

# Best Climbs

## Denver and Boulder

Over 200 of the Best Routes in the Area

STEWART M. GREEN

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**FALCON**GUIDES

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## HAPPY HOUR CRAG

Happy Hour Crag is one of Boulder Canyon's most popular climbing venues, especially on evenings after locals get off work. The south-facing cliff offers lots of routes, mostly of moderate grades. Come early or on weekdays to have the crag to yourself. If the parking lot is full, it's busy up there.

Happy Hour is popular for top roping since the crag's summit is easily accessed by foot by hiking up a gully on the left side of the cliff. If you're top roping, bring slings and webbing up to 30 feet long to rig anchors from trees and gear. Use extreme caution when setting up top ropes. Don't knock rocks off and make sure you're tied in on the cliff edge. Serious accidents have occurred on the cliff top. Bring a rack with sets of Stoppers, TCUs, and cams to 4 inches if you plan to lead. No sport routes are at Happy Hour, and only a few of the routes have bolt anchors.

**Finding the crag:** From the bridge at the junction of Canyon Boulevard and Arapahoe Avenue at Boulder Canyon's mouth, drive west up CO 119 for 6.8 miles and park in a pullout on the left (south) side of the highway. Happy Hour Crag is high on the slope directly north of you. Cross the highway and hike up a steep trail to the west end of the cliff base. Hiking time is ten to fifteen minutes.

**Descent:** Descend from the top by scrambling down a steep gully on the west side of the cliff.

Happy Hour Crag has been the scene of many top roping accidents and a few fatalities. Use extreme caution on the cliff top when setting up your anchors. Make sure that you're tied into the end of your rope and that it's firmly anchored if you're creating a top rope anchor at the cliff edge.

**1. Left Side** (5.5) Crack system on the far left. Good beginner lead with lots of gear. Climb past a triangular block to a hand crack.

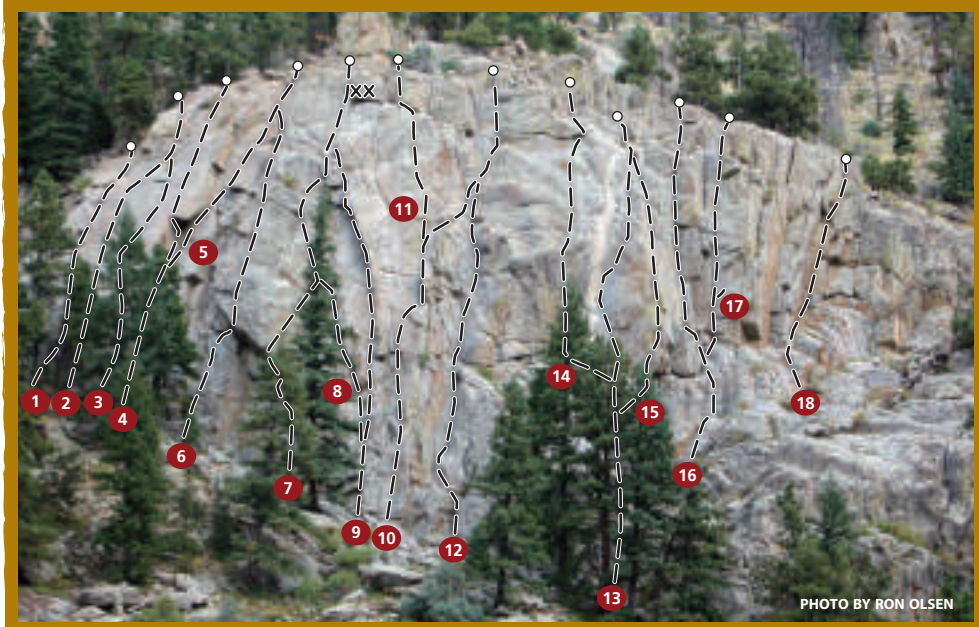
**2. I, Robot** (5.7) Start right of a tree. Climb a shallow right-facing dihedral, then finish up a crack.

**3. Are We Not Men** (5.7) Start just right of *I, Robot*. Work up a right-facing corner and easily pull over a roof. Continue up a crack to the top.

