

California Road Trip A Climber's Guide

Northern California

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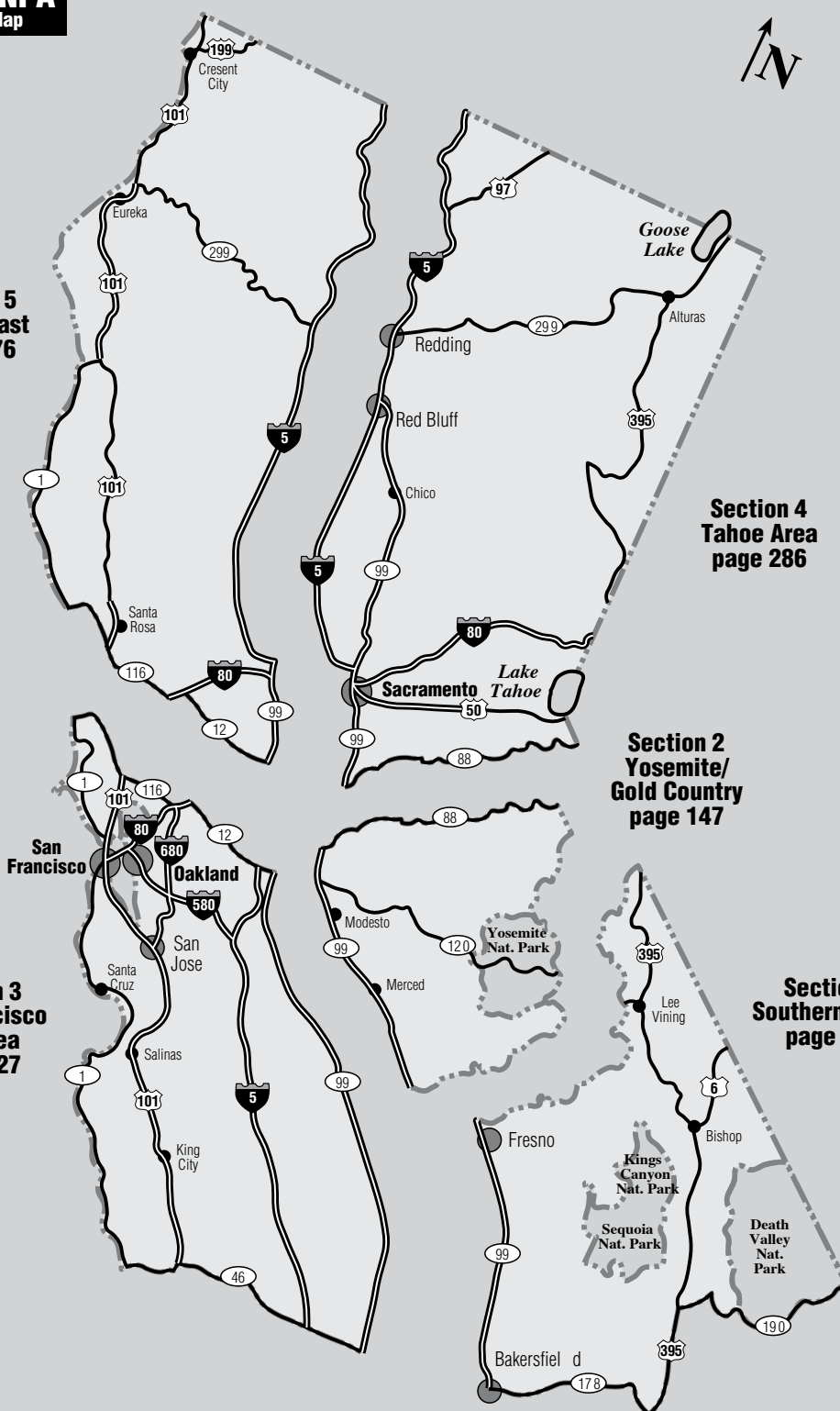


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Key to Stars

*****	World Class.
****	Excellent destination crag.
***	Regionally famous, good destination.
**	Good local crag.
*	Good if passing through.

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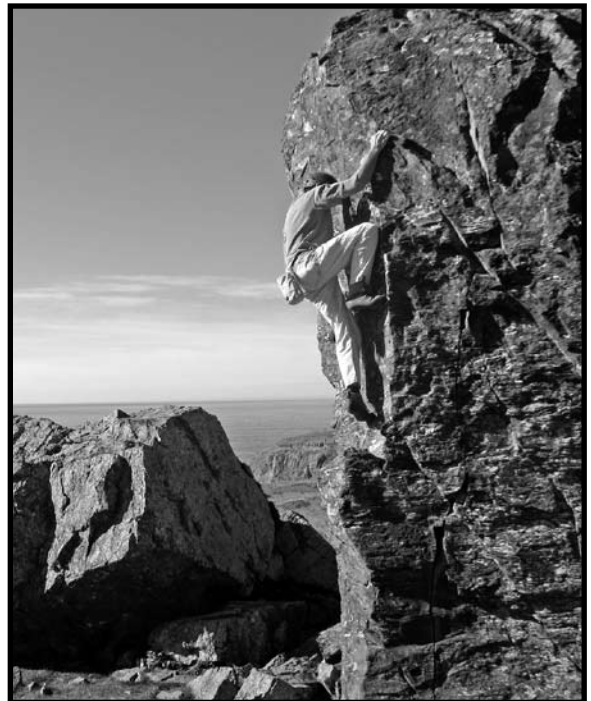
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John "Verm" Sherman bouldering at Goat Rock.

FOREWORD

by Royal Robbins

Of our 50 states, I can't say that the best rock climbing is in California. It probably is, but I haven't yet sampled the possibilities in each of the other 49. It's certain that some other states bristle with climbable rock – Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming spring instantly to mind. But California is filthy-rich in this resource. We've got rock everywhere, but particularly in the Sierra Nevada, the 400-mile mountain range that forms the granite backbone of the Golden State. Along the crest of this tilted slab of the earth's surface, as well as on the steep eastern and gentle western slopes, one finds peaks, walls, crags and boulders such as to make the would-be rock climber salivate with eagerness. How to find them? This book provides the answers.

My personal favorites in the Sierra Nevada are Yosemite National Park with the Yosemite Valley walls and the magnificent domes of Tuolumne Meadows, and Lover's Leap along Highway 50. These areas stand out in my mind, but there are many others as well, such as the Hinterlands south of Yosemite, and Courtright Reservoir, to name a couple. But it's hard to beat the routes in Tuolumne Meadows, particularly one of my favorites, *Crescent Arch* on Daff Dome. That formation is so named because it's the Dome Across From Fairview, Fairview being the largest feature in the region with a 1,000-foot north face. I remember climbing *Crescent Arch* many years ago with my good friend, Pat Ament. The route goes up beautiful rock, has a kind of off-width but nonetheless well-protected crack, and includes a desperate finish up 5.10 delicate climbing that is frosting on a delicious cake of continuously challenging rock.

Elsewhere in California the individual seeking adventure on rock finds the state has much to offer. For example, in the far north, near Mt. Shasta, are the Castle Crag – granite spires that tower gloriously into the sky. Moving south along the coast one finds a mystery area. What's there and where is it? The authors, under "North Coast" in their guide, unlock some of the secrets. This guide also tells us about local rocks in the Bay area, sandstone outcrops near Santa Cruz, and the strange volcanic spires of Pinnacles National Monument. My favorite climb at Pinnacles is the *Salathe Route* on the Hand. It's only 5.6, but John Salathe, an immigrant from Switzerland who took up climbing when he was 45 years old, led it with no bolts, a tremendous accomplishment up fearfully steep and sometimes loose rock. To start, one traverses left across a vertical face to a flat step atop a boulder stuck in the hardened volcanic ash. There's a bolt here, which I have since used for an anchor, but when I first climbed it with my wife, Liz, back in 1968, I was determined to do it as Salathe had -- without bolts. Dropping down and searching under the protruding boulder for a place to slot a nut, I found a ring piton, doubtless placed by that fox, Salathe. So he didn't do the next section without any protection! Of course I used the piton for safety and, with this added assurance, continued up steep rock to the top, lacing the occasional knob with a runner. After reaching the summit, I thanked God for taking

an area overview, a map if necessary, the latest guidebook titles with author names, local climbing store phone numbers, climbing gym phone numbers, and local amenities (gas, food, lodging).

Next, we break down each crag and give a description of the specific area, including rock quality and type, the climbing styles employed there, climbing seasons, route count, directions, and gear recommendations. Finally, we list route names and ratings, often accompanied by photos or topos. Our goal is not only to get climbers to their destinations but, once there, to give them a choice of specific routes on quality cliffs and boulders.

AREA SELECTIONS

As already mentioned, this guidebook (consisting of 2 separate volumes) is not a comprehensive guidebook in that it doesn't cover every crag in California nor give comprehensive information concerning the crags it does cover. It does, however, offer a sampling of over 100 quality areas. Admittedly, with some sections of the state containing more quality areas than others, we had to occasionally include a so-so crag in the belief that climbing on a cliff of below-average quality is better than not climbing at all. That said, we carefully scrutinized our choices to include quality cliffs that are representative of the area as a whole and which offer an abundance of quality routes.

Agreeing that stars add to traffic lines at the crags, we are not including star ratings. While popular, we quickly found that most of the routes in this guide are of at least 2-star quality or higher when compared to routes in any given area. We also tried to include a mix of areas that cater to the wide spectrum of climbing abilities. For more information, on any area, we encourage climbers to buy a local guidebook. For large destination areas like Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows, we encourage climbers to stay and buy a guide. There is just too much there to even do an adequate small, select list, but we tried anyway.

