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Introduction

by Greg Barnes

With steep, moderate routes, cracks that eat up pro, and tightly bolted face pitches, many long routes at Red Rocks give you high adventure without the runouts so common in many areas. Varnished edges, incut jugs, splitter cracks, technical faces, fun chimneys—Red Rocks multi-pitch routes have it all. Bolted anchors on many popular routes quicken the pace and allow easy retreat. Red Rocks multi-pitch climbs are just downright fun, but that’s only half the story. Red Rocks also has tons of shorter routes, great sport climbs, and excellent bouldering. The canyons of Red Rocks are blissfully free of traffic noise and the reminders of civilization, and Desert Bighorn easily outnumber hikers. As you get back in the canyons, you realize the awesome scale of the 3,000-foot sandstone escarpment, and how even the very long routes rarely tackle more than half of a wall’s relief. During the daytime, Las Vegas thankfully remains hidden away, and only at night, with the glow of casinos on the skyline, do you realize just how close Red Rocks is to Sin City.

Yet the huge and rapidly expanding Las Vegas, if not one of the attractions, is one of the main conveniences of climbing at Red Rocks. Cheap airfare, endless neon nightlife, restaurants, coffee shops, supermarkets, libraries, and the infamous Strip—are all only a few minutes away.

Even more convenient than the city is the plethora of sport climbing, bouldering, and short trad routes that bring many climbers to Red Rocks in the first place. And with the development of hundreds of sport routes on the limestone cliffs in the area, climbers are no longer limited to the often overcrowded, but excellent, sport

crags at the start of the Red Rocks Loop Road. These limestone cliffs are often at higher elevations, and offer great alternatives for warmer days.

All told, the classics of Red Rocks are uniquely accessible, often relatively low on the commitment scale, and undeniably high on the pure climbing fun scale! Here we give you SuperTopo guides of some of Red Rocks’ best—including a few never before published routes.

Red Rocks Historical Overview

Prior to 1970, climbing in Red Rocks was a low-key affair. To the extent that technical climbing was being done, it was mostly in the category of general mountaineering. The practitioners were a group of climbers usually referred to as the “Sierra Club” set. (This goes all the way back to a time when the Sierra Club focused on leading outdoor activities.) The routes of this era were typically unrecorded “class 4” operations that linked ledge systems and broken areas to find their way up the walls and to the summits. Climbers such as Howard Booth, Vern Bostick, and Jeff Lansing navigated the canyons and cliffs in these early explorations. One eager participant was local teenager Joe Herbst.

Joe spent the summer of 1970 working for the Palisade School of Mountaineering in the company of luminaries such as Don Jensen and Doug Robinson. Following an autumn in Yosemite, Joe returned home to Las Vegas prepared for great things. Over the next decade he pioneered first ascents of innumerable Red Rocks classics from short crag testpieces, to long free routes, to big aid walls. His pure clean climbing ethic, strongly influenced by Doug Robinson, in turn influenced an emerging generation of local climbers who followed him.

By the late 1970s, George and Joanne Urioste were beginning to make themselves noticed in the local climbing scene. With a good eye for the beautiful line, and a willingness to work very hard on long bolted stretches, the Uriostes initiated a new era in Red Rocks climbing. Drawing from a knowledge of their own routes, and with much reference to Joe Herbst’s notebook,

Tori Allen on Caustic (5.11b). (Greg Epperson)

Joanne Urioste authored the original Red Rocks climbing guide in 1984. The ensuing surge in popularity propelled Red Rocks to world-class status as a rock climbing destination.

– Larry DeAngelo

Welcome to Red Rocks Climbing

Our goal in this guidebook is to provide you with everything a climber needs to know about Red Rocks' finest climbing routes—including our namesake SuperTopo—in order to prepare you for an awesome climbing adventure. We chose these routes because of their exceptional rock quality, elegant lines, and outstanding views.

Many of these routes played a historic role in the development of Red Rocks climbing. As we do in all of our SuperTopo guidebooks, we've taken the time to provide you with the history for each route as well as the climbing info. If you're like us you'll find the experience of climbing these classic routes enhanced by the rich history and stories of the colorful characters that first pioneered the climbs.

We hope you enjoy climbing these routes as much as we do. You can be assured that they will offer a superb experience.

