



Despite appearances, this man is in Canada. Yes, Canada! Matt Maddeloni on an extension to *Velvet Elvis*, one of several unclimbed projects in the Amphitheatre, Horne Lake.

## Horne of plenty

Euro-quality limestone in beautiful British Columbia

By Andrew Boyd

Over the last few years rumors have been flying about a hot new limestone area in the dense evergreen forests of British Columbia. You may have seen some short reports in *Hot Flashes* and a few pictures here and there, but still no info, just little teasers. Well, before we get to the Beta, imagine this: You're 60 feet up from the second-pitch belay and starting to pump and sweat. Sketching through the thin layback crux, you reach up and grab a sinker

edge. You take a few deep breaths and look around: first above, where the black, horizontal, Lovers-Leap-like bands look good, but the bolts get farther and farther apart. Then below, past your belayer, down a 100-foot wall of smooth gray rock, and out across long pine-clad slopes to a lake, where you can just make out people swimming. Imagining yourself down there, floating in the cool, clear water, is like a massage for your mind; and when you snap out of your daydream

you realize you've been climbing the whole time. Grasping the positive edges of the last chert rockband, you clip the anchors of *The Body*. It is one of the best 5.11s you have climbed.



Horne Lake, a.k.a. "The Lake," lies about halfway up the east coast of Vancouver Island. It has 50 completed routes from one to four pitches on a cliff that is up to 200 feet tall and a third of a mile wide. Two more cliffs of equal size lie to the right of the main cliff and are still completely untouched. The new-route potential is mind-blowing — think 250 pitches on the main cliff and another 500 on the surrounding walls. The rock is compact limestone, reminiscent of Thailand with tufas, flowstone, and contrasting orange, white, and black streaks. Many routes feel hard for the grade until you learn to look for hidden holds on the highly featured rock.

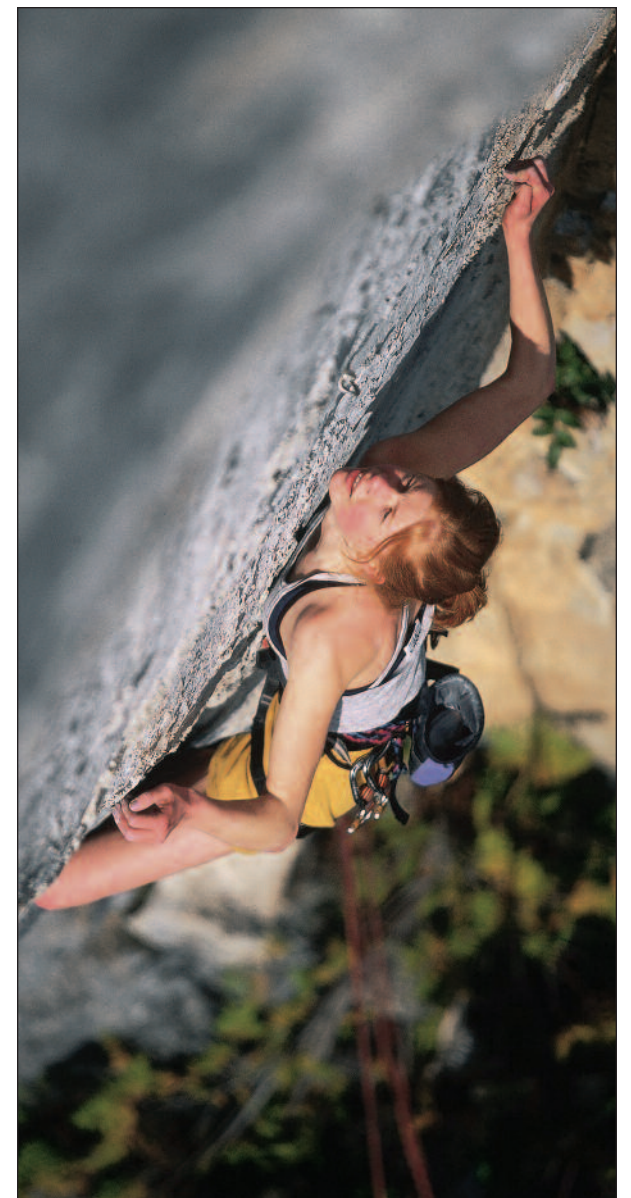
You will find stemming corners like *The Waterspout* and *Llama Lover*, both 5.11c; crimpy vertical faces like *Crispy Critter Corner* (5.12c) and *The Body* (5.11b); and monstrous jug hauls up way steep rock like *Save the Pushers* (5.13a) and *Globe Trotters* (5.13d). If you like sport climbing and can make the grade — most routes are 5.11 and up — you can chose from many styles of climbing and never got bored by repetitive moves at The Lake.

