

SPECIAL EDITION: THE COAST

# CALIFORNIA CLIMBER

FALL 2013  
N° 06

FREE



## DESTINATIONS

28 / MICKEY'S BEACH

42 / NORTH COAST

60 / BIG SUR





Designing  
Testing  
Climbing  
Working  
Playing  
Living

In  
CALIFORNIA

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A man in a green tank top and black pants is climbing a dark brown rock wall. He is using a green rope and a white carabiner. The wall is covered with various climbing gear, including colorful holds (blue, red, green, yellow) and metal carabiners. The background is a solid white color.

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## CALIFORNIA CLIMBER

NO. 06  
FALL 2013

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### DEPARTMENTS

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### FEATURES

28/MICKEY'S BEACH  
42/NORTH COAST  
60/BIG SUR



### ON THE COVER

Travis Lombardo nabs the third ascent of Fear of the Inevitable V6, a 25 foot problem on an amazing free-standing arch at Salt Point State Park.

IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING

### THIS PAGE

Sarah Peet traversing at Panther Beach, Santa Cruz.  
IMAGE + JIM THORNBURG

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Ryan Camera working on a new problem at Ossagon Beach, Redwoods State Park, Humboldt County.



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## FOR YOUR MOUNTAIN

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

JONATHAN SIEGRIST'S FAVORITE FA'S & HOW HE NAMED THEM...

'Enter the Dragon' 14a trad, The Fins. I was on a Bruce Lee stoke, and the length and sustained difficulty of this rig required ninja focus. Two of my best friends were getting married the next weekend in Colorado, and I essentially had one try to make it happen before leaving -- one chance -- Bruce Lee style. Beautiful route.

'24 Karats' 14c, The Red. To go with the theme of the wall (Gold Coast), I really felt like this route was near perfection--24 Karats worthy. Still one of my favorites.

'Shadowboxing' 14c/d, Rifle. I had to wait until after 4 or 5pm to try this rig in the shade, and every day into the season it was getting more and more sun! It was a battle to find the right temps and with a trip on the near horizon, my clock was ticking!

'Atonement' 14a/b, VRG. This was an old project that had been chipped, then glued in, then chopped and thus forgotten. I rebolted it and re-cleaned it, making the FA of this rad route and hopefully reconciling the whole event. It also follows the Theological theme on the Blasphemy Wall.

'Cloak and Dagger' 13b/c, Wizards Gate. The 'Cloak and Dagger' refers physically to the lower shield like feature and the upper arete, and metaphorically to the fact that this amazing zone had somehow mysteriously escaped the vision of Tommy & other local hardmen for decades.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

RUST NEVER SLEEPS

**THE TIDAL SHORELINE** of California's Coast spans over 3,400 miles of bays, inlets and sandy coves. Each year travelers from the farthest reaches of the globe take in incredible views from the winding curves of the Pacific Coast Highway. Thousands of people tour the coastline each season, yet very few park their cars and explore the hidden beaches below the road.

This season, California Climber celebrates one of the Golden State's most diverse and unique regions. Few states in the country have the expansive coastal access that California has, and no other state boasts an equal volume of quality seaside boulders and crags. Ocean-swept towers, freestanding arches, wave-like sandstone buttresses and overhanging blocks with sandy landings can be found on the hundreds of isolated beaches.

Alongside surfers, abalone divers and fishermen, climbers who call the California Coast home have always had an intimate relationship with the Pacific shoreline. From the southern reaches of San Diego to the foggy villages north of Humboldt County, seasonal tide charts hang from the walls of climbing gyms and gear shop bathrooms. At these same locations, you'll often see a jar dedicated to donations for anchor replacement. And anyone who's spent a significant amount of time climbing near the ocean can tell you just how important fixed anchor maintenance can be.

The UIAA (International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation) recently conducted a study of saltwater corrosion on fixed climbing anchors at seaside crags. The results were somewhat unsettling, with certain types of stainless steel bolts failing after only nine months of exposure and carbon-steel bolts corroding at an even faster pace. Surprisingly, huge falls are not needed to break bolts that have undergone chloride-stress corrosion from saltwater exposure. Some can break with the force of a short fall, and in some rare instances, body weight has been enough to snap a bolt hanger.

Many of the popular crags along the ocean—such as Mickey's Beach just north of San Francisco (see page 28) and Fisk Mill Cove in Sonoma Coast State Park—have had a number of routes equipped with enormous stainless steel U-bolts and titanium glue-in eye-bolts. If you're lucky enough to clip one of these monsters, please take a moment to thank the individuals who placed them (they're expensive and a pain in the ass to install).

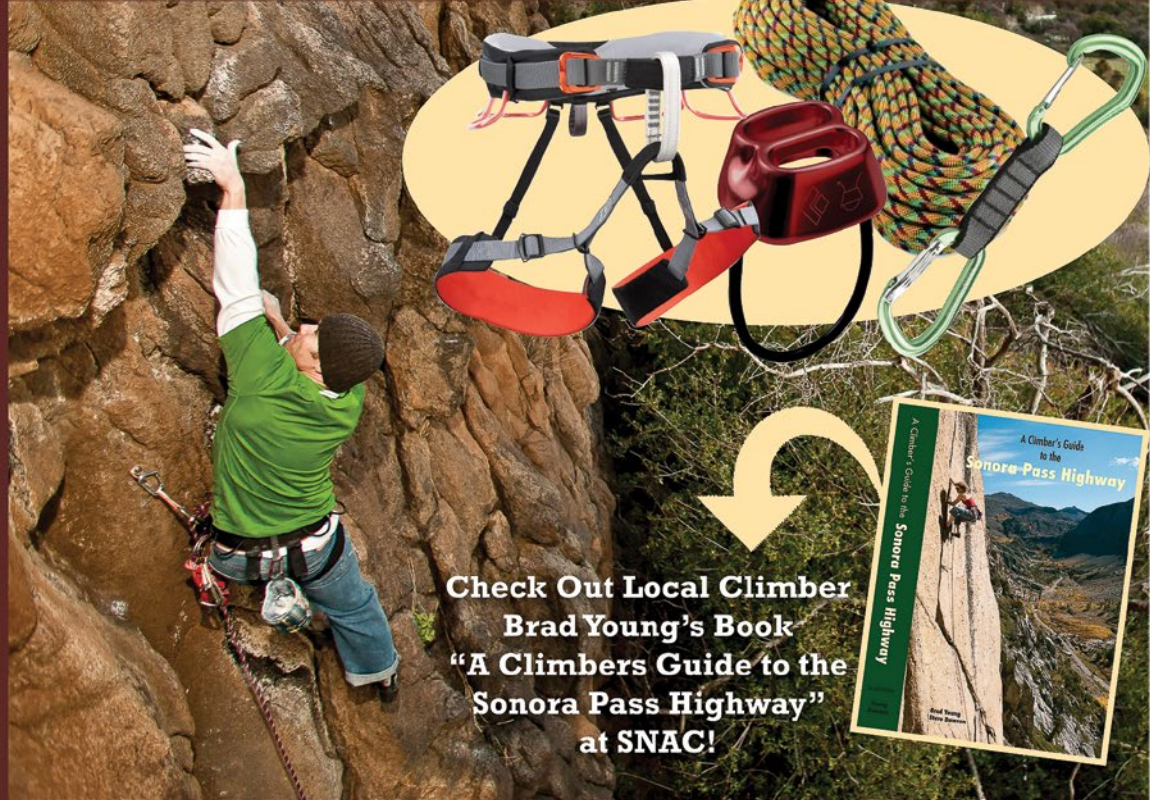
Even if you're a brave soul and your local seaside crag is littered with rusted-over hardware store bolts, it's a great public service to get some donations rolling and spiff up the cliffs for the next group of climbers. You can find a wealth of information about replacing bolts on the American Safe Climbing Association's website ([safeclimbing.org](http://safeclimbing.org)), but it's best to head out with an experienced friend to learn the

proper techniques of anchor replacement. Keeping our crags safe may seem like a hefty undertaking, but if we roll up our sleeves for a few rest days, we might just save someone's life. —**DEAN FLEMING**

