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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 bouldering in Lake Tahoe. **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.

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Preface

What sets Tahoe apart is not just the number of boulders, it is the variety. You can climb Joshua Tree style rock by the lake or climb Yosemite-esque holds in the forest or drive 30 minutes east to the desert and climb impeccable volcanic pockets. It's all here, it's yearround, and even this book, the most complete coverage yet on the subject, can only whet your appetite.

This is Lake Tahoe's first bouldering guide. Initially, author Kevin Swift and I were excited about doing the inside tour of Lake Tahoe's boulders with Tahoe's most accomplished and active boulderers. But at first it was slim pickings. We started to wonder if there were actually enough boulder problems to fill a book.

But a few months into the project everything changed...drastically. Boulders started showing up everywhere. Often when a local showed us a new concentration, there were even more boulders close by that they hadn't climbed yet. Suddenly we had a new challenge: there were just too many boulders to document! To make matters worse, we became afflicted with the first ascent bug. We wanted to put up even more problems and pump up the load of documentation even more. Would it never end? Finally we had to say, "Enough is enough!" So every area listed in this guide has even more established problems than what we list. We were just not able to document them all. That gives you a great opportunity: Take a wrong turn while driving to one of the areas and you might find a first ascent waiting for you.

We can definitely use your help with beta on new problems for the next edition. We always want feedback on our books. Because this is the first guidebook to Lake Tahoe bouldering, we especially need your help. Send me an email if you find something you think should be included next time around. Also, if you know the name of a problem in the book that we weren't been able to identify, please email the name to us.

Lastly, we know that many of the ratings may be a little off. There just wasn't time to get a consensus rating on everything.

Chris McNamara
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Introduction

By Kevin Swift

Granite, GRANITE, GRANITE! That's Tahoe in a nutshell. Not just any granite, either. Super quality, compact, weathered Sierra granite unfolds in every conceivable shape, size, and location. On almost any given day, you can roll into Tahoe from any direction and be pulling down within half an hour. There are boulders on ridgetops with endless views, and boulders lying in shadowy creek beds. There are boulders in forest and desert settings, exposed to the sun or hiding in shade, up high and down low, right in town, and half an hour up remote hillsides.

Everything from lie-down starts under low roofs to terrifying, guaranteed-death highballs, VB to V12, knob pimping, sloper slapping, slab teetering, crack jamming, edge cranking madness abounds. You'll die before you do all the problems around Lake Tahoe—one because your forearms will explode, two because you'll never find them all, and three because there isn't a person on Earth who can muster the necessary stoke to clean and tick every one of the thousands of untouched boulders splashed all over Tahoe even if they could find them.

This place will still be going off ten years from now, when people who are actually willing to hike for an hour finally come to town and start pillaging all the more remote potential. You simply can't go wrong here, and if you do manage to send everything in the guidebook, you will have lived here long enough to become a local and get a free pass to all the developing stuff we couldn't include without getting killed.

A word of caution is in order here, for all of you who still have jobs, significant others, and homes elsewhere. I've met a

Chris Ewing at the Momma Cat Boulder.

startling number of people who visited Tahoe for a week's vacation and are still here—two, five, or ten years later. I'm one of them. I came here just to check it out and after two years can't see living anywhere else for the moment. Maybe when I've worn the place out I'll want to leave, but that will take a while.

SuperTopo.com

All the Tahoe information below is available at www.supertopo.com with links directly to the sources for easier trip planning.

When to climb

The general Tahoe bouldering season is May–November. October and (a dry) November usually have the best conditions. In the summer, you generally want to seek the shade. The areas that are climbable all winter long are listed in the sidebar on page 13. During a lean snow year, boulder the areas in this book that are near a plowed road.

Getting There

Car Travel

A car is essential in Tahoe because public transportation is scarce. From San Francisco, drive Interstate 80 to Sacramento. For North Lake areas, continue on Interstate 80. For South Lake Areas, take Highway 50 east. Access all climbing areas in this guide off Highway 50, Highway 89, or Interstate 80.

Air Travel

Reno/Tahoe Airport is about an hour and fifteen minutes drive to South Lake Tahoe and Sacramento International Airport is about two hours away. You can also fly into Oakland or San Francisco, rent a car and drive about three hours.

Camping

There are hundreds of campsites in Tahoe. View the overview maps on pages 18–19 to locate these campsites. A great web site that lists many South and North Lake Tahoe camping areas is: www.explorer1.com/tahoe/camping.htm Fire permits are required for fires at many areas. For a list of ranger

stations from which to get a fire permit:
visit: www.fs.fed.us/r5/tahoe/

South Lake Free Camping

Phantom Spires

Camping is conveniently located at the Phantom Spires parking lot, along the logging road, and along Wright's Lake Road. It's all Forest Service land so you can camp just about anywhere. There are three large pullouts along the logging road that each accommodate four to eight cars. The first two have nice views but are often windy. The last pullout, the Phantom Spires parking area, is the largest and most wind-sheltered. There is also a great camping spot at the end of a 4WD road that leads to just below Lizard Head. There are no facilities so bring your own water. Bury your poop at least six inches underground. Be careful when building a fire. Build a tall fire ring and keep fires small.

