

NEW CLIPS



INSIDE

A closer look
at your Fitness,
Health, Nutrition,
Relationships,
Beauty and Style

YOU CAN DO THIS **ROCKCLIMBING**

On the rocks

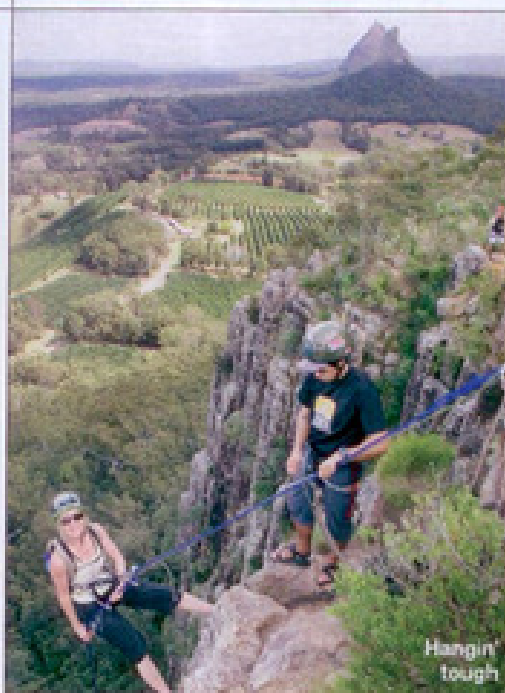
► Climbing mountains leaves Sue White with a greater appreciation for her arms



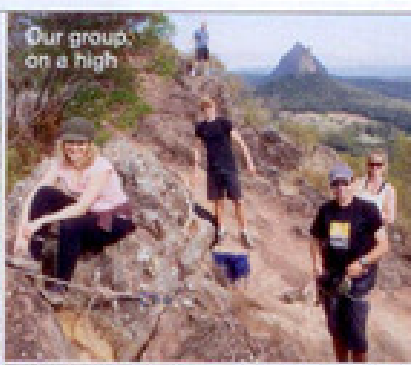
Cursed with a fear of heights my whole adult life, I recently became determined to move beyond my recurrent vertigo. But how? While the mere thought of jumping off cliffs or out of planes makes my stomach churn, rockclimbing dangles rewards: you usually do it in jaw-droppingly beautiful locations; it's not too exy (after the initial outlay for equipment); and there are physical pay-offs.

At 6am on Saturday, I set out from Brisbane towards the Glass House Mountains. While my body craves a few more hours of sleep, everything else is ready for action: my sneakers and tights lend me a decidedly athletic vibe; my rental car, a Mazda CX-7, is super-sporty and, when I arrive at the Adventure Cafe an hour later, my guide – Jay from Pinnacle Sports – exudes a can-do attitude. Fuelled by a hot brekkie, our small group drives a short distance to our first climb and I remind myself that today is only my “warm-up”. We're spending the morning on Mount Ngungun, one of the dozen or so peaks sprinkled across the Glass House Mountains area. The mountains are remainders of ancient volcanoes, and they rise from virtually flat terrain.

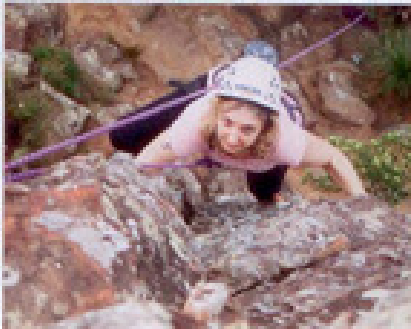
After walking for half an hour up the surprisingly steep side of Mount Ngungun, we're a couple of hundred metres above ground level, and there are magnificent views on all sides, including one of the Sunshine Coast beaches. Jay gets to work sticking tiny metal objects – cams – into cracks in rocks; they're meant to keep our ropes connected »»



Hangin' tough



Our group on a high



Scared, me?

CLIMBER CHAT

Below!

Used to warn climbers below of falling debris. Do not look up if you hear this

Bouldering

Clambering over rocks without equipment

Slack

Yelled when the climber needs more slack in the rope

Sewing machine leg

Twitching muscles

to the rock. "Just these, holding us in?" I ask warily. "Yeah, but there are six of them," Jay replies breezily. If overcoming a fear of heights is the first challenge in rockclimbing, trusting your equipment must come a close second. It just looks so minimal. And while the tight shoes, seatbelt-like harness and plastic helmet are reassuring, it's the innocent-looking climbing rope that bothers me most. Jay reassures me that climbing ropes are fit for the task, "All of us could hang on it together, and it would still hold us." But in my mind, I'm still trusting my life to a rope, and the attention of my "belayer", below. Belayers stand at the bottom of the cliff, ready to safeguard those above in the case of a fall by pulling on the rope. I feel sceptical and visualise scraping my face against the cliff face. In fact, most climbing accidents occur from human error (like not clipping onto a high ledge when you really should), rather than equipment failure.

We learn a few safety calls, tie the rope in a double figure eight through our harnesses, and spend the morning practising by scaling the 30m up Mount Ngungun's peak and abseiling back down. I struggle to find footholds, handholds, and to haul my body higher. But aside from a small slide where I

slip and smack a boob into the rock face, I'm doing OK. Until about the fourth go, when my shaking arms and legs reveal an utter lack of technique. I've spent most of the morning relying on my arms to wrench me up out of tight spots and now, exhausted, I discover this was a classic error. "Always find a foothold for your feet first. Only move your hands when you can't move your feet any higher," Jay says.

