

Senior resident assistant Maritza Ryciak tackles one of the many climbing walls at Crux Rock Gym on West 3rd Avenue.



Maritza Ryciak stretches to reach a handhold. Some of the walls at Crux reach 2 1/2 stories.

On the ROCKS

Climbers weigh pluses and minuses of indoor versus outdoor rock climbing

By Edward Yuen
for the Emerald

Michelle Emmons was introduced to rock climbing eight months ago, and she's already caught the fever.

"Rock climbing is like solving a puzzle," the senior journalism major said. "It is a great exercise for strength building and developing mental focus."

Emmons is one of many people who have discovered rock climbing in recent years. It's a sport suitable for people of all ages, climbers say. And it can be done on both natural rock walls and on man-made indoor walls.

Each type of climbing has its own pros and cons, climbers say.

"Outdoor climbing is more creative," Emmons said. "It has no set route. Indoor rock climbing is limited to the creativity of the [rock climbing] center."

Besides the route of the climb, the biggest difference between indoor and outdoor climbing may be the climber's feeling.

"Indoor walls are very short," said Erik Gomez, coordinator of the Crux Rock Gym in Eugene. "You are climbing on plastic instead of real rocks."

Outdoor climbers run the risk of exposure to the elements, however, Gomez said.

Daniel Geiger, associate coordi-

nator of the Outdoor Program, said beginning climbers should start with a class in order to learn safety procedures and basic skills.

Gomez recommends beginners start with indoor climbing, which provides a better chance to develop the required techniques, he said.

Two rock climbing classes are being offered spring term, but they are filling up quickly. Only one spot was available early this week.

The University is also building a indoor rock climbing wall in the remodeled Esslinger Hall. The wall will open next year.

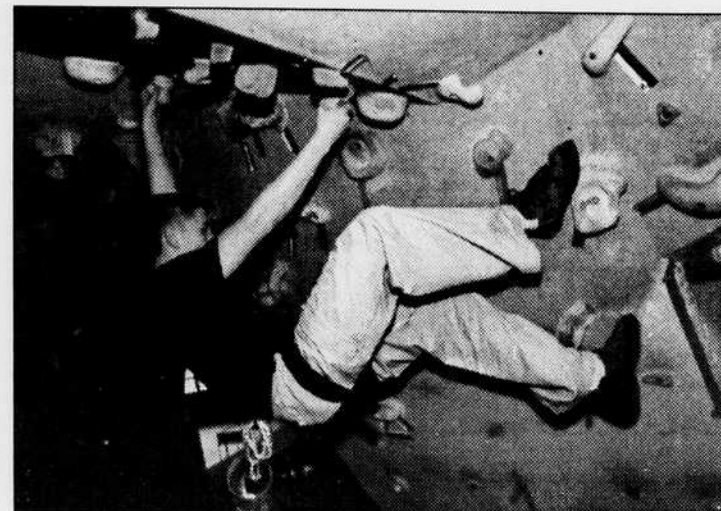
Students who enjoy outdoor rock climbing can also check out the Outdoor Program, which organizes three to five trips a year.

While rock climbing is an individual sport, Geiger said, students should always go with at least one friend. "You need a trusted partner to go with you," he said.

Geiger said Smith Rock, located northeast of Bend, is one of the world's best outdoor climbing sites and a favorite for many students.

Students can also make recommendations for more personalized trips if they like, Geiger said. For more information on the trips or climbing in general, call the Outdoor Program at 346-4365.

For printed information, the Outdoor Program is collaborating with some local climbers on producing a guidebook that features Flagstone, a climbing site near the McKenzie River. The guidebook will be released in May.



Thurston High School student Zack Cords likes to climb at Crux 2 or 3 times a week. Crux Gym offers special discounts on student memberships.

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