

SUPERTOPO™

TUOLUMNE FREE CLIMBS

Second Edition

by
Greg Barnes
Chris McNamara
Steve Roper

Over 130
New Climbs!



Tuolumne Free Climbs

Second Edition

Greg Barnes
Chris McNamara
Steve Roper



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Front cover: Kuan Chang at East Cottage Dome. *Photo by Corey Rich.*

Frontispiece: Brad Goya on Eichorn's Pinnacle, but feeling on top of the world. *Photo by John Brooks.*

Back cover: Greg Haverstock riding the wave of one of Tuolumne's most incredible climbs, The Matthes Crest. *Shawn Reeder.*

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Maki Grossnick on the first ascent of Push It. Greg Barnes photo.

Warning!

Climbing is an inherently dangerous sport in which severe injuries or death may occur. Relying on the information in this book may increase the danger.

When climbing you can only rely on your skill, training, experience, and conditioning. **If you have any doubts as to your ability to safely climb any route in this guide, do not try it.**

This book is neither a professional climbing instructor nor a substitute for one. **It is not an instructional book. Do not use it as one.** It contains information that is nothing more than a compilation of opinions about climbing in Tuolumne Meadows. **These opinions are neither facts nor promises.** Treat the information as opinions and nothing more. Do not substitute these opinions for your own common sense and experience.

Assumption of Risk

There may be errors in this book resulting from the mistakes of the authors and/or the people with whom they consulted. The information was gathered from a variety of sources, which may not have been independently verified. Those who provided the information may have made mistakes in their descriptions. The authors may have made mistakes in their conveyance of the information in this book. **The authors cannot, therefore, guarantee the correctness of any of the information contained in this book.** The topographical maps, photo-diagrams, difficulty ratings, protection ratings, approach and/or descent information, suggestions about equipment, and other matters may be incorrect or misleading. Fixed protection may be absent, unreliable, or misplaced. **You must keep in mind that the information in this book may be erroneous, so use your own judgement when choosing, approaching, climbing, or descending from a route described in this book.**

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- Greg Barnes

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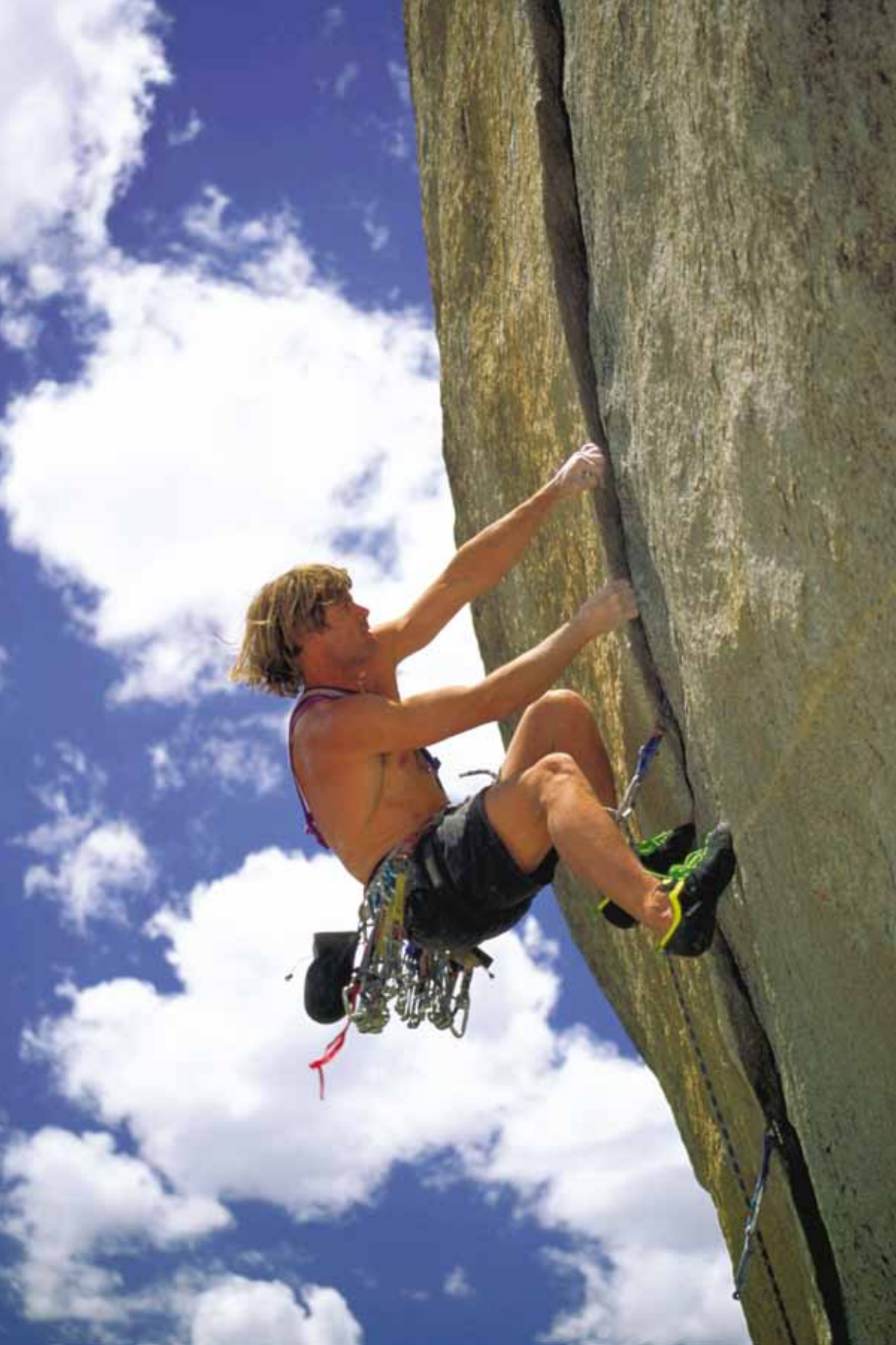
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Introduction

by Greg Barnes

Just a short drive and almost a vertical mile higher in elevation than Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows is an alpine rock climbing paradise. With its giant golden domes, pine trees, and lakes, Tuolumne offers some of the finest scenery of any climbing area on the planet.

