2026 Black Hills, SD Summer Sport Climbing Camp For Teens

details subject to change. If you find any typos or discrepancies in this information, please email letsgo@alphaclimbing.com for clarification. Programs and locations change from year-to-year, as do planning details.

Dates - July 11-19, 2026 - please refer to the itinerary below. For drop-off in Spearfish these dates will reflect the program time in the Black Hills. For athletes returning to Bozeman with the van following the camp, expect a return by noon on August 10 (although earlier may be possible).

Ages - 14+ or with approval

Minimum Experience & Ability
Applicants should have a minimum of 2 years climbing consistently 2+ days per week, preferably with a gym team program. Athletes should have experience lead climbing at a minimum of 5.11- on gym routes. Spearfish and Victoria Canyon have a high concentration of routes in the 5.11-5.12 range.

Program Overview
Spearfish Canyon in SW South Dakota is home to over 750 bolted sport climbing routes. It is a nationally recognized destination and firmly holds a position as one of North America's premier summer climbing destinations. The grade range spans 5.9 to 5.14, with a huge concentration in the 5.11 & 5.12 difficulties. This is a performance rock climbing program intended for motivated youth athletes who are driven to succeed. Athletes will be given the opportunity to perform to their potential, along with the high level mentorship and motivation that comes with every **alpha climbing** program.

Climbing and Athletic Focus
Slightly overhanging, single-pitch limestone sport routes will account for most of the climbing during this camp. Athletes will be provided the opportunity to work on onsight/flash and redpointing strategies. *It's important to understand that athletes will not be allowed to only climb on limit-level projects*, although adequate time will be given to projecting routes. Athletes will be required to belay and support the efforts of the rest of the group. The emphasis for this camp will be leading - minimal top roping will be available.

Program Fee and Additional Expenses -
$1950 - includes on ground transportation, most food, and accommodation (tent camping). Athletes will need an additional $20-40 for occasional take-out meals.

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Cell Signal, Wifi, and Communication
Cell signal is very limited in the canyons, but will be available in town. Daily check-ins with home will be allowed but we reserve the right to limit device time. Athletes will not be allowed to have devices out at the crag unless they are being used to take photos. The staff will carry a satellite beacon that can send and receive messages in an emergency.

Accommodations
This trip will tent camp at a national forest campground in Spearfish Canyon. Athletes will need basic car camping equipment. It can get cold at night. It will rain! Tents must be storm worthy! There is minimal cell phone coverage at camp, but usually text messages come through.

On Ground Transportation
Our AWD Chevy passenger van will be used. If the group grows beyond 8, a second van will be rented.

Eating/Food
Most breakfasts will be cooked. Mid-day food will consist of snacks, leftovers, and easy prep meals. Athletes will receive diverse and nourishing meals. We do attempt to minimize meat and dairy consumption during our trips. If you are a heavy meat and dairy eater please contact us before applying. We readily accommodate vegetarian needs and potentially, vegan needs. Please contact us with any major allergies before applying. Finally, we attempt to minimize added sugar in our food. Athletes who consume more than 50g sugar/day should contact us before applying.
We do not allow athletes to arrive with large quantities of snacks, bars, and other supplements. If dietary supplementation is necessary for any reason, please let us know and we will work with you on managing it.

Itinerary
Starting and ending locations in Bozeman, Montana with stops in Billings. The shuttle from Bozeman to Spearfish is included at no additional cost.
Accommodation and additional transportation can be pre-arranged and must be paid for by the athlete, or reimbursed to alpha climbing as required.
The climbing itinerary will be 3 days climbing followed by 1 recovery day followed by 3 days of climbing. Weather, of course, will have the final say in when we can climb.

The planned itinerary:
Saturday, July 11, 2025

- Depart Bozeman at 2 PM
- Arrive to Billings, Montana (if needed) by 4 PM
- Depart Billings by 4

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- Arrive to Spearfish 8 PM

July 12-18

- Climbing days (with one “rest day” for sightseeing)

Sunday, July 19

- Depart Camp in the morning
- Arrive to Billings, Montana by 1 pm
- Arrive to Bozeman, Montana by 3:30PM - pick-up will most likely be at the airport

Airport pickups

Airport pickups will be available in Bozeman and Billings, MT prior to the camp start time. Please consult with Aaron to confirm times before booking flights.

