



Climbing Review: Crack Climbing by Glenn

Back in the dark ages of traditional climbing, generations of climbers had taken great pride and placed great reliance on their crack climbing prowess to achieve the heights and searing lines of their dreams. Images of the spectacularly famous crack lines of Yosemite Valley and Utah adorn the walls of practically every establishment connected with climbing and instantly spring to mind as the quintessential essence of rock climbing.

Within the modern era of rock climbing, however, the fine art of traditional crack climbing has become much maligned, and to a large extent avoided like the plague. Young rock athletes can be seen tying themselves in knots, applying outrageously intricate techniques to surmount relatively straightforward lines, while the old guard are falling about in fits of laughter.

The necessity for an entry-level understanding of jamming techniques may in time save a great deal of thrashing about, loosing skin and face. Quite simply, a climber embarking upon the start of the famous three star classic wall Twentieth Century Fox (20), encounters an overhanging hand crack, widely regarded to be the crux unless you can jam; Without a sound grounding in the fine arts of jamming, the climber shall arrive at the beautiful wall thoroughly spent and quite sore.

The thought of jamming ones flesh into cracks, twisting it to fit and suspending full body weight from it may instill visions of excruciating pain and gut wrenching exertion. However, with practice and a little experimentation with finger jams and locks, climbers can master the crack climbs of their dreams with a minimum of wasted energy and loss of skin. With practice the techniques become second nature In time the movements become graceful.

The techniques:

From the thinnest finger crack to the widest offwidth, precise footwork is the key to conserving energy in each form of crack climbing technique. This reduces the load on the hands and the force required to hold the jams. Try to avoid ramming your feet too deeply into cracks, as a thrashing panic to dislodge a trapped foot can sap ones strength. In the event that the crack is too thin to receive toe jams smear the toe of the boot against any irregularity in the crack line to gain height and better purchase.

Finger to hand cracks require a camming, or torque motion, of the fingers or back of the hand to hold in parallel cracks. To increase the torque and efficiency of the jam, lean to the left or right of the crack. Keep the hands low, between head and waist height, and the thumb of the leading hand facing downwards. For long reaches, turn the bottom hand to a thumbs up position. Visualise the next sequence of jams and possible foot holds. Take your time, pace yourself and when resting, do so with a straight arm to conserve energy.

Recommended routes:

Frog Buttress, Queensland

Infinity 19, Black Light 21, Conquistador 21, Yankee Go Home 22, Impulse 24

Mt Piddington, The Blue Mountains, NSW

Flake Crack 17, The Eternity 19, Psychopath 19

Mt Boyce, The Blue Mountains, NSW

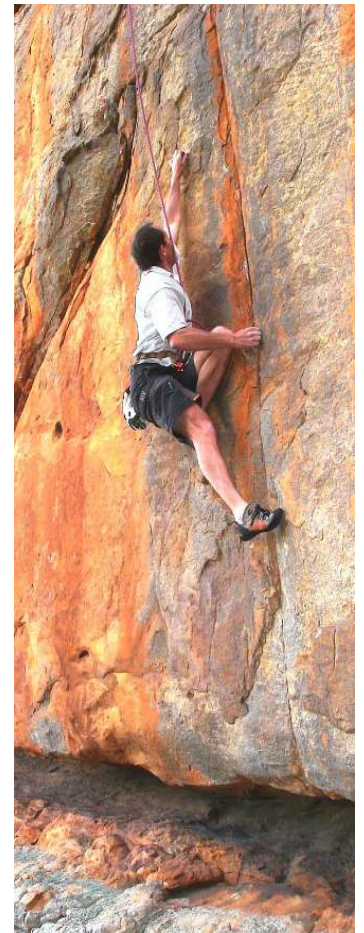
Firebug 17, Gold Star 18+

Mt Buffalo, Victoria

The Initiation 19, Lift Girls Lament 19

Mt Arapiles, Victoria

Bam Bam 20, Werewolf 20, Pebbles 22, Scorpion Corner 22



Raunchy Rooster

18m grade 22

Mt Arapiles