

A Climbers' Guide to the El Rito Sport Crags

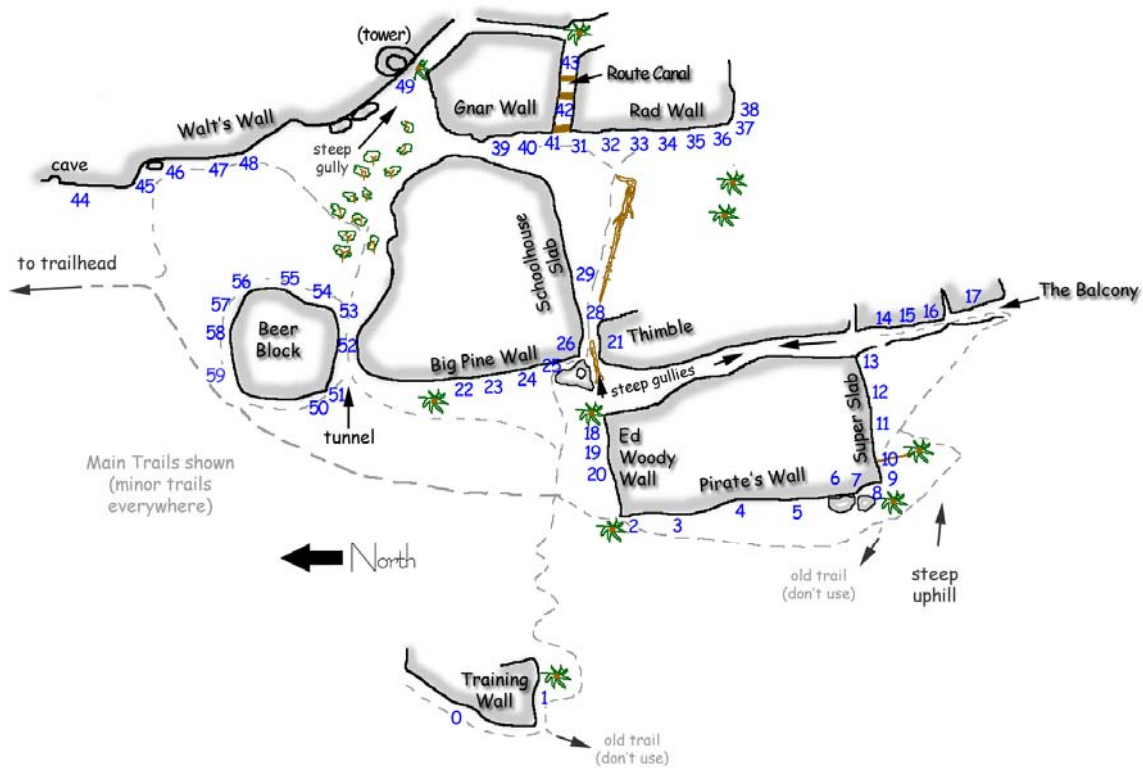
New Mexico

By Gary Clark - Version 06/05/05

HOW TO GET THERE

The village of El Rito is located about 50 miles north of Santa Fe. There is a detailed map of Northern NM on the web site if you are having difficulty finding it on a regular road map. From the east end of the village, turn north on Forest Road 44 (dirt). Drive 3.75 miles from the pavement, and park to the left just after the sign "Cañada del Potrero." Camping is available at several locations up this spur road, which ends in about a half-mile. Now walk across the road to a trail paralleling it headed south. The trail crosses a bridge, then turns south up the sidehill to the crags. (~15 min.)