Each area was visited by at least one of the authors of this book and found worthy of inclusion. The majority are of high quality, easily accessible, and hold anywhere from an afternoon to a week's worth of climbing.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

California is a valuable treasure and should be treated as such. Never take access for granted. **YOUR ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES.** Therefore, when visiting an area, please travel lightly. Leave an area cleaner than you found it. Also, consider using less chalk in areas near non-climbers. They may not understand or appreciate the white mess you leave behind. Do your best to hike on established trails, only going cross-country when absolutely necessary. Remember the 100-foot rule and defecate at least 100 feet away from trails, crags, and water sources. Many access roads are on dirt roads. Stay on these roads and obey any posted signs. Keep your dog (if permitted) close and in your control. Respect the local wildlife and any postings about raptors. Ignorance doesn't cut it. Be informed and aware of your surroundings. Common sense is your best guide. If you see someone not using it, speak up. We are our brothers' keepers. As dysfunctional as we can be at times, we're still family, so hold others accountable if you see them acting in a negative or harmful way. If you don't, their actions and your failure to speak up may cost future climbers an area.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION:

SOUTHERN SIERRA

The climbing in the Sierra Nevada is legendary. It is a heaven on earth, our Chamonix, our Cordillera Blanca, our Alps, but with better weather. Climbers can depend upon the seasons in California. The winter is relatively short and mild, unless you're in the highest reaches of the Alpine zone. In many places, during the right days, climbers can still climb mid-winter, even with snow on the ground. And the other three seasons are a dream. The rock varies, but granite is the norm, so it dries quickly.

A climber traveling to the Sierra Nevada during the summer can expect to climb most everyday. Thundershowers are commonplace, but are infrequent and mild in most cases. The higher elevations make for ideal summer cragging, even when the valleys below are in triple-digit temperatures. The lower elevations and the western foothills are ideal in spring and fall, and can be fantastic during dry winter spells.

The western and eastern sides of the Sierra differ greatly. The oak and coniferous woodlands on the gentle western slope are dotted with exfoliating granite domes, ideal for slab climbing. Recent development of overhanging sections of these domes has greatly increased the number of difficult routes on the western side of the Sierra, making possible what was once thought to be impossible. The majority of the areas are close to relatively large population centers. San Francisco, Fresno, and even Los Angeles are two to four hours away, making it a quick get-away for visiting climbers landing at major airports. Amenities are easy to come by, as is alternative entertainment for rest days.

The eastern Sierra, much more stark in its beauty, contains a mix of volcanic tuff and granite, as well as other types of rock. The cliffs here tend to be shorter and steeper, making them ideal for sport climbing. The boulder fields are world famous, and yield the easiest access to the

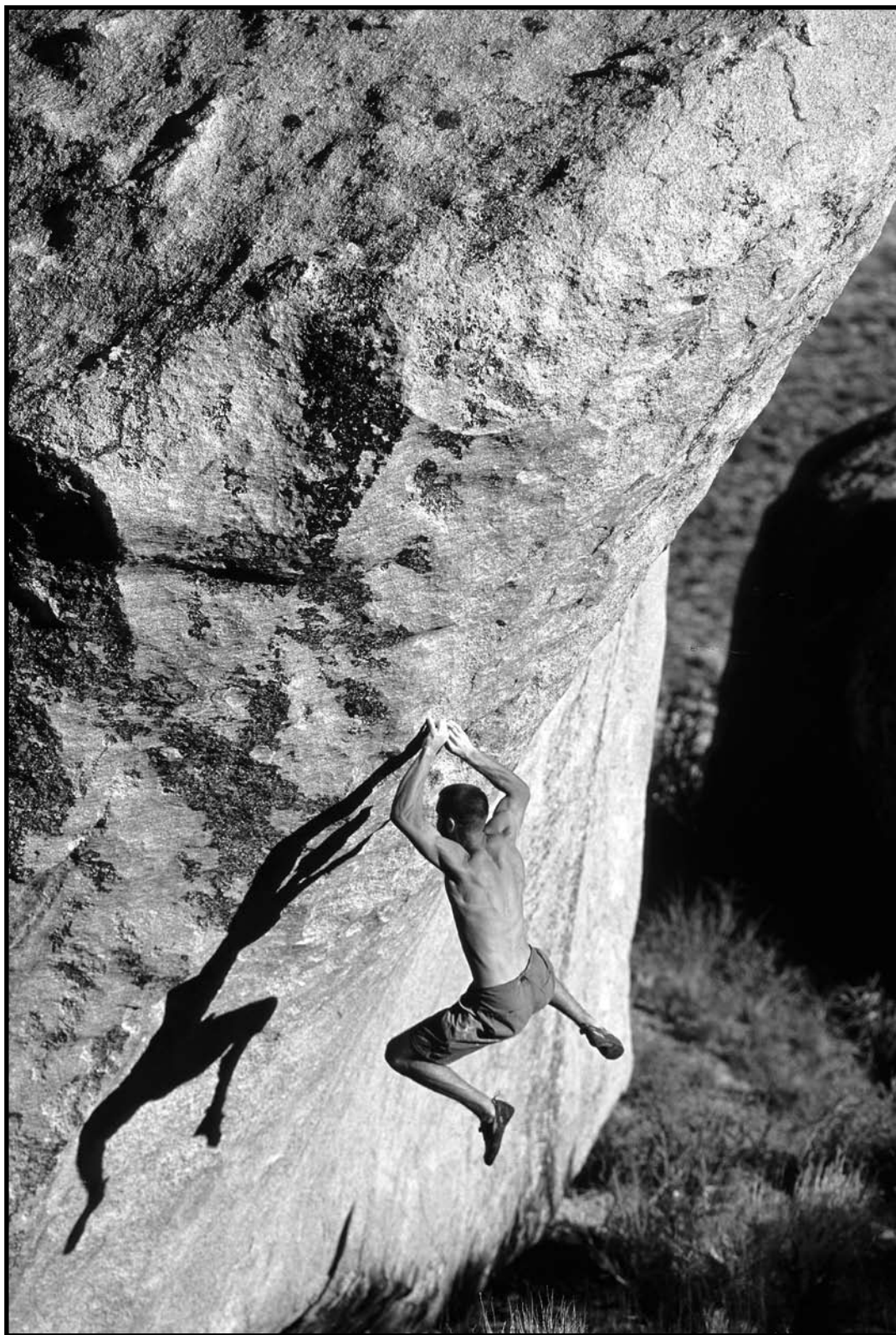
high country and glimpses of Mt. Whitney. You also shouldn't miss the numerous hot springs dotting the plains. While the east side doesn't have any large cities, it is sprinkled with quaint small towns and sites of geological and historical value. A visit to the ghost town Bodie is a must for any new visitor to the east side. The western slope is bordered by the Central Valley and its agricultural fields. The east side is bordered by the desert-- creating a "wild west" atmosphere of the days gone by. Mammoth Lakes, the exception, is a popular tourist destination in both the summer and winter.

The fact that both of these regions are within a day's drive of one another makes for a plethora of climbing possibilities for the road tripping rock climber. There are numerous passes that connect the east to the west, and excellent climbing is often found along these highways too. The amount of climbing is staggering, and you'll be hard pressed to find an area that doesn't have quality climbing nearby.

The majority of the areas in this section are of extremely high quality, but must hit areas include: Buttermilks, Owens River Gorge, Clark Canyon, and Courtright Reservoir.

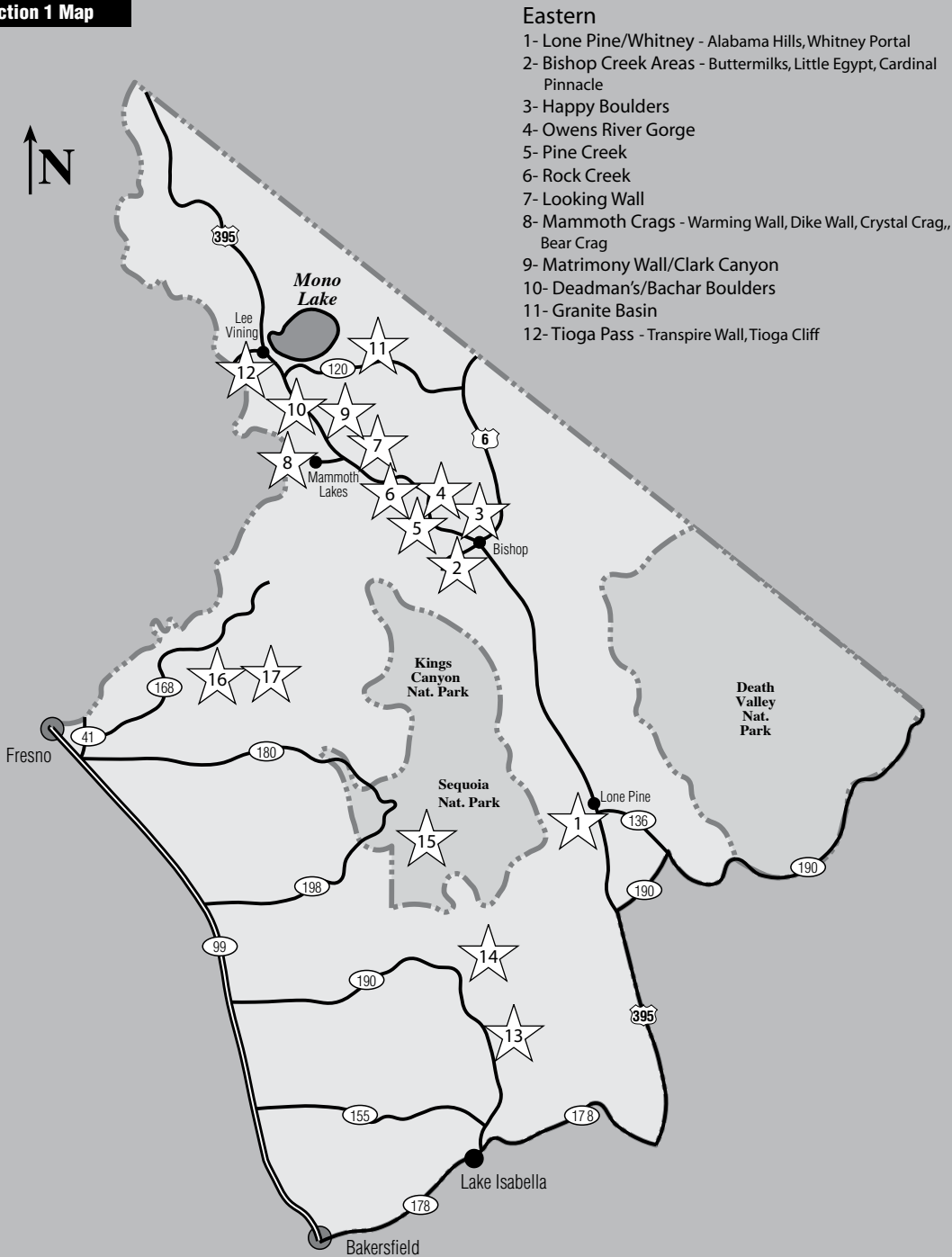
Be sure to bring a mountain bike, kayak, fishing gear, or whatever other pleasures you indulge in, because this area is a recreationalist's paradise.