**4. Twofers** (5.8) Quality climbing. Start at the base of a groove. Climb a right-facing corner on the left to a short dihedral to a roof. Make exciting moves left around the roof and climb easier rock to the summit.

**5. Twofers Bypass** (5.8) Variation to *Twofers*. Climb to the dihedral below the roof, then launch up right along an angling crack system.

## Happy Hour Crag



**6. The Big Spit** (5.9) Begin below the left side of a big roof. Climb a corner to the roof, turn it on the left, and jam a good crack.

**7. Rush Hour** (5.12a) Start below the right side of the roof. Climb a corner to a hanging flake. Traverse up left and make strenuous moves over the roof (5.12a). Follow easier cracks to the top.

**8. Last Call** (5.9+) Sustained, physical, and good. Begin in the crack system right of *Rush Hour*. Climb cracks to the base of a left-facing corner. Work up left past some roofs to a tricky traverse left. Finish up *Rush Hour's* cracks.

**9. Dementia** (5.10a) Best on the cliff. Start up the next crack right of *Last Call* and climb to a V-shaped left-facing corner. Jam the finger crack up the tight corner. Above, finish up cracks to a 2-bolt anchor.

**10. Malign** (5.7) Varied moves and good pro. Climb a broken right-angling corner system, keeping right of a painted peace sign and a steep face to a final open book.

**11. Thrill of the Chaise (aka Cheers)** (5.10a) Climb *Malign* to the peace sign, then launch directly up a steep face past a couple bolts and nut placements to a 2-bolt anchor below the top.

PHOTO BY RON OLSEN

**12. Nightcap** (5.9) Good climb with a short crux. Climb broken cracks to an open dihedral. Stem and jam up the dihedral past a bulge to more corners to a crux upper bulge. Finish up a nice crack in a corner.

**13. Grins** (5.8) Excellent jamming. Start at a rock spike at the cliff's low point. Climb 50 feet to a hanging tooth. Jam a good crack up the face right of a vertical white pegmatite band to the summit.

**14. Last Laugh** (5.11a) The face left of *Grins*. Climb *Grins* to the top of the hanging tooth, step left to a bolt, and climb directly up past two more bolts to a high crux and anchors on a ledge. 3 bolts to 2-bolt anchor.

**15. Teetotaler** (5.11a) Climb *Grins* to the tooth or broken terrain to the right. Climb to the base of a hanging arête. Work up the arête with heel hooks and palms past four bolts. Finish at *Grins's* 2-bolt anchor or the cliff top.

**16. Hands Off** (5.7) Short but fun. Scramble up easy rock to the base of a dihedral. Stem and layback up the dihedral to the top.

**17. The Great Race** (5.9+) A short toughie. Scramble to the base of the crack and corner right of *Hands Off*. A tricky start leads to easier climbing.

**18. Cruel Shoes** (5.9) Stem up the short dihedral on the far right side of the face.

## THE BOULDERADO

The Boulderado, a southwest-facing cliff, rises above the north side of the highway. The cliff, named for a landmark Boulder hotel, is deservedly popular with its perfect granite and sunny exposure. On nice days, particularly on weekends, ropes usually hang from almost every route. It's perfect for beginning leaders and for top roping. A couple routes have bolt anchors, while others require long slings to rig top rope anchors from trees and gear. The four routes on the steep right side are much harder than those on the main face.

**Finding the crag:** From the bridge at the junction of Canyon Boulevard and Arapahoe Avenue on the west side of Boulder, drive west up CO 119 for 8.6 miles. Park on the left (south) side of the highway in a spacious pullout. Cross the busy highway and hike up a climber trail to the cliff base. Hiking time is five minutes.

**Descent:** To descend from the cliff top, scramble down the left side to the base.

**1. Jam It** (5.8) Start at the cliff's left side below a big roof. Climb easy rock to a crack in the right side of the roof. Hand jams up the crack lead to a scrambling slab finish.

## The Boulderado



**2. Ho Hum** (5.4) Edge up a slab to a pine tree on a ledge. Step left and climb a right-facing corner. Finish up left to the top.

**3. Idle Hands** (5.6) Excellent. Climb a slab to a bulge to a crack system. Face climb up a headwall to an easier finish.