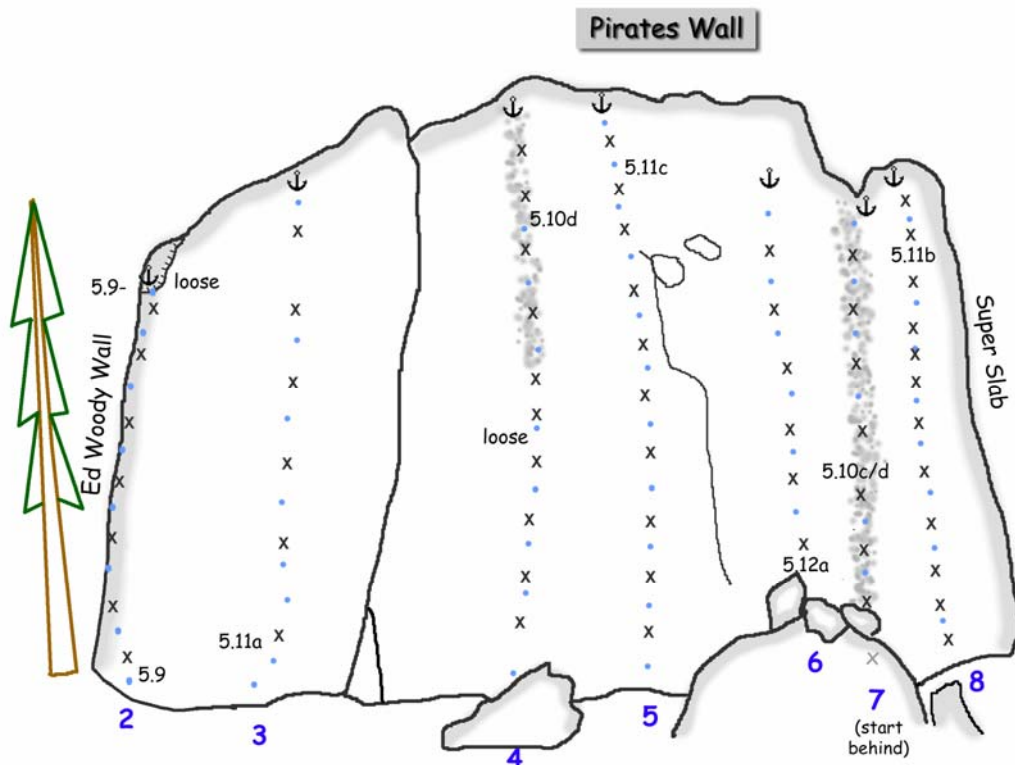
El Rito Sport Crags - Map



El Rito Sport Crags - The Routes

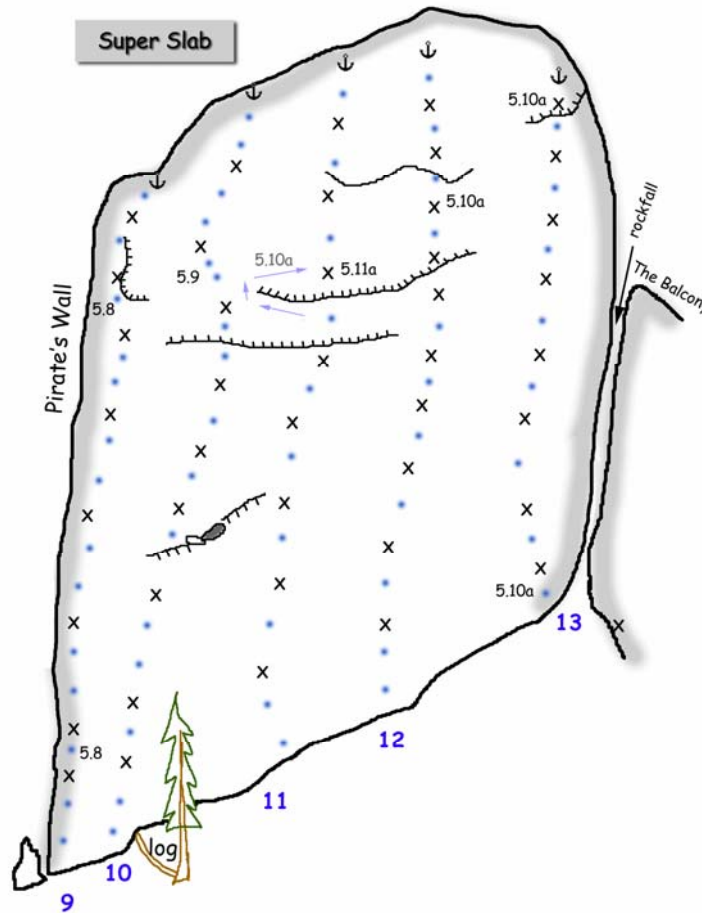
| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|--|--------|--------------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|--|
| Training Wall A small block downhill from the approach trail. No drawing. | | | | | | |
| 0 | ? | Grits | 20' | 2 | | Very short, very steep route on the west face with small holds. Rating unknown, but clearly hard. |
| 1 | 11d | Just Another Pretty Face | 30' | 3 | ⚓ | Steep strenuous route on south face. The left line of bolts. |
| 1v | 11b | Pretty Face Variation | 30' | 3 | ⚓ | Start as for route 1, but clip separate bolts on a more natural line of holds to the right. Come back left at the top to the same anchor. Short route but great moves. |