While Half Dome is visible from Tuolumne's higher peaks, the climbing is completely different than Yosemite Valley. Instead of smooth, polished cracks and blank faces, Tuolumne has sharp, angular cracks, endless fields of knobs, and golden glacier polish with incut edges. Popular in the middle of summer when Yosemite Valley can be uncomfortably hot, Tuolumne has little traffic in early and late season, and generally little traffic anytime aside from the popular routes. And compared to the near-urban atmosphere of Yosemite Valley in the summer, Tuolumne is practically tranquil.

With spectacular granite peaks, dramatic views, and approaches that meander through isolated backcountry meadows, Tuolumne has one of the finest collections of moderate alpine routes anywhere. Cathedral Peak, Matthes Crest, the North and West Ridges of Mt. Conness, and the Northwest Buttress of Tenaya Peak all provide outstanding long routes at the 5.5-5.7 level. Tuolumne also offers a good deal of shorter climbing routes with quick approaches, including some face routes that are both moderate and well-bolted.

However, one particular facet of Tuolumne rock climbing deserves explanation: runouts. Most routes were developed in the 1970s and 1980s. On lead and bolting from a stance, the safest way for the leader to stop and place a

bolt was to stand on good holds. So the leader would keep going until getting to some good holds, then stop to place a bolt. On easier climbs there are often no bolts or pro placements on entire pitches, and many hard climbs are very dangerous. The Bachar-Yerian, a vertical knob climb established in 1981, remains one of the most serious and runout face climbs anywhere. On this climb and other testpieces, many of the world's strongest climbers test their psychological strength.

The tradition of runout face routes in Tuolumne, in combination with the poorly defined "R" ratings in the U.S., led to many visiting climbers running into much longer runouts compared to "R" rated routes in many other areas. In this edition we have introduced an intermediate rating of "R-" in order to help define runout routes. With detailed beta and gear information, plus variations to avoid some runouts, leaders can pick routes where they feel comfortable. Still, be aware that many Tuolumne classics are very runout compared to "R" rated routes elsewhere. We've also included many climbs you can top rope so you can develop your skills in relative safety.

Equipment

Most face routes in Tuolumne need some trad gear - even some "sport" routes. The crack routes require a good selection of gear, and it's nice to have many extendable draws.

While most routes in Tuolumne were developed with shorter ropes, a 60m or longer rope has become the Tuolumne standard, and a number of new routes detailed in this guide require 70m ropes (or two ropes). Dozier Dome in particular requires two 60m ropes for most routes.

On long routes, avoid the hassle of climbing with a pack by using a Camel back and clipping your lightweight hiking shoes to your harness. The Camelback holds enough water for most long climbs as well as space for a few essentials such as food, a small LED headlamp, compact rain shell, and sunscreen.

Peter Croft on a project in Glen Aulin. (Chris Falkenstein)

Anchor Conditions

Between 1998 and 2008 the American Safe Climbing Association replaced 1,055 bolts on 208 routes in Tuolumne. While most popular climbs now have safe bolts, some bad bolts remain. View which routes the ASCA has replaced at the ASCA web site, www.safeclimbing.org, and please make a tax-deductible donation. Even a mere \$5 will replace at least one bolt. And that bad bolt could be the one that blows on somebody.

Essential Tuolumne Beta

Below is some fundamental information for planning a trip to Tuolumne. However, for more updated and extensive information you should visit the Tuolumne Beta Page on the SuperTopo web site: www.supertopo.com/climbingareas/tuolumne.html

Getting There

Tuolumne Meadows is located 1.5 hours northeast of Yosemite Valley. Since most climbers start their trip to Tuolumne by first driving through or near Yosemite Valley, you should visit the SuperTopo Yosemite Beta Page at www.supertopo.com/climbingareas/yosemite.html. There you will find more information and links for airports, buses, trains, and car travel.

Air Travel

Reno/Tahoe Airport is the closest airport to Tuolumne. From there, you will need to rent a car (3-hour drive) or take a bus or shuttle to Mammoth. The bus service is The Crest/Inyo-Mono Transit (800-922-1930), and the shuttles are the Mammoth Shuttle (760-934-6588) or Sierra Express (760-937-8294). From Mammoth take YARTS to Tuolumne (see Bus Travel). Oakland or San Francisco airports are farther from Tuolumne but are preferred over Reno/Tahoe because there are more flights to choose from. You can also fly into Sacramento or Fresno. Each of these places is a 3.5- to 5-hour drive from Tuolumne Meadows.

Bus Travel

YARTS (877-989-2787; www.yarts.com) provides bus transportation from Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne and from the Eastern Sierra to Tuolumne. During July through Labor Day, YARTS leaves from the Tuolumne Meadows Store every morning and from Yosemite Lodge each evening. It provides access between Yosemite and Mammoth, with the schedule and prices varying according to demand, even depending on day. Once in Tuolumne, a free shuttle bus provides convenient access throughout the Tuolumne Meadows area between the Tuolumne Lodge and Olmsted Point (including Tenaya Lake) during the middle part of the summer, and even sometimes to Tioga Pass a few times a day.

Car Travel

From Yosemite Valley, it's a 1.5-hour drive east on Highway 120 to Tuolumne Meadows. It's a 4.5-hour drive to Tuolumne from the Bay Area, a 3-hour drive from the Tahoe area, and about a 1.5-hour drive from Bishop.

Gas is available next to the Tuolumne Meadows Store, 15 miles east in Lee Vining, and on Highway 120 at Crane Flat.

If you don't have a car, you can rent one at any airport or major city. International climbers who stay in the United States for more than a month often buy a cheap used car in San Francisco or Los Angeles and sell it (or scrap it) at the end of their trip.

Driving times and distances to Tuolumne

From	Time (hours)	Distance (miles)
Boulder, CO	18:00	1,150
Fresno, CA	3:30	150
Truckee, CA	3:00	150
Los Angeles, CA	6:00	340
Mammoth, CA	1:00	50
Oakland, CA	4:30	220
Sacramento, CA	4:00	210
Salt Lake City, UT	10:00	620
San Francisco, CA	4:30	230
Yosemite Valley	1:30	60

When to Climb

Tuolumne Meadows has some of the best weather of any alpine rock climbing area on Earth. That said, Tuolumne is in a massive mountain range that receives severe thunderstorms, lightning, and rare major Pacific weather systems throughout the summer.

All climbing in Tuolumne is accessible from Highway 120. Because of its high elevation, Highway 120 east of Crane Flat and west of Lee Vining is closed in the winter. The road closes on the first snow of the year (usually November) and opens sometime in late May to June, depending on the snow year. During the winter, it is possible to climb in Tuolumne, but few people make the arduous ski in.