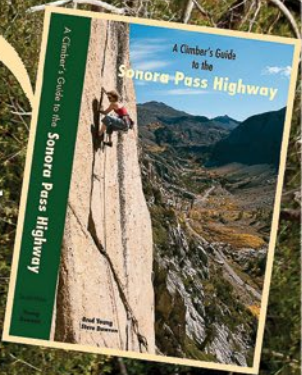


DEAN FLEMING

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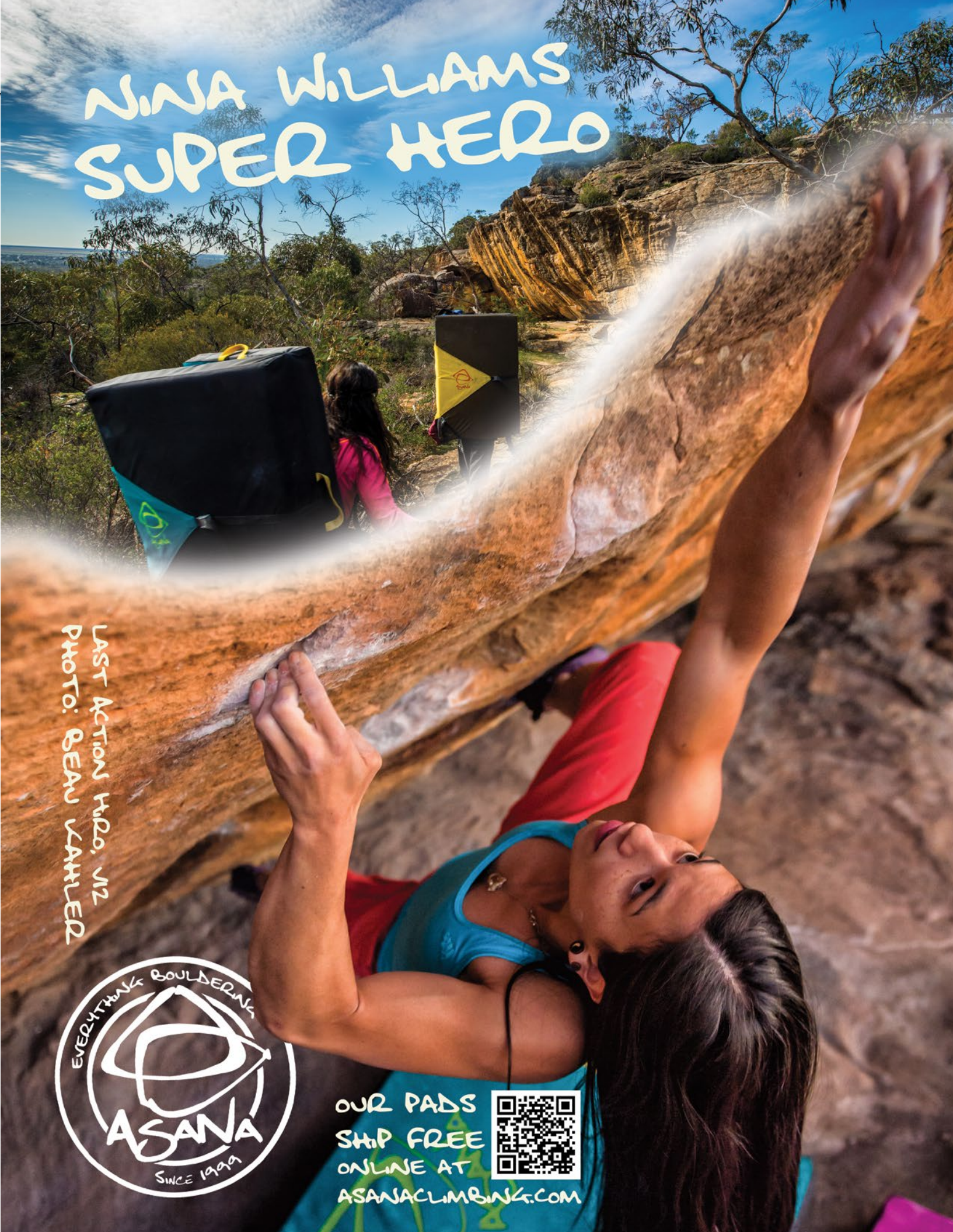
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ROUTE OF THE SEASON WORDS + CHARLIE BARRETT / IMAGE + JIM THORNBURG

SEA BISCUIT, 5.12b

[ THE FIRST ASCENT ]  
Marcos Nunez & Jordy Morgan, 2001

Marcos Nunez and Jordy Morgan in 2001. The route was not actually named for the film Seabiscuit, which came out in 2003—two years after Marcos and Jordy established this spectacular arête on the Sonoma Coast. Marcos used to call everything that looked good a biscuit. After bolting the route he said, “Dude, it’s the Sea Biscuit!” The name stuck. A few years later, the route was led without clipping the bolts, but instead using traditional protection in some pods and cracks. This style adds more spice to the route—including a 20-foot runout to the anchors.



BETA

ROUTE Sea Biscuit		GRADE 5.12b	LENGTH 45 ft
ROCK TYPE sandstone	STYLE sport, 4 bolts to anchor	RACK Quickdraws	
LOCATION Fisk Mill Cove, Salt Point SP	APPROACH 3 min + rappel	DESCENT lower off draws, clean from behind	
SEASON all year	GUIDEBOOK/S Bay Area Rock 7th Edition by Jim Thornburg & Wine Country Rocks by Chris Summit		

DESCRIPTION

Sea Biscuit is one of the most aesthetic single-pitch sport climbs on the California coast. The route is pretty short, but it packs a punch in 45 feet. This overhanging arête hosts solid pockets, unique tafoni and perfect slopers in a beautiful setting above the Pacific Ocean. Fun pocket climbing at the start leads to a powerful, squeezing crux with your butt hanging over the water. The crux is followed by 20 feet of amazing 11+ sandstone arête climbing past unique features. The pitch ends at two bolts placed next to a basketball-sized clipping jug. Sea Biscuit is an intimidating lead for even experienced 5.12 climbers, but its spectacular location, excellent rock quality and interesting movement make it well worth the effort.

Marcos Nunez on the FA of Sea Biscuit (5.12b).



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Erica Lineberry on Thunderstruck, 12b, NRG P: D. Brayack



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Carl Kirsch and his 1969 Subaru 360 Van “Subie-Doo”

CC: Aside from awesome, I’m not even sure what this thing is. Can you tell us a bit about your van and where it came from?

CK: Okay, where do I start... Subaru built these things in the 1960s. They made the van, a truck and a funny-looking car all with the same engine and wheels. I had been interested in the vans for years. A climbing trip to Kalymnos, Greece, a few years ago got me fixated on the idea. In most other parts of the world, newer versions of these vans are driving all around and are cool as hell. This one came up on Craigslist an hour north of me, and I had to have it. It had been left sitting for at least 20 years and needed lots of work, but it was complete and had a title. Considering less than 3,000 of these were imported until 1970, I felt pretty lucky to find one in the U.S.

What’s under the hood of this beast?

The original engine was two-stroke, two-cylinder 360cc and air-cooled; this motor would be small even in a motorcycle, and being a two-stroke it would smoke and make a lot of noise. My original plan was to convert it to electric. I just finished an electric-motorcycle project, so I thought this would be straightforward. But as I was collecting parts for the conversion, I found a Japanese 1994 Subaru four-wheel-drive truck, and the direction changed. The truck could never be road legal here in the U.S., and it was imported for off-road use only, so it was the perfect donor vehicle. I thought because they were both very small Subarus with rear engines that it would be an easy swap. Oh, was I wrong! It turned into a big project with endless custom pieces. The new motor is a four-cylinder, four-stroke 666cc. It’s kind of evil and small.

It sounds like you’ve done some pretty serious work to this rig. What were the biggest modifications or repairs you undertook?

There were a lot of modifications. The biggest projects were shortening the frame and front-drive shaft, reworking the brake system, rebuilding the engine, making a new wiring harness, adding a radiator (the original was air-cooled) and on and on...

Damn, dude. Are you finished with it?

No way. I need to finish the body work and paint, install a simple bed with storage underneath, a roof-rack basket and a stereo.

Sounds like it will be a great road trip machine. How’s the gas mileage?

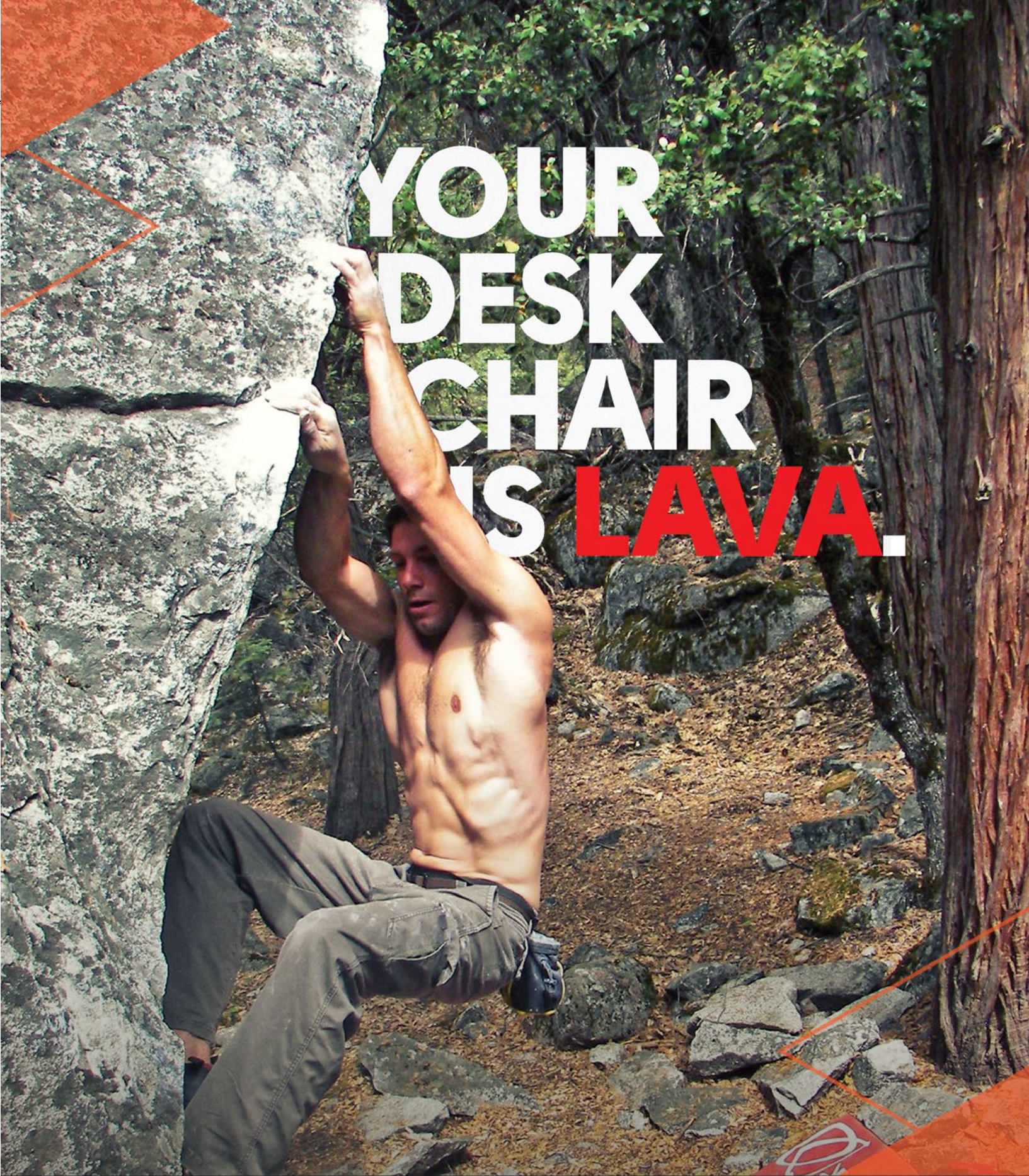
It gets great mileage—like 50+—but it tops out at 65 mph and prefers 50 mph.

What about off-road terrain? How does Subie-Doo run on rough roads with high-clearance sections?

The truck suspension I put in is pretty firm, has good ground clearance, is super light and has on-demand four-wheel-drive. It will go pretty much anywhere.

Sounds like Subie-Doo is almost ready to stretch his legs. Do you have any long trips planned?

I’m planning some road trips this winter. I’ll be based out of Joshua Tree and will use it around there for climbing. The only problem is that everywhere I go I get asked a lot of questions. This thing gets a lot of attention—it’s pretty crazy. I often have different tastes than most people, but this thing is loved by all. It’s my rolling art project and is the only one like it in the world.



