

# A Climbers' Guide to the El Rito Sport Crag

New Mexico

By Gary Clark

Maintained by Jason Halladay - Version 09/27/2017

## 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, <http://tinyurl.com/5odxa8>, 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.)

### WHAT'S NEW!?

**(September 2017)** Five new routes on the Pirate's Wall has really packed this long overlooked wall with some fun new lines. Of these, Pirates of the Carabiner (5.9) has the promise of a classic route.

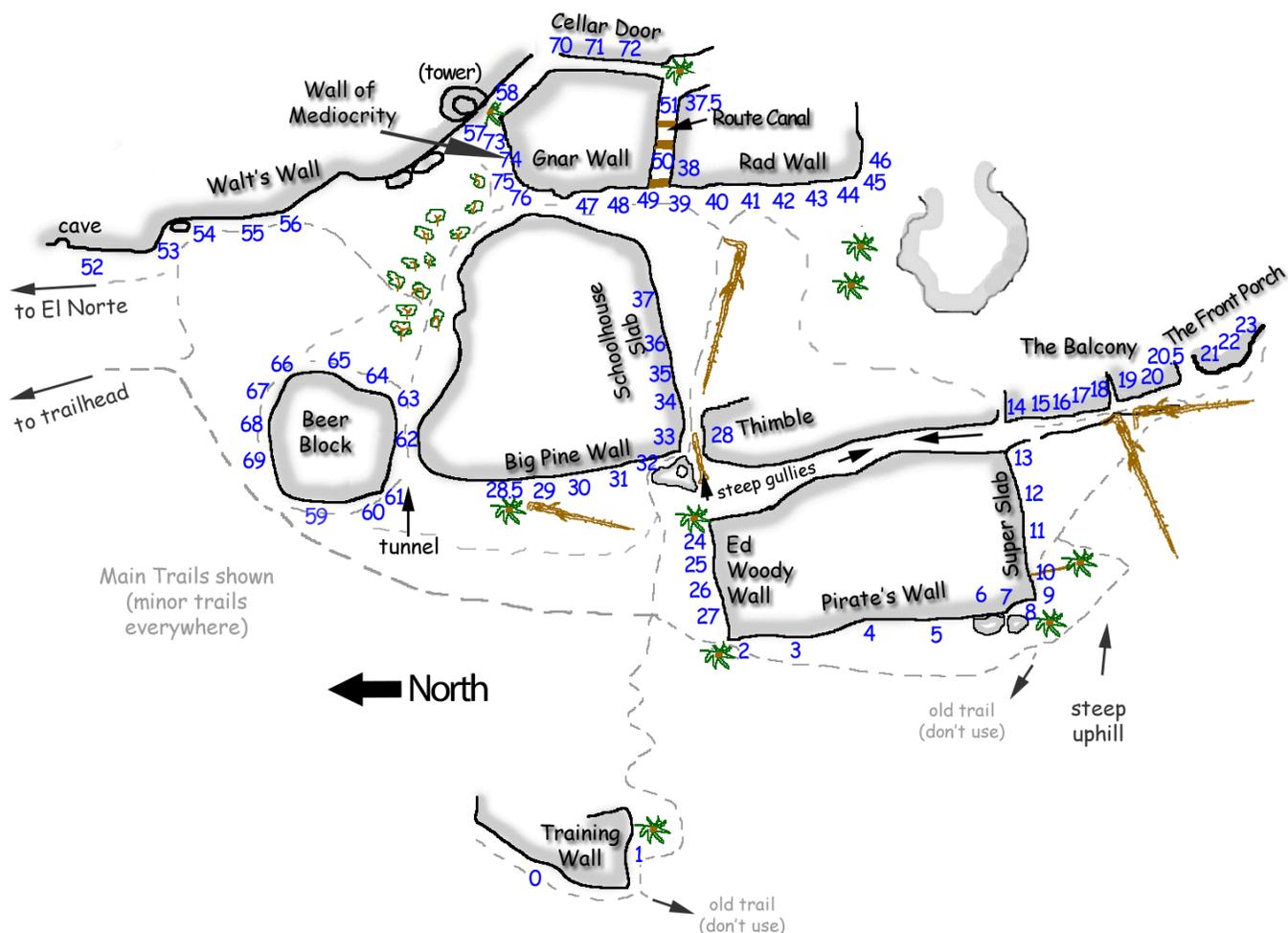
**(July 2017)** Squeeze my Cobbles (5.11b) on Big Pine Wall is an excellent new 5.11. Helical Tusk (5.9) on Gnar Wall. The Wall of Mediocrity is an entirely new area with four lines on the northwest side of the Gnar Wall block. These new routes are dirty and need traffic but the rock is good and makes for a good area to escape the crowds.

**(November 2014)** Cobble Sutra (5.10a) on Big Pine Wall, Green Chile Two Step (5.7) on north side of Rad Wall, Prima Donna (5.9) on Walt's Wall, Nine Lives (5.11a) on the Balcony. The Cellar Door area has three routes.

**(September 2009)** Added hyperlinks to each route's corresponding MountainProject.com route page. Clicking these links will get you to the latest information about each route as well as additional route information. Added a "consensus" column for routes as many routes are now generally considered easier than originally rated. The consensus is from the route's page on MountainProject.com. Also, new routes have been added to the Balcony and the Route Canal area. I've given these routes letter sub-denotations instead messing with the main route numbering. See table below for new routes.