About the Crags

East Face Windy Peak (5.6-5.9)

The East Face of Windy Peak has great short trad routes with less crowds.

Whiskey Peak (5.9-5.11c)

The middle section of Whiskey Peak is home to some of Red Rocks' best splitter cracks and some excellent face climbs.

Lotta Balls Wall and Alcohol Wall (5.7-5.10b)

The Lotta Balls area is full of clean cracks and dihedrals that form steep, moderate climbs on excellent dark brown rock.

East Face of Mescalito (5.9-5.10b)

This face has great steep climbing on somewhat runout routes, with morning sun and afternoon shade, and close proximity to several other two- to four-pitch routes and the Brass Wall.

Brass Wall (5.6-5.10d)

Quality cracks, a short approach, and a good concentration of moderate climbs make the Brass Wall one of the most popular traditional crags at Red Rocks.

Ragged Edges, Hidden Falls Wall, and Case Face (5.5-5.12d)

Only a few hundred yards from the road, these great climbs are popular when the weather is appropriate since the walls only get morning sun.

The Gallery (5.8-5.12c)

These short, juggy, and steep sport climbs are in a great sunny location—the most popular sport climbing spot in Red Rocks.

Magic Bus (5.8-5.9)

Great sunny crag with a few well-protected climbs, both sport and trad.

About the Climbs

Here is a brief summary of some of Red Rocks' best multi-pitch climbs listed by difficulty.

Mescalito South, Cat in the Hat (5.6, 6 pitches)

With great and consistent climbing, big belay ledges, and an easy rappel down the route, Cat in the Hat is the friendliest and most popular route of its grade in Red Rocks.

Jackrabbit Buttress, Geronimo (5.6, 4 pitches)

This is a fun climb for those experienced at the grade with steep face and crack climbing with an exposed finish, but with some delicate holds.

Solar Slab Wall, Solar Slab (5.6, 11 pitches)

One of the best long routes of the grade anywhere with many variations.

Rose Tower, Olive Oil (5.7, 6 pitches)

Great varied climbing in a long crack to face to dihedral system with midday sun.

Angel Food Wall, Tunnel Vision (5.7, 6 pitches)

Fun chimneys with a cool tunnel-through pitch—a great climb with a short approach.

Angel Food Wall, Group Therapy (5.7, 6 pitches)

A wild big roof pitch at the top with some runout climbing lower, Group Therapy is a

good route for those comfortable with a bit of loose rock.

Mescalito North, Dark Shadows (5.8, 4 pitches)

It's hard to believe that the steep, dark, and ominous dihedral of Dark Shadows is rated only 5.8. The route is located in a tight canyon with large trees and pools of water—an atmosphere unique in Red Rocks.

Whiskey Peak, Frogland (5.8, 6 pitches)

Long, sustained, and deservedly popular, Frogland is one of the best of the moderate climbs in an area renowned for awesome moderates.

Cloud Tower, Crimson Chrysalis (5.8, 9 pitches)

This fantastic route is sustained at 5.8. There are many bolts when the climbing gets wide, which allows you to venture onto the face.

Burlap Buttress, Arrow Place (5.9, 3-5 pitches)

A great sunny route, opposite the popular Whiskey Peak Wall.

Solar Slab Wall, Beulah's Book (5.9, 3 pitches)

Fun climbing with a great new arête variation, often used as an approach to the upper Solar Slab.

Global Peak, Chuckwalla (5.9, 6 pitches)

A long remote approach guards this great face and crack climb in the rarely visited Mud Spring Canyon.

Black Velvet Wall, Epinephrine (5.9, 15 pitches)

One of the longest and best routes in Red Rocks, and certainly one of the best 5.9 routes in the world. Although rated "5.9," the chimneys on Epinephrine are slick, continuous, serious, and not to be underestimated.

Black Velvet Wall, Sour Mash (5.10a, 7 pitches)

With varied climbing, tons of thin cracks, tightly bolted face climbing cruxes, and an intriguing traversing roof to crack, Sour Mash is endless fun.

Black Orpheus Buttress, Black Orpheus (5.10a, 11 pitches)

Black Orpheus ascends a break in a huge overhung headwall via a cleanly fractured

dihedral and has some of the best moderate crack climbing at Red Rocks.

