The Arizona Mountaineer

The Arizona Mountaineering Club Fall 2018

Our Quarterly Newsletter

Hello fellow AMC members! I hope you are all enjoying the cooler weather. The club has been quite busy with the conclusion of the fall sessions of Basic, Anchors and Lead schools completed, as well as, yet another successful Over the Rim cleanup. As the weather cools off remember to be safe and have fun!

Photo: John Furniss

Please feel free to submit any articles for publication to: **newsletter@arizonamountaineeringclub.net .**

Anna Dircks, Newsletter Editor

*"Our **Mission** is to provide educational opportunities, climbing experiences, advocacy to protect our climbing resources, and stewardship of the Arizona Outdoors by promoting volunteerism and community engagement."*

In This Issue:

The Iron Road in the Sky

By Chris Adams

Want to experience thrilling exposure, breathtaking views, and fun climbing? Read on to learn about the Telluride Via Ferrata with the climbers approach.

What is it?

The Via Ferrata (meaning: Iron road in Italian) is an exposed "trail" overlooking the beautiful town of telluride.

The Telluride Via Ferrata was created by climber and mountaineer Chuck Kroger. While the original Italian routes had the practical purpose of creating passage through mountains that were, at the time, otherwise unclimbable by non-mountaineers, Kroger envisioned a route that was solely for the appreciation of those who traveled it. The route is accessible to many skill levels. No climbing experience needed unless you're following the adventure in this article. However, specific gear is required. More on this below.

Photo: Me and Tina at the VF trailhead. The views only get better.

Links: More can be found here about the creation of the original Via Feratta (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_ferrata) and the Kroger's invention (https://www.telluride.com/blog/ferrata-telluride)

How We Did it:

Inspired by a helpful tip from AMC member and outing leader John Sasso, Tina and I, rather than access the VF from a walking trail as most people do, decided to climb up to the Ferrata following a 300 foot sport route called "skylight arete".

The approach for this climb is an easy 15 minute downhill walk from the upper VF trailhead. The final anchors for the climb ended just below the VF trail and It was an easy 15 foot scramble to start on the Via. From the top anchors. Accessing the VF this way puts you at about 1/4 into the trail. Well before the "main event".

Photo: Tina at the second belay station.

The Climb:

Skylight arete is a three pitch, 5.8 sport climb. Every belay station is bolted and offers nice ledges for taking in the amazing views while climbing. The bolts were well spaced and logically placed protecting the second pitch roof crux and the exciting arete traverse in the last 30 feet of the third pitch.

Link: Skylight Arete on Mountain Project.

Traversing the Via Ferrata

Once on the via Ferrata we changed back into our approach shoes, coiled our rope, and prepared for the traverse. The VF is composed of narrow cliff side trails protected by a steel cable system. Climbers hook into the cable system with two tethers connected to a standard climbing harness and "clip around" the cable supports as they crawl along the trail.

On one side of the footpath is the cabling system bolted into the rock. The other side? A 300-400 foot sheer drop to the valley below. At times, the trail completely disappears as is the case for the "main event". A 150 foot traverse across a vertical rock face with NO solid ground below your feet. Hikers climb using nothing but footholds and steel brackets placed strategically into the rock. Talk about exciting!

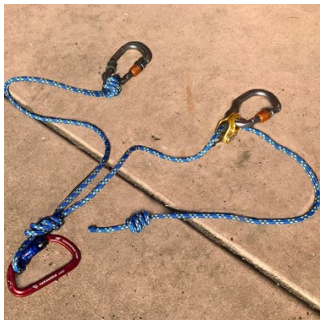
Photo (bottom right of page 3)**:** taking in the views while traversing the "Main Event".

The VF is traditionally traversed from right to left when looking at the cliff. We traversed, and then reversed, the VF to return to our car without having to hike back on the four wheel drive road. We encountered two groups on the trail. Allowing groups to pass was pretty straight forward and only involved good communication and keeping an eye out for small nooks that would give enough room for two people to safely pass each other.