**(June 2008)** Since the last revision of this guide in May 2006, one new wall and a total of twelve new routes have been established. The Front Porch is a new wall developed in 2006 by Vaino Kodas that boasts three 5.11 routes. Vaino also established a number of routes on other walls

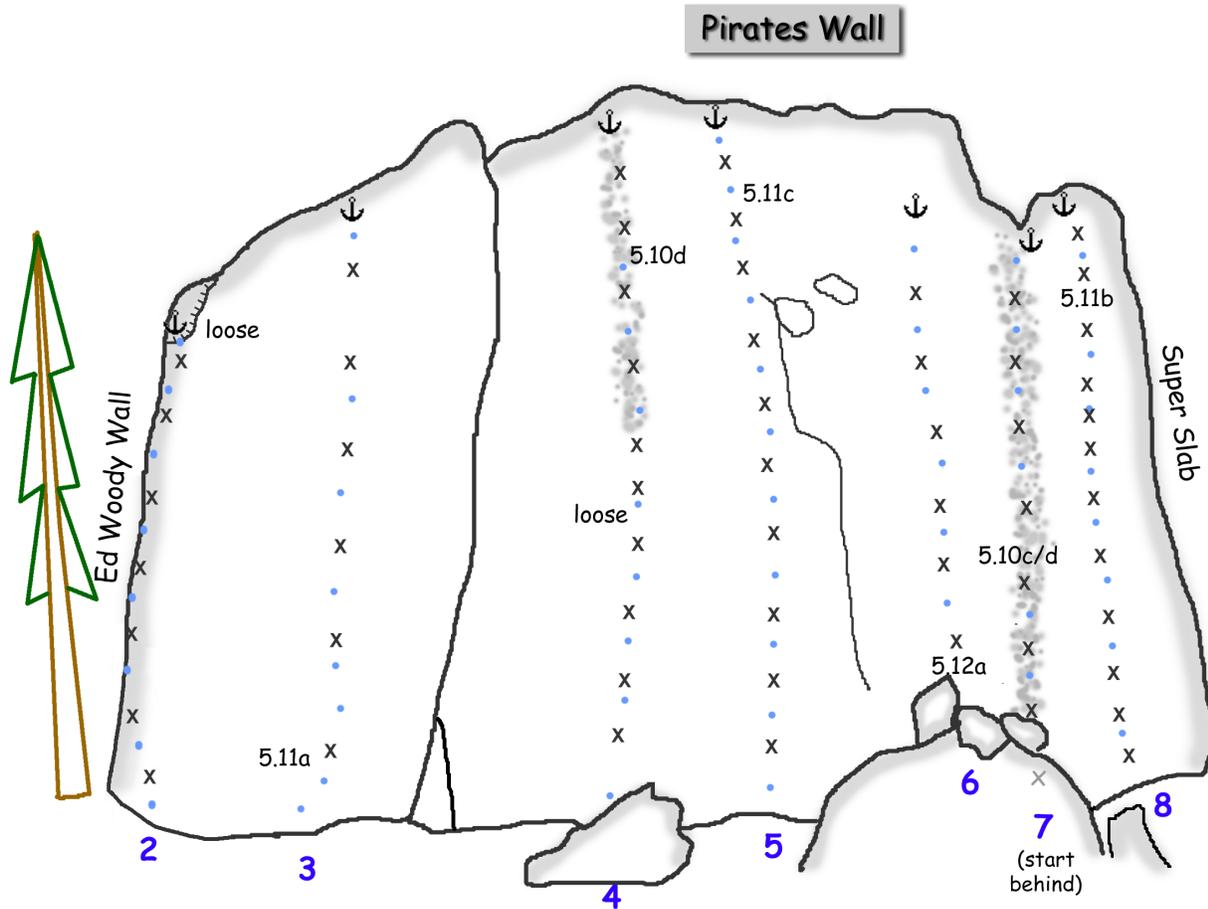
## El Rito Sport Crags - Map



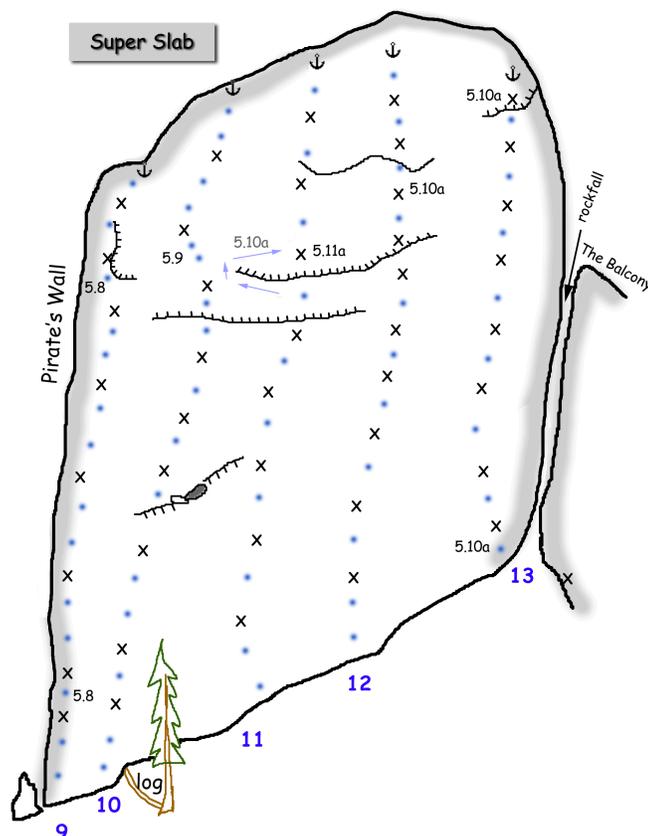
Training Wall		A small block of rock down hill of the Ed Woody Wall. Routes L to R. No drawing.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
0	12b	12b	<a href="#">Grits</a>	20'	2	Very short, very steep route on the west face with small holds.
1	11d	11d	<a href="#">Just Another Pretty Face</a>	30'	3	Steep strenuous route on south face. The left line of bolts.
1v	11b	10d	<a href="#">Pretty Face Variation</a>	30'	3	Start as for JAPF but clip separate bolts on a more natural line of holds to the right. Come back left at top to shared anchor. Short route with great moves.

