

# CALIFORNIA CLIMBER

SUMMER 2018

N° 25

## FEATURES

CHIMNEY  
ROCK

GOLDEN STATE  
DWS

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# CALIFORNIA CLIMBER

NO. 25  
SUMMER 2018

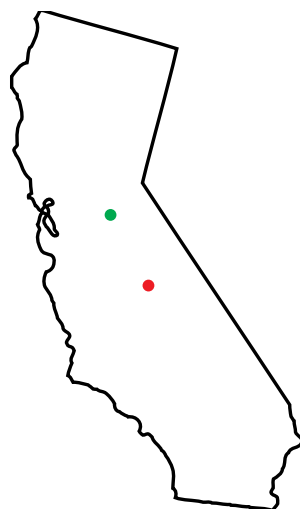
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## FEATURES

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## ON THE COVER

Kai Defty deep water soloing on impeccable limestone at Natural Bridges, Calaveras. IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING

## THIS PAGE

Brad Perry surfing the granite slopers of *Swiss Chocolate* (V5), Mountain Beavers, Lake Tahoe. IMAGE + ALTON RICHARDSON

Clockwise starting top right: Dan Brayack, Nate Gerhardt, Andy Cross, Alk Berg, Dan Brayack



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# CALIFORNIA CLIMBER

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**PUBLISHER**

Dean Fleming

**ART DIRECTOR**

Alton Richardson

**SENIOR CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Jerry Dodrill, Jim Thornburg

**SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

Fitz Cahall, James Lucas

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Austin Siadak, Alton Richardson, Jon Thompson,  
Jim Thornburg, Greg Epperson, Kevin Daniels, Kyle  
Queener, Dean Fleming

**CALIFORNIA CLIMBER**

22502 Colorado River Dr.

Sonora, Ca 93570

Phone: (209) 768-0110

Email: climb108@yahoo.com

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EDITOR'S NOTE

**AT THE AGE OF FIVE** I got my first look at Soulsbyville Elementary School's outdoor jungle gym; a facility that was equipped with an Olympic-quality set of monkey bars. Three rows of approximately thirty bars each. Wood framed with solid steel rungs. A sandy base. It was just as intimidating as it needed to be to get your heart racing along with your feet as you sprinted towards it. I remember being filled with joy and beyond psyched to simply swing around. And swing around is exactly what I did. Practically every day for the next five years, until my hands became covered in blood blisters that I'd occasionally wrap with old tee shirts or rags from the lost and found box in the cafeteria. In all this time spent monkey baring, however, I never thought about being good at the monkey bars, or whether or not others were good at the monkey bars, or if a person could even be good at the monkey bars. Was I practicing real monkey bars, or just swinging around?

+++

In this issue of California Climber photographer Jim Thornburg brings us back to our child-like love of scrambling, swimming and scaling with a huge feature about California's deepwater bouldering and soloing. Flipping

through these pages one might notice that none of the climbs featured in this section are given names, and most have not been given grades. These climbs will not be found on mountainproject.com, or 8a.nu, or in any guidebooks. I suppose someone could say that these aren't real rock climbs and that swinging around on nameless blocks and cliffs above emerald blue pools of water is less productive than ticking off all the four-star classics at a famous area. Then again, maybe guidebooks and checklists and difficulty ratings aren't the things that universally motivate us to climb on rocks. Perhaps we are simply inspired by things that look fun to climb on, and psyched to go swing around. For more see *The Deep* on page 28.

In juxtaposition, photographer Greg Epperson also brings us to an area as real as rock climbing in California gets. Adorned with runouts, complex route-finding, creative natural gear placements and thought-provoking descents, Chimney Rock in Sequoia National Park has been a bastion for ground-up blue-collar rock climbing for generations. Climbing at Chimney Rock can be as serious as you'd like it to be, with intimidating and colorful walls and spires that loom above the valley below. For more see Chimney Rock on page 40.

—DEAN FLEMING



Charlie Barrett swinging around on some fun rocks above Cherry Creek.

DEAN FLEMING

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BETA

|  |   |                          |   |
|--|---|--------------------------|---|
| ROUTE<br>Dewlap                        |   | GRADE<br>5.11d           | LENGTH<br>60'                               |
| ROCK TYPE<br>Granite                   | STYLE<br>Sport Bolted                                   | PROTECTION<br>Quickdraws |   |
| LOCATION<br>Phantom Spires, Strawberry |   | APPROACH<br>30 mins      | DESCENT<br>Bolted anchor, lower/rappell off |
| SEASON<br>Summer, Fall                 | GUIDEBOOK<br>Rock Climbing Lake Tahoe, by Mike Carville |                          |   |

DESCRIPTION

PHANTOM SPIRES SITS HIGH ABOVE

Highway 50, hidden by trees and often overshadowed by its incredibly popular neighbor Lover's Leap. The Spires are a truly unique, and somewhat eerie climbing destination, where the howling winds and rolling fog can add to the exposed and sometimes frightening feeling of the routes. Many of the routes at Phantom Spires are shorter in length, yet most are naturally protected and a few multipitch climbs with adventurous route-finding do exist. Surprisingly, there are just a few bolted sport climbs at Phantom Spires. Among these, *Dewlap* 5.11d, found on the incredible Lizard's Head formation, is one of the best short sport routes found on the Highway 50 corridor.

*Dewlap* climbs past six, mostly well-spaced bolts, starting on the West Arête of the Lizard's Head Spire and slowly winding its way to the North Arête of the formation. Although the start of the climb is among the easier sections of the route, a stick clip is very useful for clipping the first bolt as the base of the climb is a jumbled pile of large boulders. Once the second bolt is clipped, *Dewlap* starts to feel very safe but surprisingly exposed as you weave your way to the left and right sides of the sharp arête. Here, horizontal cracks, dime edges and other cool features produce some wild movements. It's easy to lower off the top of the formation, but if you have time, it's cool to bring your partner up to the summit of this wild little formation to take in the view of the dramatic Highway 50 corridor far below.

The late Julia McKenzie climbing *Dewlap*, 5.11d.

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Alex Schwilke placing a Dragon Cam 8 on the Scott-Burke off-width, Freerider (5.12b), El Capitan. Photo: Frank Kretschmann





“TICO & GERTIE”

Kyle Queener and his 1998 Toyota T-100 and Palomino camper

CC: Where did you find this setup and how much did it cost?

I fell in love with this truck when I first saw it. Tico belonged to my former housemate and close friend, Matt. While I was Stewarding in Yosemite, Matt and I were sitting on the tailgate in my campsite talking about his move back to Taiwan. I saw an opportunity and offered him \$6,000 on the spot. I’ve had Tico for over two years now. I bought Gertie about three months ago.

CC: Where did the names come from?

Tico? Tico the T-100 just sounded right. And Gertie.... Well, Gertie sounded like a worn out, slightly out of her prime Palomino, which is exactly what my camper is.

CC: Any modifications?

The truck is completely stock except for the massive dent to the passenger’s side. I’m not sure what happened, I think someone tried to park under it. You really can’t improve on a

Toyota truck; however, I did add some airbags for the extra weight of the camper.

CC: How’s the gas mileage?

I do okay in the mountains, about 15mpg. Before the camper I averaged about 17mpg. I don’t really want to talk about the mileage on the highways...

CC: Is there a reason you went with a camper instead of a van?

Absolutely. I love having clearance and four-wheel drive. Adding the camper has definitely changed the temperament of my driving off-road but I can still get to a lot of places you could never imagine taking a van. I like to bivy in some pretty far out there places, away from the sprinter vans and way out of cell service.

CC: How does this set-up work offroad?

Off-roading has definitely changed for me since adding the camper. I’m sideways much less often and the wheels are always on the ground (except for that one time heading into Trona, CA where we went airborne at 65mph)... Adding an extra 1,000lbs to Tico definitely dropped the possibilities, but in 4x4 low I can crawl along pretty well. I’m still trying to figure out the attachments between the camper and truck. I attached the camper to the bed using a bunch of 5/8” hardware and stainless steel turnbuckles, but after many miles of bumping around off-road I pulled back into town with the camper sitting about a foot farther back as all the turnbuckles had shook loose.

CC: Any plans for the summer?

I don’t have too many climbing plans right now. I’m currently living out of the camper, working full-time as a climbing guide, helping with the opening of a new climbing gym in Bishop, planning an event to take a dozen or more wounded veterans rock climbing in Yosemite Valley in September, growing a larger adaptive climbing program in the Eastern Sierra and co-founding a non-profit. I would like to do another big Sierra traverse this summer... Palisade Traverse anyone?