Photo: Please be aware of climbers below you!

The gear:

Two tethers, connected to a climbing harness, are necessary in order to "clip around" the brackets, placed every six to ten feet, that securely lock the safety cable into the wall. While official Via Ferrata's safety systems, the safest option, can be purchased online or at local Telluride retailers we chose to make our own VF rigs. We saw many home made systems. Some safer than others. Purchasing a system specifically designed for the VF is the safest choice. But at $120-$160, per system, it's also expensive. Especially considering that they are "one use" tools. Local outdoor shops in telluride might rent rigs for the day so if you're planning on doing the VF this might be an option.



Here's a picture of what we used.

NOTE: Use this design at your own risk.

If you'd like specific directions on what we created, you can email me at chrisb.adams@icloud.com and I can send you more details. I've left them out of the article for the purposes of brevity.

One thing I'll say is that if you make your own tethers, AVOID USING SCREW-GATE CARABINERS. They are neither easy, nor safe for the Via Feratta. We purchased carabiners designed for traversing the VF. They were worth the purchase and can be repurposed.

In addition to our VF rigs we used:

- Helmet! The rock is a conglomerate, similar to camelback mountain, and therefore the risk of rockfall is possible. In addition there's risk of hikers above the route accidently kicking rocks down.
- 12 quickdraws
- 60 meter dynamic rope (A rope as short as 40m should work. None of the pitches on the route were longer than 35 meters.). Be warned that if you use a rope shorter than 60 meters, you cannot rappel the route without fixing your rope. Personally I used a 60 meter 8.5mm single rated rope. This saved me a couple pounds in weight and still allowed the option for bailing.
- Lunch and water (I carried two liters)
- 18-28 L backpack.
- Approach shoes or good hiking shoes
- Personal climbing gear (harness, chalk, Prussiks, etc.).
- Emergency rain jacket depending on weather.

Plan to take everything with you. You could leave gear at the base of the climb but you probably won't want to hike down to get it after the day's adventure.

Getting There:

There are two parking lots for the Via Ferrata. Both are located by following CO 145 east through town. The lower parking lot is the first encountered. Be warned that if you park at this one you'll need to continue up highway 145 by foot until you can get to the via Feratta trailhead. The good news is that if you decide to go one direction on the VF, you'll exit the trail right where you parked your car. The upper trailhead has limited parking but we noticed that several people parked on the narrow dirt road above and below the trailhead without any penalty. The upper trailhead is accessed on highway 145 which becomes an "easy", narrow, 4x4 road. The road is easily doable for a Subaru or vehicle of similar capability.

Detailed approach instructions can be found here: https://www.outdoorproject.com/adventures/colorado/climbing/ferrata-telluride

The Via Feratta is a scenic adventure and well worth the time and effort. Accessing the VF via climbing from below adds another element to the adventure and makes for a longer but very satisfying day! If you have the chance I highly recommend this adventure.

Photo: Tina enjoying a well deserved Moscow Mule after Traversing the Via Feratta.

The North Face of the Silverhorn (Mount Athabasca): An Icy Surprise

By: Bharath Tata

August 6th, 2018. I have been eating and burning over 8,000 calories every day for the past 20 days. Today is the last day of a whirlwind three-week trip to the Canadian Rockies. It's my 10th consecutive day of climbing and will be one final 14-hour day in the mountains.

Following the completion of my research project at ETH Zürich, a month gallivanting around Europe, and two weeks in India with my family, the last phase of my summer-of-a-lifetime is a three-week program with Yamnuska Mountain Adventures. Today is the last day of my third and final class with Yamnuska: Intro to Alpine Ice.