Solar Slab Wall, Horndogger Select to Sundog (5.10a, 10 pitches)

Fun climbing on more delicate rock, this newer climb is sunny and perfect for more experienced sandstone climbers.

Black Velvet Wall, Dream of Wild Turkeys (5.10a, 11 pitches)

Long and sustained, Dream of Wild Turkeys tackles discontinuous features for over 1,000 feet of amazing climbing with nearly every pitch 5.9 or 5.10a.

Black Velvet Wall, Yellow Brick Road (5.10b, 10 pitches)

Yellow Brick Road is a two-pitch direct variation to Dream of Wild Turkeys. It is slightly harder, more sustained, and avoids the hardest slab cruxes of Dream of Wild Turkeys.

Black Velvet Wall, Prince of Darkness (5.10c, 6 pitches)

Amazingly sustained perfect edges up pitch after pitch of sport-bolted face, Prince of Darkness is one of the most classic face climbs in the U.S.

Eagle Wall, Eagle Dance (IV 5.10c A0, 10 pitches)

Long, sustained, and beautiful, nearly every pitch on Eagle Dance is 5.10 with a variety of climbing from thin crack to sustained edging face.

Eagle Wall, Ringtail (5.10d, 5 pitches)

Fun crack and dihedral climbing with a tightly bolted, thin edging crux.

Eagle Wall, Levitation 29 (5.11c, 10 pitches)

The classic 5.11 multi-pitch of Red Rocks, with an enduro crux freed onsite by Lynn Hill. It has everything from steep crack to roofs to endurance overhung thin face.

Whiskey Peak, Only the Good Die Young (5.11c, 5 pitches)

Wildly steep yet tucked away out of sight, Only the Good Die Young is easily the most neglected classic of its grade in Red Rocks.

Red Rocks Climbing Beta

Red Rocks Climbing Skills

Endless seas of perfect in-cut edges are the hallmark of Red Rocks face climbs. Unlike Yosemite, most Red Rocks crack climbs are actually face climbed while using the crack for protection and the occasional jam. For those not used to sandstone, take some time on easier climbs to get used to the often fragile rock, and above all else, do not climb on the rock the day or two after a rainstorm (longer if heavy rain), since the rock is significantly weaker when damp.

Climbing Gear

Red Rocks sandstone has many tapered cracks and a double set of nuts is essential. When cams are used, they are mostly in the thin to hand size (we'll warn you when bigger gear is needed). Tri-cams are useful for protection in pockets, as are very narrow head cams such as the larger sized Aliens. For many of the longer routes, many draws and slings are needed—it is common to clip more than 10 bolts on a single pitch. Extra rap slings and rap rings are a good idea for many of the routes, especially for trees and blocks. Most bolted stations have fixed rings or chains which eliminate ugly webbing tangles.

Ropes

Red Rocks is infamous for stuck ropes. Those great in-cut edges often snag ropes (some people call Red Rocks faces “velcro rock”), and raps down gullies or crack systems often end up with epic rope problems. While the long routes which you rap may seem like an obvious case for using double or twin ropes, these skinny ropes seem to get stuck more often than thicker lines. Also, many parties are used to using skinny tag lines or thin static lines. This is not recommended in Red Rocks due to the frequency that you have to re-lead up to retrieve ropes. If you have only a tag line or a static line, an easy lead up to retrieve your rope can be extremely dangerous. The most common solution is to have the leader trail another dynamic line, or have the follower backpack the second rope.

New and Delicate Climbs

The SuperTopo Red Rocks guide includes several lesser traveled or newer routes with more fragile holds than the more traveled classics. Use caution and pay extra attention to which holds are probably too thin to support a climber's weight for the following routes:

Geronimo
Horndogger Select and Sundog
Pine Nuts
When A Stranger Calls
This Ain't No Disco
Arrow Place
One-Armed Bandit
Aquarium

Non-Climbing Gear

A good supply of water is key, both for climbing days and for camping. Potable water is available at the campground, but it tastes bad. Fill up water containers from areas with better tasting water. Wear long pants and good approach shoes or boots to protect you from the often cactus-filled approach trails and the bushwacking descents. Use sunscreen and sun hats for warmer periods. Carry warm clothing and rain gear for anytime in the late fall through spring, where you can expect anything from hot periods to rain or snow.