*** All graphics for Eastern Sierra by Marty Lewis unless noted.



Chris Sharma on *Mandala*, Buttermilks. Photo Thornburg

**SOUTHERN
SIERRA**
Section 1 Map



EASTERN SIERRA

Lee Vining/Mammoth/Bishop/Lone Pine Hwy 395

AREA OVERVIEW:

The east side of California's Sierra Nevada mountain range contains a lifetime of climbing for those of any ability. Within a relatively small radius of the town of Bishop, climbers can choose from literally thousands of boulder problems, sport climbs, trad climbs, or long backcountry routes in the Sierra. It's a year-round Mecca and, thus, home base for a lot of big name climbers. The area is covered by many guidebooks and in no way can be touched by the scope of this book. What we've done is attempted to give you a tour of the area's greatest hits.

This is a part of the world that should be visited by everyone. Whether you climb or not the scenery is amazing and opportunities for adventure are endless. Thus, you'll find little problem filling up your rest days, no matter what season you find yourself in the area. Galen Rowell called it the most beautiful area on Earth, making the Eastern Sierra a must see stop on anyone's world tour.

CLIMBING GUIDEBOOK AND AUTHOR: *Bishop Area Rock Climbs*, by Marty Lewis; *Owens River Rick Climbs*, by Lewis; *Mammoth Area Rock Climbs*, by Lewis & John Moynier; *Bishop Bouldering*, by Mick Ryan; *Bishop Bouldering*, by Wills Young; *The Good, The Great, and the Awesome*, by Peter Croft.

CLIMBING STORE PHONE NUMBERS: Mammoth Mountaineering, on Main Street in Mammoth, (760) 934-4191; Wilson's Eastside Sports, on 395 in Bishop, (760) 873-7520

AMENITIES: Bishop/Mammoth have all you need. Tons of campgrounds off Hwy. 395.



Aspens near Tom's Place, Rock Creek Canyon.
Photo Bill Serniuk

Robyn Embrey on *Meth Squeeler*, Happy Boulders.
Photo Greg Martin



ALABAMA HILLS

Lone Pine - Hwy 395

AREA OVERVIEW:

The Alabama Hills will remind one of Joshua Tree, with the towering snow capped Sierra as a backdrop. Lots of desert towers and mini-domes to climb, mere minutes from the parking areas. Easy to access, this crag is easy to hit as a drive by, or you could buy the local guide and stay for a week. Since it has become such a popular climbing area, you need to be aware of a few things: From the local guidebook by Lewis & Croft: "The BLM has requested that users pick up a flyer on Alabama Hills user ethics at the Chamber of Commerce, Film Museum or Visitors Center in Lone Pine. User groups should camp in established campgrounds rather than camping in the Alabama Hills." Be respectful of the many user groups using this area. We are not alone.

CLIMBING STYLE: S, T, TR, B

SEASON: All year, but summer is hot.

GEAR: Medium rack and a dozen draws.

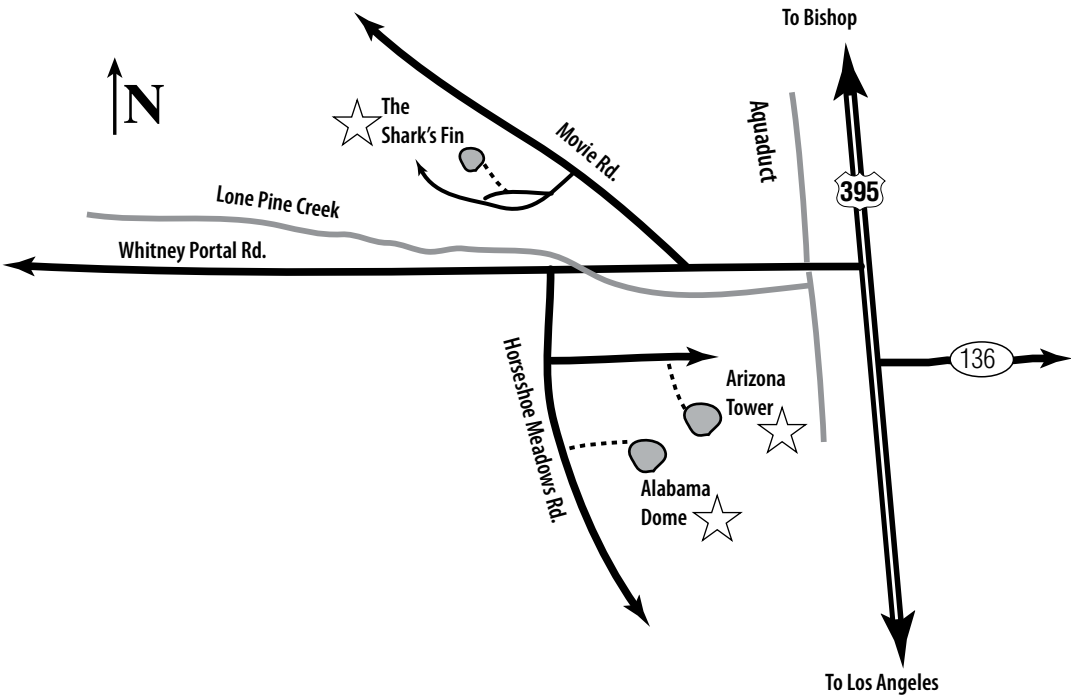
ROUTE COUNT: 100+ / 16.
 $\leq 5.10 = 14 \quad > 5.10 = 2$

DIRECTIONS TO: Alabama Hills

The Alabama Hills are located just west of Lone Pine. From Hwy. 395, take the Whitney Portal Rd. west for 2.7 miles. Turn right on Movie Rd. for the Shark's Fin, or continue 0.4 miles further and turn left on Horseshoe Meadows Rd. for Arizona Tower and Alabama Dome. Once on Horseshoe Meadows Rd., turn left after 0.5 miles and drive 0.1 miles to a locked gate and park. Continue walking for about 3 minutes and then turn right and cross a wash to Arizona Tower, which faces north. For Alabama Dome, park at a pullout about 0.6 miles down Horseshoe Meadows Rd. Walk east in front of a cliff band for 2 minutes. When almost past the dome, scramble up.

Graphic Tom Slater

Alabama Hills



Alabama Hills- Arizona Tower

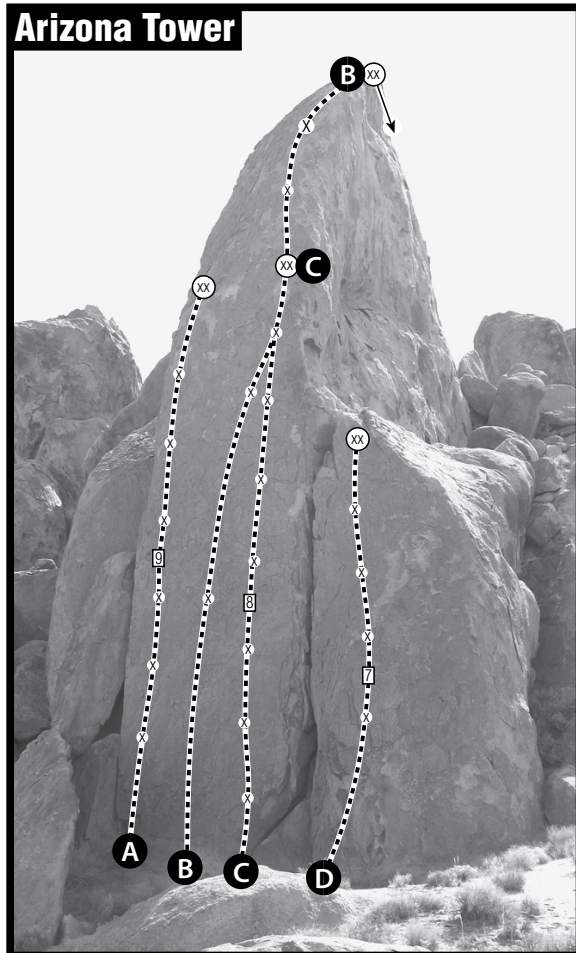
Lower off all routes. Bring 8 draws and some slings.