Until recently we had no idea that Vancouver Island had cliffs like this. Then, one cold, wet day in 1996, Mark Phillips and I stuffed ourselves into his little red Fiaro and headed out with only a vague tip and a map, searching for anything climbable. After numerous dead ends and disappointments, we finally came upon Horne Lake. Trees obscured our view and we couldn't find a trail heading up to the cliff, so we didn't realize the extent of our "discovery" until a steep bushwhack deposited us, jaws wide open, in a huge cave (the Amphitheatre) that forms the centerpiece of the crag. We then ran the entire length of the cliff, laughing and scoping lines and arguing over which ones we each wanted. The following days back at the Crag X gym in Victoria were rather comical. We had vowed to keep Horne Lake a secret, but it turned out that Kenneth Cronin and Nickoli Galadza had received a similar tip and "found" the cliff that same week. From their big grins and heavy hints, we knew they had stumbled upon something big, and vice versa, but since nobody was giving details it took us almost a month to realize our secrets were the same. My problem was that I had just found this dream cliff in my own backyard but was leaving in couple of weeks on a four-month road trip.

When I finally made it back to The Lake in July I imagined finding all the good lines done. To my relief, only a handful of routes had gone up, but everyone was still stoked. With a great eye for a line, Cronin had bolted a route on the Century Wall, a vertical to slightly overhanging face covered with flowstone and orange and black tufas. *Quarter-Century Girl* (5.12a), named after his fiancée's 25th birthday, starts up big tufas and then traverses underneath the prominent right-leaning roof to a tricky crux on hidden pockets and edges. Cronin and Galadza also climbed the fun layback crack of *Easter Sunday* (5.9) on the Easter long weekend. I got to work and added my first Horne Lake route, *The Waterspout* (5.11c): 60 feet of stemming and crimping up a silvery groove with distant but safe clips to make the insecure climbing even more exciting. It couldn't have been better.

The pace quickened over the following couple of years. Phillips went on a rampage and equipped many high-quality routes including the two-pitch *Body* (5.11b), *Bobby Lust* (5.11d), *Velvet Elvis* (5.12a), *Code of Honor* (5.12c), and everything on the Boss Wall. I put my two bits in with *Mr. Horney* (5.12c), the two-pitch *Crispy Critter Corner* (5.12c/d), *Moonraker* (5.12b), *Ahead by a Century* (5.13a), *Welcome to the White Zone* (5.13b), as well as the unusually technical Llama Ledge routes.

Still, in 1997, when Jean-Minh Trinh-Thieu arrived on a road trip from France, he was stunned by the lack of development. He quickly added the outstanding *Save the Pushers*, an 80-foot, 45-degree overhanging pumpathon (5.13a), as well as the area's hardest routes: *Globe Trotters* (5.13d), which weaves out a 40-foot horizontal roof to a crux of small underclings and crimps, and



Now, if only I could let go to clip ... Jerusha Miller on the technical *Llama Lover* (5.11c).

*Dinosaur Highway*. The latter — overhanging at least 50 feet in 100 — was the first 5.14a on Vancouver Island and the second overall in Canada (the first was *Pulse* in Cheakamus Canyon, B.C.). With these routes he changed the perception of The Lake from just another crag to that of an area with a huge amount of hard sport-route potential.