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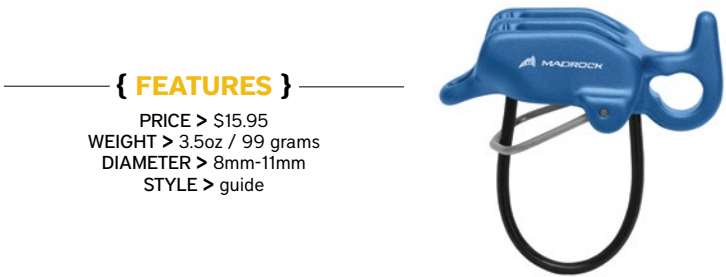
Gabriella Nobrega testing out the Mad Rock Aviator at Fisk Mill Cove.

THE BEST CATCH

**EVERY TIME YOU TIE IN** to a toprope, redpoint a project, start up a big wall or set off on a big fall, you put as much trust into your belay device as you do your climbing partner. Although many of the belay device designs in today's market are similar, there are a few companies that have improved on important features. This season we chose to highlight products that show innovations in three categories: tube-style, guide-style and auto-assisting.

In selecting devices for his review we looked closely at weight, stopping power, price, handling and versatility to find out what products would best suite different styles of climbing and different types of climbers. So Whether you're gearing up for a long backcountry trip, swinging leads on the big stone, or hitting the crags in search of long clip-ups; we've covered a belay device that can easily suite your needs.

MAD ROCK AVIATOR



- { FEATURES }
- PRICE > \$15.95
- WEIGHT > 3.5oz / 99 grams
- DIAMETER > 8mm-11mm
- STYLE > guide

METOLIUS BRD



- { FEATURES }
- PRICE > \$19.95
- WEIGHT > 2.9oz / 82 grams
- DIAMETER > 8mm-11mm
- STYLE > tube

We tested the BRD on multi-pitch routes, clip-ups and even took it into the backcountry for a couple first ascents. The assisted stopping power of the device made catching big falls casual. On first inspection it seemed as though the locking action of the BRD would make feeding rope while lead belaying a nightmare. To be fair, if you get anxious and jerk on the device it will probably cause you some trouble, but like most devices, once you get the hang of it the BRD belaying is very precise and smooth feeding.

We found that the BRD was most effective when used with a dedicated belay biner or some large, round stock biner. [The device can be flipped around for more or less pressure.](#) If you forget to flip it around on low angle rappels, it locks so well that you almost have to feed rope in to keep it moving. Rapping off slabs was slightly annoying, but on free-hanging rappels the BRD worked like a dream.

After testing out the BRD for a few months we had a chance to sit down with Doug Phillips, President of Metolius, and Brooke Sandahl, Vice President of Metolius, to discuss this renovated tube-style device. "We designed the BRD to have very little hand pressure needed to engage it," said Sandahl. "We saw and experienced so many plate or tube style devices that take a ton of effort to lock up. It's fine if your old school, but super dangerous for new climbers or smaller folks." "We went through 100's of prototypes to arrive at the current model," said Doug. "The BRD is far and away the safest plate-style device in existence." We certainly had our doubts, but after some rigorous testing and a few monster whips, we knew the boys at Metolius were really onto something.

For their Aviator belay device, Mad Rock used the idea of the guide-style tube device as a starting point and then improved on it with a couple cool features. The device works well for belaying seconds off an anchor and can be quickly rigged for this application. [The Aviator's unique removable spring keeps the device from locking when you feed rope during long lead belay sessions](#) - in testing the Aviator was one of the smoothest feeding tube devices we used. Another unique feature of the Aviator is its unique and ergonomic "fin" that can be used to modulate speed while lowering or descending.

In keeping with Mad Rock's mantra, the Aviator is a quality device that fits within a dirtbag's budget. The almost shocking \$15.95 retail price could put a smile on even the most frugal climber's face. The Aviator isn't astoundingly heavy, but for a tube style device it was one of the heftier belay tools we tested this season. On the plus side, the extra material around the rope running surfaces of the Aviator will help prevent the edges from wearing down to sharp points. If you're looking for a tube-style device that with great versatility and some extra features and you're working with a tight budget, the Mad Rock Aviator is definitely worth checking out.

DEAN FLEMING

# Metolius Super Team Chalk

"Super Chalk, it's almost like cheating."  
- Chris Sharma

Answers are available at [www.metoliusclimbing.com](http://www.metoliusclimbing.com)





{ FEATURES }

- PRICE > \$85.95
- WEIGHT > 6.4oz / 182 grams
- DIAMETER > 9.4mm-11mm
- STYLE > auto-assist

TRANGO CINCH

The Trango Cinch was one of the first auto-assist belay devices on the market to safely handle thinner cords. Today it remains a staple for both sport climbers and multi-pitch climbers because of its light weight and versatility. Although some climbers are not very concerned with weight, others argue that many of the auto-assist devices available today are simply too heavy to pack into remote locations or drag up long multi-pitch climbs.

With the advent of guide-style tube devices, the use of auto-assist devices on multi-pitch climbs may seem obsolete; however, cam-style auto-assist belay devices can still out-perform the competition in many scenarios. [When you need to escape the belay, rig a 3-to-1 haul, sit through an endless big-wall belay or counterweight the haul-bags; an auto-assist belay device is the tool of choice.](#)

At an astounding 182 grams, there's no excuse to leave the Trango Cinch at home. While testing the Cinch we found it to be incredibly quick and simple to set up at top-belays. In this mode it was super easy to release the cam when slack was needed by the second. For feeding rope during fast-paced lead belays, the Cinch could easily be held "wide open" to provide a near frictionless belay. If you're an all-around climber looking for a nice, lightweight auto-assist device that performs as well in the mountains as it does at the sport cliff, the Cinch might be your new best friend.

SMC SPIRE

Belaying directly off an anchor with a guide-style tube device is one of the safest and most comfortable ways to climb multi-pitch routes. But when your buddy wants to lower down a few feet to check out a neat looking caterpillar, re-directing the belay device to release tension can feel like a physics exam. With many guide-style devices, a small piece of cord needs to be threaded to a loop near the nose of the device. With this cord clipped, a sling or cordelette then runs back through a high piece in the anchor. When tension is applied to this cord, the device releases tension. Confused yet? Thankfully, so were the folks at SMC.

With one simple design element the team at SMC has created a guide-style belay device that foregoes the hassle of a re-direct to lower a climber. SMC's new Spire belay device has a small slot that sits above the rope-bearing holes in the belay plate. To release the device in guide-mode, a carabiner is simply clipped to this slot and pulled downward. With this action, the device flips sideways and allows smooth lowering from a top belay. [The Spire's awesome simplicity is complemented by an incredibly light 70 gram frame; making it perfect for backcountry travel and alpine routes.](#) The Spire isn't the cheapest device in this review, but if you plan on spending lots of time on multi-pitch routes - or you're just looking for a hassle-free and lightweight guide-style device - the Spire is certainly one of the most innovative designs on the market today.



{ FEATURES }

- PRICE > \$29.95
- WEIGHT > 2.5oz / 70 grams
- DIAMETER > 8mm-11mm
- STYLE > guide

FADERS SUM

{ FEATURES }

- PRICE > \$90
- WEIGHT > 9.1oz / 260 grams
- DIAMETER > 9.1mm-10.5mm
- STYLE > auto-assist



Although the SUM has been on the market for a while, we got our first good look at the belay device at the Fixe Hardware booth at the Outdoor Retail Trade Show in Salt Lake City last summer. Upon first inspection we came to an instantaneous and unanimous reflection: This thing looks weird. But looks can be deceiving. It wasn't until we actually handled the device that we realized the true beauty of its design.

[The SUM is widely considered to be the smoothest feeding auto-assist belay device on the market - especially when used with thinner ropes.](#) To complement this feature, the SUM also locks up incredibly fast on smaller cords. The SUM is designed and shaped differently than most auto-assist devices, so it can take a few minutes to get used to, but if you're doing lots of clip-ups and you like to use thinner ropes to shave weight on redpoint attempts, this device is hard to beat.

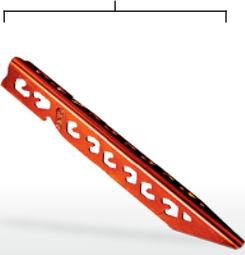
The SUM has a unique cam release system which generally provides smooth and steady lowering. As we have found with many auto-assist devices, some testers noted that the lowering mechanism was harder to engage if the climber was significantly heavier than the belayer. Yet in most cases, when the belayer took a short step forward to release some tension the problem was entirely solved. The SUM did not test especially well when rappelling, but the slight disadvantage in that department was far outweighed by its incredible handling while belaying. If you're thinking about getting serious at the sport cliffs this year, the SUM easily warrants a closer look.

