

## The AscendME Project

**AscendME (Ascend Middle East):** is a large scale long, term project; which contains many small pieces of a much larger puzzle. It will start with the UAE and Oman and as a growing sandstorm will spread to all Middle Eastern Countries.

**Mission/Objective:** to build, develop, promote and teach safe climbing and mountain sports; while helping to support the local communities/business around the climbing areas, to support the climbing community, to help the local children's charities, and to clean up the climbing areas first in the UAE and Oman then other Middle Easter Countries.

**How:** AscendME is broken down into 5 main parts that all tie together to complete the objective:

1. UAE Rock Trip (Oman in October 2014)
2. AscendME Access and Bolting Fund
3. MEMGA (Middle East Mountain Sports Association)
4. Ascendme.com
5. NEW UAE and Oman Guidebook
6. Charity

## UAE Rock Trip

**What:** The UAE Rock Trip is a tour of all the major climbing with in the UAE for 2-3 weeks by a team of experienced international climbers as well as local climbers.

**When:** 4<sup>th</sup> February to 24<sup>th</sup> February

### Objectives during the Rock Trip:

1. To establish as many new climbing routes in the existing areas.
  - a. Dibba 5 days
  - b. Ras Al Khaimah 4 days
  - c. Fujeriah Wadi Wruyyah 4 days
  - d. Hatta 4 days
  - e. Al Ain 4 Days
2. To fix old routes that need to be fixed
3. Promote UAE Climbing
4. Get the local climbing community involved and working together for a common goal
5. Get new climbers to the areas to learn safe climbing
6. Film of the Rock Trip

7. To clean up rubbish around all the locations
8. Give back to local communities and to children's charity

### **Needed, How and Why:**

1. Climbers and Bolters
  - a. We have a few great teams of climbers on board for the project already from: Spain, UAE, Jordan, Oman, and Lebanon. Online Marketing of the trip will be done to invite other climbers from around the world to come take a part.
2. Camera/Production Crew and Movie
  - a. A few photographers, videographers are on board already we will need more.
  - b. Profits from the sale of the UAE Rock Trip will be divided the following ways 50% towards local children's charity, 50% to the UAE Bolting Fund
  - c. The UAE Rock Trip will be a full length movie on climbing in this region
  - d. The movie will be sold around the world as well as shown for free on local TV stations
  - e. Will be available for a short time online for free viewing
3. Production Company to produce the movie. Sales of the movie will go towards children's charity, towards UAE bolting fund and other parts of the AscendME project.
4. To Raise a Minimum of 100,00dhs from individual/corporate donations/sponsorship by sending them our proposal and asking for financial support. By starting the AscendME project on Kickstarter.com and other like online donation projects. By sales of shirts, hoodies, patches and calendars.
  - a. The money given by donation/sponsorship will be split into the following way: 25% will go towards local children's charities the other 75% is for the Rock Trip/Bolting Fund
  - b. The money raised by sales from the shirts, hoodies, patches and calendars will be split the following way 50% towards children's charities 50% to the Rock Trip/Bolting Fund
  - c. The fund raised towards the Rock Trip/Bolting Fund
    - i. Hangers and chains, Hilti is sponsoring 3000-5000 bolts; we still need to purchase hangers and chains.
    - ii. Drills (Hilti might sponsor a few more) ropes, wrenches, hammers and other needed equipment
    - iii. Food for the bolters, workers, camera crew for the time they are here
    - iv. Transportation for the team around the UAE
    - v. Flights (the Spanish team said they will pay for their flights and other climbers will also pay their own flights and if enough funds can be generated some of the money will be used to help with the cost of the tickets of those coming to do the work)
    - vi. Accommodation (most of the time we will camp)
    - vii. Signs will be made for each area in Arabic and English with the name of the climbing area, warnings, risks, emergency contact number
    - viii. Trash bins for each area

