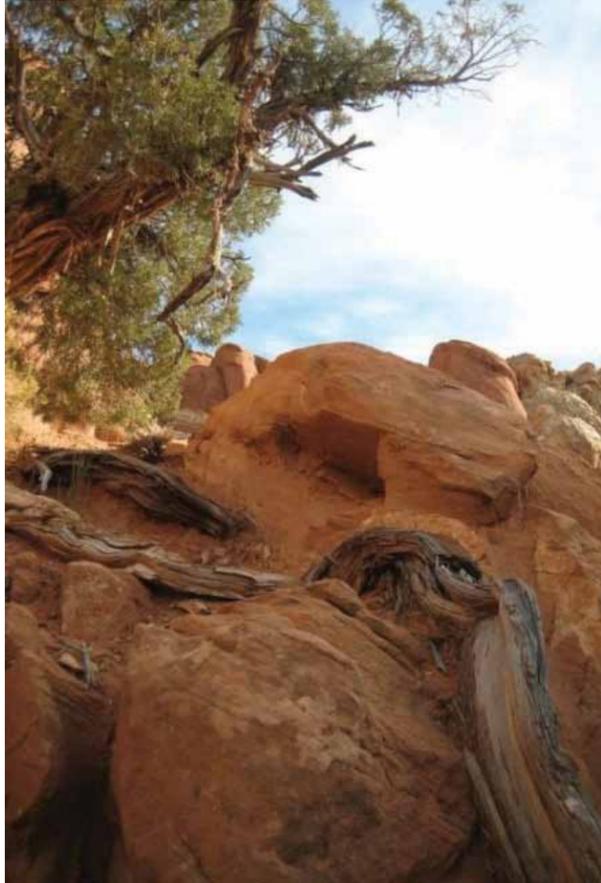
CYCLING HAPPENINGS

Survival of the Hydrated How To Stay Hydrated While On Your Desert Cycling Adventure

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Rim Tours

When you call to book a summertime mountain bike tour, as an example, the person that makes your reservation is going to tell you (or should tell you) to “pre-hydrate.” Drinking extra water steadily throughout the day prior to hot weather activity, or pre-hydrating, sets your body up to be able to take on physical exertion in hot weather, i.e., Moab from May through September.

The concept of pre-hydration and advance preparation for hot temperatures are exemplified in the natural world. The plants and animals living in the desert have specific adaptations that help them conserve water. In fact, humans could learn quite a bit from trailside flora and fauna when it comes to feeling alive and energized in the heat.



Despite a drab appearance, the corridors of our mountain bike trails in the summertime are lined with life. On a mountain bike ride or a hike you will surely enjoy the shade of a Juniper at some point. Utah Juniper trees (*Juniperus osteosperma*) are desert heroes when it comes to water conservation. Their root systems stretch the length of a football field from their trunk in search of water, taking advantage of cracks in the rock and deep ground water sources.

But perhaps the Juniper’s most adapted characteristic is the ability the tree has to self-prune when water is in short supply which concentrates fluid to the most essential parts of the trunk. It would be the human equivalent to amputating a limb in order to keep blood flowing to the most essential organs of the body. Since humans are



programmed to hold on to our limbs when our body goes in to water conservation mode, perhaps there is more to be learned about water retention from the White-Tailed Antelope Squirrel.



Imagine we had an umbrella permanently attached to our pants that we could extend over our backs on every bike ride, hike, canyoneering trip, rafting trip, etc. What if that umbrella was white as to reflect the light from the sun, keeping our core cooler as a result? What if it was fashionably acceptable to wear white after Labor Day?

To an Antelope Squirrel (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) wearing white is essential to their survival in the desert, so a little fashion faux pas is a small price to pay. This small mammal is identifiable as it runs from shrub to shrub with its tail arced over its back, showing the white underside. The reflective coloring inevitably helps the animal keep cool as the sun blazes overhead. So when selecting your outfit for summertime recreation in the desert, thank the Antelope Squirrel for also not being afraid to wear white!

Hydration is essential for desert activity in the human and natural world. Since humans are limited in our physical adaptations to hot environments we need to compensate in other ways, such as pre-hydrating the days leading up to warm weather activities. Water has been known to cure headaches, chapped lips and bad moods, so drink up and enjoy your vacation!



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