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PHOTO: JEREMY PEXTON ON LITTLE TAHOMA, WA

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SPIRE BELAY DEVICE



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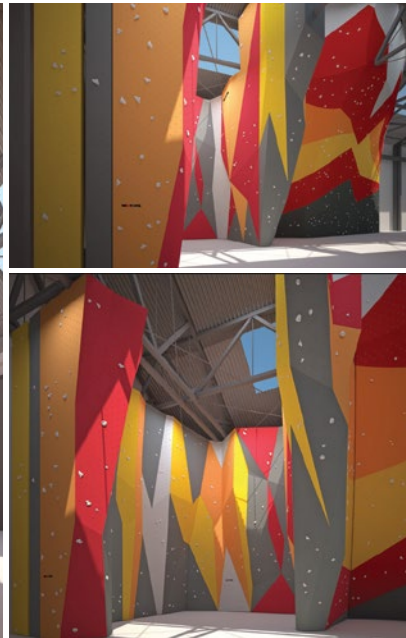
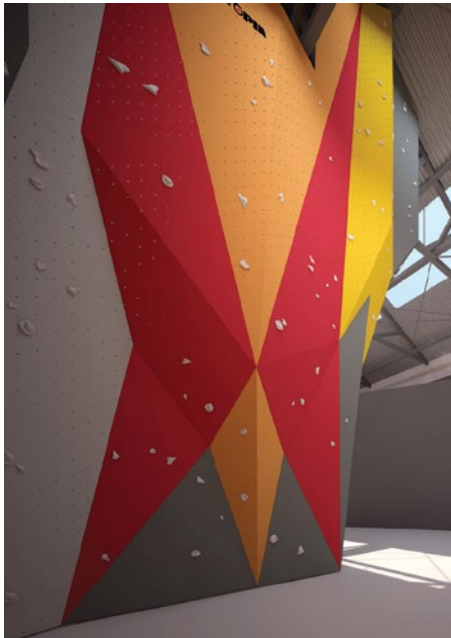
2013

# MISSION CLIFFS EXPANSION

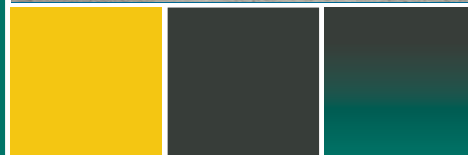
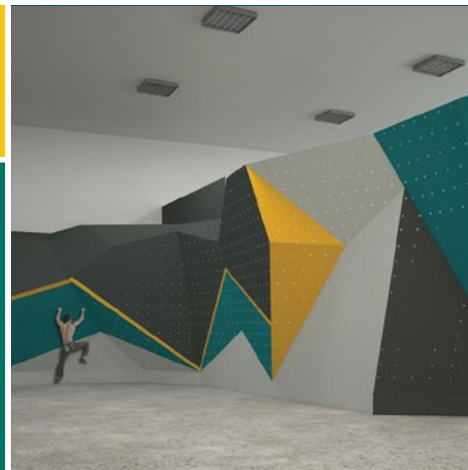
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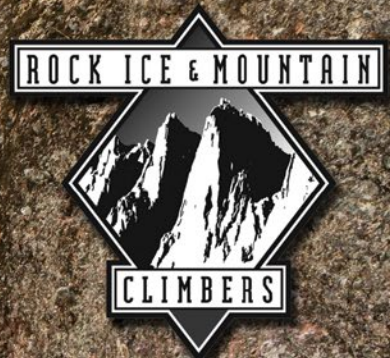


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Darren Wiemeyer climbing at Pinnacles National Park, California





GOLDEN STATE GALLERY



CLIMBER / Eric Owen  
ROUTE / *Unknown*, Salt Point State Park  
PHOTOGRAPHER / Jerry Dodrill



GOLDEN STATE GALLERY

CLIMBER / Eric Chemello  
ROUTE / *Swallow the Sea* (5.12c), Footsteps  
PHOTOGRAPHER / Jim Thornburg

CLIMBER / Ben Pope  
ROUTE / *Judge Dredd* (5.13b), Sea Crag  
PHOTOGRAPHER / Dean Fleming



GOLDEN STATE GALLERY

CLIMBER / Joel Ruscher  
ROUTE / *Sole Man* (V6), Trinidad Head  
PHOTOGRAPHER / Dean Fleming





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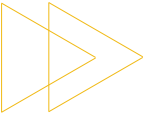


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WORDS & IMAGES + JIM THORNBURG



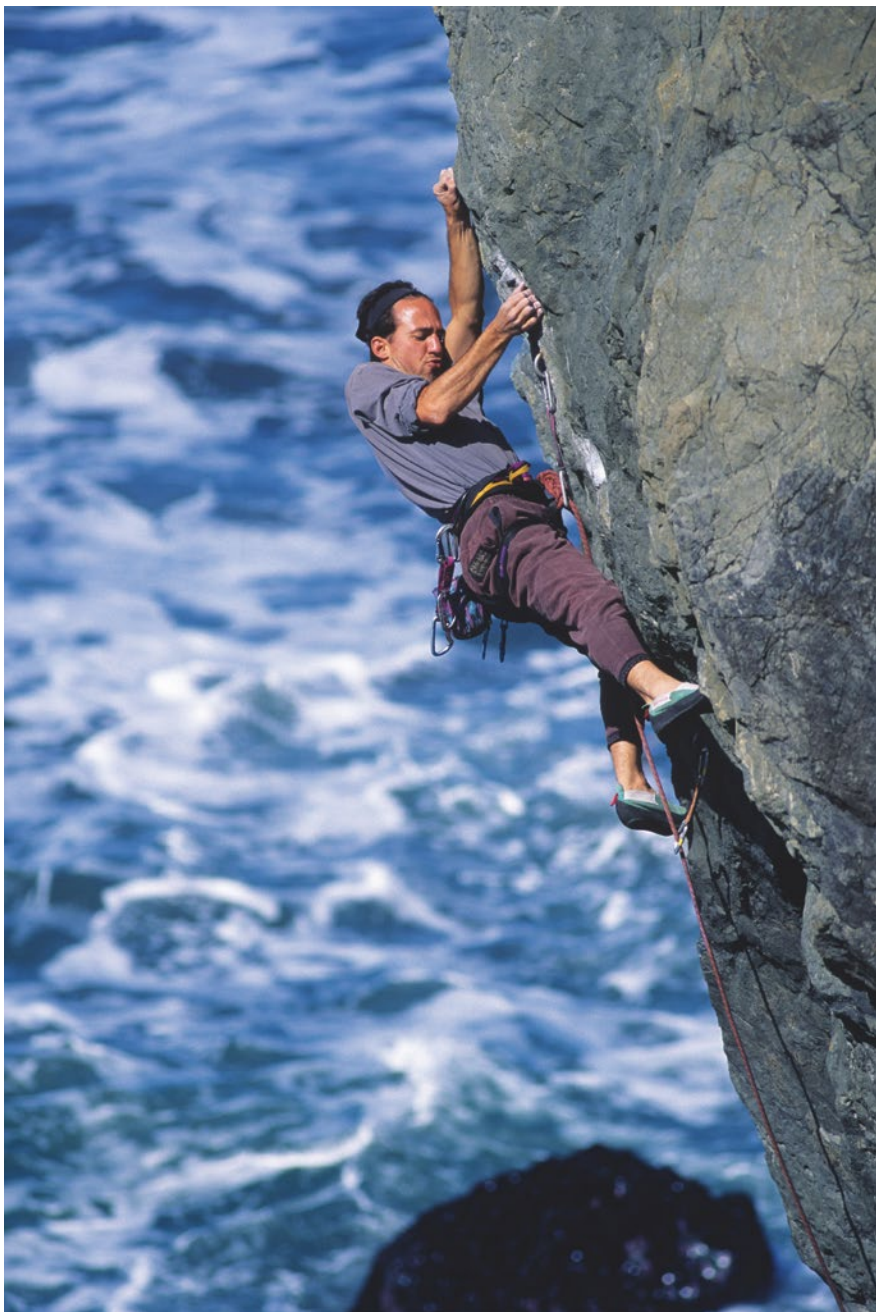
Chris Sharma climbing on half of a crack (see 'Lost at Sea', page 34) on *Mickey's Beach Arete* (5.13b).





LEFT Christine Zalecki on *Sunny Side Up* (5.11d). Hard moves up the initial overhang lead to intricate face climbing on a beautiful, slightly less than vertical face.

RIGHT Chris Clay on *Sex Porpoises* (5.12c). The three routes on the southeast arête of the Main Rock, *Sex Porpoises*, *Squid Vicious* (5.13a) and *Nancy* (5.11d) were named after the 80s punk band *The Sex Pistols*. Sex Porpoises is a classic intro to the hard climbing at Mickey's, with sustained, bouldery moves throughout its 60 feet.



methodical approach—working the crack move by move and committing the long sequence of jams to rote memory.”

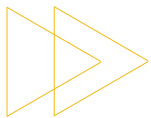
Freakishly strong from years of steep bouldering at Berkeley’s Mortar Rock, Dekker—or Conan the Librarian as we liked to call him—was bored with the slabby style of America’s hardest face climbs. His powerful forearms longed to crush steep face routes. In 1987 he ventured from his home in Berkeley to Mickey’s Beach, where a monolithic boulder sat on the shore of a rocky coastline adjacent to a then-popular nude beach. The big rock had only three established lines: two cracks and a slab. The main attraction was the stunning *Mickey’s Beach Crack*, a 65-foot finger crack that split a smooth and steeply overhung face. Some of the face climbs on the adjacent overhangs had been attempted, including “Spider” Dan Goodwin’s project *Moon Dance*: a futuristic line on the south face of the rock that he worked on top rope.

Dekker, along with his friend Scott Frye (another vastly talented Mortar Rock boulderer), began dogging (also on top rope) the moves on a short overhanging arête they called *Dreams of White Porsches* (a spoof on Marin wealth and the famous British arête climb called *A Dream of White Horses*). The pair worked out moves on it that were quite different from other routes of the day, including a massive ape-extension span to a small edge. At the lip of the overhang, however, they encountered a real stumper: no positive holds, just a befuddling combo of widely spaced sidepulls. After much work, Dekker came up with what at first seemed like a Hail Mary plan: From two bad sidepulls, he would throw a violent kung fu kick far to the left and hook his toe on an angled part of the arête. This hard move allowed him to rock up and reach his left hand to a higher sidepull. Figuring out how to release the toe-hook and control the resulting swing without “seeing the ocean” (a term Dekker used to indicate he had spun too far to hold on) was all that stood between them and solving the crux. Eventually the pair discovered a subtle way to control the swing, and soon after, they were both able to send the line on top rope.

The pair conservatively rated the climb 5.12d; nowadays, it’s considered solid 13b, and somewhat of a sandbag at that. More importantly, *Dreams* opened locals’ eyes to the potential of the rock’s climbability. Today, Mickey’s is a hardman’s heaven, with four main crags and 45 routes—20 of which check in at 5.12c and above. There is also a wealth of bouldering down on the main beach and more still on the rocky coast to the north and south.

Not only are the routes at Mickey’s very difficult, but the moves are often cryptic. Combine that with climbing conditions that are sometimes less than perfect (high humidity, damp holds), and the routes can demoralize even the strongest. In 1990, for instance, Jerry Moffatt and Ben Moon, two of Britain’s top climbers and two of the world’s best at the time, tried *Dreams* after it had been bolted and led and suggested a rating of 8b, or 5.13d.

I assume they made the common mistake of venturing to Mickey’s without first checking for low tide and swell (you want three feet or less on both counts). Going to Mickey’s without this knowledge is akin to a surfer going to his favorite break without doing the same: Conditions will likely suck, and you won’t have fun. Hit Mickey’s in the right conditions—late afternoon with an offshore breeze that turns the waves a frothy pink and leaves the rock tacky and orange in the last rays of a golden California sunset—and you won’t want to be anywhere else.