About Anchors and the ASCA's Work

Until just a few years ago, most bolts on longer Red Rocks routes were terrible 20-year-old 1/4" bolts. Dan McQuade and friends spent a ton of time and energy replacing key anchors, and then in the last few years SuperTopo's own Greg Barnes, the Director of the American Safe Climbing Association, spearheaded rebolting efforts that have replaced almost 500 bolts on classic climbs in the canyons, including most routes covered in this Supertopo guide. All the work is done by volunteers—the ASCA has no paid staff. Please donate to the ASCA, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, as it doesn't yet receive enough support from the climbing community to keep up with all the

bolts that need to be replaced. On average a new camouflaged 1/2" stainless bolt, hanger, drill bit, etc. for replacement in Red Rocks costs the ASCA about \$9 in hardware costs alone. Visit www.safeclimbing.org for more information.

Environmental Ethics

Red Rocks is a desert ecosystem, and while the thorn and spine-barring plants may look (and feel) formidable, take care to reduce your impact. The number one way to do that is to stay on the main trails and avoid lesser traveled trails—even back-track if necessary. Bighorn sheep, peregrine falcons, and many other animals inhabit the canyons—respect them in their home.

Burros are feral (once domestic animals that have escaped to the wild) mule-like animals that were imported from North Africa to help miners in the 1800s. They are protected in Red Rocks, while in California they've been systematically removed from public lands for over 20 years. They are of most concern in Red Rocks while traveling on the highways at night, and speeding cars plus hard-to-spot burros have led to some serious accidents.

Unfortunately, the real environmental issues with Red Rocks are outside its boundaries and obvious to anyone who goes to Las Vegas more than once. The

city is exploding in size and threatening to develop every scrap of land that it can get, somehow securing enough water for wasteful practices like artificial lakes in the middle of some of the suburbs. The hill across from the canyons, Blue Diamond Hill, has been the home of a gypsum mine for as long as anyone can remember. While the giant blasting (2 p.m. on Wednesdays usually) is annoying, the hill has blissfully blocked Vegas from view from most of Red Rocks. Unfortunately, this is likely to change, and unless enough pressure is put on the local government entities, high-end housing, golf courses, gated communities, and Wal-Marts may be only a few years away. Thankfully, development of this hill was delayed in May 2003 due to a big public outcry. See www.redrock.org for more info on how to help preserve Red Rocks.

Current Road and Weather Conditions

http://weather.yahoo.com/forecast/USNV0049_f.html or call the National Weather Service for local weather at 702-736-3854.

Getting There

Car Travel

Red Rocks is just west of Las Vegas and is accessed from various points in Vegas, and from Highway 160 from the Death Valley area. From almost any direction it's fastest to take the main Interstate highways into the city, although on weekends the heavy traffic flow from LA can long traffic jams across the desert from the west.

Despite what you'd expect from a map, if driving from the Bishop/Yosemite area it's actually much faster to take Highway 168 from Big Pine across Westgard Pass into Nevada, then down Highway 95. This takes about 4.5 hours. However, the views through Death Valley National Park, especially in late fall, winter, or early spring, are definitely worth seeing.



Sarah Feichtlin

Air Travel

Las Vegas is one of the easiest, and cheapest, places to fly to in the world. However, huge conventions sometimes clog the airlines, drive prices through the roof, and fill up every hotel room. Plan ahead.

Loop Road

There is a \$5 entrance fee to enter the loop. A Golden Eagle Pass (same as a National Park Pass but with a little golden sticker that costs \$15) works to get you in free. If you already have a National Parks Pass, you can buy the Golden Eagle sticker here. Annual Red Rocks specific passes are also available for \$20. Climbs accessed from the Loop Road have very limited parking hours. If you are staying after hours, and wish to avoid a \$50 fine, call the late exit number (702-515-5050), where you must give detailed information on your car, the number of people, the route you're climbing, and emergency contacts. Late exit passes are only available for long routes in the canyons—not for sport climbing, bouldering, or hiking. Don't try to abuse the system. You WILL get fined for being in the Loop Road after closing with no pass. The pass only allows a few extra hours, and if you are still not out, you can get fined.

