

OUTDOORS

PLAYING, CAMPING AND ECO-TRAVELING



THE WORLD IS THEIR JUNGLE GYM

Parkour in Eugene

By Deanna Uutela · Photos by Zac Goodwin

Dallas Branum stands on the grass in the courtyard of Lawrence Hall, home of the UO's architecture program. He stretches, focusing on his legs, back and shoulders. After loosening up, he does some standing vertical power leaps to get his body used to jumping and taking the shock of landing. Then the real fun begins.

He runs, leaps over a concrete barrier, positions his hands around a pipe that's secured to Lawrence and climbs until he reaches a ledge. From there, he swings one arm up, releases and grabs another ledge with his other hand. Once he reaches the adjoining wall, he pulls himself onto the roof. The next destination: the adjacent rooftop. He dives forward, lands feet first and tucks his body into a vertical roll. Run completed.

Like children playing at a park, traceurs — parkour enthusiasts — play on structures in their urban surroundings. They climb, jump over, swing on and dangle off of everything. You name it; they'll conquer it. The basic goal is to move from point A to point B as efficiently and quickly as possible, using only the human body. Parkour focuses on uninterrupted, efficient forward motion over, under, around and through obstacles in an environment, using skills such as running, jumping, swinging and vaulting. It has been compared to martial arts, dance forms, gym-

nastics — even skateboarding minus the skateboard.

Some people consider parkour a game, some a discipline, but for the truly dedicated, it's a way of life. For Branum, 24, parkour is about having fun and teaching his mind and body to run free. "I see parkour as modern day gymnastics combined with urban climbing," Branum says. "Instead of feeling like you are in a cage, you go where you want to go. There are no limitations."

Branum has a strong physique, thanks to his hobby. "Parkour is an intense workout," Branum says. "It requires you to utilize every body part."

Branum enjoys parkour because he can do it individually and in a natural environment. Unlike most physical activities, parkour doesn't require any equipment, specific locations, team members or even money to practice it. The only thing you need is a big imagination and the willingness to let go of your fears and allow yourself to be a kid again. "I went through a