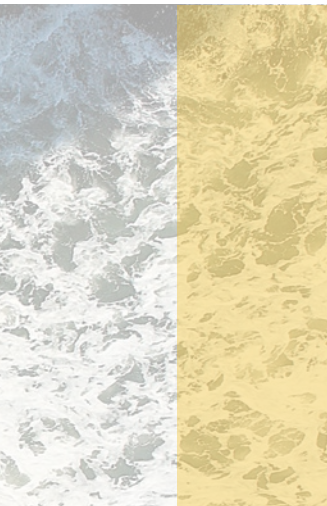


**Hangdog.** Now there’s a term you don’t hear often these days. It’s been replaced with the phrase “working the moves,” meaning you’re trying a route that’s too hard for you, but you intend to work it and redpoint in the most efficient way possible.

The term “hangdog” originated as an insult back in the 1970s. Calling someone a “f\*\*\*ing hangdog” was about as caustic an insult as you could hurl back in those jingus-slab-dominated days—you were supposed to lower after every fall. The only insult worse was to call someone a “f\*\*\*ing rap-bolter.” Ironically in the 80’s, those who bore the moniker “hangdog” often wore it with the same pride they wore their Lycra tights—a new climber for a new era, rebelling against the status quo.

The rules of those times dictated that face routes could only be climbed in traditional mountain-climbing style, i.e., from the ground-up, with no rehearsal, and with bolts drilled only from stance or hooks. Consequently, the cutting-edge face climbs of the day were tiny-hold affairs that were vertical or less.

In 1981, Tony Yaniro (perhaps America’s strongest climber at the time) made an early repeat of Colorado’s *Sphinx Crack* (5.13b), an overhanging thin-hands testpiece. Yaniro, among the first climbers to fully embrace hangdogging, sent the climb in short order. His belayer, a 21-year-old Library Science major named Harrison Dekker, was duly impressed: “Yaniro had such a







*TOP LEFT* Christine Paige on *Rust Never Sleeps* (5.10a), a miniature climb that requires a low tide, barnacle smears and a cool head. When a big wave hits the rock, don't be surprised when the whole thing moves a few inches.

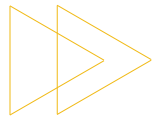
*BOTTOM LEFT* Steven Roth on the *Sundial Crack* (V0) a heady highball/solo on the north end of the beach.

*RIGHT* Clara Lopes on *Hot Tuna*, a short but stout 5.12a on the South Face.





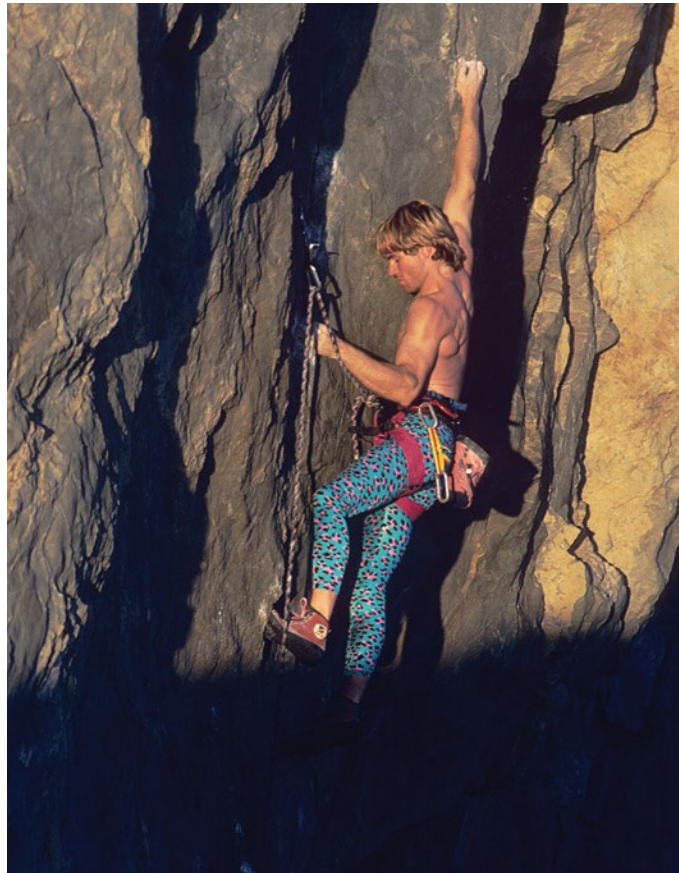
Harrison Dekker on *Flounder* (5.13b) in 1989; this great route climbed limestone-like pockets up to and over a four-foot roof. “*Flounder* was a super-classic climb” says Scott Frye, who made the first ascent in 1989. “Sadly, it fell over before many people had the chance to climb it”. The face underneath was cleaned a few years after the rock fall by local Ken Arizza, who found two hard new climbs, *Naked* and *Disfigured* (5.13a) and Mutiny (5.13b). To the right of Dekker, you can see the yellow dihedral that made up the top of another great crack-line called *Scorpio*, a 5.12c first led by Dan Goodwin in 1983. *Scorpio* was also lost to the rock fall of 1994.



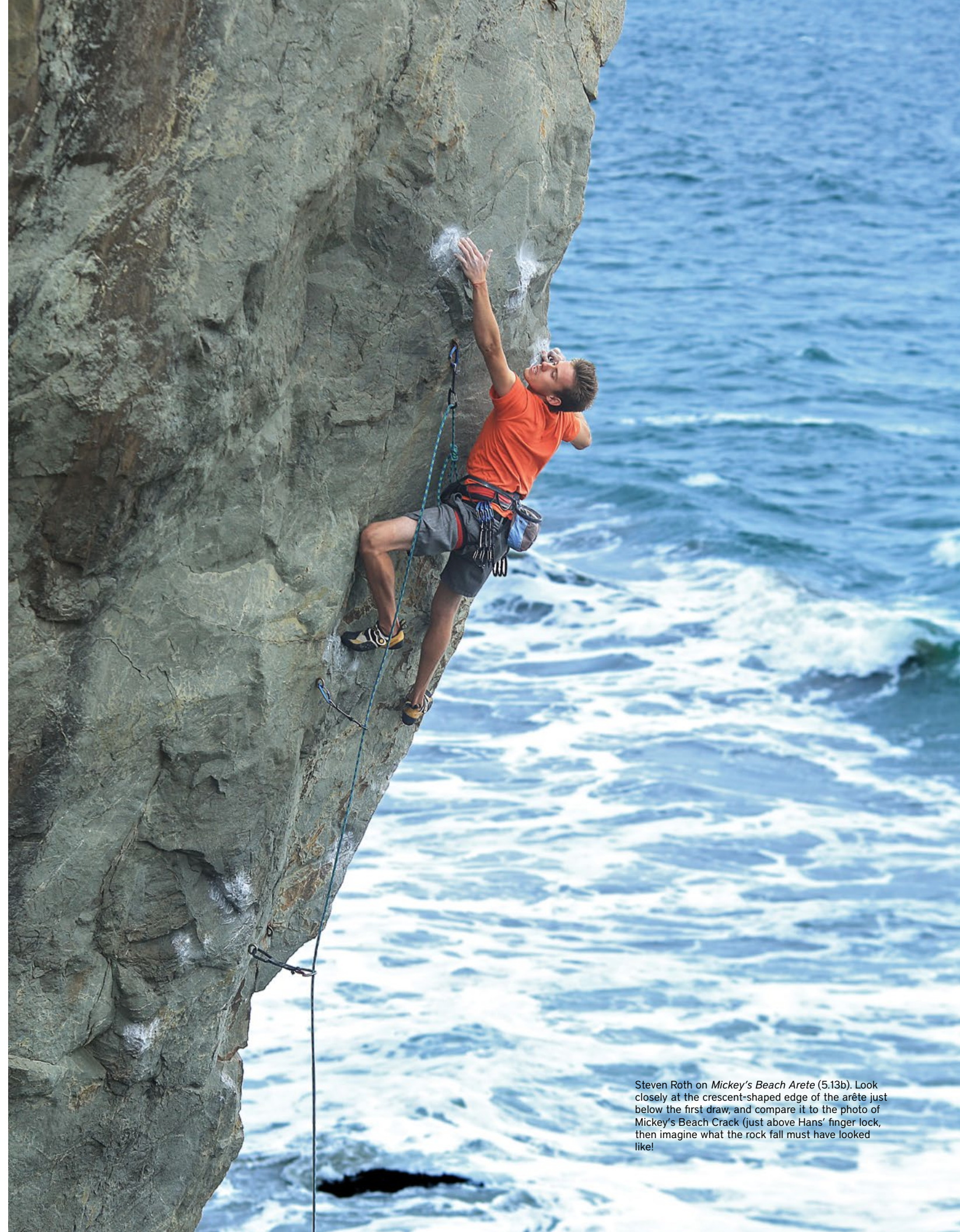
## LOST AT SEA

*Mickey's Beach Crack* was a brilliant 5.12b splitter that redefined the word when its right side split away in a violent rock fall during heavy surf in 1994. Three other excellent routes were similarly lost at sea (on the arête and around the corner on the west face). The left side of the crack is now *Mickey's Beach Arete* (5.13b); a fantastic climb that somewhat makes up for the loss of the Bay Area's one true splitter.

Hans Florine boulders out the start of *Mickey's Beach Crack* (5.12b).



Scott Frye on the first ascent of *Plate-O-Shrimp* (5.13b/c), a route named after a line from the 80s cult classic, *Repo Man*: “Suppose you’re thinkin’ about a plate o’ shrimp. Suddenly some one will say, like, “plate,” or “shrimp,” or “plate o’ shrimp” out of the blue, no explanation. No point in lookin’ for one, either”.

