

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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UPCOMING EXHIBITION EXPLORES THE SPORT AND SPIRIT OF CLIMBING

Ascent: Climbing Explored Opens April 28, 2018

Bend, OR — A new exhibit showcasing the dynamic history, evolution and culture of climbing and mountaineering in the West will open to the public at the High Desert Museum on April 28. Curated by High Desert Museum staff, *Ascent: Climbing Explored* tells the story of how technology pushed the sport to new heights over several decades, explores the geology of the High Desert region and shares the vibrant culture climbers cultivated along the way.

Curator of Western History Dr. Laura Ferguson spent the better part of a year researching the sport as she developed the exhibit. “The climbing community has been incredibly generous, and I’ve loved having a chance to learn more about the history of climbing from those who played a key role in shaping it,” said Dr. Laura Ferguson.

The exhibition takes an incredible journey back in time, tracing modern-day climbing to its early mountaineering roots, when people began exploring peaks in pursuit of scientific discovery. It explores the rise in mountaineering expeditions that followed as people began to climb for the sheer joy of it and the development of rock climbing. Along the way, it highlights technical advances from evolving shoe styles to the advent and improvement of safety gear.

The exhibit also features beautiful artwork, including an original sketch by Thomas Moran, on loan from the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Geology of the region will be highlighted, including Smith Rock, which became a national destination in the 1980s. “It’s exciting that Smith Rock, which has played a significant role in the world of climbing, is right in our backyard,” said Dr. Ferguson. The exhibition also addresses the importance of balancing adventure-based, outdoor recreation with environmental stewardship. There will be a climbing wall for kids and other hands-on experiences.

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“Ascent provides a connection between the past and present, exploring climbing from its humble beginnings through the enthusiastic following the sport has today,” said the Museum’s Executive Director, Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. “Climbing culture runs deep in our region and we’re pleased to be able to expand our visitors’ knowledge through this exhibit.” It was climbing culture combined with innovations in gear that sparked the creation of several major outdoor gear companies.

Ascent is an informative, interactive exhibition that has something for all ages. Visitors will not only learn about the history of climbing, but will explore artifacts from different time periods, get a unique look inside the sport’s unique culture and test their skills with ropes and knots. Exhibition runs through September 3, 2018.

For more information, visit <https://www.highdesertmuseum.org>

**Photo attached must be credited: Photo courtesy of the Deschutes Historical Museum
Caption: Climbing Lava Butte, c. 1910**

Exhibit made possible by GreenLoop IT Solutions, OPB, NW Travel Magazine and SELCO Community Credit Union and with support from Bend Magazine, Chubb and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in 1982 and brings regional wildlife, culture, art and natural resources together to promote an understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of North America's high desert country. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats, and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate the high desert environment. The Museum is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Affiliate.

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