

Top Roping Trip to Vaso Island, November 2024



Potomac Mountain Club



Background

BLUF

If you're only interested in the climbs, jump to [The Climbs](#).

Members

Irina Geiman
James Elliott
Jeff Burka

Eric Mayl
Jennifer O'Brien
Leslie Hill
Leila Desotelle

Simon Carr
Brian Florence
Carol Clayton



Equipment

- Rubber dinghy
- TR setups - 5
- Various slings, cordelettes, extra carabiners for rappelling and belaying from the top.
- 12V air pump
- Kayaks – 4

Proposed Schedule

- 8:00 a.m. meet at Carderock Climbers parking lot
- 9:00 a.m. have everyone on the island
- 9:15 a.m. walk the tops of the walls
- 10:00 a.m. start climbing
- 4:00 p.m. start heading home

The schedule worked pretty well!

The Trip

8:00 am

What a beautiful day!

If you have ever climbed at Carderock on a beautiful fall day you know you want to be there early because the best spots fill up very quickly. We were in no such hurry. No one was going to take our spots today!

Most everyone was there by 8:00; it took a little time to get gear organized and the boats blown up, so it worked out perfectly. And thanks so much to Carol for bringing her electric pump! That let us save our muscle power for the rock. :)

We launched directly from Hades Heights, right in front of Arnold's Arduous Ascent. We used a light static line to lower some boats down over Biceps. Others walked the rest down the north end of Carderock.

It took us only about 30 minutes to get 2 boats blown up and all the gear down to the water.



Cliffs are but a small barrier to the well-prepared! Leslie, Leila, and Carol wait patiently for Eric and Brian to lower the boats. - Photos by Jeff Burka



8:45 am

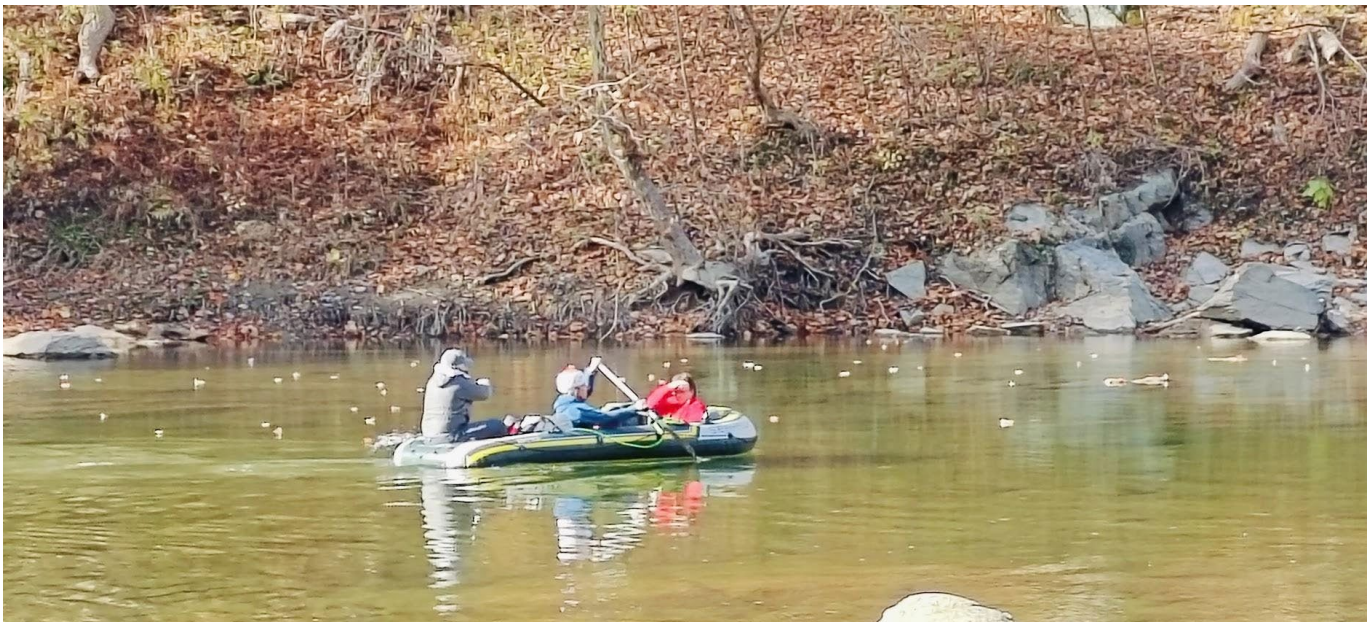
The crossing begins!