During early season (late May–June depending on snow year), Tuolumne conditions are often the best: no crowds, no mosquitoes, and long days. However, some approaches and climbs may be wet or snowy. Around June 15 the crowds arrive in Tuolumne – along with the mosquitoes. The crowds are not bad relative to Yosemite, but you will probably have to wait in line for the most classic routes. The mosquitoes, on the other hand, can be terrible. Be sure to bring long pants, long sleeve shirts, and bug repellent. In September, the crowds and mosquitoes leave Tuolumne and while the climbing conditions are still great, the days become short and the nights frigid.

Thunderstorm cycles are common in the summer. Typically, the storms hit in mid-afternoon and slowly increase in strength over several days, clearing up each night. However, heavy thunderstorms and rain can set in for days at a time. And in a few recent summers, an almost total lack of thunderstorms over the entire summer have perplexed locals.

Current Road and Weather

There is no specific weather phone report for Tuolumne so your best bet is to check the general High Sierra weather at www.supertopo.com. For current road conditions, call 209-372-0200, or the CalTrans voice-activated system for major highway conditions at 800-GAS-ROAD or 916-445-7623 (from outside California).

First Climbs

For those new to Tuolumne or with limited time, here's a list of good starter climbs:

Crags and Topropes:

Bunny Slopes, 5.6-5.9
Daff Dome, South Flank, 5.5-5.11c
Ellery Lake, 5.9-5.10d
Low Profile Dome, 5.7-5.11b
Pothole Dome, 5.0-5.11
Puppy Dome, 5.6-5.12c
Western Front, 5.9-5.10b

Multi-pitch Climbs:

Tenaya Peak, 5.5
Cathedral Peak, 5.6
Northwest Books, 5.6
Holdless Horror 5.6
West Country, 5.7
Zee Tree, 5.7
Erret Out, 5.7
Bull Dozier, 5.7
Hermaphrodite Flake to The Boltway, 5.8
South Crack, 5.8 R

Staying in Tuolumne

Unlike the Yosemite Valley experience, Tuolumne Meadows is relatively uncrowded and serene and provides just enough basic services to comfortably camp. If you are craving some better food, more services, or just a day excursion, Lee Vining, Mono Lake, and Mammoth Lakes are all less than an hour away.

Camping

The only campground in Tuolumne is the Tuolumne Meadows Campground, which is centrally located and very large (over 300 sites). Half of the sites can be reserved in advance at www.recreation.gov (reserve them at least 2-3 months in advance for peak times) and half of the sites are on a first come, first served basis (stand in line in early morning to ensure you get a site.) Sites cost \$20 per night with a six-person, two-car limit. Be aware that mosquitoes can be particularly fierce and bears patrol the campground so proper food storage is mandatory.

Camping (cont)

Located 7 to 12 miles east from Tuolumne Meadows are ten Forest Service campgrounds, many of which are first come, first served. Several of these campgrounds are at elevations higher than Tuolumne Meadows and can help with acclimation. Twelve miles east of Tuolumne Meadows, the campgrounds in lower Lee Vining Canyon are lower altitude, more sheltered from the wind, and near to services in Lee Vining. You will pay between \$12 and \$17 per night on a first come, first served basis. The prices at these campgrounds have climbed steeply in recent years, in some cases more than doubling in less than a decade.

Along Highway 120 toward Yosemite Valley are several additional campgrounds with moderate to long drives (30 minutes to one hour). The campground reservation office in Tuolumne has information on current campground conditions.

Lodges and Cabins

In addition to campsites, there are more plush accommodations available in Tuolumne and the High Sierra, including the Tuolumne Meadows Lodge, White Wolf, and the High Sierra Camps (www.yosemitepark.com/html/accommodation.html). Just outside of the park boundary is the Tioga Pass Resort (www.tiogapassresort.com), which offers cabins, a small restaurant, and an espresso bar. Drive 15 miles east from Tuolumne Meadows and you will reach Lee Vining, a small town with a few motels, restaurants, and other basic services.

Food

A limited selection of high-priced groceries are available at the Tuolumne Meadows store. In addition, you can purchase groceries in Lee Vining at the Lee Vining Market. Mammoth has a large Vons supermarket.

The Tuolumne Meadows Grill serves hamburgers, fries, etc, but has very limited hours, closing hours before dark in mid-summer. The Tuolumne Lodge has a restaurant that serves breakfast and dinner in the middle part of summer. Eight miles

east of Tuolumne Meadows, the Tioga Pass Resort houses a cozy dining room with good food. Surprisingly, the Mobil Gas Station, located 14 miles from Tuolumne Meadows in Lee Vining, has the best food in the area. This isn't just any gas station – Tioga Toomey's Whoa Nellie Deli has a great selection of sandwiches, pizzas, fish tacos, and a variety of other savory treats for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Frequent local bands and even a trapeze out front are other features of this unusual gas station.

Climbing Gear and Climbing Guides

The Tuolumne Mountain Shop (209-372-8436) located at the Tuolumne gas station offers a small selection of climbing equipment. For a more extensive selection of gear, you will need to drive 50 miles to Mammoth for Mammoth Mountaineering Supply (888-395-3951) www.mammothgear.com, 90 miles to Bishop for Wilson's Eastside Sports (760-873-7520) www.eastsidesports.com, or 60 miles back to Yosemite Valley for the Yosemite Mountain Shop (209-372-8396) www.yosemitgifts.com/wetoyomosh.html). You can get climbing instruction and



Third Pillar of Dana from the base – perfect alpine granite.

Chris McNamara

arrange for a guide through the Yosemite Mountaineering School (209-372-8344), which is based in Tuolumne at the Mountain Shop/gas station.

Altitude

At elevation it takes a few days for most people to adjust to the rarefied air, so drink plenty of water and take it easy. On your first day in Tuolumne, climb a route with a short approach to let yourself acclimate. In addition, eat a low-fat diet for the first day or two. Wear extra sunscreen and a hat – the UV levels are greater at altitude and severe sunburns can happen quickly.

Thunderstorms and Lightning

Tuolumne has mostly beautiful, sunny weather in the summer, yet severe thunderstorms occur. Small, puffy clouds seen before 10am are a frequent predictor of afternoon rain, hail and, worst of all, lightning. Thunderstorms often appear in cycles and generally during periods of hot, calm weather in the Central Valley.