A. Spot 5.9

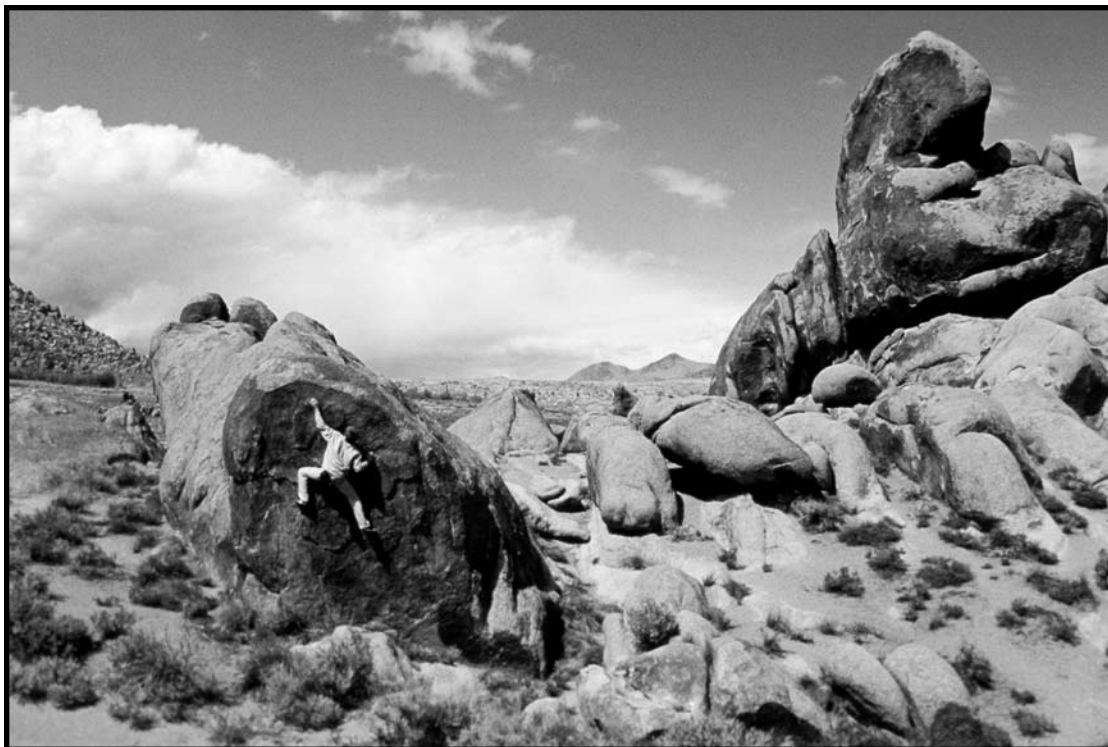
B. Sweet Home Arizona 5.9R Lower off west side.

C. Muffy 5.8

D. Death of a Cowboy 5.7



Bouldering in the Alabama Hills.
Photo Tom Slater



Alabama Hills- Alabama Dome

- A. Blockade Runner 5.10c** Great route.
B. Dihedral Dance 5.11a Another good one.
C. Gone with the Wind 5.10a
D. Southern Man 5.9
E. Sweet Home Alabama 5.9 Dirty dihedral.
F. Sherman's March 5.10b There is one fixed drill bit just before the anchor. Bring a sling if you want to use it as pro. Rap off on *Southern Man*.

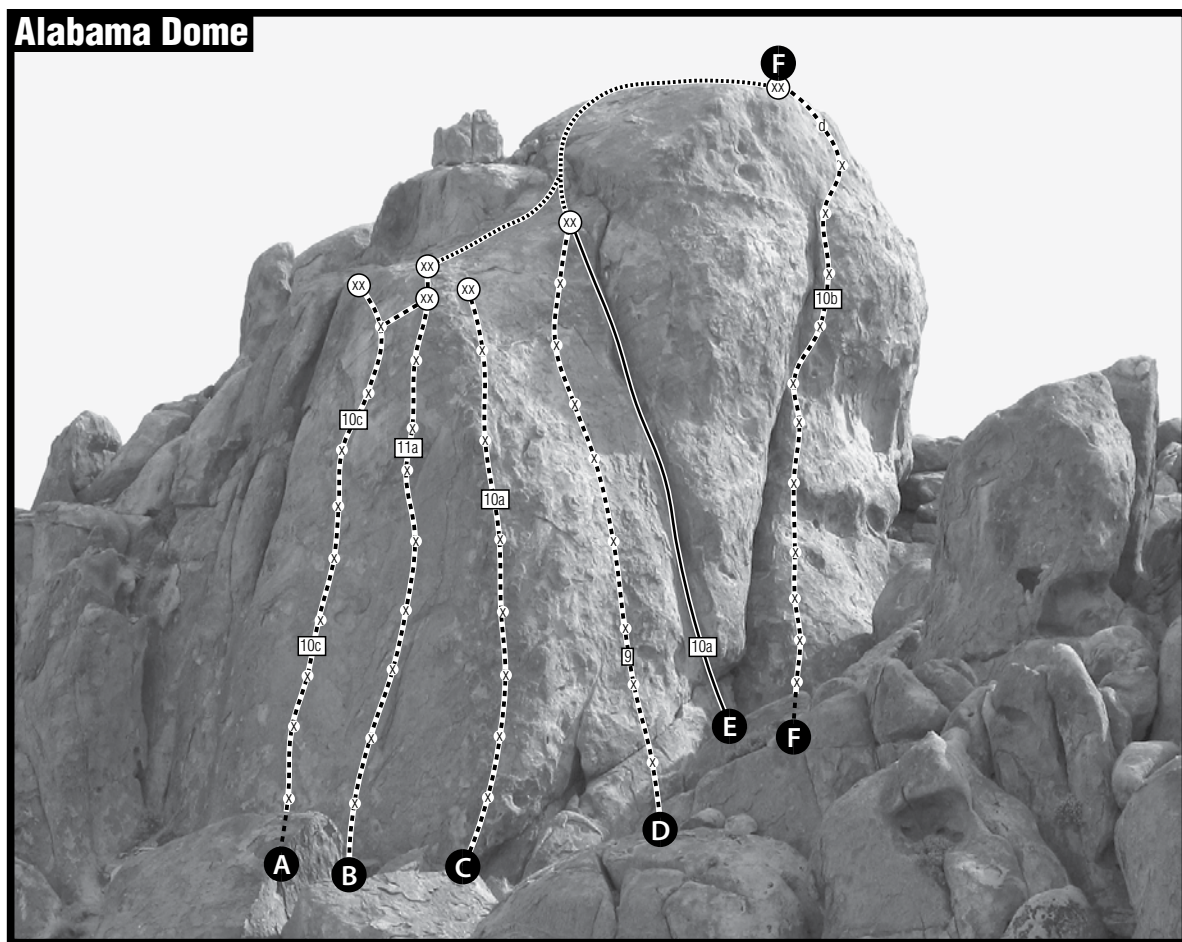


Photo Marty Lewis

Alabama Hills- Shark's Fin

From Whitney Portal Rd. turn right (north) onto Movie Rd. After 0.6 miles, turn left on Lone Pine Fire Rd. N1. The Shark's Fin Crags are the first towers encountered before reaching Movie Flat. From the Lone Pine Fire Rd. N1 immediately take the right fork at a "Y". After 0.2 miles the parking area will be reached. Bring your camera for this one, great photo opportunity!

A. Pirates on Horseback 5.10b

B. Coal Sea Adventure 5.7

C. East Face 5.7

D. Shark's Fin Arête 5.7 Cool position.

E. Fat Black Mama 5.11c

The crux can be avoided by going left to the Arête after the 3rd bolt, then clip the 3rd bolt of the Arête then climb back right and continue up past 3 more bolts to top. Then it's .11a.

F. Ol' White Pappy 5.10c

Climber on *Shark's Fin Arête*, Alabama Hills.
Photo Bill Serniuk

Shark's Fin

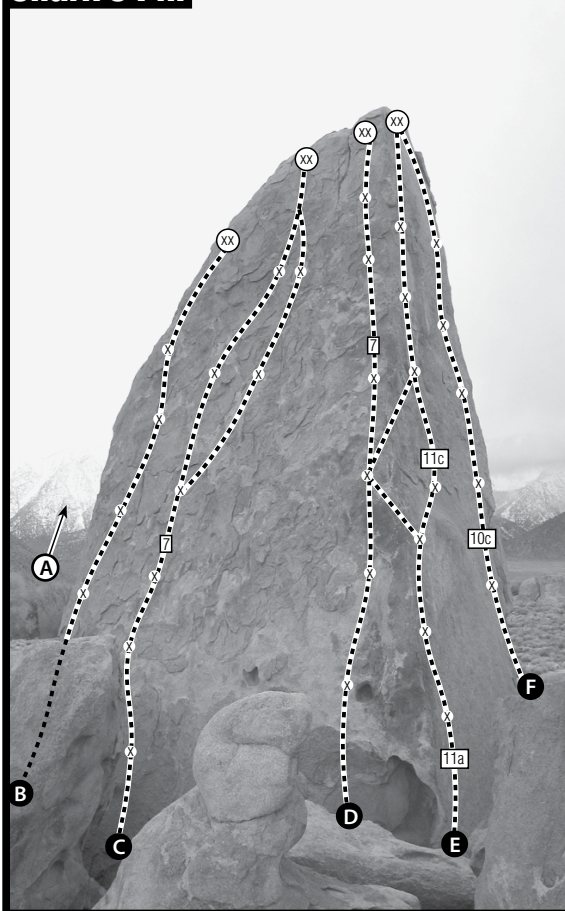


Photo Marty Lewis



DIRECTIONS TO: Demon Dome

Park a few hundred yards past Needlerock Creek, but before the cattle gate. Then hike up a faint trail through an oak forest for about 25 minutes.

