

# Canadian Rock



Select Climbs of the West

Kevin McLane



**FREE  
PREVIEW**

# Canadian Rock Select Climbs of the West

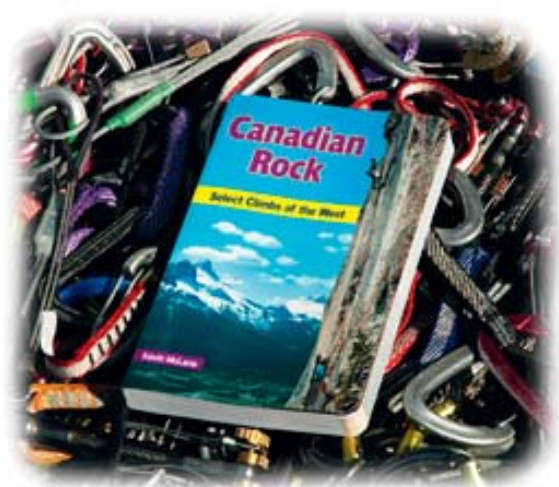
## The Preview Edition

*Canadian Rock : Select Climbs of the West* is a 384 page climbers guidebook that brings together into a single collection 1300 of the great rockclimbs of Western Canada. This free Preview Edition is a 16-page sampling of the book.

The climbs range across Squamish, British Columbia and Alberta, covering the entire spectrum from sport crags to long multi-pitch and alpine crags, across granite, quartzite, gneiss and limestone. Famous centres like the Squamish Chief are covered, scores of little-known jewels and quiet places, and the great mountain crags of the Alberta Rockies. The 1000km of terrain ranges from Pacific rainforest, across near-desert conditions in British Columbia, to the magnificent Rockies.

Over 70 different climbing areas are described, covered by more than 800 colour topos and photos. The colour-coded topos have innovative features not seen elsewhere in a climbers guidebook.

If you're planning a road-trip, want to explore great new areas, or experience some of the best climbing you'll ever encounter, this is the guide for you.



## Full Book Table of Contents

Introduction	.. 8–9
Acknowledgements	10–11
Climbing Areas Map	12–13
Using the Guide	14–15
About Grades	.. 16
Protection Gear	.. 17
The Yin and Yang of Rock	.. 18
Tools for Staying Alive	.. 19
Climate and Wildlife	.. 20
Information, Resources, Books	.. 21

### Squamish Introduction 29–31

The Chief Area – The Malamute	.. 32
The Chief Area – Shannon, Papoose	38
The Chief – Bulleheads	.. 44
The Chief – Grand Wall Base	.. 50
The Chief – The Apron to the Opal	.. 54
The Chief – The Sheriff's Badge	.. 62
The Chief – Shlanay	.. 64
The Chief Backside	.. 70
Long Climbs of the Chief	.. 78
Mt Habrich	.. 94
Bouldering	.. 96
Murrin	.. 106
Smoke Bluffs	.. 118
Conroy Creek	.. 130
Cheakamus Gorge	.. 134
Rogue's Gallery	.. 136
Calcheak	.. 138
Soo River Bluffs	.. 140
Green River Bastion	.. 142

### INDEX of Squamish Climbs .. 146

### British Columbia Introduction . 157

<b>Skaha</b>	.. 158
Skaha – Southeastern Crags	.. 160
Skaha – Belfry, Tottering Pillar	.. 164
Skaha – Morning Glory	.. 166
Skaha – Fortress East, Red Tail	.. 170
Skaha – Doctor's Wall	.. 178
Skaha – Shady Valley North	.. 180
Skaha – Great White Wall	.. 182

### Interior Region .. 186

Yak Check	.. 188
Marble Canyon	.. 190
Kamloops – Roche Lake	.. 192
Vernon – Cougar Canyon	.. 194
Kelowna – Cedar PK, Boulderfields	.. 198

<b>Columbia–Kootenay Region</b>	.. 204
Revelstoke – Waterworld	.. 206
Revelstoke – Begbie Bluffs, Blanket	210
Golden – Spillimacheen	.. 216
Gimli South Ridge	.. 220
Castlegar – Waterline	.. 222

### INDEX British Columbia Climbs .. 224

### Alberta Introduction 236–237

<b>Jasper</b>	.. 238
Jasper – Lost Boys, Rock Gardens	240

### Lake Louise Region .. 244

Lake Louise – Back of the Lake	.. 246
Lake Louise – Goblin Wall	.. 256
Lake Louise – Saddleback	.. 258
Lake Louise – Tower of Babel	.. 262
Lake Louise – Grand Sentinel	.. 264
Lake Louise – Sugarcube	.. 266

### Canmore–Banff Region .. 268

Banff – Borgeaux	.. 270
Banff – Guide's Rock	.. 272
Canmore – East End of Rundle	.. 276
Canmore – Ha Ling	.. 282
Canmore – Grassi Lakes	.. 288
Canmore – Cougar Canyon	.. 296
Canmore – Bataan	.. 302
Canmore – Acephale	.. 310
Canmore – Barrier Bluffs	.. 314

### Kananaskis & Yamnuska .. 318

Burstall Slabs	.. 320
The Fold	.. 324
Joy	.. 326
Kid Goat and Nanny Goat	.. 328
Yamnuska	.. 332
CMC Valley – Ripple Wall Area	.. 346

### Ghost River .. 348

Planter's Valley	.. 350
West Phantom	.. 352
West Phantom – Grey Ghost Wall	.. 354
West Phantom – Bonanza	.. 358
West Phantom – Wild West Wall	.. 360
Along The Ghost River	.. 362
Along The Ghost River, Montana	.. 364
Along The Ghost River, N.Phantom	365
Along The Ghost River, Wully Wall	.. 366
Silver Tongued Devil	.. 368
The Bastion	.. 372
North Ghost – Alberta Jam	.. 378

### INDEX of Alberta Climbs .. 380

## Introduction

Western Canada is a fortunate place to be a climber. The landscape, the climbs, and the climate are among the most varied and beautiful in the world, from the mild west coast of Squamish to the arctic grip of the Rockies, encompassing rainforests and deserts, the edge of the Pacific ocean and high mountain ranges.