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METOLIUS INFERNO II DRAW

{ \$17.95 }

Modern quickdraws maintain the seemingly simple combination of carabiners and webbing, yet they are actually quite complex, often designed to provide easier, smoother, climbing experiences. A quickdraw reduces rope resistance by acting as a lever, typically between the bolt hanger end carabiner and the sling itself. If paying close attention to a string of quickdraws when a person is leading, one will notice that the rope end of the quickdraw typically moves upward toward the climber while the sling pivots on the bolt hanger end carabiner. This fact is exactly why Metolius was able to create a stiffer dogbone for their new Inferno II Quickdraws which allows for easy racking, comfortable grabbing and easier clipping, while still maintaining all of the rope-drag reducing capabilities of floppy, less ergonomic quickdraws and runners.

The Metolius Inferno II draw comes with two robust, full-size wiregate carabiners with wider gate openings and deeper rope wells than the original Inferno biners. The flared nose profile helps prevent accidental gate openings while a smooth silhouette discourages nose



hooking and other alternative axis loading. The dogbone is made from 11mm Monster webbing which has been stiffly bar-tacked near the rope-end of the draw and then fully stitched all the way to the bolt hanger end. This provides excellent durability and grabability. Metolius didn't completely revolutionize the quickdraw with their Inferno II, but they did craft a damn fine draw with a significant amount of subtle improvements. One excellent example is the clear rubber gaskets that Metolius has positioned over the webbing on the rope end of the draw. While rubber gaskets in this position are nothing new in the market of high end quickdraws, the use of clear rubber allows the user to see if the carabiner has been correctly threaded through the dogbone, and also to check the dogbone material for worn or weathered sections. Overall, the Inferno II Quickdraw is just another example of an excellent product that is manufactured by a company that is owned and operated by folks that actually get outside, test their gear and are very willing to make useful improvements.

HIPPYTREE RIDGE SHORT

{ \$62 }

As if a sign from the great river gods, a pair of HippyTree Ridge Shorts showed up in our PO Box this June, just as temperatures in the California Foothills skyrocketed to over 100 degrees. While we only had one month to test these shorts before writing this review, we did scramble down about 50 miles of steep river canyons, butt-sliding down the semi-smooth river-polished rocks, hopping between potholes and over small streams in search for some new swimming holes, boulders, slackline spots and deep water solos. Like all of HippyTree's products, the Ridge Shorts are designed to function well at boulder-fields, cliffs, swimming holes, and beaches, and then help to make you look a little less like a complete idiot when you show up at the bar or restaurant in the evening. And there's something to be said for that truly utilitarian design. In the summer months, if you have to grab three changes of clothes every time you leave the house, you're buying the wrong stuff.



The Ridge Short has a 20 inch outseam with a nice crotch gusset for flexibility and strength. HippyTree's blend of 98% cotton and 2% spandex make for a perfect fit and feel with just enough give to allow for high-stepping or other wonky climbing movements. In the one month that we were able to test these shorts we were pleasantly surprised at the durability, and based on the minor wear that has occurred we've somewhat presumed that the Ridge Short is among the more durable items in the HippyTree line. That said, these aren't Carhartts, and the ability to stem and high-step with ease is certainly a trade-off for a bit of durability. If you're trying to re-shingle your roof this summer, or replace the axle in your old Toyota, you might want to slip on a pair of overalls. But if your goal is to climb in comfort without restriction and then still appear to be a functioning adult with some sense of style when you venture out into public places, these shorts might do you a few favors.

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5.10 MOCCASYM

{ \$125 }

"I was so broke," recalls Young Chu, the revolutionary Korean born climbing shoe and gear designer as he recalled his days living in Yosemite's Camp 4 in the 1970s. "I had to start making my own climbing gear if I wanted to continue climbing," added Chu. "Eventually I was making all my own climbing gear." After practicing for years on his mother's sewing machine, in 1987 Chu started the company Nelson Sports and began designing shoes for mountain and extreme sports, including motor cross boots for Fox, racing boots for Shift, snowboarding boots for Device and climbing shoes for Five Ten. Chu designed some incredible models for Five Ten, but perhaps his most famous conception has been the Anasazi last, which in 1990 gave way to the now legendary Five Ten Anasazi Velcro, Anasazi Lace and Five Ten Moccasym. The Moccasym is essentially the molded form of Chu's foot, which by either miraculous design, measure of luck, or both, seems to perfectly fit the feet of everyone who's had the pleasure of climbing in them.

It is the opinion of this tester, that if a person was forced to climb in only one shoe for the rest of their life, they would be wise to select the Five Ten Moccasym. Does the Moccasym climb everything perfectly? Of course not, but due to its basic form this shoe can perform incredibly well on hugely diverse styles, angles and rock types. Out of the box the Moccasym will execute



cracks at the highest level; in fact there may be no other shoe in existence that is **more sought after and used more frequently for perfectly splitter cracks**. While it is somewhat counterintuitive to use a soft shoe for crack climbing, the way that the Moccasym smears inside of hand cracks and allows the foot to rotate back to a comfortable position actually produces a feeling of security - it can **almost like standing on 2"x4" piece of lumber** if placed perfectly.

The Moccasym also excels at slab climbing, although with nearly zero support in the midsole one might need to strengthen their feet if planning to tackle long and demanding slabs in places like Tahaquiz or Tuolumne Meadows. That said, with a soft form C4 rubber, the Moccasym can **smear huge amounts of sole** onto the slickest slabs and stick like no other. With minimal support in the midsole and a somewhat bulky toe box, vertical dime edging and overhanging pockets are perhaps

the Moccasym's least favorite terrain; however this tester has personally witnessed a number of individuals onsighting 5.13 or harder vertical granite edging test pieces in these very shoes. This is a testament to the Moccasym's versatility, as it seems this shoe really can **perform at a high level** on almost any type of terrain, if the climber is willing to train their feet and the shoe to react to the terrain at hand.

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An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The left side of the image shows a dark, rocky beach with white foam from breaking waves. The right side features a steep, light-colored rock face. A small figure of a climber is visible on the rock face. In the top left corner, there is a yellow outline of the state of California with the text 'GOLDEN STATE GALLERY' next to it.

GOLDEN STATE GALLERY





#### PREVIOUS PAGE

CLIMBER Andy Wyatt  
ROUTE *Evolution Traverse*, (5.9 VI)  
PHOTOGRAPHER Austin Siadak

#### ABOVE

CLIMBER Jimmy Webb  
ROUTE *Sunstar* (V6), Lake Tahoe  
PHOTOGRAPHER Jon Thompson

#### RIGHT

CLIMBER Nicole Zuelke  
ROUTE *A Dog's Roof* (5.12b), Yosemite Valley  
PHOTOGRAPHER Dean Fleming

#### NEXT SPREAD

CLIMBER Nik Berry  
ROUTE *Father Time* (5.13b), Yosemite Valley  
PHOTOGRAPHER Austin Siadak



GOLDEN STATE GALLERY





GOLDEN STATE GALLERY





# A CALIDAD ABROAD

WORDS + PHIL BONE

**RECENTLY A CLOSE RELATION OF MINE MOVED TO THE WEST COAST.** I needed to visit Ann and now she was closer. She moved to a small town in Central Oregon . . . Terrebonne. You're kidding me, my climbing buddy exclaimed! That's right next door to Smith Rock. I bought a ticket.

From the plane the familiar topography of Northern California scrolled by, the Sierra Nevada, and the Sacramento Valley. Mount Shasta signaled the transition into the Cascades. It was getting greener and wetter. Cropland gave way to forests with geometric clear cuts oddly highlighted in snow. My seat neighbor pointed out the Columbia River while he finished his Bloody Mary. He seemed anxious; these smaller planes do feel a little closer to the sky. Still, we descended smoothly into a rainy Portland morning. I had a short hop from there to Redmond, during which I began to appreciate the high desert. The Crooked River meandered below, lined with basalt escarpments topped with sage and juniper flats. Mount Bachelor and The Three Sisters were cloaked in white. Redmond was dry and the wind blew cold.

The next couple of days were spent visiting with my family, helping with minor chores, and letting them pamper me. It was so nice to see Ann in her new surroundings and get to know her extended family who had lived in the area for some time. You could watch the sunrise paint Smith Rock from their house. It looked so close. I tried to walk there one morning, but that river isn't the only thing that's crooked in those parts. After a few miles jig-jogging around ranches and developments I turned back and initiated plan B. the internet.