Demon Dome Left to right. Bring a small trad rack, slings, and draws.

A. The Crack of Erebus 5.8/.9

B. Boom Boom Flake 5.9

C. The Medusa 5.11a

D. The Bride of Dracula 5.10+

E. The Mephisto Waltz 5.9

F. Zool 5.10a Excellent face climb.

G. Beelzebub Variation 5.9 Var. start to "F".

H. Crack of Cerberus 5.8/.9 Dihedral.

I. The Devil Worshipper 5.9

To the right of this climb are several hard cracks in a right facing dihedral. No topo. Cracks on the slab are all 5.10+, and the crack up the overhang is 5.12+ A1.

J. The Backrub 5.6 The large right facing dihedral

with trees near top.

K. Some Like It Hot 5.10

L. The Omen 5.9

M. The Number of the Beast 5.8/5.10 direct

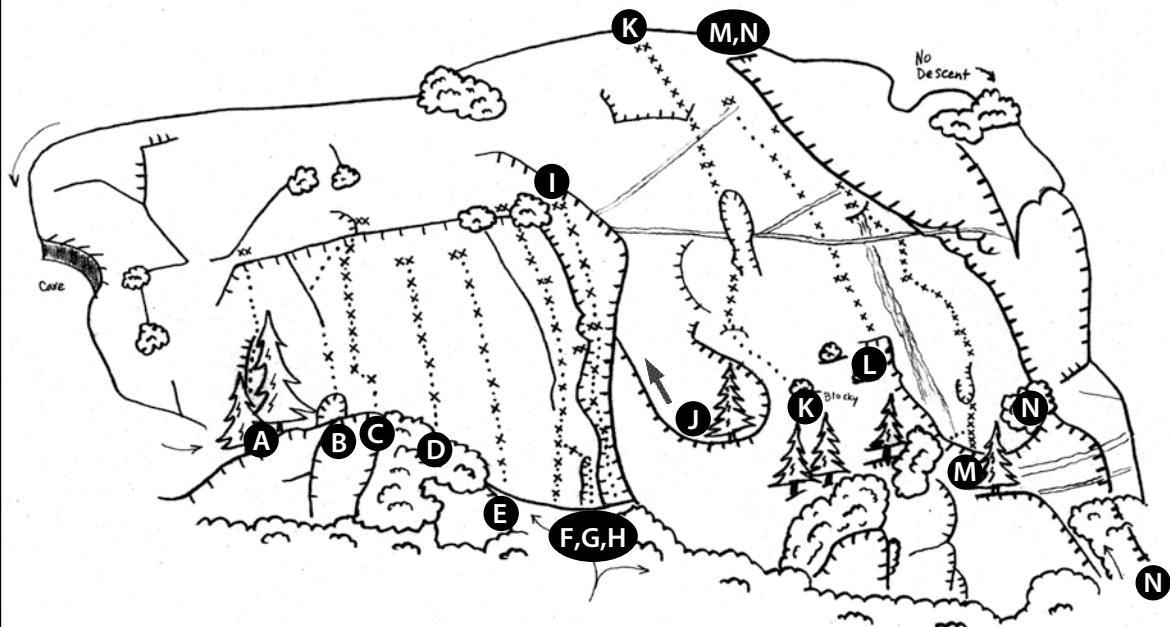
start Bolts + pro to 3". 4 pitches. A classic route. The *White Punks* route of Demon Dome. Not a sport route (topo is deceiving). A ton of adventure for a 5.9 - 5.10 leader.

N. Rosemary's Baby 5.8 Pro to 3".



Photo Tom Slater

Demon Dome



LITTLE BALDY

OVERVIEW: A quality dome with many fun moderates. Great view and a nice hike.

AMENITIES: Camping at Lodgepole Campground.

CRAG DESCRIPTION: This is a typical dome set up. The routes are 1 - 6 pitches in length, and range in difficulty from 5.6 to 5.11. The rock and routes are of good quality. Most routes are a mix of bolts and pro. The hardest routes are found in the middle of the dome.

CLIMBING STYLE: T

SEASON: At 8,044', this is a comfortable place to climb during the summer and early fall.

ROUTE COUNT: 21
 $\leq 5.10 = 19$ $> 5.10 = 2$

DIRECTIONS TO: Little Baldy

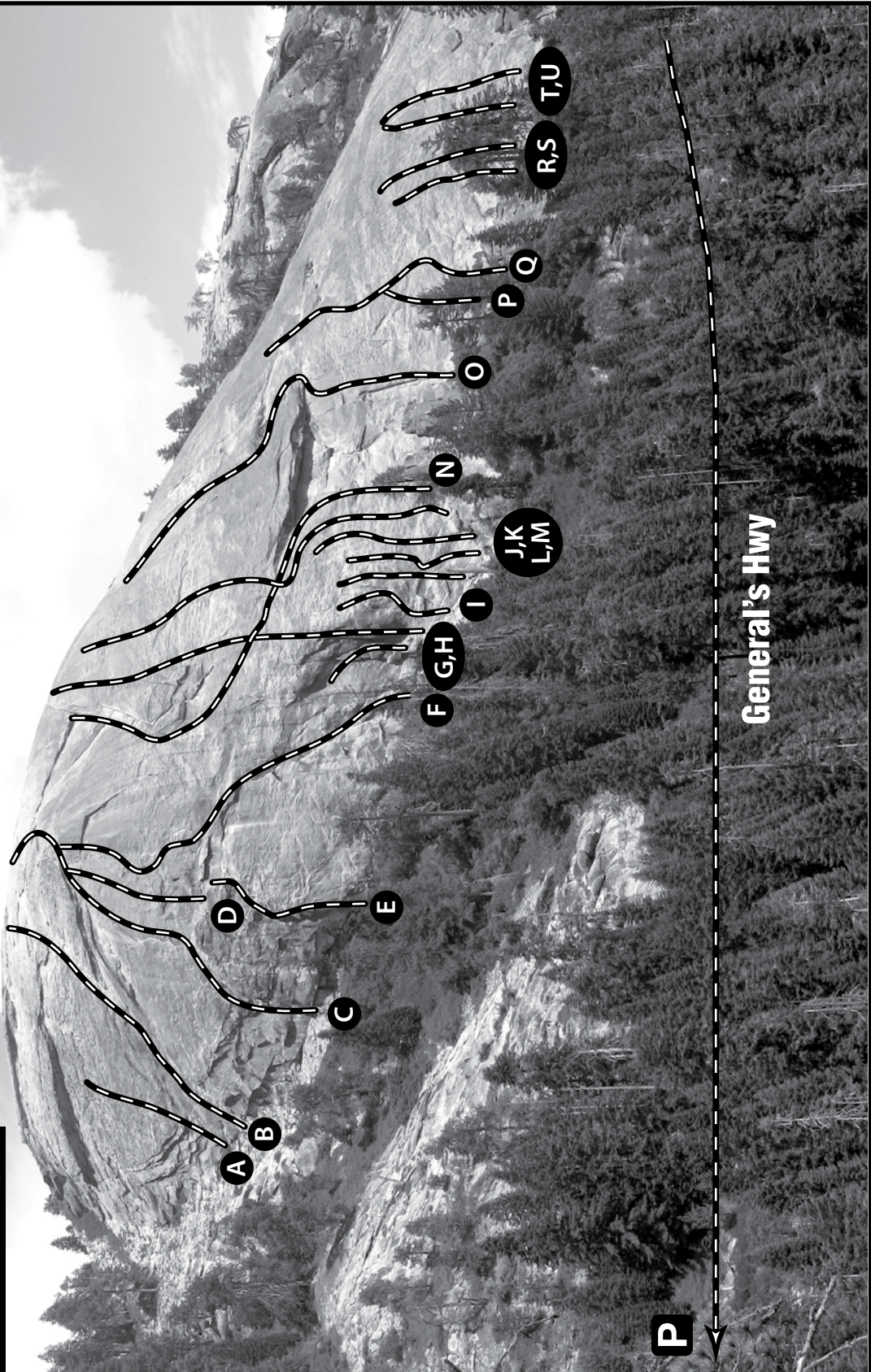
After reaching Lodgepole, you'll find the turnout and trailhead for Little Baldy is approximately 6 miles past Lodgepole Campground, traveling north on the General's Highway (Hwy 198). At approximately 6 miles, a NPS trailhead sign will identify the Little Baldy trail. Directly across from the sign will be a large turnout for parking (south side of the highway). Then hike to the southernmost part of the turnout and cross over to the east side of the road. Find a faint trail that heads steeply into the forest. It continues uphill through switchbacks until it reaches the steep west side of Little Baldy. Continue southeast to skirt the base of Little Baldy to access the remaining routes on its southern side. The base of the dome is reached after a 5 minute hike. Descent: Take the faint trail around the north side of the dome, or if it is near dark, take the well worn hiking trail from the summit back to the parking area (1.5 miles).