Lightning tends to hit high points, trees, and water, but will also hit low points next to high rocks, flat areas near trees, and dry land around lakes. A climber was struck by lightning on Cathedral Peak in 2000, and many other close calls have occurred.

Know how to perform CPR. Unlike nearly any other type of injury that stops the heart, electrical shock victims can suddenly awaken even after extended CPR. But remember, the best strategy is to avoid thunderstorms in the first place. If you're on a climb and get nervous about developing clouds, it's time to turn around.

Bears, Marmots, and Mosquitoes

Bears have damaged cars for as little as a stick of gum or an empty soda can. If you want what's yours to remain yours, remember three things: bears are hungry, smart, and strong.

When bears smell food, even if it's locked in your trunk or glove compartment, they shift into high gear. They get turned on by odors of containers that used to contain food. They even go for toothpaste and sunscreen. Bears don't need to smell food;

they see something like a grocery bag or an ice chest and associate it with food. In fact, they don't even need to see that much. If a bear sees clutter inside a car, he'll think, "I wonder what's under all that stuff?" and go to work.

Breaking into a car is a trivial exercise for a bear. He inserts his claws at the top of the door frame and pulls down. Then he climbs in and trashes the car. You can't outsmart or outmuscle a bear. Always stash your food in one of the bear-proof storage lockers provided by the Park Service in the campground, at various trailheads including Cathedral Lakes, or at the Wilderness Permit Center.

If camping in the backcountry, use bear canisters, which are available at the Wilderness Permit Center. Tuolumne bears are experienced at cutting the lines to hung food, and the tattered remnants of the lines can be observed on nearly any tree near a backcountry campsite.

In addition to bears, be on the lookout for marmots. Cute from a distance, these plump critters love nothing more than scrounging for food in climbing packs while you watch helplessly from two pitches up. Be sure to hang your backpack high on a tree branch – even if it does not have food in it. Marmots are tough, smart, and strong-toothed and can quickly gnaw through nearly anything – leave zippers open.

Nasty mosquitoes are very common for most of the summer in Tuolumne, so come prepared. Consider long sleeve pants and shirts, which not only help with mosquitoes but help prevent sunburn.

Backpacking

Wilderness permits are required for camping in the backcountry (e.g. for Conness or Matthes Crest). They are available for free at the Tuolumne Wilderness Center (7:30 a.m.-5 p.m.), starting at 7:30 a.m. the day before you go in. There is often a long line to get permits, and popular trailheads frequently fill up, so plan ahead and get in line an hour early if you really need the permit. They can also be reserved up to 6 weeks (168 days) in advance, but not less than two days

Previously unpublished climbs

Cheesecake 5.5
 DAFFy Duck 5.5
 String Cheese 5.6
 Frogger 5.7
 Eddie Muenster 5.7
 Chop the Hogs 5.7
 Roof Rat 5.7
 Black Nepalese 5.7
 Bull Dozier 5.7
 Obviously Not 5.7
 Ripple 5.7
 Pac-Man 5.8
 R2-D2 5.8
 West of the Witch 5.8
 Udder Chaos 5.8
 Pasture-ized 5.8
 Cry Baby 5.8
 Dastardly Rascal 5.8
 Dope Show 5.8
 Crystal Meth 5.8
 Cheeseburgers & Beer 5.8
 Bit by Bit (pitch 3) 5.8
 Isostacy 5.8
 Avocados & Tequila 5.8
 X-Wing 5.9
 Slasher 5.9
 Wrest Day 5.9
 Felsic 5.9

Aileron 5.9+
 Trendy Bendy 5.10a
 Mmmm...Crackahol 5.9 or 10a
 Bust It Out 5.10a
 Turbine 5.10a
 Life in the Cretaceous 5.10a
 Flash of the Blade 5.10a
 Stimulant 5.10a
 Chili Air 5.10a
 Dumpster Evangelist 5.10a
 Loud and Obnoxious 5.10a
 Cheetos & Everclear 5.10a
 You, Me, & the Dike 5.10a
 Cyclone 5.10b
 Flintstone (pitch 2) 5.10b
 Anduril 5.10b
 Tectonomagmatic 5.10b
 Tourette's 5.10b
 Plutonics 5.10b
 Metalhead 5.10c
 Five Ten, You Wuss 5.10c
 Mordor 5.10c
 City Girl 5.10c
 Narsil 5.10d
 Loco Yokel 5.10d
 Push It 5.11a
 Tooled 5.11b
 Stinky T-shirt 5.11d
 Rise and Fall of the Albatross 5.13a/b

Backpacking (cont)

in advance, and a non-refundable fee is required (\$5 plus \$5 per person as of 2009). Full information, including how to reserve through the internet, phone, or mail, is available at <http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/wildpermits.htm>

Miscellaneous Beta

Showers cost \$2 and are available at the Tuolumne Meadows lodge between noon and 3 p.m.. There is a post office located next to the Tuolumne Store, which is open most of the season.

A message board is located outside the Tuolumne Meadows Store, and another larger one is along the entrance road to the campground. Most climbers use the Store board, but make sure if arranging messages with friends to specify which board.

The Tuolumne Meadows Stables (209-372-8348) is the pack station in Tuolumne.

The nearest ATM is at the Lee Vining Market. The nearest bank is Mammoth. You can get cash back with a credit card purchase from the Tuolumne Store.

Nearby Climbing Options

To take a break from Tuolumne, or if the weather deteriorates, there are many fine options. Yosemite Valley is the most obvious, but a plethora of bouldering and climbing areas are only an hour or so to the east near Mammoth and Bishop. These include (in approximate order of accessibility) the Bachar Boulders and Deadman Summit (bouldering), Sagehen Summit (trad/multipitch), Clark Canyon (sport), Dike Wall (sport) and Crystal Crag (sport/trad), Mammoth Crest (trad), Bear Crag (sport), Rock Creek (trad/sport), Benton Crag (trad), Owens River Gorge (sport), Pine Creek (trad/sport), Cardinal Pinnacle (trad), Buttermilks/Druids/Happys (endless awesome bouldering), and many others. Guides to these areas are available from Maximus Press (www.maximuspress.com).

Also, the huge endless granite alpine climbs of the Sierra are covered in SuperTopo's own *High Sierra Climbing*, which includes climbs on Mt. Whitney, Mt. Russel, Bear Creek Spire, and more.

