

ZIP LINING
ADVENTURE ZONES

WIND YOUR WAY
TO WATERFALLS

EXPEDITIONS TO
INCLUDE EVERYONE

A FISH FOR
ALL SEASONS

ARKANSAS

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE GUIDE



A BEGINNER GOES FLY FISHING

Rebecca Lentz won victory over a difficult childhood and two bouts with cancer to become an Arkansas Ambassador for fly fishing.

This young woman with a knack for embracing the joy of the moment is now **TEACHING NEWCOMERS** how to fish. Her passion for the natural world seeps through every word as she strides along the bank of the White River at Gaston's, scouting for the best spot.

"The **BROWN TROUT** are spawning right now, so we don't want to walk where they're laying their eggs on the river bottom," she says, adjusting her sunglasses. "These polarized glasses are great – they reveal the redd, which are the lighter circles where the brown trout have been laying."

She shows her new fishing partner, Liana Osgood, the best place to avoid the redd and get into the water in their waders. Liana is surprised by how comfortable and dry the waders are. "Just a little bit of coolness at the toes," she says, smiling.



"Casting, stripping your line and recasting has its own rhythm, just like breathing brings a rhythm to meditation."



@ladyanglerlentz

The lines are set, the knots tied. "A fly can be anywhere in its life-stage from an egg to a midge," Rebecca explains. "So they don't always look like a fly with wings." She compliments Liana's stance, feet set apart to allow the water to flow through for best balance as the novice fisher lifts the rod for the first time.

"Go ahead and roll it with your wrist, like **FLICKING PAINT**," Rebecca says. Liana's line ribbons out over the water, the last curve suspended in a gentle U before the fly settles into the ripples.

In the **WHITE RIVER** and **LITTLE RED RIVER**, rainbow trout are most common, but the rivers are also plentifully stocked with tiger trout, cutthroat trout and, perhaps the most prized, brown trout, which fans call "butters" for their yellow color with brown spots.

"Brown trout are more elusive," Rebecca says.

"They're smarter, and they hang out along the banks and shelves. You really have to do your work to trick them and catch them."

"Catch" is a slippery word, though, for this woman committed to preserving the balance of nature. She uses **BARBLESS HOOKS** to ensure that the fish will sustain the least possible damage from fishing, even though that hook choice makes a catch more difficult.

"Lots of times, we'll use the hashtag **#FISHEXPLORECONSERVE** because we want the fishing experience to be there for future generations," Rebecca says. "So we catch and release. CPR – catch, photograph, release."

BELOW: FLIES


BELOW RIGHT: RAINBOW TROUT



The benefits of fly fishing go far beyond recreation.

"Standing in the water is very peaceful," Rebecca says. "A lot of people I connect with on Instagram are drawn to that part of it. One guy who had been struggling with addiction found fly fishing, and now it's his new addiction! It's like meditation. It's repetitive and calming."

As the women cast and recast, a hush falls over the river. Now, we're waiting on something beyond human control – waiting on **NATURE HERSELF**. Fly fishing has opened a flow of potential like the water – a welcoming of whatever may come – a moment of harmony.

And just like that, a new angler is born. The flies skim the surface, but the love of the sport runs deep. 



“The longer I climbed,
the braver I got.”



@wild_childs

“A big part of climbing is just hanging out with friends outdoors,” Katie says. “And then there’s the **ADRENALINE** and the feeling of **ACCOMPLISHMENT**. There’s some pride because you’ve done something kinda scary.”

Because climbing holds real risks that are part of the thrill, Katie wants beginners to start safely.

ROCK CLIMBING

RUNS IN THE FAMILY

If two-year-old toddler Jonas can train his finger strength on his mom’s hang board, we can all be **ROCK CLIMBERS**.

Katie Childs and her husband Jonathan are the proud parents of this ambitious little one, who looks likely to follow in their footholds someday.

“I got into climbing because of my husband,” Katie says. “He’d been climbing off and on, and when he wanted to climb every weekend, I said, ‘**I WANNA GO!**’ So I’ve been climbing for about 12 years now.”

