

# @PLAY

Your daily survival guide to sports, recreation and outdoor news in Colorado's High Country

## Drewbie's dispatches from Nepal

In Summit County, those of who live in Breckenridge frequently refer to Silverthorne as the other side of the world, and vice-versa. All kidding aside, we often get stuck in our personal bubbles: our comfort zones, the places where we feel at peace, safe, home.

But travel is important. Leaving our comfort zones can be so meaningful for our mental health, allowing us to reset our minds, refresh our bodies, learn about the world and grow as people.



**Drew Mikita**  
Dear Drewbie

For 95 percent of us — a statistic that, like 76.8 percent of my stats, I made up on

the spot — Summit County is not our original home. For me, home is always going to be Hudson, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, and, thus, much of my travel is to my original home. The Cleve is where my family, childhood memories and values come from. I wouldn't trade it for the world. I genuinely love to travel to Cleveland because it is comfortable, with the best people on earth. Judy and Phil Mikita are there, and it is probably more comfortable to me than even my new residence, Breckenridge.

### HOMEBOY HEADS TO NEPAL

I am a homebody. I love my house on Locals Lane, the trails in French Gulch, the restaurants on Main Street, the ability find exactly what I want at City Market (until they move it and the entire county freaks out). Comfort, for me, comes with consistency. However, as my respected colleague, Jenn Barchers says, "Chaos brings change." And growth, maturity and enlightenment.

I sit writing this article in Kathmandu, Nepal — a city that is so unlike anywhere I have ever been. It's actively pushing my limits, and my comfort zone has been nuked in this bustling city. Chaos.

Many of you know that Molly and I are in Nepal because we are trekking to



Breck locals Drew and Molly Mikita left for Nepal on May 10 to spend three and a half weeks near Kathmandu, where they'll help with fundraising, humanitarian aid and, as consummate runners, participate in the 2016 Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon. The Mikitas join 15 Nepalese children from the Kailish Home charity for the marathon.

base camp and "running" the Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon. Everyone seemed to envy my opportunity, but I was reluctant to go on this adventure. Why? I suppose it was a variety of reasons: fear of the unknown, ignorance, leaving my Summit County bubble, leaving the baby-dogs for a month, pushing my limits. Also, I teeter on being a curmudgeonly shut-in who talks a big game about adventure yet prefers home.

But, truth be told, I am most comfortable on my trails, at my restaurants and in my City Market. I am embarrassed to admit this, but it is reality. Blaming it on my mental-health issues comes is just a shroud for fear, apathy and laziness.

### TRAVEL: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

Above is a nicer euphemism for nuking my comfort zone, and it started the minute Molly and I left home. After days of travel, literally around the world, we arrived. On the flight, I committed to making this trip a once in-a-lifetime adventure that will touch my soul and shift my existence as I know it. This is an opportunity to learn, grow and

improve as a being — just as you all told me it should be. Thanks, friends.

We left for our trek May 17 (and will likely be done when this prints), and my apprehension and fear are at an all-time high. I am masking it with curiosity, excitement and optimism. Truth be told, travel scares the s\*\*\* out of me, which must mean the opportunity for growth is copious: What if I can't do the trek or marathon? What if I get sick? What if \_\_\_\_\_?

Well, what if I have the time of my life?

### MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT-IFS

In mud season, Summit County people all seem to have great adventures planned to reset for the next round of tourist season. Whether it is a trip to Fruita or Moab to be bad-a\*\* on the trail, a Costa Rican beach vacation or a trip around the world, Summit Countians seek adventure.

If you are looking for adventure in your travels, here is my advice:

**Push your boundaries, but respect your limits:** Growth comes from leaving our comfort zone to enter our learning zone. Go too far, however, and injury, death and sadness can all occur. This is danger or

panic zone. If you push too far, your experience may sour you to travel and thicken your bubble.

**Do your research and know the place you're going:** Molly has researched Nepal for years, as it has long been her dream to travel to this amazing place. Learn about the culture, values, laws, people, climate, food, cost, gender-roles, dangers, geography, transportation, religions, norms, etc. before leaving. The interweb has all kinds of information to help with your travel. Knowing the cultural norms will help keep you safe and out of trouble.

**Have flexibility on your trip:** Some people like to plan everything, while others completely wing it and go with the flow. A balance of these two is ideal. Find a few activities and restaurants that are must-dos and then have some time for "wherever-the-world-takes-me" days. If your plans are too rigid, you will miss great opportunity and experience, and, if you don't plan well, you will end up sleeping under a bridge in the red-light district of Amsterdam next to a junkie. (OK, that was catastrophic.)

**Yesterday, Molly and I let the day determine itself.**

**Someone offered us a yoga class that turned into two incredible hours with an amazing yogi** — all for \$4. Never gonna forget that. When you have minimal expectations it helps your trip be a success.

**Set goals for your trip:** While in Nepal, I want to learn as much as possible. The people, culture, mountains, spirituality and lifestyle all allow an opportunity for growth. I want to find my joy. With all the stress and pettiness that has dictated my life, I want my joy back.

Also, I want to leave this place better than I found it. We are volunteering at a children's group home, which is not only an opportunity to help, but also a chance to learn and grow.

**Be local:** Don't go to Starbucks. With a passion for food, this is one of my motivating factors for travel. Even if you don't like a dish, you at least tried and learned. On our trip to Peru, we ate a horrific purple desert. It tasted like spoiled grape-jelly medicine. Yet, we still talk about it every time we see my dad and sister — such a great memory.

**Different isn't always bad:** All cultures have good and bad things. In Kathmandu, the people are amazing

### FOLLOW DREWBIE IN NEPAL

Want to keep up with Drew and Molly's trek to finish the 2016 Tenzing Hillary Everest Marathon? Follow their trip at [www.themaddingo.com](http://www.themaddingo.com) as Drew will be blogging the adventure.

— so kind and genuine. They treat tourists with kindness, gentleness and respect. Namaste is said with deep meaning. They care — and not just because they want our money, but because that is who they are. Back home, we see tourists and are fake, condescending and judgmental.

Does that mean Nepal is better than Summit County? In how they treat people, yes. In other areas, not so much. We don't have a big problem with litter in Summit. The air is clean, and streets well kept. Kathmandu has garbage literally burning in the streets. Does that mean Summit County is better? Absolutely not. Different is different, so learn from these differences and improve our home.

**Seek to understand, not be understood:** Don't be comparing things to home the whole time. Try to understand the culture and people, without constantly measuring the differences between theirs and yours.

**Represent Summit County well:** We all know what terrible tourists look like. Remember how the bad tourists act, and don't do that. Be the awesome tourists who are open-minded, kind and giving. Many people hate Americans abroad, and it can be justifiable, as we are often horrible travelers. Instead, be the tourist you want to see in the world.

And with that, bon voyage, happy travels, salud and cheers, Summit County!

*Drew Mikita is an associate professor of psychology at Colorado Mountain College. Since 2007, he has practiced mental health in Summit County as a licensed professional counselor. He is also a sports psychology consultant currently pursuing a doctorate in sport psychology. Originally from Summit County, Ohio, he is living out his dream as a mountain person.*

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY