

SMU OA Colorado Ice Climbing Trip  
January 30-February 1, 2009  
Alamosa, CO

It's not common to see a van load of Texans in Colorado...oh, who am I kidding? Yea it is. But maybe not a van load intending to do what this van load was intending to do. SMU OA trip staff, David Chambers, Dexter Jacobs (11), and Ryan Davis (10), packed up and headed to Colorado on Friday, Jan 30, with SMU students Daniel Maitland, Ben Boyer, PHD student Darren and brother Noel Nicholson, and SMU Alums Eddie Chen, Todd Coker, and Collin West. Our goal: ice climb as much as possible in 2 days and get back to SMU "not so late" on Monday, Feb 2.

After pushing a long 16 hour day on Friday, we finally pulled into the "Dirty Mo" as Alamosa is pleasantly referred by students at Adam State University, our destination and base camp for the weekend. Upon arrival, we met up with a good friend and Adams's Outdoor Adventure Coordinator, Mick Daniel, to get checked into our dorm rooms and take a quick look at downtown "Mo" for dinner. We woke early the next day to get outfitted with snowshoes, plastic boots, crampons, and ice tools and headed for our first climbing destination, North Clear Creek, near Creed. The sun was shining and the temperature pleasant for late January in Colorado (AM temps 15-17 F). Surprisingly enough, we had @ 2 mile snowshoe into the small, beautiful slot canyon which helped to fight off the cold temperatures. We reached our spot with 3 set lines over beautiful cascading ice. The sun gradually faded behind the rim of the canyon and things began to get cold but as soon as our short introductory skills clinic was over, we hit the ice and didn't stop for 6 hours! The Coloradans commented that it was okay ice but to us, it was perfect. You could actually see the running water beneath the frozen surface making you think twice about slamming your ice tool into it.

We crawled out of the canyon just as the sun was setting and was able to catch that magical picture provided by the light at dusk with blue sky with the silhouette of the Rockies and snow covered ground as the canvas. We eventually got packed up but it was going to be too late to catch dinner in Alamosa with a 2 hour ride back so we headed into Creed and found the only joint open serving food at 8 pm. Upon arrival back in "Dirty Mo" at 11+, we were all too exhausted to resist the bunks so we headed for bed with another early wake-up on Sunday.

As has become the routine, we met early, loaded up, packed up and jumped into the van for the drive down to South Fork for coffee and this time up into Wolf Creek pass to a site with a little better access. A short snowshoe in and we were at the bottom of the cliffs with 3 great looking falls at our fingertips. It was "kids hopped up on chocolate at Pump It Up" from there on. We climbed until we couldn't kick crampons into the ice anymore or your hands were numb from the cold and "screaming" from pain caused by lack of blood flow and constant slamming into the ice with the ice tool. As we rounded off another day of 6 hours worth of ice climbing, we took a few parting shots and headed for the van. We headed for the "Dirty Mo" one last time and headed into the "lively" downtown for food and to catch the end of the Super Bowl.

The crew packed up on Monday with temperatures hovering around 6 F, warm for the Dirty Mo this time of year. We gassed and coffee-ed up and started the long trip back to SMU. Before the day was done, we would go from down jackets and fleece to short sleeves as we pulled into Dallas around 7 that evening.

No matter the marathon weekend and total drive of 36 hours in a van. No matter that we probably won't remember who won the Super Bowl in two years anyway. No matter the missed commitments and work. We had ice climbing fever and it will be a long time before that scenery, aching calves, painful hands, and big smiles escape our memories.