| Pirates Wall West Face of this major formation. Routes numbered L to R. See drawing below. | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------|-----|----|---|--|
| 2 | 9 | Scurvy Dog | 60' | 7 | ⚓ | Tricky start 6' right of arête on face. Go to arête, then follow closely-spaced bolts to overhang, which is easier than it looks. |
| 3 | 11a | Oxymorons | 75' | 6 | ⚓ | Crux at start, much easier higher. Good route, sophomoric original name. |
| 4 | 10d | Captain Hook** | 80' | 10 | | Has some OK climbing, but loose rock detracts. Belay out of the fall line, and wear a helmet! Not one of the better routes at the area. Crux section at top. |
| 5 | 11c | Walking the Plank | 75' | 10 | | Long, strenuous route with the crux near the top. Death cobble for belayer four feet left at the crux section - Don't stray from the bolt line! |
| 6 | 12a | Pirated | 70' | 6 | | Start atop boulders. Difficult clip at the anchors. |
| 7 | 10c | Blackbeard | 80' | 8 | ⚓ | Area classic. Start behind boulders in narrow slot. Can bypass 10d crux above 3 rd bolt to the right (10c). Caution - potential for leader to hit pillar behind in fall low on route! |
| 8 | 11b | Long John** | 88' | 12 | ⚓ | Furthest right route on wall. Crux at top where it gets steep. Note length - 60m rope, or belayer must be on top of boulders behind base (convenient Ponderosa anchor). Excellent. |



Super Slab Highest face at area, with high quality moderate routes. Faces south. Routes numbered L to R. See drawing below.

| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|----|------------|---------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|---|
| 9 | 8 | <i>Super Arête</i> | 82' | 8 | ⚓ | Best route at this grade with an exciting position. Still some loose rock on the edge - stay on the bolt line to avoid. |
| 10 | 9 | <i>Class Action</i> | 80' | 10 | ⚓ | Starts 10' right of the arête. Excellent, popular route. |
| 11 | 11a or 10b | <i>Full Sail</i> | 90' | 9 | ⚓ | Straight up at bulge is 5.11. Traverse left is 5.10. The longest route at El Rito - the only one for which a 60m rope is mandatory (or you can go over the top.) Excellent. |
| 12 | 10a | <i>Boltaneer</i> | 85' | 10 | ⚓ | Area classic. Note length - you can do it with a 50m rope if you pay close attention. Excellent. |
| 13 | 10c | <i>Oreo</i> | 75' | 8 | ⚓ | On extreme right edge of wall, just under a chute. Note belay bolt at bottom of face to your right. Hard moves at bottom and top, softer sweet stuff in between. Excellent. |

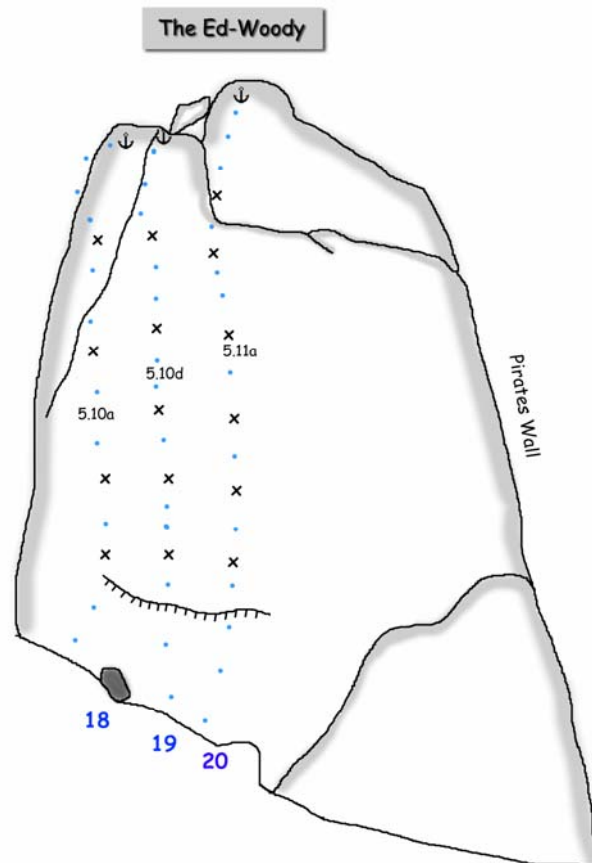


The Balcony The faces above and right of Super Slab, facing west. Routes numbered L to R. No drawing

| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|----|---------|---|--------------|-------|-------------|---|
| 14 | 9 | <i>Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery.</i> | 40' | 4 | ⚓ | Big holds on a short face; would be only 5.7+ if it weren't for awkward final moves to get to an unnaturally placed anchor. |
| 15 | 8 | <i>Cobzilla</i> | 40' | 5 | ⚓ | Similar to 14, but has more consistently difficult moves. Easiest if you tend right above the first bolt. |
| 16 | 9 / 10a | <i>Mister Bigglesworth</i> | 40' | 4 | ⚓ | Similar to 15. Perhaps 10a for short people. Hardware is sub-par on this route. |
| 17 | 11b | <i>Jug-or-Naut</i> | 40' | 5 | ⚓ | On the rightmost block on the Balcony - steep jugs, 1st half hardest, good physical route. |

The Ed-Woody North facing, slightly overhanging wall on same block as Super Slab & Pirates Wall. Routes numbered L to R. Drawing below.

| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|----|--------|----------------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|---|
| 18 | 10a | <i>Gridlock</i> | 35' | 4 | ⚓ | 10a only if you go to the arête below the final bolt. Direct finish is much harder. Not a great route because of this unnatural finish that sandbags many climbers. |
| 19 | 10d | <i>Redline</i> | 40' | 5 | ⚓ | Steep pockets, doesn't let up. Excellent. |
| 20 | 11a | <i>Cobbles and Robbers</i> | 55' | 6 | ⚓ | Steep pockets to easier finish. Another excellent route just a bit harder than Redline. |



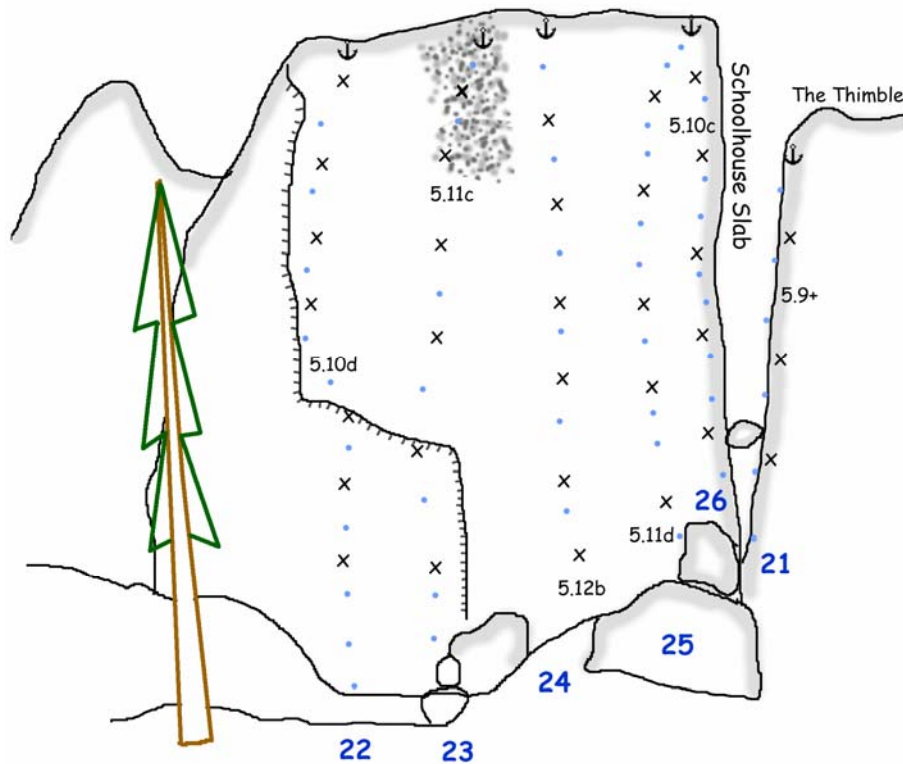
The Thimble Small formation forming the right side of the tunnel through to the upper area at top of log. Faces north, no drawing.

| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|----|--------|------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|---|
| 21 | 10a | <i>El Dorito</i> | 30' | 3 | ⚓ | Very popular warm-up for jug hauling, but a traffic jam area on weekends - avoid. Ground-fall potential while clipping bolts - dangerous for leader near his/her limit. |

Big Pine Wall The west-facing major wall at mid-height on the slope. Popular, quality climbs. Routes numbered from L to R. Drawing below.