Speaking of which, I feel like I've been sitting in front of this computer long enough to last the whole summer. I've got projects to tick and they're not gonna get done if I don't go climbing. And why are you still sitting on your lump reading this thing, anyway? You should be on your way out the door with gear in hand, diving headfirst into a trip to Horne Lake!



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# The Lake's top 10

## Does this make you Horney?

*She Stole the Chert Off My Back* (5.10b), 7 bolts. Set away from the action of the Amphitheatre, this route gives lovely vertical climbing on little chert edges.

*Born To Run* (5.11a ), 7 bolts. Way up on the Boss Wall, this route sees less traffic than it deserves. Interesting climbing on perfect stone takes you through two roofs, with a tricky crux on the vertical section between.

*The Body* (5.10b, 5.11b), lots of bolts! This two-pitch route deserves every bit of traffic it gets. The second pitch is the blockbuster. Over a hundred feet of sporty, technical face climbing on amazing chert bands. Take two ropes to rap off.

*The Waterspout* (5.11c), 6 bolts. Wonderfully sustained stemming and funkiness up the vertical water groove on the Century Wall, just left of the stream. Said by some to be one of the best sport routes they have ever done!

*Llama Lover* (hard 5.11c), 5 bolts. Another thin, very technical stemming route up a white-streaked corner. The difficulties increase with height.

*Bobby Lust* (5.11d), 8 bolts. Steep and varied climbing up a corner/crack on the right edge of the Orange Wall. Mostly 5.10 to a short crux.

*Moonraker* (5.12b), 7 bolts. The easiest route that pulls the lip of the Amphitheatre. Incredibly varied with steep climbing on tufas, pockets, edges, and huge jugs. Seasonally wet, the route dries out from June onwards.

*Code of Honor* (5.12b/c), 7 bolts. One of the best routes in the Amphitheatre, although it doesn't pull the lip. Technical sidepulls and underclings lead to gigantic tosses between huge jugs. Deceptively steep and pumpy.

*(Jesus) Save the Pushers* (5.13a), 14 bolts. This route starts on *Plastic Jesus* but bypasses the anchors and fires straight up the fiercely overhanging wall above. There are no "hard" moves, but the pump will make you sick.

*Ahead by a Century* (hard 5.13a), 8 bolts. Just left of *The Waterspout* on the Century Wall, this route gives technical, sustained climbing on varied holds in a sensational position.

p61  
Marmot  
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## Horne Lake Logistics

**Getting there.** Horne Lake lies at the base of Mount Mark on the east side of Vancouver Island, about one hour north of Nanaimo and three hours north of Victoria. Unfortunately, you need to take a ferry to get from the mainland to the island. Ferries sail from Vancouver to Victoria and Nanaimo, or from Horseshoe Bay to Nanaimo. Your best bet is to take the ferry from Vancouver to Nanaimo, saving driving time. Either way you're looking at \$45 (Canadian) for a car and two people, each way.

From Victoria, drive north on Highway 1 towards Nanaimo (110 km, 70 miles). Don't go into the city center. Instead, take the Highway 19 (Inland Highway) exit. From the Nanaimo ferry, follow signs to the Inland Highway North. After about 50 kilometers (30 miles) on Highway 19, take a left at the lights onto Horne Lake Road. This road soon turns from paved to gravel and leads to a four-way stop. Turn right onto Horne Lake Caves Road and follow it for 7.5 kilometers (4.7 miles) — if you pass a large boulder overhanging the road, you've gone too far. The trailhead is on the right at a steep pull-out. Do not park here. Instead, check with the Horne Lake Adventure Camp 0.5 kilometers (500 yards) further down the road and park here if there is room. If not, ask at the Adventure Camp for alternatives. Walk or shuttle to the trail. The cliffs are a strenuous 15-minute hike from here.

If you are flying in, you can avoid the cost of the ferry by landing on the island at Victoria Airport and renting a car for the drive to The Lake.