Tuolumne Topropes

Tuolumne is known for its runouts on low-angle face. Compared to the Valley, the faces tend to be steeper, more featured, harder to spot bolts on, and more runout. In general, anyone comfortable slab climbing can get used to Tuolumne fairly quickly, but those without much slab experience should definitely introduce themselves to slick low-angle granite on toprope. Tuolumne has several easily accessible toprope crags for doing exactly that, and it's generally easy to

walk or scramble to the top. Some topropes require a belay to safely set the anchor, and some require climbing adjacent routes of a lower grade.

In the table below, we've listed the more easily toproped climbs contained in this guidebook, along with key beta. There are dozens more toproping options not listed here available after leading various routes at many crags.

Area	Route	Rating	Anchor Access	Technique
Pothole Dome	many topropes	5.0-5.11	scramble 2nd-3rd class	slab, crack
Murphy Creek	several topropes	5.7-11c	walk, belay to anchor	cracks
Puppy Dome	several	5.7-12c	walk; scramble 3rd	cracks
Bunny Slopes	several	5.8-5.9	climb 5.6-5.7	slab, face
Ellery Lake	many topropes	5.9-10d	walk, belay to anchor	cracks, face
Western Front	many topropes	5.9-10b	scramble 3rd class	slab, face
Canopy World	several topropes	5.9-13a	scramble easy 5th	face, cracks
Medlicott Dome	Beer, Donuts	5.9-10	climb 5.7	face, cracks
Lamb Dome	Little Sheba, Lampoon	5.10a, 9+	scramble 3rd class	crack, face
Low Profile Dome	three 5.10 faces	5.10a-10c	climb 5.7 R	face
DAFF south flank	Fingertips	5.10a-b	climb 5.8	slab
Mountaineers Dome	three slab routes	5.10b-11a	climb 5.9	slab, crack
East Cottage Dome	many routes	5.10b-11a	scramble 4th, rap	face
Stately Pleasure Dome	Footnote	5.10c	climb 5.0	slab
Galen's Crack	two routes	5.10c-10d	walk	crack, face
Harlequin Dome	Chinese Handcuffs	5.10d	walk, bushwack	crack
Low Profile Dome	Memo From Lloyd	5.11b	long scramble 4th class	crack



Karin Wuhrmann follows pitch 3 of You Asked For It. photo by Greg Barnes

Leave No Trace

by Greg Barnes

The high country of Tuolumne Meadows is one of the most beautiful places on the planet. It has recovered well from the hordes of domestic sheep that ravaged the Sierra in John Muir's day, but the ecosystem is delicate, and we need to respect and preserve it.

The concept of Leave No Trace is fundamental, yet we can all do a better job of living up to it. Obvious things to do include carrying out all trash you find, using bear boxes in the campground, bringing bear canisters on overnight trips, and staying on trails. However, there are a lot of other things to do that are less obvious and often not done that well by climbers.

- Travel on rock when possible, otherwise stick to existing paths and trails. What looks like an empty dirt patch in June will be a flower garden in August – if you don't trample it first!
- Bring only minimal food and carry it on your person at all times when climbing. Rodents can and will chew through packs and into any food you leave at the base. Hanging food is a joke – we've all seen squirrels run up vertical rock – and a tree is home ground for these furry little acrobats.
- Pee on open rock or dirt and avoid plants. The salts in your urine can kill plants, which absorb water from the soil and breathe through pores in the leaves.
- Plan your day such that you use restrooms before heading out. This is easy to do, yet a surprising number of people munch a big breakfast at the car, hike to a climb, and then run to the nearest spot to take a dump. Parking areas for most climbs don't have bathrooms – plan ahead of time.
- When you have to go, follow the Leave No Trace guidelines: "Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products." Packing out TP is distasteful to most people, but it's easy to do with a few large ziplock bags.
- In the campground or at picnic areas, immediately store food in the bear box



Chris McNamara on top of The Third Pillar of Dana.

Greg Barnes

Fairview Dome, one of the most impressive domes in Tuolumne. Photo by Greg Barnes

- or secure containers. Don't walk to your car and expect the birds, rodents, and bears to sit around and miss their chance to run in and grab food. Dinnertime is the favorite raiding opportunity; don't leave food unattended.
- Carry only gray, tan, or black webbing. If replacing fixed slings, cut off the old slings and take them with you.
 - In places far from road noise, use rope commands instead of yelling "ON BELAY!" Loud belay commands are the number one impact climbers have on the solitude of others. Besides, it's good to practice rope commands for windy days and long pitches. Both partners tie in and double-check each other's knots. The leader uses a four-sharp-tug command for "off belay;" then waits a bit and pulls up the slack. Four sharp tugs from the leader then confirms that the follower is "on belay."
 - When driving in Tuolumne at night, use your high beams and drive slowly. Many deer are killed every year by traffic, and several bears have been injured or killed (and YOU can be injured or killed in these accidents!). The entire stretch from Tioga Pass to Tenaya Lake, especially from the pass through the Meadows themselves, sees heavy deer traffic. Drive slowly at dawn and dusk. Animal eyes reflect light and are easily seen in high beams, so be on the lookout.
 - Take the free Tuolumne shuttle to climbs. Check the hours at the store bus stop. The shuttle driver will stop at any pullout large enough to be safe, which includes most popular climbing areas. The shuttle runs the entire length of the climbing areas, except for the climbs approached from outside the Park (i.e. Mt. Conness, Third Pillar, and Ellery Lake).

Visit the Leave No Trace website at www.lnt.org to learn more about minimizing your impact on the wilderness.



Ratings

Tuolumne Meadows has a tradition of severely runout routes on slabby terrain, and also a tradition of stiff and sandbagged ratings on some climbs. In this book we include relatively few of the severely runout routes unless the routes are classic. With the increase in very tightly protected climbs over the last few decades, the definition of “well protected” has changed radically. For those who expect protection wherever they want it, and especially for those with little experience on granite slabs, there are very few routes in Tuolumne that meet the modern definition of tightly protected.

We also try to even out the difficulty ratings to current norms. After all, if ratings don't accurately compare climbs, and if some 5.10s are harder than other 5.11s, what is the point of a rating system? Rating climbs well is becoming increasingly difficult as very strong gym and sport climbing-trained climbers intersect with traditional climbs which require little physical strength but lots of technique and mental strength. In addition, the high elevation of Tuolumne often adds acclimation as a factor in perceived rating.