- ix. Other Expenses
- 5. **Sponsors:** (Hilti, Petzl, TraksPro, Fixe, Climbing Brand Companies, Media, Tour Companies, Airlines, anyone willing to sponsor the project)
  - a. Sponsors will receive marketing and advertisement in our campaigns, shirts, movie online, media etc.
  - b. We will also send our proposal out to brands and companies asking for support for:
    - i. 200-400 various size shirts
    - ii. 200-400 hoodies or jackets
    - iii. Printing of shirts, hoodies/jackets, patches, calendar
    - iv. Filming and Production
    - v. Equipment
    - vi. Hangers
    - vii. Mallions
    - viii. Chains
    - ix. Tents/Camping Equipment
    - x. Climbing Equipment
    - xi. Tools
    - xii. Transportation
    - xiii. Food
    - xiv. Marketing and PR
    - xv. Permits into Dibba for UAE Residents
    - xvi. Dhow for one day in Dibba to get the team DWS (Deep Water Soloing) and to film it
    - xvii. Flights
    - xviii. Other things we might need
- 6. **Marketing** will need to be done to promote the project
  - a. Online
    - i. Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, Youtube etc.
    - ii. Email
    - iii. Climbing Websites
    - iv. Sponsors website
  - b. Local News and Magazines
    - i. News Paper
    - ii. TV
    - iii. Radio
  - c. Posters in local climbing shops and gyms

**Benefits:** The Climbing Community, Local Communities/Businesses, Sponsors, Charity etc. will all benefit from the AscendME Project. This project will have a major positive impact in the following ways.

### 1. Climbing Community

- a. More Climbs trad and sport

- b. Old Routes that need repairing will be repaired
- c. More routes = more climbing and community growth
- d. Safer Climbers and Climbing Areas
- e. Clean Climbing Areas
- f. A chance to meet new people and climbers from around the world
- g. The Climbers will be working towards common goals
- h. The Climbers are giving back to local charities to help out and make a difference

## **2. Local Communities/Businesses**

- a. More Climbing Routes will bring more climbers living around the UAE and from around the world who will purchase climbing gear from equipment shops, petrol from gas stations, food and beverages from local stores, cafes and restaurants
- b. The areas where the climbing is will be cleaned up and an effort will be made to maintain the cleanliness
- c. Getting the locals who live around the climbing areas involved will give them a better knowledge and understanding of climbing and its benefits
- d. Local Tour Companies will have an increase in business for mountain based sports (Absolute Adventure, Explorer Tours, Arabia Outdoors, Sky Musandam, Rahal Musandam, Spirit of Adventure, Al Shaheen, Ecoventure etc.)

## **3. Sponsors**

- a. Marketing and Advertisement
  - i. Top Sponsors will have a commercial at the beginning of the UAE Rock Trip Video which will be sold around the world and uploaded online in small pieces.
  - ii. All Sponsors will be listed in the credits
  - iii. Sponsors will be listed on the T shirts worn by those on the UAE Rock Trip
  - iv. Sponsors will be listed in all online marketing: Emails, Facebook, and Youtube etc.
- b. Sponsors will receive recognition from the climbing community, local communities and children's charities for being part of a beneficial event.
- c. Logos and branding of sponsors by everyone involved in the UAE Rock Trip

## **4. Charity**

- a. The percentage outlined above from donations and sales will be set aside and donated to local children's charities
  - i. The money given by donation/sponsorship will be split into the following way: 25% will go towards local children's charities the other 75% is for the Rock Trip/Bolting Fund
  - ii. The money raised by sales from the shirts, hoodies, patches and calendars will be split the following way 50% towards children's charities 50% to the Rock Trip/Bolting Fund
  - iii. Profits from the sale of the UAE Rock Trip will be divided the following ways 50% towards local children's charity, 50% to the UAE Bolting Fund
- b. **Charities** that will benefit from the proceeds are:
  - i. Rotary Club

- 1.
- ii. Gulf For Good
  - 1.
- iii. Other
  1. ??

