

Sport Climbing 2011: Field trips

Practice: Edgeworks climbing gym.

Trip Dates: September 24th and 25th; October 8th and 9th.

Place: Frenchman Coulee **Time:** Sat: 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
Sun: 9:00 am until 2:30 pm

References: Frenchman Coulee 2008 (Ford and Yoder) (contains pictures of climbers from some of our past classes); Selected Climbs in the Cascades, Vol II, pp.316-328 (Nelson and Potterfield; Weekend Rock, pp. 253-271 (Whitelaw). See also:
<http://www.justgetout.net/Wenatchee/14582>.

Directions: Heading East on I-90 take Exit 143 (same as the Gorge Amphitheater Exit). Follow Silica Road North less than a mile and turn West onto Vantage Road. We will meet at the Feathers parking lot (just past the Feathers climbing area) which is on the left 1.5 miles from the intersection of Silica Rd & Vantage Rd at 9am on Saturday morning. The plan is to be organized and on our way to the Feathers climbing area by 9:30am.

We will meet back in the parking lot at 4pm and head over together at our campgrounds at Vantage Riverstone Resort <http://www.vantagewa.com/index.php?page=where-to-stay---camping>. The address is 551 Main Street Vantage, WA 98950. Directions from I-90: Take Exit 136. Turn left, go over the overpass, the Riverstone Resort office (where we will check-in/pay for campsite) is 1/4 mile on the left side.

Sign In/ Sign Out: All students and instructors are required to sign in and sign out. A sign in(Saturday)/sign out(Sunday) roster will be posted on one of the vehicles (TBD) in the Feathers parking lot on Saturday morning and Sunday morning. If you leave early (i.e., before 2:30 pm Sunday), or decide to stay past 2:30 pm on Sunday, please sign out; otherwise, if we can't account for you at 2:30 pm on Sunday we will have to telephone you or your emergency contact person to find out where you are. **Cell phones.** If you have a cell phone, bring it and turn it on. This is the best way to communicate with one another for all sorts of purposes, including coordinating an accident response (see safety plan).

Permits: A \$12.00 Fish and Wildlife Parking Permit is required to park at Frenchman Coulee. If you don't display it, you risk getting a ticket large enough to pay for several years of permits. You can pick one up at many sporting goods stores, and also at the larger Fred Meyer stores.

Gear: Climbing harness, belay device, large pear-shaped locking biner, personal anchor, gloves suitable for belaying and rappelling, **helmet** (nobody climbs without one), rock shoes, chalk bag. Small daypack, food for lunch and snacks, plenty of water (at least two liters) and clothing and gear for conditions (sun, heat, cold, wind, rain). Medications (e.g., if needed for allergies to insect or bee stings). **Students:** If you have a first aid kit that you carry on hikes or climbs, bring it. **Instructors:** Bring a first aid kit suitable for leading a basic climb.

Ropes: The instructors will bring half a dozen 60 meter club ropes. If you own a rope, bring it. 50 meter ropes will work fine in most places other than Sunshine Wall, which generally requires a 60 meter rope. **Quick draws:** If you own quick draws bring them. Generally 10-12 will suffice. If a route requires more, team up on draws.

Water: You will need to bring enough water to last you through Saturday climbing. You can fill up at the Riverstone Resort campground, where we will be spending the night.

Food: By tradition, dinner and breakfast are group participation events. Meal coordinators (one for each meal) will set the menu for the meal and assign each student and instructor to bring a particular food item, utensil, pan, skillet, coffee maker, Coleman stove, etc. The meal coordinator (aka Chief Cook) will assign roles in the meal preparation process. Consequently, if you have an assigned cooking role it is important to be back at the campsite no later than 5:00 pm to start preparing the dinner meal for serving at 6:00 pm, and to be up and ready by 7:00 am to prepare breakfast for serving by 8:00 am. **Beverages.** Alcoholic and other beverages are on your own. **Camp chairs:** Highly recommended to avoid sitting on rocks or cooler chests.

Toilet facilities: Rumor has it (or, actually, it's a fact) that the Riverstone Resort campground has some pretty nice accommodations, including flushing toilets and showers. Climbing in Frenchman's Coulee, however, has no such accommodations. Plan accordingly for during the day when we are climbing. ***Do not leave any "waste" behind.*** Instead, bring some bags and toilet paper to pack it up while climbing.

Camping: Most persons sleep in tents. Some sleep in trucks, vans or SUVs. There are generally lots of tent sites. Bring a headlamp as it gets very dark after sunset. You will also want it for nocturnal visits to the toilets. Weather is usually warm/hot and dry but it can be rainy and windy. At night, it cools down considerably, so a warm jacket (puffy) comes in handy. A three season sleeping bag works well.

Safety

Initial considerations:

Safe climbing begins with proper instruction, proper gear and guided practice. One of the main goals of the sport climbing class is to teach you how to sport climb safely. Consequently, much of the lectures and practice will focus on safe climbing techniques and practices. The material below is an overview. It is not a substitute for instruction and practice.

