

Event

Rock climbing at Montagne d'Argent.

Logistics

Date: Sunday April 26th

Location: Montagne d'Argent, Quebec

Cost: \$20/person (\$15 for gas and \$5 climbing fee)

Will be car pooling from Merrickville.

Schedule

Drop-off: 6:00am at the community centre.

Pick-up: Around 8:00pm at the community centre.

Travel time is approximately three hours; 500km round trip.

Leaders & Adults Attending

Allan Yates and Ivan Wood.

Qualifications

Allan Yates has had rock climbing instruction and has climbed using a variety of techniques, as has Ivan Wood.

Max, Ben and Jen have taken VenClimb 2 and therefore are knowledgeable about climbing safety techniques

Allan has current first aid qualifications.

Sleeping Accommodations

Not applicable.

Activities

We will be climbing on various rock faces at Montagne D'argent throughout the day.

Equipment:

- 3 climbing ropes
- Various carabineers
- Various slings
- 1 helmet for each participant
- 1 harness for each participant
- First aid kit
- Flash light

Risks

- Rock climbing accidents may result in scrapes, abrasions, sprains, broken bones, torn muscles or ligaments, head, neck or spinal injuries or death.
- For protection helmets are always worn, as are harnesses.
- Participants will be tied in for climbing and for placing ropes.
- If an injury occurs the nearest hospital is in Val David, 43 km away.

Attendance

- Youth attending are Max Taylor, Ben Catton, Jen Gale, Alex McKay, Bradley Skelhorne

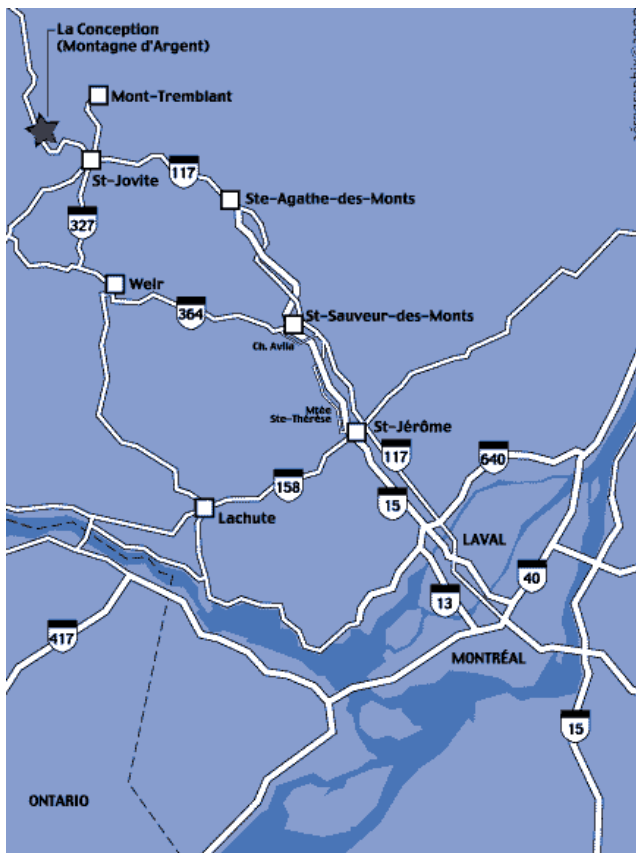
Food

- Each person to bring their own packed lunch, supper, and snacks.

In Case of Emergency

- Cellular service is unknown.
- Nearest Hospital in Val David is 43 km away.
Centre de santé et de services sociaux d'Antoine-Labelle
1525 Principale Nord
Marchand, QC J0T 1T0
(819) 275-2118
- Directions from Montagne D'argent to Centre de santé et de services sociaux d'Antoine-Labelle:
Head northeast on Route De la Montagne - d'Argent toward TC
1.7 km
2. Turn left at TC
Destination will be on the left

Map to Montagne D'Argent





Report

A good day's climbing was had by the kids. While we were a little unsure given the weather forecast, we didn't have any rain while we were climbing, though some of the routes were still wet from the spring thaw. According to my thermometer, the temperature started at 6C and reached 17C. A little bit of sun at one point, but mostly cloudy otherwise.

We departed on time at 6:00am. The drive was just under three hours. Highway 50 has been extended and a new road is in place for part of the way to Mont Tremblant, so the drive was much easier than last year. It appears the highway construction is continuing, so our next visit should be even simpler. The short cut we take near the end is a little rough. Last year it was partially under water, and this year the road was split in two at one point.

With our new year's resolution to get the Venturers running more of the show, we literally gave them a blank cheque (to pay for the access fee) and let them take it from there. Their first job was getting registered. Unfortunately they weren't will to practice their French, but the owner took advantage to practice his English! We were charged \$5/person for climbing access, though the website had indicated the fee was rising to \$6/person this year.

