

RUNNING / TRIATHLON / MOUNTAIN BIKING / HIKING / SKIING / SURFING AND MORE...

JAN/FEB
05

Her Sports™

Cold Play

STAY WINTER FIT
WITH SNOWSHOEING

Do Your First Ironman

WE'LL GET YOU READY IN 16 WEEKS

10 Secrets to Better Sleep

Power Pilates!

ENERGIZE YOUR MIND/BODY ROUTINE

Junk Food Made Healthy



hersports.com

Multisport Athlete **Lauren Adams**

DISPLAY UNTIL FEBRUARY 28



\$4.99 / \$6.99 Canada
Address Service Requested

UP CLOSE

Meet triathlete and Olympic bronze medalist **Susan Williams**

Rockin' and Rollin' in

Sin City

Grab your climbing gear and mountain bike and head to Vegas for high-rolling action of a different sort.

By Stephanie Forte

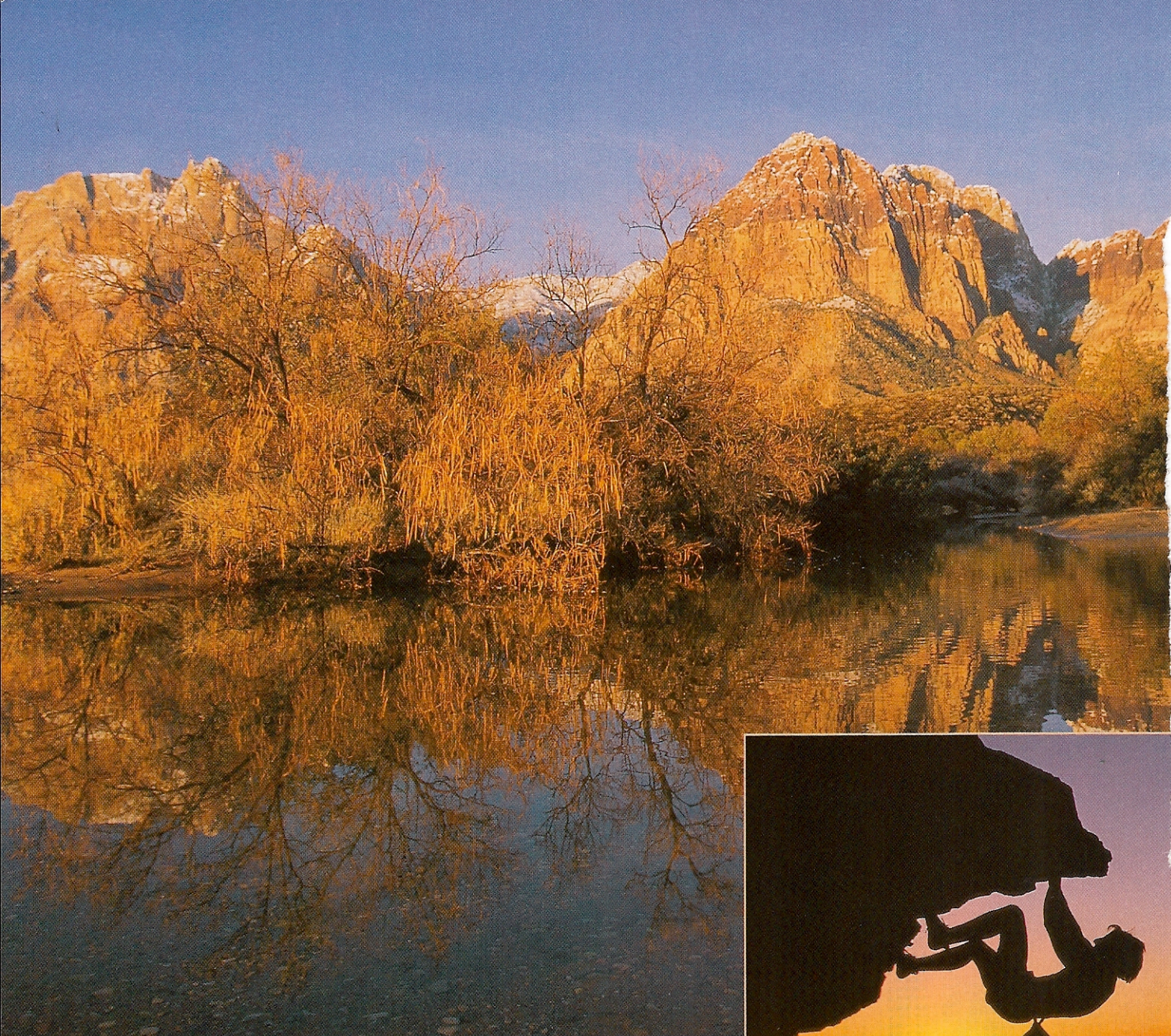
Photos by Jared McMillen



TALES OF BIG WINS, HUGE LOSSES AND PAINFUL HANGOVERS MAY BE TYPICAL SIN CITY SOUVENIRS. But world-class sandstone rock climbing, hiking and mountain biking trails make Las Vegas an international hotspot for outdoor adventure, as well. The 196,000 acres of the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area on Highway 159 may seem a sharp contrast to the man-made jungle of the Strip just 20 miles to the east. Yet, they share the same intoxicating effect: skyrocketing adrenaline. In a city where just about everything is possible, you can get down and dirty in the Mojave desert by day and party like a rock star by night.

Sometimes called islands in the sky, the limestone cliffs and peaks of the Spring Mountains that hug Red Rock Canyon were once part of an ancient seabed. Today, the towering sandstone peaks that line deep canyons vary from golden vanilla to blood red, with shades of pink and