When to Climb

The longer routes at Red Rocks are in the canyons and many are usually too cold in the dead of winter. The best seasons are fall and spring, although south-facing routes are sometimes too hot (and therefore climbed even in mid-winter). Monitor current weather, as cold or hot spells can change your plans. Even in warmer spring and fall periods, cold storms happen regularly, and the sport, short trad, and bouldering areas of Calico Basin are often perfect when the canyons are stormy or drying out after a storm. Several local limestone areas are also perfect alternatives, and for truly desperate days, Powerhouse Rock Gym (next to Desert Rock Sports on West Charleston Boulevard) offers indoor overhanging leads and hot showers.

June through August is usually so hot that no one dares climb except in the

coldest canyons. Air temperatures well above 100 degrees are common. Local high-altitude limestone climbing is the best choice if you're in Vegas this time of year.

Staying in Red Rocks

Camping

Unfortunately, there is only one campground in the Red Rocks area—the BLM 13 Mile Campground. It is located on West Charleston (Route 159), one mile from Calico Basin Road. While the 13 Mile Campground is new and fairly large, it fills quickly in prime season. Both drive-in and walk-in sites are \$10 (which is odd since you can have two cars at a drive-in site but only one at a walk-in). Currently there are about 40 sites, but plans are under way to double the size of the campground. Large groups should reserve some of the group sites, which are only \$25 a night for up to eight cars and 20 people. These are often reserved 6 months in advance for peak times. Visitors Center: 702-363-1921.

If full, Vegas hotels or a long drive to the west to find a camping spot are the only options. If you can sleep in your car, the back lots of many large casinos are usually hassle free. Take note that cheap hotels are difficult to find and almost non-existent on weekend nights. It is illegal to camp at the trailhead for Black Velvet Canyon or anywhere in that area.

Recently Added Bolts

Many classic Red Rocks moderates have recently had some bolts added. Sometimes added by the first ascent party, and sometimes added by unknown parties, these bolts may be removed by other climbers wishing to preserve the difficulty and danger level of the climb. Some bolts indicated in the SuperTopo may or may not remain, and if they are missing, do not be overly surprised. Check the SuperTopo Route Beta section and the SuperTopo Climber's Forum for more current info at:

<http://www.supertopo.com>

Restaurants

There are endless restaurant options all over Las Vegas. The main concentration of eateries near Red Rocks are along Charleston Boulevard and Sahara Avenue, and Rainbow Boulevard, which runs perpendicular to the two. Every fast food chain and tons of restaurants and casino buffets dot the city.

Groceries

Several brand-new large grocery stores are on Charleston Boulevard near Red Rocks. By the time you read this there will be even more so take your pick. There is a Starbucks inside every one, and there is a Starbucks outside in the strip mall in front of every one as well. We're not joking.

At the intersection of Highways 159 and 160 near Blue Diamond (on the way out to Black Velvet Canyon from the campground) is a new gas station with a small selection of food and supplies.

Water

Carry plenty of water—especially on the south-facing routes. Dehydration is no fun and impairs judgement. Get water at the campground, the visitors center, or nearby stores. The water at 13 Mile is particularly nasty, so stock up ahead of time if you can.

Library/Internet Access

West Charleston Library (6301 West Charleston Boulevard; 702-878-3682) is the easiest to find and has about 20 internet terminals. You have to have a library card to use the terminals, but they are easy to obtain.

Sahara West Library (9600 West Sahara Avenue; 702-507-3630) is the quickest to get to and has around 50 Internet terminals that you can use for free for an hour, but amazingly they are all filled much of the time. You currently do NOT need a library card, just a photo ID such as your driver's license. It also has a discarded book salesroom out front where you can pick up great reading material at a quarter per paperback and 50 cents per hardback. Just down the street is a large mall/movie theater complex.

Climbing Gear

Desert Rock Sports (8201 West Charleston Boulevard; 702-254-1143, www.desertrocksports.com), on Charleston Boulevard as you drive into town, is a full-service climbing shop with a huge gear selection and knowledgeable staff. One of the folks you'll likely see there is one of the owners, Mike Ward, who's been doing long FAs in Red Rocks since the 1970s (including several of the routes in this book). Powerhouse Gym, located in the same building, is a good option for rainy days and also offers affordable showers.