Katie’s **BACKGROUND IN BALLET** helped her progress rapidly to more difficult climbs because of the full-body workout shared by both ballet and climbing. But technical progress is only a small part of the climbing experience.

“If you go with a group of friends, go with **SOMEONE EXPERIENCED**,” she says. “Climbing gyms can also refer you to guide services.”

She hooks up the harness, showing how the carabiner clips into the belt loop to form a secure harness running around the thighs.

“Usually, you’d start in a climbing gym first so you can experience the movement, handle the gear and have a **PRO TEACH YOU** how to belay,” she says.

Belaying, the art of feeding rope to a climber whose safety depends on you, is the heart of the sport climbing experience and the first skill to learn.

Now, Katie will climb to the top of the rock to set the rope in the permanent anchor for Liana Osgood, who is making her first climb today. This phase, the **“LEAD CLIMB,”** is the more dangerous phase and should be attempted only by an experienced climber and belayer. Jonathan belays for Katie, watching closely and maintaining his firm grip on the end of the rope.

“The longer I climbed, the braver I got,” she says, reaching for her next foothold with a sinewy stretch. “It’s a confidence thing. I’d lead a climb now that I would not have led a few years ago.”

A few minutes later, she’s back on the ground with Liana.

“OK, are we ready?” Katie asks, smiling.

Liana takes a deep breath and clips in.

The **FULL-BODY EFFORT** is clear as her body stretches out in sharp relief, every muscle defined against the unyielding rock.

“OK, we’re going to have you take a fall here at the start,” Katie says. “That way, you’ll feel how safe it is.”

Liana pauses, then lets herself trust fall back off the rock. The **HARNES CRADLES HER** firmly. She exhales, then laughs.

“See?” Katie says. “No problem!”

With greater confidence, Liana attaches herself to the wall again, feeling for the next fistful of rock. It’s on.

“You don’t want to climb in gloves, even though they are great for belaying,” Katie says. “As climbs get harder, the holds get smaller, sometimes only a **FINGERTIP WIDE**, and you need a good grip. Chalk also helps keep your hold even if there’s an adrenaline rush and sweat.”

“Most people deal with the heights at some point but get over it,” Jonathan explains quietly. “Climbs are graded on difficulty, so a lot of growth happens over the process of attempting more difficult climbs that are **MENTALLY CHALLENGING** in different ways. It’s like a lot of personal-growth-driven sports like running – first you start with half a mile, then a mile and then work toward five.”

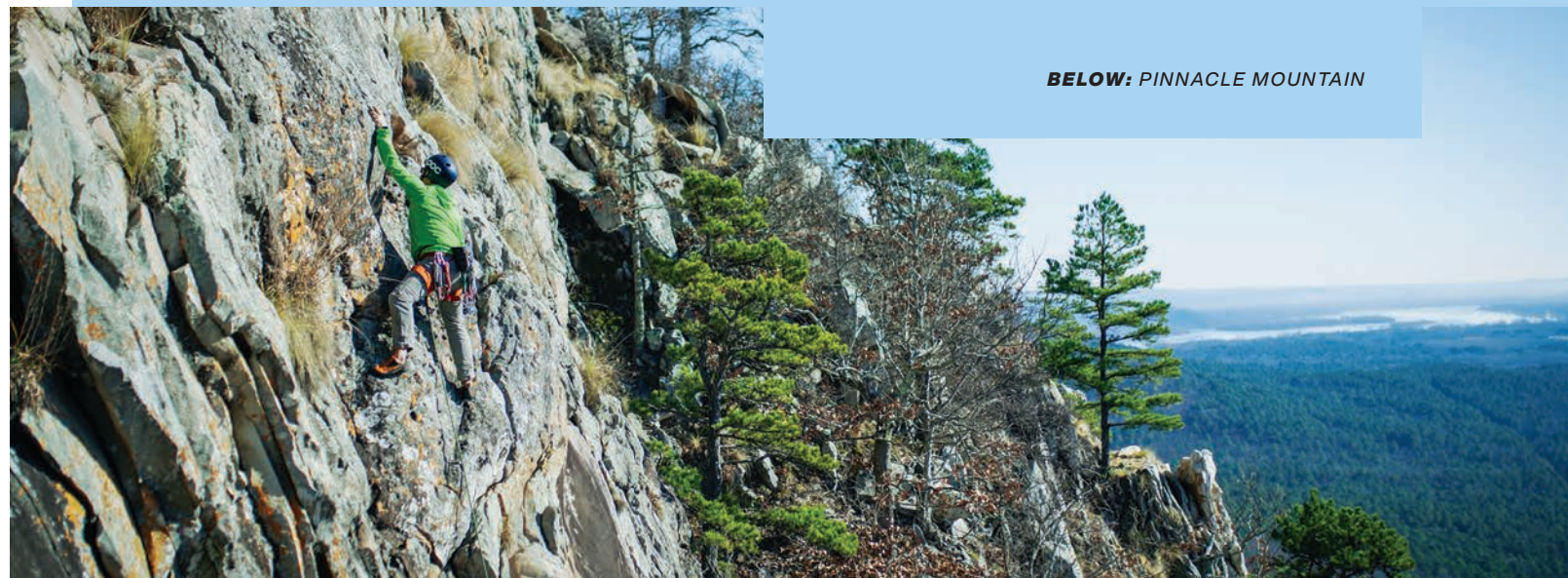
Katie calls encouragement to Liana who has just found secure holds and is pausing for a quick breather. “There you go! You’ve got this.”