Ratings are decided by discussion and consensus, so we would like to hear your criticism and feedback. Please send a note to chris@supertopo.com or post a message on our route beta pages at www.supertopo.com/routebeta/tuolumne.html. Before your trip you may also wish to check these route beta pages for feedback from other climbers on particular routes that you anticipate climbing.

Runout Ratings

If a rating is followed by an “R-”, the route is somewhat runout. This is obviously subjective, but it generally means there is a moderate runout on easy terrain (for that route rating), or a short runout on harder terrain.

If a rating is followed by an “R” it means the climb is substantially runout (has little protection) and a fall from the wrong spot is fairly likely to result in injury (ANY climbing fall can be serious or even fatal, so this is obviously a subjective rating). To climb an R rated climb you should be very solid at the grade. For example, most climbers want to feel solid on a well-protected 5.9 climb before trying a 5.7 runout climb.

An “R/X” rating is severely runout or runout in a really bad spot. This could be just a short runout with cruxy climbing and a big ledge to hit, or it could be a huge runout on a slab.

A climb with an “X” rating means that a fall will likely result in severe injury or death.

However, by the standards of many climbing areas, R rated climbs in Tuolumne are more runout. A good number of climbs that are rated R- in this guidebook would have a solid R rating in other areas. Likewise, routes listed here as R might be rated R/X or even X in other areas because of long fall potentials on steep, knobby terrain. Examples include Great Pumpkin and Hobbit Book. Many easier climbs also have very long fall potential on smooth low-angle granite, and these are not given R/X ratings because serious injury beyond road rash is relatively unlikely. Examples include South Crack, Great White Book, and the Dike Route.

International Ratings Comparison

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 6C E5	24
5.11a	VII+	6B+	6A 6C E6	26
5.11b	VIII-	6C	6B 6C E7	27
5.11c	VIII	6C+	6C 7A E8	28
5.11d	VIII	7A	6C 7A E9	29
5.12a	VIII+	7A+	7A 7B E10	30
5.12b	IX-	7B	7A 7B E10	31
5.12c	IX	7B+	7A 7B E10	32
5.12d	IX	7C	7A 7B E10	33
5.13a	IX+	7C+	7A 7B E10	34
5.13b	X-	8A	7A 7B E10	35
5.13c	X	8A+	7A 7B E10	36
5.13d	X	8B	7A 7B E10	
5.14a	X+	8B+	7A 7B E10	
5.14b	XI-	8C	7A 7B E10	
5.14c	XI	8C+	7A 7B E10	
5.14d	XI	9A	7A 7B E10	
5.15a	XI+	9A+	7A 7B E10	

Crag Comparison - Single Pitch Crags

_____ Number of routes at each grade _____

Crag	Number of routes at each grade											Face or Cracks?	Early Season?	Summary
	page	≤5.6	5.7	5.8	5.9	10a	10b	10c/d	11a/b	11c	Topropes			
Block Area	55	1	1	1	1	1					0	face and cracks	yes	Sport routes and gritty cracks/faces.
Bunny Slopes	53	1	2	1	1	1					2	face	yes	Slabby knobby face; great intro area.
Canopy World	86	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	face and cracks	yes	Secluded crag with long flat hike.
Circle A Wall	52				1				1		1	face	no	Short fun knobby face; wet early season.
Daff Dome S. Flank	76	1	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	10	face and cracks	yes	Golden slabs and easy cracks.
Dike Dome	28	1	1	1							3	face and cracks	yes	Slabby routes in a spectacular setting.
Drug Dome Base	134	2	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	mostly face	yes	Steep knobs, snow at base in very early season.
East Cottage Dome	82				1	2	6	3			6	all face	yes	Steep knobs and thin edging.
Elleery Lake	192				1	1	1	2			5	face and cracks	no	Very short top-ropes outside park; high altitude.
Galens Crack	63						2				2	face and cracks	yes	Short burly offwidth and face topropes.
Low Profile Dome	60	2	1	2	1	1	1	2			4	mostly face	yes	Excellent face climbs; short approach.
Mariuolumne N. Wall	142				1	1					1	cracks	no	Steep shady cracks, snow in early season.
Medlicott Dome Right	152				2	1	2	3			0	face and cracks	no	Tons of classics, often wet early season.
Mountaineers Dome	50				1	1	1	1	1		3	face and cracks	yes	Golden slabs, one crack (first pitch of multipitch).
Murphy Creek	32	1	1	2		1	4	1	4	1	10	cracks	no	Concentrated cracks with long but easy hike.
Olmsted Canyon	30				1	1	1	4	1		9	cracks	yes	Short cracks on scattered crags with a short hike.
Pothole Dome	89	11							1		12	face	yes	Beginner slab topropes and a 5.11 roof crack.
Puppy Dome	98	1	1							3	5	cracks	yes	Great easy and very hard cracks.
Razor Back	116	1	1	1	1	1	1				0	face	no	Thin edging slabs with snowbank in early season.
Western Front	66				3	2	1				6	face	yes	Great 5.9-10b slabby face topropes.
Wind Tunnel	78	3	2	1							2	face	yes	Low-angle slab and face in spectacular setting.