**4. Mons** (5.5) Smear up a fun slab, then jam a short crack. Work up broken cracks above to the cliff top.

**5. Fistula** (5.4) Another slab start leads to an easy fist crack.

**6. Qs** (5.9+) Good climbing on the left side of the lower right face. Face climb left of an edge. 6 bolts to 2-bolt anchor.

Around the corner to the right of Qs are three hard routes: *Jazz on the Mezzanine* (5.12b), *Hell in a Bucket* (5.12d), and *Suite 11* (5.11c).

### CASTLE ROCK

Castle Rock, one of the Boulder's most famous crags, towers above the highway's south shoulder. A gravel road swings around the south side of the cliff, giving easy access to the climbs. Almost sixty routes and variations ascend Castle Rock, ranging from 5.0 to 5.14. Expect good crack climbing on the moderate trad lines. Bring a standard Boulder rack with sets of Stoppers, TCUs, and cams to 4 inches.

**Finding the crag:** The rock, towering above CO 119, is 11.9 miles

# Castle Rock—West Face



west of Boulder. A gravel road turns south at the crag's northwest corner and swings around its south face. Park below the impressive south face. The longest approach is thirty seconds.

**Descent:** Descend from the summit by downclimbing the north face to a pine tree with a rappel chain. Rappel and scramble down to a path that leads west to the road. Use caution, particularly in winter or after rainstorms, when descending. Many routes also have rappel anchors.

**1. Skunk Crack** (5.9+) Locate two cracks. *Skunk* is the left one. Bouldering moves lead to a shallow chimney to a crack on the right. Climb easier rock to a 2-bolt anchor.

**2. Comeback Crack** (5.10b) Jam a finger crack to a bulge, then climb an unprotected prow (5.7 R). Finish at a 2-bolt anchor.

**3. Curving Crack** (5.9) Layback or jam a corner crack. Stem and layback a left-curving corner to a roof. Above, climb a crack to a 2-bolt anchor.

**Descent:** Rappel.

**4. Bailey's Overhang** (5.8) Follows a right-facing corner. **Pitch 1:** Jam a fist crack to a ramp. Climb the ramp to a wide crack. Awkward moves lead past the overhanging crux, then jam a crack in a right-facing corner to a belay from a horn to the left. Rappel 105 feet from a cable around a block to the ground or do **Pitch 2:** Climb easier cracks and corners to the top.

**5. The Final Exam** (5.11a) No topo. Classic bouldering problem. Climb a 20-foot bulge with fingertip laybacks. Above the problem, climb slabs to the *Pass/Fail Option* (5.11a) roof, traverse right to *Coffin Crack*, or downclimb slabs to the left.