The scope of this guide extends across southern British Columbia to the Rockies. It includes the best sport climbing in Canada in the Bow Valley and Ghost River, one of the most renowned granite climbing centres in the world at Squamish, beautiful and little-known alpine cragging, and the spectacular quartzite crags of Lake Louise. It takes place across four major rock types: granite, gneiss, quartzite and limestone, each with its variable flavours. Bringing it together into a single collection has been the underlying reason for this book.

Over 1,300 rock climbs and 75 boulder problems are described, representing very roughly 10% of all the climbs in the west. Among those not included are many great places to visit and little-known good climbs. There are three major sections to the guide: Alberta, British Columbia and Squamish. Alberta has five regional divisions and BC has three. The geographic range from Kananaskis to Jasper, and Castlegar to the Okanagan and Squamish, tries to capture what matters most across 70 different areas, spread over 1,000 kilometres and a 14 hour drive.

The distant origins of this book began in 1978 in the Bow Valley, when Chris Murrell and I spent riveting days on timeless classics like Reprobate, Forbidden Corner, and the Greenwood-Locke. I was hooked. I continued with occasional visits, but 17 years passed before my first trip into the Ghost to climb Bonanza with Karen McNeill, soon followed by Moonshadow at Burstall with Jon Jones. The first glimmerings of a guidebook stretching from the Ghost to Squamish began to take root: so much great stuff to climb and so few climbers across the west even knew it existed. How to pull it off however, was a question with no answer so nothing happened and another decade passed. Then in July 2006 after climbing the hallowed CMC Wall with Chris Atkinson, inspiration came, commitment followed, and the journey began.

It quickly became evident that a guide aimed at only the best climbs would not work. They are spread too widely and frequently clustered with lesser but still attractive climbs. Nor did it seem right to be seduced overly much by popularity. So I developed a set of criteria to help gauge what to include, and how, based on where I thought climbers would be happy to drop their packs in anticipation of a great or a fun day of climbing. As a result, this book evolved into a crag-centred collection of favourite, unknown, and magnificent places, with the central theme of capturing the best climbing experiences on the rock in western Canada.

## Introduction

Quality climbs always grab attention, but not all are necessarily everyone's cup of tea or close to home, they can require time to pull off. Popularity matters, but that's a different kind of draw with a more casual air. The local crag is popular, but not always because the climbs are great. A goal of this book was to somehow represent 'the best' wherever it was, with everything reconciled into these few pages. Quality was measured by how far determined climbers would be willing to travel for a really great day out. Popularity was measured by how frequently people return to the same place, time and again. That helped to rank things so that little-travelled places like Burstall Slabs could receive even-handed treatment on the pages alongside the ever-popular crags of Skaha, and the most famous places like the Grand Wall of the Chief could sit beside unknown gems like Sugarcube or Joy.

Great climbing days in Canada range up to the ice and snow of the highest peaks, so this brought the necessary limitation of rock climbing only—no alpine skills needed—and all climbs car-to-car in a day. The two major styles of sport and traditional climbing are fully represented: as are short climbs and long climbs, alpine crags, climbs in near-desert conditions, small jewels in the forest, and bouldering. Within the realm of rock climbing, the principle was to have something for everyone.

All areas listed are on land where the public is able to roam with relative freedom, but there is a prominent omission: Horne Lake, a limestone sport crag on Vancouver Island described by Brian Wyvill as "a chunk of flowstone that looks like it was kidnapped from Ceuse." Without its private land sensitivities, it would have certainly been included.

Over the years I've had the great opportunity to climb at all the major centres described, and at three-quarters of the crags. In the course of developing the guide I've visited them all with camera and notebook, most of them several times, for early sun, or late sun, or no sun, and hiked hundreds of kilometres of high ground across some of the most beautiful landscapes on earth.

May everyone be inspired to get out there, travel to places they've never seen, and above all, enjoy the climbs.

Kevin McLane



## The Yin and Yang of Rock

There's a lot of rock and a lot of climbs in this guide. The granite, the gneiss, the quartzite and the limestone, sea level to summit, deliver us the epic, the exhilarating, the hard and the satisfying. The character of each particular stone demands different skills, and each has special flavours that bring further depth and interest. The two predominant—and radically different rock types—are Rockies limestone and Squamish granite. As if this were not enough for entertainment, the climatic difference between the Rockies and the Pacific Coast is vast, and as a result, climbing in western Canada is unusually diverse, even from a planetary view.

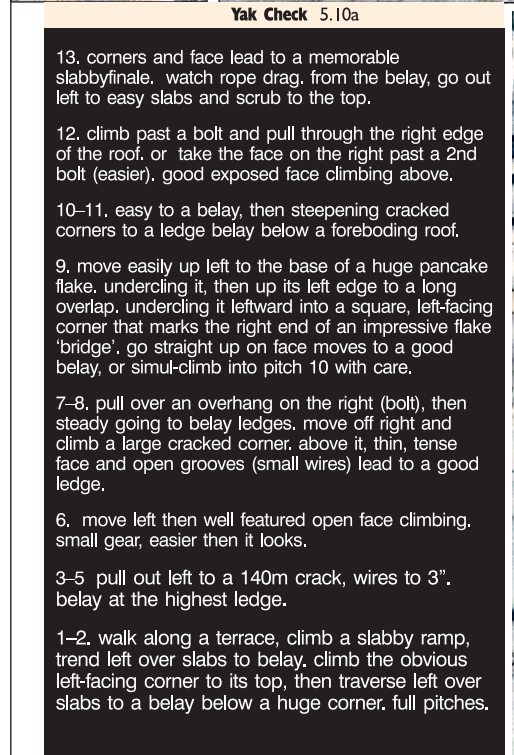
Gneiss, edgy and face-route oriented, is predominant in the southern interior of British Columbia, exemplified by Skaha. Quartzite is predominant in the Lake Louise area, characterised by steep juggy crags and it also exists in the Revelstoke area, steeper even than Lake Louise but more fractured. Limestone varies considerably, across Acepahle with its hints of French sport stone, the grey fractured crags of the Canmore region, and the blue mountain limestone of the Ghost River with, paradoxically, long crack climbs. And then there is Yamnuska, which is all of the above and some.