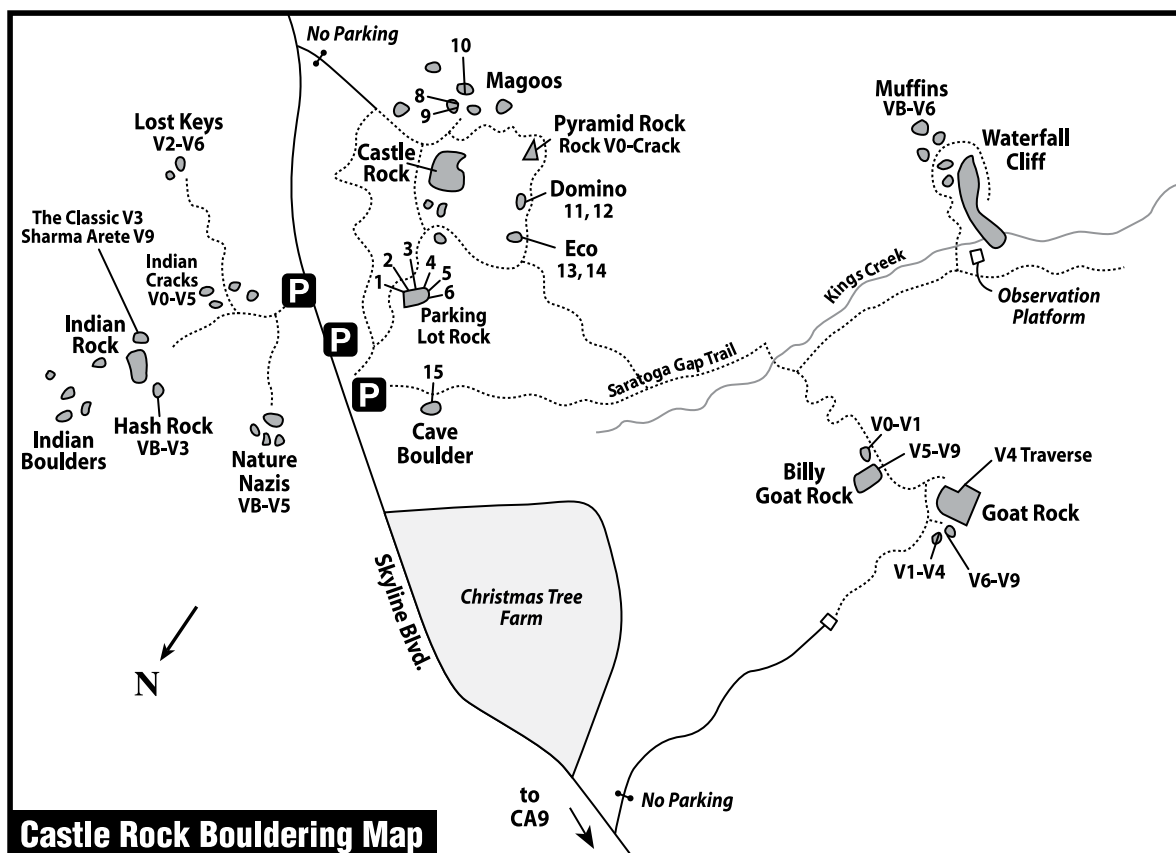
GEAR: A full rack with 10-12 slings.

Little Baldy - Left to right

- A. Green Mantle 5.10 Pro:** small to 3" Start 20' left of the *Regular Route*. Traverse out to a left-leaning crack to a short left facing corner, then head up past two bolts. Mantle the overhang and continue up past two more bolts. 1 pitch, 150'.
- B. Regular Route 5.6** Follow the obvious left-facing ramp for 3 pitches.
- C. Hair Raising 5.9 Pro:** small to 3". Climb up the dirty dihedral to the main ledge (or get to the main ledge via "F"). Then climb right facing flakes and corners 3 more pitches to the top.
- D. Middle Size White Boys 5.10b** From the main ledge, climb the face past flakes, a fixed pin, and 7 bolts to the first anchor. Then finish same as *Hair Raising* and easier ground.
- E. Cornered Animal 5.9** This 1 pitch route will get you to the main ledge. Ascend the left facing corner to the right of *Hair Raising*.
- F. Welcome to Little Baldy 5.10a** Climb the left-facing, left leaning corner for 2 pitches up to the main ledge. Then climb an arching crack to a left-facing dihedral to easier ground and the top.
- G. For Better, For Worse 5.10** Climb up the corner to a crack that traverses below the roof. 100'.
- H. Hair Line 5.9** Climb the crack to the right of *For Better* up to bolted anchors. Rap or continue up run-out slab.
- I. Skinhead 5.11c** Climb up past flakes and 6 bolts. 80'.
- J. Wounded Knee 5.11b Pro** to 2". Climb up to a left facing flake, then past 6 bolts and flakes. 120'.
- K. Little Baldy Hoodewink 5.10d** Starts to the right of the left facing corner. Climb the face past a bolt to roof, then right and over a roof. 120'.
- L. Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow 5.10 A** A challenging face climb past 10 bolts. 160'.
- M. The Merkin 5.10b** Face climb past 5 bolts and belay at ledge at flakes. Traverse left and then surmount the small roof and belay at the ledge (5.6R). Continue up low 5th-class on run-out slab to the top.
- N. Hairbrain 5.8** Climb the crack/right facing flake and belay at cracks end. Then traverse left below the roof and belay near end. Head up and over, trending up and left to a ledge and belay. Then up past the large flakes and easier climbing to the top.
- O. Wiggled Out 5.8** Climb up the obvious left

Little Baldy





Castle Rock Bouldering

This is only a select list of the popular classics. There are many more problems and variations to be found. There are also a lot more VB-V0 problems around Castle Rock and the Magoos.

Parking Lot Rock

There are also a lot of problems between #1 and #6, most notably are *North Arête* V4 and the *Flakes* V3 in the center of the northeast face. *Parking Lot Traverse* (#7) starts below *North Arête* and traverses past *Flakes* uphill into the *Tree Route*.

- 1 Rug Head V2** Northeast arête.
- 2 Tree Route V4** Face/groove left of #1.
- 3 Deforestation V9** Center of main east face.
- 4 Coz Mama V4** Short sit start bulge over flat rock.
- 5 Coz Daddy V6** Right roof/arête on southwest face.
- 6 Yabo Roof V5** Sloper mantle roof - classic!
- 7 Parking Lot Traverse V8** Traverse from west side into #2.

Magoos

- 8 Mr Magoo V1** Stand start or V2 sit - classic face.
- 9 Bates Eliminate V7** or V10 left of tree - hard.
- 10 The Swim V3** Sloper mantle finish - opposite #8.

Graveyard

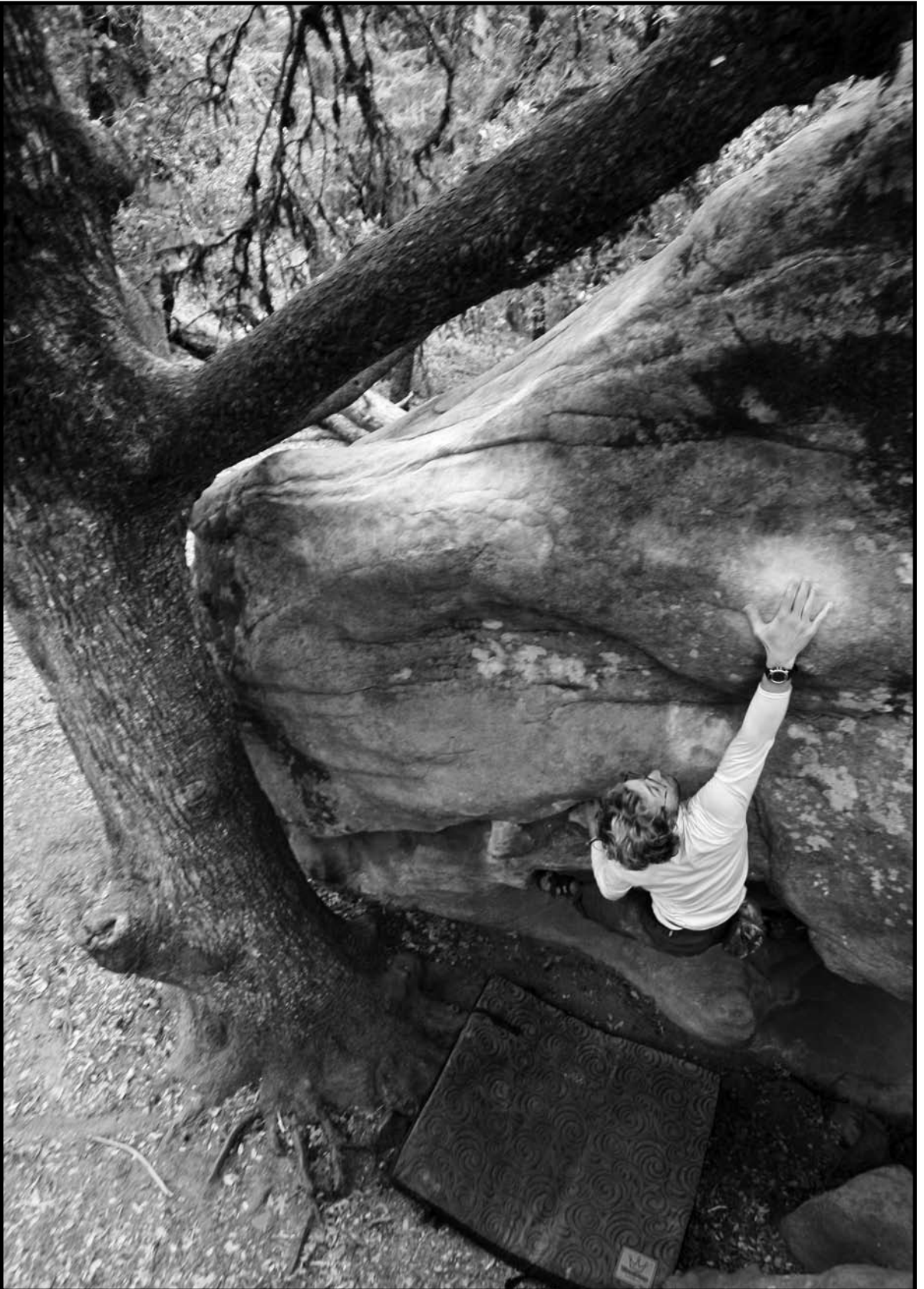
- 11 Domino V2** Center of face over trail.
- 12 Domino Theory V5** Traverse left to right.
- 13 Eco Terrorist V10** Hueco-sloper-hueco. Mega!
- 14 Wish You Were Here V9** Right of *Eco*.