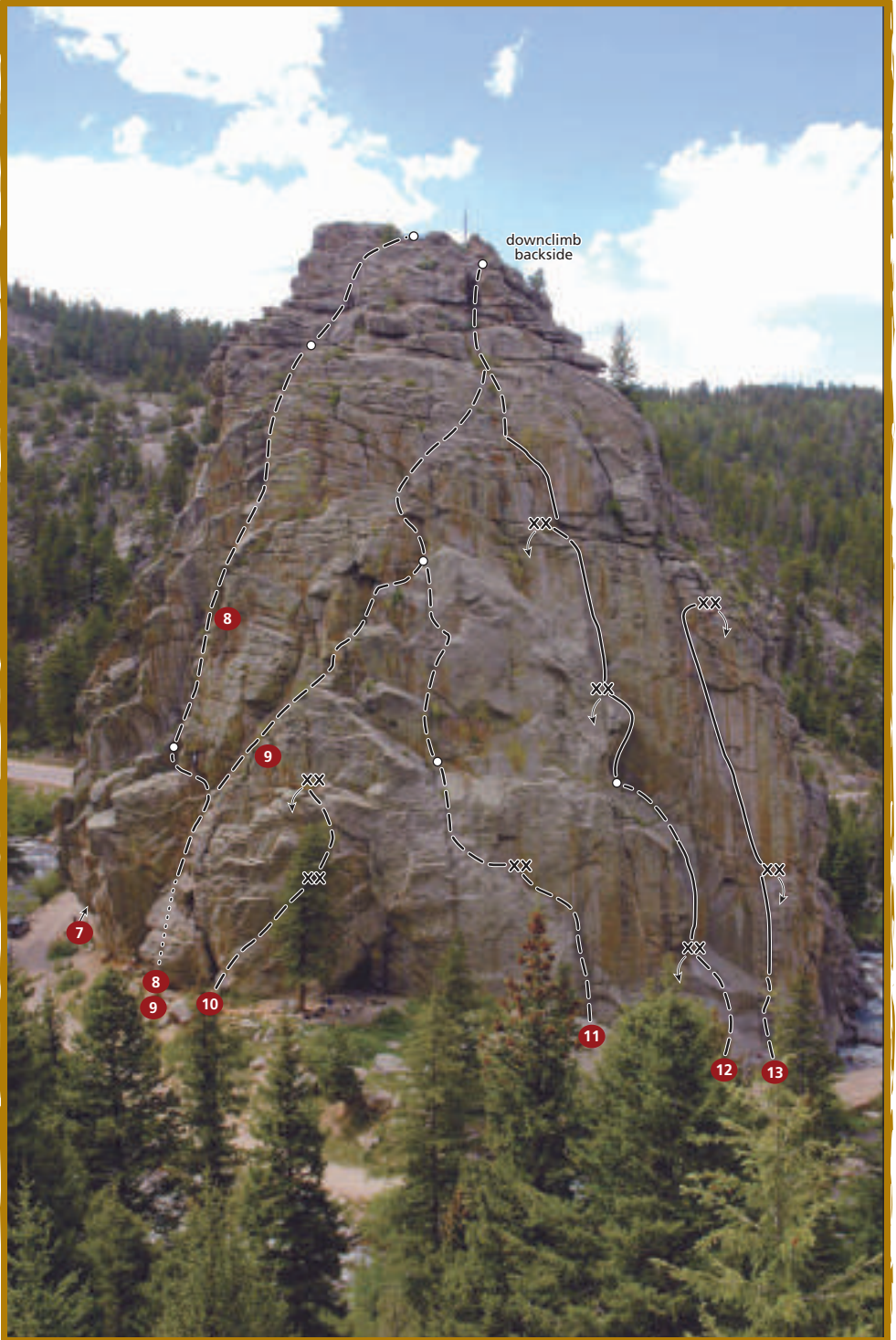
**6. Coffin Crack** (5.10b) No topo. Strenuous off-width crack. **Pitch 1:** Wrestle up an off-width crack to a belay above the slot. **Pitch 2:** Above, jam a hand crack over a roof (5.10) and climb to the top. **Descent:** Walk off or after pitch 1, rappel from anchors 15 feet right from the belay.

**7. The By Gully** (5.9+) No topo. Immediately right of *Coffin Crack*. **Pitch 1:** Climb an insecure crack, then thrutch up an off-width crack and a couple slots. Scoot left and belay atop *Coffin Crack*. **Pitch 2:** Climb up and over a roof and continue up.

After leading the first ascent of *The By Gully* in 1964, Royal Robbins said, "By golly, it went."

**8. Cussin' Crack** (5.7) Good moderate. Start in an obvious cave/cleft. **Pitch 1:** Climb a chimney up the cleft (5.5) or the slab right of it (5.8) to a trough. After 65 feet, exit left and climb up left to a belay stance below a corner. **Pitch 2:** Climb cracks into a V-shaped corner—Cussin' Crack. Work up the corner (5.7) to a long corner (5.6) to a good belay ledge. **Pitch 3:** Scramble up easy rock to the top.

# Castle Rock—South Face





**9. Jackson's Wall** (5.6) Popular and fun classic. Begin at the left side in a cave. **Pitch 1:** Long pitch. Climb the cleft up right past chockstones, then up a diagonal trough to a face. Go right and climb to a ledge with a 2-bolt anchor. **Pitch 2:** Stem up left and climb a headwall (5.6) to a ledge. Climb up right to the summit. **Descent:** Scramble down the north side, trending left to a tree with a rappel chain.

**10. Tongo** (5.11a R) Begin around the corner from *Jackson's Wall*. **Pitch 1:** Follow a right-leaning ramp (5.10a R) to a belay stance with a 2-bolt anchor. **Pitch 2:** Move right and jam up a short finger crack (5.11a) to a good ledge with a 2-bolt rap anchor.