Climbers across the west are well aware how the different natures of Squamish granite and Rockies limestone affect the character of our climbing life, but curiously, relatively few climbers have become adept at climbing on both. Although perhaps very skilled at one, many can be intimidated at the prospect of pushing it on the other. Squamish granite can be forceful and burly, where a maxim is “when in doubt, layback”. Limestone is subtle, where the maxim is “when in doubt, traverse”.

Or if you prefer, look at it as limestone and granite being the yin and yang of rock: the interdependent polarities of wholeness. This is literally true in the geologic sense. The yin character of limestone derives from the quiet, cooling environment of the ocean, the yang character of granite thrusts upward out of the earth with a lot of hot fuss.

The yang nature of granite cracks is stark and uncompromising, leaving no doubt what must be done: little energy is spent on subtle things. The yin nature of limestone frequently presents a puzzle at how to progress. Its character is enigmatic and complex, demanding patience and time to appreciate, a fine environment to learn the art of routefinding. Climbers who become well-schooled on both granite and limestone achieve something that is beyond the reach of just one. Give it a try.

**Stonefall and loose rock** are ever-present concerns. Take them seriously, but don't be intimidated. Especially at the high crags, protect yourself with a helmet, finely tuned ears, avoidance of exposure, awareness of shelter, and the knack of becoming one with the rock. Belay by a tree if possible. Learn to read stone, how to work loose holds so they remain in place. And always take care for those below. Accidents happen.



13. corners and face lead to a memorable slabby finale. watch rope drag. from the belay, go out left to easy slabs and scrub to the top.

12. climb past a bolt and pull through the right edge of the roof. or take the face on the right past a 2nd bolt (easier). good exposed face climbing above.

10–11. easy to a belay, then steepening cracked corners to a ledge belay below a foreboding roof.

9. move easily up left to the base of a huge pancake flake. undercling it, then up its left edge to a long overlap. undercling it leftward into a square, left-facing corner that marks the right end of an impressive flake 'bridge'. go straight up on face moves to a good belay, or simul-climb into pitch 10 with care.

7–8. pull over an overhang on the right (bolt), then steady going to belay ledges. move off right and climb a large cracked corner, above it, thin, tense face and open grooves (small wires) lead to a good ledge.

6. move left then well featured open face climbing. small gear, easier than it looks.

3–5 pull out left to a 140m crack, wires to 3". belay at the highest ledge.

1–2. walk along a terrace, climb a slabby ramp, trend left over slabs to belay. climb the obvious left-facing corner to its top, then traverse left over slabs to a belay below a huge corner. full pitches.

**Descent.** the safest and quickest way home is to scramble down from the col between Yak's 2 peaks into easy terrain and a trail that leads back to the base. don't rappel the route into other parties. a bail-out at p8 is possible down the slabs, x2-50m ropes.

1 Yak Check 5.10a

Yak Check







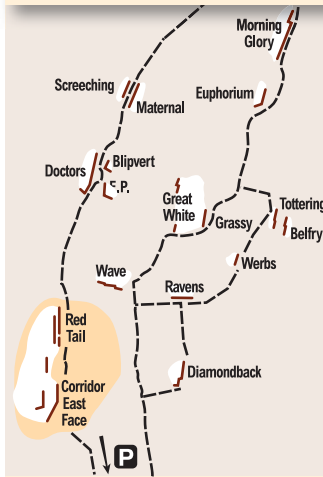
## The Fortress

The Fortress is the predominant and largest climbing area at Skaha. It presents itself to the west and south as a large but unremarkable domed hilltop, but the high impressive rock walls of interest to climbers lie on its steep eastern flanks, hidden from the view of highway travellers and the urban areas. This eastern flank of the Fortress rises out of the cool depths of Shady Valley, one of several deep geological faults that rake north-south through the entire Skaha climbing area.

Stretched out along a near-contiguous half-kilometre of rock, the Fortress is one of the most highly-travelled centres in western Canada. The climbs listed reflect the character of climbing at the Fortress, steep open face climbs and fingery gneiss edges. There is a uniformity to the climbing which has resulted in the majority of routes being principally in the 5.10 range, and that has ensured a considerable and well-merited popularity.

**Gear.** up to 16 draws and a single 60m rope; a standard or light selection for the gear or mixed routes.

Foot Approach	15-20 minutes
Number of Crag	5
Number of Climbs	54
Crag Face	East
Climb Length	12m–60m
Gear	see below
Grade Difficulty	
Type of Climbing	



## Conventions Used in the Guide

- ◆ The Summary box beside the introduction to each crag gives a quick overview of the basic information of what the crag's about.
- ◆ Red route lines on topos indicate gear routes, yellow lines are sport routes, and yellow-dash lines are sport routes that require a few pieces of gear.
- ◆ Pitch grades are placed on multi-pitch topos as close to the middle of the pitch as possible, not necessarily where cruxes are located.
- ◆ Topos are either standard photo-topos, illustrations where that is not possible, and combined photo-topo—line drawings for longer climbs.