Climbing Guides

American Alpine Institute:

360-671-1505; www.mtnguide.com

Jackson Hole Mountain Guides:

702-254-0885 ; www.jhmg.com

Mountain Skills: 505-776-2222;

www.climbingschoolusa.com

National Outdoor Leadership School

(NOLS): 307-332-4784; www.nols.edu

Sky's The Limit:

800-733-7597; www.skysthelimit.com

Other Guidebooks

Rock Climbing Red Rocks by Todd Swain offers a full guide to sport climbing and information on many climbing routes in the canyons.

The Red Rocks of Southern Nevada by Joanne Urioste was recently reprinted, and has detailed written information on many canyon routes not covered by any other guide.

Islands in the Sky by Dan McQuade, Randy Leavitt, and Mick Ryan is a guide to limestone climbing all over Nevada, most of which is concentrated close to (and sometimes even in) Red Rocks. www.rockfax.com

Las Vegas Limestone by Roxanna Brock covers all Las Vegas area limestone climbing. www.VegasClimbing.com

Red Rocks Bouldering by Rob Jensen, and *Las Vegas Bouldering Guide* by Jared McMillen, cover local bouldering. Also by McMillen is the *Red Rocks Sport Climbing Guide*.

Crime

Las Vegas is a big city with big city crime. Never leave your wallet in your car, conceal valuables, and be especially careful at canyon trailheads. If possible, conceal any evidence that your car belongs to a climber. Thieves specifically target climbers' cars because they know they will be gone all day. A common trick is to break into a car, find a wallet, remove a single credit card, then carefully lock the car back up. By the time you figure out that a card is missing, thousands of dollars have been charged at local casinos. Also, it is not uncommon for valuables like mountain bikes to be simply ripped off of locked racks on the car, sometimes leaving parts of the fork behind.

Camping near the city to the west along Highway 160, which is a heavily traveled road to the satellite town of Pahrump, runs the risk of violent crime and should be carefully considered. Gun shells litter the campsites, and most sites near the road are illegal to camp at.

Animals and Sharp Plants

Be very careful around the abundant cacti and sharp desert vegetation—a glance will tell you that the plants in Red Rocks know how to defend themselves. It's a good idea to carry a pair of tweezers for cactus spines.

Rattlesnakes, scorpions, tarantulas, and wasps are present but rarely seen.

Peregrine falcons nest in the canyons—do not disturb them if you see them (besides, they are bold and have a history of attacking climbers).

Please give Desert Bighorn sheep a wide berth in the unlikely event that you see them up close (half a mile away up a 5th class wall is more common).

Rest Days

The human zoo of Las Vegas, especially The Strip, must be viewed at night. The roller coasters, pirate shows, fountains, and endless extravagantly decorated casinos are reminiscent of the orgies of the Roman Empire in its heyday. There are so many bright lights in Vegas—especially the one out of the top of the Luxor's black pyramid—that Las Vegas is the most intensely bright spot on earth as seen from space.

For other “rest” day activities, there are many excellent hikes in Red Rocks, notably Bridge Mountain and Turtle Mountain. Full information on these is available at the BLM visitors center. Fun hikes up the various canyons can also be good times to scope the approaches to routes without the weight of your gear. Those with mountain bikes can explore the big new array of trails out near the entrance to Black Velvet Canyon. There are also longer excellent single tracks south of Highway 160, all on hard-packed and often rocky terrain. A quality mountain biking map is available at the mountain bike store right next to Desert Rock Sports/Powerhouse Gym. Tire kits (and tweezers) are essential as these trails wind in and out of sharp plants.

The desert tortoise among spring wildflowers.



Greg Barnes

SuperTopo Mission

- Help climbers ascend and descend routes quickly, efficiently, and safely by creating the most accurate and informative climbing topos ever published.
- Capture the mystery, adventure, and humor of climbing by publishing the histories, anecdotes, and outrageous stories of each route.
- Promote clean climbing by publishing the most up-to-date rack info as well as hammerless ratings for each pitch.
- Stress the importance of low impact climbing and promote stewardship of the environment.

Visit www.SuperTopo.com Before Each Climb

There is much more beta available for free on the SuperTopo web site: www.supertopo.com. Visit the web site before your climb to be sure you have the latest information.

