



# Rock Rendezvous



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## TRIPS READY FOR SIGN-UP!

Welcome to February’s newsletter. We have a packed issue for you this month, including details of the first lot of campsites Scott has booked for us for March through June (thanks Scott!!). More details can be found on page 9.

We also have a dispatch from RR member Hamid Aghdaee, who is preparing to return to the U.S. after about a month climbing and hanging out in Thailand. As you know, Hamid went to Thailand in late December and in an e-mail message to members on 12/27, said: “I would have been right in the middle of the wave, had I not slept through the bus leaving for Krabi. So now I'm here in Ao Nang (where it was also badly hit). At least prices are rock bottom because everyone's leaving.” Read his dispatch for the RR newsletter on page 3.

We’ve got two great trip reports this month from Simon Kenney (beginners’ ice climbing in Lee Vining) and from Adan Martinez (climbing tour of Spain).

Finally, save the date of Feb. 1, for next RR meeting, where Tom McMillan will present a movie of his successful Friendship Beyond Borders expedition to Mt. Everest. FBB accomplished its goal in May 2004, when Nawang Sherpa reached the summit of Mt. Everest. Nawang is the first trans-tibial amputee to ever climb an 8,000 meter peak. Don’t miss this event. More details of the meeting on page 10.

Thanks to those who contributed to this newsletter this month. Thanks for reading! – Linda ([llhleung@hotmail.com](mailto:llhleung@hotmail.com))

## NOTES FROM JANUARY RR MEETING

BY RICARDO LAGOS

January's meeting was held at casa Lagos, in San Francisco. We stood around consuming large amounts of pizza and beer until Scott insisted that we start the meeting on time.

### **New faces**

Seeing as this was my first meeting, I decided to start by asking other people to speak, and so we were introduced to two new faces. Julian is from France, arrived in San Francisco just four months ago and reports that he has not had much of a chance to climb in the U.S. yet. Phil Esra made his debut appearance at Rock Rendezvous, and the only note that I can read from Simon's meeting notes is that he climbs at the gym once a week.

### **Rock Rendezvous camping reservations!**

Scott gave us an update on the Yosemite Valley reservation that we have for April and May (see the upcoming trip section for more info). We've also reserved a group site at Red Rocks for March 31 to April 4 (any volunteers to lead this

trip?). Simon reminisced about some great climbing that he's got done at Sonora Pass, so I hope that he leads at least one of the Sonora trips that we have planned for the month of June.

Other climbing destinations that made the list of "*places we should go to*" were Pinnacles, and Lover's Leap, with a minor mention of some place called J-Tree.

Next we swung into the commercial part of evening, when a stunning Rock Rendezvous sweatshirt was modeled. I'd like to remind everyone that we still have some t-shirts, so talk to Simon K., before they are all gone.

### **Upcoming meetings**

Finally, before everyone dozed off, we announced some of the upcoming attractions in the works: Kathy is working on getting Alan Steck to do a slide show in March, and Em & Bruce will be hosting our February meeting with a movie by Tom McMillan on his recent successful expedition to Everest.

## Rock Rendezvous Photography Contest

*Announcing the 1st ever Rock Rendezvous Photo contest!* We will be accepting entries for the entire year, and will be announcing the winners at our Christmas party.

The contest is for climbing related photographs that include the brand new Rock Rendezvous climbing information cards. Simon Kenney has been handing out Rock Rendezvous business cards at the monthly meetings, and the club will be giving away prizes to the photograph that includes the RR business card in the most exotic or hard-to-reach climbing locations around the globe. (Think of a picture of an RR business card tucked behind a bolt on the Nose, or at the summit register of Temple Crag.)

Send your submissions in to Linda (llhleung@hotmail.com), and we'll print the entries in the newsletter.

## CLIMBER OF THE MONTH

This month's climber is **Sam McGeehan**, who is a regular at our Thanksgiving trips and other outings.