## AscendME Access and Bolting Fund Outline

The AscendME Access Fund will fall under the AscendME.com website and domain and will be a branch of MEMGA (Middle East Mountain Guide Association). Please refer to the sections below for more information on AscendME.Com and MEMGA

Countries that have large amounts of developed climbing areas have Bolting or Access Funds and Organizations set up to: raise funds, keep climbing areas open, help with ongoing development of climbing areas and routes, repair and maintenance of old or damaged areas and routes and conserves the climbing environment, educate climbers, land owners, national and local government on climbing, bolting, safety and conservation. Having an Access Fund/Organization that can help benefit and protect mountain sports in the Middle East is crucial for many reasons. The AscendME Access Fund will support and represent the growing number of climbing areas, routes, climbers and climbing communities in the UAE and Oman then ALL Middle East Countries with mountain based spots in all forms of climbing: rock, ice, mountaineering, bouldering, caving, canyoning, via ferrata and trekking.

The Access Fund will be modeled of the US and UK Access and Bolting Funds which work with federal, state and local officials; local climbing organizations; and land managers to develop and guide climbing management policies for public and private lands.

On a National Level this work includes advocating for climbing issues in Middle Eastern Countries:

 Bahrain,  Cyprus,  Egypt,  Iran,  Iraq,  Israel,  Jordan,  Kuwait,  Lebanon,  Northern Cyprus,  Oman,  Palestine,  Qatar,  Saudi Arabia,  Syria,  Turkey<sup>[19]</sup>,  United Arab Emirates and  Yemen

When there is a state or national policy issue that will have direct impact on the climbing community, the Access Fund actively lobbies local, state and national government towards a mutually agreeable policy. However, the majority of the national work will be developing and maintaining relationships with policy makers in order to consistently keep the interests of climbers on their agenda.

On a local level, this work includes guidance for both local climbing organizations and land managers/owners on climbing issues that directly impact their land. In areas where there is a local climbing organization in place, the Access Fund will work with the locals, providing them with legal and national policy expertise to empower them to develop climbing management strategies that are best

suited for their area. In areas where there is no local climbing organization, the Access Fund represents climbers' interests during the planning process, helping land managers/owners to formulate policies and reduce impacts and liability.

## **Climbing Impacts**

Climbing, once an obscure activity with few participants, has become a mainstream form of outdoor sports and recreation. Climbing occurs in unique environmental settings such as mountains, wadis, cliff sides, canyons, and alpine areas, which can also harbor valuable natural and cultural resources. These unique settings also present land managers with distinctive challenges. Climbing activities take place primarily off-trail, away from developed facilities, and historically have had little oversight by land managers or owners. Given the ever-growing popularity of climbing and other outdoor recreation activities, potential impacts on resource values must be considered and appropriate management actions taken.

**Ecological impacts** are those impacts that have a potential effect on the biological and physical characteristics of a site or resource, making the area less natural. While some climbing impacts are similar to those found in other recreation environments (for example camping and hiking), managing rock climbing activity poses special challenges due to the unique character of the climbing environment, which is spatially diverse and encompasses both a horizontal and vertical perspective. Some of the ecological issues presented by climbing include climber trails, bivouacking and backcountry camping, human waste disposal, vegetation, water resources, and wildlife.

**Cultural Impacts** are often caused due to climber being attracted to the same geologic formations that Middle Eastern Locals identify as traditional cultural and religious places. Cultural resources include, but are not limited to, Native American sacred sites, archaeological sites, petroglyphs and pictographs, ancient and historic trails, historic mining areas, cabins, springs, and landscapes that may include a mountain or a river. Foot traffic, climber trails, ground compaction, chalk residue, and other effects associated with climbing activities may affect cultural resources just as they do natural resources. Climbing activity often interfaces with cultural resources and may result in the development of climbing management plans on federal lands.

**Social impacts** have a potential effect on an individual's recreation experience through the interaction or behavior of others (climber-to-climber or climber-to-non-climber). Examples of the potential social impacts of climbing include: crowding, litter, brightly colored equipment that contrasts with the rock, shiny hardware (bolts, carabineers), the use of chalk, other visitors in the area, and the presence of climbers. The impacts of trail and rock erosion and vegetation damage may also detract from the aesthetic quality of a recreation area.