Major Region Colours	Squamish
	British Columbia
	Alberta

<b>18</b> up to 5.9	<b>10a</b> pitch grade	<b>x3 raps</b> 3 rappels using 2.50m ropes
<b>12</b> 10a – 10d	<b>1</b> pitch number	<b>27m</b> ± 27m rappel
<b>15</b> 11a – 11c	<b>∞</b> Lower/rap	<b>2</b> rappel station
<b>3</b> 11d and up	<b>x1-60m</b> single 60m rope	

Major Area **Back of the Lake** Crag and Sector **Black Zawn 4**

### Summary Boxes for each Area Introduction

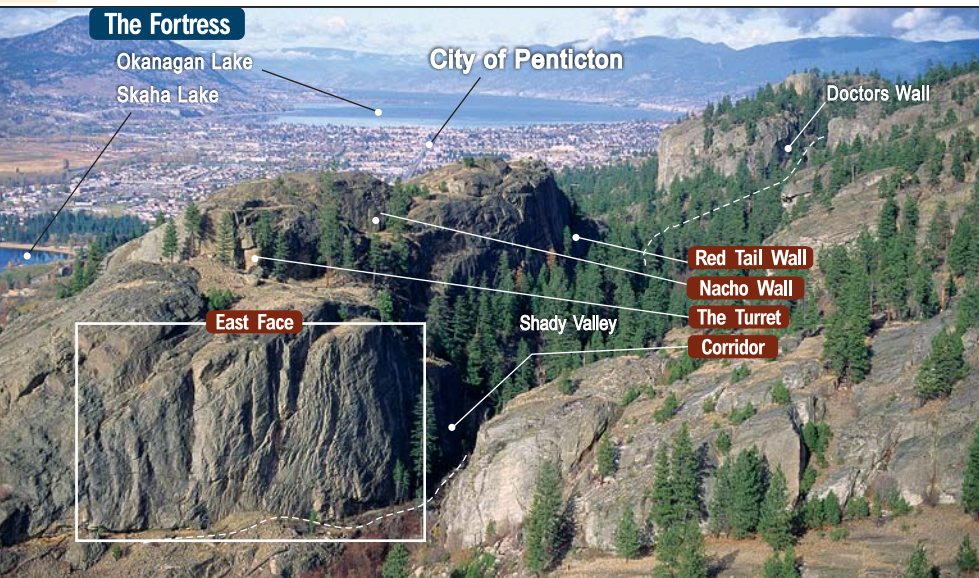
Approach	10–15 mins
Rock	Granite
Climbs and Pitches	21 & 121 ±
Crag Faces	West and North
Climb Length	1-9p
Gear	see below
Descent	Walk off
Drying	Quick mostly, generally better the further south. Open rock dries quickly, cracks a little slower. Snake and Diedre can be slow. Apron Gully climbs are slow.
Best Season	April–October
Grade Difficulty	
Type of Climbing	

An indication of the how many climbs at 5.9 or less, 5.10, 5.11a,b,c, and 11d up.

Drive from Canmore	20 minutes
Foot Approach	15–25 minutes
Rock	Coral Reef
Number of Climbs	50+
Crag Faces	Southeast-ish
Climb Length	12m–30m
Gear	16 draws, 60m rope.
Descent	Lower/rappel
Best Season	April–October
Grade Difficulty	
Type of Climbing	

Sport climbs.  
 Mixed sport and gear.  
 Trad climbs.  
 Approximate ratio of sport and gear routes.

### The Fortress





## Gimli South Ridge

This is a magnificent alpine rock climb in Valhalla Provincial Park which ranks with the best of its class anywhere in the world. Eight pitches of steep cracks, grooves, and fingery walls thread together in a startling narrow line: exposed, strenuous, moderate and captivating, a high crux roof traverse on pitch 7 and not a single bolt. The rock is wonderful stuff, a kind of ancient brew of gneiss, quartzite, and granite.

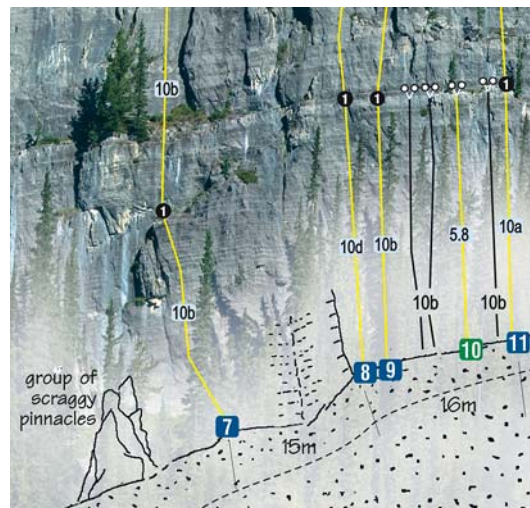
**Approach.** Off Highway 23, 2½hrs south of Revelstoke, turn into and drive through the small town of Slocan to cross the bridge over the Slocan River. Head south down the Little Slocan River forest road for 10km or so. Turn right at a junction into forest roads up Bannock Burn, occasionally signed for 'Valhalla Provincial Park', for 12km to the parking area. From there, a fine trail climbs steadily through the forest for 2hrs to a spectacular alpine setting below the climb. Camping is popular, although many climbers day-trip the route. Water is scarce later in the year.

**Descent.** A steep scramble down the broad east flank narrows onto a ridge to the southeast, down talus chutes, and across a couple wide basins with a 7m rappel to finish. In early summer, consider continuing further on the ridge to reach easy snowfields, although this entails a hike back up the start.

