

Ice climbing in Tahoe takes root

By Dave Zook, Moonshine Ink

Scaling a glistening slab of vertical blue ice with only a few centimeters of steel crampon points and ice tools pierced into the frozen water, the going is slow, demanding, and dangerous. Nevertheless, a small legion of Tahoe ice climbers is dedicated to finding the small window when ice climbing takes hold in Lake Tahoe.

“Ice climbing can be extremely challenging, frustrating, not to mention dangerous, especially when beginning, and Tahoe is not a world class destination by any means,” said Logan Talbott, an Alpine Skills International (ASI) guide and ice climber with 15 years of experience. “But it’s a unique medium and people get hooked by the experience of climbing up something like the bizarre formations on a frozen waterfall.”

Ice climbing may be overshadowed in Tahoe by skiing and snowboarding, but climbers relish in finding yet another way to celebrate Tahoe’s dynamic landscape. Plus ice climbing typically improves when the skiing deteriorates and vice versa, so the potential for a conflict of sporting interests is minimized.

“I’ll ice climb more when the skiing’s not good,” said Brennan Lagasse, a professor at Sierra Nevada College, ice climber, and skier. “These recent seasons where we’ve had a slow start I’ve certainly climbed a lot more, and it helps get your focus on something super fun rather than dwelling on when it’s going to snow.”

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