**Name/ nickname:** Sam / Orion  
**No. of years climbing:** 4  
**RR member since:** Thanksgiving Red Rocks trip 2003  
**First climb:** The blue 5.8 at Iron Works on tower 1  
**Favorite climbing destination:** Yosemite Valley  
**Favorite post-climb eatery:** Crossroads Cafe, J-tree or the tailgate of the truck with partner, beer & chips n salsa.  
**Favorite climbing gym:** Berkeley Iron Works and I live in S.F. (traitor)  
**Ski or snowboard?:** Board  
**Other outdoor pursuits:** cycling, snowshoeing, x-country skiing, hiking, volleyball, photography.  
**Favorite travel destination:** The next new place that has climbing =)  
**Person most like to be stuck on a ledge with:** Karl Babba  
**Favorite climbing read:** Annapurna by Maurice Herzog  
**Earliest childhood memory:** it was warm and red =)  
**Climbing motto:** We DO NOT need the #4.  
**Climbing hero:** Ed Viesturs

## Dispatch from Hamid Aghdaee in Thailand

Hamid is safe and having a great time in Thailand. Here is his dispatch from Thailand:

*Thailand, Jan. 19. 2005 –*

Hi there,

I spent a little less than 3 weeks climbing, scuba diving, exploring, chillin', reading, meeting some super-rad people, smoking A LOT of dope, enjoying some damn good food and company, etc, etc.

I got to Tonsai right after the Tsunami. Shops and restaurant right on the beach at Railei, Tonsai and Ao Nang were damaged but within a week or so some of them were up and running again. Everything is pretty much in good condition for whatever adventure you may choose to live here.

It's INCREDIBLY quiet at TonSai and RaiLei for high season and the businesses are suffering. If you want to help the people in these particular communities, the best thing you can do is come visit and stay!

I injured my finger last week so no more climbing for me. I'm going to Similian Islands for 6 days or so of Scuba Diving. OH YEAH!!!

I'm coming back end of the month.

Hope to see you friends soon.

No goal but the path, Hamid.

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## FOR SALE:

**Metolius TCUs, sizes: 00,0,1.**

Minimal use with no falls taken. \$30 a piece.

Contact me either at: paul\_manangan@prn.com or 415.637.7746.

## TRIP REPORTS:

# Ice climbing for dummies

**Words: Simon Kenney Photos: Angelique Augereau**



Lee Vining canyon, the final mile to the ice

Myself and a few others had been badgering Scott Johnston (RR's ice climbing expert) to do a beginners' ice climbing trip. So this weekend just gone (Jan. 15) a merry band of novices (and nearly novices) set off from the Bay Area to Lee Vining on the eastern side of the Sierras.

For three weeks prior to our trip, it had snowed continuously across Northern California giving some of the deepest snow accumulations that hadn't been seen in certain areas since 1916 (which translates to about 16-plus feet!!). This meant that the usual easy 30-minute walk from the parking lot near Lee Vining to the base of the ice had now become a 5-mile ski/snow shoe adventure.

And so our original 15 people who had signed up for the trip dwindled to around nine who had backcountry snow gear. Scott chose the perfect venue for our accommodation in the form of the Best Western in Lee Vining, and the big, big room with kitchen and plenty of beds. This meant that only two people ended up sleeping on the floor.

So we got up at 5:00 a.m. Saturday morning (yuk), and after eating a heavy duty breakfast of pancakes, syrup, veggie sausages, OJ and coffee (cooked by Scott!!) we set off from our rudimentary base camp (Best Western) and headed for the hills.

The road had been ploughed to within about 5 miles of the ice. We started skiing in around 7:00 a.m. and reached the base of the ice around 10:00 a.m. The trail to the generator plant, which is about a mile from the ice, had already been broken by a snow cat. But even that last mile was not too bad going as the snow had formed a crust (but still the deepest snow Scott says he had ever seen there).



Scott leading

We stamped out on a ledge at the base of the smaller of the two ice walls, where Scott led up to fixed anchors at the top and set up two top-ropes. I watched as each person proceeded to kick and ax their way up the routes. We learned about good and bad ice, how to be most stable on your crampons, and how you don't need to pound the axe in too far.