The previous night, I zip up my sleeping bag by 7:30 PM. I manage three hours of decent sleep before my watch goes off at 11:45. I begin getting ready for the 12:30 AM start as agreed upon before dinner. Today we are climbing the Silverhorn, the west summit of Mount Athabasca (3491m/11453ft). Mount Athabasca can be reached easily from the west, but as we are taking an alpine ice class, it's appropriate to take the more difficult route up the icy north face of the Silverhorn. In alpine climbing, early starts are common – they help mitigate avalanche and rockfall risk; both become more likely as the sun heats up the snowpack and thaws the ice that often holds boulders together. The sooner you're off the mountain, the safer you will be.

We're walking along the moraine before 12:45 AM. Soon, we get to the glacier and take the opportunity to shed a layer, get our crampons on, and rope up. I look up. The Milky Way glitters across the sky; Mount Andromeda looms overhead to the southwest. Mars, the brightest it has been in 15 years, is setting behind the ridge. I was hoping to catch an aurora on my last day in the Rockies, but you can't win every time.

The walk along the glacier is relaxed. As a precaution against crevasses, we spread out on the rope. This way two people won't fall into the same crevasse, and it's easier for the team to hold a fall if someone does takes an unplanned plunge. Ten meters of rope between each of us makes conversation impractical, and we walk in silence, headlamps bobbing, focusing on efficient steps and consistent pacing. The only sounds are the clinking of ice screws and the occasional scratch of a crampon on a dry patch of ice.

After a couple of hours uphill we reach the bergschrund. A common feature on mountains, the bergschrund, or schrund for short, is the big crevasse at the joint between a glacier and relatively static ice face. It can be dozens of meters deep. Crossing the schrund can be hazardous and is usually an important milestone on any climb.

We've been walking together on the glacier, but just below the schrund we transition to pitching it out, climbing one at a time, usually in rope-length segments. Mike, our instructor, climbs 3 meters above the schrund and places two ice screws to belay us over the hazard. Once the four of us are at the anchor, Mike starts climbing the first pitch. It's easy terrain, and he quickly runs out of rope. He builds another ice screw anchor and yells down, "I'm secure! Off belay!" The belaying student acknowledges, then proceeds to drop his shiny new orange Petzl Reverso belay device. "Shit!" It falls silently in the snow, then hovers over the schrund before disappearing deep into the abyss. "Well, at least you'll be a pro with the Munter by the end of the day," I say. He sighs and gets ready to climb. Not an ideal start to the day.

We are a team of four. Mike leads, then belays up the two other students, who are relative beginners. They are climbing on the same rope, separated by 5 meters or so. Once they reach the anchor, the instructor sets off to lead the next pitch while one of the students belays me up on the other rope.

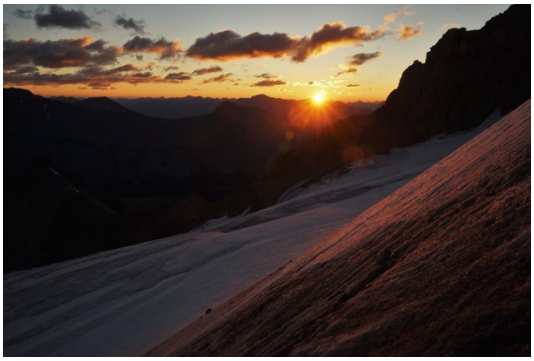
This climbing is easy. It's about 50-degree ice with a small layer of snow over it. I "dagger" it up – holding my ice axes at the pick and plunging them into the ice rather than gripping at the bottom of the shaft and swinging them in. It's a faster and smoother; rather than a 1-2-3-4 swing-swing-step-step motion, I'm stepping and swinging at the same time, almost walking style. One-two-one-two. Like an efficient march, right arm and left leg move together, then left arm and right leg.

