

Climbers Guide to Smith Rock. Alan Watts. Chockstone Press, Evergreen, CO, 1992. 341 pages. \$19.95.

This long-awaited guide goes way beyond serving as a roadmap for the more than 1000 routes at the park: it's a riveting read, a fascinating glimpse into Smith Rock history, and at least for me (a Smith devotee), a worthy book of worship. If you climb at Smith regularly, it's a must-buy; if you're just visiting, you'll find yourself borrowing a copy from the nearest climber every time you put down your pack.

Watts' guide provides several crucial pieces of information that will help you enjoy Smith to the utmost: star ratings, which are impossible to guess at from the ground when you're looking at blank walls of tuff ("is it loose?" is always the big question); good topos for the lesser travelled basalt gorge columns and outlying spires; and insightful tips that sometimes go beyond conventional route descriptions (I for one would have saved some rope wear on a route if I had read his comment that "you can avoid the lunge if you use holds to the left"). His comments about the amount of rotten rock on routes is particularly useful, since at Smith you have to expect the possibility of a portable hold on any but the most solid lines. His area topos and descriptions are also very helpful for the newcomer; since some Smith walls are more than a few minute's hike from the parking lot, and the hairpin topography of the crags can easily cause any first-timer to use a longer than necessary approach. Watts lends a helping hand with a brief comment on the most direct approach to these crags, and a time estimate for hiking to the farthest formations.

It's hard to find fault with Watts' magnum opus. A few climbers may feel unjustly humbled by rating downgrades from the previous "Route Finder," published by Redpoint Climber, a low-cost cluster of stapled photocopies, (for example, *Light In The Path* has changed from 5.10a to 5.9), but that would miss the point of Watts' attention to changed ratings. The petrified mud of Smith mutates over time, so the topography really does alter—occasionally down but almost always up (as a very popular route, *Gumby*, has gone from 10a to 10b).

There are a few goals and slipshod copy-editing in the book. But I found the typos none too irritating. The upside-down photo of a climber on *Take a Powder* is easily forgiven when the overall quality is so good.

The historical introduction and first-ascent information are first rate. So too the bouldering guide complete with a name and topo for most boulders. At the back of the book there's a checkoff list of all Smith routes—boulders excepted. No matter what you're looking for, Smith is so packed with routes worth climbing that you need to plan your days, like deciding which parts of the Metropolitan Museum to visit first, since you know you'll never get to everything. A few hours with this guide and a pencil and you can't go wrong. And when you're ready to refuel and recount the day's exploits, flip to Watts' thoughtful overview of local eateries.

JOHN FINE