

VEGAS

THE MEN'S ISSUE



TOM FORD
The Man With T
Golden Tou

the climb to the top

RED ROCK, MOUNT CHARLESTON AND MOUNT POTOSI OFFER SOME OF THE BEST ROCK CLIMBING IN THE UNITED STATES. BY SUSAN STAPLETON

A mere 30 minutes from the glut of indoor entertainment options on the Strip sits one of the most legendary rock climbing areas in the country. Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area's sandstone west of the city draws top international climbers who love the variety—world-class traditional, aid and sport climbing, as well as a vast amount of bouldering. Mount Charleston to the north and Mount Potosi to the south combine limestone walls for sport climbing with a mix of ascents that attract beginners and experts alike.

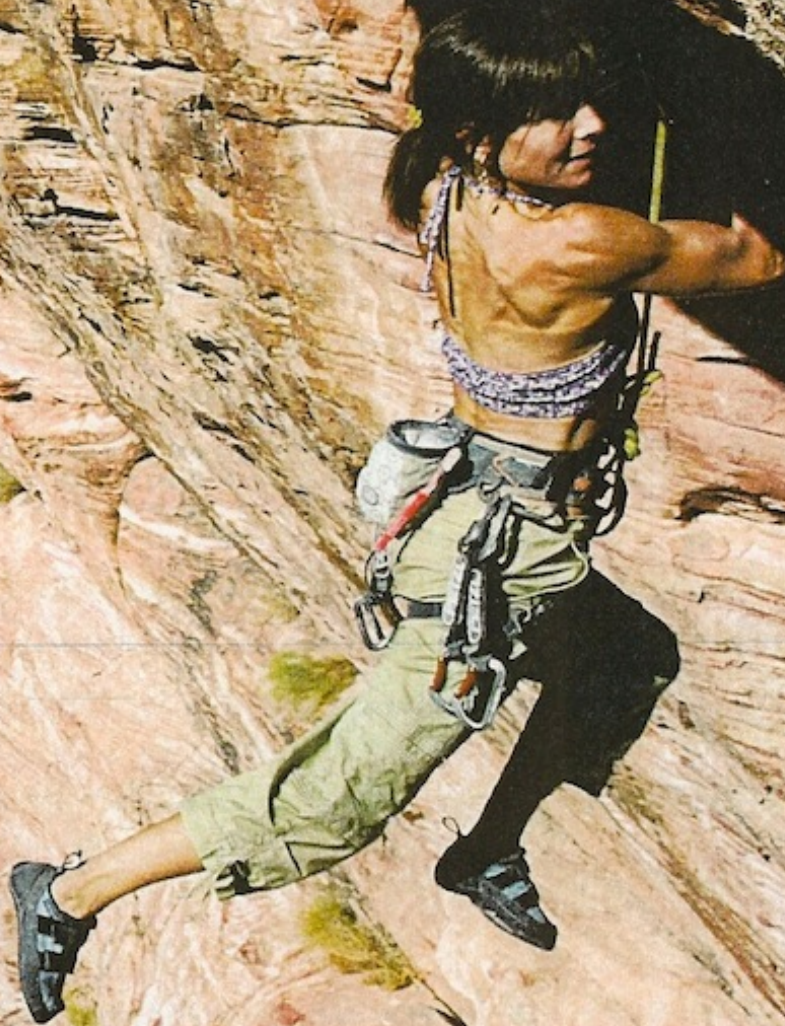
October has the distinction of marking both the beginning of one season and the end of another. In the fall, climbing season kicks off at Red Rock Canyon, after the high temperatures of the summer start to wane in mid-September. Meanwhile, climbing at Mount Charleston goes strong until November, when it starts to become impossible, depending on one's

tolerance for the cold. One hot spot off Trail Canyon, called The Hood, draws climbers from around the world for some of the most difficult climbing routes in the United States.