**Seasons.** The best time to visit Horne Lake is between June and October. This period generally has the best weather and least chance of seepage. Nevertheless, winter temperatures are mild and climbing is possible year round; it is not unheard of for people to be climbing headwall routes in T-shirts in December and January. The cliff is south-facing so it gets a good dose of sunshine and routes dry out quickly after showers. Unfortunately, seepage can be a problem on the steep cave routes from November to May. For weather updates check out reports for central Vancouver Island and/or Victoria, or try the Environment Canada website ([www.environmentcanada.com](http://www.environmentcanada.com)).

**Accommodations.** This is a major concern for locals. Camping is not permitted at the cliffs or the trailhead. The closest campground is the Qualicum Bay Resort (250-757-2003) in the town of Qualicum, 20 minutes east of the Lake. There is some talk of walk-in teepee camping for climbers at the Adventure Camp, but there is nothing right now; phone 250-248-7829 for details or check out the Adventure Camp's website at [www.hornelake.com](http://www.hornelake.com). The towns of Qualicum and Parksville (off the Inland Highway, 30 minutes southeast of The Lake) have several inns and motels and a few nice campgrounds.

**Eats and treats.** Qualicum and Parksville have grocery stores. The surrounding area has numerous pubs and cafes. For an evening out, I recommend Sushi Ichi in Parksville or the Black Bear Pub in Nanaimo. You can buy candy bars and pop from a small concession at the Adventure Camp, which also has a nice café with take-out sandwiches, soups, wraps, coffee, etc.

**Access and ethics.** Horne Lake is situated on logging-company land. So far, access to the cliffs has not been a problem, and hopefully will not be, as long as climbers act responsibly. The Access Fund and local climbers are working with local residents and Texada Logging to create long-term access plans for the area. Given this situation, and to avoid confrontation with local climbers, please make certain you obey the following rules:

- Park at the Adventure Camp and walk to the trailhead.
- Do not drive up the steep logging road to save five minutes' walking.
- Fires are strictly forbidden.
- Walk only on existing trails; the hillside is steep and erodes quickly.
- Don't leave trash.
- Don't cut down trees. If you're eyeing a route behind a tree, find another one of the hundreds around.
- No chipping and drilling. If a route is found to have "unnatural" holds, it will be chopped.
- Stay off red-tagged routes. If you want to climb a new route, bolt your own.

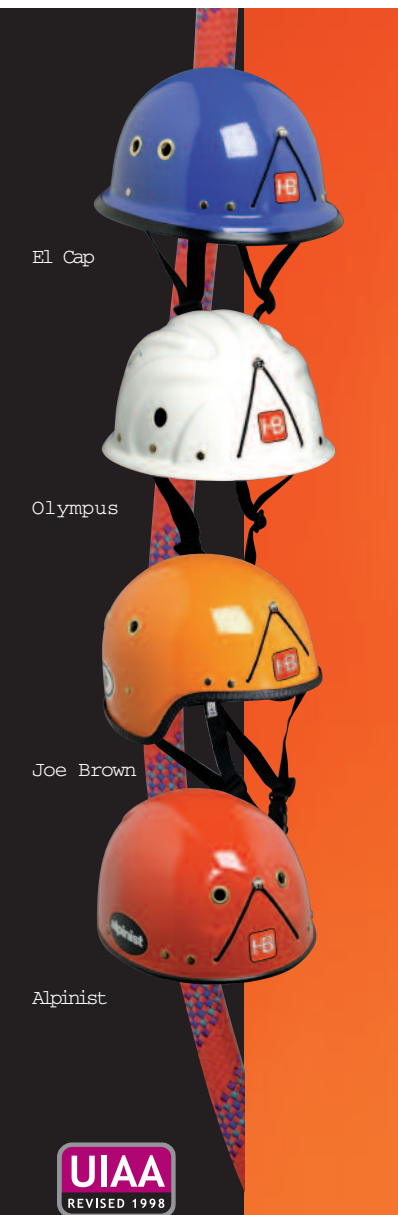
The Horne Lake guidebook has a more comprehensive ethics section as well as some guidelines for new routing.

