

Freerider and Salathe Topo for Antonin and Loic

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AS DENALI, MOUNT RAINIER, AND THE GRAND CANYON
DOMINATE AND DEFINE THEIR RESPECTIVE NATIONAL
PARKS, SO DOES EL CAPITAN LOOM, TOWER, AND RULE
OVER THE ENTRANCE TO YOSEMITE VALLEY. YOU CAN
PICK ANY SYNONYM FOR "DOMINATE" AND IT WILL
STILL WORK. OVERSHADOW. DOMINEER. INTIMIDATE.

OVERWHELM. NOT ENOUGH
SUCH WORDS EXIST IN OUR
LANGUAGE TO PROPERLY
DESCRIBE THE EFFECT THIS
CLIFF EXERTS ON CLIMBERS
AND TOURISTS ALIKE.

- STEVE ROPER, CAMP 4

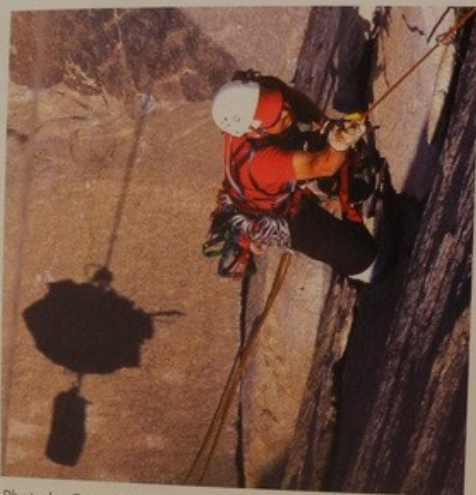


Photo by Corey Rich

Approach

From El Capitan Meadow, pick up the distinct trail that starts 300 feet west of El Capitan Bridge. Follow the trail to a large clearing. When facing the wall, walk at 10 o'clock and pick up the climbers' trail that eventually leads to a point 200 feet in front of the toe of the Southeast Buttress and the start of the Nose. From here, the trail diverges to skirt either the base of the Southeast Face or Southwest Face. It's about a quarter mile and a 10-15-minute walk from the road to the toe of the Southeast Buttress and the start of The Nose. From there,

it is an additional 20-30 minutes to reach the start of Lurking Fear or Zodiac.

Descent

The 2-3 hour East Ledges Descent is the fastest, most convenient way to descend from El Capitan. It spares your knees the long hike down either the Yosemite Falls Trail or Tamarack Flat Trail.

From the summit of most routes, hike east, staying 100 feet from the edge of El Capitan until you reach a long and distinct 30-40-foot-wide drainage just below the Zodiac finish. (For the Lurking Fear/West Buttress Finish, begin by hiking away from the edge and east until you escape slabby and brushy terrain. Then turn and head down and a little east back to the edge of El Capitan.) Follow the drainage down until 80 feet before a 2,000-foot drop-off into

Horsetail Falls (often dry). Enter the manzanita bushes on a well-worn trail that after 5-10 minutes will hug the left wall. Continue along the wall until bushes end and scramble down 3rd-class terrain for about 100 feet to a ledge that is roughly perpendicular to The Wild Dikes, a south-facing black wall streaked with white.

Read the following text while referencing the descent topo.

For rap routes A and B, move down 15 feet of 4th class and cut right (south) across a 20-foot wide drainage gully. Walk/slide down the

right side of the gully for 30-50 feet. Exit onto the south (right) shoulder and cruise down 40 feet to a ledge. For rap route A, continue toward the edge and down a 20-foot 4th-class section to a tree wrapped with slings. For rap route B (the only route you can rap with one 60m rope), head left and down 30 feet of scree,

then move right over exposed 4th-class rock. Work right, through a bush, to a 4' x 6' flat ledge with a small tree. Rap route C (see topo) is not recommended.

From the base of the rappels, head east down multiple 3rd-class sections joined by faint trails. Eventually, a defined trail will emerge. Follow it down to a boulder strewn drainage, immediately crossing to a trail paralleling the drainage for 300 feet before it breaks off into the trees to the Manure Pile parking lot, about one mile from El Cap Meadow.