Pirates Wall		West Face of first major formation. Routes numbered from left to right. See drawing below.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
2	9	9-	<a href="#">Scurvy Dog</a>	60'	7	Tricky start 6' right of arete on face. Go to arête, then follow closely-spaced bolts to overhang, which is easier than it looks.
2.1	5.10a	-	<a href="#">Clast Away</a>	50'	7	Start just right of where most people start up Scurvy Dog and go straight up. A perfect two-finger pocket near the second bolt initiates the steeper climbing. Pull a tricky move past the third bolt and cruise the easier climbing on the left edge of the massive flake. Finish on steeper terrain with great pockets.
2.2	5.10b	-	<a href="#">Cobbles and Crossbones</a>	60'	9	Climb vertical rock and pull the bulge/roof on an amazing large cobble. Climb easier ground to a stance on a ledge on the massive flake. Steep climbing up the black streak. Watch the ledge fall potential going to the anchors.
2.3	5.9	-	<a href="#">Pirates of the Carabiner</a>	65'	8	Head up just left of the water groove/crack/channel for two bolts. Cross into the groove on good pockets for two more bolts and a less steep middle section. Climb steeper rock on some great cobbles and smaller three-finger pockets to a tricky section just below and to the anchors.
3	11a	11a	<a href="#">Oxymorons</a>	75'	6	Crux at start, much easier higher. Good route, sophomoric original name.
3.5	10b	-	<a href="#">Shiver Me Cobbles</a>	80'	10	Steep start to easy but loose/dirty middle section. Finish on super fun steep section.
4	10d	10+	<a href="#">Trick or Treat (a.k.a Captain Hook)</a>	80'	10	A lengthy, enjoyable route. Some bolts up high could use replacing. Crux section at top.
5	11c	11b/c	<a href="#">Walking the Plank (a.k.a. The Buzz)</a>	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!
5.5	11c	-	<a href="#">Terror on the High [Eleven] Sea</a>	75'	12	Increasingly steeper climbing to pumpy upper section. Fixed cable draws facilitates cleaning.
6	12a	12a	<a href="#">Pirated</a>	70'	6	Start atop boulders. Difficult clip at the anchors.

7	10c	10+	<u>Blackbeard</u>	80'	8	Area classic. Start behind boulders in narrow slot. Can bypass 10d crux above 3rd bolt to the right (10c). Caution - potential for leader to hit pillar behind in fall low on route!
8	11b	11a/b	<u>Booty (a.k.a. Long John)</u>	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		Tallest face at area, with high quality moderate routes. Faces south. Routes numbered from left to right. See drawing below.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
9	8	8	<a href="#">Super Arete</a>	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	9	<a href="#">Clast Action</a>	80'	10	Starts 10' right of the arête. Excellent, popular route.
11	11a/ 10b	10+	<a href="#">Full Sail</a>	90'	9	Straight up at bulge is 5.11a. Traverse left is 5.10b. 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	10a	<a href="#">Boltaneer</a>	85'	10	Area classic. Note length - you can do it with a 50m rope if you pay close attention. Excellent.
13	10a	10b	<a href="#">Oreo</a>	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.