## **Climbing Management**

Climbing presents unique management challenges due to its historic associations, the equipment used, the different forms of climbing activity, and the diversity of environments where climbing takes place. Management response to the effects of climbing activity will depend on many factors, including whether the land is public or private, the mission of the agency or field unit, and staffing or budgetary resources.

Each natural area is unique, requiring land managers to exercise broad discretion in managing recreational activities.

### **Development of a Climbing Management Plan**

Climbing Management Plans are an effective way for land managers to manage climbing on both public and private lands. A successful Climbing Management Plan:

- Builds cooperative relationships between climbers and resource managers.
- Provides management direction that is the minimum necessary to protect resources and is implemented on a graduated scale from indirect measures (e.g. education) to direct measures (restrictions).
- Satisfies statutory requirements and internal agency guidance (where applicable).
- Provides information about status and contextual importance of resource values, climbing activity and Provides information about contextual use patterns, and effects of climbing activity on identified resource values.
- Articulates climbing as a recreational experience, and describe the variety of climbing opportunities as values.
- Identifies management alternatives that address climbing impacts in a manner that is consistent with management approach to other recreation groups.

Climbers' compliance with management approaches is generally good in areas where management priorities are well publicized and there have been opportunities for public involvement in development of management policy. Poor compliance often arises in situations where there has been limited communication between climbers and resource managers, where management policies show poor understanding of climbing activity and use patterns, or where new restrictions have arisen without the identification of problems through field observation.

### **Bouldering Management**

Bouldering is the practice of climbing on small rock formations or boulders that are short enough in height that ropes and gear are not necessary. Since bouldering does not utilize ropes, relying on fellow boulders to act as "spotters" is the common practice. In general, bouldering falls are frequent, but short. Spotters redirect falling climbers away from hazards and towards the safest landing zone. For this reason, most boulderers climb in a group (usually 2-6 people), relying on one another not only for technical climbing advice and positive encouragement, but for safety benefits as well. Unlike many other forms of climbing, the majority of bouldering activity takes place on the ground around the rock formation. This activity does have the potential to increase the typical impacts of climbing.

### **Local Support and Mobilization**

When a local climbing access issue occurs, the best line of defense is always the local climbers who are familiar with the area and the issues. That is why a critical piece of the Access Fund's work is

encouraging, organizing, and supporting local climbers to join together into local climbing organizations. We offer one-on-one guidance, educational resources, stewardship programs, and grants to help get these local organizations up and running.

Each local climbing organization adds to the strength and voice of our climbing community. The Access Fund helps to pull these individual organizations together into a grassroots network that not only increases climbers' influence on national policy issues, but acts as a channel for extending climbing advocacy and stewardship work. It is through this grassroots channel that the Access Fund is able to:

- rally climbers together into both local and national letter-writing campaigns
- inform and educate climbers on the local impact of national policies
- promote and support stewardship efforts and events
- educate climbers on effective climbing management strategies, land acquisitions, and resources on how to manage private lands

### **National and Regional Coordinators**

National and Regional Coordinators (NCs and RCs) are volunteers from each Middle East Country who serve as a point of contact and support for local access issues. These individuals are liaisons to local areas, representing climbers' interests on both public and private lands. They facilitate efforts to keep climbing areas open. The dedicated volunteers who serve as regional coordinators are committed to providing climbers with solutions that will preserve America's diverse climbing resources for future generations. When access issues arise in a climbing area, if there is not a local climbing organization, climber can reach out to NCs and RCs in their country and or region.

### **Stewardship and Conservation**

The Access Fund envisions a world where climbers are seen as stewards of the land versus simply "users" of the land. To this end, we advocate for a balance between recreational access and environmental conservation, and we encourage climbers to respect and honor the places and policies where they climb.

The Access Fund helps to organize volunteer events across the country, providing climbers with the support and resources that allow them to care for and give back to lands where they climb

The Access Fund collaborates with some of the country's foremost environmental organizations, including Earthworks, the Sierra Club, the Trust for Public Lands, Wilderness Society, The Nature Conservancy, and National Parks and Conservation Association. We collaborate on issues such as the use of fixed anchors in Wilderness areas, the preservation of lands threatened by development, the role of local stewardship in protecting public lands, political advocacy on public lands issues such as mining reform, and the protection of birds and other cliff-dwelling wildlife.



