



Professional Climbing Instructors Association Top Rope Climbing Instructor Courses

Course Description: The Professional Climbing Instructor Association's Top Rope Climbing Instructor™ course emphasizes the technical and educational proficiency necessary to safely and professionally instruct rock climbing and climbing related activities in a group setting. The forty five hour course plus exam is intended to help transition recreational climbers into becoming model climbing instructors.

The course revisits and improves existing personal recreational climbing skills and introduces guide specific skills. Topics include: expanding your repertoire of belay systems, knots, harness choices, and rappelling methods; exploring and practicing methods of teaching and modeling these skills, coaching participants effectively, noting external and internal hazards, sorting through the equipment, administrative, legal and ethical expectations and responsibilities associated with being a climbing instructor, practicing a variety of anchor configurations and learning many subtleties about anchoring, establishing and managing redirected and belay-from-above top rope climbing sites including various belays and backup methods, extending anchors, negotiating the edge when rappelling, general site management, environmental concerns, coaching, belay transfers, assisting and rescuing climbers, promoting Leave No Trace, and understanding the experiential learning model along with briefing and debriefing processes and learning and teaching styles. We might even get some climbing in...

Target audience: outdoor instructors, aspiring guides, and climbers who facilitate top rope climbing programs in group settings such as camps, schools, universities, therapeutic groups, and climbing schools.

Course Prerequisites: Participants must have prior top rope climbing experience that includes an ability to comfortably set up top rope climbs, to belay, and to rappel without guidance. Familiarity with anchoring including natural and artificial anchors is also required. The terrain context for the course is top rope sites with an easy approach, situations where leading/soloing is not necessary to reach the anchors. If you are unsure of your skills please talk to TRCI Course director, Todd Vogel prior to enrolling in the program.

Summary of prerequisite skills:

Knots: figure 8 family, bowline, grapevine, ring bend.

Belaying: use of a variety of belay plates including self-locking (Gri-Gri type) devices.

Rappelling: Able to rappel without coaching.

Anchoring: able to comfortably utilize natural and artificial anchors to create equalized and appropriately strong anchor systems that have minimal extension. Comfortable with use of cordellettes and runners and evaluating your own anchor systems.

Climbing: able to climb comfortably on mid fifth class terrain and to rappel over edges without coaching.

Gear: has required gear for the course and is comfortable with its use.

Participants may be asked to demonstrate skills prior to the course.

Course Instructors: The course is instructed by PCIA-approved instructors who are generally AMGA certified rock guides or alpine guides who have completed an instructor training program specific to the curriculum. The instructor for most courses is Todd Vogel, AMGA certified rock and alpine guide. Todd has taught nearly 100 TRCI courses and has been a climbing instructor since the early 1980's.

Dates and Prices: Check the Outdoor Link or PCIA.us web sites. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of rescheduling, or cancelling. The course fee includes PCIA course administration fees. All participants must be, or become, PCIA members

The March 2009 course date and meeting place: is March 5 - 9, 2009; meet 8am March 5th at TBA

Course length and ratios: The course is taught in three modules. The first module is the Base Managed Climbing Instructor Course™ (BMCI) and is three day, 30 hours in length and will not exceed a ratio of six participants to one instructor and a maximum of twelve students on a course. A minimum of four participants is required to run this course. Typically the second module is the Top Rop Climbing Instructor™ module which imparts skills for running sites from the top of the cliff. The

TRCI module is one day in length. The third module is the Base Managed Climbing Instructor™ exam and is a one day optional evaluation.

Course Manual: a course manual and numerous handouts are included with the course.

Course Fees: Course providers are enabled to charge their own course fees. Providers pay a per student fee to the PCIA. These fees are included with the course costs. Currently Outdoor Link's fee schedule is this:

3 day module BMCI: \$500

1 day exam: \$100

1 day TRCI module: \$125

Total course tuition: \$725

Course completion: Upon completion of the course module, participants will receive an oral performance evaluation. This will also become the basis for the participant's written evaluation received via mail or electronic means following the course. Participants may opt to take the BMCI exam component of the course immediately after the course or anytime within the three years following the course. After successful completion of the BMCI course a participant is a PCIA Assistant Base Managed Climbing Instructor. After successfully completing the exam a participant is a certified PCIA Base Managed Climbing Instructor. After completing the TRCI module the participant is a Certified PCIA Top Rope Climbing Instructor.

To emphasize: The exam is separate from the course and participants may opt to wait to take it. You may wait up to three years from the date you complete your course to take the exam. About 30% of course participants are assessed to be "ready" to take the exam immediately following the course with the balance needing more mileage with the skills.