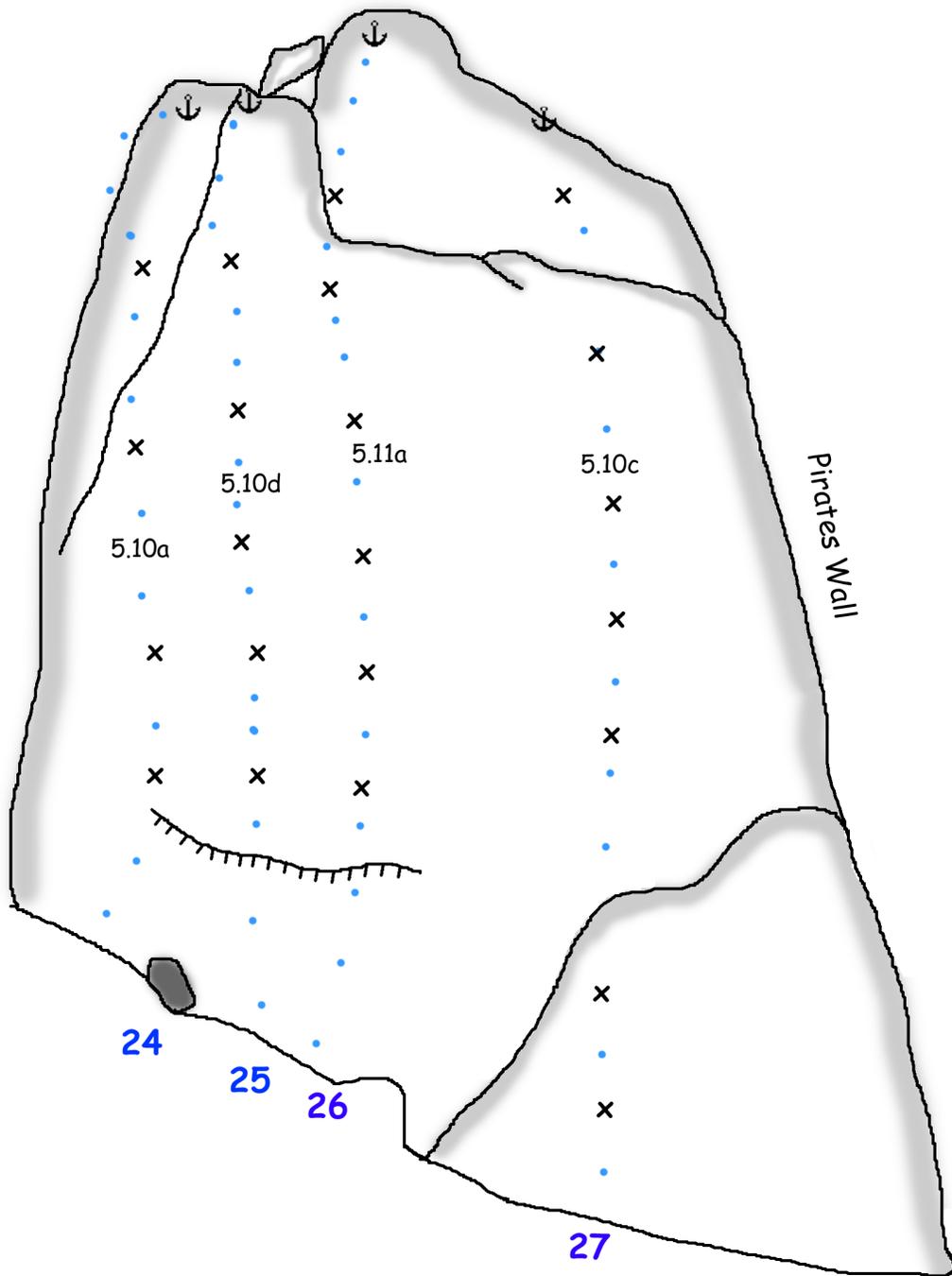


The Balcony		The faces above and right of Super Slab, facing west. Routes numbered L to R.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
14	10b/c	10b	<a href="#"><u>Dr. Evil</u></a>	35'	6	A fun line up slightly overhanging rock. Use belay bolt and be careful not to kick rocks down chute.
14a	10b	10b	<a href="#"><u>Evil Medical School</u></a>	40'	7	Angle up and right moving past a crux bulge to easier climbing above.
14b	9	9-	<a href="#"><u>Angry Sea Bass</u></a>	40'	6	Climb past one bolt to a big ledge. Follow pockets of varying size to the top.
14c	9	9+	<a href="#"><u>Sharks With Friggin' Laser Beams</u></a>	40'	8	Climb past two bolts to a ledge. Sustained climbing above to the anchor.
15	9	9	<a href="#"><u>Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery</u></a>	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.
16	8	8+	<a href="#"><u>Cobzilla</u></a>	40'	5	Similar to 15 but more consistent difficulty. Easiest if you trend right above the first bolt.
16a	10a	10a	<a href="#"><u>Chupacobler</u></a>	40'	7	Climb up a green streak on good rock
17	10a	10a	<a href="#"><u>Mr. Bigglesworth</u></a>	40'	4	Similar to 16. Perhaps 10a for short people. Hardware is sub-par on this route. Spinners!
18	8	9-	<a href="#"><u>Mini Me</u></a>	40'	7	Climbs big, positive cobbles. Well protected.
19	11b/c	11a	<a href="#"><u>Rodent Outhouse</u></a>	40'	7	Right of big gash in wall. Small pockets to a big ledge, then bigger jugs to the finish.
20	11b	11b	<a href="#"><u>Jug-or-Naut</u></a>	40'	5	Rightmost route on the Balcony - steep jugs, 1st half hardest, good physical route.
20.5	11	11a	<a href="#"><u>Nine Lives</u></a>	40'	7	Big Holds, Big Moves.