Working as a united community, in cooperation with land managers and environmental agencies, improves the reputation of climbers as legitimate, responsible, and conservation-minded stewards.

### **Risk Management & Landowner Support**

Exposure to potential liability is often a concern of both private and public landowners when considering climbing access. Yet, the perception of risk associated with climbing is often overstated and misunderstood.

Access Fund offers both private landowners and public land manager's resources to help understand risk management and liability protection. We also provide tools to mitigate both real and perceived risks. Together with local climbing organizations, the Access Fund can help landowners/managers develop access agreements that incorporate risk management strategies, stewardship support, and best climbing management practices. Such agreements, including recreational leases, are temporary in nature, yet renewable. These types of agreements offer landowners a viable option for public access within a set timeframe, and are a good alternative for climbers when an acquisition or permanent easement is not an option

Risk management: Understand the various layers of liability protection, including national, regional, state, city recreational use statutes, case law, waiver systems, and other basic strategies.

### **Education**

The AscendME Access Fund's educational work will be a vehicle for building the capacity of individual climbers and local climbing organizations, empowering them to protect the lands they climb on. The goal is to mainstream the climbing access mission through educational offerings that span the breadth of the AscendME Access Fund's focus—from effective public and private land management practices, to writing a climbing management plan, respecting and lessening impact on the climbing environment, political activism strategies, stewardship and conservation guidance, how to start a successful local climbing organization, information about what's going on in your backyard, and safe climbing practices. The Access Fund also works to educate public and private land managers and policy makers on the mechanics and culture of climbing, risk management, and how to lessen impact.

# **MEMSA (Middle East Mountain Sport Association)**

## **AscendME.com**

Ascendme.com will be the data base for all mountain sports in the Middle East. The website will be modeled after and function similarly to the following website: UKclimbing.com, MountainProject.com, RockClimbing.com, 27Crag.com, UKBoltFund.org and AccessFund.org.

The Website will contain the following:

1. Data Base of Areas and Routes for all Middle Eastern Countries in which climbers will be able to have an individual username and password to access the website and will be able to add or update areas and routes with relevant information, picture, topos and videos.
2. Interactive Google Map with GPS location of climbing areas.
3. Forum for each Middle Eastern Country where climbers can discuss: Areas, Routes, Partners, Gear, Trips, Event etc.
4. Find partners, groups, guides, events, education, classes, walls, gyms, and shops.
5. News on Middle East Climbing
6. Information on climbing equipment
7. Smart Phone and Tablet Application
8. MEMGA (Middle East Mountain Guide Associations)
  - a. Information, events, classes
  - b. AscendME Access and Bolting Fund
    - i. Information
    - ii. Donation

## **NEW UAE and Oman Guidebook**

Each country and region with established has a reference or guide book about climbing in that country or region that can usually be found at local climbing and sporting good shops. A guide book usually contains information, directions, precautions/warnings, where to camp for each area; information on each climbing route, name of the route, grade (difficulty), First Ascent (who climbed it first) etc.

The UAE and Oman have separate guidebooks; both of which are very outdated. Since the release of the guidebooks more than twice as many new areas and routes have been established. Typically updates are done every few years; however there has not been an updated publication. An updated guidebook is severely needed for both countries

The AscendME Project will also be working on writing a new guidebook for the UAE/ Oman. There are many benefits to having an updated guidebook:

1. Climbers will know of the new areas, route, precautions etc.
2. Climbing guide books promote local climbing and bring new climbers as well as visiting climbers from other parts of the world
3. Sponsors will have advertisements pages and be listed in the book that will be sold at stores and shops around the UAE, Oman and online.

4. Guide books are sold in local shops; climbers who come to purchase a guidebook usually purchase other items from these shops
5. The profits of the guide book will be divided up in the following ways:
  - a. 50% to MEMSA and AscendME Access and Bolting Fund
  - b. 25% to local charities
  - c. 25% to the authors of the guidebook