“It’s crazy how climbing people will come from all over the world to small sites,” Katie says. “Here at **HORSESHOE CANYON RANCH**, you find people from all over the world, like France. Then, when we were in France bouldering, we saw people we knew from Arkansas!”

Liana has resumed her climb and is cresting the top. With a last surge of effort, she reaches her feet and turns to look out over the vista. She is glowing.

Jonathan wears a broad grin, sharing in the new **CLIMBER’S ELATION**. “It’s definitely awesome to see someone do something out of their element and succeed.” **AH**

BELOW: PINNACLE MOUNTAIN



YES, YOU CAN BE A

MOUNTAIN BIKER



“You can make wherever you live the outer limits, even your own backyard.”



@nat_ross

MUSCULAR MOUNTAIN BIKERS shoot high in the air over rocks and ramps, amazing us lesser mortals who may think we’re never destined to straddle a mountain bike. But mountain biking trails also come in forms that are fun and accessible for lots of people who love the outdoors, and Arkansas is home to the perfect expert to teach a beginner the ropes.

Mountain Bike Hall of Famer Nat Ross talks about biking with the same boundless energy that made him a champion in endurance racing. A native of Colorado, Ross now lives in **BENTONVILLE**, the hottest new spot for mountain biking. When he’s not brewing up a new pilsner for kicks, he loves to help people discover the pleasures and rewards of all things MTB.



ABOVE: COLER MOUNTAIN
BIKE PRESERVE

“It’s a great way to get outdoors, travel some ground and really **EXPLORE**,” Ross says as he pulls on his gloves. “When you get off-road, you always have a chance to explore. Whether you’re riding a gravel road or crossing a creek, biking doesn’t take a simple **A-TO-B PATH**. So even if you’re just running an errand in town and you decide to bike, it always makes your journey more interesting.”

Because equipment and skills are the foundation of safety, Ross advises that beginners should get some guidance when they first start out.

“Guidance can come in the form of lessons or just having someone there with more experience,” Ross says. “That way, you can acquire the tips you need to speed up the **LEARNING CURVE**. Even YouTube has a lot of helpful videos that can teach you the basics.”

Beginners should start on a wide-open, grassy space with a gradual downhill, the kind of terrain that opens up a window for success.

“It’s all pretty easy to master once you figure out the **SHIFTING SYSTEM**,” Ross says. “So a grass hillside is the ideal spot. After starting there, you’d move on to dirt surfaces, then to features with rocks and wood.”