If you're caught in a storm or descending at night and are unfamiliar with the East Ledges descent, take the tedious, 4-5-hour Yosemite Falls Trail descent instead. Pick up the Falls Trail from the summit of El Capitan (see map page 42).

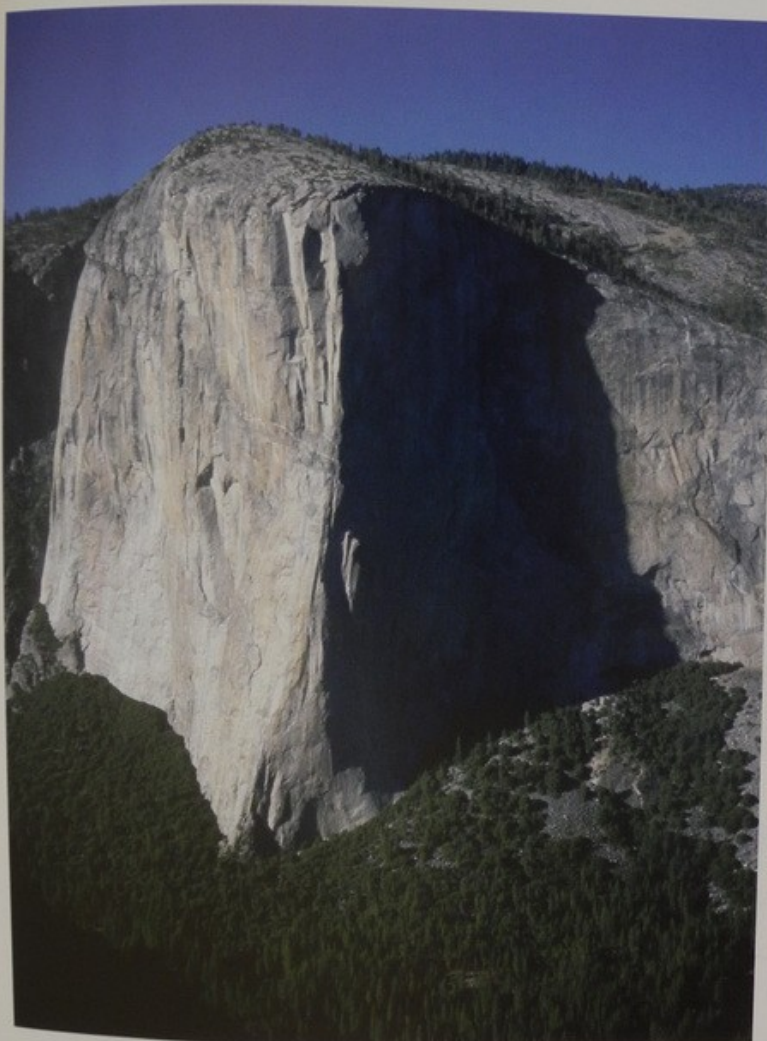


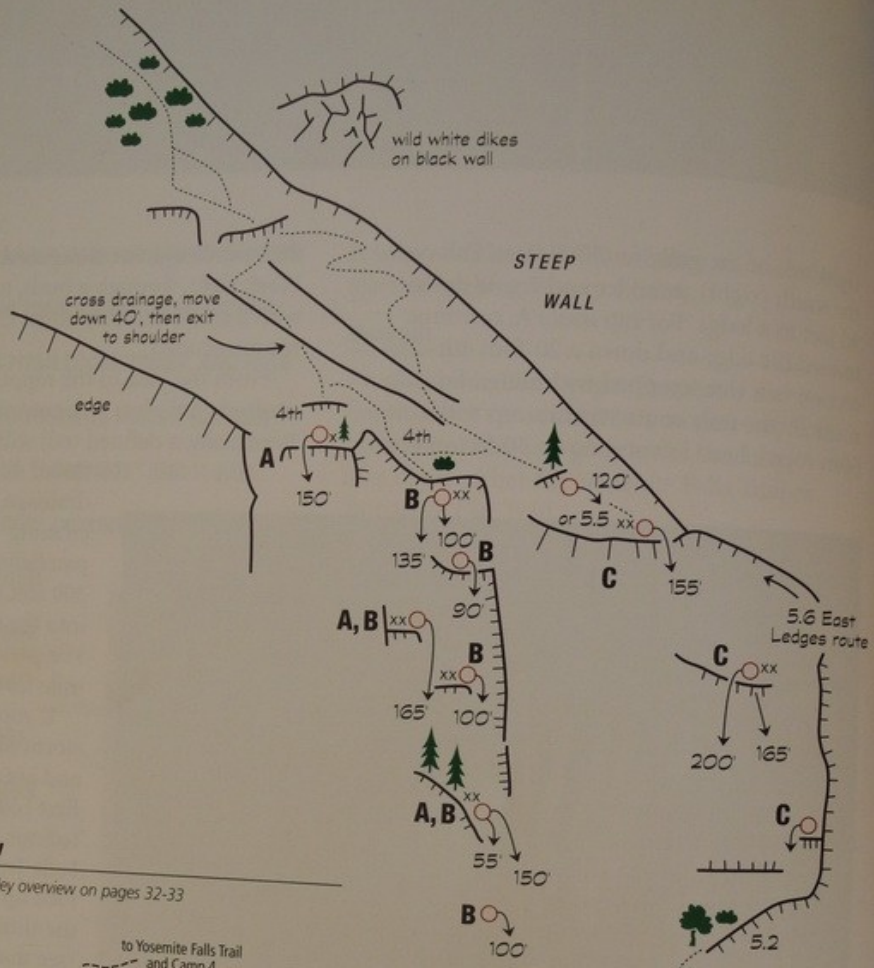
Photo by Chris Johns

SUPERTOPO.

FOR CURRENT ROUTE INFORMATION, VISIT SUPERTOPO.COM

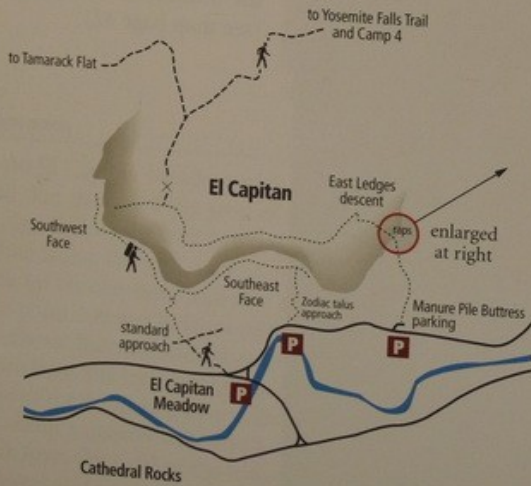
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East Ledges Descent



Area overview

Complete Yosemite Valley overview on pages 32-33



When trail meets drainage, cut across to trees and follow trail to Manure Pile buttress parking lot

Salathé Wall

VI 5.13b or 5.9 C2

The Salathé Wall is El Cap's most natural line and possibly, as Royal Robbins dubbed it, "the greatest rock climb in the world." While some would argue that The Nose is more classic, there is no doubt that Salathé contains pitch after pitch of exceptional climbing. The aid cruxes are slightly trickier than those of The Nose and there are more wide cracks, including some mandatory 5.9 offwidths. One highlight of the route is the fact that most of the belays are at a good stance or ledge.

First ascent history

Prior to their discovery of this route, the Camp 4 regulars named the southwest face of El Cap the Salathé Wall in honor of their hero, John Salathé. Salathé's example was their motivation. And so was El Cap's Southwest Face, it being, so far as they knew, the most beautiful granite wall on earth.

While the first and second ascents of the Nose broke the mental barrier to climbing El Cap, the ascent of Salathé Wall in 1961 defined the style of how the new routes on the great wall would be climbed in the future. Aware that any rock face could be climbed with expedition tactics, Royal Robbins, Tom Frost, and Chuck Pratt dug deeper for a different style of climbing.

Fixed ropes were used on the lower part of the route, but the upper 2,000 feet were climbed alpine style in what was, at the time, the most committing first ascent in Yosemite. Robbins, Frost, and Pratt climbed the first ten pitches in three and a half days. From Heart Ledges they fixed six and a half ropes to the

ground. Three days later the team prusiked up, jettisoned all but three of the ropes, and pushed to the summit. The climbing up higher involved unprecedented commitment and technical difficulty.