Marketing use by participants: Organizations who teach or utilize only top rope climbing methods may advertise that their instructors have "completed a PCIA approved top rope instructor training program" only if all of their climbing staff have participated in such a program. Otherwise programs may only market a specific program that will be run by a course graduate at a ratio not to exceed one certified top rope site manager per six students. Programs not meeting the above criteria or teaching other aspects of climbing should seek out instruction through certified guides and undergo PCIA accreditation and peer review.

Camping and meeting place: Joshua Tree Programs: Camping is not provided unless previously arranged. When camping, we will often camp at either Sheep Pass or at Indian Cove. Once we have a campsite reserved we will let you know the site number. Eastern Sierra Programs: Camping is not included in the course but we can help you make arrangements - please let us know if you would like us to do so. **For Joshua Tree Programs, please contact us prior to the program for specific campsite information!**

Getting to Joshua Tree: find your way to Southern California. If you are flying to get to the program the Ontario airport is your best bet as it is only two hours from Joshua Tree. Rental cars are available there. Driving from the west: take interstate 10 to the Yucca Valley/hwy 62 exit. Proceed through Yucca Valley and the town of Joshua Tree. You will turn south at the stop light for programs out of Sheep Pass, continuing about 12 miles up the road, across the main part of the park; about a mile past the Hall of Horrors parking area Sheep Pass campground come up on the right. For Indian Cove programs: From the town of Joshua Tree: continue east on 62 approximately 7 miles to the Indian Cove entrance to Joshua Tree National Park. This is about half way between Twentynine Palms and Joshua Tree. Head into Indian Cove and the group campground is on your right just before the entrance road "T's". An entrance fee of \$10 is charged at Joshua Tree Park and is good for seven days. A Golden Eagle Pass will work too. Yucca Valley is your best place to shop for supplies before heading into the Park. The Indian Cove entrance station has water but otherwise the nearest supplies are in Twentynine Palms, a twenty minute drive from the campground. The nearest phone is 15 minutes from the campground.

For programs that base out of Sheep Pass Campground the nearest supplies are a forty minute trip and the nearest phone is half an hour away. There is no water in the Sheep Pass campground.

Getting to Bishop: All roads meet in Bishop...From the north: find your way to Highway 395 heading south. Bishop is about 3.5 hours from the Reno airport, on Highway 395. It is about 1.5 hours from Tioga Pass if you are coming from the west side of the Sierra. From the south: Find your way to Highway 395. From the west side of the LA area this usually entails a brief stint on the 405, then Highway 14, which meets 395 north of Mojave. From the east side of LA you will pick up 395 from interstate 15, near Victorville. Bishop is about 5 hours from the LAX or ONT airports.

Curriculum Outline:

order of topics may be rearranged as needed.

Days 1 - 3: the PCIA Base Managed Climbing Instructor™ Course

Day 1

- Introduction/course overview, ice breakers, instructor & participant introductions, backgrounds, participant goals, course objectives and course overview.
- Professional philosophy and ethics: professional expectations, creating a standard of care, guiding/instructing versus climbing, terrain limitations, client instructor relationship, role modeling, client safety, comfort, and time management, on-going education
- Administrative concerns: legal issues, equipment record keeping, medical training, program goals and boundaries, consistency
- Site selection: new site suitability, impact potential/access, terrain classification
- Sample presentations:
 - harness application,
 - knots,
 - belaying: a detailed look at position, friction, anchor, signals, teaching, backing up belays, belay escapes, practice
- Climbing equipment: a detailed discussion, instructor equipment

Day 2

- Climbing as a tool for growth: review of experiential learning model, use of new games/initiatives that relate to climbing for improved sequencing; briefing, debriefing.
- Participant fears: what are they, recognizing, ways of minimizing
- Site management: the instructional team/roles, safety/environmental briefings, maintaining the big eye, instructor safety
- Establishing the common point: anchoring details, bolts, natural features, artificial gear, SERENE: strong, effective, redundant, equalize, no extension; practice

Day 3

- Redirected top rope climbs (slingshots): extending over the edge, instructor safety, belay/belayer management (anchor options, stance, signals, backups), base management, knot pass avoidance, coaching, topping out, pluses and minuses of redirects, practice
- Establishing the master point: reprise
- Rappelling: rappelling versus lowering, devices, backups, using a releasable setup, teaching rappelling: progression, modeling, client and instructor safety, practice

Day 4 The PCIA Top Rope Climbing Instructor™ Module -

- Traditional top ropes (top belays): advantages/disadvantages, instructor versus client belays, belaying from harness versus belaying from anchor, belay options: plate Munter, Grigri, other options, lowering clients, back up methods, practice
- 2nd-4th class terrain: recognizing and dealing with hazards, use of fixed lines, frictions knots, practice
- Assistance and rescue skills: Assisted 2:1 hoist with independent belay, other ascending options: knotted rope, ascending system; belay escape, practice.
- Emergency Planning: what if thinking, prevention, emergency plan
- Course summary and review.

