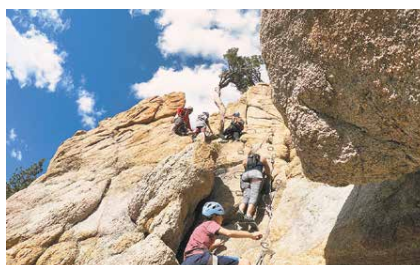


Travel

CLIMB ON UP

VIA FERRATAS MAKE MOUNTAIN CLIMBING EASY

BY CASEY HATFIELD-CHIOTTI



Clockwise from top, via ferratas in Wyoming, California and Colorado. The cables and handholds make rock climbing a breeze for beginners — if they're brave enough to try.

MORE THAN 100 years ago, during World War I, the Italian military had a problem: It needed to move troops more safely through the Alps, the highest mountain range in Europe. Their solution? A system of rungs and ropes attached right onto the rock. Voilà! A path through the mountains.

After the war ended, people in Europe eventually realized that these routes could be climbed for fun, too. Via ferratas, as the routes are called (*via ferrata* means "iron path" in Italian), became a big summer-time activity there.

Now via ferratas are being built in the United States, too. More than 20 routes have opened here in the past few years. The best part is that you don't even need experience: Via ferratas are safer than traditional rock climbing and a lot easier for beginners. There are metal hand and foot rungs glued and bolted deep into the rock. Bungeelike lanyards and carabiners connect your harness to a sturdy cable throughout the route. "If you fall, they open up, spring out and catch you," explains Bodhi Kiparsky, 12, who recently visited a via ferrata route that just opened in Ouray, Colo., his hometown.

6 VIA FERRATAS THAT WELCOME KIDS

JACKSON HOLE VIA FERRATA, Teton Village, Wyo.

BONUS: Treasure spotting
All the routes in Jackson Hole (shown above, top) start at altitudes over 9,000 feet, so the views are great — if nerve-racking. "My favorite part was when we crossed the cable bridge — it was fun to face my fears," says Hannah Calder, 12, from Wilson, Wyo., who visited last summer. There are also things like a helix-shaped ladder and a horizontal ladder across a deep, dark opening in the rock face. Keep your eyes peeled for the sparkling quartz crystals scattered along the beginner and intermediate routes.
OPEN TO: Kids 10 and up

TAHOE VIA FERRATA, Olympic Valley, Calif.

BONUS: Funny guides
At the Palisades Tahoe Resort (shown above, bottom right) there's a giant slab of rock called Tram Face that people once thought was unclimbable. (It has a crumbly surface that is difficult for rock climbers.) But it turns out to be perfect for via ferratas. In addition, the guides here have led

climbs at some of the highest peaks in the world, so they know how to put visitors at ease. Expect lots of jokes.
OPEN TO: Kids over 3 feet 11 inches tall

GOLD MOUNTAIN VIA FERRATA, Ouray, Colo.

BONUS: Old-time history
Ouray was established by miners looking for gold and silver during the 1800s. This via ferrata (shown above, bottom left) follows their footsteps through the red cliffs north of town. Along the route, you can visit a more-than-100-year-old blacksmith shop and a real mine. "I loved learning about the history," Bothi says. "In the old blacksmith's hut, there's an old furnace, and they showed us how they used to make their drill bits."
OPEN TO: Kids 7 and up

ADVENTURE TRAIL AT AUSABLE CHASM, Adirondack Mountains, N.Y.

BONUS: A white-water river
The sound of a roaring river will help calm your mind (or test your nerves) as you tackle this via ferrata in upstate New York. It's made up of six cable bridges that are more than 50 feet high and cross rapids on the Ausable River. The route also has a cargo-net climb and edge walks along

the cliffs, which were carved out by the river and melting glaciers around the end of the last ice age.
OPEN TO: Kids 8 and up

SOUTHEAST MOUNTAIN GUIDES VIA FERRATA, Red River Gorge, Ky.

BONUS: A waterfall
This route goes along a rugged cliff, and at one point you can even climb behind a waterfall. The views are amazing, says Josiah Walter, 10, from Zeeland, Mich., who recently visited: "When you look down, there's this beautiful landscape, like a jungle almost." (Tip: Clip a water bottle to your harness. "There will be times where you will get on a ledge, and you will be thirsty," Josiah says.)
OPEN TO: Kids 10 and up

ABOVE ZION VIA FERRATA, outside Zion National Park, Utah

BONUS: Desert views and big birds
This via ferrata is in a red-rock desert. Walk along sandstone cliff faces and climb up and down rungs that feel like ladders. Keep an eye out for wildlife like endangered (and huge!) California condors along the way. And if you aren't too afraid of heights, stand on what guides call the "scary rock": It's got 1,000-foot drops on three sides.
OPEN TO: Kids 8 and up

A SUMMER CAMP FOR KIDS WHO LOST LOVED ONES

BY CHARLEY LOCKE

WHEN ARJAY MILLS, 14, lost his dad during the pandemic, he felt really lonely — as if he were the only kid in the world going through something so hard. That changed when he went to Camp MAGIK, a place for young people dealing with the kind of sadness that happens with loss. It's called grief. "I never really talk to my friends about losing my dad, because I don't know how they'll react to it," says Arjay, who lives in Lawrenceville, Ga. "People at camp could relate."

Every year, thousands of kids in the United States go to special camps like this one, which have gotten more attention since Covid. (More than 250,000 kids lost a parent in the pandemic.) For many, it's the first time that they're able to really talk about what they're going through.

Jada and Jacori Bradstreet were nervous when they first went to Camp MAGIK last year. At school, they had wanted to talk about losing their dad, but were afraid of being bullied. But at camp, the other kids were kind. It helped the sisters open up. Jada, 10, felt brave enough to talk about her dad after doing another brave thing — learning how to canoe. Jacori, 12, learned how to deal with anger by screaming as loud as she could with the other campers out in the woods. "It felt good," she says, "because I got to get all of the angry feelings out of my body."

Camp isn't only about emotions, though. Isla Alexander, 11, looks forward to going to Camp Erin, in Idaho, every year. She can open up about her mom, who died when Isla was 6, while doing other fun activities: making s'mores on a campfire, zip-lining and doing archery (her favorite). When thoughts and emotions about her mom come up, Isla can just share them. "It feels safer," she says, especially since many of the camp counselors have also lost loved ones. "They actually understand."

Even though camp usually only lasts a few days, kids keep in touch. Almost a year later, Arjay still plays video games with friends he met at the program. And Jacori and Jada are more comfortable talking about their loss now, both with friends they made at camp and friends at school. They want to help other kids feel the same way. Now, the sisters are hoping to start a support group. "Listening makes you feel even better," Jacori says. "You can heal together." ♦



TINY STORY

48 THOUSAND

The number of fireworks that were set off during the Macy's Fourth of July show in New York City last year. The annual celebration is the largest fireworks display in the United States. It's so big that organizers began planning it about a year in advance.