Cave Rock

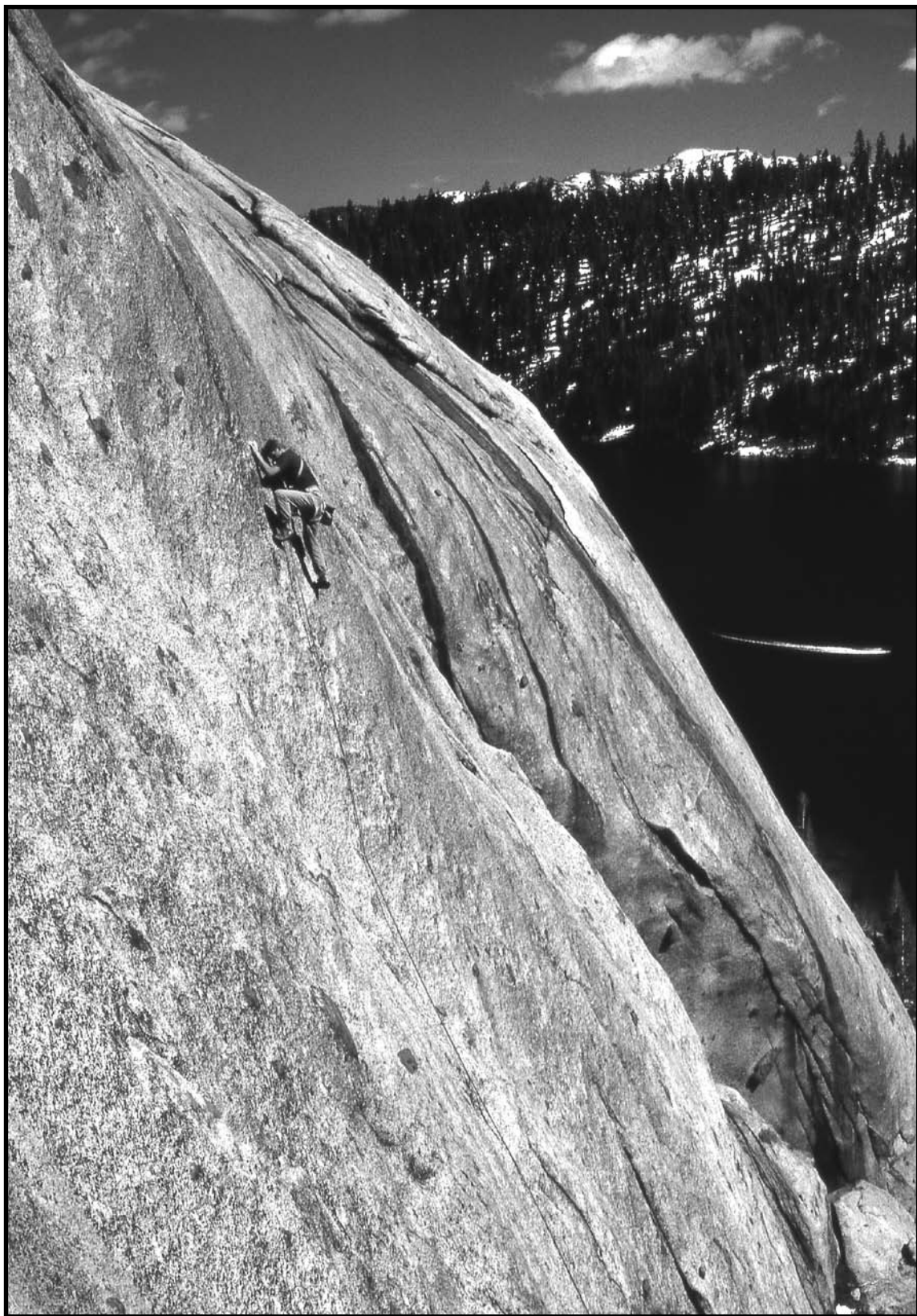
- 15 Groundation V6** Low stand start on undercling.

Castle Rock - 25' north of Castle Rock are several boulders. To find the *Spoon*, look for the tall boulder with a giant scoop with a pocket inside the scoop.

- 16 The Spoon V1** Undercling to mantle. Helps to be tall. There are about 5 other V1-V2s on this boulder as well. Not on topo.



Josh Junkermeier boulders in the Magoos, Castle Rock. Photo Marc Schiffhaur

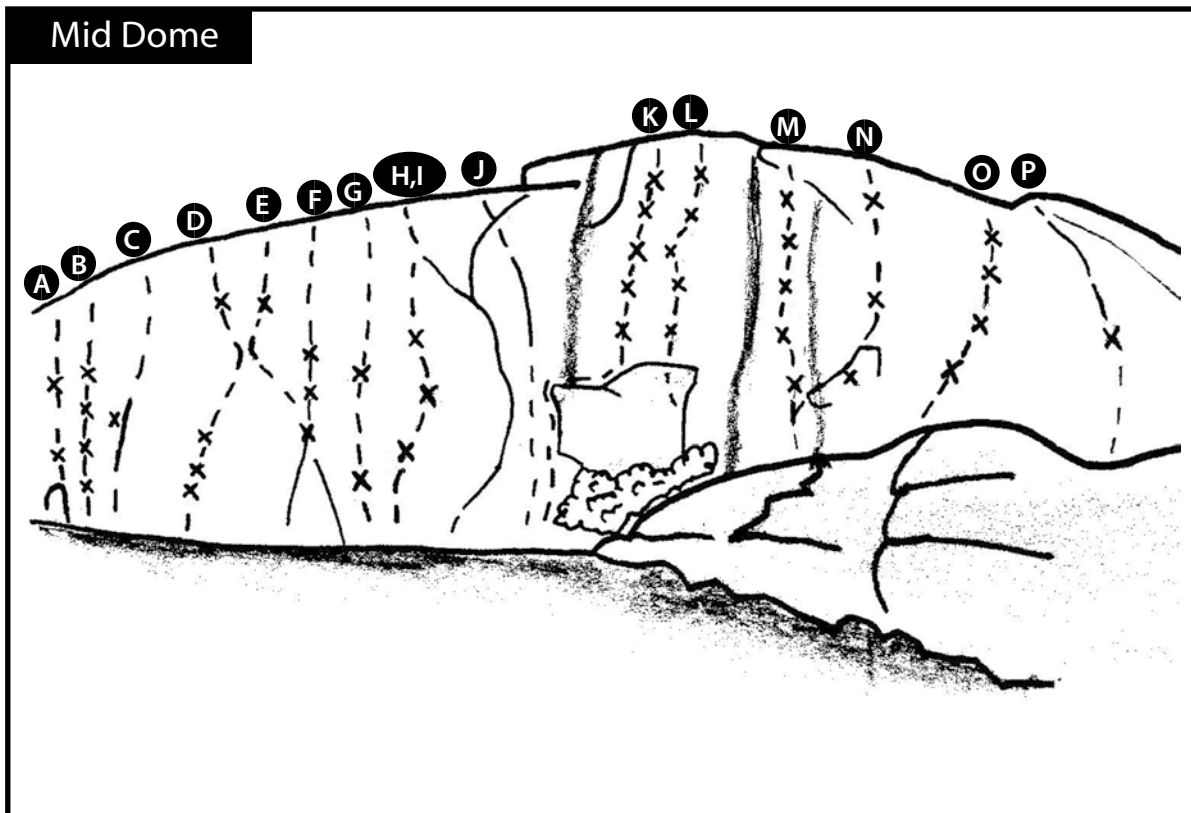


Al "Dude" Swanson on the first ascent of *Fight Fire With Fire*, Mid-Dome, Echo Lakes.
Photo Bill Serniuk

Mid Dome Excellent face climbing. Some pro required for some routes. Descend the NW side. Left to right

- A. Rawl Will 5.9**
- B. Negra Modelo 5.11b**
- C. Cut My Hair 5.10d**
- D. Fight Fire with Fire 5.11a**
- E. Hicks from the Sticks 5.10b**
- F. Hoser 5.10c**
- G. Fit to be Tied 5.9**
- H. Puppet Master 5.10**
- I. Smiley's People 5.11d**
- J. The Jon Bowlin Memorial 5.10c**
- K. Slave Driver 5.11c**
- L. Country boy 5.10d**
- M. Chore boy 5.12a**
- N. Power Stance 5.11b**
- O. Hip Hop Hipe 5.12c**
- P. Black Panther 5.10b**

Mid Dome



PUTAH CREEK

Winters - Hwy 128

AREA OVERVIEW: The car, the rock, the creek in that order all are less than a minute hike from the highway. Mostly vertical to overhanging basalt bouldering on blocky jug edges and slick water polished slopers. A few fun moderate highballs and long, technical traverses offer a good time and a good pump but the steep problems on the main face of Purgatory Boulder are the true classics (V1-V9)

CLIMBING GUIDEBOOK AND AUTHOR: *Bay Area Bouldering* by Chris Summitt.

