



## **Single Pitch Instructor Certification Course**

The American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) Single Pitch Instructor Course is the first in the AMGA sequence of climbing instructor and guide training programs.

The SPI course was designed to help capable recreational climbers transition into capable and effective climbing instructors. The course focuses on the technical skills required by an instructor as they are applied in all forms of single pitch climbing instruction. In addition to this, the course addresses the essential educational and environmental tenets required to teach climbing. Those seeking certification may go on to take a two day field examination following the course or at any time within three years after successfully completing the course. Certified Single Pitch Instructors are expected to demonstrate the technical and educational proficiencies necessary to instruct a variety of single pitch rock climbing skills in a safe and effective manner to both groups and individuals. While not all students are fully prepared for the certification exam by the end of the course, every participant will have the training to practice and prepare for an exam in the future and will leave the course with many new ideas and skills.

All course participants receive a written evaluation at the end of the course and are granted a one-year associate membership in the AMGA. Benefits of membership include a subscription to the quarterly Mountain Bulletin guide's newsletter, discounts on the AMGA Guide's Manual, and opportunities to attend membership instructional clinics and membership meetings.

The SPI course is intended for recreational climbers who are already proficient in both top-rope and lead climbing. It was designed to benefit those who wish to facilitate outdoor climbing programs for groups such as those offered by guide services, camps, schools, universities, therapeutic groups, churches and climbing gyms. Those who wish to teach climbing in the outdoors tend to have a much higher success rate in obtaining employment as climbing instructors with this training and certification. The AMGA strongly suggests this course as a precursor to those interested in pursuing Rock Instructor or Rock Guide training and certification.

### **SPI Course Pre-Requisites**

- ❑ You are at least 18 years old.
- ❑ You have a genuine interest in rock climbing and instructing novices on single pitch crags.
- ❑ You have at least 12 months of prior climbing experience.
- ❑ You are an active climber with traditional lead climbing experience.
- ❑ Able to comfortably set-up climbs, to belay, to rappel without guidance.
- ❑ Ability to demonstrate familiarity with anchoring principals, natural anchors and artificial anchors (wires, hexes, passive and active cams). These skills may be assessed at the start of your course.
- ❑ You are capable of comfortably climbing 5.8 while on top-rope.

### **Course Curriculum and Contents**

The following is a brief overview of the main points that will be discussed and practiced throughout the **three-day course**. Weather or other environmental factors may change the order of the curriculum.

#### **Day One:**

- ❑ Introduction to the AMGA and the Rock Certification Process.
- ❑ Carpool to the Instructional location
- ❑ Discussion of climbing equipment and its importance to the climbing instructor.
- ❑ Review of instructor knots and hitches
- ❑ Instructor and student belay techniques
- ❑ Management of the climbing site
- ❑ Instructional anchors and rock protection
- ❑ Teaching techniques and risk management for the climbing instructor

#### **Day Two:**

- ❑ Professionalism in climbing instruction
- ❑ Development of practical skills for top-managed sites
- ❑ Climbing site organization and group management
- ❑ Discussion and practice of lowering techniques
- ❑ Assistance skills for a top-managed site.

#### **Day Three:**

- ❑ Development of practical skills required for a bottom-managed site
- ❑ Review of assistance skills required for a bottom-managed site
- ❑ Techniques to teach climbing movement
- ❑ Review Sessions
- ❑ Individual and group debriefs

## **Two-Day Exam and SPI Assessment Candidate Prerequisites**

The **two-day SPI Certification Exam** may be taken directly following the SPI course if the candidate successfully completes the course and meets the assessment pre-requisites. However, it is highly recommended that the SPI graduate take time practicing and consolidating the skills learned on the course before assessment.

### **You meet the SPI Certification Exam pre-requisites if:**

- ❑ You have successfully completed the AMGA Single Pitch Instructor Course or the AMGA Top-Rope Site Manager Course.
- ❑ You have trad lead climbed a minimum of 40 graded rock routes. A large number of these should have been 5.6 or harder.
- ❑ You are capable of comfortably leading traditional routes at the 5.6 grade in a variety of settings (i.e. crack, face, slab, etc.). You will be asked to demonstrate your leading ability throughout the assessment.
- ❑ You are capable of comfortably climbing 5.8 while on top-rope.

### **To gain SPI Certification, candidates must:**

- ❑ Successfully pass the SPI Assessment
- ❑ Hold current AMGA Membership at the Associate Level or higher
- ❑ Hold appropriate current First Aid Certification for the area where you desire to work. (Please see the SPI Program Manual for more information on first aid requirements.)

\*\*\*It is a common practice for students to take their exam at a later date, following completion of their course. This allows additional time to practice new skills, and to build confidence for the exam. Flexibility in selecting exam date is highly recommended.

### **SPI Course Pricing**

- ❑ **SPI Course Fee: \$450**
- ❑ **Exam Fee: \$300**
- ❑ **Re-exam Fee (if needed): \$225**

### **Logistics, Equipment, and Pre-Course Assignment**

#### **Meeting time and place:**

**Smith Rock State Park, Oregon:** Participants will meet at the grass picnic area located off the main parking area at **9:00 am on the first day of the course or exam.**

Drive east from Terrebonne on Smith Rock Way. Take first left after RR tracks, this turns into Wilcox Rd. Go one mile and turn left on Crooked River, Pass the “Bivy Area” and overflow parking. You will see grass picnic area on Left.