(continued on page 64)



AARON BLACK

Andrew Boyd working a project in the Amphitheatre.



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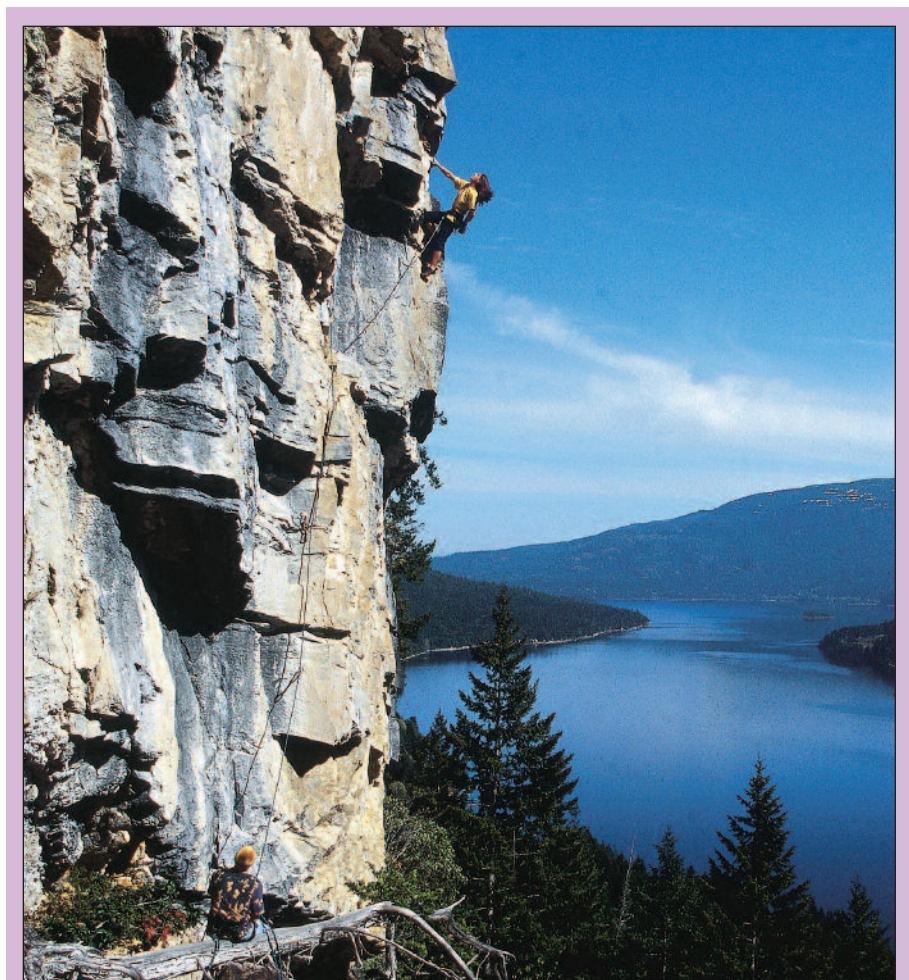
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Matt Maddeloni takes the scenic route on a recently established 5.10a on the Boss Wall.

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(continued from page 62)

**Climbing gyms and shops.** Vancouver Island has two excellent climbing gyms. In Victoria, check out Crag X Indoor Climbing Center, 341 John Street, 250-383-4628. In Nanaimo, try The Romper Room, 4385-b Boban Drive, 250-751-7625 ([www.island.net/~romperrrm/](http://www.island.net/~romperrrm/)). You can get a limited selection of climbing gear at The Romper Room as well as the Valhalla Pure Outfitters in Nanaimo. Victoria has numerous climbing shops, including Robinson's Sporting Goods (888-317-0033), Juene Brothers Great Outdoor Store (250-386-8778), and Valhalla Pure Outfitters (250-360-2181).