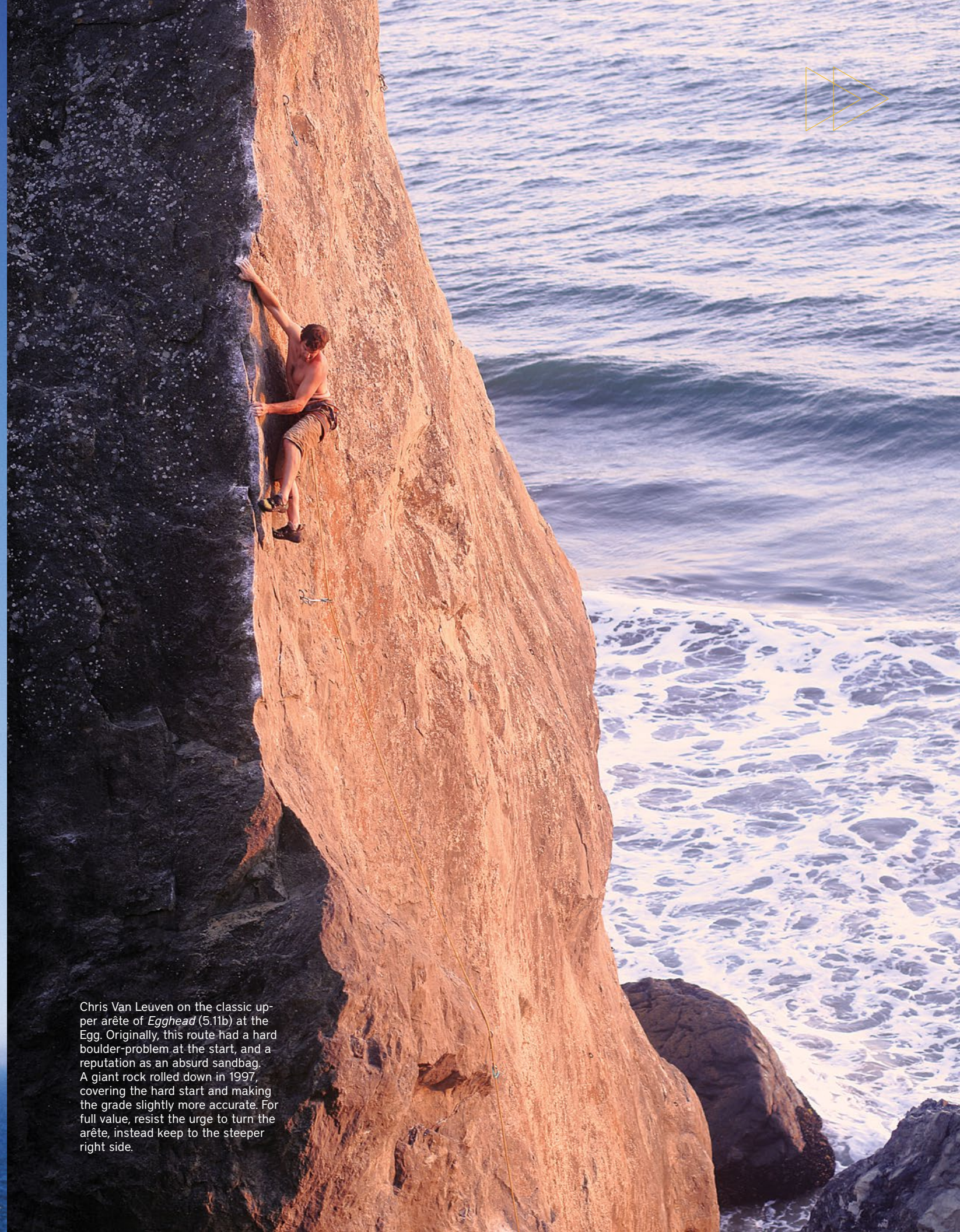


Steven Roth on *Mickey's Beach Arete* (5.13b). Look closely at the crescent-shaped edge of the arête just below the first draw, and compare it to the photo of Mickey's Beach Crack (just above Hans' finger lock, then imagine what the rock fall must have looked like!





Carlos Brasco on *Surf Safari* (5.13d). The wild overhang of Surf Safari was first climbed in 1991 by Scott Frye. This route and its neighbor, Endless Bummer (13b) both end with a confounding mantle and balancy "stand-up" move onto a surfboard-sized ledge.



Chris Van Leuven on the classic upper arête of *Egghead* (5.11b) at the Egg. Originally, this route had a hard boulder-problem at the start, and a reputation as an absurd sandbag. A giant rock rolled down in 1997, covering the hard start and making the grade slightly more accurate. For full value, resist the urge to turn the arête, instead keep to the steeper right side.





Steven Roth on *The Emperor's New Clothes* (5.12d). This excellent new route on the long-forgotten *Emperor Boulder* is long and sustained with no moves harder than V3. Sound easy? Try it. The route was originally discovered and top roped by Alex Catlin or Phill Heller in the late 80s, and left in an extremely chossy state. After a thorough cleaning (that removed about a ton of loose rock) the climb is now bolted and very fun.



## THE BETA

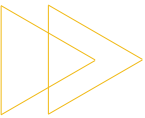
**GETTING THERE:**

Main Rock: From Highway 101 exit Highway 1 towards Stinson Beach and drive for about .6 of a mile on Shoreline Highway to the junction with Almonte. Turn left, remaining on Shoreline (Highway 1) for about 10.25 miles. If you get to Stinson Beach you've gone 1 mile too far. Look for a huge dirt parking lot on the left. From the parking lot, hike down the trail to the Main Rock (5 minutes). Steep, scruffy trails lead to either side of the Main Rock. Most of the bouldering is down on the beach where all the naked people are.

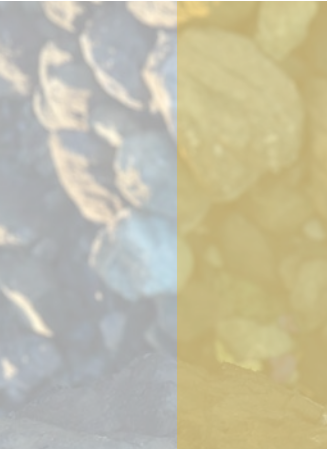
**WHEN TO GO:** Mickey's Beach is truly a year round destination. That said, you'll find the

ocean side routes are often wet, so it's best to consult a tide table and surf report ([sfgate.com/weather](http://sfgate.com/weather) - click the surf report for swell, and the marine forecast for tides). Look for a low tide below 3 feet and swells under 4 feet. During the winter months, the sand level varies drastically, changing the height and landing areas of the boulders.

**GUIDEBOOK:** *Bay Area Rock - Climbing + Bouldering* by Jim Thornburg has all the most up to date route info for The Main Rock, The Egg, and Surf Safari, as well as topos and info for the bouldering on Stinson and Mickey's Beaches.



Kyle O'Meara on *Nancy* (5.11c/d). A few holds have broken over the years on this fun route (the easiest of the steep routes on the main rock), forcing the climb right (around an arête). The straight up finish (*Courtney*, 5.11d) is more straightforward, but a bit harder, especially if you're under 5'8".





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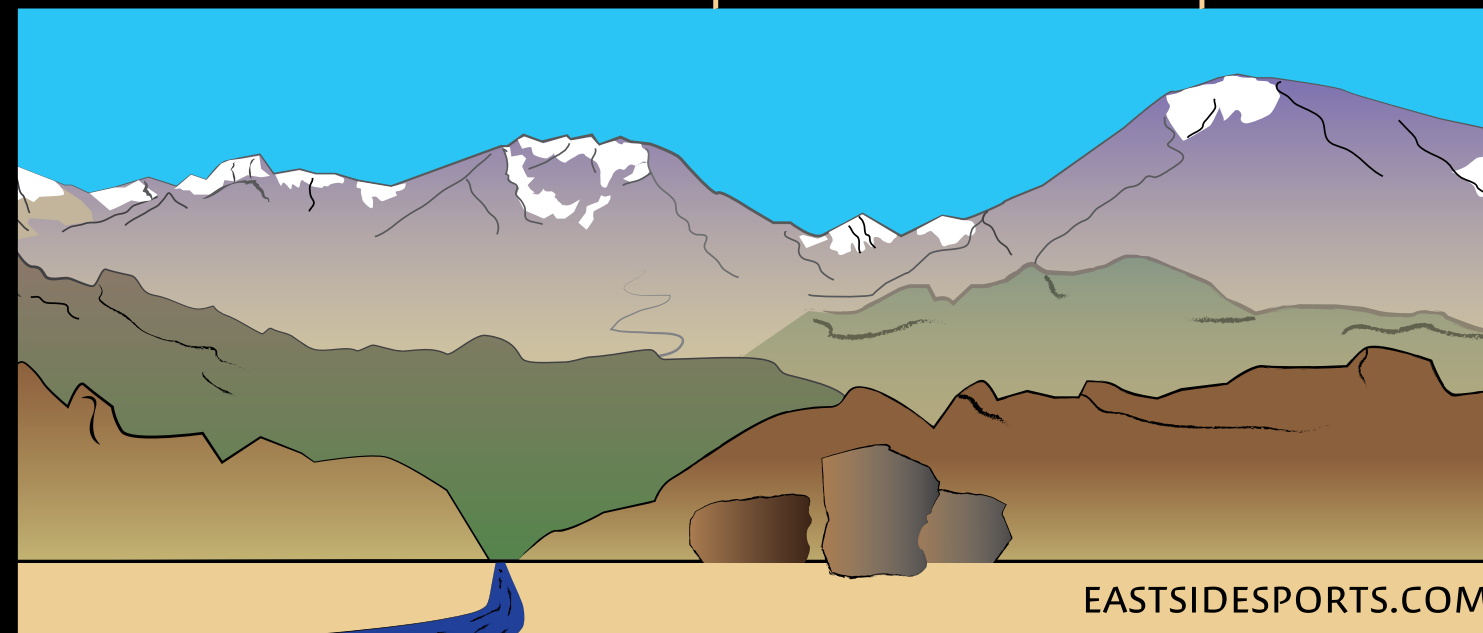
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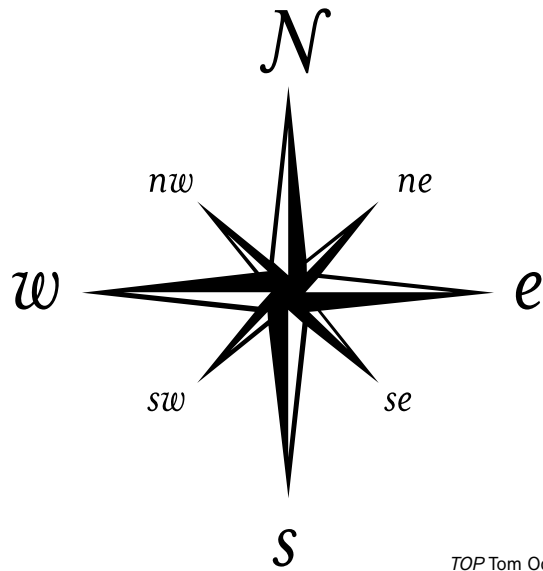
# Northbound & Down

WORDS + IMAGES DEAN FLEMING



Julia Mackenzie on an un-named V5 arête at Ossagon.





