



COURTESY AMGA

Climb On! The AMGA can now single pitch your butt up across the globe.

New Highs

The AMGA claims the first U.S. mountain guide program to gain international endorsement. By Jayme Otto

NEED SOME EXTRA CASH?

Pimp yourself out as a guide. Any type of mountain adventure will do—rock climbing, ice climbing, backcountry skiing. Position yourself in key mountain towns, solicit tourists with handmade flyers. Don't panic if you don't have any credentials, because in the U.S., by law, you don't need any. But change may be on the way.

For the past 25 years, the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) has strived to change the Wild West atmosphere of U.S. guiding and bring credibility to the profession through education, certification and standards. "When you hire a guide, even at the most basic level of climbing, you are essentially trusting this person with your life, like a doctor," says Betsy Novak, executive director of the AMGA. "The problem we have in the U.S. is that people don't question the qualifications of this person. AMGA certification is like insurance in that you know what you're getting."

This spring, AMGA's Single Pitch Instructor Certification Program (SPI) obtained unanimous sup-

port for international endorsement from all members of the Union Internationale des Associations D'Alpinisme (UIAA) Training Standards Working Group. The AMGA SPI Program is the first internationally endorsed certification program in the U.S. to be recognized by the UIAA. However, the UIAA's reach has already permeated other institutions in the U.S. REI, for example, will only sell UIAA-approved climbing gear.

The endorsement process took three years, but Novak thinks it was well worth it. "We feel that having the international recognition of the UIAA allows mountain guide professionals from different countries to recognize each other's qualifications. It's important for the AMGA to be at the forefront of what those standards are. By keeping up at the international level, we're setting the precedent for what should be happening in the U.S.," she says.

Next up? AMGA is seeking UIAA endorsement for its climbing wall instructor training program. Novak expects the process to be complete sometime in 2010.

whatever the adventure, a slog is inevitable
IS TCK SLOG SERIES ON
YOUR GEAR ESSENTIALS LIST?

BUY 1 PAIR OF SOCKS, GET 1 PAIR
when you shop at slogseries.com

online promo code:
1611SOCKS

TCK SLOG SERIES

(free pair must be of equal or lesser value; discount will be applied
in the form of an instant refund via PayPal)