By the time I had done my third route, I felt like I didn't look so dumb and really enjoyed what I was doing. Everybody progressed that day and by 4:00 p.m. we were all pretty shot and so packed up top head down. We finally reached our cars at around 6:00 p.m. (cross country skiing by head lamp was a new and interesting experience!!).

So, back at base camp (Best Western), where we relaxed under hot showers, dined on hot food, cheese, gateaux, five bottles of wine (thanks Angelique), beer, whiskey, and enjoyed loads of great company.

The following day (Sunday), I decided to nurse my blisters and try some Alpine skiing at Mammoth instead of ice climbing, so myself, Phil, Angelique, and Kat set off for a spot of resort skiing for the day. If you've never been there before, Mammoth is ... well ... mammoth. We traversed the slopes all day and only

duplicated a couple of runs and still didn't get to anywhere near covering the whole resort.

The rest of the team: Scott, Michael, Adan, Jean-Luca, and Jason all did the return trip back to the ice wall (all five miles of it ... each way), and continued to hone their newly acquired skills. This time, they climbed a multi-pitch route and did a spot of leading (getting to grips with all those nice ice tools). We all rendezvoused back at base camp at around 7:00 p.m., compared blisters and bruises and continued running down our supply of provisions (especially the chocolate sponge and ice cream).

The final day (Monday), myself, Scott, Phil and Angelique set off in search of hot springs (the rest of the team dispersed or did a little more alpine skiing at Mammoth. Our first objective was Buckeye hot springs near Bridgeport, but after getting some local info, we realized that six miles of unbroken trail would probably turn out to be more of an all-day event (we needed to get back to the Bay by 8:00 p.m.). So we opted for Tavertine hot springs on the other side of Bridgeport and only a mile in.



It's a hard life being an ice climber

We took our meager rations of fresh cut sandwiches from the local deli, donned our skis (snow shoes for Angelique) and headed in. We took in a simple summit before heading down for a dip in the pools. Tavertine has great views across the Bridgeport valley to the Sierras behind. We had the springs to ourselves where we had lots of fun making naked snow angels, and taking a bunch of photos (some printable). We headed for the cars after about an hour soaking and hit traffic and reality.

A great weekend with fine friends where we had about as much fun as you can standing up!!



# Tour of climbing Meccas in Spain, Part 1

**Words and photos: Adan Martinez (trip taken Sept. 30 - Oct. 18, 2004)**

Almost every time I meet new people at "home" in the U.S., the inevitable question comes up: where are you from? I wonder, where am I from, as to where I live, or where my accent is from? My accent is soft enough that I'm not sure it's been detected. Not that it matters as long as I don't have to repeat what I'm saying. When I say I am from Spain, that's always has a conditional. Yes, I was born there, but I only lived there a total of 7 years perhaps. I still carry a Spanish passport, but otherwise I feel I don't know as much about the country as I someone who claims to be from there should.

When it's climbers I meet, they ask me about the climbing there. Some have been there.

Apparently Spain has some of the best and most varied rock-climbing in the world. Tom Davis, a long-time hardcore Yosemite climber and owner of the Santa Cruz climbing gym where I learned to climb, told me that what's great about Spain is that there are all these climbing areas all throughout the country, and what they would consider a backyard crag there here it would be considered a destination worth traveling to. This is probably no exaggeration. Rockclimbing.com features 496 areas in Spain, more than any other area in Europe. Only England with 482 comes even close, considering this is an English language website and therefore by nature Anglocentric.

I learned to climb once I moved to California. I felt as a climber I had an obligation to go back to my roots and learn more about the climbing there.

First time I went in June 2003. But at that time it was too hot to climb in most of the better known areas. And after having been out of the country for 10 years, I was busy visiting family. I did not have many days left to climb. On top of that, it was not easy to just go to a climbing area and find a partner. For some reason this doesn't work as easily as in the U.S. in a place like Camp 4 in Yosemite. So I could not get very ambitious with my plans.

### Meeting Debbie

Over the next year, I tried to get people interested in coming with me to Spain. I wanted to have a reliable partner and not just wing things and try to hook up with someone I met there. And although I hear it has been done, I did not feel as adventurous to go that far and be left hanging. Europeans tend to be not as open to that as Americans are. I wanted to have a solid, somewhat predictable plan, which needed the right combination of partner and appropriate weather conditions. Many of the good places can be hot most of the year.