white swirled into calico patterns. Canyon washes are strewn with boulders in hues of purple, green and red. Waterfalls cascade into pools after winter snow and spring showers, while natural springs create lush, green landscapes. And prehistoric Indian carvings on cliff bands and broken boulders hide throughout the desert, begging to be explored.

October through May is prime time for rock climbing, hiking, mountain biking and experiencing the desert outside Las Vegas. Winters are sometimes cold, with occasional snow and rain. In February, the intense desert sun feels almost tropical at a mere 67 degrees, yet nighttime temperatures can drop to the mid 30s. Weather sometimes changes dramatically in the course of only a day, so prepare yourself for sun, rain and wind.



Reflections of the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area; Getting an early morning workout on Little Lost Boulder (inset)

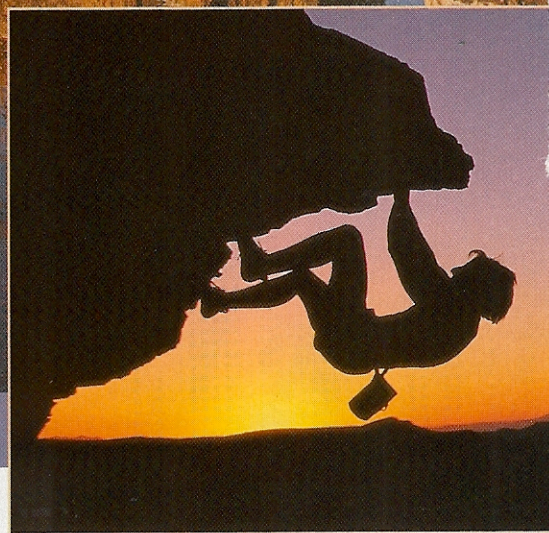
Rock Climbing

Red Rock is a must for climbers of any ability. "The hardest part is deciding what to do," says Lilly Feldman, a 43-year-old rock climber and veterinarian from Avon, Conn., who has scaled Red Rock seven times in the four and a half years she's been climbing. "I always feel like a little kid in a candy store with only a dollar to spend!" Red Rock has more than a thousand established routes: long traditional climbs, short sport routes and powerful boulder problems. The rock is user-friendly, with plenty of hand and footholds, and texture that won't trash your skin after one day of climbing. Most crags require at least a short hike, but incredible views make it all worth it.