*TOP* Tom Ogden on Porifera 5.10d, Footsteps.  
*BOTTOM* Dennis Baumsteiger on Ferny Mac V5, Arcata Community Forest.

On hands and knees I crawled through mud and blackberry brambles, creeping towards small rays of sunlight peaking through the thick brush and coastal fog. Welts from stinging nettle bushes began to swell on my ankles, shoulders and face. Poison oak weaved through the undergrowth in thick, unavoidable patches. I came to an abrupt halt when my crashpad caught on the branch of an alder tree. I struggled until the pad was finally set free from the limb, and in an instant, I lost my balance and lurched forward down the muddy slope.

After a few feet of sliding on my elbows and knees and diving face-first through Frisbee-sized spider webs, I came to a stop on flat ground. I looked up to see the rest of the group bounding down the overgrown trail. They laughed and carried on a conversation as they hacked through blackberry vines with long pieces of driftwood. I had adapted to North Coast climbing about as quickly as the turtle could evolve to running down gazelle. Still, the sound of each breaking wave and thoughts of perfect gray blocks perched on cobbled beaches kept me crawling forward.

+++

Isolated on the northwest edge of California’s coastline, the small college community of Arcata makes up the cultural heart of Humboldt County. During the fall months, the sun drops quickly, and beyond the marshlands to the west, it appears as an enormous red disc before hastily sinking between the Somoa Spit and Old Town Eureka. As the shadows grow longer in town, rays of orange light reach past Highway 101 to bathe the tops of stately redwoods. In the evening, the fog banks rise and a familiar cold sweeps inland from Arcata Bay. After the sand is brushed from crashpads and the last ropes are pulled, this thick mist cultivates the region’s thriving coastal ecosystem.

A few miles north of Arcata, Highway 101 drops to sea level, and the road follows the coastline and divides the beaches from deep marshes that lead eastward to redwood groves. To the northwest, peninsulas stretch out around sandy coves like fingers reaching for the ocean. Beyond the capes, the sea is speckled with islands. Some are topped with lush, vegetated forests while others are reminiscent of shark’s teeth with sharply pointed apexes.

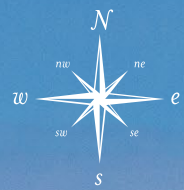
The islands dot placid coves like Trinidad Head, where fishing vessels and crabbing boats settle into the gentle rhythm of the tides. Farther north, dramatic drops in seafloor height produce intimidating shore breaks. At high tide the ocean meets jagged sandstone cliffs with monumental force. Tide-dependent landings and changing sand depths compel North Coast climbers to form an intimate relationship with the ocean.

The rocks that are scattered on the beaches north of Arcata look similar from a distance, but upon closer inspection, an incredible diversity of stone becomes apparent. Greywacke sandstone blocks feature sharp arêtes. Square-cut holds and slick footholds appear in abundance on the wealth of greenstone. Spider webs of pockets and odd cantaloupe-shaped balls form on the bellies of hard tafoni sandstone pillars.



Austin Schuler on the *Trinidad Traverse* (V2), Trinidad Head.





Nic Sabo on an un-named V4 at Ossagon







Julia Mackenzie on an un-named  
V5 arête at Moonstone Beach.

*house-sized boulders slow-cooked for thousands of  
years far below the Earth's crust – finally rising to  
perch on a 5 mile stretch of flat sandy beach*

---

Perhaps the most valuable stone in the region is a rare form of smooth gabbro south of the Klamath River. A gift from the San Andreas Fault, these unique house-sized boulders slow-cooked for thousands of years far below the Earth's crust until finally rising to perch on a five-mile stretch of flat, sandy beach. Intersected with striking quartz veins and littered with perfectly textured incut edges, these blocks could provide a lifetime of new problems for anyone willing to travel south of the established bouldering circuits.

+++

Just over a year ago, eight young climbers packed into a 1970s Toyota Dolphin camper and made the long haul from Arcata to Myers near South Lake Tahoe. Dennis, Julia and Ari had moved north from Marin County a few years prior to attend Humboldt State University. Ryan, Luke, Big Nate and Cameron were also in Arcata for college courses, although Luke and Ryan had since graduated and landed sweet government jobs. Austin, a mutant-strong 16-year-old, was on summer vacation awaiting his junior year of high school. The crew was small, but tight-knit and infectiouslly psyched. After a long North Coast winter, they were excited to test out sparkling granite boulders in the warm sunshine of the Tahoe Basin.

I met the group that weekend while wandering through one of Tahoe's characteristic pine forests. We fell off boulders during the day and then exchanged stories into the night. I mentioned that I had recently visited Arcata in an attempt to rekindle a relationship with a girl, but that I hadn't done much climbing there. They talked about vacant ocean-swept boulders, inland limestone clip-ups, pristine beach-side crags and cool temps. Less than a week later, I fueled up the car and headed for the North Country.

+++

I pulled into Arcata late on a Friday night. The place had a familiarity of the worst kind. Once again I had tried to connect with the girl, and once again I had nowhere to go and nowhere to stay. The bartender's leathery face crinkled to an age-revealing smile. Not the kind of age measured in years, but rather an accumulation of hardship calculated by moments of adversity. She called me sweetie when she poured each drink, and it made me feel better.

A few hours later, I awoke to a hazy day and a headache. Dim light passed through the fog and flooded the passenger-side window. I kicked open the back door and stumbled towards the grocery store. The plan was to meet around 10:00 a.m., which in Arcata means 11:30—we'd probably be hitting the road by 12:30. I pounded a few cups of coffee as we wound up the 101 towards the Klamath River. High above the river's confluence with the Pacific, we stuffed our crashpads with beer, food, firecrackers and sleeping bags before heading down through a damp jungle toward the beach.

After 100 yards on hands and knees, I was finally able to stand upright on the faint trail. A wall of green leaves towered overhead as I thrashed toward the sound of crashing waves. Finally my toes touched the sand. Ryan and Austin had dispatched the trail with ease and were posted up at a makeshift campsite tucked between three gray boulders. I threw down my crashpad and dug out my climbing shoes.

Slowly we began our search for perfect lines of unchalked holds. The first block south of camp was about the size of a small cabin and overhung on three sides. We climbed some interesting warm-ups on smooth edges before gazing up at a steep prow facing the ocean. On closer inspection, the line seemed like it could open up. A logical start on a small rail sat below sequential moves to a good hold. Climbing to this point was possible, but to span the gap to the next oddly shaped pinch evoked visions of shoulder surgery.

Between sandwiches, spliffs and sandy naps, we threw creativity at the boulder. After very little success and the better part of a day, we moved down the beach to chalk more holds. As the sun set, the prow and a few other features were added to the long list of projects worth coming back to.





LEFT TOP Jazzmyn Zamora on the *Huda Point Traverse* (V2), Huda Point.  
LEFT BOTTOM Luke Mast on *Karen Crack* (5.8), Moonstone Beach.  
RIGHT Tom Ogden on *Weltering Splash* 5.9R, Footsteps.



In the dim glow of twilight we tossed firecrackers into the sand. The colorful explosions danced along the rocks and beach until they reached the Pacific. The light reflected deep into the night sky from the top of a thundering shore-break. We picked out interesting shapes of driftwood from our stack of firewood; setting each piece carefully aside on a flat gray rock. We talked about the waves growing closer with the rising tide. We spoke of everything—everything except for climbing and girls. We sat with the fire until our faithful blanket of fog covered the stars.

*Dean Fleming is the publisher of California Climber. After a few years on the road, he’s found a place to live near downtown Arcata.*

### 5 Star Routes

*Karen Crack* (5.8), Moonstone Beach: This route has been topoped to death by HSU students and gumbys for decades; so it takes a lot of shit from the locals. But if you rack up and lead this climb, it suddenly becomes one of the finest leadable moderates on the North Coast. Excellent and creative gear in pockets starts the climb; above, a perfect, thin crack splits excellent sandstone.

*Porifera* (5.10d), Footsteps: Walking out onto the platform below the southernmost wall at Footsteps is a pretty intimidating act; the sound of waves crashing from every direction is amplified in the huge corridor. Launching up into the sea of pockets above this platform is one of the most heroic acts imaginable. *Porifera* is an intimidating route for its grade, but considering the heady nature of all the climbing at Footsteps, it’s a pretty good warm-up for the area.

*Launch Toast* (5.11d), Moonstone Beach: This striking arête has been called everything between 5.11a to 5.12a. No matter what grade you think it is, you certainly won’t be disappointed by the movement and unique holds

that litter this incredible prow. Pockets, edges, heal-hooks and underclings lead to a two-bolt anchor and sunset views of the Pacific.

*Great White* (5.12c), Promontory: Although renovation of the lead bolts and anchor might be warranted on this long forgotten line, the incredible rock and steep pocket-pulling on *Great White* certainly make it a climb worth resurrecting. Until this climb sunk into relative obscurity, it was considered by many to be the best climb of its grade and style in the state of California.

*Houdini* (V5), Huda Point: Houdini is one of the few crack boulder problems in the Humboldt County area. This alone makes it a sought-after line; however, if this overhanging splitter was standing in the middle of Camp 4 it would still be considered an absolute classic. Perfect fingerlocks with great footholds lead to a heady laybacking crux far above the sand. The climb can be topped-out as a boulder problem (a spooky 35 feet) or topoped via two bolts at the crack’s end. Some folks opt to jump off after a huge jug at mid-height.







LEFT Kai Defty on *Launch Toast* (5.11d), Moonstone Beach.  
 TOP LEFT Cameron Trujillo warming up on one of the many spires south of Huda Point.  
 TOP RIGHT Jemma Williams on *Huda Point Traverse* (V2), Huda Point.  
 BOTTOM Ari Maiello on *Houdini* (V5), Huda Point.