More than one year later, I start feeling it's time to settle down for a while, I miss domestic life, my savings account is crying to me for some attention, and it's time to look for work. Meet Debbie.

Debbie is in an almost diametrically opposite situation. She's been living two months in Switzerland on a work-abroad program with a Silicon Valley dotcom. She's been working too hard and needs a vacation. Time and intensity experience is more important than cost.

Before she left for Switzerland, I mentioned the vague possibility I would meet her to climb somewhere in Europe. I don't think she took this very seriously. And I didn't think I would make it there either, too many trips already left me a bit jaded. But a few days at home after my last trip (Utah/Colorado) I started feeling restless, I proposed the idea again by e-mail to meet in Spain. Soon after a decision had to be made, I didn't want to be getting her excited about the

idea and then backing out. And to me this presented an opportunity I might not have again in a while. So that provided enough justification for going,



The Gorge, and Caminito Del Rey

So I had a solid and competent partner; a better gym and perhaps sport climber than I am. I've been doing too much trad, I could use a change, and most of the good climbing in Spain I understood to be sport. I envisioned an experience much like Thailand, with convenient sea-side bolt-clipping climbing to be rewarded with a bit of good food and comfort, interesting culture and plenty of possibilities for rest day activities. But as opposed to Thailand, where most of the climbing is concentrated in two places, in Spain there's so many to choose from, perhaps so many the choices are a bit overwhelming for a first time visitor.

We only had two weeks. Debbie was using up almost all of her accumulated vacation, and I had previously committed to a consulting job on my return. So our mission was to check out a few of the more well-known climbing Meccas in Spain that seemed appropriate for that time of the year, with a focus on sport climbing (don't get enough of that at home). Possibilities were El Chorro (Malaga), Costa Blanca, Costa Daurada,

Montserrat, Riglos, and La Pedriza, with convenient cultural stops along the way in places like Sevilla, Granada, Barcelona, Zaragoza and of course Madrid.



Los Cotos, one of the few "easy" climbing areas in El Chorro, featuring much polished slab

After some lengthy discussion, we agreed to take rope, quickdraws, harness and shoes of course. Then a light traditional rack, as we heard there would be some very recommendable traditional ("classic") routes. We were planning to stay mostly in refugios but we did not take sleeping bags, we heard they were not needed and it was something we later regretted, as we found these refugios only provide the basic mattress.

Although by U.S. standards public transportation is really good, it is not always quick or convenient for rural areas where some of the good climbing is in, so we rented a car to minimize downtime. We were also counting on eating out a bit so we did not take a stove, but some of the days required early starts and coffee is one thing I can not compromise after a few days I broke down and bought one. This was not a low budget trip by my standards, but we had little time and a very ambitious schedule.

We meet at the airport and pick up the rental car, drive off, avoiding Madrid altogether (a bit of a selfish decision on my part) and head south to Malaga bound to El Chorro. Being the native I seem to be the natural trip leader and strategy planner of this expedition of 2, but about the only advantage I have is language, and a false sense of security in the familiarity of the culture fades quickly, I feel I'm just as clueless as how some of the things work here. We have to stop somewhere for the night, and I suggest stopping in the provincial capital city of Jaen. I knew it did not have much tourist interest, but this is pretty dull as far as Spanish cities goes.

### **In search of a place to stay**

Looking for food and lodging in a non-tourist city does not turn out to be a good strategy. We spend endless hours in narrow streets driving around in a maze of signs pointing to hotels in seemingly contradictory directions, to find at the end they are full anyway. Supply meets demand I reason, and who would want to stay in this town? Tourists don't visit, families always stay with families; that leaves business travels, but about the only thing I can think of here is olive oil production. We give up. A roadside hostel (equivalent of motel) seems a better idea. We go have a dinner, which turns out to be a bit disappointing for the price by Spanish standards.