The web site offers additional free beta for each climb:

- photo galleries
- trip reports
- route condition updates
- closures and rockfall warnings
- route beta email alerts

The web site is packed with general Red Rocks info:

- free downloadable color topos
- road and weather conditions
- everything you need to know about staying in Red Rocks
- good routes for first-time Red Rocks climbers
- general trip planning info



Protect Red Rock Canyon

by Jed Botsford, Climbing Ranger

Why do you climb at Red Rock Canyon? Is it one of your favorite places to climb when it is cold everywhere else? Do you like it because of the variety of the climbing, the wilderness experience while climbing tall routes in the canyons, the sport routes with quick approaches, or the large amount of bouldering? It seems as though every climber has a different reason for why they climb at Red Rocks. One theme that climbers can all agree on is that the climbing access at Red Rock Canyon is worth protecting.

Protecting the Desert Environment

What can you do to protect the fragile desert environment while climbing at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area? Remember and practice some of the Leave No Trace principles.

Plan Ahead and Prepare

A nice hot cup of coffee is great to get you going in the morning, but it also gets other things moving. Plan to go to the bathroom before you leave the parking lot instead of waiting until you are at the base of the crag. Human waste does not decompose in the desert soils and toilet paper is trash.

When you are climbing a tall route, always carry a headlamp and warm clothes. All too often climbing parties head up a route which takes much longer than was expected and get caught in the dark.

If you are not sure if you will be able to do the approach, climb the routes and get back to your car before the closure of the Scenic Drive, call for a Late Exit Permit and save yourself a \$50 ticket. The permit is free and easy to get by calling 702-515-5050.



Sarah Felchlin

Travel on Durable Surfaces

While you are hiking, stay on established trails to avoid trampling cryptobiotic soils. Red Rock Canyon has been a popular climbing area for a long time. There is always an established trail leading to a climb or crag. Take a few minutes to find the trail instead of cutting across open desert or straight up to the climb.

Sandstone is a porous rock and absorbs water during a rainstorm. Allow the rock to dry out for at least 24 hours after a rain. There are some great limestone crags around Red Rocks and Las Vegas that can be climbed on when the sandstone is wet.

Pack It In, Pack It Out

Pack out all your toilet paper, tape, cigarette butts and left-over food. How many times have you arrived at the base of a tall route and right where the climb starts there is an orange peel or some other type of trash? The orange peel may biodegrade but it can take up to a year in the desert for it to disappear.

Respect wildlife

Seeing a wild horse or burro is a great experience, but remember that wild horses and burros are federally-protected animals and it is illegal to harass or feed them.

Climbing Access

“What can I do to help protect the climbing access at Red Rock Canyon?” This question is one of the most common questions I am asked while I am on patrol. My reply depends on the situation, but here are some great ways to protect climbing access at Red Rock Canyon.

Get involved with your local climbing groups, such as the Las Vegas Climbers Liaison Council and join the Access Fund. Participate during project days when land managers and climbing groups are working together on a trash pick up at a local crag, or a chalk cleaning session.

Talk with the land managers before you decide to put up a route. Find out if there are any bolting restrictions. Red Rock Canyon has two wilderness areas: Rainbow Mountain and La Madre Mountain Wildernesses. As of the summer of 2003, the BLM does not allow any new bolting to take place in the Wilderness areas of Red Rocks.

The BLM will be writing a Wilderness and Climbing Management Plan in the near future. By getting involved and talking with the BLM, your comments can be incorporated into both the Wilderness and Climbing Plans that will affect climbing directly.

One of the most popular bouldering areas in Red Rocks is the Kraft Boulders. The access into Kraft is through private property. As long as climbers approach the bouldering area by parking in the BLM designated parking areas, walking on the dirt roads to the boulders and not cutting across private property, the Kraft Boulders will be open for a long time to come.

If you would like to learn more about Leave No Trace ethics check out their website at: <http://www.lnt.org>.

If you would like to contact either of the climbing rangers at Red Rocks, feel free to call 702-515-5138 or 702-515-5042.



If you are lucky, you may run into Bighorn sheep. These were spotted below the Brownstone Wall.