**11. South Face** (5.10a) **Pitch 1:** Layback a short right-facing dihedral (5.8) and hand traverse left (5.10a) to a ledge. Move left past bolts and follow a ledge system up left to a crack (5.6) and a belay ledge with a bolt and piton. **Pitch 2:** Climb directly (5.7) to a right-angling ramp and corner. Climb the ramp to a tricky face traverse up left (5.9) to a crack. Continue (5.9) to a belay ledge. **Pitch 3:** Finish up *Jackson's Wall*. Climb a crack, then work left and back right up a corner system. Finish up left over ledges to the top.

**12. Athlete's Feat** (5.11a) Superb and sustained crack climb. Begin at a pointed boulder beside the road. **Pitch 1:** Crank the crux mantle (5.11a) onto a sloping slab and belay at a

In 1964 the great Yosemite climber Royal Robbins, belayed by Pat Ament, made the first free ascent of *Athlete's Feat*. The route, with its five short pitches including four 5.10 pitches, was the most sustained free climb in the United States at that time. Royal wore Tretorn tennis shoes from Switzerland for the ascent.

2-bolt anchor. **Pitch 2:** Layback the overhanging corner above (5.10d) and jam an easier crack to a belay. **Pitch 3:** Layback or jam a corner crack (5.10b/c) for 45 feet to a belay. **Pitch 4:** Work up a tricky corner (5.10b) to a 2-bolt anchor on the left. Make two 100-foot rappels to the ground or do **Pitch 5:** Climb a crack (5.9+) above the belay or move left and climb a corner (5.8) to the summit.

**13. Country Club Crack** (5.11b/c) Boulder Canyon classic crack climb. **Pitch 1:** Grab polished holds (5.11c) past 2 bolts. This boulder start is the route crux. Jam an awkward hand crack (5.9) to The Bar, an airy belay ledge. 65 feet. **Pitch 2:** Jam a sustained hand crack (5.10) to a roof. Pull the roof and jam an insecure finger crack (5.11a) to easier rock and a 2-bolt anchor up right. **Descent:** Rappel with double ropes, or rappel with a 200-foot (60-meter) rope and swing over to *Athlete's Feat's* second anchors.