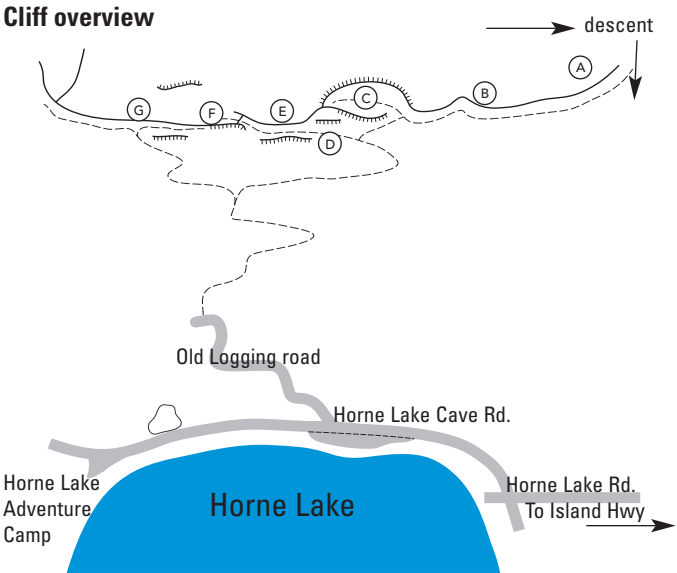
**Rest days.** Take a guided tour of Horne Lake's spectacular caves. Fish or swim in the lake. Bring your mountain bike for high-quality riding, especially around Nanaimo and Hornby Island. For a change of pace, head into Parksville for 18 holes of mini-

golf on a pretty cool course. My favorite rest-day activity is go-carting. I know of two tracks: one on the highway about 25 kilometers north of Nanaimo and another one right in Nanaimo.

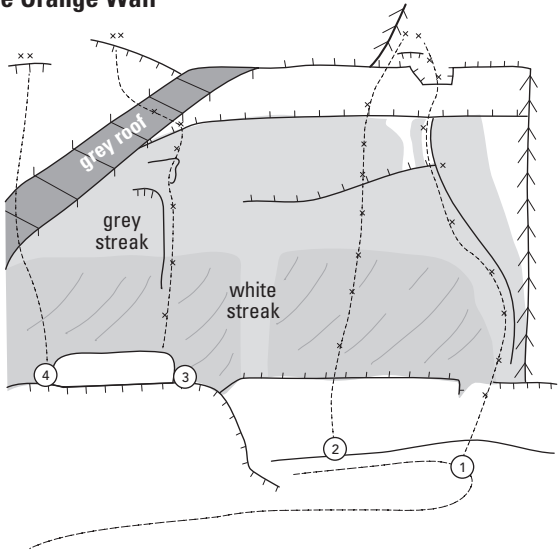
**Gear and guides.** On 90 percent of the routes a rack of up to 15 draws and a single 50-meter rope will do, although a 60-meter rope is handy for lowering off the longer routes in the Amphitheatre. Some routes in the Amphitheatre require a number of long draws to reduce rope drag. If you're coming to The Lake for the trad or longer routes, a helmet and second rope is useful. All descents from the top of the cliff should be by way of the trail dropping down the gully on the right. Rappels off the top are not recommended due to loose rock. An inexpensive guide, *Climbers Guide to Horne Lake* by Andrew Boyd, is available from The Romper Room in Nanaimo; all proceeds go to the bolt fund.

p.65  
Climbing Magazine  
Calandar Books Promo  
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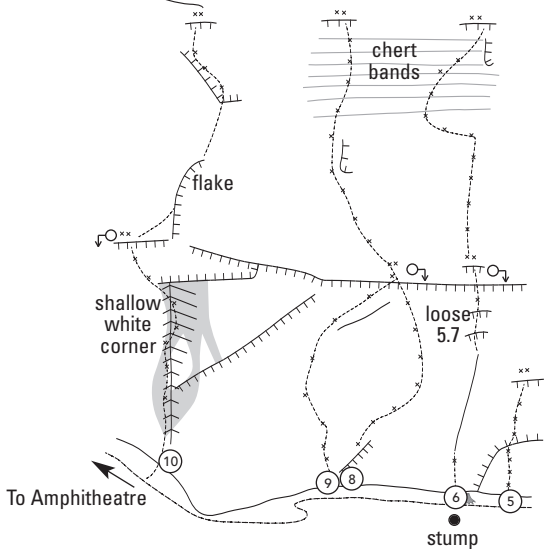
Horne Lake mini-guide