The schedule of fees for ala carte drop-off and accommodation services is as follows:

- Curbside airport pick-up/drop-off (each way): under 25 miles - $35
- Parked airport pick-up/drop-off (each way): additional $15
- Unaccompanied minor pick-up/drop-off (each way): $35 + $35/hour
- Overnight stay before or after listed program start/end date and time: TBD
- Airport or auxiliary shuttle (includes unique trips for emergency items or equipment needs) over 25 miles: $35/hour plus $.25/mile (total miles)

Van Shuttle from/to Bozeman

Weather

Athletes should be prepared for cool temperatures. A light insulated jacket is highly recommended.

Equipment Requirements

A full packing list will be provided upon request, or after the application has been accepted. Some of the requirements include:

- 40+ liter pack with enough capacity to carry a rope, quickdraws, and all personal gear
- Helmet with rated side-impact protection (verification will be required)
- Tent, pad, and sleeping bag rated to summer mountain weather
- 60-70m x 9.5mm rope in good condition (optional)
- 12+ quickdraws

Failure to arrive with the required equipment might result in limited opportunity until adequate fulfillment of the requirements occurs. A waiver on some of the equipment might be available.

Insurance

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Athletes must have health insurance. Families should check with their provider to inquire with out-of-network coverage in South Dakota. A medical consent form will be kept on hand in the case of medical emergencies where the parents cannot be reached.

Staffing

Mentor Olivia Harmanos and 1-2 other additional mentors as needed. Olivia will serve as lead mentor on this trip. She has led trips as an alpha mentor and with other programs for the past five summers. She began working with alpha after participating as an athlete for our 2019 gap semester in Greece. Olivia has over 17 years of outdoor climbing experience, expanding a variety of disciplines, and 10 years of youth coaching experience. She currently coaches the youth competitive team at Vital in New York City. The assistant mentor will be Alice Gutsche-Smith, who has 12 years of climbing experience and has assisted with alpha climbing's 2022 Mallorca, Spain trip and 2023 Bighorns and Black Hills camps.

All staff are certified using alpha climbing's proprietary mentorship and risk management training program.

All staff are 1st Aid/CPR certified, SafeSport trained, pass criminal background checks, and have safe driving records.

Permitting

This program will operate as permitted by the Black Hills National Forest, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies,

this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible State

or local Agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information is also available in languages other than English.

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To file a complaint alleging discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/ complaint_filing_cust.html , or at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provided in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

alpha climbing is an equal opportunity provider.

Scholarship

Scholarships are available on a need basis. Please email us at letsgo@alphaclimbing.com with inquiry. As a nonprofit organization we also accept donations beyond recommended trip costs that go towards our scholarship fund.

Other Activities

There won't be much time for other activities, unless the weather prevents us from climbing. Trips to hot springs, short hikes, and sunbathing might be options. This program will have one "rest" day from climbing to visit some local site-seeing attractions (TBD)

Disclaimers and other requirements for participation

- This is not a learn-to-climb program. It is not appropriate for beginners. To be considered, applicants must have significant climbing, including regular gym training. Climbers attending this camp will need to have the minimum ability of 5.10+ onsight and 5.11 redpoint on rock. There is very little climbing below the 5.10+ level.
- Most of the food provided during this program will be plant-based and vegetarian friendly. Minimal animal food products will be offered. Furthermore, we do not allow athletes to arrive with bars, supplements, snacks, and/or candy, and reserve the right to confiscate said items for the duration of the camp if they are found.
- Our staff maintains a vigilant approach to risk management and mentorship, but we require all athletes to be well versed in basic safety procedures. We usually require verification with a team coach or gym manager before accepting applications.
- Specific equipment is required for participation. Athletes arriving without listed requirements might incur limited participation or dismissal from the program. We need our athletes to arrive with the specific equipment requested. If you have any questions on whether or not your equipment is satisfactory, please contact us as soon as possible. In some cases, we will need to verify your equipment to ensure it meets our standards.
- Athletes must bear all responsibilities for the cost of arriving to and from the established start and ending locations and scheduled times. Early departure due

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to: personal or family emergencies; medical conditions; dissatisfaction with the program, staff, other participants, physical environment; et al, is the full and complete responsibility of the applicant.

- Athletes will be invoiced for expenses for arrangements made for airport pickups/drop offs; room and board before and after the established start/end times; damages to property due to abuse, negligence, or accident; or other incurred expenses that are auxiliary to the established programming and not the fault of alpha climbing staff or other participants or users.
- Participation is only allowed once all required paperwork is submitted and payment-in-full, or a commitment to pay-in-full, is received. Refunds or dismissal of a balance due shall not be given to early departures unless agreed upon by both the applicant and Alpha Climbing LLC administration.

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