The Venturers decided to head for the same areas as last year. We first hiked up through the Grand Canyon area. The rock face was still quite wet, so we proceeded further to the Antre du Dragon area which we recalled to be drier. Upon donning our safety equipment, it was realised that a helmet had been left in the truck (remember, the adults no longer try to keep a watch for missteps like this). So Max dispatched Bradley and Alex back down the mountain to fetch the helmet while the older three started work on the anchor setting.

Max and Ben had taken the VenClimb II course last year, and have practiced anchor setting on several excursions since then. Jennifer just came off the VenClimb II course, and was thus fresh with knowledge. The three of them went up the cliff (you can scramble up the end) to do the work. Ivan was most upset I wouldn't let him help. It's rather boring standing around while the kids have all the fun. They rappelled down after setting the anchors.

Three routes were setup here:

- La Griffon: 5.9-
- La Gaillarde: 5.8
- L'ecaillle du dragon: 5.8

After they had their fill on these routes, the anchors were dismantled and we moved back to Grand Canyon and found that the rock face had dried out somewhat. Ropes were setup on:

- Le Castor Bricoleur: 5.7
- Madame la Marquise: 5.6-
- Le Bogue de l'An 2000: 5.9

I don't remember exactly who managed achieve which routes, but I would say that most people managed most routes. I was very pleased to see persistent efforts from all the kids. It may have taken them a while to climb some routes, and their style might have been questionable, but they kept at it until they succeeded. Climbing is one activity where height does help. The longer arm and leg stretch of the older Venturers can make a big difference. Also the newer climbers haven't yet fully moved from normal climbing holds to friction holds. That's where instead of depending on grabbing on to a rock protrusion, or stepping on something, it's the force of your foot/hand against the rock that keeps you from slipping. It's something that comes with practice; and strength helps too. The more they get out the better they will become. Isn't that like most things in life?

Both Ben and I found the L'ecaille du dragon flake layback to be quite a bit easier to accomplish this year. We're not sure why, except that we did it at the beginning of the day rather than at the end of the day like last year. I managed it without using my knee as I did last year. It's not considered good form to use your knees; if you can get a knee somewhere, you can get a foot there.

While we took along five ropes, our three plus two belonging to the Venturer Advisors Forum, with five Venturers we found three ropes were enough. The additional ropes would have been beneficial if we had all ten Venturers out.

Based on my observations, I would be completely comfortable letting the three older Venturers run a climbing outing on their own. I was very impressed with Max's leadership throughout the day. It's even the simple things, like having people check for left over gear before leaving a spot. We never had to chase after them for picking up trash, etc. Ben, Max, and Jennifer did a great job with the anchor setting. At the second setup location, I found that by stepping back across the canyon I could get a good view of their activities while not actually looking over their shoulders. While reviewing each other's work, they were not holding back their critiques. One phrase that drifted across to me was "Even if you always do it that way, that doesn't make it right". Jennifer and Max had Ben rip apart one of his anchors to redo it as they didn't like it. From debriefing them later, it was a good anchor, but they wanted it self equalising whereas Ben had equalised it for a single direction of pull. Both are good, depending on the circumstances, but Max and Jennifer were concerned about the direction of pull. Better safe than sorry (though the climbing anchors are extremely over engineered for the stresses encountered in our type of climbing).

I had always considered rock climbing to be a carrot to keep kids interested in Venturers, such that they would have the opportunity to learn other skills. However, my take after this outing, is that rock climbing in itself provides significant opportunities for the lads (that includes the lasses) to learn and demonstrate both leadership and responsibility. You cannot be given a much higher responsibility than someone's life.

Christiaan, our climbing instructor, recommended the routes in the Le Fou and M&M areas. He says the M&M climb is one of the best 5.8 crack climbs in Canada. We didn't make it there this time, but I hope we can hit those on our next trip. Ivan also thought the routes at the near end of the Grand Canyon look good.

We arrived back at 8:00pm, and the last Venturer was dropped off at home (except poor Max) by 8:20pm. Note to self, I should have dropped Alex off before Jennifer and Bradley; less back tracking. A total drive of 489km.

A few of us had a short discussion concerning the fall VenClimb. We were considering whether we should participate in that event, or run our own event and have our elder Venturers do all the teaching. There are a couple of benefits to VenClimb: One is that camping is possible beside the Gatineau cliff; this is not normally allowed. Secondly, it gives our Venturers the opportunity to interact with other Venturers from across the region. VenClimb use two cliffs, one on the Saturday and one on the Sunday. One option we thought of, was to participate, but use the opposite cliffs to the main group. That would mean less crowding for everyone and give our lads the opportunity to be responsible for all our setup and training. We intend to get the Venturers working on their fall plan this spring, so they can consider their options at that time.

After seeing the older Ventures at work, both Bradley and Alex expressed renewed interest in VenClimb II. So we'll see what happens next year. Note that the dates for most of the council wide events/courses are fixed in June of the preceding year. So if the Venturers want to attend something specific, they have plenty of advance notice to set their calendar.