Sport climbing is generally regarded as less risky than traditional climbing. The main reason is that sport routes are usually generously bolted, so that leader falls are short and well protected. However, there are notable exceptions to this when leading some routes, especially placement of the first bolt, which may be fairly high off the deck or which may require a bouldering "crux" move or two immediately off the deck. Some climbers carry stick clips (aka "cheater sticks") for clipping the first bolt from the ground. Also, sometimes it is prudent to "spot" the lead climber until s/he makes the first clip.

Those who follow a route, climb the route top-roped, which is a very safe way to climb. Falls on top rope are almost always inconsequential. Climbing top roped is the way for beginners to start. It is best to postpone leading until one's safety skills, technical skills (placing draws, assembling and breaking down top anchors, rappelling, etc.), climbing skills and confidence have advanced to the point that they have become second nature.

Although sport climbing leader falls are generally short, and usually uneventful, they are not without hazard. Craggs contain numerous protruding features such as horns, ledges etc., that can seriously injure a climber even on a short fall. It is wise for those who wish to lead sport routes to get some practice in learning how to fall. Practice falls not only enhance safety but they also promote confidence in learning to push one's limits. The best place to start practicing falls is in a climbing gym on a route that has been specifically designed to allow you to practice safely. Edgeworks has one or two of these that are set up as test routes for climbers who want take their lead test (safely falling and safely catching a lead fall are part of the test) .

Most sport climbing injuries are to fingers and hands, either scrapes or lacerations, or finger ligament sprains/strains. Strains of upper body muscles are also common. Other commonly injured areas are knees and shins. If you fall hard onto your feet (e.g., fall onto a ledge, or the deck, feet first), it is possible to sprain or even break an ankle. A good basic first aid kit and a roll of athletic tape is generally sufficient to handle the most common injuries. Warming up is a good way to prevent muscle strains and prematurely "pumping out". Climbing gracefully, in control is far safer – and more effective—than trying to muscle your way to the top with your upper body.

Although it is now standard practice for a route designer to carefully clean a new route of loose rock and other debris, there is still a chance of rock fall. Also due to the columnar volcanic nature of the rock at Frenchman Coulee, the top anchor chains/bolts of many routes are set near the top of columns that contain an abundance of loose rock that no route designer could ever clean or keep clean. Rock fall is the primary reason that we wear helmets. Helmets are required.

Several kinds of potentially hazardous critters inhabit Frenchman Coulee. The two best known large ones are rattlesnakes and porcupines. There are also a variety of biting insects too numerous to list. Rattlesnake sightings are uncommon and I have never seen a porcupine. Give both a wide berth. The snakes that I have encountered have been rather shy creatures that quickly flee into rock crevices once they encounter a group of climbers. If you encounter a snake on a route, down climb slowly and cautiously. Bug repellent may come in handy for insects.

Sun protection is critical. The weather is usually sunny and it is easy to get a sunburn without realizing it. Hydration is also important. You may find that while climbing in this hot arid location your need for fluids is greater than usual. Carry at least two liters of water. A wind shirt or shell also comes in handy

Thunder and lightning storms can swiftly move in across the Columbia Plateau. Carry rain gear even on nice days and prepare to return to your campsite if there is sufficient advance notice of an oncoming storm (which there often is given the expansive views across the plateau) or seek shelter if lightning has begun to strike nearby (count the seconds between the thunder clap and the lightning and then divide by 5 to estimate the distance in miles from the lightning strike; $10 \text{ secs}/5 = 2 \text{ miles}$. If you are climbing, get down off of the route. Lightning likes high places, so stay low.

Safety Plan

First aid kits. We ask anyone who normally carries a first aid kit in their pack to bring the first aid kit that they normally carry. We expect instructors to bring the kind of first aid kit that they would carry if they were leading a basic mountaineers' climb.

Communication. Frenchman Coulee is a large area. Small groups of students and instructors will be climbing as far away as a mile or so from one another and they will be frequently out of visual and auditory range. In the event of a serious accident, we may need to respond from remote locations and we may need to call for help. In such circumstances cell phones are essential for coordinating an accident response, whether we decide to self-rescue or request local help.

In the event of an accident. If someone sustains a serious injury (i.e., their injury cannot be safely treated by their group and/or they cannot walk back to Elvis Rock with minimal assistance), someone in the group needs to immediately notify Gregg Gagliardi (Cell# 253-592-9756) or Bill Hecker (cell# 206-788-7491) who will coordinate the accident response. In the meantime, those in the immediate proximity of the injured climber need to safely provide emergent care until additional help arrives.

To date all rescues at Frenchman Coulee have been provided courtesy of the Grant County Volunteer Fire Department. They may be contacted by calling 911. They may request that available climbers stabilize the injured climber and then transport them to a flat area for an airlift. A flat area near Kotick Memorial Wall (see Crag map overview in Ford and Yoder) has been used for airlifts.

For less urgent medical care, the closest hospital is Quincy Valley Hospital (509-787-3531; 908 10th Ave SW, Quincy, WA). The next closest is Kittitas Valley Community Hospital (1-800-734-5326; 603 South Chestnut, Ellensburg, WA),