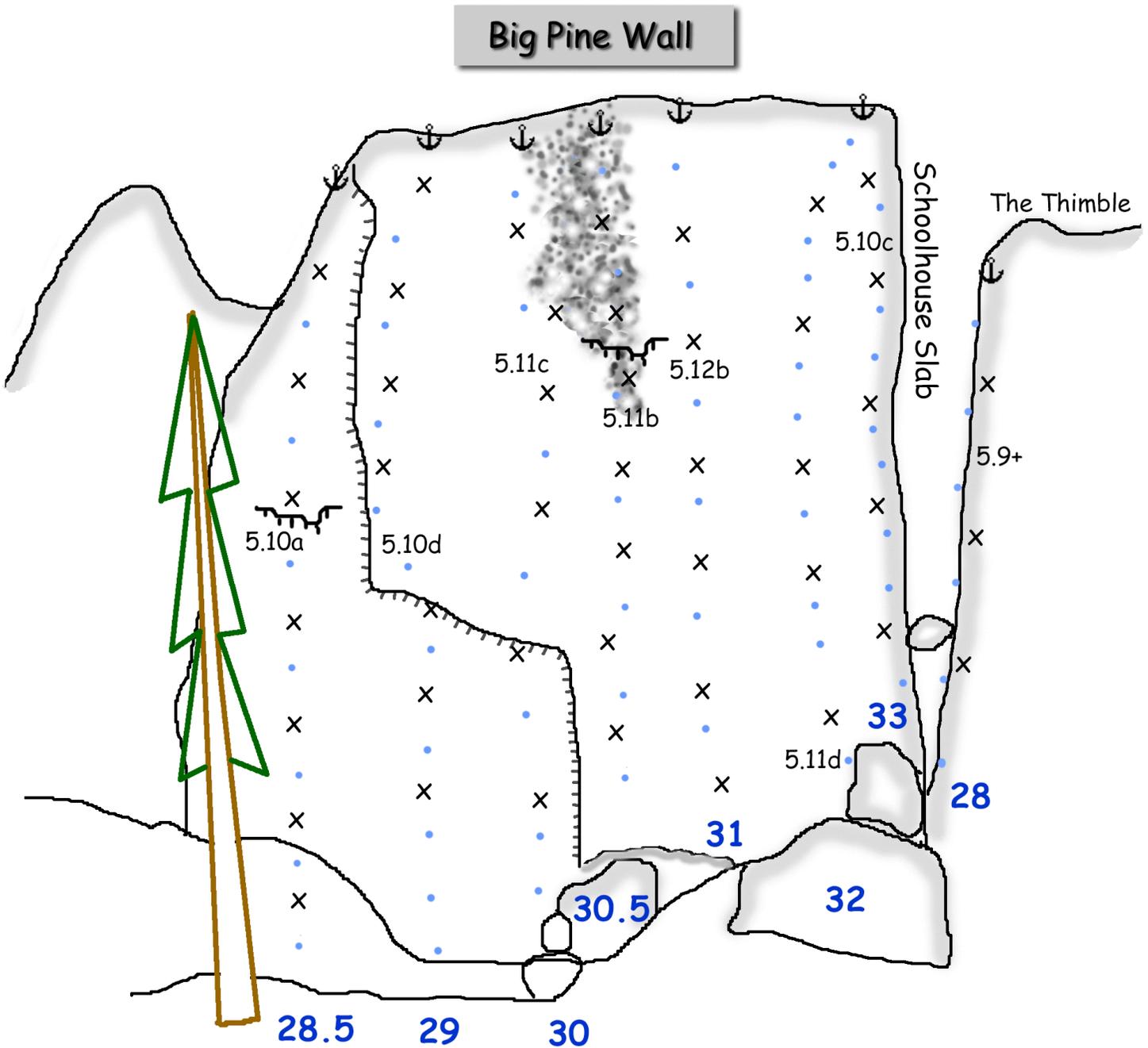
The Front Porch		The small wall about 30' south of the Balcony. Routes numbered L to R. No picture.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
21	11c	11+	<a href="#">Into the Gayle</a>	45'	6	A left to right traversing route with tricky sequencing.
22	11c	11c	<a href="#">El Farolito</a>	40'	4	Route up the middle of the wall with increasingly steepening rock and a high crux.
23	11c/d	11c/d	<a href="#">Tree Swing</a>	40'	6	Trends left following a leftward ascending seam/corner through sequency moves to steep jugs above. Fun!

The Ed-Woody		North facing, slightly overhanging wall on same rock as Super Slab & Pirates Wall. Routes numbered from left to right.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
24	10a	10	<a href="#">Gridlock</a>	35'	4	10a only if you go to the arête above the final bolt. Direct finishis much harder. Not a great route because of this unnatural finish that sandbags many climbers.
25	10d	10d	<a href="#">Redline</a>	40'	5	Steep pockets, doesn't let up. Excellent.
26	11a	11a	<a href="#">Cobbles and Robbers</a>	55'	6	Steep pockets to easier finish. Another excellent route just a bit harder than Redline.
27	10b/c	10	<a href="#">Len's Take</a>	60'	7	The right-most route of the now four routes on the Ed Woody wall. clip two bolts to a big ledge. Ever steepening moves above.

# The Ed-Woody



The Thimble		Small formation forming the right side of the tunnel through to the upper area at top of log. Faces north.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
28	10a	10a	<a href="#">El Dorito</a>	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.

