

SUPERTOPOTM

YOSEMITE

BIG

Second Edition

WALLS

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The Definitive Guide
To Yosemite Big Wall Climbing

15 New
Routes!

El Capitan



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

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

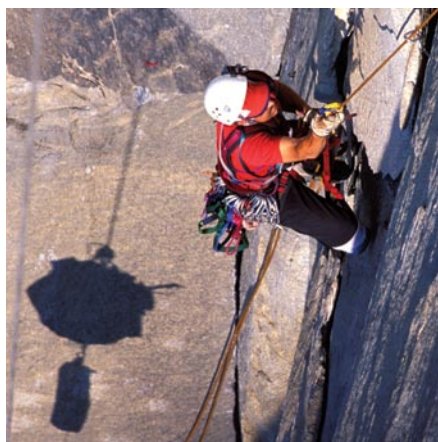


Photo by Corey Rich

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,



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.

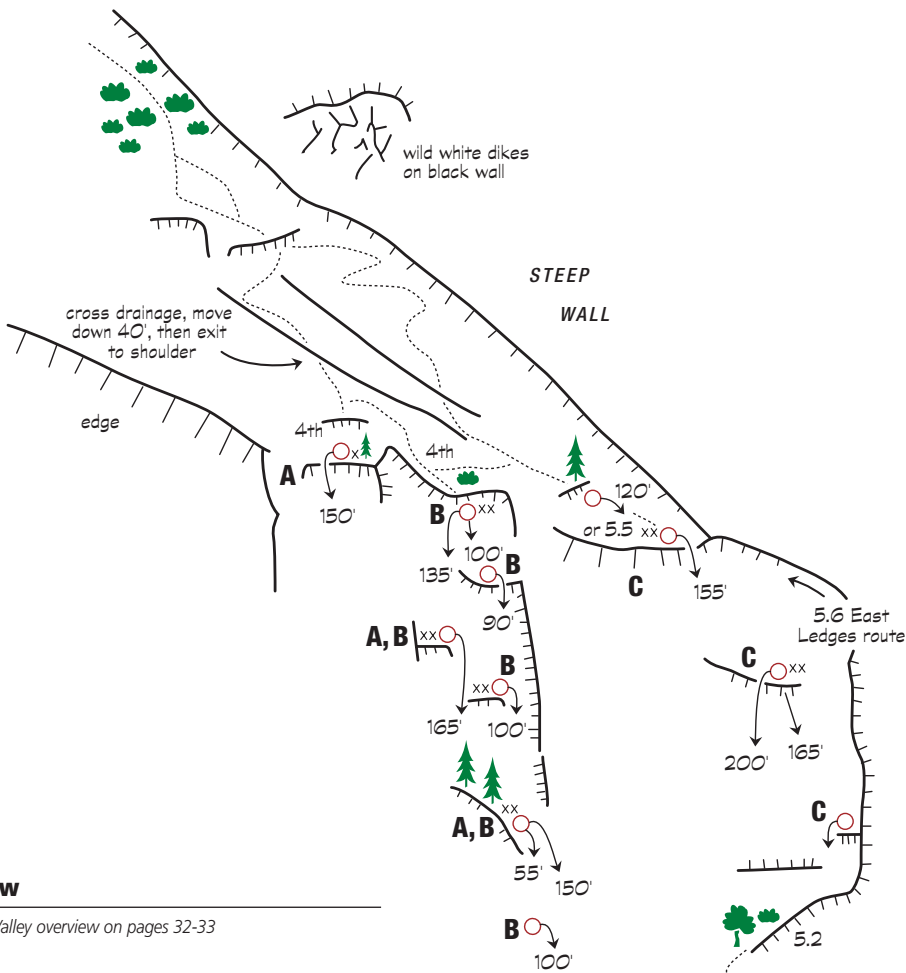
From the base of the rappels, head east down multiple 3rd-class sections joined by faint trails. Eventually, a defined trail will emerge. Follow it down to a boulder strewn drainage, immediately crossing to a trail paralleling the drainage for 300 feet before it breaks off into the trees to the Manure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



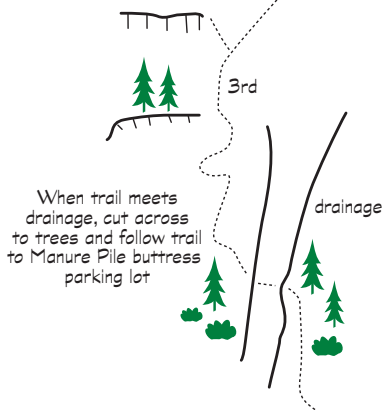
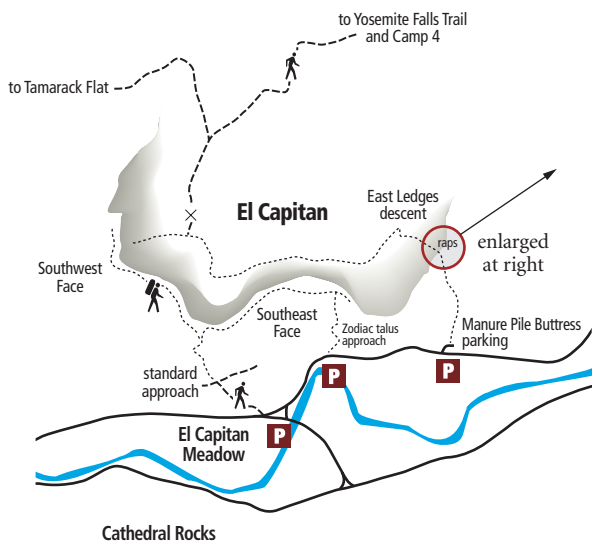
Photo by Chris Johns