With the rising popularity of **E-BIKES** that use battery packs to assist riding at times, riders of all fitness levels can try out mountain biking as long as they are willing to challenge themselves. Rentals also make it easy for newbies to try out the sport before committing to a personal purchase.

“This sport is getting more and more popular for working folks who are stuck on computers all day,” Ross says. “Mountain biking is becoming the new golf, because after work, you can **GET OUTDOOR EYE CANDY** from time spent with nature along with the endorphins from exercise.”

Essential safety equipment includes a helmet, sunglasses or goggles, and often knee pads. Gloves keep hands firmly on handlebars without chafing. Some of the most prized trails are what mountain bikers call “**FLOWY**,” a quality that allows the trail to maximize ease of ride.

“Flow trails have a gradient: a net gain or net loss of elevation,” Ross says. “The trail will contour the side of a hill in an appealing way with **UNDULATIONS** and **HUMPS** to keep the bike moving so that it’s a pleasure and not as punishing. You get the gradient and the hills without having a steep, long pedal uphill.”

More advanced riders sometimes seek out “technical” trails with elements that tend to be more difficult to navigate like **ROCK GARDENS**, **WALL RIDES** or **LOG PILES**.

“Here in Arkansas, one great aspect is the accessibility of our trails,” Ross says. “**COLER MOUNTAIN BIKE PRESERVE** is only 2 miles from downtown Bentonville and sits on 150 acres to explore. They offer camping and three trailheads with accessibility to parking. There’s a coffee shop out there in the middle of the trails, so you have to ride or run to it, which is a great way to take a break.”

Ross loves the way that mountain biking allows your rides to flex with your personal goals.

“Everybody has their own method of achieving their **END GOALS**. Maybe it’s exercise, pushing your own limits a little bit, maybe getting some sensory overload. For me, it might be crossing a creek, so I get the experience of being in the mountains but without suiting up from head to toe. Does your ride check your own boxes? That’s what matters.” **AG**

For in-depth information on Arkansas cycling routes, events and resources, order a free copy of the Arkansas Cycling Guide at arkansas.com/cycling.



"I give my diamonds
to my daughters."



@thearkansasdiamondminer

FIND DIAMONDS

WITH INSIDER TIPS FOR SUCCESS

If you go dig for diamonds, you're going to get to play in the mud, just like you've always wanted. There's a gamble involved every time in this **TREASURE HUNT**, but learning some techniques and tricks can raise your chances of going home with a sparkly prize.

So says Solomon Baughman, a lifelong Arkansan who has been mining for diamonds since 1999. While on vacation in south Arkansas, he followed a sign that led him to the world's only public diamond mine, located at **CRATER OF DIAMONDS STATE PARK**. Little did he know that his first trip would lead to many more over the next two decades.

Now, he posts instructional videos on YouTube to help beginners enjoy a successful mining trip to the state park, where **VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS** have brought diamonds and other minerals to the surface of the earth.

More than 33,100 diamonds have been found by park visitors since the state park opened in 1972. Notable diamonds found here include the 40-carat Uncle Sam, the largest diamond ever unearthed in the U.S.