CLIMBING STORE PHONE NUMBER: REI 916-924-8900

GYMS: Rockzilla (Napa) 707-255-1500; Rocknasium (Davis) 530-582-4510

AMENITIES: 7 miles east on CA-128 in Winters you can find gas, food, and lodging.

Purgatory Boulder/Heavy Metal Boulder

CRAG DESCRIPTION: The two biggest boulders have the highest concentration of problems with the more moderate terrain being on the taller Heavy Metal Boulder and the steeper, more difficult turf on the Purgatory Boulder. The boulder next to the parking lot has a few burly traverses and some really fun up problems. Just north of the Heavy Metal Boulder is The Weasel Boulder, which has a few good, slabby 5.6-5.7s.

CLIMBING STYLE: B

SEASON: All year, but summer can be hot.

GEAR: Bouldering pads. Tarp for the ground in winter.

ROUTE COUNT: 40 / 10
 $\leq V5 = 8$ $> V5 = 2$

DIRECTIONS TO: Putah Creek

From I-80 east in Vacaville, follow I-505 north to Winters. From Winters take CA-128 west toward Lake Berryessa. About 7.7 miles west of I-505 in Winters, park in a dirt turnout on the west (creek) side of CA-128 and follow a good but sometimes overgrown trail for a 2-minute hike to the boulders in the shady forest between the highway and the creek.

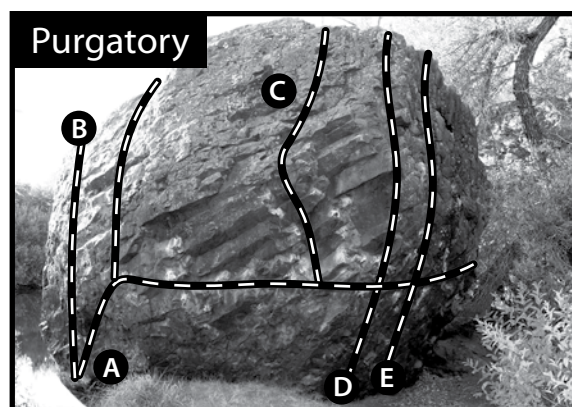
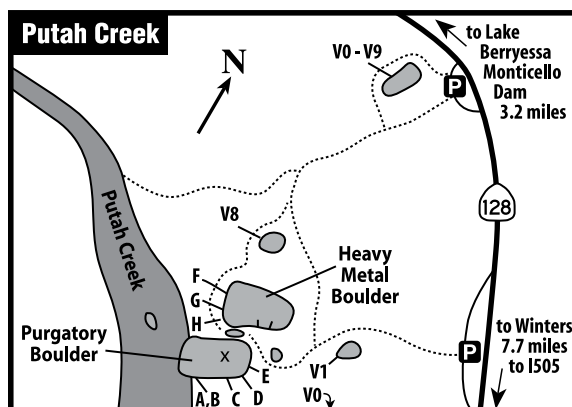


Photo Chris Summitt

Purgatory Boulder - Left to right

- A. Welcome to Whine Country V8** Traverse usually done left to right. Or V9 from low water start on *Splash*. Start by itself V4.
- B. Splash V1R** Face over water, low water start.
- C. Purgatory V1** Steep main face. Classic.
- D. S.H.P. V4** Steep prow. V5 sit.
- E. Hell Awaits V4** or **Hellspawn V8** Sit.

Heavy Metal Boulder No topo.

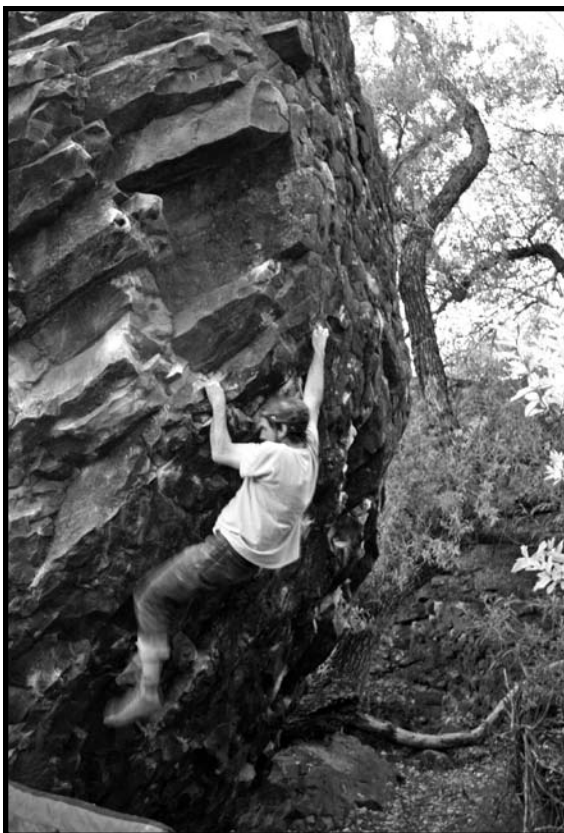
F. 5.7R Left side of west face. Faces creek.

G. 5.8R Right side of west face. Faces creek.

H. V0R Arête left or V1R arête right.

I. Heavy Metal V0 Face over rock landing.

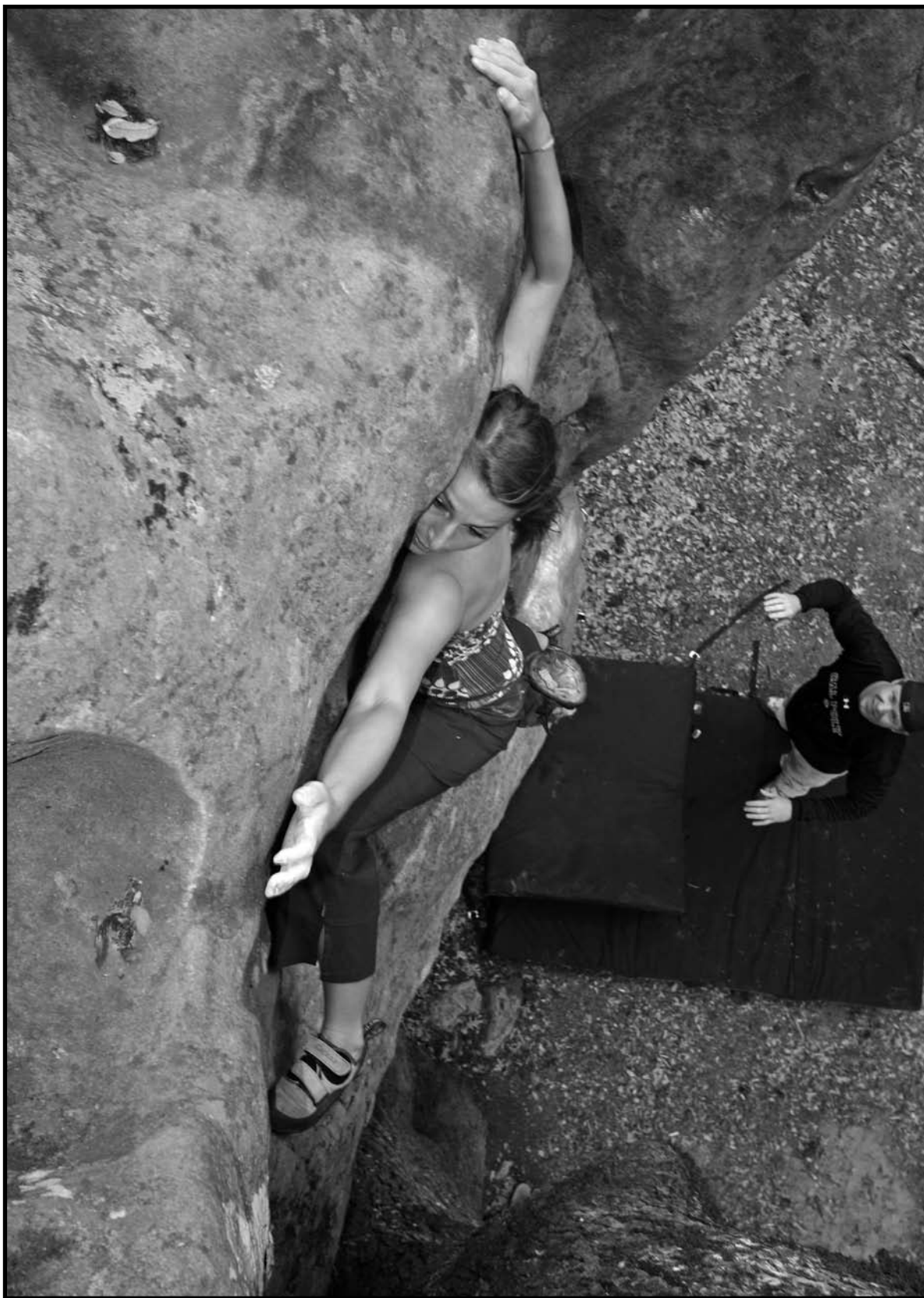
J. Heavy Metal Traverse V4 Either direction.



Right- John Sherman on *Hell Awaits*, Putah Creek.
Photo Chris Summit



Chris Wineinger on *Purgatory*, Putah Creek.
Photo Chris Summit



Tara Valladon on *Mr. Magoo*, Castle Rock.
Photo Tom Slater

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