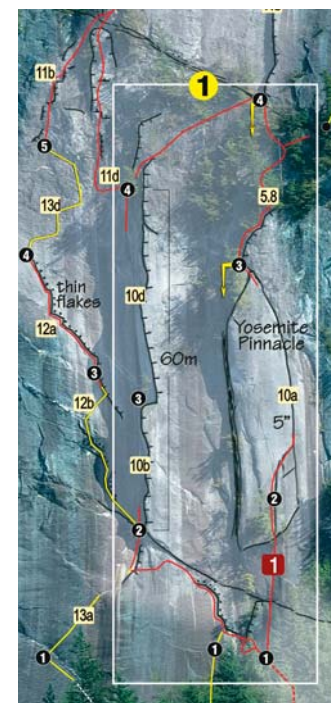
**Gear.** Standard to Full rack (depending on skill) with an emphasis on middling sizes: long pitches, no fixed gear, and all gear belays. Take two ropes and water.

<b>From Revelstoke</b>	2½ hr to Slocan
<b>From Castlegar</b>	1 hr to Slocan
<b>Forest Road Drive</b>	15km. 2wd. ½hr.
<b>Foot Approach</b>	2hrs (if day-trip)
<b>Rock</b>	Beautiful
<b>Climb Faces</b>	South
<b>Climb Length</b>	8 pitches, then easy
<b>Gear</b>	see below
<b>Descent</b>	see below
<b>Best Season</b>	late June–Mid Sept
<b>Grade Difficulty</b>	
<b>Type of Climbing</b>	

## Examples of Tops in the Guide



From the Silver Tongued Devil Topo  
Ghost River Valley



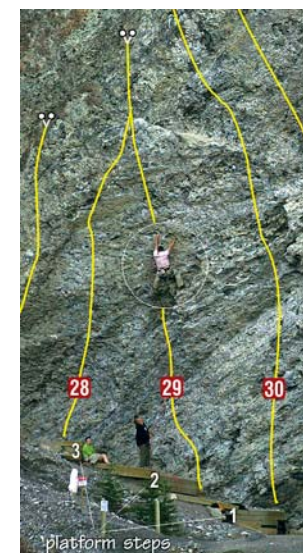
From the Tantalus Wall Topo  
Squamish



From the Sky Crag Topo  
Squamish



From the Saddleback  
Topo Lake Louise



Sector Meathooks  
Grassi Lakes, Canmore

### Gimli South Ridge





## The Back Of The Lake

Lake Louise is one of the premier climbing centres in Canada, and the magnificent crag that lies at the west end of the lake offers one of the finest concentrations of high-quality rockclimbs in North America. The extraordinarily beautiful location of the lake, backdropped by Mount Victoria and near the Trans Canada Highway mean it is also one of North America's top mountain destinations for tourists, so expect to be mingling with them in the area.

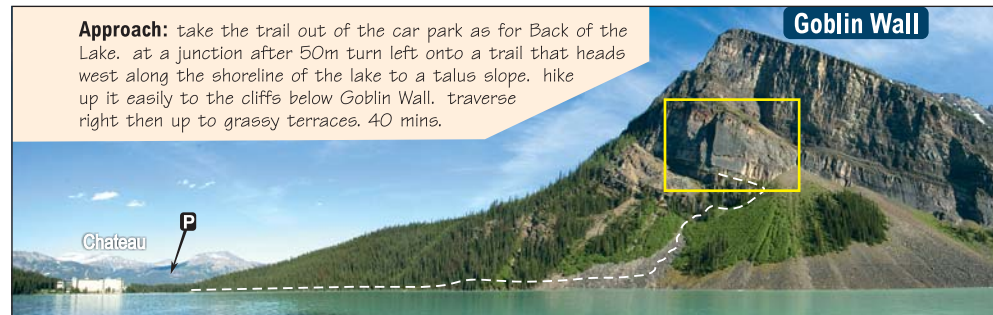
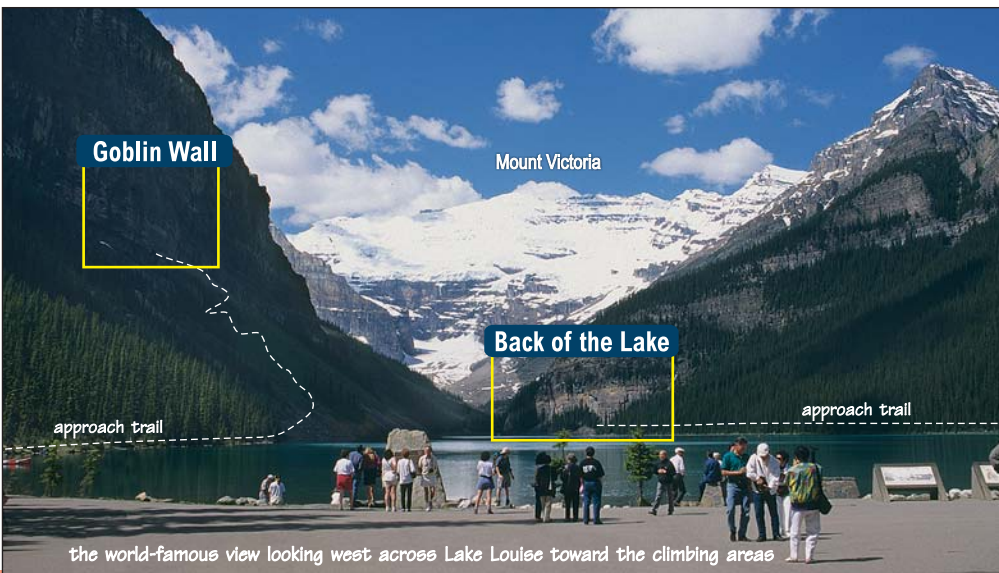
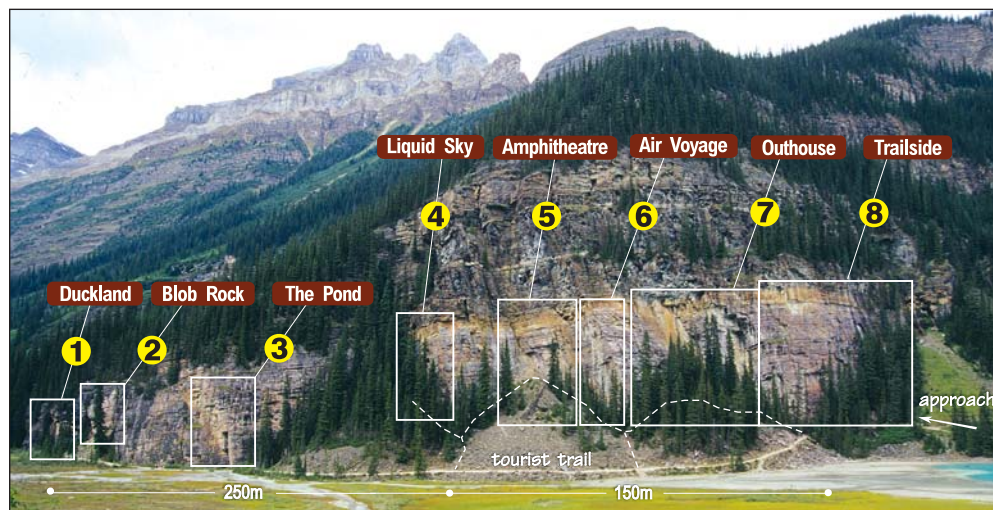
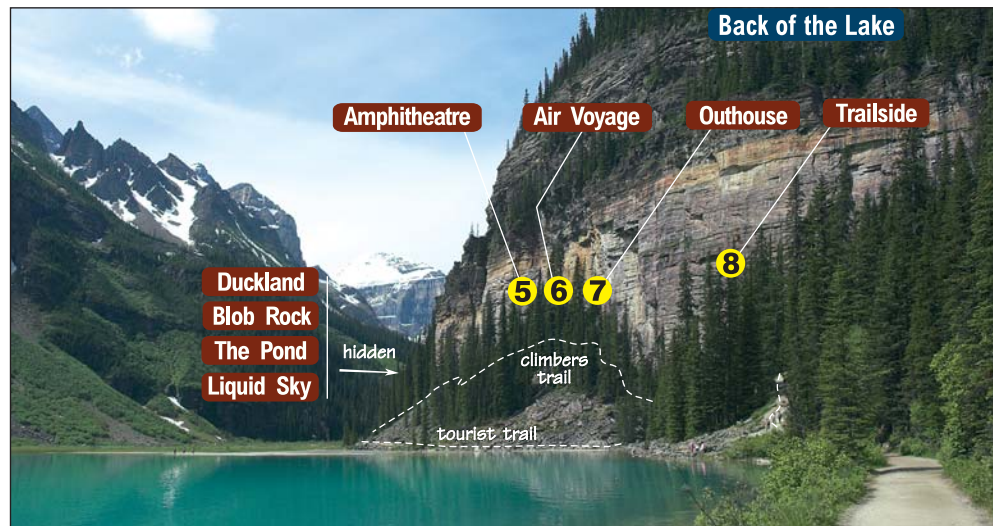
**The Back of the Lake** is a series of south east-facing quartzite buttresses and walls almost a half-kilometre in extent ranging up to 50 metres high. The rock is uniformly steep, solid, and juggy, presenting a stellar array of sport, gear, and mixed routes described here across eight sectors. This is a mountain crag with a southeastern aspect, on any day conditions may vary from windy to calm and cool to hot. Go prepared.