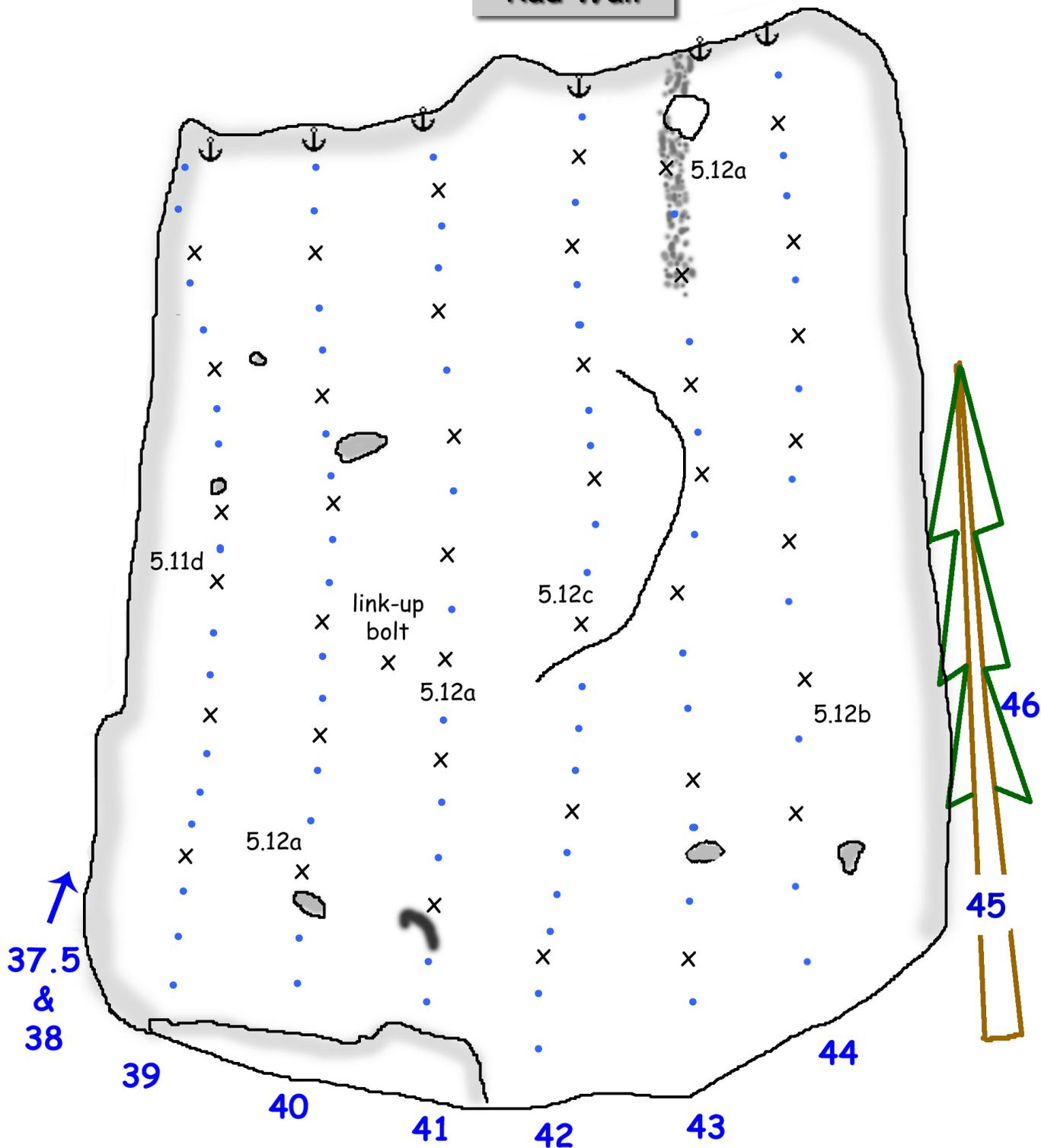


Big Pine Wall			The west-facing major wall at mid-height on the slope. Popular, quality climbs. Routes numbered from L to R. Drawing below.			
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
28.5	10a	10a	<a href="#">Cobble Sutra</a>	52'	7	Nice pockets with crux at mid-height bulge
29	10d	10c	<a href="#">Cobble Wobble</a>	55'	4	Area classic. Steep cobble pulling. Great!
30	11c	11b	<a href="#">Corn on the Cobble</a>	50'	7	Lower half easy, crux moves quite stiff, then lets up a little. Used to veer right at end but as of 2017 has new anchor straight up.
30.5	11b	11b	<a href="#">Squeeze My Cobbles</a>	50'	8	Nuevo classico! Steep climbing on great holds up the black streak. Start from ground on easy flake or from left edge of higher ledge.
31	12b	12a/b	<a href="#">Pocket Rocket</a>	50'	5	Start between rocks at base of face.
32	11d	11+	<a href="#">Peach Cobbler</a>	50'	5	Tough pocket pulling on unrelenting face. Exc. Route.
33	10c	10a	<a href="#">Apple Cobbler</a>	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 32.

Schoolhouse Slab			Good area for beginners and to watch dog fights. Faces south. Routes L to R.			
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
34	7	7+	<a href="#">Cobb It</a>	35'	4	Short, straight-up climb, not much to get excited about.
35	7	7	<a href="#">Que? (former TR-only route)</a>	35'	5	A former TR route with lead bolts added in 2008. Enjoyable.
36	7	7	<a href="#">Herby Goes Bananas</a>	35'	3	Another route in the same vein as Cobb It.
37	7+	7+	<a href="#">Short Bus</a>	35'	5	Right-most route. Well protected and fun.

Rad Wall		Highest major west-facing wall with long, steep, unrelenting physical routes. Routes L to R.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
37.5	7	7	<a href="#">Green Chile Two Step</a>	50'	5	Left of "Slacker Ken" on really good, green rock.
38	9	9	<a href="#">Slacker Ken</a>	50'	5	Around the corner to the left of the main wall. Faces north. Nice exposure and fun climbing.
39	12a	11d	<a href="#">Procrastination</a>	50'	6	Left most route on main, steep face. Near arete. Bring muscles.
39a	12b/c		The Traverse	70'	7	Left to right upward traverse of Rad Wall. Start on Procrastination and work right clipping the "link-up bolt" and finish at the anchors for Stoker.
40	12a	11d	<a href="#">Bolting Barbie</a>	50'	6	Continuous pocket pulling. Crux move above 1st bolt.
41	12a	12a	<a href="#">Stroke Me</a>	50'	7	Original rating 11c/d, but consensus has it harder.
42	12c	12c	<a href="#">Against All Cobbs</a>	55'	7	Reachy start, crux middle section, endurance finish.
43	12a	12a	<a href="#">Crack Attack</a>	55'	9	In spite of the name, there is no crack climbing.
44	12b	12b	<a href="#">Stoker</a>	50'	7	Right most route on main face. Crux going to third bolt on big cobble with tiny crimp. Then try to hang on to the anchors.
45	11c	11c	<a href="#">The Matrix</a>	45'	6	Around corner on SW arete.
46	10c	10c	<a href="#">Resurrection</a>	45'	6	Use 1st bolt of Rte. 45, then follow bolts right and up. A botched, abandoned project redone and finished June '03.

