

Go Climb a Tree

You climbed trees as a lad, but the last time you even came close to doing it was to cut a dead limb or to rescue the kids' kite. Do you remember the fun and the fear of climbing higher and higher for an adrenaline rush and bird's-eye view of the world? Recreational tree climbing is letting adults experience vertical exploration again and, with a rope and harness, the fast-growing sport is reaching dizzying heights.

"Not a lot of people can resist it once they've tried it," says Tobe Sherrill, a climber and the chief executive officer of SherrillTree Supply, which provides equipment to professional arborists. "Once you get used to the climbing techniques and get past the nervousness, it's a breathtaking experience." For seasoned climbers, this experience includes scaling redwoods the height of the Statue of Liberty, swinging and maneuvering from one tree to another, and even sleeping in a treetop hammock. For newcomers, recreational tree climbing is just as thrilling, but you must start at ground level before working your way up. And so you're not risking life and limb, but enjoying it, this means using the right equipment and getting the proper training.

An introductory climbing kit from Sherrill starts at \$399 and has everything you need to climb safely, including a rope snap, climbing ropes and a climbing harness. There's also positioning lanyards, a throw line and weight, and equipment bags. Necessary safety gear like helmets and gloves are purchased separately.

Understanding the equipment looks intimidating, but the rope-intensive self-belay system is easy to learn with good training. Tree Climbers International (TCI) and its numerous global affiliates offer instruction on everything from tying basic knots to tree-climbing methods and safety.

Once you have the basics down, you'll be ready to climb into the canopy of a tree and explore. With the abundance of trees, you can climb almost anywhere (TCI also leads tree-climbing expeditions) and every climb is a different experience.

Visit www.treeclimbing.com and www.sherrill-tree.com.

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