

Climbing Towards Sustainability

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Abstract: Rock Climbing has grown into a popular sport that is enjoyed by people all over the world. With climbing growing more popular, the strain on the environment involved is becoming an issue regarding the preservation and conservation of these popular locations. How does one practice climbing in an environmentally sound way to preserve the future of the sport and to ensure the future of the ecosystems in which climbing takes place? The history of the sport along with relevant conservation efforts will be able to help shape a specific set of rules to abide by in order to ensure the sustainability of the outdoor sport.

Methods

- **History**— The history of climbing will bring an understanding of how the sport evolved through time.
- The history of the sport will also provide evidence of the ever changing outdoor ethic of climbing.
- Through the history of climbing one will be able to prove what methods of sustainable climbing prove to be most successful, as well as decide which of the three sects are the most sustainable.
- **Division of the sport**— by researching the three most popular types of climbing.
- This allows me to analyze which of today's mainstream climbing types is the most invasive.
- **Interviews**— Personal interviews with the head of The Access Fund, a non profit, 400,000 member strong, sustainable climbing alliance.
- **Public Opinion**— Using the online forum of www.MountainProject.com, I was able to approach the climbing public regarding their personal climbing ethics.

Type of Climbing	Positives	Negatives
Traditional Aid Climbing (TRAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Removable gear/ protection. ⇒ Born from traditional climbing, deep rooted outdoor ethics. ⇒ Leaves no trace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Gear can get stuck and lost amongst the cliff face. ⇒ Not as secure as the other two. ⇒ Requires a lot of experience ⇒ Costly to the climber
Sport Climbing (Fixed Anchors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Secured/ fixed anchors and bolts. ⇒ Opens up new areas that are un-climbable in traditional manners. ⇒ Provides a safer atmosphere for new climbers. ⇒ More affordable than TRAD climbing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Brought climbing into new un-regulated areas. ⇒ Leaves a permanent route up the cliff face. ⇒ Replacement of weathered/ broken bolts and anchors is costly. ⇒ Requires more management than TRAD climbing areas.
Bouldering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ No anchors/ Protective gear. ⇒ Available for anyone, anywhere. ⇒ Broad range of areas in which bouldering can be done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Unregulated climbing areas result in damage to ecosystems. ⇒ Available to more people, which brings more human traffic into climbing areas.

Leave No Trace Climbing

- The Center of Outdoor Ethics has 7 Leave No Trace principles that concern any recreational activity in the outdoors. Of these seven there are that stand out specifically for climbing.
- 1.) Plan Ahead and Prepare
 - 2.) Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces.
 - 3.) Dispose of Waste Properly
 - 4.) Respect Wildlife
 - 5.) Leave What you Find
 - 6.) Respect Other Visitors
- These rules are a great start to climbing in a sustainable manner.

Suggestions For Sustainable Climbing:

- Climb locally, at a gym, local crag
- Join a local climbing coalition for building a stronger climbing community
- Pack out what you pack in
- Follow all rules and regulations of the climbing areas you happen to visit
- Leave what you find, keeping a clean site and climbing area will make a future visitors experience a positive one
- Re-Sole shoes and repair gear

Conclusion

- The idea of clean climbing is one that can only be suggested and hopefully acted out amongst the climbing community. The three main sports all have effects, both negative and positive. To choose a single one of these sports as more invasive and less sustainable than the other, wouldn't make much sense. Choosing to climb in a Leave No Trace manner regarding all three is the surest way to ensure one is minimizing his or hers climbing footprint.