# Rad Wall

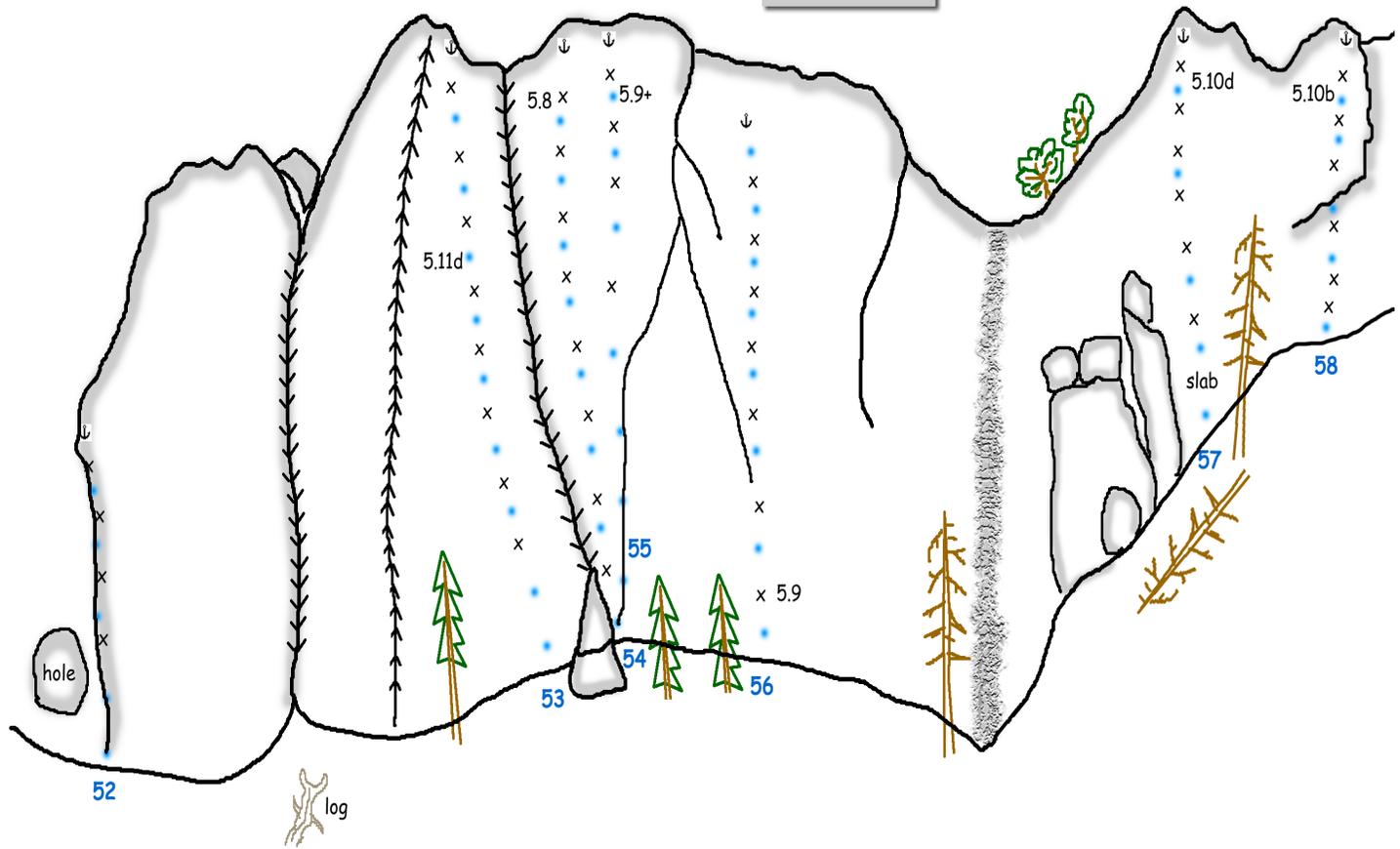


Gnar Wall			The big block just left (N) of the Rad Wall. Routes numbered L to R (CCW). No drawing.			
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
47	10b	10b	<a href="#">Balls to the Wall</a>	35'	5	Leftmost route on west face. Rock looks manky, but is actually pretty solid. Fun steep climbing with good holds just where you want them.
48	10c	10b/c	<a href="#">Blackballed</a>	35'	4	Fun short route in the middle of the west face. Crux near top.
48.5	5.9	5.9	<a href="#">Helical Tusk</a>	35'	6	Pumpy, well-protected climbing up small corner. Crux exiting small corner. A great first 5.9 lead in the area.
49	9	9	<a href="#">Crest Chewel</a>	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 3rd bolt hanger spins, but the bolt is solid - no worries.
50	10b	10b	<a href="#">Tooth Fairy</a>	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.
51	10c	10c	<a href="#">Look Ma, No Cavities</a>	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.			
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
52	12d		Unknown/Unfinished?	25'	4	Quite far to the north - look for cave. Short, severely overhanging route - looks very hard.
52.5	9	9	<a href="#">Prima Donna</a>	68'	10	Face climbing on good holds to a steeper finish. Watch for rope drag.