It took about 15 minutes for each trip launch-to-launch to get everyone across in the big boat. Leslie, Carol, Simon, Jeff and Brian used the dingy, everyone else used kayaks. It took 2 trips with the big boat to get 5 people and lots of gear across. So everyone was on the island by 9:15.

There is a natural trail up the middle of Vaso Island - it's a sometimes swampy dell that lines up with the walk down. It makes it pretty easy to find your way across. That dell ends just upstream of Knubble Wall.



*And we launch! Brian pointing out the Landing Zone to Eric and Irinia.
Then Brian, Leslie, and Simon cross the river - Photos by Jeff Burka*



Don't pay the Ferryman until you get to the other side... - Photo by Carol Clayton



Eric and Irina beginning the fearless crossing - Photos by Carol Clayton

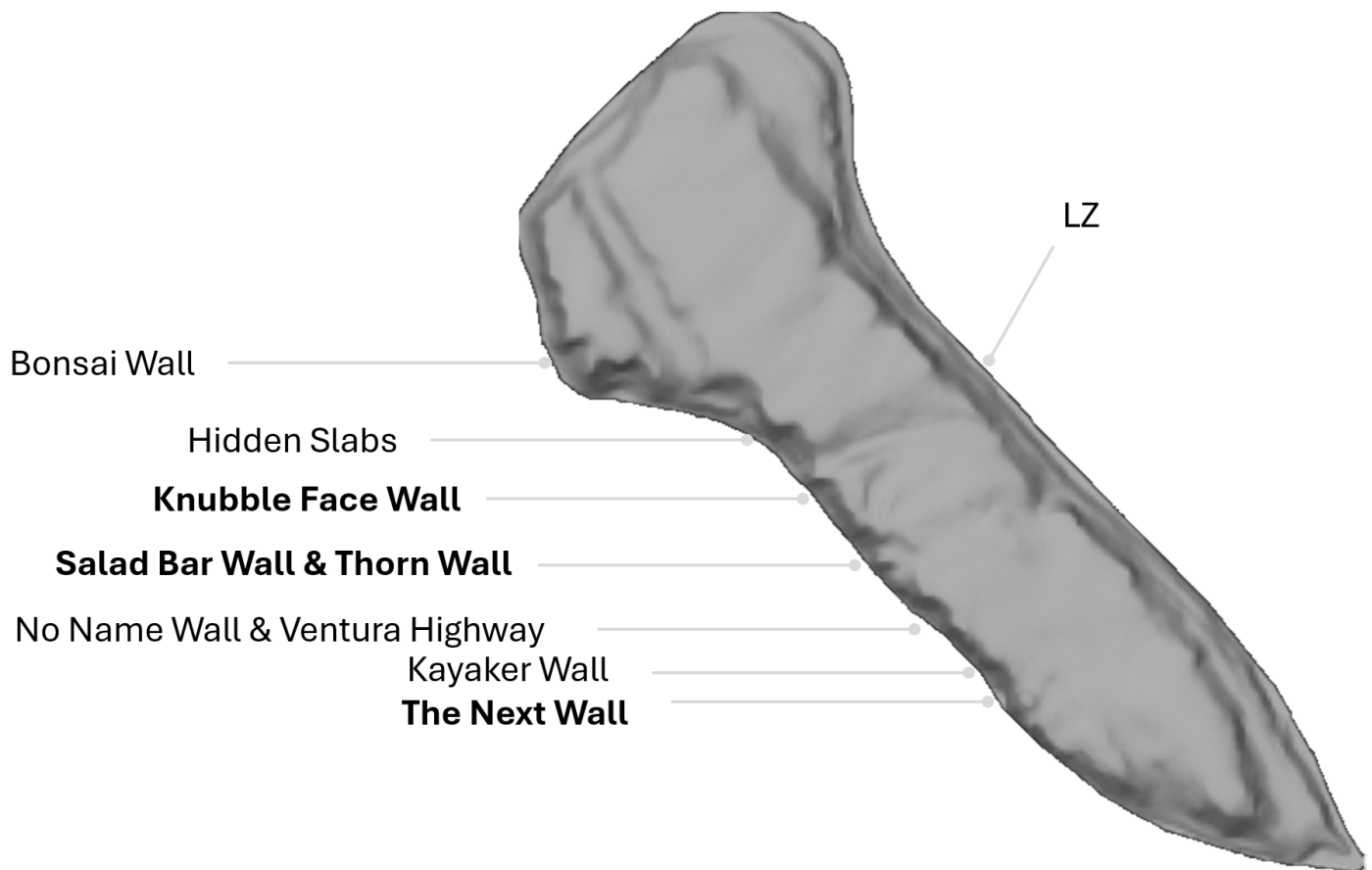


*Expert landing and disembarking was experienced by all!!
Meaning no one ended up in the water. - Photo by Jim Elliot*



Climbing

The Climbs



A topographical map (thanks, Google!) of Vaso Island showing the locations of the climbing walls.