**Goblin Wall** on the southern side of the lake shares the same exceptional quartzite and magnificent climbing, but is a chill place except in warm weather.

**Approach.** A 25 minute walk along a wide, flat trail from the large, intense tourist parking area 5km up from Lake Louise. Avoid arriving between 10am and 3pm. Goblin Wall is only 15 mins longer to approach.

**Gear.** 15-16 draws, 60m rope, Light Rack; Standard Rack for Goblin.

Drive from Canmore	1¼hr
Drive from Golden	1¼hr
Foot Approach BOTL	25 minutes
Foot Approach Goblin	40 minutes
Rock	Quartzite
Number of Climbs	71
Crag Faces	SE (BOTL). NW (G)
Climb Length	20m-3p.
Gear	see below
Descent	Lower/rap
Best Season	Early June-Late Sept
Grade Difficulty	
Type of Climbing	



**Approach:** take the trail out of the car park as for Back of the Lake. at a junction after 50m turn left onto a trail that heads west along the shoreline of the lake to a talus slope. hike up it easily to the cliffs below Goblin Wall. traverse right then up to grassy terraces. 40 mins.

JASPER

LAKE LOUISE

CANMORE

KANANASKIS

YAMNUSKA

GHOST RIVER



## Silver Tongued Devil

Silver Tongued Devil is a fine south-facing crag overlooking the North Ghost parking, sharing the same hill as the Bastion around the corner to the north. The scenic vistas from the crag down the Ghost River valley and the surrounding peaks are inspiring. However, unlike other Ghost crags all pitches are 30m or less and fully bolted, and all that's needed for gear are 14-16 draws and a 60m rope. The day gets off to brisk start with a splash through the river to reach the trailhead.