GO BIG

Some of the best multi-pitch traditional climbs in the country are in these canyons. Routes tend to take plenty of gear. Many people tackle their first multi-pitch lead on a Red Rock route. Roxanna Brock, a professional climber who's been a park guide for six years, says her client base is now 50 percent women, ranging in age from 15 to 65. They love to rack up and trad climb. "Most experience some of the best climbing days of their lives in Red Rock," says Brock.

Brock's top pick for getting off the ground is **Dark Shadows** (5.8). With four pitches (that can be done in three), it's one of the best in its grade. Dark Shadows is situated in the north fork of Pine Creek Canyon, where you're greeted by





an oasis of small pools filled with tiny frogs and surrounded by colorful boulders, grape vines and trees, as well as 345 feet of spectacular black varnished sandstone. The first pitch is less-than-vertical face climbing, while pitch two climbs up a corner system. Pitch three is the gem, stemming up a dihedral with plenty of handholds in the crack and on the face. A right-leaning crack takes you to the last anchor. All four pitches are equipped with bolted belays.

Other top multi-pitch picks include **Cat in the Hat** (5.6), **Olive Oil** (5.7), **Frogland** (5.8), and **Triassic Sands** (5.10).

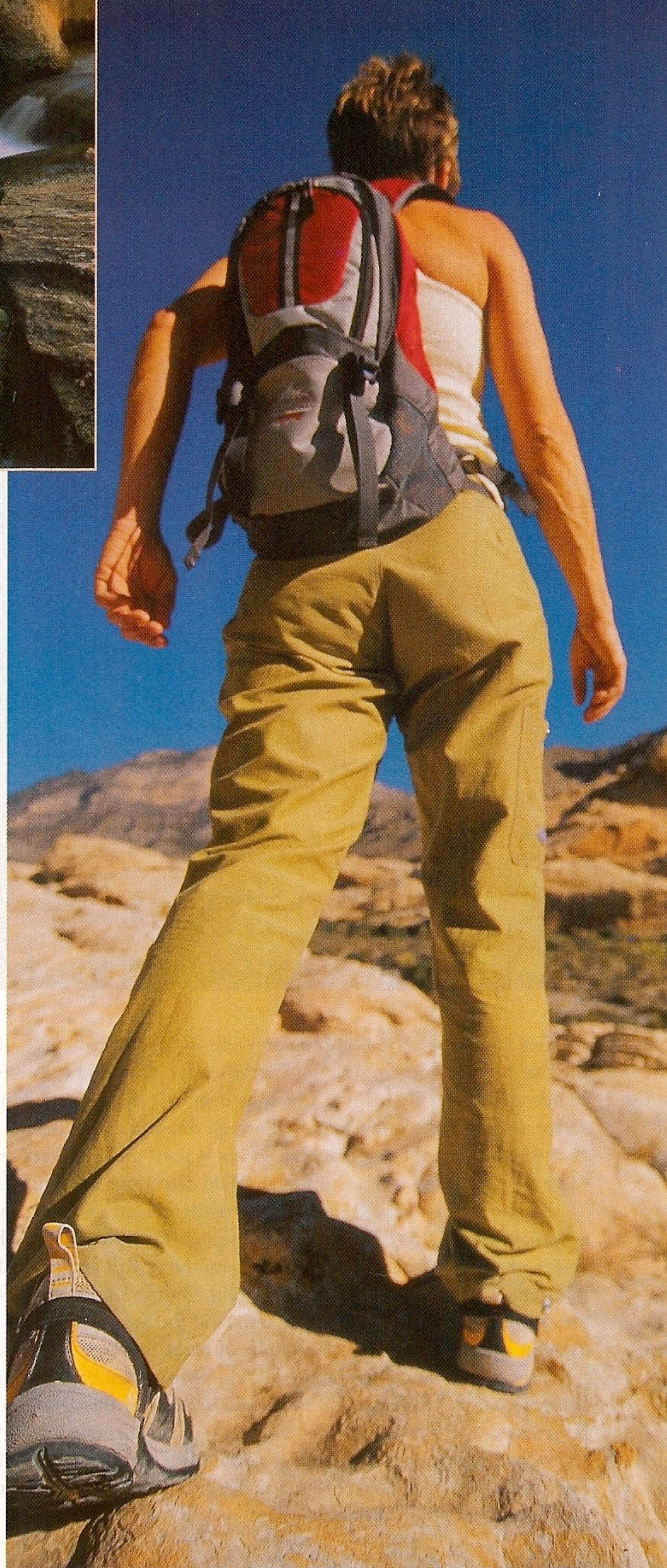
PULL DOWN

If clipping bolts is your thing, sport climbs range from less-than-vertical slabs to steep and overhanging. **The Gallery** is the most popular sport crag. Home to one of the most photographed routes in climbing, **The Gift** (5.12c), routes span from 5.8 to 5.13b. A sprawling flat sandstone surface provides a decent hangout area, but it bakes in the sun most of the day. There are plenty of good places to practice leading, with short, vertical routes up to 5.10, though the rock becomes steeper as the grades increase to 5.11 and 5.13. Don't forget to train your crimp strength at the gym; these routes will put you to the test.

A new area by Red Rock standards, Sunny and Steep's 40-minute hike takes you through the Calico Basin boulder field and down the colorful wash of majestic pink and white boulders that give Calico its name. An ideal place to perfect the art of steep rock climbing, **Sunny and Steep's** routes (5.8 – 5.12c) are well-bolted with big, friendly handholds.

Hiking