"It's rare to find a climbing area so close to a major urban center that offers a serene wilderness experience," says climber Stephanie Forte. Forte chiseled her rock climbing agility for six years in Aspen, Colorado, before making Las Vegas her base for the past 13 years. "Vegas has quickly become known nationally for its reputation as a very dynamic climbing community," says the internationally known climber who redpointed a route called Soul Train, rated a 5.14a climb, in 1999. In laymen's terms, redpointing means she climbed from bottom to top without falling; a 5.14a is a grade that at that time fewer than 10 women in the world had climbed.

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Stephanie Forte
climbing at the
Cannabis Crag on
the backside of
Kraft Mountain in
Red Rock Canyon



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It takes a certain dedication to master the routes: Forte, ranked sixth in the US among women climbers, spent months in 1997 and 1998 living in her pickup truck in Yosemite just to climb. She also traveled to Smith Rock in Oregon and Bishop in the Sierra Nevadas, and spent another three months at the beginning of 1998 in Thailand for more climbing.



Hanging out at Red Rock

When she returned to the States that spring, she moved her truck up to Mount Charleston and lived in the parking lot to maximize her time perfecting her moves. Now she trains two nights a week at Red Rock Climbing Center, and as long as she's not working at her public relations agency, Forte Creative Media PR, she climbs outside both days on the weekend. Bikram yoga, running and weight training supplement her intense training.

But newbies shouldn't be deterred. Several companies offer classes for those just starting out, including Forte's gym, Red Rock Climbing Center. When it's time

to head outside for the first time, guides from there and Jackson Hole Mountain Guides are available to lead.

Once climbers fall in love with the rock, they want the thrill of tackling new routes, and world-class climbers like Forte are drawn to the jewels in the Spring Mountains. "The setting is breathtaking," Forte says. "You spend the day with sweeping views of magnificent limestone cliffs, aspen

and pine trees." The Hood sits at 8,500 feet and adds the challenge of altitude, but the cool breezes off of Mount Charleston make climbers forget it's summer in the desert. Climbers head for routes with tantalizing names such as Robber's Roost, the Imagination Wall with its multi-pitch sport climbing, Glass House, Yellow Pine and the Mary Jane Wall.

From fall through late spring, serious climbers head to Mount Potosi with its cliff base at 6,500 feet. A 45-minute hike through snow in February leads to spots such as Clearlight Cave, which has climbs in all-day

sun, so athletes do them in shorts and a tank top even in the winter. All are within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, which clocks in at 6.3 million acres, making it the largest national forest in the lower 48 states.

But it's Red Rock Canyon that takes center stage for climbers in the fall. "People treasure that experience, and Red Rock is one of the last great open spaces," Forte says. "Las Vegas and its recreation areas are like yin and yang, opposing but not in opposition, seeking and providing balance to one another." V

EQUIPT

Want to learn? Red Rock Climbing Center offers 35 feet of high lead walls, 8,000 square feet of climbing terrain, 1,000 square feet of roof and 2,500 square feet of bouldering. 702-254-5604; redrockclimbingcenter.com

POWDER TIME

LAS VEGAS SKI & SNOWBOARD RESORT GETS A FACE-LIFT JUST IN TIME FOR SKI SEASON.

No need to head to Colorado, Tahoe or Utah to get some ski time. Sin City has its own ski resort just 30 minutes from the Strip where you can find powder for skiing and snowboarding in the Vegas Valley: Las Vegas Ski & Snowboard Resort. And the skiing there is about to get better. In July, the resort received approval from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Service to build approximately 50 new trails and 10 new lifts along with more

snowmaking capabilities, additional parking, new equipment and more guest facilities, all meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards.

While the entire plan will take place in phases over the next 10 to 12 years, guests will notice changes when the resort opens after Thanksgiving. Two yurts will be home to an expanded youth ski school and beginner programs.

A 5,000-square-foot outdoor seating area at the base lodge and a convenient ski corral for snowboard and ski storage will be complete by opening day.

But for skiers, the most important difference will be the quantity of snow. The new snow pond holds 7.5 million gallons of water, four times the supply of the previous pond. That means top-to-bottom powder on every run from bunny hills to black diamonds.

Las Vegas Ski & Snowboard Resort