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|---------------------------|-----|---|---|--|
| 22 | 10d | <i>Cobble Wobble</i> | 55' | 7 | ⚓ | Area classic. Steep cobble pulling. |
| 23 | 11c | <i>Corn on the Cobble</i> | 50' | 6 | ⚓ | Lower half easy, crux moves quite stiff, then lets up a little. Bolt six is hidden until you're there. |
| 24 | 12b | <i>Pocket Rocket</i> | 50' | 6 | ⚓ | Start between rocks at base of face. |
| 25 | 11d | <i>Peach Cobbler</i> | 50' | 5 | ⚓ | Tough pocket pulling on unrelenting face. Exc. Route. |
| 26 | 10c | <i>Apple Cobbler</i> | 50' | 5 | ⚓ | Contrived route on steep face a few feet left of arête. Can escape at any point to south face for easy climbing, but getting back to anchors is 5.9. Shares anchors with 25. |

Big Pine Wall

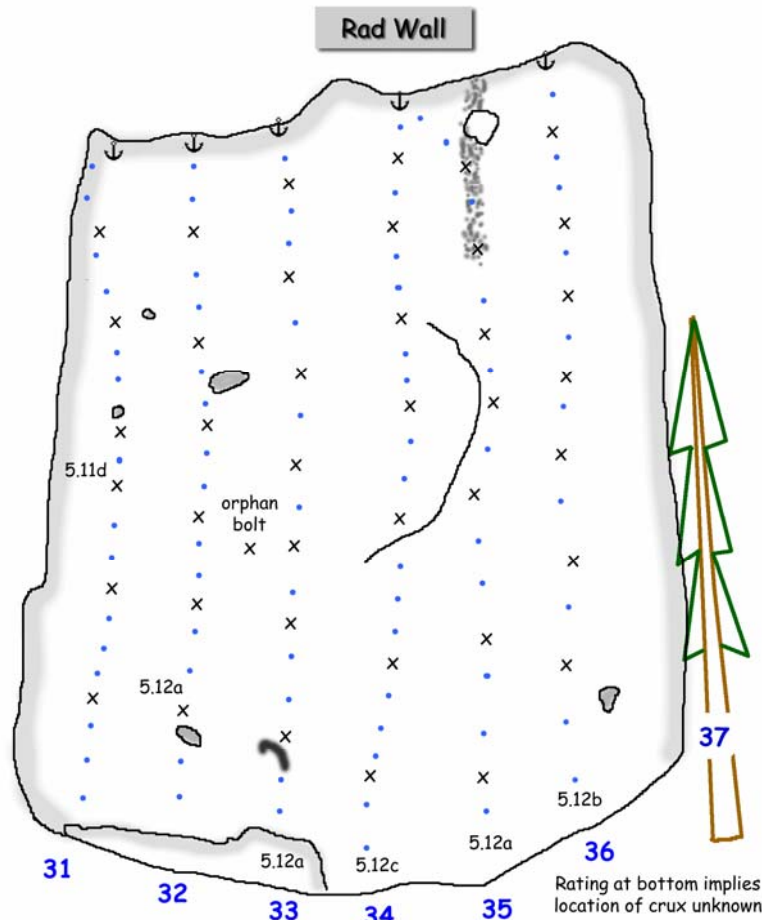


Schoolhouse Slab Good area for beginners and to watch dog fights. Faces south. Routes numbered L to R. No drawing.

| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|----|--------|---------------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|---|
| 28 | 7+ | <i>Cobb It</i> | 35' | 4 | ⚓ | Short, straight-up climb, good beginner lead. |
| 29 | 7+ | <i>Herby Goes Bananas</i> | 35' | 3 | ⚓ | Very similar to Cobb It. |

Rad Wall Highest major west-facing wall with long, overhanging, unrelenting physical routes. Routes numbered L to R. Drawing below.