After a few days the team reached the East a horrible looking bombay slot that juts out from the wall. The team spent hours scoping a way to avoid this feature before realizing that they would have to climb what Robbins later called "the most terrifying 5.7 in the world." Two pitches higher they reached El Cap Spire, one of the most incredible ledges on El Cap. Beyond that was the most spectacular feature of all, the Headwall, where, at one point in

lowering himself away from the wall to prusik, Robbins said he "...was so terrified that I could barely suppress a shout of terror!" They reached the summit on September 21 after spending six days on the final push and nine and a half days total on the wall. A minimal 13 bolts were placed, all below Pitch 7.

Other history

Todd Skinner and Paul Piana made the first free ascent in 1988. This marked the first free ascent of a major El Cap route and also the longest, most sustained hard free climb in the world. Piana describes one of the crux pitches: "Searing fingertip pin scars, laser-precise edging and post-doctoral skills in body English were the ingredients of the last 20 feet of this pitch." Higher, the Salathé Headwall represented the most beautiful and also the most daunting section of the

WE WISHED TO AVOID [SIEGE] METHODS

IF POSSIBLE SO AS TO KEEP THE ELEMENT

OF ADVENTURE HIGH WITH AT LEAST A

MODERATE AMOUNT OF UNCERTAINTY.

IT WAS PERFECTLY CLEAR TO US THAT

GIVEN SUFFICIENT TIME, FIXED ROPES,

BOLTS AND DETERMINATION, ANY

SECTION OF ANY ROCK WALL COULD

BE CLIMBED.

ROYAL ROBBINS

		Pitch																																			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34		
Aid	A5/C5																																				
	A4/C4																																				
	A3/C3																																				
	A2/C2																																				
	A1/C1	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	
Mandatory free	5.8-5.9																																				
	≤5.7																																				

Salathé Wall

VI 5.13b or 5.9 C2

climb. Again and again, both Skinner and Piana were spit from the pumpy and technical cracks. The searing pain of blown tips and damaged cuticles was matched only by the mental strain of continual failure so close to success. After 48 days spent on the wall, drawing from the depths of their reserves, Skinner and Piana both surmounted the remaining difficulties and stood on the summit. Big-wall free climbing had been taken to the next level.

In 1995, Alex Huber became the first person to individually free all pitches. There is debate as to whether Skinner and Piana or Huber should get credit for the first free ascent. By European standards, Huber made the first free ascent because he was the first person to red point all pitches. However, by the standards in Yosemite in 1988, Piana and Skinner free climbed the route and thus, in this book, get credit for the FFA. In 1997, Yuji Hirayama accomplished an astounding free ascent by nearly on-sighting the entire route over two days.

Strategy

There are generally fewer crowds on the Salathé than on the Nose, although traffic jams still occur in late spring and early fall. Most parties climb and fix to Heart Ledges on day one. Another alternative is to pre-haul the bags to Heart Ledges. Fast teams bivvy on El Cap Spire and Long Ledge, then summit and walk down. Slower parties bivvy on Lung Ledge, El Cap Spire, the Block and Long Ledge, then summit and walk down. Most belays have been replaced by the ASCA. Sun shines on the route from mid-morning to sunset.

No feature terrifies aspiring wall climbers more than the Hollow Flake. To protect the crack requires numerous 6" to 10" pieces and results in hideous rope drag. The alternative is to not bring any pro for the entire pitch and run it out for 80 feet on a 5.8 squeeze. Opinions vary on which method is scarier. Either way, the best bet is to be in solid shape for off-widths and squeeze chimneys.