Getting Ready to Climb

Where to climb? There are so many walls to choose from! Setting up is also a bit more challenging than at neighboring Carderock. Knubble Face and Salad Bar can usually be belayed from the bottom as long as there have been enough dry days to make sure the rocks are not slippery. There are walkdowns at the cut-through and just north of Salad Wall. There is also a walkdown just south of Knubble Face, but it is steep enough that a rope is a good idea - but you will also need to share this gully with poison ivy most times of the year. The other two walkdowns are easier. It's usually a good idea to belay Thorn Wall from the top, but since it really hadn't rained in weeks, the water was low enough to belay Thorn Wall from the bottom (just barely).



The gang at the top of Salad Bar Wall



The view from the top.

And then the Climbing Began!

And so we began climbing. The first climbs were on Knubble Face, Salad Wall, and the Never Stop Exploring (aka The Next) Wall. Later, we put up climbs on Thornwall as well. Here are the climbs we did:

Knubble Face

- Knubble Face Right (5.6)
- Not So Knubble (5.9)
- Unknown

Salad Bar

- The Salad Bar Center

Thorn Wall

- Unknown

Never stop Exploring Wall

- Unexplained Forces
- Blade Runner Right
- Semi-Chimney



Simon on Semi-Chimney

- Photo by Brian Florence



Irina and Eric on Blade Runner Right



Leslie watching over Semi-Chimney - Photos by Brian Florence



Maybe Jim knows why this is a "semi" chimney?



Jenny on Semi-Chimney with Leslie and Leila cheering her on



Eric on top of the The Next Wall - Photo by Carol Clayton



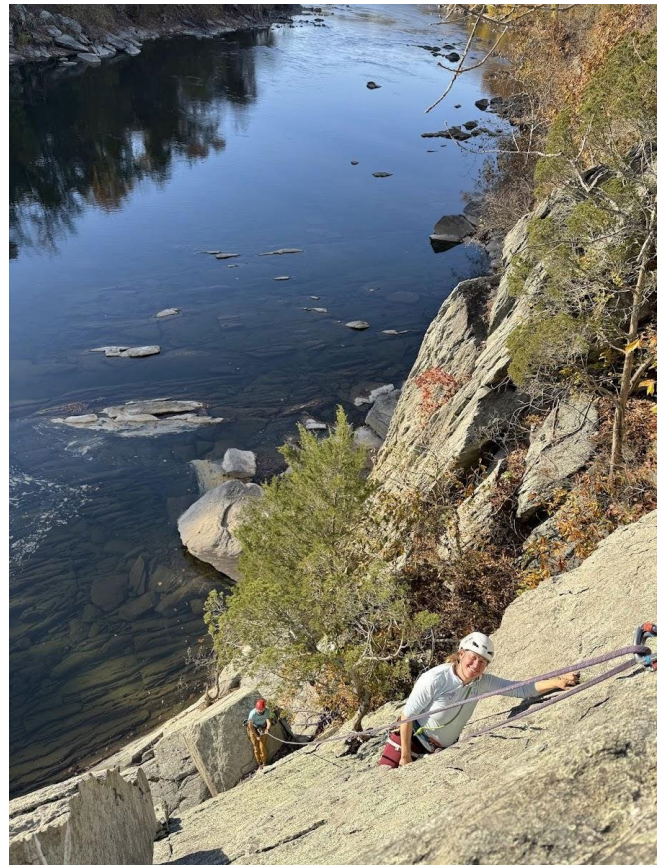
Jeff on Unexplained Forces - Photo by Jim Elliot



*What a pristine nubble actually looks like when it hasn't been smoothed by thousands of rubber soles.
Photo by Carol Clayton*



Eric belaying Jeff from the bottom on Thorn Wall - Photo by Jim Elliot



Leila on Unexplained Forces - and a beautiful view of the Potomac! - Photo by Irina Geiman



Returning Home - a view of Carderock not often seen - Photo by Carol Clayton



The Crew Left to Right: Brian Florence, Eric Mayl, Leslie Hill, Irina Geiman, Simon Carr, Jeff Burka, Jenny O'Brien, Leila Desotelle, Carol Clayton - *Photo by Carol Clayton*