Lover's Leap

Seconds from the boulders, the campground has all the necessities: picnic tables, pit toilets, privacy, drinking water, and a bar within a five minute walk. The 30 campsites have two to four tents sites each and come with one parking spot. Park additional cars on Highway 50. Each site also has a plastic storage bin for food storage (bring a padlock if storing valuables). Rangers enforce the 14 total days per year limit with fines. Carry out all your trash and dump it at the Strawberry Lodge for a fee or hunt in South Lake Tahoe for a dumpster. The Strawberry Lodge offers

showers or baths for \$5. Each site has a campfire ring, and you should bring your own wood as the Forest Service discourages collecting locally.

Strawberry Tract Road/ The Secrets

Drive to 42 Mile Tract Road, the first left west of Strawberry Lodge. After you pass over the bridge over Strawberry Creek you can camp just about anywhere.

South Lake Tahoe Pay Camping

D.L. Bliss California State Park

Highway 89, South Lake Tahoe, CA (530) 525-7277. www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=505

Fallen Leaf Lake

Highway 89, South Lake Tahoe, CA (530) 544-5994. www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/recreation/camping/flcamp.shtml

Campground by the Lake

1150 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA (530) 542-6096. <http://www.recreationintahoe.com/campground.htm>

South Lake Restaurants

Thai: Orchid Thai, 2180 Lake Tahoe Blvd., (530) 544-5541

Burgers: Izzie's Burger Spa, 2591 Lake Tahoe Blvd., (530) 544-5030

Pizza: Bob Dog's Pizza, 3141 US Highway 50, (530) 577-2364

Mexican: The Cantina, Highway 89 and 10th St., (530) 544-1233

Chinese: Hunan Garden, 900 Emerald Bay Rd., (530) 544-5868

Seafood: The Chart House, 392 Kingsbury Grade, (775) 588-6276

Breakfast: Ernie's, 1146 Emerald Bay Rd., (530) 541-2161

Bar/Music: Divided Sky, 3200 US Highway 50, (530) 577-0775

Lunch: Sprouts, 3123 Harrison Avenue, (530) 541-6969.

Coffee: Alpina Café (free wireless), 822 Emerald Bay Rd., (530) 541-7449 or Alpen Sierra (free wireless), 3940 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Suite 1 (530) 544-7740

Introductory Areas

These areas all have problems in the VB-V1 range:

- The Secrets
- Lovers Leap
- Old County
- Grouse Slab
- Echo View
- Washoe Boulders

North Lake Restaurants

If you're brave and ready for the ultimate greasy spoon experience, hit **Coffee And** (530-587-3123) in old Truckee. I once counted 17 coffee refills or warm-ups during a single breakfast a couple of years ago. Of course I tottered out into the sun twitching and scratching like a meth addict, so cracked-out I could feel my hair growing. While abundant, the coffee's horrendous, so **Wild Cherries** (530-582-5602) is the only way to go for a snoot full of caffeine, baked goods and decent lunches too. Anyplace with a parking lot full of beat up trucks and a steady stream of Carhartt-wearing construction workers has to be serving high-test café two thumbs up. For Mexican food, my vote goes to **El Toro Bravo** (530-587-3557) and their outdoor patio in the summer. If you like high volume mariachi music, you're golden.

The best vibe in town award (and incredible food too) goes to **Earthly Delights** (530-587-7793) right next door to the secondhand gear shop, which stocks a good selection of used gear, and can be the ticket for a half hour mission, browsing for stuff you didn't know you needed until you saw it. If you've got a little money rattling around (uh huh, right) check out **Dragonfly** (530-587-0557), upstairs in Old Truckee. A couple of the guys that work there are super stoked on bouldering, so tip big! For a cooling libation after a hot day in the sun, my vote goes to **Bar of America** (530-587-3110) a classic dive that won't cost an arm and a leg.

North Lake Tahoe Pay Camping

Donner Memorial California State Park
Intersate 80, Truckee, CA (530) 582-7894
www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=503

For many other pay campsites, visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/tahoe/recreation/tkrd/summer.shtml> or call (530) 478-6118

Winter Bouldering Areas

Bouldering in winter!? Well, if you don't mind hiking through a little snow, winter bouldering is great. The snow takes the bite off many of the highballs and is not a big deal if you bring a tarp. The following areas are climbable after 3-5 days of sun and above freezing temperatures.

North of Reno Areas
Purgatory
Washoe boulders
Hangman's Cave
Momma Cat Boulder
Sugarloaf
Echo View Estates
Pie Shop
Memorial Boulder
Rainbow
Sun Wall

Clair Tappan Lodge

This Sierra Club lodge is about 1.5 miles west of summit on Old 40 and offers inexpensive bunks and meals with a great history. Ansel Adams used to stay there and many of the old Sierra Clubbers who stared climbing in the West. The Sierra Club also owns the Hutchinson Lodge right next door. It is rented to groups at reasonable rates and is great for climbers.