Retreat/Storm

During storms, a waterfall forms on many of the upper pitches, often resulting in the rescue of both

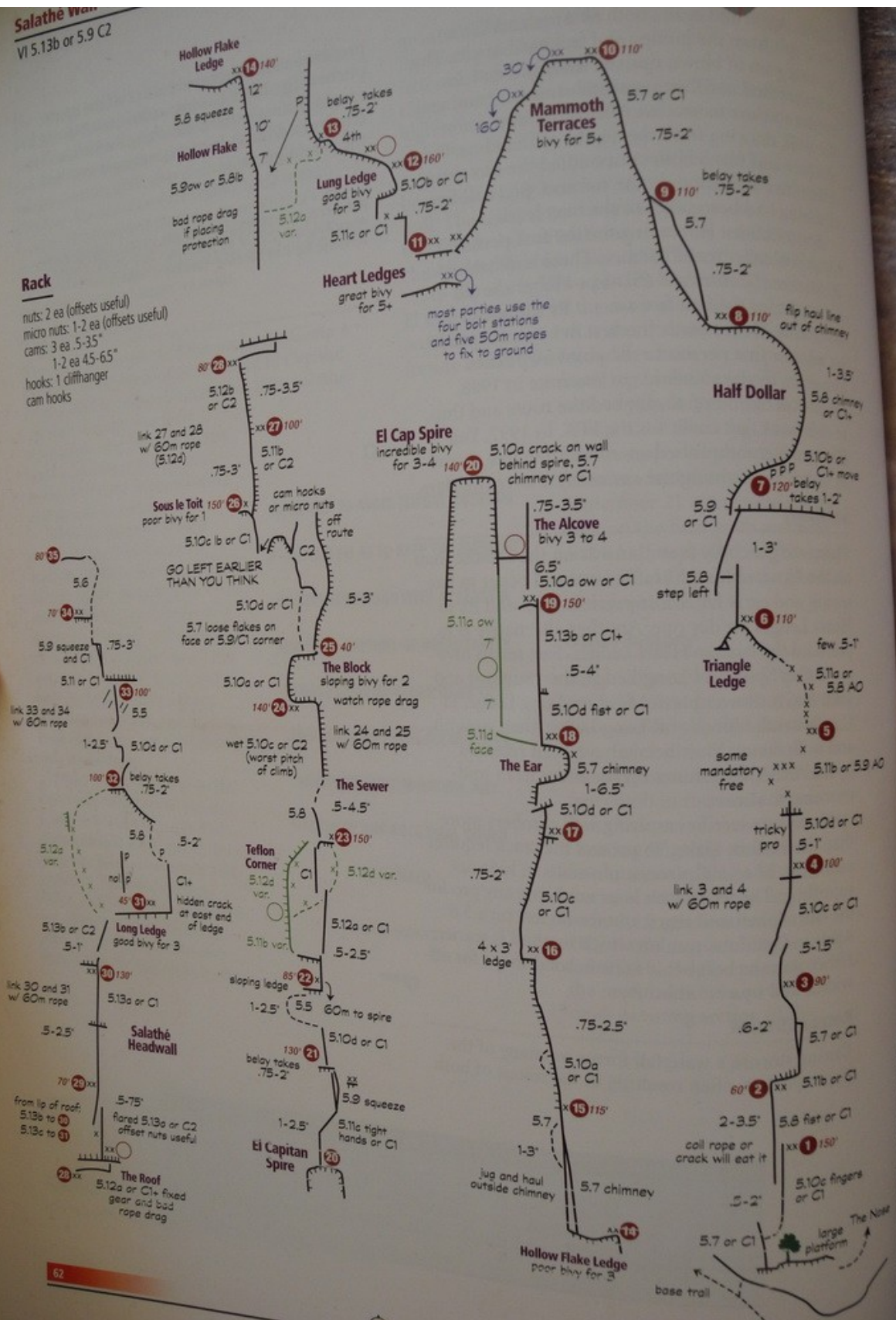
prepared and unprepared parties off the upper pitches. The Block is a particularly nasty spot to be caught during a storm. Reversing the Hollow Flake requires a difficult friction/tension traverse back to the pendulum point.

Reference: *Vertical World of Yosemite, Camp 4, Defying Gravity*, Royal Robbins: *Spirit of the Age, Fifty Classic Climbs of North America*, *Big Wall Climbing*, *Climbing in North America*.