Luckily, the roadside hostel strategy proves successful, and even though it's midnight we don't get ripped off too badly. One good thing is that prices here are clearly displayed at the counter, and tend to be dictated by ranking and are not as arbitrary as back home. At least I didn't end up with the feeling that we could have gotten a better deal if we had driven a few miles further and asked around, or looked less tired.

As tired as I am, I only end up sleeping until 3:00 a.m.? I didn't know. I didn't want to look at the clock. My mind was wide awake, and lying in bed with nothing to do I was thinking about things I don't want to be thinking about.

*Read part 2 of Adan's report next month, when he takes us to El Chorro in southern Spain, one of Spain's classic sport climbing destinations.*

## UPCOMING TRIPS:

It's here, what you've all been waiting for: The first lot of campsites that have been booked for spring/summer 2005. Thanks to Scott for booking the sites.

You can sign up online at the website to attend any of these trips, but please note that you have to be a fully paid up RR member to do so. Please see below for details on how and to whom you should pay your 2005 dues. Thank you.

We are looking for leaders for these trips, so if you fancy leading one of these events, please sign up at the Website (trip leaders get free campsite accommodation!). As always, if you have an upcoming trip you'd like to open up to other club members, or if you'd like to organize another outing for the club, please drop me a line – Linda ([llhleung@hotmail.com](mailto:llhleung@hotmail.com)).

<i>DATES</i>	<i>TRIP VENUE</i>	<i>ORGANIZER</i>
3/31 – 4/3	Group outing to Red Rocks	
4/22 – 4/23 4/29 – 4/30 5/6 – 5/7	Upper Pines, Yosemite Valley	
5/27 - 5/30 6/10 – 6/11	Pinecrest, Sonora	

## *Paying your membership dues*

### YOUR DUES ARE DUE!

If you've paid your dues for this year, thank-you. If not, please do so asap. The membership fee is \$15 (\$7 after mid-year), which covers the cost of camp fees, backcountry permits, and our annual Christmas party in December. In the past we have also donated money to worthy causes. Such expenditures are not incurred without membership approval. Here's how to pay:

#### **For new members:**

If you are new to RR, please mail the signed RR membership application to our treasurer, Noriko Sekikawa (please e-mail her at [sekikno@earthlink.net](mailto:sekikno@earthlink.net) for her mailing address), along a check for \$15, made payable to Noriko Sekikawa. You can access the application form at: <http://rock-rendezvous.org/pages/rr-join-app.pdf>

**For continuing members:**

We are updating our member application file (meaning discarding non-members' applications carried forward from the 20th century). If we cannot locate your liability waiver, we may ask you to sign the form again - just a heads up - sorry about the details.

Please pay your dues (\$15) using one of the following methods:

1. Paypal (Noriko's e-mail address is [sekikno@earthlink.net](mailto:sekikno@earthlink.net)). Please be sure NOT to pay with your credit card - both payee and payer will be charged financing/ processing charges.
2. Make your check payable to Noriko Sekikawa and mail it directly to her (please e-mail Noriko for her mailing address).

Noriko says: "If I don't receive your payment by Jan.31, your current member status will be reset and you will no longer have the member privileges to sign up for the 2005 trips. So, please pay your dues now so you can forget about it until 2006!"

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## *NEXT ROCK RENDEZVOUS MEETING:*

Please join us for the February RR meeting at Bruce and Em's place, where special guest Tom McMillian, will present a 70-minute movie of his successful Friendship Beyond Borders expedition to Mt. Everest. As usual, the meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m., and we ask you to be prompt because we want to give enough time for the movie and questions with Tom. Thanks.

**When:**

Feb. 1, 2005, 7:00 p.m.

**Where:**

78 Alta Vista Ave. in Mill Valley (in case of route-finding difficulty, call 415 383 7557)

**Why:**

Tom McMillan will present a 70-minute movie of his successful Friendship Beyond Borders expedition to Mt. Everest:

"On May 16, 2004, the Friendship Beyond Borders expedition accomplished its goal when Nawang Sherpa reached the summit of Mt. Everest. Nawang is the first trans-tibial amputee to ever climb an 8,000 meter peak. A motorcycle wreck in summer 2000 left Nawang Sherpa, an aspiring high-altitude guide in Nepal, an amputee. He got a new 'climbing leg' in 2002 thanks to the High Exposure foundation, a nonprofit launched by Ed Hommer, who lost his own legs on Denali and hoped to scale Everest one day

together with Nawang. Ed's own Everest dream however ended in tragedy a few months later when a rock struck and killed him on Mt. Rainier Sept. 23, 2003. [In 2004] Tom McMillan, a California climber, stepped in to make Nawang's dream to scale Mt. Everest a reality."

