

Ohiopyle State Park, PA

Inaugural Ice climbing Trips Part One Jan. 17th

Avoid grid lock of this historic weekend, I'm going ice climbing, were my plans. I was drawn into the vortex in the end but not before analyzing 2 ice climbing areas. The first trip involved enlisting participants from the Listserve which went as smoothly as crunchy peanut butter through an ice screw. For some reason, of the dozen hopefuls for this weekend trip, during this impossible weekend, one by one, "biled", for any one of the following reasons. In the end I drove to Ohiopyle, PA in 3 hours to meet Galen and Ryan, from the mental institute of car camping, who braved the -10 degree temps in their SUV.

From the DC area, it is an easy drive west 270, 70, 68 and 40 which brings you south of Ohiopyle State Park, southeast of Pittsburg, PA, with a choice to go to towns Ohiopyle or Confluence. BTW, Sugarloaf road cuts through the park and is a paved road and maintained for most of the course through the park. When I hit the parking lot in Ohiopyle, PA, our heros and their alaskan huskie, quinn, were still alive. We drove to the trailhead of the Youghigeny rail trail with the temps hovering a little below zero. He left our puffies and hit the trail. After a few minutes walking we were all quite comfortable and it was a georgeous day. We hiked about 3 miles along the scenic Youghigeny River scouting a springtime return to kayak this 11-mile stretch of class 1-2-3 white water from Confluence to Ohiopyle. The only landmark was the the oxbow bend in the river and if it weren't for the GPS coordinates in the Griz Ice Climbing Guide for Pennsylvania , the approach would have turned into the typical CLUSTER, wandering around the wilderness diciphering cryptic descriptions from a guide book; you know we've all been there. +39° 50' 31.62", -79° 27' 46.26", Victoria Flats WI2+ 250ft. This location is described in the guide, and puts your roughly in the neighborhood of 5 flows, 3 of which where climbable this day.

Ryan had never been on ice before and Galen was just off the couch. We climbed what we named the second fence and bishop's cherry at the following GPS coordinates:(***) The temps climbed all day long and by 1300, it was around 12 with a high of 18 later on in the day. The area is great for new leaders and begginers since the gulleys are gentle, but do have their moments. I would think under optimum conditions this area would have ample moderate routes to spend the day on,

when the conditions are thicker.

There are a number of climbs in the surrounding area, most notable was our alternate destination of confluence WI3-5 approached from the town of confluence on the same rail to trail. Ohiopyle area is a white water town which is the livelihood. There are a number of bed and breakfasts in the area and a couple less expensive hotels: the National Trail motel and another further west on 40. I think this is a great year round destination only 3 hours from DC Metro.

VINCENT PENOSO