Looking for climbing partners online is a bit like hitchhiking. Sure, I'm standing by the side of the road with my thumb out, looking for a ride with strangers, but I've got standards. If it doesn't feel right I won't get in . . . right! After a couple of hours you're ready to jump in the back of a tallow truck driven by a monkey on speed. So I carefully screened prospective partner profiles, cross checking age, gender, experience, wish lists, and previous ascents. Then, after subtle probing, and careful consideration I grabbed the first warm body that responded. Hey, it's Smith Rock and it was super important to my peeps that I summit.

I arranged to meet Bugcrusher at the local gear shop. They had everything a climber could need: books, prayer flags, coffee, beer on tap, and the one essential I always buy to help out the little guys: block chalk.

"That will be a dollar, ninety-seven. Out of two dollars."

"Keep the change."

"You sure?"

Bugcrusher was a mellow young man from Washington State. He was down here attending a local junior college. I didn't ask about the gnarly bruises and scrapes on his face and arms (we just met and it was spring break. My own kid wouldn't respond to that kind of prying, so why pester him). I did mention that we may as well not get too excited if he didn't have rope & draws. We went out to his car, and by appearances also his bivy. There among the clothes, boots, sleeping stuff and Himalayan climbing literature was a 70 meter shoelace and a six pack of super light sport draws, all still in the packaging!

"I'm new to rock, but I've done some mountains. Is this stuff OK?"

Insert bemused emoticon.

"Bug, this is perfect!" Oh boy I'm going to climb Smith!

Man that was fun, going to a new area big and beautiful: tons of climbs, nice trails, the river, birds, trees, and sky. The towers and faces at Smith have a way of pulling in the light and projecting dreamy earth tones. It was busy and noisy. Parking issues and crowds couldn't dim my pleasure at being there though. There were families with screaming kids, dogs, picnickers, and hard men. Some were running steep trails to the summits, others were cowed by the paved overlook. They were not all climbers by a long shot, but there were plenty of those too. We got kind of marginalized looking for unclaimed stone, but that was OK we found some privacy to untangle and flake out that new rope.

**LOOKING FOR CLIMBING PARTNERS ONLINE IS A BIT LIKE HITCHHIKING. SURE, I'M STANDING BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD WITH MY THUMB OUT, LOOKING FOR A RIDE WITH STRANGERS, BUT I'VE GOT STANDARDS.**

The first climbs we did were pimple pulls with a few pockets thrown in. Think East Cottage Dome meets Clark Canyon. Find the best knob or pocket, trust your feet, step up, repeat. Bug turned out to be a fine partner. He was conscientious and pleasant. He knew how to belay, led what he could without a lot of drama, and he used simple, clear climbing commands. We started ticking the easier looking climbs and having a lot of fun. I'd usually lead, then rig the rope so that when

Bug pulled it the high first bolt would stay clipped for him.

When the shadows grew long climbing packs started moving towards the bridge. We gravitated to the popular Morning Glory Wall. The must do Five Gallon Buckets was open. We dropped our rope at the base and

shoed up for some crazy cool climbing on/in giant huecos. There was still a gaggle of climber types loitering around and winding down. It was quite festive. IPAs were breaking out, rope bags were folding up. Dogs were doing laps, some dread fellas were cooking beans ala hobo.

"Having fun?" A gal from North Carolina asked.

"We're having a Blast! It's my first time."

"Really?" She appraised my vintage skeptically.

"In Oregon."

"Oh, I get it, ha-ha. Where y'all from?"

"California . . . Sonora." It felt weird to say it like it was someplace else, when I'm always there.

Early Spanish sailors thought California was an island rich in gold and pearls inhabited by fantastic beasts and Amazon warriors. The topography of Baja, where they first encountered California, might give someone that impression. The California of my youth had more of a personal insularity. To me the landscape still fostered a sense of both mystery and completeness. Shining granite domes of the Sierra bathed in a sea of sky. Blocks of Joshua Tree monzonite floated on

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the desert sand. It was world enough.

Travel is good though. One’s vision is broadened. When I got home to Sonora the local climbing area seemed a little podunk, but that’s good too. Carnivals are fun, but I wouldn’t want to run away with the circus. Some guys at the crag asked me if I’d been to this area or that. The answer was either no, or many years ago. I’ve got winter climbing minutes from home and the Sierra just up the hill all summer. It’s world enough.

“Can we give you a lift?”

“No thanks.”

I walked out through the volcanic talus fields, enjoying the quiet of that place. Buckeyes were pouring out their spring perfume, surreal hues of Indian paintbrush, lupine, and California poppies defied the eye to focus on what was more light than substance. A fragile gathering of Harlequin lupine surprised me this early in the season. I once again eyed some lines for new routes I’d probably never get around to. The shadow of a Turkey vulture glided over. He seemed to tip a wing at me to say, oh it’s only you.

Up North, I had caught up with Bug on another afternoon. He was getting some trad chops upriver. He and his partner were sampling an upper tier of wavy basalt with cracks of every imaginable dimension. It was really fun, and great experience. These things top out, so anchoring top belays, and

rappelling became mandatory. They were short, but not lacking in commitment or surprises. I got on one that looked a little blank up high for the number the boys gave me. Same old story, how bad can it be, followed by how did I get in this fix again? A little dogging and a big dyno led to an ugly belly flop onto the summit.

When it was Bug’s turn he sagged onto the rope again and again. I kept pep talking the snarling, whimpering thing just out of sight pulling me towards the edge. It was a big move and a skinny rope. Finally a bloody hand reaches over, followed by wide eyes and a big grin. The other guy is down there still studying the book and decides to skip this one . . .

I followed Bug and his friend to the riverbank where they planned to hop rocks to effect a shortcut across one of the Crooked River’s many oxbows. It did not look good. I envisioned myself getting back late for dinner, soaking wet, and that wouldn’t be the first time. I extended my hand.

“Nice climbing with you.”

“Oh . . . yeah thanks, I’ll try to make it down your way sometime. You can take me to Yosemite.”

“I would like that.”

I kept looking back to see if they had made it across the river OK. I never saw them, but I did hear a very loud shriek. It was the kind you might make when you find out how cold the water really is.



The author, Phil Bone climbing at his home crag, Table Mountain, near Sonora.

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# CHIMNEY ROCK

IMAGES + GREG EPPERSON





#### PREVIOUS

Townsend Brown and Rico Miledi climbing the fourth pitch of *Big Boys Don't Cry* (5.11).

#### LEFT

Townsend Brown and Rico Miledi climbing the third pitch of *Kitty From Hell* (5.10+). Described as outstanding with sustained and varied climbing featuring everything from fingers to OW.