I try again, and amazingly, it works. I float up the cliff, glide my way down the abseil, and by the end of the day it all seems achievable. That is, until I look up at the massive Mount Tibrogargan, which we're supposedly climbing tomorrow. According to legend, Mount Tibrogargan is the father of the Glass House Mountains. He certainly looks that way – this is one serious cliff face.

It's 8am on Sunday – time for the 200m climb. With arms and legs aching from yesterday, I face the big daddy mountain. Today we're multi-pitch climbing (with more than one belay stop) up the side of the cliff. Jay has to go first, so he can belay us from above. It feels weird, waiting below on our own, and as we begin our painstakingly slow climb my body shrieks in protest. Thighs, shoulders and arms resist, but as there's no way but up, I encourage my aching muscles to come along for the ride.

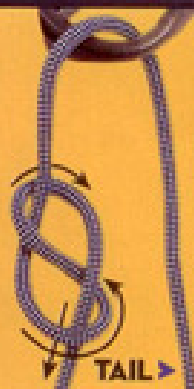
On each pitch, I climb as far as the rope will allow (typically 30 to 50m) before launching onto the small ledges where Jay waits. With no choice but to look out at the scenery, I try to appease my fear with calming thoughts while Jay resets the ropes, and we repeat the cycle. We do six pitches in total, and by the fourth, the height is seriously concerning me. As I climb, my foot slips off its tiny foothold 150 metres above the safety of solid ground and dozens of thoughts flash through my mind. Few are printable, but one screams loud and clear: *Do. Not. Look. Down.*

My fear encourages me to get cosy with the rock, and I begin slithering up by clinging on. Jay advises otherwise, and I work on his suggestion: "Keep your arms straight, and body slightly off the rock. If you hug it your feet will angle so they're more likely to slide off."

I spend the day completing physical and mental puzzles. I figure out where my arms and legs should go, and then I make sure my mind doesn't talk me out of it. Eventually, we make it to the top, an incredible 200m above trees, birds and land. Someone lets out a loud whoop of glory. Then I realise it was me! I bask in exhilaration. That is, until I creep towards the ledge, remembering that I still have to abseil all the way back down.

LEARN THE ROPES

How to tie a tight figure-eight knot to your harness in three easy steps



1 Bend the rope to make a loop. Wrap the tail around the base of the loop for one full circle. (Note: if it looks like a pretzel, you didn't make a full circle.) Then pull the tail of the rope through the loop to make a single figure eight.



2 Take the tail end and bring it down through the centre of the figure eight. With the remaining tail of the rope, trace the single knot, following the same path as step one. (Note: think over, under, over, under.)



3 You should see three sets of double strands. Make sure they're not overlapping. Tighten.

Getting edgy

Gear that'll help you scale new heights

With a tough EPS liner, rigid outer shell and quick-adjust straps, the **Black Diamond Half Dome helmet** has all you need in a hat. \$99.95 seatosummit.com.au

The 750ml **Camelbak Better Bottle** is free of BPA (nasty chemicals found in some other bottles), and can be easily sipped with one hand. \$29.95 camelbak.com.au

The quick-drying fabric of the **Adelite singlet** has SPF30 protection and it's extra stretchy for max reach. \$89.90, kathmandu.com.au



Secure ropes to your harness and belay device with **Zodiac 11mm Offset D Quicklock carabiners**. \$34.95 expeditionequipment.com

Dip into the easy-entry **Arc'teryx C40 chalk bag** to keep your grip firm. \$49, seatosummit.com.au

Made from tough nylon for strength and lycra for mobility, the **Lebrita 3/4 pants** are a top choice for the mountain. \$99.90, kathmandu.com.au



The deep, V-shaped grooves of the **Black Diamond ATC-XP** belay bite into the rope to give you full hand control. \$52.95 seatosummit.com.au

Fall-proof your climb with the lightweight **Arc'teryx R 280 harness**, shaped specifically for women. \$279, seatosummit.com.au

The **Red Chili Corona VCR climbing shoes** offer a snug fit with a pointed toe for precision on the rocks. \$229.95, expeditionequipment.com

The **Sterling Sport 10.4mm climbing rope** is thick but lightweight. \$369.95 expeditionequipment.com

Hang here

Dig into climbing with the best Australia has to offer



KANGAROO POINT, BRISBANE

This climb is in the heart of Brisbane city, so there's no chance of getting lost in the mountains. Try the **Dusk Descent** climb that goes on into the night. They also offer abseiling lessons. \$70 for 3 hours, adventureseekers.com.au



MOUNT ARAPILES, VICTORIA

Four hours from Melbourne, Mount Arapiles is revered by climbers across the world. There are more than 2000 routes, but if you're looking for quiet, avoid times like Easter. Lessons are tailored to your experience. From \$280 for a one-on-one lesson; \$65 each for a group lesson (including gear), users. netconnect.com.au/~climbag



CATARACT GORGE, TASMANIA

Tasmania boasts some of Australia's best climbing, and Cataract Gorge is the perfect place to experience the kind of breathtaking scenery and challenging climbing that the Apple Isle does so well. With hundreds of climbs for all levels of skill, this really is a climber's paradise. From \$120 per person per half day (including equipment), adrenalin.com.au **WH**