I'm very comfortable in the terrain. I have the benefit of watching the others climb it first as well, so I really fly up the face. However, the belay isn't keeping up. Ideally, the rope I'm tied into, the rope keeping me safe, should be taut above me. Instead, slack builds in the system as I move, and the rope starts to hang below my harness in a long loop. If I fall here, it's a long way before the rope takes my weight and starts to slow me down. I stop and wait, 20, then 25, then 30 seconds as the slack is ever-so-slowly taken in. I look down and can see the rope inching up ever so slowly. Once the belayer has finally caught up, I'm off to the races again. I've found a great rhythm on this terrain and continue with quick, precise strokes. It's a shame when I look down and see meters and meters of rope hanging below me again and am forced to slow down. I'm almost soloing. If I take a fall of that length, the rope wouldn't do much to mitigate the resulting shock-load. Frustrated, I find a decent place to rest my legs while I wait again for my belayer to pull in the slack, agonizingly slow. This sprint-stop sequence continues for the next two pitches, and my patience starts to wear thin.

Later, I'm hanging in my harness, alone at the anchor. Mike has started belaying the others up, and I have the place to myself. Just me, two ice screws, a double-length sling, and a few carabiners. We're going too slow, I think.

What's taking them so long? I have ample time at the anchor while they climb, and I clip my pack somewhere secure and enjoy some hot tea and snack on a bar or energy gel. I don't restrict myself – it's best to eat when possible and keep fuel in the tank rather than ration and save when there's no need. A slightly lighter backpack in exchange for a jolt of energy is a pretty good deal.

We keep climbing. After just a couple of pitches on the face, the sun rises and I treat myself to another swig of hot water from my thermos. We should really be much further up if we want to make it to the main summit before it starts to get dangerous.



At 7:30, I can finally see the summit, and we get to a crevasse-y pitch. This section of the route is criss-crossed with deep slots in the ice. The others climb warily, picking their path with care. Soon, it's my turn. The call comes down, "You're on belay!" I quickly down the energy Gu that I've been fiddling with and start cleaning the anchor. Soon, the last ice screw pulls free. "Climbing!"

My belayer has barely finished replying "Climb on!" and I'm already moving.

I climb this pitch methodically. I can't afford meters of slack here. Picking a good line, I avoid the bigger crevasses. Most are less than a hand-width across, and I can clearly see the deep gashes through the light snow cover.

I step over one, two, three of these skinny crevasses. I get to another crevasse partly covered in snow. The gap is small to either side of me with a snow bridge in the middle. I use the same strategy I used before: first, I swing my axes into the ice above the crevasse. I get really good holds. Then I step up to the lip of the crevasse in preparation to step over. I shift my weight, and –

The floor falls out.

"Whoa!" I cry out as my body drops. In an instant, I find myself staring along the deep blue slot of a crevasse. A combination of the rope, a pile of snow, and narrowing walls that pinch my body and backpack kept me from falling

further.

My heart is pounding and my blood is almost entirely adrenaline, but I'm unhurt. But how did I fall? Looking up, I can see the shape of the crevasse now. It's a skinny gap most of the way, except where I crossed. The snow I had stepped on had obscured the bulge which was just wide enough to fit a body with a backpack. I thought I had placed my foot near the edge of the crevasse, but I had in fact been right over the middle of the hole. That snow had given way, dropping me into the one part of the crevasse where a fall was even possible. I look down to see my right leg buried in snow up to mid-thigh. "Scheiße," I mutter, using the one of the German curses that I mastered in Switzerland.