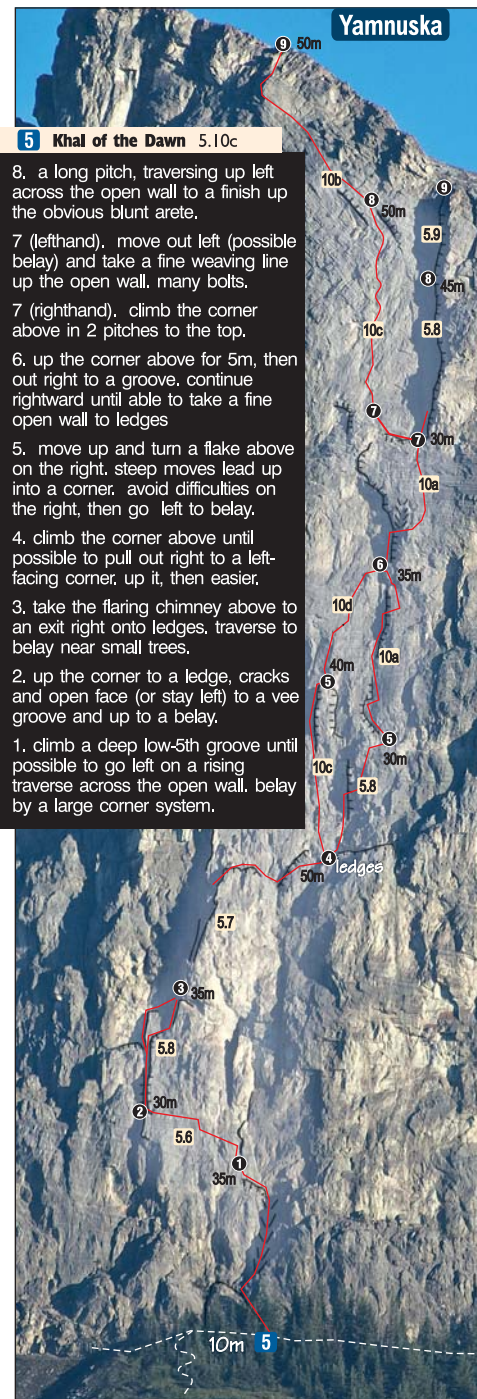
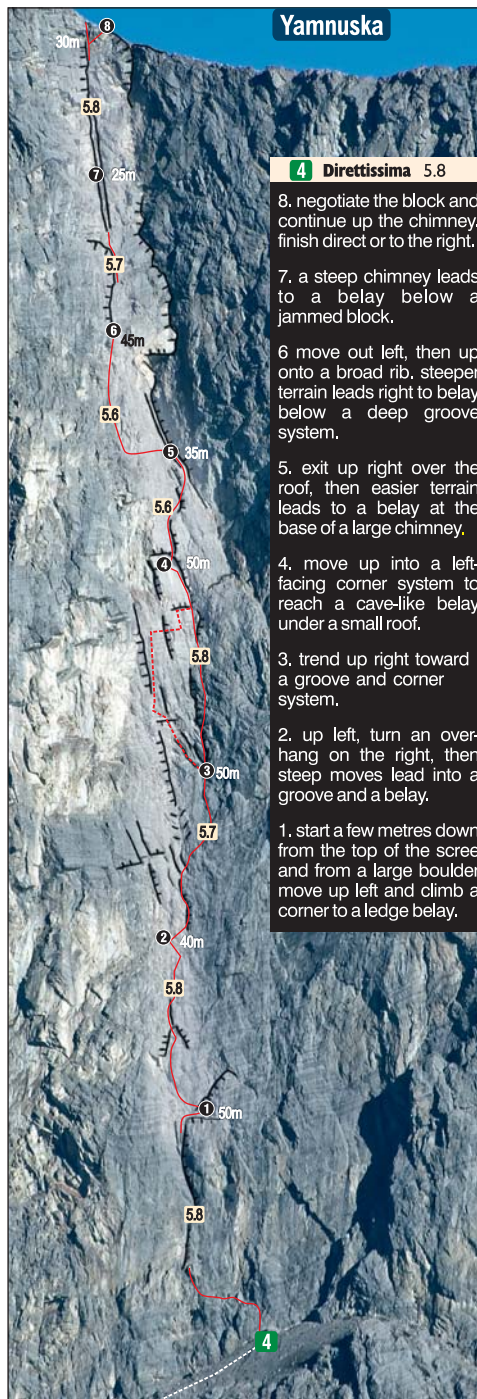
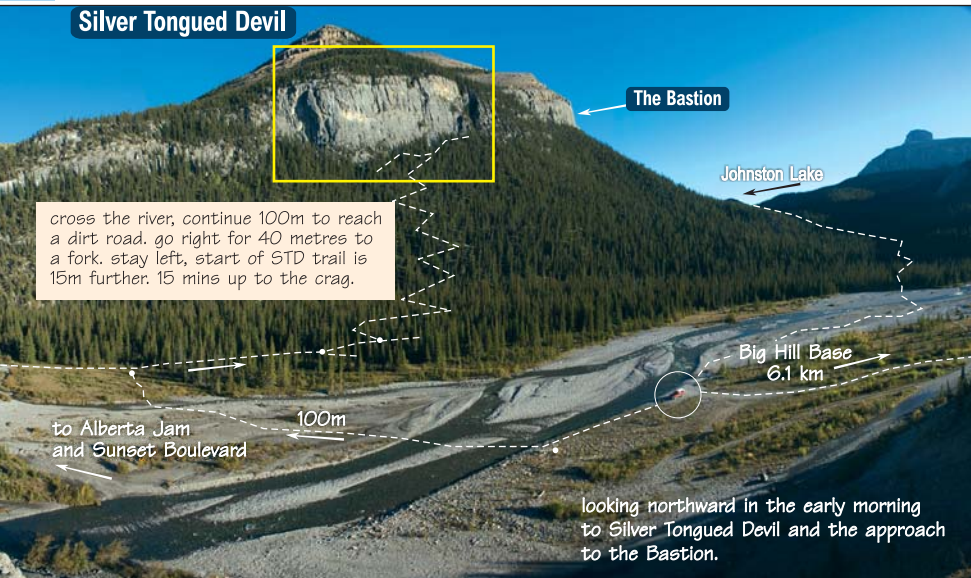
Silver Tongued Devil has a long season, April to October, due to its sunny character and lower wind exposure, with rock that is exceptionally good crozzley limestone, giving beautiful high-angle face climbing. The climbs are up to 4 pitches, and almost uniformly are 5.10s. They are packed close together, but are almost entirely independent lines of bolts, so once the start is determined, routefinding is a matter of following the bolts. This selection of 11 climbs in the centre and right sectors is a sampler of the many fine sport climbs.

