

Rocky Mountain News

Gear swaps clear out garages

Outdoor novices can cut costs at grass-roots sales

By Janet Reese, Special to the News
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Gear swaps offer a little bit of something for everyone.

Want to sell your used outdoor gear that is still in good shape? Need gear but don't want to pay high retail prices? Want to turn your used gear into cash and buy other gear at bargain prices? Interested in a new sport but don't want to invest much until you know you like it?

If so, gear swaps are the way to go.

I attended the Mountain Miser's spring gear swap in April where I sold my old, unused backpack - it was too big for me - for \$25 and bought a brand new smaller one for \$15. The retail price of the smaller pack was \$78. I walked away with \$10 in my pocket and a new pack.

My only investment was the hour-and-a-half I spent at my sales table until the right buyer came by and I got the price I wanted. Afterwards, I had fun looking around for other deals.

The Mountain Miser outdoor gear store in Englewood and Golden-based Colorado Mountain Club each hold a spring and a fall gear swap. At the Mountain Miser swap, anyone can sell and buy gear. There is no seller's fee and no commission; you price your own gear and keep all the money. At the CMC swap, anyone can buy equipment, but only members can sell.

Spring swaps feature winter mountaineering gear such as downhill and backcountry skis and boots, snowshoes, ice-climbing boots, crampons and technical clothing. Fall swaps include summer gear: tents, kayaks, bicycles, sleeping bags, climbing shoes, ropes and carabineers, fishing equipment, hiking boots, clothing and backpacks. Often, you can find gear for any season at spring and fall swaps.

Mountain Miser

"We help set up around 80 tables for sellers in our parking lot and 300 to 400 people attend each swap," said David Goodman, Mountain Miser owner. "I hold them to give back to the community. We create a fun-filled atmosphere where our customers and others can turn used gear into cash, buy other gear and have fun."

Clean out your closets and garages of old gear, Goodman said.

"Tents, sleeping bags, fleece, shells, packs, skis, climbing gear, paddling gear and camping accessories will all sell. People love the deals. You'll be utterly amazed at what you'll sell if the price is right," he said on the store's Web site.

"Remember this is a swap, not an art auction. People are looking for deals. Price your stuff to sell, unless you want to take it back home with you."

Buena Vista residents Kathy Hoerlein and Scott Cragle regularly attend the Mountain Miser swaps.

to let go of old or duplicate gear.

"We make the most money on tents, bike/ski racks, telemark boots, backcountry skis and poles and camping gear," Cragle said. "We have made anywhere from \$10 to \$20, to \$100 when we sell bigger items."

Said Hoerlein: "I also attend the gear swaps looking for specific items to buy. I got a great deal on used Tubbs snowshoes for \$75, priced near \$200 in retail stores."

Colorado Mountain Club

At the CMC gear sale, members deliver their priced gear to the club the day before the event. Volunteers set up and organize the swap in activity-specific areas such as topographic maps, books, technical clothing, boots, backpacks, skis and snowshoes, fly-fishing, bicycling, climbing and paddling. You don't have to be a member to buy.

When the doors open at 6 p.m., buyers flood the room for deals. Sellers aren't required to be there, but some attend to negotiate prices.

"The event is ideal for people starting to hike, climb or ski," said Marilyn Choske, a CMC member who started the sale in 1992. "You can find good deals at the sale before spending big bucks on gear in outdoor stores."

Julie Beckwith outfits her family at the CMC sale.

"Usually, members sell good-quality gear," she said. "My son bought an avalanche beacon for \$25, usually priced over \$200. The seller was there to show him how to use it."

CMC member Beth Dwyer, who sells and buys gear at the sale, said, "Popular items include GPS devices, compasses and climbing gear. Hiking boots and clothing are less popular sales items. At the spring sale, I sold a biking jacket, helmet, new hiking pants and made \$65. I bought a head lamp, climbing shoes, fleece shirt and a small pack, all for \$75."

Even if you have no gear to sell or buy at swaps this fall, consider attending one. Swaps are great places to meet people with outdoor interests. You might pick up some free and interesting information for your outdoors adventures.

Keep the swaps in mind for next year. The Mountain Miser holds its spring swap the second Saturday in April and the fall swap the second Saturday in September. CMC holds its swaps in April and October, with varying Friday dates.

Swapping Tips

Sellers:

- Price your items low. Be willing to negotiate.
- Sell gear that still is in useful condition; don't bring worn out or damaged gear.
- If you have a lot of gear to sell, make a list and track your sales for future reference. Mark the items with a price, or skip the price tags and negotiate directly with buyers.

- Bring a chair, sunscreen and a hat for the outdoor swap.

Buyers:

- Arrive early to find the best items and deals.
- Negotiate prices with onsite sellers; ask sellers if they are willing to accept lower prices.
- Before buying, check items for flaws. Remember there are no returns.
- Ask volunteers at the CMC for help in finding items.

Sellers and buyers:

- Bring cash in small denominations for change. Cash is preferred. Some sellers accept checks.

Upcoming swaps

- Mountain Miser gear swap

9 a.m.-2 p.m. Sept. 10 at the Mountain Miser parking lot, located at 209 W. Hampden Ave. Sellers are asked to arrive about 8:45 a.m. The swap will take place regardless of rain, shine or snow. Free food and refreshments will be provided.

Sellers need to register for tables by Sept. 8. Register online at www.mountainmiser.com, or call the store at 303-761-7070. Mountain Miser provides tables at no charge and supplies the swap venue.

- Colorado Mountain Club used gear sale

6-8 p.m. Oct. 14 at Colorado Mountain Club, located at 710 10th St. in Golden. The sale takes place indoors in a room on the ground floor. Buyers can arrive early to secure a good place in the queue. Information: 303-279-3080, ext. 2.

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