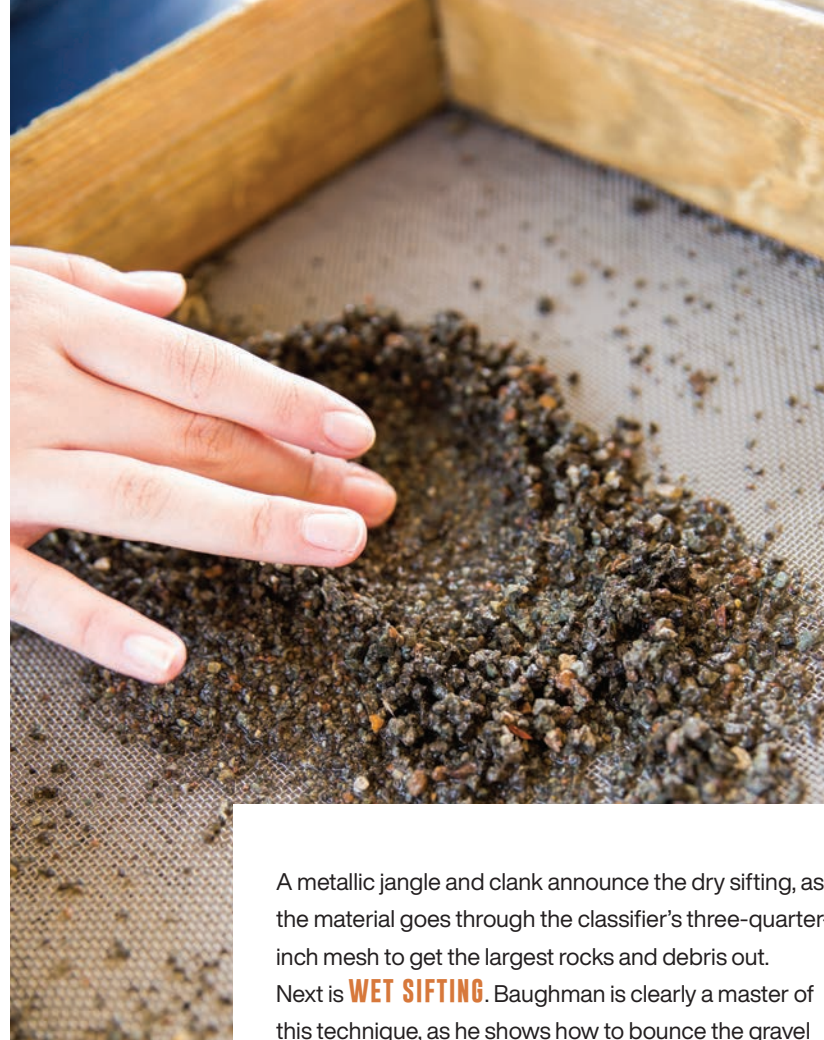
The fun of getting dirty comes with some cautions. "You need to have a whole set of throwaway clothes!" Baughman chuckles. "You are not going to come out clean. Don't do it in a three-piece suit."

He turns and looks out at the diamond field.

"See how the field is plowed into **FURROWS**? That's so the rain runoff will carry the heavier material into deposits on the side of the furrows."

He leans down to a patch where the small rocks and gravel are heavier. "This is what you're looking for. You want to gather the material that's already been concentrated by the water flow, and the best time to go is a couple of days after a good rain."

His shovel bites into the damp ground, and the combined dirt and gravel drop into the bucket with an old-fashioned thud. It's just like playing in a mud pile and stirs up the same childlike glee, but with the excitement of **REAL DIAMONDS** thrown in too.



A metallic jangle and clank announce the dry sifting, as the material goes through the classifier's three-quarter-inch mesh to get the largest rocks and debris out. Next is **WET SIFTING**. Baughman is clearly a master of this technique, as he shows how to bounce the gravel and then shimmies it side-to-side to make the heavier material find a center. "If you don't get it to form a center, it will be hard to find anything in all the dirt," he says.

With a thump, he overturns the screen sifter to look at the bright center, where the minerals have now formed a noticeable cluster.

"There's some **SPINEL**," he says, pointing to some opaque, black, shiny stones. Pink garnet, calcite, barite and quartz crystals or even amethyst may show up in the mix, along with diamonds of several colors.

At the end of their visit each day, visitors can take home all the **"CENTERS"** from their sifted searches that will fit in a five-gallon bucket. Half the diamonds that come from the park are found at home, when miners have more time to look through all the minerals in their clusters.

For Baughman, though, finding the treasure is only part of the fun.

"The best thing is the camaraderie," he says. "A lot of **FAMILIES** will go down there for three or four days, so you can make new friends from all over the country. I'll see people I haven't seen in years. When one of your mining friends finds a diamond, everyone is high-fiving each other and it's exciting."

His warm smile reveals the other part of the reward. "I give my diamonds to my daughters," he says. "There's nothing monetary about it." **AH**

For mining tip videos and all go-to info for visiting Crater of Diamonds State Park, see arkansasstateparks.com/parks/crater-diamonds-state-park.