CHIMNEY ROCK

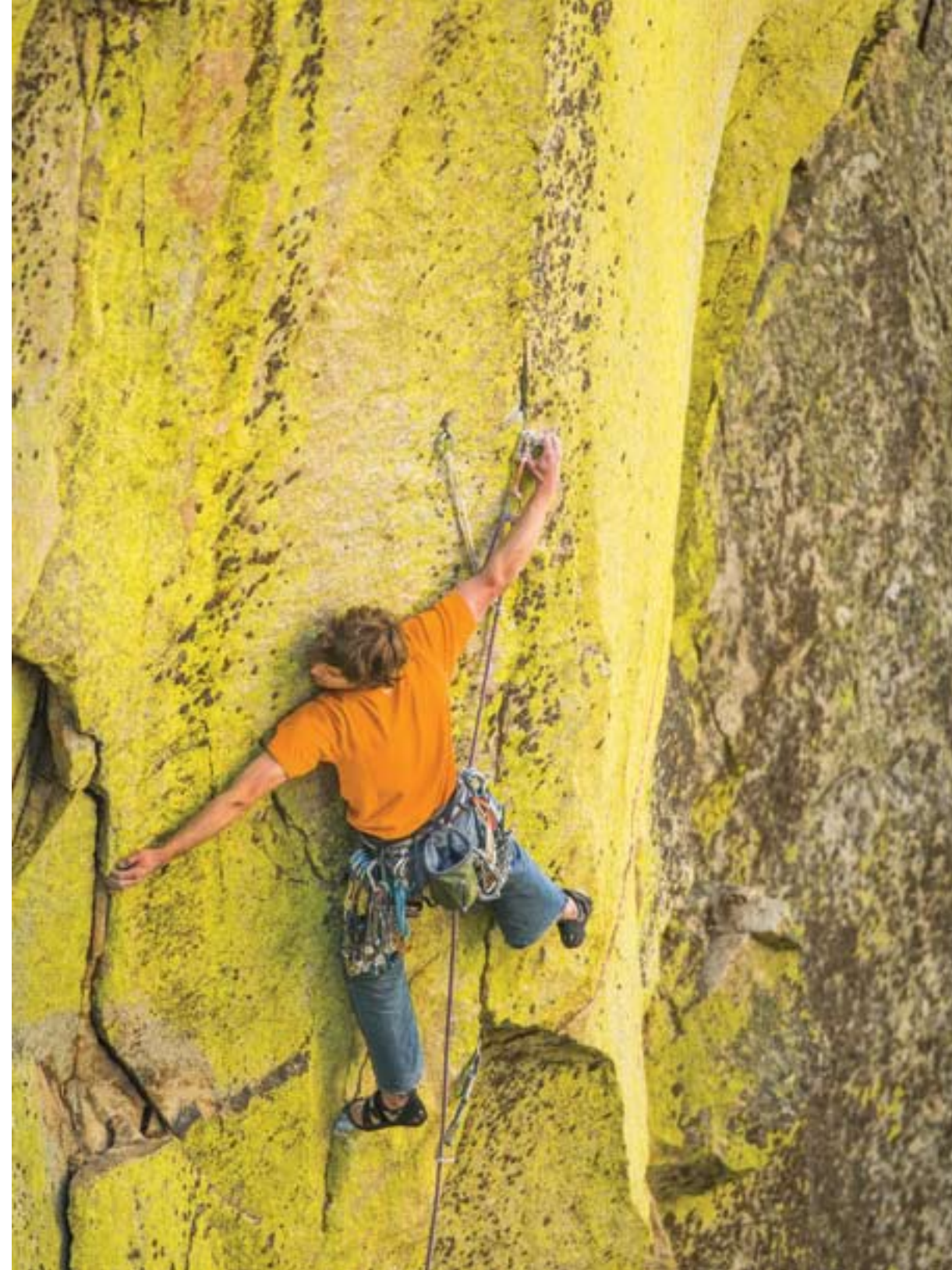
**IN 1990, DAVE HICKEY** placed a summit register atop Chimney Spire, a 500 foot tall dagger of granite located in Sequoia National Park. This register replaced the original summit notebook which held signatures from the early 1970s and 1980s. The Regular Route and first ascent of the spire is attributed to Fred Becky. In 1972 staff from a nearby Girls Scout camp found fixed pins on the Regular Route but no other sign of Fred. For years no other activity occurred at Chimney Rock, until the incredibly talented and prolific explorers and first ascentionists Herb Leager, Ron Carson, Chris Brewer, Gary Sullivan and Vino Kodas explored the area. If you peak into the first ascent index of almost any Southern Sierra guidebook, you'll likely see a long list of truly bold and excellent routes established by Leager, Kudas and Carson. Chimney Rock in Sequoia National Park is no exception, and with a feel, quality and color similar to the nearby Needles, it's easy to see why these three locals were drawn to this area.

"Some of those guys were working at the Air Force base out of Ridgecrest and others came from the Los Angeles and Bakersfield areas," said fellow Chimney Rock first ascentionist Kevin Daniels. "They were responsible for the majority

of early ascents in the Trona area and Great Falls Basin up Chimney Peak and the East flank and Domeland Wilderness down through the Sequoia Kings Canyon and west side of the Sierra. They developed bouldering and climbing areas around Bodfish and Kernville, north up the Kern Canyon at areas like Book Rock, Parker Bluff, Dome Rock, Needles and Buttes, all the way up to Shuteye Ridge and Bass Lake. They avoided the Valley and focused on more remote, quite backcountry areas like Courtright. If you see granite in these areas I can almost guarantee it was inspected by these guys years ago. Before Google Maps made it easy to view formations from the comfort of your Easy Chair, these guys spent years of their lives exploring the unknown. How they were climbing was more important to them than what they were climbing. Style and tradition were always the focus and inspiration for adventure. The granite in these areas is high quality featured stone that lends itself to ground up lead bolting."

"The routes at Chimney Rock were established in ground-up style, and some of the climbs are very bold," added Daniels. "It's a very old school area – there's pins, funky gear, runouts, very few fixed anchors and even fewer bolts. The descriptions are vague and the climbing can be serious. You have to be ready to go rock climbing."





**LEFT**

Left: Kevin Daniels climbing the first pitch of *Good and Plenty* (5.11)

**RIGHT**

Townsend Brown climbing *Freaky Deaky* (5.11+)

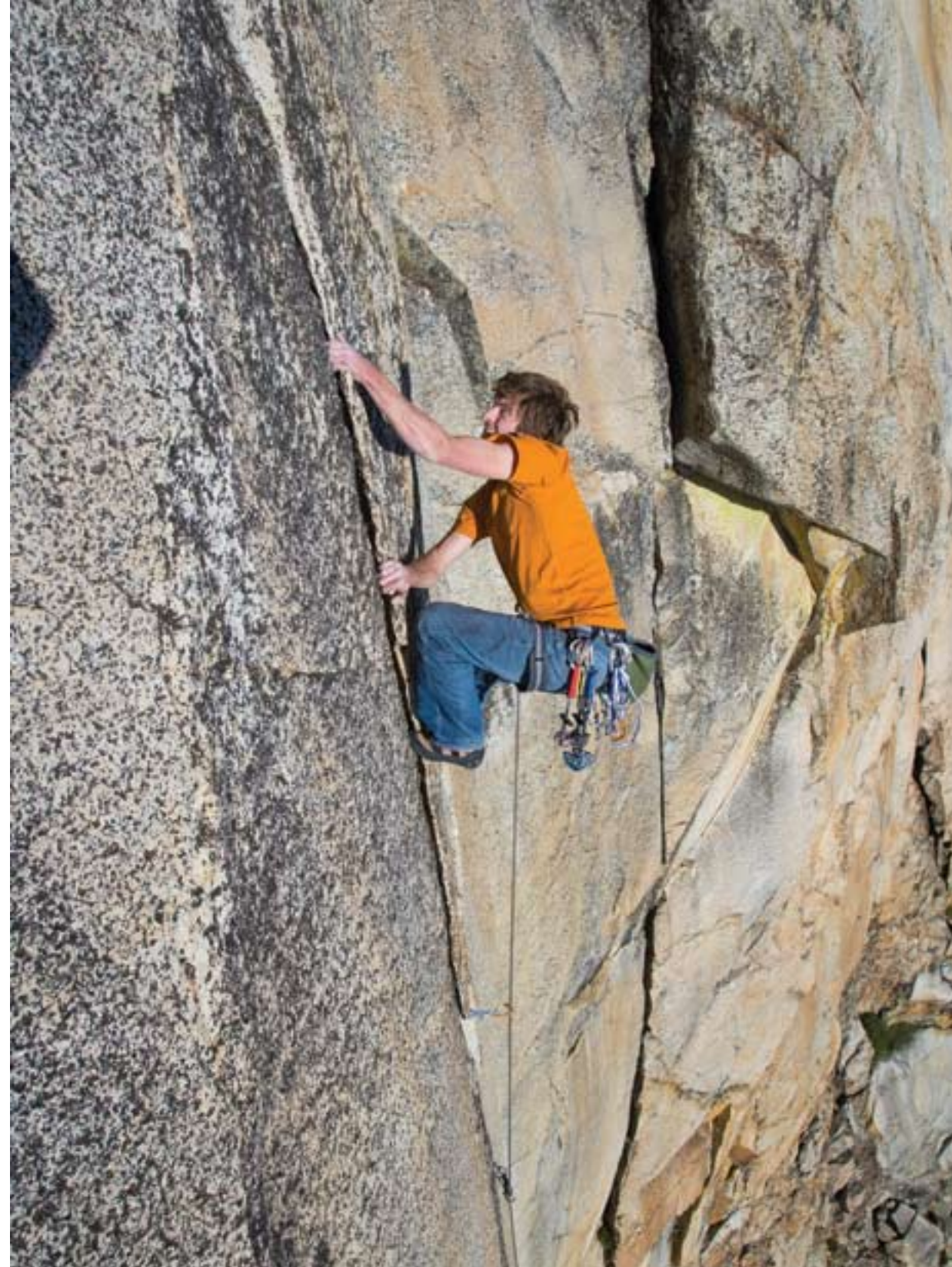
**NEXT PAGE**

Kay Okamoto climbing pitch two (5.8) of *Good and Plenty* (5.11)