# Contents

Introduction **x**

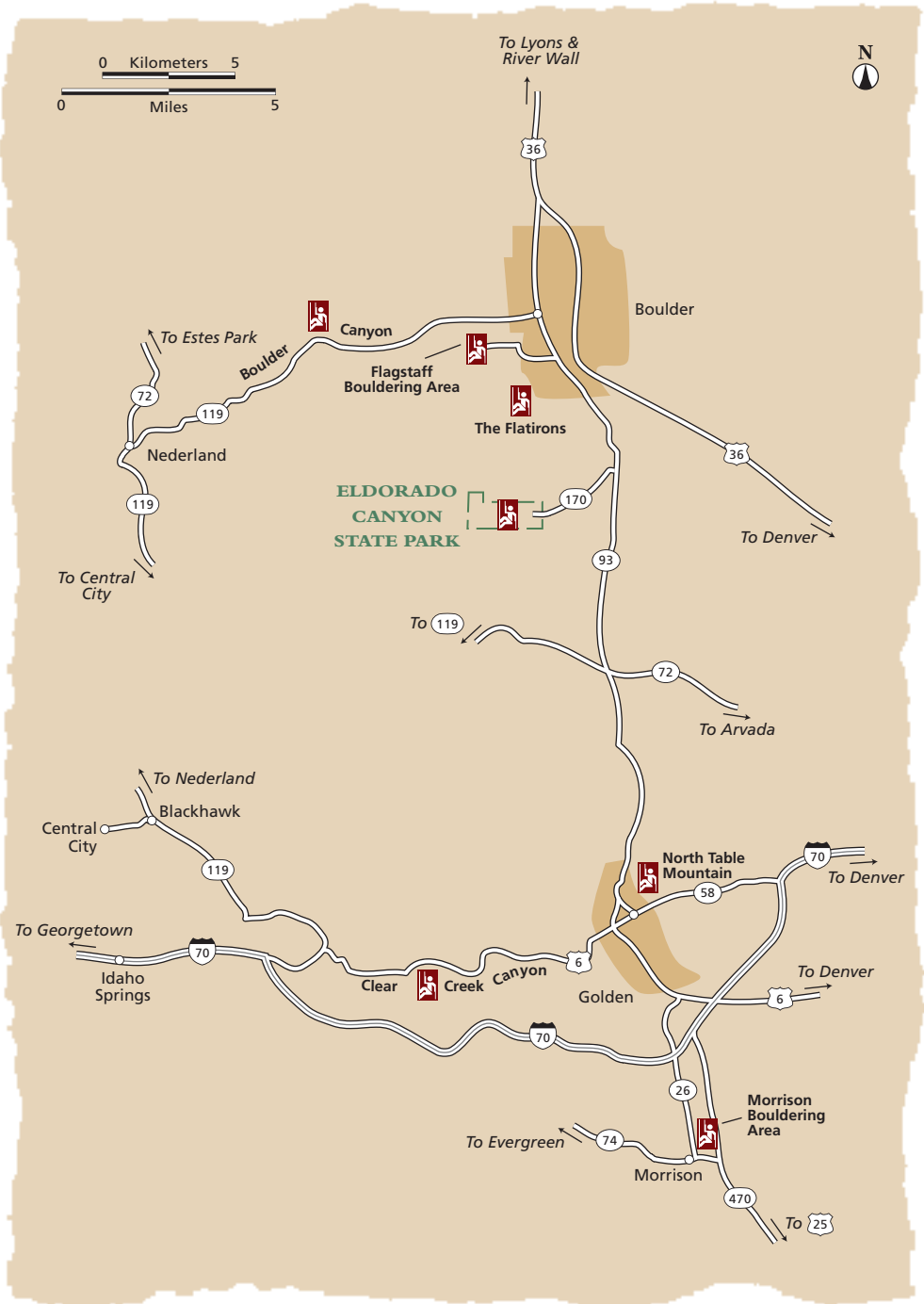
## **BOULDER AREA**

- 1. Boulder Canyon 3**
  - The Dome **3**
  - Happy Hour Crag **7**
  - The Boulderado **9**
  - Castle Rock **10**
  
- 2. Eldorado Canyon State Park 17**
  - The Bastille **18**
  - Wind Tower **24**
  - Whale's Tail **26**
  - Redgarden Wall **30**
  
- 3. The Flatirons 45**
  - First Flatiron **46**
  - Third Flatiron **52**
  - Satan's Slab **54**
  - Seal Rock **57**
  - The Fatiron **59**
  - The Maiden **61**
  - The Matron **63**
  
- 4. Flagstaff Mountain Bouldering 67**
  - Panorama Point Area **68**
  - Alamo Ridge Area **76**
  - Flagstaff Amphitheater Area **80**
  
- 5. River Wall 87**























## **DENVER AREA**

- 6. Golden Cliffs 95**
    - Brown Cloud Crags **96**
    - The Overhang Area **99**
    - Table Top Area **102**
  
  - 7. Clear Creek Canyon 105**
    - Red Slab **106**
    - Little Eiger **108**
    - High Wire Crag **111**
    - Anarchy Wall **116**
- Appendix: Climbing Shops, Gyms,  
Guide Services, and Hospitals **120**
- Index **122**
- About the Author **129**




# Denver/Boulder Overview



## Map Legend

	Interstate		Town
	US Highway		City
	State Highway		Climbing Area
	County Road		Crag/Boulder
	Gravel Road		Cliff Edge
	Unimproved Road		Mountain Peak
	Trail		Parking
	Waterway		Restroom
	Lake/Reservoir		Building
	Falls		Camping
	National Forest/ State Park Boundary		Gate

## Topo Legend

	Natural gear belay stance
	Single piece of fixed protection (bolt or piton)
	Fixed belay station

*Dedicated to the great Denver and Boulder climbers who established these Best Climbs for our enjoyment, including Dale Johnson, Ray Northcutt, Layton Kor, Pat Ament, Larry Dalke, Jim Erickson, Steve Wunsch, Alan Nelson, and Ken Trout. Thanks for your vision, boldness, and hard work!*

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