Crag Comparison - Multipitch Crags

Crag	Number of routes at each grade											Face or Cracks?	Early Season?	Summary
	page	≤5.6	5.7	5.8	5.9	10a	10b	10c/d	11a/b	11c	Pitches			
Cathedral Peak	100	1	1	1							6	face and cracks	yes	<i>The classic, spectacular, and very crowded spire.</i>
Daff Dome	67			2	1	1			2		4-5	face and cracks	yes	<i>Cracks and face, with some single-pitch at base.</i>
Dozier Dome	160	1	5	4	3	4	2	1			1-4	face and cracks	no	<i>Short multipitch, long single pitch; need two 60m</i>
Drug Dome	130			1			3				3-5	face and cracks	yes	<i>Classic 5.10d's, dirty 5.8, funky 5.10c/5.8 A0.</i>
Eichorn's Pinnacle	107	1	1	1		1					2-5	cracks	yes	<i>Spire with easy notch route, longer direct.</i>
Elleery Bowl	193							1			2	crack	no	<i>Awesome 2-pitch 5.11, cold high and snowy.</i>
Fairview Dome	118			1	1		1				4-12	face and cracks	yes	<i>Crowded classic 5.9 and 5.10c; runout shorter 5.8.</i>
Harlequin Dome	43				1	2		2	1		3-5	face and cracks	yes	<i>Roofs and dihedrals with few knobs.</i>
Lamb Dome	126						3	1	1		2-4	face and cracks	yes	<i>Cracks and golden faces; can link routes.</i>
Lembert Dome	91	2	1	2	1	4	2				2-5	face and cracks	yes	<i>Cracks, slabs, water chutes, and knobs.</i>
Mariolumne Dome	138		1			1	1	1			4-5	face and cracks	no	<i>Hobbit Book and three 5.10s, high and cold.</i>
Matthes Crest	110		1				1				4-15	ridge	yes	<i>The long knife-edge, and a new 5.10 start.</i>
Medlicott Dome	144	1		3	4	1	1	3	1	1	2-6	face and cracks	no	<i>Long gold knobby dome; wet streaks early.</i>
Mountaineer's Dome	47			1	1	1					3-5	face and cracks	yes	<i>A 5.10 crack and runout varied slab routes.</i>
Mt. Conness	176	2						1			5-10	face and cracks	no	<i>High altitude moderates with lots of 3rd/4th class.</i>
Phobos Deimos Cliff	57								1		3	cracks	yes	<i>Steep golden cracks; steep approach hike.</i>
Pywiack Dome	167	2	1		2						2-4	face and cracks	yes	<i>Moderate slabs and steep face & cracks.</i>
Stately Pleasure Dome	34	2	2	2	2	1					2-6	face and cracks	yes	<i>Sunny white granite above Tenaya Lake.</i>
Tenaya Peak	172	1									5-10	face and cracks	no	<i>Long easy climb with early season snow.</i>
Third Pillar of Dana	188								1		5-10	crack	no	<i>High-altitude classic, snow early season.</i>

Fairview Dome

Fairview is the preeminent dome in a region geologists claim has the highest proliferation of granitic domes on earth. The symmetrical 900-foot-high north face displays fascinating evidence of exfoliation. Enormous overhangs and arches clearly demonstrate that for millennia the outer shell of rock has been peeling off as the elements pry at natural flaws. Although there were obvious ways to bypass the curving overhangs, the face remained unclimbed as late as 1958.

Approach

Park in an obvious six-car pullout in trees – the only pullout on the south side of the road – 3.4 miles west of the Tuolumne Store and 4.2 miles east of Tenaya Lake. From the pullout, follow an obvious trail that heads directly from the left (southeast) corner of the parking lot toward the dome. Follow climbers' trail signs; please do not stray from the trail. When the trail splits near the base of the dome, stay on the left



trail for the Regular Route or the right trail for Lucky Streaks. Great Pumpkin starts 50 yards right of Lucky Streaks.

Descent

There is only one descent route: walk south down the giant knobby slab of the dome. The descent is mostly 2nd class with one 3rd class section. Bring approach shoes unless you want to kill your toes. Climbing shoes are not needed for the descent.

After getting down to the bottom, contour back right along the face until you reach the base of Lucky Streaks, then follow climbers' signs back to your car.

From the top of Great Pumpkin, traverse 200 feet of 4th class straight back from the edge to a bowl on the 2nd/3rd class descent. It's wise to stay roped for this section. From there, join the normal descent route.



Regular Route 5.9★★★★★

Time to climb route: 6–8 hours

Approach time: 20 minutes

Descent time: 40 minutes

Sun exposure: afternoon to sunset

Height of route: 900'

The Regular Route of Fairview is listed in *Fifty Classic Climbs of North America* – “routes which ambitious climbers dream of doing” – and there is no doubt it’s one of the climbs to dream about in Tuolumne Meadows. The route follows the longest steep line in Tuolumne and contains pitch after pitch of sustained and rewarding cracks. Views of Daff Dome and the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne River are outstanding, surpassed only by the 360-degree panorama from the summit. The climbing features good pro and variable cracks. As you climb higher the climbing eases and speeds up.

FA: Chuck Pratt and Wally Reed, 8/58.

FFA: Steve Roper and Mark Powell, 1962.

History

Few mountaineers have the good fortune to stumble upon a climbing area as undeveloped as Tuolumne Meadows was in 1958. One such lucky person was Wally Reed, who felt like a child turned loose in a toy store as he puzzled over which should be the first big climb of the region. Reed had noticed half a dozen intriguing route possibilities, but his thoughts kept turning to the symmetrical 900-foot-high north face of Fairview Dome. On its steep north face were two long, conspicuous cracks; the right-hand one looked promising, for it shot up 300 feet and ended in broken rock.

At the 450-foot level was a huge crescent-shaped ledge, and if it could be reached, the remainder of the route looked easier.

Early in the summer of 1958 Reed met 19-year-old Chuck Pratt, who at that time had been climbing for less than a year, and asked him if he would be interested in making an attempt on the north face of Fairview. Pratt agreed immediately, flattered that a man who had labored on El Capitan with Warren Harding would ask him along on a new route. When Pratt arrived in Tuolumne and saw the marvelously direct route Reed had picked out, he knew at once it had the ingredients for a memorable climb.

The first pitch of the climb went free and fast. But higher, as the cliff steepened, the two men were forced into direct-aid techniques. Since he had never done such extensive aid work, Pratt regularly tangled his feet in his aid slings, much to the amusement of Reed, who was completely at home on a long piton ladder. Twice it was necessary to belay in slings, an awkward technique Pratt had done only on practice climbs. So attentive were the men to their world of stone that when the sun disappeared behind a nearby ridge, they were caught by surprise. From a small ledge 400 feet above the ground, the pair hurriedly abandoned the face, satisfied that the route was feasible at least as far as what they called Crescent Ledge.

It was not until August that the two climbers found time to return. They decided to carry bivouac gear on this attempt, which was a wise decision, for it was dusk when they reached Crescent Ledge, and the temperature quickly plunged to the freezing point. Insulated in their sleeping bags, the pair watched the moon rise over the Sierra crest and illuminate a world glowing with granite.

Early the next morning Reed and Pratt began noticing subtle changes in the character of the rock. In the vicinity of Crescent Ledge, flakes and knobs began to appear, and the excited climbers stowed their aid slings and rapidly gained elevation. A four-foot ceiling that cut across the face at the 600-foot level looked formidable, but hidden, juglike holds permitted the obstacle to be free climbed easily. By noon, the two men had reached the rounded summit, amazed by the fact that they had covered the final 500 feet so easily.