East Ledges Descent



Area overview

Complete Yosemite Valley overview on pages 32-33





Routes: West Face

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1 Lurking Fear | 6 Cosmos | 11 The Shield |
| 2 West Buttress | 7 Excalibur | 12 Muir Wall |
| 3 Never Never Land | 8 Salathé Wall | 13 Triple Direct |
| 4 Aquarian Wall | 9 Son of Heart | 14 The Nose |
| 5 Dihedral Wall | 10 Magic Mushroom | |



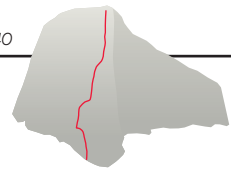
Routes: Center

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 8 Salathé Wall | 15 Tribal Rite | 21 Pacific Ocean Wall |
| 9 Son of Heart Route | 16 New Dawn | 22 Sea of Dreams |
| 11 The Shield | 17 Reticent Wall | 23 North America Wall |
| 12 Muir Wall | 18 Wall of Early Morning Light | |
| 13 Triple Direct | 19 Mescalito | |
| 14 The Nose | 20 South Seas | |

Muir Wall

Approach and descent on page 40

VI 5.13c or 5.9 C4 or A2



The Muir Wall is one of El Cap's greatest natural lines, second only to the Salathé. It boasts large clean corners from the ground to summit with moderate yet sustained climbing. This route is substantially more involved than the Nose or Salathé but technically easier than the Shield or Zodiac.

First ascent history

The first ascent of the Muir in June 1965 registered big wall climbing's boldest style ever. It was the first wall climb to shun fixed ropes, the first climb to be done without a reconnaissance, and most significantly, the first done with a team of only two climbers—the logical progression after the four-man first ascent of the North America Wall.

Yvon Chouinard and TM Herbert started the climb with two 50-pound haulbags holding minimal rations and a paltry bolt kit. Low on the route the team suffered through oppressive heat. Then, on day 3, a storm rolled in and by the fourth night, rain and cold lashed the pair huddled on Gray Ledges. Chouinard recalled the bivvy: "TM had a particularly bad night, shivering so violently that he could hardly speak. When he did he sounded almost delirious. We were despondent and for the moment had lost our vision and courage. Yet we kept any thoughts of retreat to ourselves."

Up higher, storms, heat, and the intense labor of an El Cap first ascent with only two people took their toll. When they reached the Gray Bands they considered, then rejected, a bail onto the Nose before moving up the wild, steep and clean upper dihedrals. Chouinard wrote: "At this point the route becomes vague in my

mind. The artificial climbing blends into the free. The corners, dihedrals, jam cracks, bulges, are all indistinguishable parts of the great, overhanging wall. The pitches never end, and one day merges into another."

As they neared the top both climbers were drained, low on bolts, and struggling with continuously difficult pitches. Yet even as their physical movements became more stressful, their mental awareness grew sharper. "Nothing felt strange about our vertical world," wrote Chouinard. "With more receptive senses we now appreciated everything around us...this ultra-penetrating perception gave us a feeling of contentment that we had not had for years." Chouinard and Herbert summited on the eighth day after drinking the last of their water and placing their last bolt.

Other history

In 1968 Royal Robbins soloed the route to become the first person to solo El Cap. In 1994 Kurt Smith, Scott Cosgrove and Greg Epperson came within 20 feet of an all-free ascent of the Muir Wall. In 2001 Tommy Caldwell and Nick Sagar made the first free ascent. Their line follows the Muir Wall for the first 21 pitches, then does a 7-pitch variation.


Strategy

It is the least crowded A2 route on El Cap. On day one climb without a haulbag to Heart Ledges, then descend the fixed ropes to the ground. Most parties then spend three to five nights on the wall, hopefully stopping at the two best ledges: Gray Ledges and Belay 26. Most anchors will accommodate two portaledge. The Shaft team replaced most belay bolts.

Retreat/Storm

This route offers poor shelter in a storm and most of the upper pitches, as well as some lower pitches, are exposed to runoff. Not a good route to do in the winter. To retreat, rap the route.

Reference: *Climbing*, May 1998: *Camp 4*; *Vertical World of Yosemite*; *Big Wall Climbing*; *Climbing in North America*; *Defying Gravity*.


**DOWN BELOW THERE WERE ONLY
TEN PEOPLE WHO EVEN KNEW WE
WERE UP HERE. EVEN IF WE WERE
SUCCESSFUL, THERE WOULD BE NO
CROWDS OF HERO WORSHIPPERS, NO
NEWSPAPER REPORTS.**

YVON CHOUINARD



		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		
Aid	A5/C5																																			
	A4/C4																										C					C				
	A3/C3																									C	C							C		
	A2/C2				C		C									C			C							A	A	C		C	A	A		C		
	A1/C1	C	C		C		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	A		C						C			
Mandatory free	5.8-5.9	•									•					•																				
	≤5.7																																	•	•	•

Muir Wall

VI 5.13c or 5.9 C4 or A2