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|--------------------------|-----|---|---|--|
| 31 | 11d | <i>Procrastination</i> | 50' | 6 | ⚓ | Nearest route to the left arête. Bring muscles. |
| 32 | 12a | <i>Bolting Barbie</i> | 50' | 6 | | Continuous pocket pulling. Crux move above 1 st bolt. |
| 33 | 12a | <i>Stroke Me</i> | 50' | 7 | | Original rating 11c/d, but consensus has it harder. |
| 34 | 12c | <i>Against All Cobbs</i> | 50' | 7 | | Reachy start, crux middle section, endurance finish. |
| 35 | 12a | <i>Crack Attack</i> | 50' | 9 | | In spite of the name, there is no crack climbing. |
| 36 | 12b | <i>Stoker</i> | 50' | 7 | | |
| 37 | 11c | <i>The Matrix</i> | 45' | 6 | | Around corner on SW arête. |
| 38 | 10c | <i>Resurrection</i> | 45' | 6 | ⚓ | Use 1st bolt of Rte. 37, then follow bolts right and up. A botched, abandoned project redone and finished in 2003. |



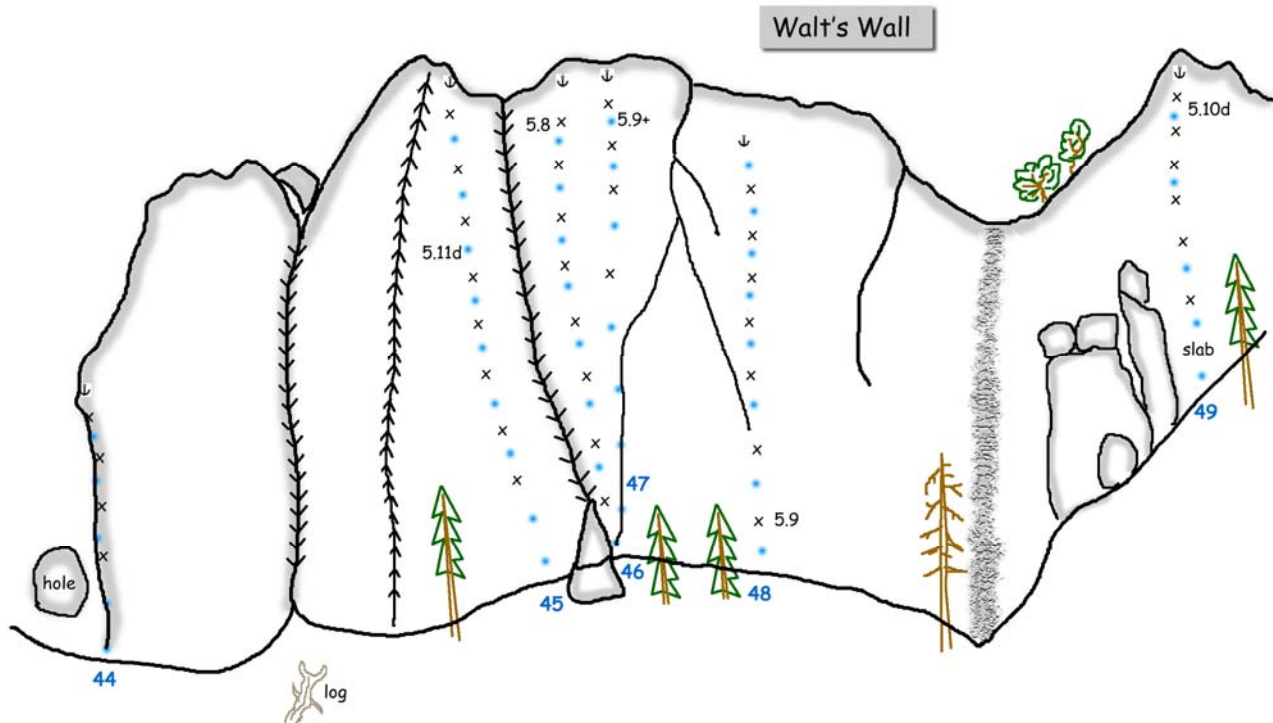
Gnar Wall The big block just left (N) of the Rad Wall. Routes numbered L to R (CCW). No drawing.

| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|----|--------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|--|
| 39 | 10b | <i>Balls to the Wall</i> | 40' | 5 | ⚓ | Leftmost route on west face. Rock looks manky, but is actually pretty solid. Fun steep climbing with good holds just where you want them. |
| 40 | 10c | <i>Blackballed</i> | 35' | 4 | ⚓ | Fun short route in the middle of the west face. Crux near top. |
| 41 | 9+ | <i>Crest Chewel</i> | 40' | 5 | ⚓ | Start on the right arete of the Gnar Wall. Easy climbing past 3 bolts, then move right to pull the overhang on good holds and continue to the shared anchor with "Tooth Fairy". The 3 rd bolt hanger spins, but the bolt is solid - no worries. |
| 42 | 10b | <i>Tooth Fairy</i> | 40' | 6 | ⚓ | In the usually shady "Route Canal" between Rad Wall and Gnar Wall. Turn bulge on the right, then back left to anchor. Note belay anchor bolt near ground on right wall. |
| 43 | 10c | <i>Look Ma, No Cavities</i> | 40' | 4 | ⚓ | The rightmost route in the Route Canal. Continuous "stand and deliver" climbing on small (for El Rito) holds. A relief from the pumpy routes. Note belay bolt on the corner of the rock behind you! |

Walt's Wall The major wall first on your left as you arrive at the area. Routes numbered L to R. Drawing below.

