

BOZEMAN PASSAGE

Your Guide To Everything BOZEMAN!



Ice Is Nice

By: CJ Adams

Suddenly my rope catches, my arms and legs flailing as I swing back and forth, colliding with the young boy scouts. A couple of scouts slip and I grimace; their futures looked similar to the debacle I currently face after I failed to get the spikes on my boot dug deep enough into the ice.

On my way to Hyalite to join Boy Scout Troop 679 for an ice-climbing excursion, I stop to get my caffeine fix. I tell the Barista my fears of annihilating an entire troop of scouts and she smiled back at me unresponsive. 'Doesn't she understand the impending ruin facing these young boys!' I think frantically as I make my way up 19th toward Hyalite.

The sun shone brightly on this nearly spring-like Saturday as I pull in the campground the troop is staying at for the weekend. Pete, the troop leader, immediately approaches me, introduces himself and gives me a tour explaining how everything operates. Of the three troops in Bozeman, Troop 679 has 22 scouts, only eight of which could attend this campout. Pete's philosophy is to let the boys learn for themselves through trial and error. I emphatically agree with him, recounting my days as a scout.

After packing all the scouts and gear into the vehicles, we drive a short way to the Hyalite Creek Trailhead parking area. As expected, the parking lot is packed with people enjoying this beautiful winter day. As the scouts unpack the gear rented from ProLite in Bozeman, I notice the plethora of ice features all around me.



Having spent a great amount of time up here in the Spring and Summer, I never realized how much water runs over these cliffs.

Ron, our guide with Reach Your Peak, began to explain the upcoming adventure. The ice features all around us represent the best concentrated ice climbing in the lower 48 states. One of these world class formations is only about a half mile up the trail and, after struggling to keep up with the scouts hiking in to the falls, we finally reached our destination.

As Ron explained to us that we would be top rope climbing, using a dynamic rope for give if there happens to

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be a fall, a couple of scouts behind me begin to talk about the "Ninja fights" they planned during the climb. 'Ah, my premonitions were a bit deceptive' I grin as Ron tells us to use our left hand as the leader and the right as the brake hand while belaying. Belayers and climbers need to wear helmets as "even a piece of ice as big as your fist will lay you out if it falls 50 feet", he continued. As we began to prepare for Ron's initial set up climb, he stressed the importance of communication between belayer and climber like "Belay" "Belay On" and "Climb" "Climb On". This dialogue is important to reassure confidence in these individuals.

Ron began the ascent, explaining that the water continually flows on the outside of the ice and as the weather warms, the water begins to flow on the inside of the formation. At this point, the structure disintegrates, beginning its long annual journey toward the ocean. The water flowing on the outside softens the ice, making it more forgiving as you put the screws in. But, Ron warns, you must be certain you feel continual resistance while inserting the screws to be assured they will hold.



After returning to the ground, Ron shows us how to push your hips toward the ice, and to pull your shoulders back to get maximum leverage while driving in the pick. The first scout was chosen to climb, then his belayer and back up belayer and the day truly began.

We climbed the formation for the better part of the day, with no problems of falling from the ice and taking half the troop with me! Great physical activity, while enjoying the outdoors; a perfect winter day. So, if you have never been ice climbing, contact Reach Your Peak for a guide and ProLite for gear. Also, get up the mountain before the formations leave us for another year and remember to support programs like Boy Scouts of America for working to instill the importance of the outdoors in our youth.