Larry DeAngelo

Free Climbing Ratings

USA Yosemite Decimal System	UIAA	France	UK	Australia
5.1	I	1	M	4
5.2	II	2	D	6
5.3	III III+	2+	^{3A} _{3B} VD	8
5.4	IV	3-	^{3B} _{3C} HVD	10
5.5	IV+	3	^{3C} _{4A} S	12
5.6	V-	3+	^{4A} _{4B} HS	14
5.7	V	4	^{4A} _{4C} VS	16
5.8	V+	4+	^{4C} _{5B} HVS	18
5.9	VI-	5	^{5A} _{5C} E1	19
5.10a	VI	5+	^{5B} _{6A} E2	20
5.10b	VI+	6A	^{5C} _{6A} E3	21
5.10c	VII-	6A+	^{6A} _{6B} E4	22
5.10d	VII	6B	^{6A} _{6B} E4	23
5.11a	VII+	6B+	^{6A} _{6C} E5	24
5.11b	VIII-	6C	^{6A} _{6C} E5	25
5.11c	VIII+	6C+	^{6B} _{6C} E6	26
5.11d	VIII	7A	^{6B} _{6C} E6	27
5.12a	VIII+	7A+	^{6C} _{7A} E7	28
5.12b	IX-	7B	^{6C} _{7A} E7	29
5.12c	IX-	7B+	^{6C} _{7A} E8	30
5.12d	IX	7C	^{6C} _{7A} E8	31
5.13a	IX+	7C+	^{7A} _{7B} E9	32
5.13b	X-	8A	^{7A} _{7B} E9	33
5.13c	X	8A+	^{7A} _{7B} E9	34
5.13d	X	8B	^{7A} _{7B} E10	35
5.14a	X+	8B+	^{7A} _{7B} E10	36
5.14b	XI-	8C	^{7A} _{7B} E10	37
5.14c	XI	8C+	^{7A} _{7B} E10	38
5.14d	XI+	9A	^{7A} _{7B} E10	39
5.15a	XI+	9A+	^{7A} _{7B} E10	40

Cam Sizes by Brand

Ref Size*	BD Camalots	CCH Aliens	Metolius Cams	Trango Big Bros	Wild Country Friends
0.4"	.1 red	.33 black	00 gray		
0.5"	.2 yellow	.375 blue	0 purple		0 red
0.6"	.3 purple	.5 green	1 blue		.5 orange
0.75"	.4 gray	.75 yellow	2 yellow		1 yellow
1"	.5 pink	1 red	3 orange		1.25 brown
1.25"	.75 green	1.5 orange	4 red		1.5 sky
1.5"	1 red	2 purple	5 black		2 pink
1.75"	1 red	2.5 gray	6 green		2.5 royal
2"	2 yellow	2.5 gray	7 blue		3 navy
2.5"	2 yellow		8 purple		3.5 purple
3"	3 blue		9 burgundy		4 black
3.5"	3.5 gray		10 dark blue		4 black
3.5-4.5"	4 purple			1 red	5 silver
4.5-5.5"	4.5 red			2	
5.5-7"	5 green			3 green	6 plum
7-8"				3 green	
8-12"				4 blue	

*"Ref size" is the optimal crack width for a given camming unit. It is not the range given by the manufacturer.

Understanding the Maps

Topo Symbols

Right-facing corner		Roof		Bolt	x
Left-facing corner		Ledge		Rappel anchor	
Straight-in crack		Slab		Face climbing	
Groove		Belay station		Pine tree	
Arête		Pitch length		Oak-like tree	
Flake		Optional belay		Bush	
Chimney		False belay		Knob	
				Hole	

Notes on Rack

- “nuts” refers to any nut, stopper, or chock. “micro”= #1, 2; “sml”= #3-5; “med”= #6-8; “lrg”= #9-13
- for cams, “2 ea .75-1.5” means bring two sets of all sizes between .75” and 1.5”. Check the cam size chart to see which cam corresponds to which crack size.

Notes on Topo

- “belay takes .6-1” means, while leading the pitch, save enough .6-1” cams and nuts to build a natural anchor.
- a number next to a tree is its height.

Topo abbreviations

ow = offwidth
 lb = lieback
 p = fixed piton
 R = runout (dangerous fall)

Metric system conversions

1 inch = 2.54 centimeters
 1 foot = 0.305 meters
 100 feet = 30.5 meters
 50 yards = 45.7 meters

Overview graphics

Canyon Wall	
2WD/4WD dirt road	
Road or State Route	
Federal Highway	
Hikers' trail	
Climbers' trail	
Cross-country travel	

Star Ratings

- ★★★★★ - undisputed classic
- ★★★★ - excellent climb
- ★★★ - good climb
- ★★ - okay climb
- ★ - barely included in this book