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|--------------------------|-----|---|---|---|
| 44 | ? | <i>unknown</i> | 25' | 4 | | Quite far to the north - look for cave. Short, severely overhanging route - looks very hard. |
| 45 | 11d | <i>Electric Pet Gri</i> | 70' | 8 | | Strang guide is not complimentary of this route, but FA party thought it was quite good. Someone wrote "Shit Pile" in chalk at the base once, if that's any clue. I haven't tried it. |
| 46 | 8 | <i>Walt's Wall Waltz</i> | 72' | 8 | ⚓ | The leftmost route on the main wall close to a large right-angled dihedral. Climb a 15' flake attached to the wall behind a big detached leaning boulder. Moderate climbing leads to a crux headwall. Excellent route, generously bolted. |

| | | | | | | |
|----|-----|--------------------------|-----|---|---|--|
| 47 | 9+ | <i>A Jap in the NBA</i> | 80' | 4 | | Almost never climbed, and not because of the crass name - you'll either need some gear (medium cam + small chocks), or face a 60' ground fall - the developers didn't bolt the lower half. Start up a black seam ~ 5' right of Walt's Wall Waltz, passing a horizontal crack at ~12'. Continue up easy rock with some opportunities for protection. The bolts on the upper half are poorly placed and of questionable quality, and there are large loose blocks. |
| 48 | 9 | <i>Bloodline</i> | 72' | 7 | ⚓ | Near the center of the main section of wall. A few moves of 5.9 to get to first bolt, then moderate (5.7-5.8) fun climbing. Consider stick-clipping first bolt if 5.9 is challenging! |
| 49 | 10d | <i>Drive-By Genocide</i> | 55' | 6 | ⚓ | High up the slope on the face of a tower section. Moderate climbing leads to a steep headwall finish. Good warmup. |



Beer Block Routes all around this enormous detached boulder, with no easy way to the top. Routes are numbered CCW from the SW corner. No drawing.

| # | rating | Name | Length (ft.) | Bolts | Clip Anchor | Comments |
|----|--------|--------------------------------|--------------|-------|-------------|--|
| 50 | 12a/b | <i>Whipper Wonderland</i> | 40' | 4 | | Straight up and over "the wave" to a big power move. A sequential testpiece. The jug at the top is positive, but very sharp - have plasma ready. |
| 51 | 13c/d | <i>The Thing</i> | 40' | 5 | | Up the steep "cave" and onto the wall just right of route 50. |
| 52 | 11c/d | <i>Texas Whine</i> | 45' | 7 | | In the dark depths of the gully. Homemade hangers, dirty, potential for hitting wall behind in leader fall. A big thumbs down for this route. |
| 53 | 11b | <i>Village Cobbler</i> | 40' | 5 | | Starts at the top of the gully. Original rating 11c. Excellent. |
| 54 | 12a | <i>It's Time to Drink Beer</i> | 40' | 4 | | Steep initial section to a difficult slab. |
| 55 | 12a | <i>Buddha's Beer Belly</i> | 40' | 4 | | |
| 56 | 12a/b | <i>Tecate Two-Step</i> | 40' | 3 | | Up the arête, then an overhanging corner. Excellent. |
| 57 | 13 | <i>B.Y.O.B.</i> | 40' | 4 | | Small holds, tough finish. |
| 58 | 12d | <i>To Beer or Not to Beer</i> | 40' | 4 | | Small holds and gastons. |
| 59 | 12b | <i>Little Kings</i> | 40' | 3 | | |

TICKLIST of routes sorted by difficulty (Routes with unknown ratings excepted.)