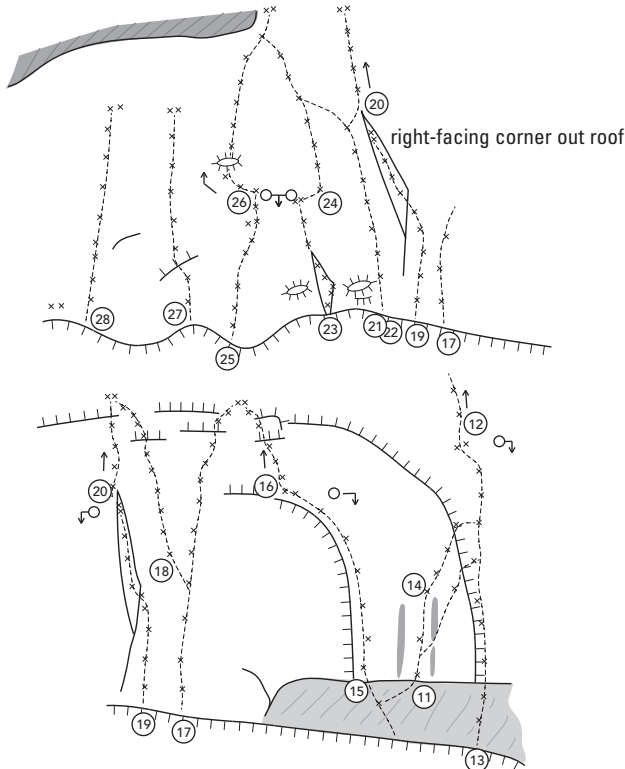
**A. The Orange Wall**



**B. Stage Right**



**C. Amphitheatre — Left**



**C. Amphitheatre — Right**

**A. The Orange Wall**

- 1. *Bobby Lust* \*\* (5.11d)
- 2. *The Sex Files* Project
- 3. *Mr. Horney* \* (5.12c/d)
- 4. *Freak Magnet* Project

**B. Stage Right**

- 5. *Jingo* (aka *Choss Cave*) (5.12a)
- 6. *Air Club For Men* \* (5.10a, 5.10c)
- 7. *Throw the Captain Overboard* Project
- 8. *Isa's Eyes* (5.10a)
- 9. *The Body* \*\*\* (5.10b, 5.11b)
- 10. *Crispy Critter Corner* \*\* (5.12c/d, 5.11b)

**C. The Amphitheatre**

- 11. *Moonraker* \*\*\* (5.12b)
- 12. *License to Kill* Project
- 13. *Unnamed* (var.) (5.12b)
- 14. *Subdivisions* (var.) \* 5.12c/d
- 15. *You Enjoy Myself* \* (5.11a)
- 16. *Unnamed* Project
- 17. *Globe Trotters* \*\* (5.13d)
- 18. *Unnamed* Project
- 19. *Velvet Elvis* \*\* (5.12a)
- 20. *Unnamed* Project
- 21. *I'm the Pusher* Project
- 22. *Don't Preach to Me* Project
- 23. *Plastic Jesus* (5.12b) \*\*
- 24. *(Jesus) Save the Pushers* \*\*\* (5.13a)
- 25. *Wart Hog* (5.12a\ b) \*
- 26. *Dinosaur Highway* \* (5.14a)
- 27. *Unnamed* Project
- 28. *Code of Honor* \*\*\* (5.12c)

**D. The Century Wall**

- 29. *The Waterspout* \*\*\* (5.11c)
- 30. *Slippery When Wet* (5.11b)
- 31. *Unnamed* 5.12a
- 32. *Quarter-Century Girl* \*\* (5.12a)
- 33. *Ahead by a Century* \*\*\* (5.13a, stiff)
- 34. *Welcome to the White Zone* \*\* (5.13b)