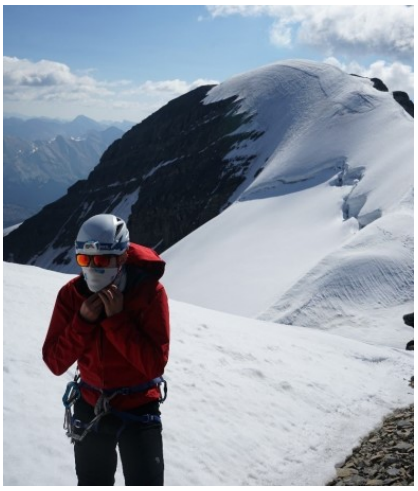
I take a moment to process what just happened and examine my surroundings. I've dropped about two body lengths and am now well and truly down inside the crevasse. I'm now facing east, looking along the crevasse, which runs roughly east to west. To my left is a clean slab of brilliant blue ice. In front of me I see the ice fade into white as the slot becomes thinner and thinner. Small icicles mark the wall, formed by snow that has melted and refrozen. Up against my right shoulder is a large grey boss of ice and snow. All in all, it's a pretty sight, but I can't spend time enjoying the view.

First things first: what do I tell my climbing partners? I decide to say nothing for the moment. They wouldn't have been able to see me; all they know is that they felt a big tug on the rope, and then nothing. I'm not confident that anything I yell from down here will be intelligible, so I risk them only knowing that I fell and am now screaming. That's the last thing I want to do to two inexperienced climbers. I'll try and get out of this myself, and fast. If I'm unable to, then I'll have to call for help, but that costs time and would probably end climbing for the day. The best option is to climb out myself.

One of my axes pulled out, but I was able to hold on. The other is still up near the lip of the crevasse, out of reach. Using a single axe, I try to maneuver into

a better position. I swing in into the ice on my left, and stick my left crampon on the same side. I push up, trying to free my right leg. It won't budge. With my left hand firmly on my axe, I reach down with my right hand and start shoveling the snow off my right leg. Once I've cleared about half of it, I try climbing again. I pull as hard as I can on my right leg – and nothing happens. Sighing, I settle back down and continue pushing snow off my leg until I can see my boot. I'm starting to worry. If I can't free my leg, there's no way I'm getting out of here without help. Third time's the charm, right? I shift my weight, lean forward, and pull. I pull, and pull, and pull – and something shifts. My foot has moved slightly inside the boot, but the boot itself is stuck tight. I realize that I might pull my foot free of the boot if I keep going. I bend down again and clear all the snow on and around my boot, save a thin dusting of soft powder. This time, my leg pulls free with a satisfying jerk, and I heave a sigh of relief.

I try to turn around. With the pack on, it's impossible. If my next idea doesn't work, I may need to take my pack off in order to climb out. I try a rock climbing method called chimneying, with both feet on one side of a slot and my back pressed against the other wall to hold myself in place. I shimmy up a few inches, move my feet up, and shimmy again. Progress. Since the slot is thinner near the bottom and wider at the top, I'm soon in a position where I can have one foot on each wall of the crevasse. One big move later, I can reach my second ice axe. I execute one last out-of-breath vertical ice move and heave my body over the edge. I lay there, panting, face-down in the snow with my legs dangling over the edge of the crevasse.



The first time I had walked in snow was a mere 10 months ago as a beginner in Switzerland. I just fell into, and climbed out of, a crevasse with only one axe. And not just a simple glacier crevasse, but a crevasse on a steep face of alpine ice! I stand up, give myself a fist pump, let out an elated whoop, and continue climbing. After all, I have a flight to catch tomorrow morning.

Endnote

On the climb, heavy boots, double gloves, and three layers kept me warm and shielded me from unforgiving winds. Around 8:00 AM on Monday, I was inside a crevasse, six feet under the surface on a steep and icy north face in the Canadian Rockies. 24 hours later, I was back home, in 115-degree Phoenix.

We ended up summitting the Silverhorn around 10:00 AM, too late to make a push for the true summit of Mount Athabasca. The climb was a total of 12 or 13 pitches, plus travel up the glacier and terminal moraine. We headed down after a short rest, making it back to the Icefields Centre by 2:00 PM, concluding a fourteen-hour day. Five hours of driving later, I was in an airport hotel in Calgary, enjoying my second shower in ten days. The next morning, I was up at 4:00 AM to catch my red-eye flight back home.