Visit the expedition Website for more information & inspiration:  
<http://www.friendshipbeyondborders.com/>

Other Bay Area showings: In case anyone can't make the meeting, Tom is also giving his show on Friday, Jan. 28 at Class 5 fitness in San Rafael, and on Saturday Feb. 19, at Berkeley Ironworks. Check with gyms for more info.

**EVEREST: Friendship Beyond Borders Expedition**

Read about us on [MountEverest.net](http://MountEverest.net)  
Best of ExplorersWeb  
2004 Awards:  
Best Expeditions of 2004

Special recognition to  
Nawang Sherpa and  
Friendship Beyond Borders  
Expedition

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**Nawang is currently  
visiting the US**  
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The Bionic Mountaineer  
Nawang Sherpa of Nepal  
is the first person to climb  
Mount Everest using a  
prosthetic leg. Since  
childhood he dreamed of  
finding an opportunity to  
some day climb Everest.

Tom McMillan, the  
American mountaineer  
who shared his Everest  
opportunity to help Nawang  
achieve his dream.

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Home page content includes: "EVEREST: Friendship Beyond Borders Expedition", navigation links (Home, Press, Team, Our Story, Goals, Updates), a central image of a snowy mountain peak, a photo of a climber on a glacier, a photo of Tom McMillan, and text describing the expedition and its participants.

For more information visit Tom's expedition Website at  
<http://www.friendshipbeyondborders.com>. The home page is shown here. All photos copyright  
FriendshipBeyondBorders.

**Meeting directions:**

78 Alta Vista Ave. in Mill Valley (in case of route-finding difficulty, call 415 383 7557)

**From East Bay:**

Take 580 across Richmond Bridge, take the Sir Francis Drake Blvd exit & go about 2 miles to Larkspur Landing. Take US 101 south (toward SF) for about 3 miles. Take the East Blithedale/Tiburon Blvd exit, and turn right at the light onto E. Blithedale Avenue. Follow E. Blithedale past a shopping center and two more stop lights until you get to the major 4-way intersection/stop light at Camino Alto. Continue on E. Blithedale past this light and take the first right onto Mesa. Go two blocks to the end of Mesa and make a sharp left onto Alta Vista. Number 78 is the seventh house on the left. Street parking is limited and best just after the hairpin turn. Please take care not to block driveways or restrict access by parking on the narrow curved part of the street.

**From SF/South Bay:**

Take 101 north across the Golden Gate Bridge, past Sausalito and take the second Mill Valley exit for East Blithedale/Tiburon Blvd. At the top of the exit ramp turn left onto E. Blithedale, cross over Hwy 101 to the next stop light and continue straight to follow rest of directions above.

**Public transportation:**

Possible, but not easy except during commute hours, when you can take the #4 GGT commute bus from SF/Financial district, which goes through Mill Valley and stops at East Blithedale & Mesa. Or take the Golden Gate Ferry to Sausalito then the shuttle bus to East Blithedale & Mesa. From the East Bay, it's a hassle, but you can take BART to ElCerrito/Del Norte or Richmond stations, then #40/42 Golden Gate Transit to San Rafael transit center, then #70/80 south to Tiburon Wye and #10 to Mill Valley. See <http://www.goldengatetransit.org> for bus info, or better yet carpool.

**Warning/Disclaimer**

*San Francisco Rock Rendezvous is not a teaching organization and does not endorse or insure rock climbing. Trips advertised in the newsletter are private and are only listed to allow for the co-ordination of car pooling and camping. Each participant on a trip is solely responsible for his or her safety during the entire trip, including the transportation to and from the climbing area and site, and any necessary insurance.*