- Group and one on one debriefs

- Conclusion late afternoon

Day 5

Optional exam

Equipment list for Top Rope Climbing Instructor Course

- If camping: Tent, tarp and car camping equipment.
- Sleeping bag and pad(s)
- Lawn chair
- Approach shoes
- Climbing shoes optional
- 1 single dynamic rope - don't bring your favorite rope

Anchoring materials suitable for crack and boulder/tree tie-off anchors as follows:

- A full 100'+ piece of static rope will be necessary. We can have some of these to lend but please make arrangements if you want to borrow a static line.
- Bring plenty of carabiners, both standard and locking. Bring protection from .25 inch to 4 inches and even a 5" piece IF YOU ALREADY OWN IT.
- Six Pear type locking carabiners
- 25' of one inch tubular webbing
- Two 25' - 30' cordelletes of 7 or 8mm cord. 6mm cordelletes are not adequate for this course.
- Harness, belay device, helmet
- Don't run out and buy the JT guide book but if you have one, bring one.
- Clothing for warm or cold, wet or dry. Bring everything from shorts to a down jacket and boots.
- Winter Programs in Joshua Tree can expect very cold conditions.
- Sunscreen and lip screen.
- Large day pack
- Food and eating gear (cup, bowl, plate, fork, spoon for the fivedays.
- Notebook and writing equipment

Notes for Joshua Tree NP:

There is a \$10 entrance fee for Joshua Tree National Park.

The closest water, phone, grocery, fuel, etc. is a forty minute round trip from camp, 15 minutes in Indian Cove.

Having said that it's often nice to sneak into town for a shower or dinner...

Notes for the Eastern Sierra:

Pay showers are a short drive up the road from the campgrounds.

The nearest grocery store is a 45 minute round-trip from the campground. The bugs will most likely be bad so bring some bug repellent.

Cancellation and Deposit Policy:

Your reservation is secured with a 50% deposit and the balance is due prior to the start of the program. We accept checks, Visa, or Mastercard.

Cancellation Policy: If you must cancel, for any reason, with thirty or more days notice you may cancel your dates for a full refund. With fourteen to thirty days notice of cancellation prior to the start date of the trip you are liable for 50% of the program fee and with less than fourteen days notice you are responsible for the entire program fee. With less than fourteen days notice of cancellation, for any reason, you will lose your deposit.

Schedule changes are not possible with less than fourteen days notice and we treat such cases as a cancellation. We will only reschedule for the same calendar year.

For any program: If conditions or circumstances, including weather, preclude running a scheduled program we reserve the right to make the decision as to whether the program will be rescheduled or an alternative provided. In the rare circumstance where we need to cancel a program due to weather you can reschedule without a penalty but no refund will be given. Credits arising from such situations will be honored for 24 months. If circumstances arise that force us to cancel a program that is already in progress we reserve the right to decide whether a credit at a prorated rate or suitable alternative to the program will be issued. We are not responsible for cancellation fees or costs arising from your changed or cancelled flights, lodging, or other arrangements. We recommend obtaining trip cancellation insurance from your travel agent.

Recommended Course Pre-study:

Please read these articles:

<http://www.safeclimbing.org/education/bomberbolts.htm>

<http://www.safeclimbing.org/education/mechbolts.htm>

<http://www.safeclimbing.org/education/adhesivebolts.htm>

<http://www.outdoorlink.org/admin-aspects.pdf>

Interesting but optional reading can be found here:

<http://www.outdoorlink.org/research-papers>

Additional details for specific programs

Program: Joshua Tree

Camping and food: not provided. Abundant camping for \$10/night can be had in the Indian Cove family campground.

Meeting place/time: Indian Cove Campground Bulletin Board, 8am, details below. The bulletin board is three miles south of the Indian Cove Ranger Station. Proceed past the ranger station until the road "t's". Turn left at the T and a quick left again to a parking area with a garbage can and recycling station.

Reminder: helmet, static rope, and approach shoes are on the equipment list

Reminder: The weather can approach arctic in Joshua Tree at this time of year.

Reminder: Some pre-course study information has been provided. It is requested that you read this material.

Map to Indian Cove: (cut/paste into browser)

<http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&geocode=&time=&date=&type=&q=indian+cove+campground,+joshua+tree,+ca&ie=UTF8&ll=34.113155,-116.146946&spn=0.056707,0.072956&z=14&om=1>