Elections Chair Announcement:

Hi Everyone!

Lisa Ruggiero here. I'm new as the Elections Chair and first want to say that it's my privilege to serve in this capacity. Secondly, I'm taking this opportunity to let everyone know that there will be officer and board positions up for the taking in 2019!

There are four officer positions, which are one-year terms, and they are as follows: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Additionally, there are (4) Director positions open. Two of those positions are for two-year terms and the other two are one-year terms. The conditions to run for any position are: 1) Be 18 years or older and 2) Be an AMC member for at least 12 months. Elections occur at he January membership meeting.

Holding apposition is a great way to serve AMC and the greater rock climbing community at large… not to mention you get an important line on your resume which is pretty cool! Deciding to run might feel intimidating but the time commitment is only 2 hours at the board meeting which is held just one time each month. It's a small time investment with a huge payoff Please consider running for a position and don't hesitate to ask any board member past or present if you have questions about any of the positions.

I'll see ya on the ballot!

CRACK ADDICT CANYON, AZ

By Tom Seeley, Arizona Rock & Canyon Adventures

Location: Arizona, Coconino County
Rating: 3A-II (III if hiking bottom up)
Longest Rappel: 160'

Crack addict is a straightforward short trip through a fault crack that seems to see action when people are out enjoying the Sedona area and looking for something short with fun payoff. Throughout the trip there are approximately 10 rappels encountered, most dry, but typically a shallow (waist deep) pool roughly two thirds of the way through and a pool (up to shoulder deep) at the base of the last large drop near the end. We typically travel through with a couple 200' ropes and a 100' to cover the drops, along with an insurance policy. Mind your rope placement and pull on the final large drop as there is a crack near the bottom that seems to be a rope magnet on occasion during the pull. It may be possible to bypass the first of the two pools, but typically the final pool has at least one member getting a little wet.

There are a few ways to approach the canyon and depending on your situation, one could drive in and simply loop back up Sterling back to your vehicle, set up a shuttle along 89A, or by hiking in from 89A via Sterling Canyon. Looping around back to the top will most likely be the option that saves the most time, assuming your vehicle can travel down the sometimes very rutted 535A. Driving in to set up a shuttle is an 11.8 mile journey that allows you to park, walk five minutes down a hill, and start the journey. This of course requires two vehicles and the road here can be rather rough especially on 535A and high clearance would prove beneficial on occasion.

The third option is entry by hiking up Sterling canyon, working up the hill, and hiking over to the drop in. This requires slightly more effort to complete, but allows access by a single vehicle with no special off road capabilities as the parking location is directly off the pavement of the 89A. The track in blue represents where parking has been traditionally used for the shuttle route, while the track in green depicts the tank loop route. One thing to note, is that there is a gate on 535 that gets locked in the winter to prevent access due to snow. If this is the case, it is my experience that hiking in to complete the canyon can be slow, dangerous, and probably not the best idea. Checking to see if this road is open prior to heading out will most likely save you from a long miserable day in a snowy canyon.

2018 Over The Rim Grand Canyon Clean-Up

By John Furniss

Over the weekend of September 29th and 30th, 44 AMC members and 4 family members participated in the 26th annual AMC Over the Rim Grand Canyon Clean-Up. This annual event is one of the club's oldest recurring service projects where we collect litter and other items, accidently or intentionally, discarded in readily visible but difficult to reach locations. We enjoyed great weather as we worked areas along the South Rim that see the greatest visitor traffic to include Pipe Creek Vista, Mather Point and the Village area from Hopi House to the Hermit Rest Transfer stop.

Year after year, we receive multiple expressions of gratitude from park visitors from around the world for our contribution to maintaining this beautiful natural resource. The National Park Services (NPS) at the Canyon sponsors our work each year and is grateful for the work we do and the way we go about it. Each year, our performance determines if we earn the privilege to come back another year and they are looking forward to our return in 2019. Congratulations and thanks to all who contributed!