53	11d	11d	<a href="#">Electric Pet Gri</a>	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. Loose in the middle.
54	8	8-	<a href="#">Walt's Wall Waltz</a>	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. Popular warmup.
55	9+	9	<a href="#">A Jap in the NBA</a>	80'	9	Original line follows a crack 6 feet right of 54 requiring gear placements for the first 20 feet. A new bolted start exists 8 feet right of the traditional start. Upper bolts are questionable and there might be loose rocks. Beware!
56	9	9-	<a href="#">Bloodline</a>	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. Stick-clip first bolt if 5.9 is challenging!
57	10d	10+	<a href="#">Drive-By Genocide</a>	55'	6	High up the slope on the face of a tower section. Moderate climbing leads to a steep headwall finish.
58	10b	10-	<a href="#">Number Two Red</a>	50'	6	Start with a few moves to get over an initial steep section to the cruiser middle section clipping three bolts along the way. Then climb up steepening cobbles past three more bolts to the top.

# Walt's Wall



Beer Block			There are routes all around this enormous detached boulder. Routes are numbered CCW from the W face. No drawing.			
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
59	11c	11b/c	<a href="#">El Beerto</a>	40'	6	Leftmost route on the west face. Small holds by El Rito standards. Move left past 6th bolt to anchor.
60	12a/b	12a/b	<a href="#">Whipper Wonderland</a>	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.
61	13c/d	13a/b	<a href="#">The Thing</a>	40'	5	Up the steep "cave" and onto the wall just right of route 50.
62	11c/d	11c	<a href="#">Texas Whine</a>	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.
63	11b	11b	<a href="#">Village Cobbler</a>	40'	5	Starts at the top of the gully. Original rating 11c. Chain draw on 4th bolt. Excellent.
64	12a	12-	<a href="#">It's Time to Drink Beer</a>	40'	5	Steep initial section to a difficult slab. Crux getting over the bulge. Thin! Shares anchor with #63.
65	12a	12a	<a href="#">Buddha's Beer Belly</a>	40'	5	Steep start with low crux to surprisingly fun climbing, albeit short, above. Hard to see anchors.
66	12a/b	12a	<a href="#">Tecate Two Step</a>	40'	3	Up the arête, then an overhanging corner. Excellent.
67	13a	12c	<a href="#">B.Y.O.B.</a>	40'	4	Small holds, tough finish. Typically finishes on Tecate to left but can also veer hard right to anchors on To Beer or Not to Beer for easier finish.
68	12d	12b	<a href="#">To Beer or Not to Beer</a>	40'	4	Small holds and gastons.
69	12b	12b	<a href="#">Little Kings</a>	40'	3	Short, powerful and bouldery

Cellar Door		Three out-of-the way routes that don't see as much action as others in the area. Faces west but doesn't get much sun due to trees and the Rad Wall. Routes L to R. No drawing.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
70	11d	11c/d	<a href="#">Rusted Route</a>	35'	4	Jug haul to sequential and slightly reachy crux
71	11a	10c/d	<a href="#">Cellar Door</a>	40'	5	Pleasant pumpy pocket pulling to a tricky finish to the anchors
72	10c	10b	<a href="#">Frank</a>	35'	4	Angle up and right to a two bolt anchor on a very large cobble.

<a href="#">Wall of Mediocrity</a>		Four new (2016) but obscure routes that haven't yet seen much action as others in the area. Bolts and anchors are extremely well camouflaged and most don't even see these routes. Faces northwest and therefore very licheny. Expect dirty climbing for a while but rock is good. Routes L to R. No drawing.				
Route #	Rating	Consensus	Name	Length	Bolts	Description
73	5.8	5.8	<a href="#">Bug-Eyed Betty</a>	35'	5	The left-most route on the wall offers the most consistent angle of climbing on colorful rock. Climb good holds to a crux about halfway up. Cruise easier, yet entertaining terrain to the anchors.
74	5.10a	5.10a	<a href="#">Bush League Hero</a>	40'	6	The steep start leads to a tricky, hard to read crux low on the route before gaining easier climbing to the top.
75	5.10b	5.10b	<a href="#">No Great Shakes</a>	35'	7	Good holds and pockets lead to a tricky crux on less-positive holds before reaching jugs again. Cruiser terrain to the top. The fifth bolt (I believe) is hidden from below but it's there. Have faith.
76	5.7	5.7	<a href="#">Two Buck Chuck</a>		6	Start up the little gully by climbing up on the fixed log. Stem up the gully until it's possible to commit to the wall and the second bolt. Once established on the wall, enjoy fun holds to the top.

Please send corrections, suggestions and route updates to Jason Halladay at [halladay@gmail.com](mailto:halladay@gmail.com). Also, please contribute your experiences on the El Rito Sport page on MountainProject.com at <http://tinyurl.com/3ob4zx>. For more in-depth information on the El Rito Sport area, take a look at Jay Foley's [Taos Rock](#) guidebook as well as Dennis Jackson's [Rock Climbing New Mexico](#).