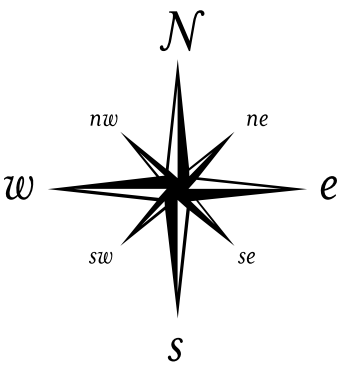






Julia Mackenzie on *Po-  
rifera* (5.10d), Footsteps.





## THE BETA

**GETTING THERE:** Arcata is located just north of Eureka on Highway 101; 95 miles south of the Oregon border. Most of the ocean-side rocks in the region can be found north of Arcata, lining the beaches from the southernmost crags and boulders at Moonstone Beach to coves a few miles north of the Klamath River. Moonstone Beach, Huda Point, Luffenholtz Beach and Trinidad Head are located along a 5-mile stretch of coastline that is traversed by the aptly-named Scenic Drive. Sport climbing, crack climbing and bouldering can be found at these beaches, although the highest concentration of quality rock is found on the area's boulder problems.

The next climbing area north of Trinidad that boasts a high concentration of established problems can be found at the end of the Ossagon Creek Trail at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. 40 miles north of Arcata on Highway 101, turn west onto Newton B. Drury Scenic Parkway. After 6.7 miles look for the Ossagon Creek trailhead (signed) on the west side of the road. The trail to the bouldering is 3.7 miles long with some notable elevation change, but the views and climbing are well worth the effort.

The best beach-side sport climbing in the region can be found a few miles north of the Klamath River at two crags: Footsteps and Promontory. Both of these cliffs can be intimidating, but offer excellent climbing on Tafoni sandstone high above the Pacific Ocean. The large grey cliff that makes up the Promontory climbing area can be seen from Highway 101, 7 miles north of the Klamath River crossing. Footsteps is located about 1 mile north of Promontory, but is much harder to find. Access along the coast can only be made at low tide. The other option is to follow a trail to the crag through heavy brush, which is easily one of the burliest approaches in the state of California. In all seriousness, the only reasonable option to access Footsteps is to follow someone who has been to the crag.



**WHERE TO STAY:** There are many fine campgrounds tucked into the redwood groves of Humboldt County's state parks and famous Redwood National Park. It is legal to camp on some of the beaches in Humboldt County, but in an effort to preserve the area from impact, it is illegal to camp at virtually all of the easily accessible beaches. The best campground I have found is Camp Klamath near the Klamath River's confluence with the Pacific Ocean. The sites are outrageously expensive at \$30 per-night but the place is pretty damn nice.

**GUIDEBOOK:** "Bigfoot Country Climbing" by Eric Chemello and Paul Humphrey includes the coastal climbing from Moonstone beach to Promontory as well as limestone climbing at Trinity Arêtes, Cecilville, Marble caves and the Caverns.

**LEFT TOP** Left Upper: Joel Ruscher during the first ascent of Land of the *Setting Sun* (V8), Huda Point. **LEFT BOTTOM** Austin Shuler on *C-Enemy* (V7), South of the Klamath River. **RIGHT** Andrea Batt on a highball V2 slab north of Trinidad Head.





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# BIG SUR

WORDS + IMAGES KYLE QUEENER

A hard to bag ascent, *Dire Straits* (V3) combines hard climbing with wet holds and less than ideal conditions. Nathaniel Potter gets another lap in during a rare moment when there is enough sand to keep you dry.



# T

The Santa Lucia Mountains rise out of the depths of the Pacific Ocean and span an area more than 90 miles in length, starting near Carmel and heading south to San Simeon. Everyone who visits develops a unique relationship with Big Sur—whether it’s the intense energy of the ocean, the solitude of the hills, the blanket of rolling fog or the spectacular sunsets—the area speaks to us all. Along this remote and ecologically diverse coastline you will find dense redwood groves that give way to steep gorges laced with bubbling and clear waters. McWay Falls cascades down on a golden, sandy beach, and it is just one example of the impressive features that comprise Big Sur, a shining gem of the California coast.

Climbers can develop an especially intimate connection with the area because a mind-blowing amount of rock divides the ocean from the soil of the hills in Big Sur. The ocean relentlessly carves away the sediment of the mountains, constantly exposing more rock that will eventually break down into grains of sand. At Garrapata Beach, sand covers long stretches of coastline and accumulates under short crags of granite and sandstone, creating a soft landing. However, the Pacific can also make the short crags grow in height (sometimes by as much as 10 feet) when the sands recede back into the ocean.

During times of low-sand levels, climbers travel to a more robust outcrop of stone. Partington Cove once docked cargo ships, but now it is only filled with bright blue water teeming with wildlife and purple rock that gradually fades into an overhanging amphitheater of white stone. Just past that is a small climbing area that rises above a flat granite shelf only a few feet above the highest tides. Water gradually shaped the rock into sweeps of granite that resemble breaking waves, while talus boulders created caves that offer some of the hardest bouldering in the Big Sur area. Rogue waves and high tides have the potential to sweep away the dust that settles in depressions of the rock, and these waves also have no sympathy for the unaware climber who disregards the dangers of being swept into the turbulent sea.

If the Pacific is being particularly pesky during a visit and prevents access to its beaches or crags, finding solace in the hills and gorges above may be the only solution. In the Big Sur River Gorge, steep cliffs and hillsides plummet directly into the water. The large boulders sit above to the water’s edge where they have been polished smooth by the constant flow of the river. Every passing storm can easily change the course of the river, and in turn, affect the climbing. Landings have been altered and eliminated altogether; where there was sediment is now only water. Of course it can work the other way, too: The next big storm may conveniently rearrange stones that currently inhibit a climber-friendly landing. More boulders lay in the narrow gorge where the explorative boulderer will find them waiting for some attention, which is hard to give when there are so many enticing swimming holes offering a distraction.

A plentitude of untouched rock is scattered throughout the Santa Lucia Range, from the shores of the ocean and far back into the valleys of the Los Padres National Forest. Budding and long-time first ascensionists alike can discover virgin rock with each new search. Some of the stone will be high-quality, and some of it will be brittle or too soft for climbing. But due to the sheer volume of boulders and small cliffs on the hillsides and shorelines, entire areas may be waiting for discovery.



*ABOVE* Many of Granite Creek’s routes are over ankle breaking cobbles, even a crash pad is little protection. Here Nathaniel Potter tops out into the no fall zone on *East Face* (V2).

*RIGHT* No crash pads required; Maeve Murphy heading into the crux of *The Wave* (V4) at Garrapata State Beach.



Adventure is guaranteed at Big Sur: wading through manzanita bushes, crawling through dense brush, walking at the eroding edge of a coastline path, finding loose rock high above the ground or even while sticking to the most-visited climbing areas. Expectations here should be simple and flexible: No day is guaranteed to be full of climbing and almost everyday includes a bit of exploration.

For the full-value experience, grab a few friends, some canned beverages, maybe one of the many hitchhikers in the area, and explore the wildness of nature in Big Sur. This isn’t the best place to test your strength; more so, this is a place that will test your patience and adaptability. Big Sur can easily become part of you, and the climbing may just be an excuse to sit on the shore and watch changing tides, hovering birds and thriving sea life.



BIG  
SUR



# BIG SUR

Justin Ridgley works the moves on the SDS of *XXX Arete* (V12/13). Justin made the probable first ascent of this problem hours before moving to Hawaii, requiring him to get on the problem well before sunrise in order to beat the heat and somehow stick the heinous slopers.

## THE BETA

**GETTING THERE:** Most of the established climbing in the Big Sur area can be accessed from Highway 1 south of the Monterey Peninsula. Mileage for the parking areas that access the crags is best measured from the intersection of Rio Road and Highway 1. The parking for Granite Creek is located 7.8 miles south of the Rio Road intersection on Highway 1 at the third turnout after crossing the Granite Creek Bridge.

8.9 miles south of Rio Road, Highway 1 reaches Garrapata State Beach. Parking can be found in a long turnout on the west side of Highway 1. From here, follow the obvious trail to the beach and then head south until the climbing becomes obvious. Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park is located 26 miles from Rio Road. Either park on Highway 1 and walk-in or pay the entrance fee. Find your way to the back of the park and follow the Big Sur River.

Partington Cove is located 35 miles south of Rio Road on Highway 1. From here, park at a dirt turnout in the apex of a tight hairpin curve and then head down the Partington Cove Trail. This trail follows a gated fire road across a bridge and through the tunnel. Once you reach the end of the Partington Cove Trail make your way around the corner over steep cliff trails and then down-climb a few feet to the routes.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Big Sur is not the friendliest place for the low budget dirtbag, but fine camping can be found all along the coast. The best, and cheapest, is probably Andrew Molera State Park. This is a walk-in campground just minutes from the beach and centrally located within the established climbing areas. Cost per-night ranges from \$25 to \$30. Fernwood Resort will make a great base-camp if you're seeking more amenities, but you will pay a fair amount more. Fernwood offers many free concerts and events; check their website before you make a trip and if anything, at least stop in for a drink and some music. Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park has many sites but this campground is usually full during the summer months. Expect to overpay for these sites, but as a tradeoff you will be within walking distance to some bouldering. Own a van? I've heard car camping south of Deetjens is a low hassle event, but no guarantees. Car bivy at your own risk.



**GUIDEBOOK:** "Bouldering the Big Sur Coast" by Larry Arthur (1988) is the only known guide to the Big Sur area. Larry, the owner of the Carmel-based online gear shop Mountain Tools, has made this guide available for free on the Mountain Tools website: [www.mntntools.com/culture/bs\\_bouldering.html](http://www.mntntools.com/culture/bs_bouldering.html). Rumor has it Larry may be working on a revised edition complete with photos and updated information. Larry is the leading authority on Big Sur climbing today and in my experience with him, he's always happy to share his local knowledge. "Bay Area Bouldering" by Chris Summit has some info on Granite Creek, but nothing more for Big Sur. Some extra info can be found on [mountainproject.com](http://mountainproject.com), as Larry's guide does exclude a few areas, as does this article. Expect to do some searching in Big Sur. Do you spot some potential from the road? Go check it out!

## 5 STAR ROUTES

*The Wave V4*  
*Dire Straits Trav. 5.11d*

(PRIVATE PROPERTY, NO TRESPASSING!)

*XXX Arete V9* (jump start), *V12/*  
*V13* (sit start)

*East Face V2*  
*The \$100 Boulder Problem V1*

Andrew Burr

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jess ros Kelley looking for adventure down south

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