The NPS took a strong interest in capturing metrics this year that reflect on the work performed. Every bit of trash collected this year was consolidated and yielded approximately two cubic yards in volume and roughly 150 pounds in weight. Trash collected included over two dozen hats of various designs. Coins were another metric of interest as they represent a significant threat to wildlife, especially the California Condor population in the Park. To this end, the team recovered over 50 pounds of coins.

It is important to recognize a number of individuals who contributed their energy, leadership and talents to the preparation and execution of this year's cleanup: Scott Nagy, Stephanie Furniss, Rogil Schroeter, David Sampson and Bill Fallon provided leadership for the two clean-up teams; Stephanie Furniss, Bill Fallon, Mitch Doty and Danny Gonzales helped in the skills review sessions; and Cheryl Beaver provided the T-shirt art.

The AMC's opportunity to perform this great service would not be possible without the assistance and professionalism of the National Park Service at the Grand Canyon. We are especially grateful to: Ranger Rader Lane and Todd Stoeberl, Acting Chief of Interpretive Services, who were our sponsors this

year; Betsy Donehoo who help us complete the permit process; and Ranger Dave Thomson for his assistance in reserving our campsites.

Photo: John Keedy

AMC 2019 Upcoming Events

By Deborah Roether

*****IMPORTANT DATE CHANGE FOR AMC MEMBER MEETINGS**: Member meetings for the 2019 calendar are being moved from Mondays to the 4th **WEDNESDAY**, 7-9 p.m. of every month. Check out the AMC website or the AMC Meetup calendar for details.

Wednesday, January 24th- The January member meeting features the **Annual Election** and guest speaker, **Geir Hundal.** Hundal will bring and discuss his new rock climbing guidebook for Cochise Stronghold. It contains 50 of the area's most popular multi-pitch climbs ranging from 5.7-5.12. The book features precise pitch-by-pitch descriptions for every route: overhead satellite imagery and clear descriptions of all approaches, formations, and descents; maps, driving directions, camping and accommodation information; a detailed timeline and history of climbing in Cochise Stronghold and, of course, Toofast's killer topos for every route! **Geir will be offering a book discount for AMC member who show up to vote. In addition, one lucky member present at the meeting will be the winner of this great new guide!!! C'mon, you gotta show up! Rock the vote!**

Wednesday, February 28th—They're massive. Magical. Magnificent. AMC member, Aaron Vix, shares his experiences as he crosses a couple of Northwest mountains off his bucket list.

· Mt. Shuksan- Vix will testify as to why Shuksan is regarded as the most photographed peak in Washington with a highly complex route involving a thousand feet of exposed scrambling, moderate snow climbing, glacier travel and an amazing summit pyramid of hundreds of 4th/5th class climbing. Fred Becky waxes on; "This peak epitomizes the jagged alpine peak like no other massif in the North Cascades…it has no equal in the range when one considers the structural beauty of its four major faces and five ridges… There is no other sample in the American West of a peak with great icefall glaciers derived from a high plateau, and in the Pacific Northwest it is the only non-volcanic peak whose summits exceed timberline by more than 3,000'…Shuksan is one of the finest mountaineering objectives in the North Cascades and its reputation is certainly deserved."

· Mount Olympus -Grecian Formula-: An air of mystery pervades the peak Olympus – so remote few people every see it with their own eyes, hard to approach, the highest point in Olympic National Park supports a half-dozen glaciers, despite its relatively modest elevation. Mount Olympus is probably on the tick list of every climber in the northwest, but it is rarely ascended because of the long approach-a two-day, 18-mile trek. It's not for everyone, but just hanging in the vicinity of this "home where dwell the gods," is impressive and restorative according to early British explorer John Meares.

AMC Club Members – Please feel free to suggest potential member meeting topics and presenters to Deborah Roether, Program Chair. She can be contacted at deborahlreother@gmail.com