In the decades following Reed and Pratt's first ascent, many more climbs have been established on the weathered knobby granite of Tuolumne, but none as long, and few so pleasing from afar.

– *Excerpt from Fifty Classic Climbs of North America, Steve Roper and Allen Steck.*

Strategy

This is one of the best climbs in Tuolumne, so expect a big line and slow parties. It's common to have to return many times before getting a chance to get on the route, and coming mid-week does not help. Early season can be a good way to beat the crowds, but the compromise is that the whole crux section is flowing with water, which raises the grade a notch or two. Also, you must start the route from a receding snow field and it can be difficult trying to keep the rope(s) dry. Late season is another strategy, but often the temperatures have dropped and because the route gets nearly no sun the rock can be frigidly cold.

The best strategy for fast teams is to start the route in the early afternoon after confirming that there are no slow parties above. For most folks, coming early and waiting in line is often the only option. Depending on the speed of the teams in front of you, this can be frustrating. Remember that returning another day is a smarter idea than starting late with slow parties above.

The Regular Route eats up nuts, therefore a double set is recommended. In addition, there are no fixed rappel anchors so nuts

are needed if retreating. Extra nuts, slings, and rappel rings or extra biners are a good idea for any team uncertain of their ability. The crux on the first pitch requires good footwork on small polished edges and a great trick is to top rope some 5.10 faces the previous day, making the edges on the Regular Route seem huge. Almost every section of difficult climbing higher up can be mellowed by stemming and good footwork.

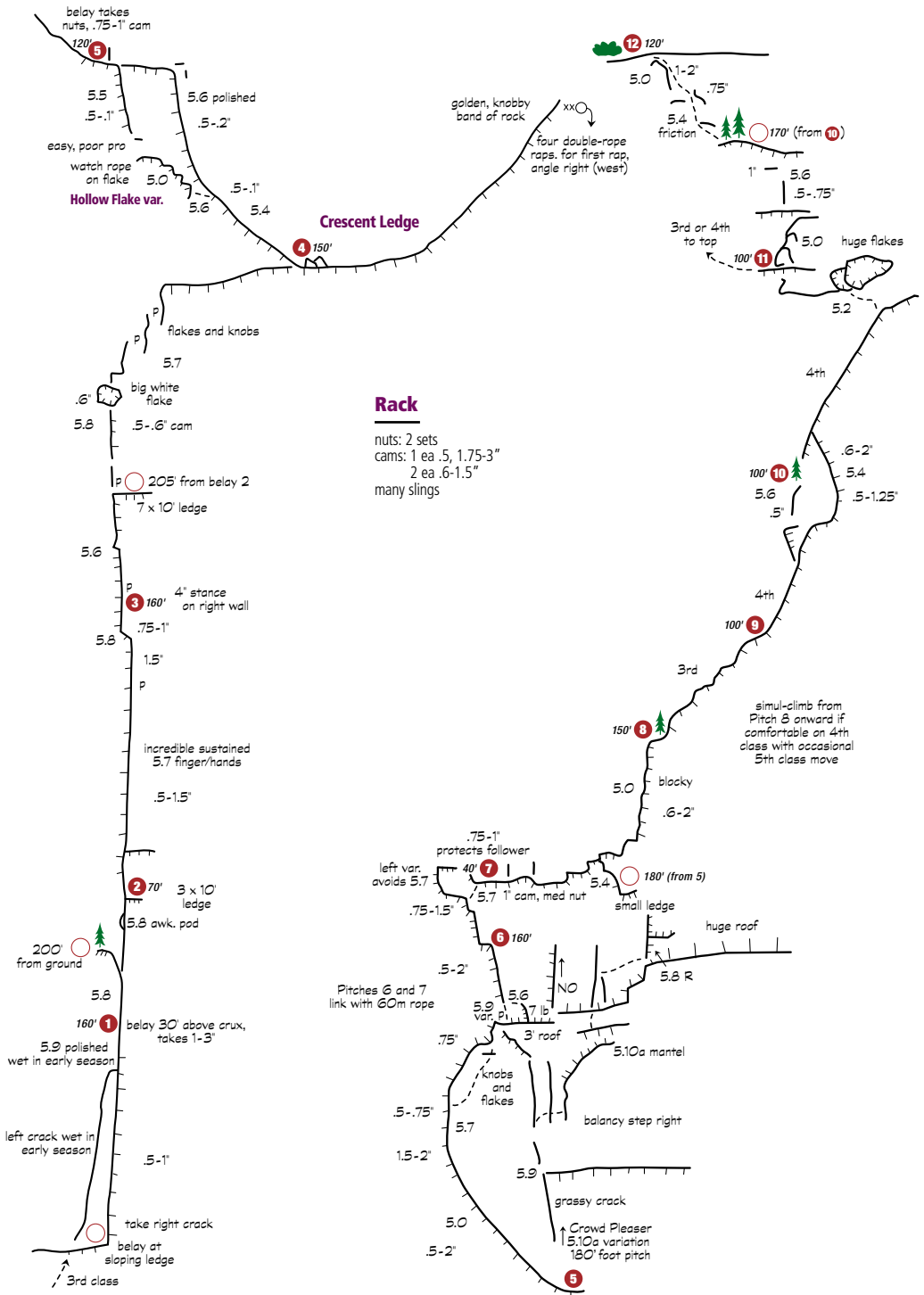
The main safety rule on Fairview, like on any long route in Tuolumne, is NEVER to climb when puffy clouds are in sight – even a tiny one. They usually indicate later thunderstorms, which can easily be deadly high on the exposed dome.

Windjackets and warm gear can be important on the cold north face. The best strategy is to harness and rack up at the car and carry everything with you, thereby avoiding the need to return to the start of the route and robbing marauding rodents of the chance to dine on your pack. Always bring headlamps and consider safety gear depending on your skill level and the season. Nights are freezing even in mid-summer.

For strong parties who get an early start, consider finishing up the day on West Crack, right across the road on Daff Dome (Dome Across From Fairview).

Retreat

Retreat with two ropes by leaving natural pro. At most places on the route, two or three nuts plus slings can be used to safely set a retreat anchor. With two 60m ropes you can reach the ground from the tree on the last rappel, otherwise you'll need to either leave gear or downclimb. From Crescent Ledge you can rappel other routes with two ropes. The anchor conditions on these rappels are unknown.



Rack

nuts: 2 sets
 cams: 1 ea .5, 1.75-3"
 2 ea .6-1.5"
 many slings