| ✓ | # | Rating | Name | Area | ✓ | # | Rating | Name | Area |
|---|----|--------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---|----|--------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| | 28 | 7+ | <i>Cobb It</i> | Schoolhouse | | 20 | 11a | <i>Cobbles & Robbers</i> | Ed-Woody |
| | 29 | 7+ | <i>Herby Goes Bananas</i> | Schoolhouse | | 3 | 11a | <i>Oxymorons</i> | Pirates |
| | 14 | 8 | <i>Cobzilla</i> | Balcony | | 11 | 11a | <i>Full Sail (over bulge)</i> | Super Slab |
| | 9 | 8 | <i>Super Arête</i> | Super Slab | | 8 | 11b | <i>Long John**</i> | Pirates' |
| | 48 | 9 | <i>Bloodline</i> | Walt's Wall | | 16 | 11b | <i>Jug-or-Naut</i> | Balcony |
| | 2 | 9 | <i>Scurvy Dog</i> | Pirates' | | 53 | 11b | <i>Village Cobbler</i> | Beer Block |
| | 13 | 9 | <i>Austin Powers, . . .</i> | Balcony | | 1v | 11b | <i>Pretty Face Variation</i> | Training Wall |
| | 10 | 9 | <i>Class Action</i> | Super Slab | | 5 | 11c | <i>Walking the Plank</i> | Pirates' |
| | 46 | 8 | <i>Walt's Wall Waltz</i> | Walt's Wall | | 23 | 11c | <i>Corn on the Cobble</i> | Big Pine |
| | 47 | 9+ | <i>Japs in the NBA</i> | Walt's Wall | | 37 | 11c | <i>The Matrix</i> | Rad Wall (SF) |
| | 41 | 9+ | <i>Crest Chewel</i> | Gnar Wall / Route Canal | | 52 | 11c/d | <i>Texas Whine</i> | Beer Block |
| | 15 | 9/10a | <i>Mister Bigglesworth</i> | Balcony | | 1 | 11d | <i>Just Another Pretty Face</i> | Training Wall |
| | 21 | 10a | <i>El Dorito</i> | Thimble | | 25 | 11d | <i>Peach Cobbler</i> | Big Pine |
| | 12 | 10a | <i>Boltaneer</i> | Super Slab | | 31 | 11d | <i>Procrastination</i> | Rad Wall |
| | 18 | 10a | <i>Gridlock</i> | Ed-Woody | | 45 | 11d | <i>Electric Pet Gri</i> | Walt's Wall |
| | 39 | 10b | <i>Balls to the Wall</i> | Gnar Wall | | 32 | 12a | <i>Bolting Barbie</i> | Rad Wall |
| | 11 | 10b | <i>Full Sail (bypass bulge)</i> | Super Slab | | 33 | 12a | <i>Stroke Me</i> | Rad Wall |
| | 42 | 10b | <i>Tooth Fairy</i> | Route Canal | | 35 | 12a | <i>Crack Attack</i> | Rad Wall |
| | 43 | 10b | <i>Look Ma, No Cavities</i> | Route Canal | | 54 | 12a | <i>It's Time to Drink Beer</i> | Beer Block |
| | 13 | 10c | <i>Oreo</i> | Super Slab | | 55 | 12a | <i>Buddha's Beer Belly</i> | Beer Block |
| | 40 | 10c | <i>Blackballed</i> | Gnar Wall | | 6 | 12a | <i>Pirated</i> | Pirates' |
| | 26 | 10c | <i>Apple Cobbler</i> | Big Pine | | 50 | 12a/b | <i>Whipper Wonderland</i> | Beer Block |
| | 38 | 10c | <i>Resurrection</i> | Rad Wall (SF) | | 56 | 12a/b | <i>Tecate Two Step</i> | Beer Block |
| | 7 | 10c | <i>Blackbeard</i> | Pirates' | | 59 | 12b | <i>Little Kings</i> | Beer Block |
| | 22 | 10d | <i>Cobble Wobble</i> | Big Pine | | 24 | 12b | <i>Pocket Rocket</i> | Big Pine |
| | 49 | 10d | <i>Drive-by Genocide</i> | Walt's Wall | | 36 | 12b | <i>Stoker</i> | Rad Wall |
| | 4 | 10d | <i>Captain Hook**</i> | Pirates' | | 34 | 12c | <i>Against all Cobbs</i> | Rad Wall |
| | 19 | 10d | <i>Redline</i> | Ed-Woody | | 58 | 12d | <i>To Beer or Not to Beer</i> | Beer Block |
| | | | | | | 57 | 13 | <i>B.Y.O.B.</i> | Beer Block |
| | | | | | | 51 | 13c/d | <i>The Thing</i> | Beer Block |

** I bestowed the double-asterisk names on routes that have gone unnamed in any printed reference for many years – if you know the correct name, please contact me!