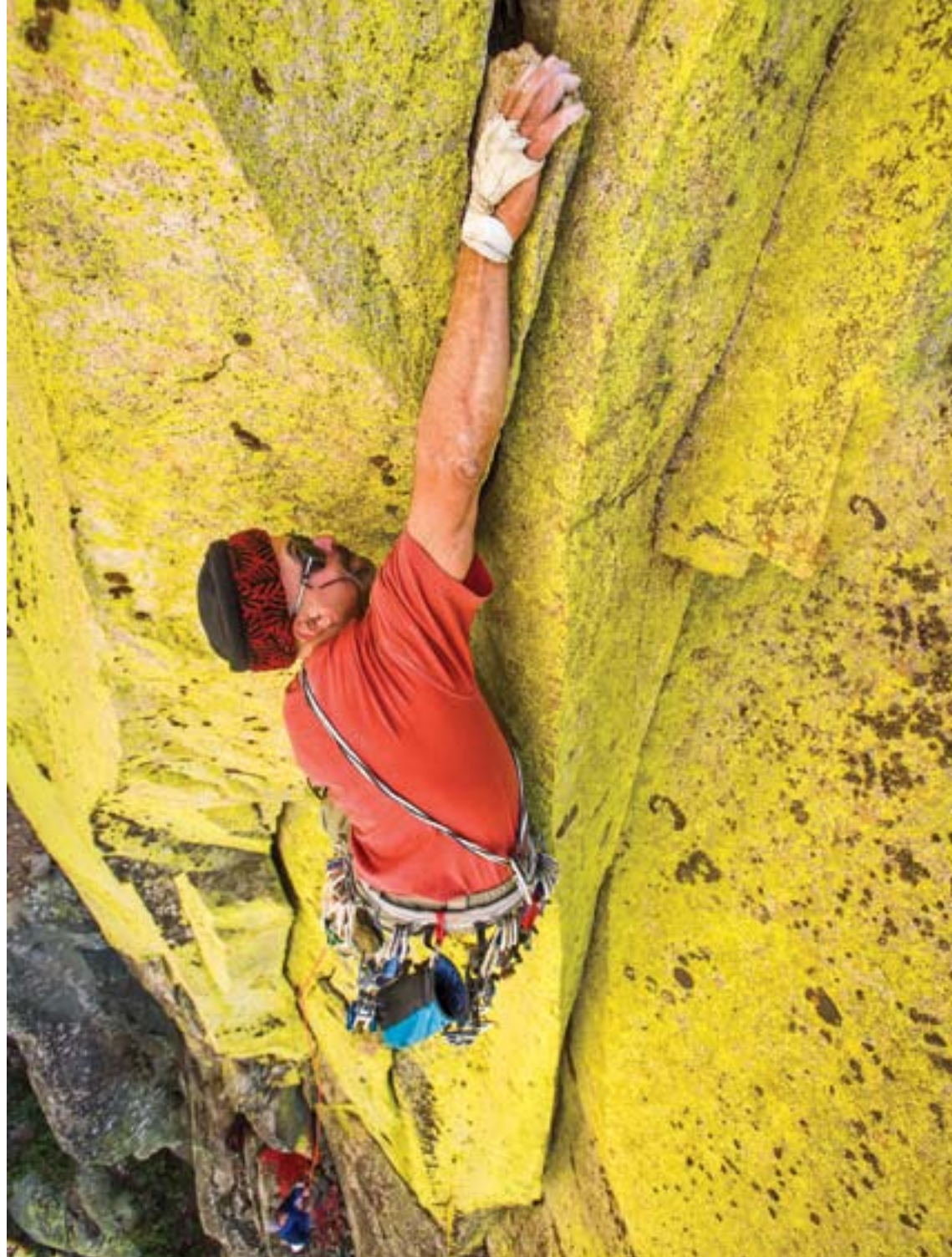
**LEFT**

Brandon Thau climbing the first pitch chimney of *Big Boys Don't Cry* (5.11), which eventually leads to a corner and roof before leading to the summit.

**RIGHT**

Townsend Brown climbing *Dead Vertical* (5.11)





## THE BETA

### SPECIAL CONCERNS

Seasonal Falcon Closures affect Chimney Rock, typically between April and August. Please be diligent in accessing the current closure dates before visiting. Call 559-338-2251 extension 380 for current information.

### WHERE TO STAY

There are several campgrounds scattered throughout the park.

### GUIDEBOOK

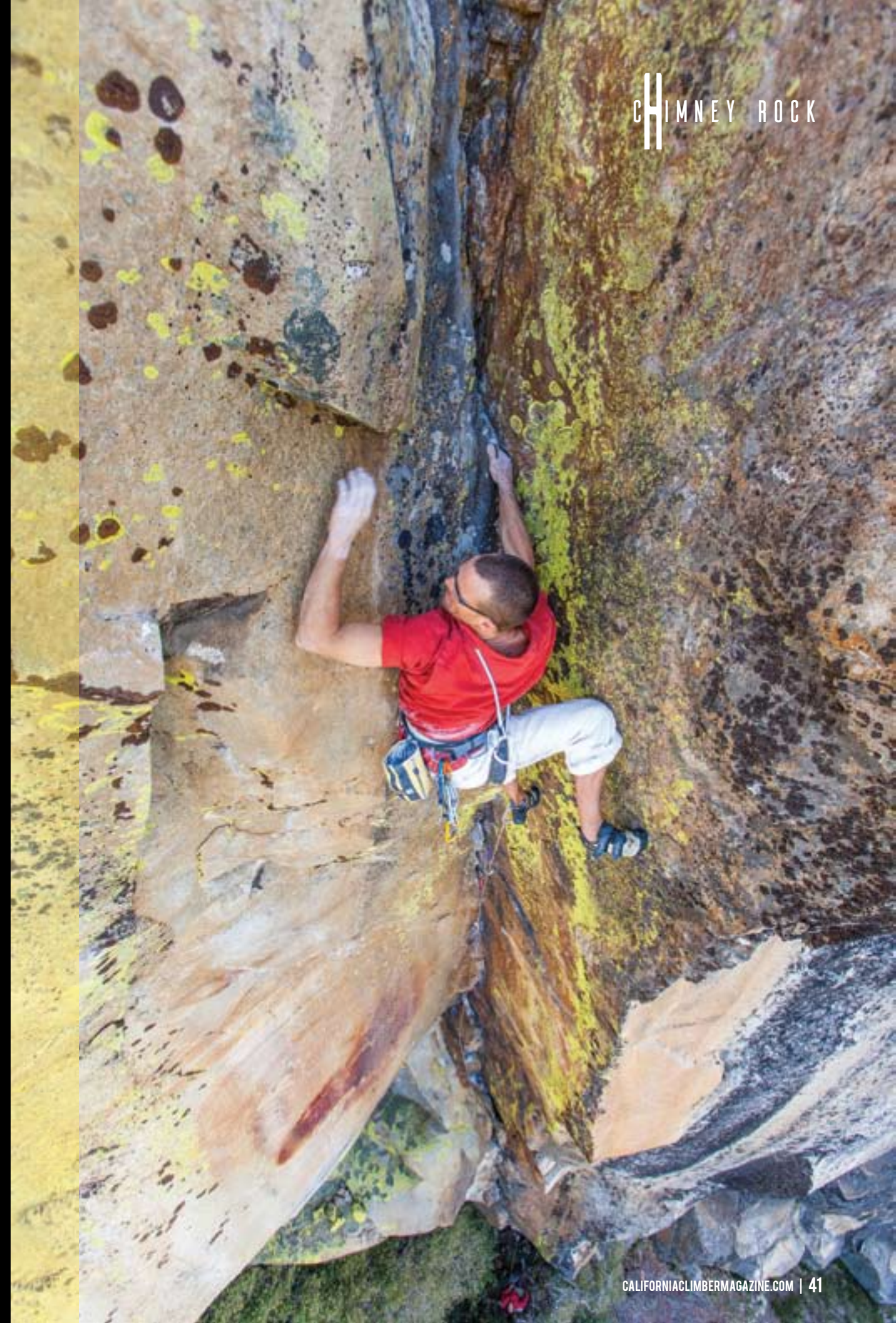
None, welcome to adventureland! *MountainProject.com* does have a handful of routes and approach beta.

### ABOVE

Rico Milede climbing *Now You See It, Now You Don't* (5.10+)

### RIGHT

Kevin Daniels making the first ascent of *Thermopylae* (5.11+)



CHIMNEY ROCK



A full-page photograph of a person rock climbing a steep, layered rock face. The climber is positioned on the right side of the frame, reaching up. The rock face is composed of light-colored, vertically layered rock. Below the rock face is a river with white water rapids. The text 'THE DEEP' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, with a reflection effect below it.