**E. The Llama Ledge**

- 35. *Drinking with the Dahli Llama* \* (5.11d)
- 36. *Llama Lover* \*\*\* (5.11c, stiff)
- 37. *Mexican Moon* (5.10c)
- 38. *The Laughing Llama* \*\* (5.12a\ b)
- 39. *Barely Crankin'* (5.7)

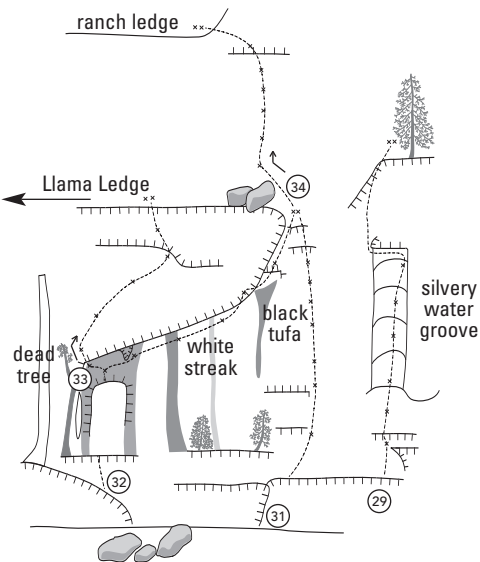
**F. Easter Egg Wall**

- 40. *Unnamed* Project
- 41. *Easter Sunday* \* (5.9)
- 42. *UIAA Approved* (5.11a, X)
- 43. *She Stole the Chert Off My Back* \* (5.10b)
- 44. *Dusty's Route* (5.8)
- 45. *Unnamed* (5.10a)

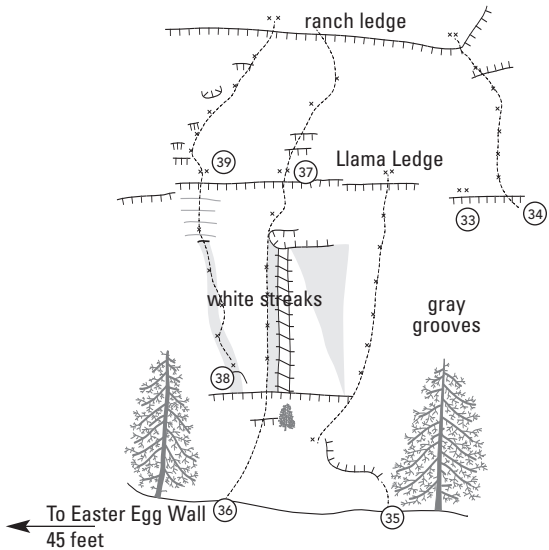
**G. The Boss Wall**

- 46. *Glory Days* (5.10c)
- 47. *Born in the USA* \* (5.10c)
- 48. *Secret Garden* \*\* (5.11a)
- 49. *Brilliant Disguise* (5.12a)
- 50. *Beat Me Up, Scotty* Project
- 51. *Born To Run* \*\*\* (5.11a)

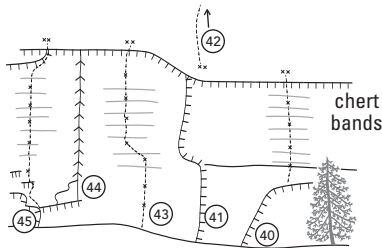
**D. The Century Wall**



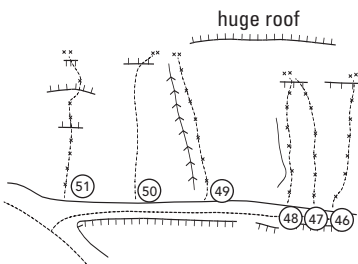
**E. Llama Ledge Routes**



**F. Easter Egg Wall**



**G. Boss Wall**



Manastash  
4C - 1/3 vert. FPO