There's plenty of one- to four-hour hikes off the 13-mile **Scenic Drive**, a one-way road that loops around a main area of the park. These hikes make good warm-ups for some of the more intense trails, or provide a great way to get centered before business meetings in town. Each canyon offers easy-to-navigate trails from its designated parking area. The winter waterfalls in **Ice Box Canyon** and the serene pools of **Pine Creek** make these spots hiking favorites. The washes and trails make a good training ground for hopping between boulders and rocks, and scrambling in preparation for more advanced hikes.



The cool flowing waters of Ice Box Canyon (above left); Hiking up to Turtlehead Peak



Riding along the Mustang Trail

Get your heart rate pumping and take in spectacular views of Las Vegas on the five-mile, roundtrip trek up **Turtlehead**, a prominent limestone peak that stands guard over Red Rock. The hike begins at the third pullout off Scenic Drive at the **Sandstone Quarry**. Though the trail can be tricky to navigate for first-timers, the ever-present peak serves as your guide to keep you on track. (The book *Hiking Las Vegas* offers detailed directions and photo references.)

Beginning in a gravel wash passing white sandstone formations, you'll reach a well-traveled path (look out for trail signs). With the peak to the right, short spurts of steep switchbacks and some scrambling will get your adrenaline pumping with a 1,900-foot elevation gain. On the summit, take in sweeping views of the canyons, Bridge Mountain and the Strip. A summit book is tucked away in a metal box alongside the pile of rocks that marks the summit.

The golden sandstone peak of **Bridge Mountain** captivates most hikers, some who travel from around the world to stand at the 6,460 foot summit. This seven- to 16-mile hike (depending on your starting point) is recommended for those with excellent navigation skills and experience; it's high on exposure and technical hiking. If you're physically fit but lack the confidence to go at it alone, call Sky's the Limit guide services.

Mountain Biking

North and south of Highway 160, about six miles past the intersection of highways 159 and 160, a system of interconnecting trails—the **Cottonwood**

Where to Stay

Don't care about quick access to Celine Dion at Caesar's? Tired of needing a compass to navigate the lobby? Here are some alternatives to expensive Vegas mega-hotels that are off the beaten Strip and closer to nature:

SUN COAST HOTEL & CASINO

A Strip-like casino tucked in suburbia
9090 Alta Drive
(702) 636-7111
Suncoastcasino.com
\$79.99 – \$199.99

BONNIE SPRINGS LODGE

A funky motel complete with a petting zoo in the middle of Red Rock
1 Bonnie Springs Drive
(702) 875-4400
\$75 - \$135

THIRTEEN MILE CAMPGROUND

Campground in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area
\$10 per site per night, limit 10 people and two vehicles
(702) 515-5350
(702) 515-5371
www.redrockcanyon.blm.gov