Salathe Wall
VI 5.13b or 5.9 C2

Rack

nuts: 2 ea (offsets useful)
micro nuts: 1-2 ea (offsets useful)
cams: 3 ea 5-35"
1-2 ea 45-65"
hooks: 1 cliffhanger
cam hooks



Description for Free Rider

Pitch	Gear # means Camalot size	Betas/Comments
1	Small Cams Double Rack	Hard for the Grade! Hard Warmup!
2	#2-3	Do in one with first pitch
3	One rack Camalots is enough up to #2	Tricky Boulder then easy
4	Small cams and nuts (Double Rack)	Nice, endurance
5	Offset nuts very useful (one rack from small to medium size) Enough Quickdraws for the slab.	Easy start but hard hard to protect without offset nuts. Second part 6c slab on Bolts!
6	Quickdraws	Another hard slab
7	Double Rack Camalots	Easy
8	Single Rack, keep #0.5-2 for the chimney	Awkward move to gain the chimney, hard for el cap rookies...
12	One Rack up to #2	One very hard move.
14	One #6	For Free climbing: Don't do like the topo says, just climb down the dihedral till you reach some loose flakes which you can traverse easy to the other side. Climb up the hollow flake. Liebacking is easier, but harder to shuffle the #6. For the last 8m it's like a strange chimney too big for #6.
15	One Rack up to #2 and one # 6 for the start	Go up inside the Chimney and shuffle #6, in the middle, leave # 6 and traverse out the chimney to some good holds outside.
16 to 17	Double Rack	Nice climb
18	2 #0.75-1 and quickdraws for the start, #5 for the start in the ear, #6 for shuffling	Hard Boulder start. Start the ear with a #5 inside and shuffle the #6 in front of you. There are some footholds and holds in the right moment...
19 (Monster OW)	One #5, One # 6, quickdraw	Hard Boulder Traverse to reach the OW. Then just clip the #6 in your daisy chain and shuffle it up for 50m. Be careful with the chockstone, don't touch it! Clip the rope in the Bolts, It's better not to use the Belay in the middle. Place #5 before the end, traverse out right to a Belay.
20	One #6 for OW double Rack for climbing Spire	Short OW, shuffle #6. Make an intermediate Belay (Bolts) before go up to the spire. The Best for climbing the spire is a crack where it gets the closest to the wall..
21	Two variations, take #6 for the squeeze chimney	Instead of the difficult finger crack it's much easier to so a scary step over move and climb the crack right of the finger crack.
22	One Rack	Short but hard Lieback
23		For free climbing take the dihedral on the left which you can't see in from belay. Go up the dihedral till you have the same height as the bolted Belay 15m on the right. Now you have two possibilities: a) Stay in the Dihedral and climb a fucking hard stemming move on Bolts (I couldn't do it) b) Traverse all the way right to the Belay. From the Belay you can go straight up on Bolts (Boulder Problem, 7B Boulder) or I heard about some guys climbing right, where it's easier but hard to protect.
24 (25)	Triple Rack if you do it in one Pitch, long slings to avoid rope drag in the final part!	Wet but easy, the last move is hard to reach „The Block“ especially if you do it in one Pitch because of rope drag...
26	Double Rack, keep the #0.75 for the last flake	Double Ropes useful. Some preplaced gear, also in the wrong way! As the topo says, go left earlier than you think. Before the crux (reaching the left flake) you can climb up to some fix slings for clipping them and climb back down.
27	Double Rack up to #2	Hard when you Lieback, It's easier to do it with jamming technique (when you know how...)
28	Double Rack up to #3	Also Hard, Liebacking is better here. Look out for some very helpful kneebars
29 (Freerider)	Single Rack to #2	Leave Salathe as (No more on the Topo). Do a 15m left traverse along the Roof lip. 7A+, Face Climbing. The next Belay is the so called „Round Table Bivy“ it's good Bivy for one, poor for two.
30 (Freerider)	Triple Rack to #3	Very long and nice Handjam with a short roof section. Hanging Belay (#2 for Backup the Belay) (5.10+)
31 (freerider)	Single Rack to #6 (I'm no more sure about the #6, probably it's better to have 2 #5)	Very exposed! Starts as a Finger Crack, then OW, lieback for ca. 4m, then go in the crack (crux) once inside, it goes better (shuffle #5 or 6?). At the end of the OW you can enter an easy chimney. Possible Belay on the left (2 #0.4) or higher up on a Flake. (5.10 OW)
32 (freerider)		Traverse (easy) right to the Belay of Salathe
33 to 35		Back in Salathe, look at the topo