



Inge Scheve for the Emerald

Monkey Face offers unique and exposed climbing routes for Smith Rock visitors.

## Smith Rock

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years ago when he was hanging out at Smith Rock for an entire summer.

"It's just a beautiful place," he said.

The main rock climbing area at Smith Rock stretches from the Picnic Lunch Wall on the front to Smith Rocks on the back side of the entrance bridge area. Most of the climbs are shorter, steeper routes that are already bolted and ready to enjoy, which is why the majority of climbers here perform sports climbing. Although short, there are several aspects of the routes that make climbers from all over the world migrate to Smith Rock any time of the year.

One such attraction is the tough 5.14d climbing route.

Additionally, new routes were discovered this summer. "Eye of the Beholder" is a 5.11c route, which rock climber Ryan Lawson, an Oregon native who has climbed since 1996, extended with a second pitch that rates at 5.10b, making the existing climb even higher. Right next to this route, another of Lawson's finds rating at 5.11d is the new "Harvester of Sorrow," which he first climbed on June 3, 2000.

Another Smith Rock favorite feature is Monkey Face, a natural sculpture that — surprise — resembles a monkey's head. Not only does the 300-foot rock column amaze people with its appearance, but it also offers unique and largely exposed climbing routes.

The route "Just do it" is one of the hardest Severson knows on the Monkey Face because it leaves climbers exposed to air on several sides high above the ground. Monkey Face offers plenty such exposure because the route forces climbers to round a corner to enter the final stage and conquer the column.

"Exposure is pretty freaky for me," Severson said. "There is something scary about having only air around and being up high while balancing on something that doesn't provide much for footing."

However, the scariest part of climbing is to watch people who are careless, Severson said. With this many visitors of all abilities, scenes of recklessness are inevitable. Most of this occurs when people belaying the climbers don't pay attention to their climber. Climbers can easily hurt

### To get to Smith Rock

Highway 126 from Springfield over Santiam Pass. Follow Highway 20 through Sisters, then turn east to Redmond. Take Highway 97 and continue north to Terrebonne, about 6 miles, to signs for Smith Rock. Head east following the signs for a 3.5-mile drive to the park entrance.

themselves if they fall when those tending their ropes are not paying attention and don't lock the rope.

Gonzales adds that most of the climbing at Smith Rock is sports climbing. In this activity, the routes are already bolted and ready for climbers to attempt. Sports climbing differs from what he calls "gear climbing" where climbers carry their bolts and equipment up the faces and also occasionally sleep in hammock-like contraptions that can be bolted to the rock face.

So what else does the area present?

First, mountain bikers can charge up Burma Road a short mile for a panoramic view of the area from atop Gray Butte (3,580 feet). From the summit the road turns into a trail that treats bikers to a gradual downhill along the ridge down to a steep gully just north of the Monkey Face column. This is an excellent place to watch climbers, have a picnic or just turn south and follow the trail around the canyon for a speedy return to the foot bridge and the parking area.

For hikers, the standard hiking path follows the river along the bottom of the canyon for an easy 5.8 mile hike. More challenging trail variations for those who are not afraid of heights or concerned about their footing include trails leading over the passes and along the ridges to the back side and the Monkey Face.

All of the trail options including the canyon floor deliver great views of the Smith Rock area, good sightings of climbers in action and patches of beautiful desert wild flowers.

But with a huge number of visitors, area users should remember to stay on the trail and be careful with the delicate desert vegetation.

"I really hope [the park administration] will take care of the place," Gonzales said. "There's a ton of people there all the time, and the area is really fragile."

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