Drive from the Big Hill	20 mins
Foot Approach	20 minutes
Car to Car	3hr+
Rock	Limestone
Number of Climbs	11
Crag Faces	South
Climb Length	27m–4 pitches
Gear	14 draws, 1–60m rope.
Descent	Rappel
Best Season	April–October
Grade Difficulty	
Type of Climbing	

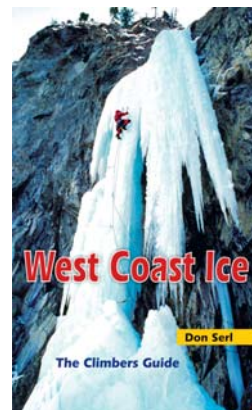
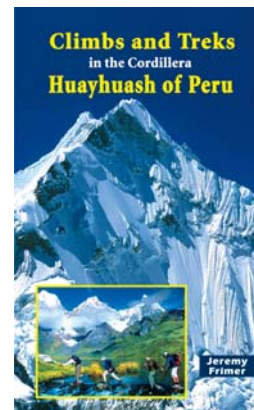
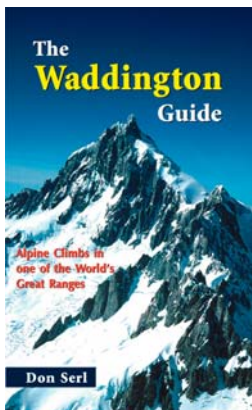
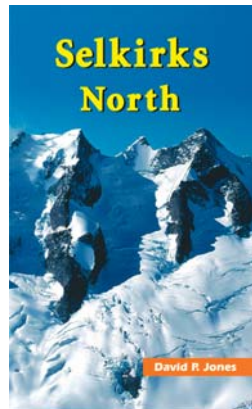
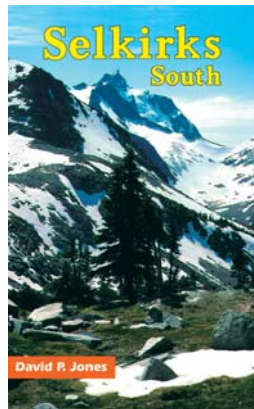
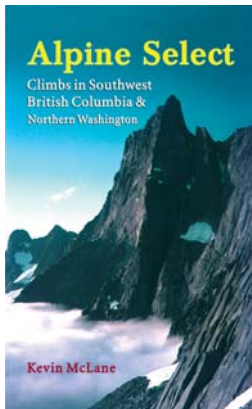
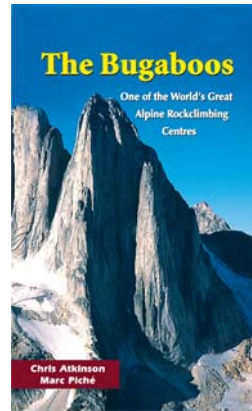
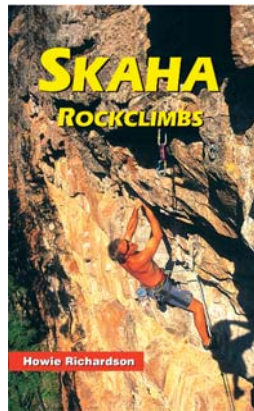
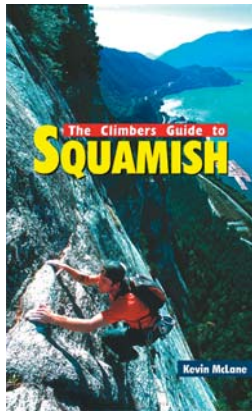


JASPER  
LAKE LOUISE  
CANMORE  
KAMANASKIS  
YAMNUSKA  
GHOST RIVER

### Silver Tongued Devil





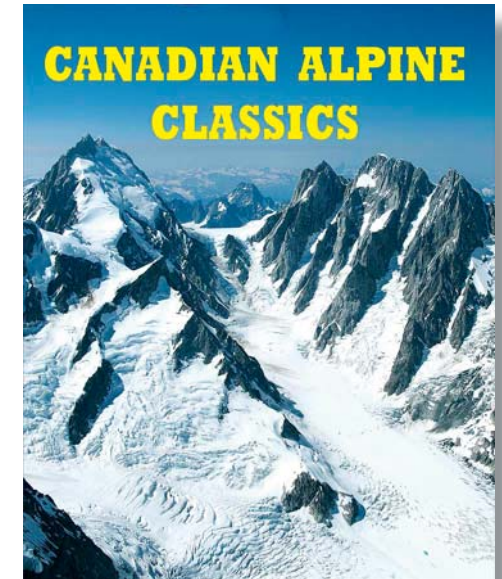


## For Publication 2011

### Authors

Kevin McLane  
Marc Piché  
Chris Atkinson

288 pages  
Hard Cover  
Large Format  
Coffee-Table style



**Canadian Alpine Classics** is a large format hard-cover coffee-table book from Kevin McLane, Marc Piché, and Chris Atkinson showcasing Canada's most celebrated alpine routes. This exciting 'best-of Canada' collection defines a treasury of world-class mountaineering from British Columbia and Alberta into the far northern Arctic. The majority of climbs are at popular grades of difficulty, on rock and ice, on famous iconic peaks, traverses, and legendary rockclimbs high in the alpine. Others are epic testpieces of fortitude on rock and ice, and beautiful easy climbs. **Canadian Alpine Classics** has climbs and challenge for everyone. For publication by High Col Press in 2011.

**Over 50 guest contributors** will present stories of successful ascents of the climbs, creating a unique collection of evocative literature to inspire climbers everywhere. The book will be rich with photography, with hundreds of glorious photos of climbers in action, mountain ambience, and stunning portraits of Canada's greatest mountains.