# THE DEEP

IMAGES + JIM THORNBURG & DEAN FLEMING





#### PREVIOUS PAGE

Stacy Bloom climbing a short but pumpy arête over the Tuolumne River.

#### LEFT

Trevor Carter traversing an angular block above the Middle Fork Stanislaus.

IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING

## THE DEEP THE DEEP

Clutching roots and gobs of dirt we traversed a narrow poison oak covered ledge over the South Fork of the Tuolumne River. Below us the water raged through a steep canyon. It was later brought to our attention that this portion of the Tuolumne is widely regarded as the most difficult section of commercially guided whitewater in North America. Here a seemingly immeasurable amount of water raged over fifty foot overhanging granite cliffs. Waterfalls pounded into rapids deafening the landscape, interrupted only by the occasional thundering sounds of thousand-pound logs tumbling down the river bed. Like a child flicking toothpicks at their siblings, the river moved these huge trees with ease. Gazing down from our perch above the stream, it was hard to imagine that even the most insane person would ever have the gall to climb into a boat and shove off down these rapids. We turned our attention back to the task at hand, steadily making our way downstream toward smaller waterfalls, where the granite rocks overhung above calmer waters.

Sliding down polished slabs, jumping between jammed logs and river stones, we moved about a mile downstream from the popular swimming area Rainbow Pools – a place where guys named Chad with tattooed dad-bods nearly outnumber the Mountain Dew cans that litter the banks. The steep cliffs adjacent to the waterfall at Rainbow do make for great deep water bouldering, and early on weekdays or in the offseason we managed to grab some good sessions there. But today, as we didn't feel like fueling the hoots and hollers from the bros and tourists at the main pool, the mission was to venture downstream into a canyon that was rumored to have numerous steep cliffs adjacent to idyllic waterfalls and tranquil swimming holes.

The idea to go climbing above the water here in California came to us about as naturally as an idea can: it's hot and it's dry, we want to

go swimming and we want to go bouldering. Although the Psychobloc movement in Greece, Spain, Vietnam and Thailand has certainly increased the popularity and awareness of deep water soloing, climbing ropeless above water is likely as old as climbing in the traditional sense – perhaps older. Never-the-less, when one thinks about deep water soloing, California is hardly the first place that comes to mind. And it's true that we don't really have any famous deep water solos here. The route *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (5.10c) up in Tuolumne has become quite a novelty among local boulderers lately, but I doubt any Spaniards or Greeks would pack their swimsuits and extra chalk bags just to send it. In all honesty, if one actually decided to search every speck of the Golden State they would probably never find another

Mallorca, or anything close to that. Still, where water flows through steep canyons and places with hard rock (which we do have a lot of) you're likely to find something that is safely climbable, and some great swimming to go with it.

In the pages that follow you'll find just a small handful of California's rivers – a few of which host some pretty incredible deep water bouldering and deep water soloing options. The rivers featured here are mostly spread throughout the Central Sierra near the granitic batholiths that have created so much of the excellent climbing that California is famous for. Here you'll find smooth Yosemite-like walls that produce splitter cracks, golden patina jugs and incut crimps, but you'll also find some pretty strange rock formations that lend themselves to steep pocket-pulling and gymnastic movement. Although you probably won't find a limestone archway that's begging to be featured in the

next Sender Films flick, you might have a great time playing around on the sun-soaked rocks, moving along cool holds and interesting features, until the time when your forearms are pumped and your climbing shoes are baking from the summer sun. It's here that you'll find a sweet sense of joy and reprieve as you plummet from the rocks into the cool water below.

**THE IDEA TO GO CLIMBING  
ABOVE THE WATER HERE  
IN CALIFORNIA CAME TO  
US ABOUT AS NATURALLY  
AS AN IDEA CAN: IT'S HOT  
AND IT'S DRY, WE WANT  
TO GO SWIMMING AND WE  
WANT TO GO BOULDERING.**



THE DEEP  
THE DEEP



## CHERRY CREEK

**CHERRY CREEK IS THE LARGEST TRIBUTARY OF THE TUOLUMNE RIVER**, yet still only forty miles from its farthest headwaters. Cherry drains watersheds mostly in the Stanislaus National Forest, but also has a few miles of gorgeous rapids that flow through the northwest corner of Yosemite National Park. It is in these sections, in and near Yosemite National Park, which Cherry Creek flows over and around some incredible granite rock formations. Climbers have been exploring the Cherry Creek Canyon area since the late 1960s and early 1970s, including climbers like Ben Shiffrin, Todd Vogel, John Tuttle and Richard Leversee, who plucked a good number of gorgeous multi-pitch domes in the canyon. More recently, climbing development in the region has slowed, yet a few great deep water solos and deep water boulder problems have been discovered a short walk from Cherry Lake.

### TOP

Charlie Barrett soloing an intimidating un-named 5.10c.

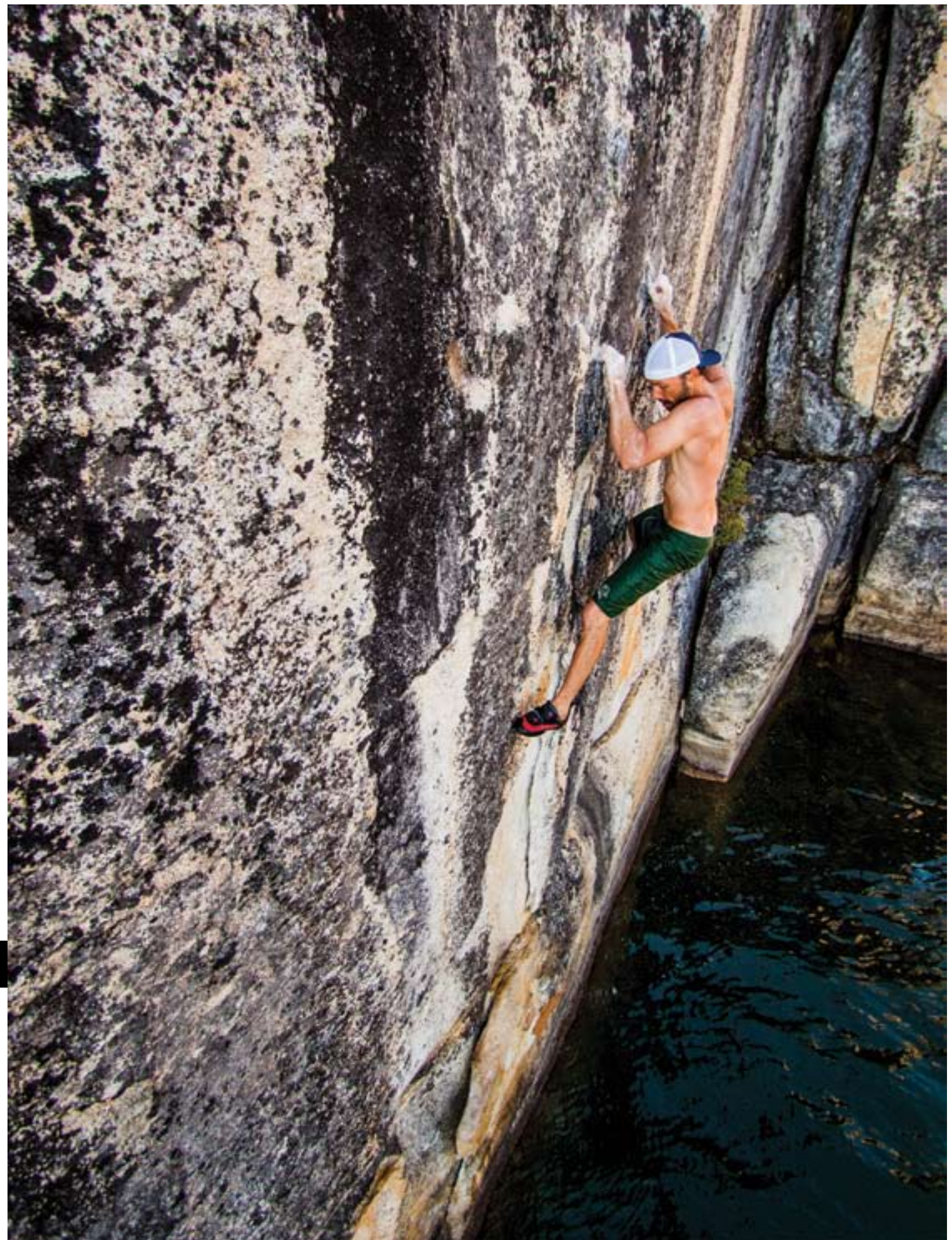
### RIGHT

Barrett makes the first ascent of an un-named deep water boulder rated about mid 5.12.