\*\*A Day use parking fee applies for non-campers.

**Red Rock Canyon:** Participants will meet at the covered picnic area located in the Red Springs Picnic Area in Calico Basin in Red Rock Canyon at 8:00 in the morning on the first day of the course or exam. The road to Red Springs may be found just a short distance west of the campground, between the campground road and the entrance to the Red Rock Scenic Drive. Take the first right-hand turn past Moenkopi Road and drive a short distance through a semi-residential area to the Red Springs Parking Lot.

We can provide more details and recommendations for local services, lodging and food opportunities to help with your personal logistical planning on request.

## **Equipment**

\*\*\*The AMGA SPI program requires that participants bring their own equipment. If you have any questions regarding any listed item/s please let us know. [info@chockstoneclimbing](mailto:info@chockstoneclimbing) or call 541-318-7170

- Climbing Helmet
- Climbing Harness with Belay Loop – No Alpine Bod or “single tie-in point” Harnesses
- Climbing Shoes and/or Sticky Rubber Approach Shoes (Must be able to climb up to 5.8 in whatever shoe you bring)
- Standard Climbing Rack – This generally includes an assortment of wired nuts, cams, Tri-Cams, hexes, etc.
- Assorted 24” and 48” Runners – Be sure that you have at least 1 48” runner.
- 10 or more non-locking carabiners
- 6 or more locking carabiners – the more the better.
- Belay/Rappel Device such as the Reverso, the Guide XP, the ATC, etc.
- Releasable locking belay device, such as the Petzl GriGri or the Trango Synchron
- 2 Prussic Loops (4 feet of 5millimeter Nylon Accessory Cord)
- 2 Cordelettes (21 feet of 7 millimeter Nylon Accessory Cord)
- One 100-foot Static or Semi-Static Rope for setting up anchors and fixed lines.
- One 60 Meter Dynamic Climbing Rope
- One of the following (recommended)books: Rock Climbing: Mastering the Basic Skills by Craig Luebben or Freedom of the Hills by the Mountaineers

We can provide dynamic ropes for sessions on the course. However if you wish to climb or practice skills before or after the class, please bring your own rope.

### **PLEASE MARK ALL OF YOUR GEAR!!!**

It is possible to mark gear with colored electrical tape or with nail polish. Many climbers use two colors of electrical tape instead of just a single black strip. This creates less of a chance that two individuals will have the same colors on their gear. No nail polish on soft goods. This may damage the overall integrity of the webbing, cord, etc...

## **Suggested Reading:**

There are many good resources to review prior to the course, Listed are a few that are pertinent to this course curriculum. Bring your favorite!

AMGA Guides Manual: Technical Handbook for the Professional Mountain Guide

- Climbing Anchors by John Long – Also see “More Climbing Anchors”
- Climbing: From Gym to Crag by S. Peter Lewis and Dan Cauthorn
- Freedom of the Hills by the Mountaineers
- Knots for Climbers by Craig Luebben
- Self Rescue by Dave Fasulo
- Rock Climbing Anchors: A Comprehensive Guide by Craig Luebben
- Rock Climbing: Mastering the Basic Skills by Craig Luebben

Outdoor Leadership and Education:

- The Backcountry Classroom – Lesson Plans for Teaching in the Wilderness by the Wilderness Education Association
- Outdoor Leadership – Techniques, Common Sense, and Self Confidence by John Graham
- Quicksilver by Karl Rohnke and Steve Butler
- Silver Bullets by Karl Rohnke
- Soft Paths: How to Enjoy the Wilderness without Harming It by Bruce Hampton and David Cole

Other Books for Outdoor Leaders:

- The Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv

### **Pre-Course Assignment:**

- ❑ Students must complete the “Open-book assignment” and email it [info@chockstoneclimbing.com](mailto:info@chockstoneclimbing.com) prior to the course start date. (See Course Manual).

### **SPI Certification Upkeep and Recertification**

- ❑ SPI Certification is only valid with current AMGA Membership and valid current First Aid Certification. If you let either of these lapse, your SPI Certification is invalid until you rectify this.
- ❑ SPI Certification lasts for **three** years from the date of assessment. There are two options for renewal.
  1. Certified Single Pitch Instructors can take the two-day SPI Assessment to renew their certification.
  2. Certified Single Pitch Instructors who successfully complete one of the following AMGA Courses: Rock Instructor Course, Advanced Rock Guides Course, Alpine Guides Course, or an Advanced Alpine Guides Course is granted SPI certification for three years from the course end date. After completing a course, please contact the AMGA so they can update your records.

### **Top-Rope Site Manager Program**

The AMGA Single Pitch Instructor program was formerly the “Top-Rope Site Manager” (TRSM) Program. American Mountain Guides Association program coordinators developed the design and the implementation of the SPI program over a period of years. They replaced the TRSM curriculum with this new program for two reasons. First, the new curriculum was designed to raise the standard of skill in the single pitch instructor. And second, they wanted this American program to align more closely with the similar programs of other member countries in the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations.

Please contact us with any questions if you have taken the TRSM Course or are a currently certified TRSM looking to transition to the SPI Certification Program.

**Jim Ablao, AMGA Certified Rock Guide/SPI Program Provider**

**Chockstone Climbing Guides LLC**

**(541) 318-7170 or (541)280-5240 Email: [info@chockstoneclimbing.com](mailto:info@chockstoneclimbing.com)**