### NEXT PAGE

Barrett making the first known ropeless traverse of an incredible roof near Cherry Creek.

IMAGES + DEAN FLEMING









# THE DEEP THE DEEP



## THE TUOLUMNE

**THE TUOLUMNE RIVER FLOWS FOR 149 MILES** from the high Sierra Nevada to join the San Joaquin River in the Central Valley. Originating at over 8,000 feet above sea level in Yosemite National Park, the Tuolumne drains a rugged watershed of 1,958 square miles, carving a series of canyons through the western slope of the Sierra. Just west of Yosemite National Park, The South Fork of the Tuolumne flows through one of the steepest canyons in the Sierra Nevada, passing through the incredible swimming hole Rainbow Pools, and then down the most difficult commercially rafted section of white water in North America to meet the Middle Fork Tuolumne. Here, and in the canyons below, excellent deep water soloing and bouldering can be found. Access to Rainbow Pools couldn't be easier, but the waters below are quite difficult to navigate. Additionally, fast moving water and pounding waterfalls can create some seriously dangerous swimming conditions.

### ABOVE

Kim Pfabe climbing the standard route at Rainbow Pools, a wonderful problem that checks in at about V2 and finishes on comforting jugs about twenty feet above the pool.

### RIGHT

Stacy Bloom climbs a wonderful little traverse to a pumpy finish in the lower South Fork Tuolumne.

IMAGES + JIM THORNBURG







Kai Defty climbing the most difficult variation on the Rainbow Pools cliff, a stout, reachy and sloping problem that climbs straight out of a large roof. A misleading series of sweet incut underclings leads to a horrendous (often sun-baked) sloper rail.

IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING





THE DEEP  
THE DEEP

**LEFT**  
Stacy Bloom climbing at  
Emerald Pool on the Yuba  
River.

**ABOVE**  
Kim Pfabe climbing above  
Emerald Pool.

IMAGES + JIM THORNBURG

**THE YUBA RIVER IS A TRIBUTARY OF THE FEATHER RIVER** in the Sierra Nevada and eastern Sacramento Valley. Although the main stem of the river is only about 40 miles long and its headwaters are split into three major forks. The Yuba River proper is formed at the confluence of the North Yuba and Middle Yuba Rivers, with the South Yuba joining a short distance downstream. It's here among the picturesque pools of the South Fork of the Yuba, near Grass Valley and Nevada City, that you'll find Emerald Pool; an incredible yet popular swimming hole with some of the best deep water bouldering and deep water soloing in California.

Although most folks that bring climbing shoes to Emerald Pool only climb up the slick but featured rocks to a height of about 15 feet before jumping off, San Francisco native Ethan Pringle recently topped out a few of the proudest lines at the Pool, including a 5.13a/b, and a 5.12c/d. "I rapped down to the left line to chalk the holds and figure out the tricky sequence through the ultra-slick bulge at the bottom," said Pringle. "Though a fall would be perfectly safe, I was pretty gripped the first time I actually climbed it. The noise and energy of the waterfall, literally feet from you while you're on the crux is so powerful!"

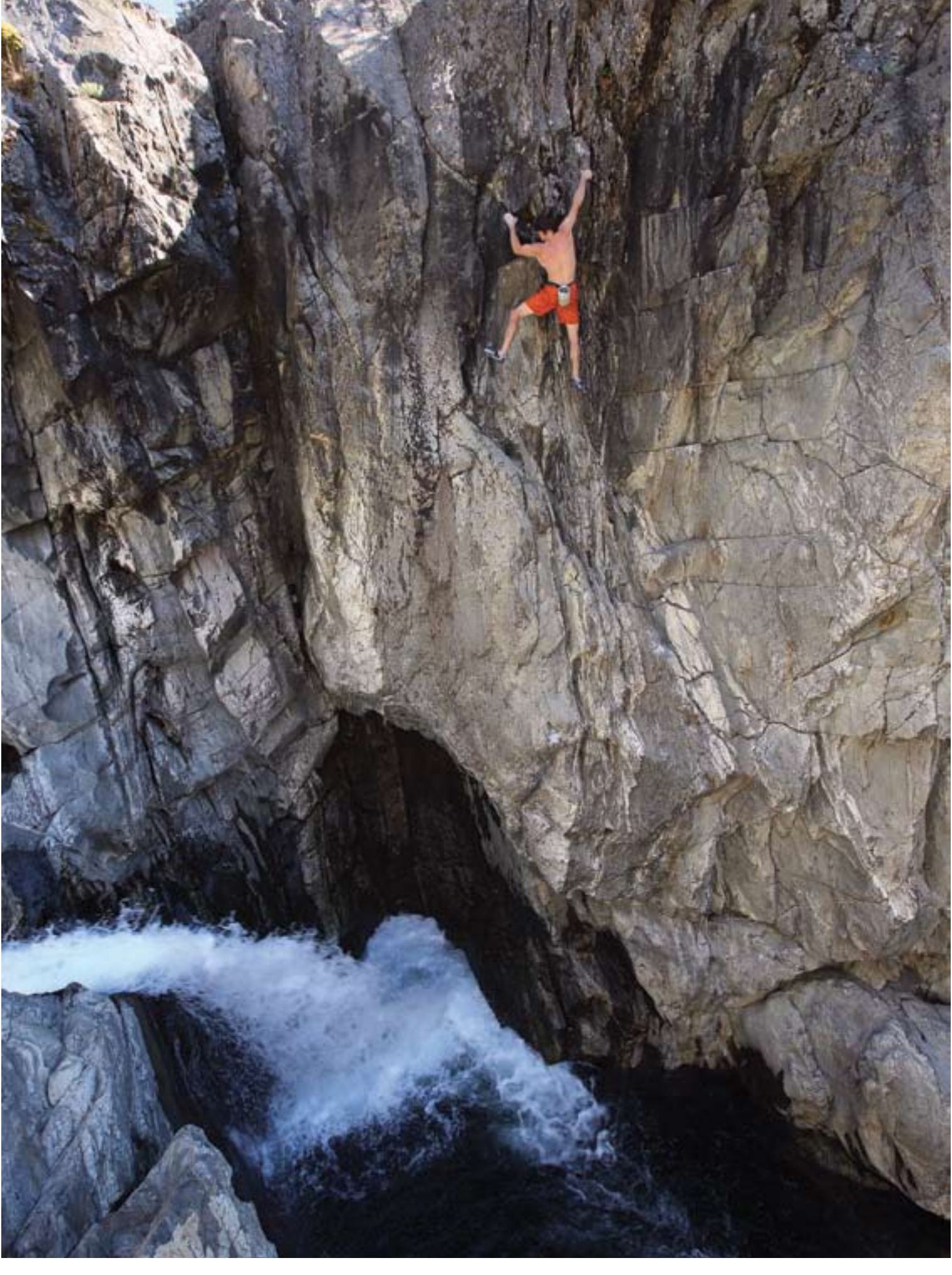




**THIS PAGE**  
Kim Pfabe climbing above Emerald Pool.

**RIGHT**  
Ethan Pringle making the first known full ascent of a difficult and tall route at Emerald Pool. This slick and committing line clocked in around 5.13a/b according to Pringle.

IMAGES + JIM THORNBURG







Ethan Pringle climbing the full 5.13 at Emerald Pool. Pringle rappelled the line prior to the 'water-up' ascent, in order to chalk the holds and figure out the roughly V8 sequence through the lower bulge.

IMAGE + JIM THORNBURG





#### BOTH

Kai Defty climbs steep jugs over a calm pool along the North Fork Merced River.

/IMAGES + DEAN FLEMING

**THE MERCED RIVER IS MOST WELL KNOWN FOR ITS SWIFT AND STEEP** course through the southern part of Yosemite National Park, where it is the primary watercourse flowing through Yosemite Valley. The North Fork of the Merced, however, is a somewhat forgotten tributary of the Merced, yet still offers great scenery and a few incredible swimming holes with pretty sweet deep water bouldering options. The water here is slower moving than other, larger rivers nearby, which produces nice warm water in late summer and really calm, deep pools for climbing over.





## THE BETA

### WHERE TO STAY

None of the areas described in this feature offer legal camping at the parking lots or trailheads, with the exception of Cherry Creek, depending on where you park to hike in. There are, however, plentiful free and pay sites available within short driving distances of all the locations in this feature.

### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

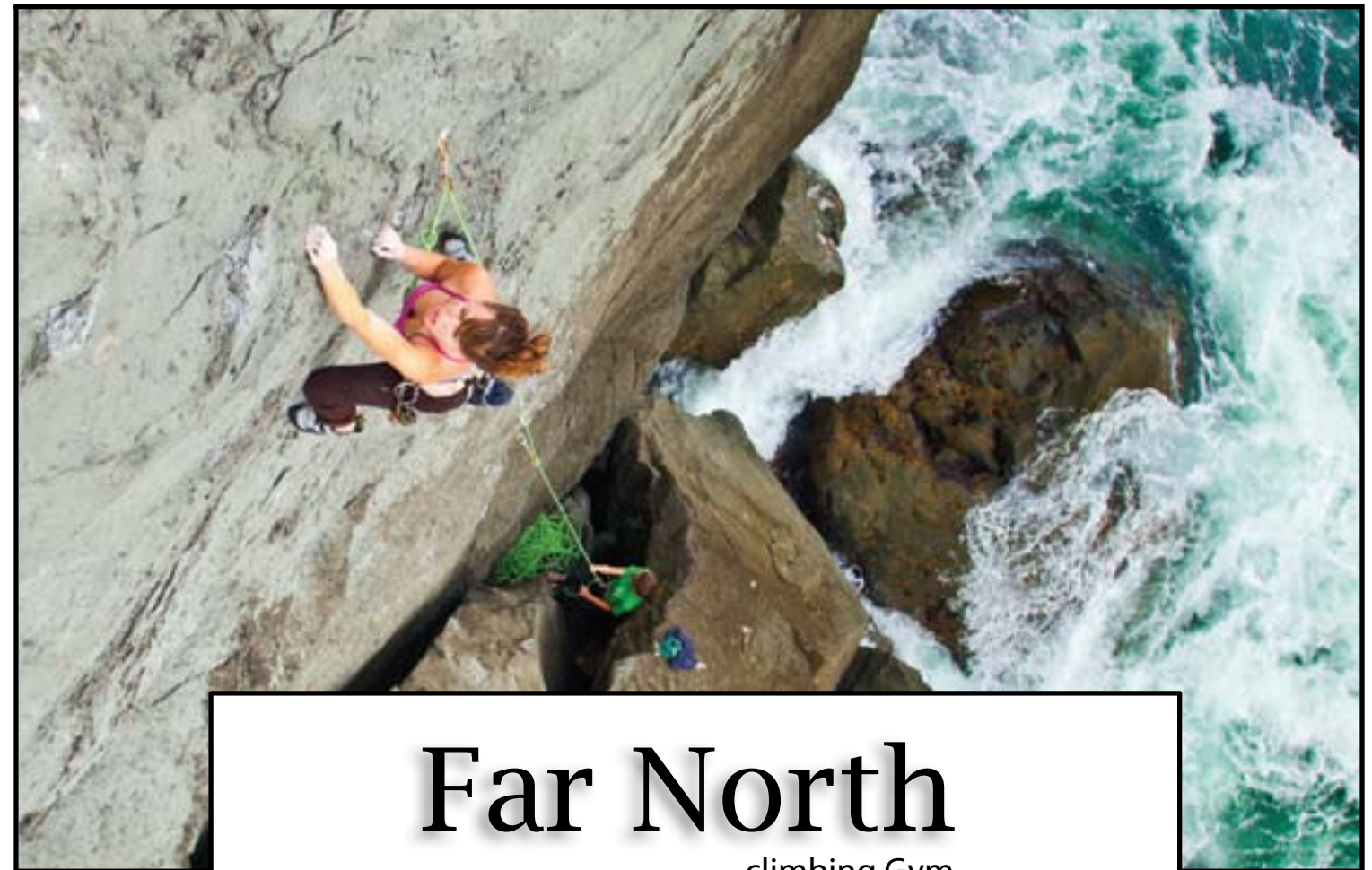
California's riparian ecosystems are among the most fragile in the region, so please do your best to minimize your impacts at all of these areas. As with an unfortunate number of swimming holes in the Central Sierra, a few of these zones might be trashed from high school-aged hooligans. Instead of adding to the unsightly mess, it would be awesome to pack in a trash bag or two to set an example for the youngsters. If you're a youngster yourself and you decide to pack out a few abandoned Rockstar cans on your way out, well, more power to you!

### NEW ROUTES

It is a somewhat unspoken rule while climbing above water, that if a climb is mossy or chossy or excessively dirty, it's really not worth rappelling down it and then knocking down gallons of debris and soil into the riverbed just so we can scramble up it. If you feel like you need to "develop" a climb above the river, then it's probably best to just walk a few yards downstream to find something better.

Kai Defty climbing fun slabs  
over the Merced River.

IMAGE + DEAN FLEMING



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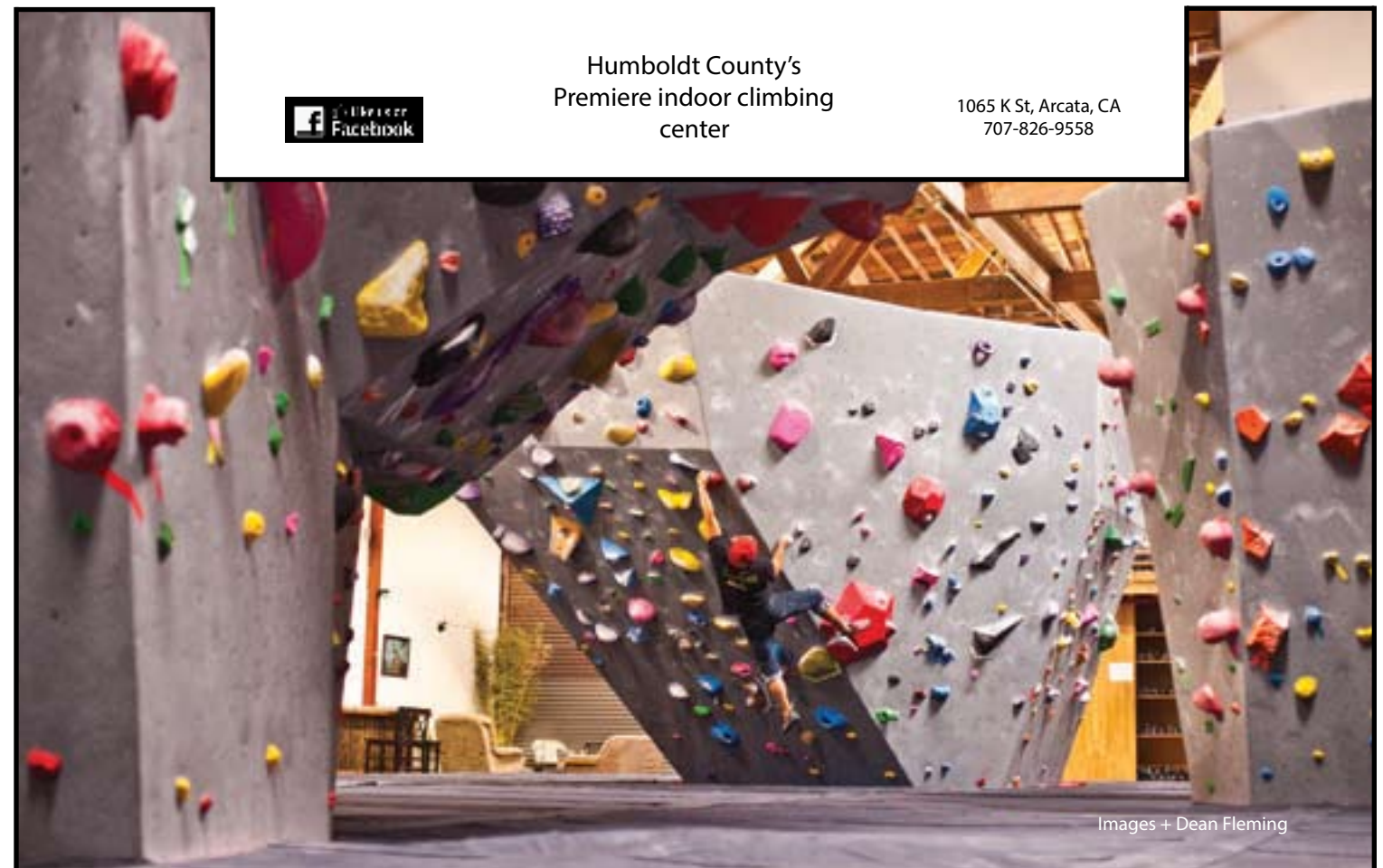
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