Groceries

There are major supermarkets in all larger Tahoe towns. If you're staying at Lover's Leap, **Strawberry Market**, located across from Strawberry Lodge, has a selection of good essential items. You can also buy extra copies of this guide there.

South Lake Climbing Gear

The best selection of gear and climbing beta in South Lake is at **Sports Ltd.** (530) 544-2284) in South Lake Tahoe at the South Y Shopping Center next to Raley's.

North Lake Climbing Gear and Gym

There are four stores in North Lake Tahoe: **Alpenglow** (530) 583-6917 in Tahoe City, **The Backcountry** (888) 625-8444 in Tahoe City and Truckee, **Granite Chief** (530) 587-2809 in Truckee, and **The Sports Exchange** (530) 582-4510 in Truckee. The Sports Exchange also offers shoe rental (\$3) and has a cool bouldering gym (\$8 day pass).

South Lake Rest Days

If you need a rest day or just want to mix things up, consider riding two world-class mountain bike trails: **The Flume Trail** and **Mister Toad's Wild Ride**. In summer, buy a lift ticket to ride at a ski resort. Hike one of the many trails or head for the water of Lake Tahoe to kayak, water ski, or just sit on the beach.

For gear and recommendations from knowledgeable locals, visit **Sports Ltd.** in South Lake Tahoe at the South Y Shopping Center next to Raley's; (530) 544-2284.

Most of the nightlife is at the Harrah's or Harvey's casinos. We prefer chilling at **Divided Sky**. In the winter, take the rare opportunity to spend half the day bouldering and a half day getting powder turns at a nearby ski resort.

North Lake Rest Days

There really isn't that much to do here in the urban sense. Days off can be a bit dull if you're into city life. If not, there's a ton of good mountain biking and hiking available, plus boating and swimming at Donner Lake. Early season you can still get tracks on north facing slopes, and have a mini-adventure race: hike and then ski or board one of the peaks park at Donner Ski Ranch and bike to the Saddle Boulders, then bomb the downhill into Truckee, eat lunch and hitch or car-shuttle back up the pass. A decent rest-day excursion is driving Highway 50 to Highway 49 over to Nevada City and just hanging out. This town has a sweet, laid-back feel and makes it easy to spend a day doing nothing at all without getting bored. On the way there, take a side trip north to the town of Washington for a trip back in time. It's tiny, almost at the end of the road,

and blessed with a couple of amazing swimming holes just up the river from the town. That, plus no people equals a perfect rest day.

Bouldering Ratings Compared

Vermin	Y.D.S	Fontainbleau	Peak
V0-	5.9	4	B0
V0	5.10a/b	4+	B1
V0+	5.10c/d	5	B2
V1	5.11a/b	5+	B3
V2	5.11b/c	6a	B4
V3	5.11c/d	6a+	B5
V4	5.12a/b	6b	B6
V5	5.12b/c	6b+	B7
V6	5.12c/d	6c	B8
V7	5.12b/c	6c+	B9
V8	5.13a/b	7a	B10
V9	5.13b/c	7a+	B11
V10	5.13c/d	7b	B12
V11	5.14a	7b+	B13
V12	5.14b	7c	B14
V13	5.14c	7c+	
V14	5.14d	8a	
	5.15a	8a+	
		8b	
		8b+	
		8c	

Minimizing Impacts

Most Tahoe bouldering areas are on National Forest land and are subject to few restrictions. Let's keep it that way. Fewer environmental impacts and fewer confrontations with rangers and private landowners mean fewer restrictions on our climbing.

The Leave No Trace principles are a good place to start:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

If we all abide by these principles, we will be in good shape. But, to really preserve our climbing freedoms, we need to go beyond. The following is a list of things to do and how to get involved:

Be conscious of where you walk, where you park, and where your bouldering pad is

Most bouldering impacts come not from actually climbing, but from cutting trails to the rock and crushing vegetation with your crash pad. Always look for established trails and avoid making new shortcuts. Park in designated areas on the maps in this book. Try to carpool to areas that are accessed from residential neighborhoods. Would you want eight cars constantly parked in front of your house? If you are bouldering in the winter, make sure you are not in a snow removal zone.



Organize trail projects to reduce erosion

Trail projects come up every few years at Lover's Leap and can generally use your help. Talk to locals and find out if there is an upcoming project. You can make a difference.

Join the Access Fund

This is a terrific organization that keeps climbing areas open. In the past the Access Fund has invested its resources in preserving the Tahoe climbing experience and we should invest in them: www.accessfund.org

Don't Chip or Glue

Please don't manufacture holds (i.e. drilling and chipping). Gluing is questionable at best. There plenty of problems that go without chipping and we need to leave stuff for the future V20 climbers.

SuperTopo Mission

- Provide the resources and inspiration for an incredible outdoor adventure.
- Help climbers ascend and descend routes efficiently and safely by creating the most accurate and informative climbing topos ever published.
- Capture the mystery, adventure, and humor of climbing by publishing the histories, anecdotes, and outrageous stories of each route.
- Stress the importance of low impact climbing and promote stewardship of the environment.
- Pay close attention to your feedback to continually improve the topos and beta.

Visit www.SuperTopo.com Before Each Climb

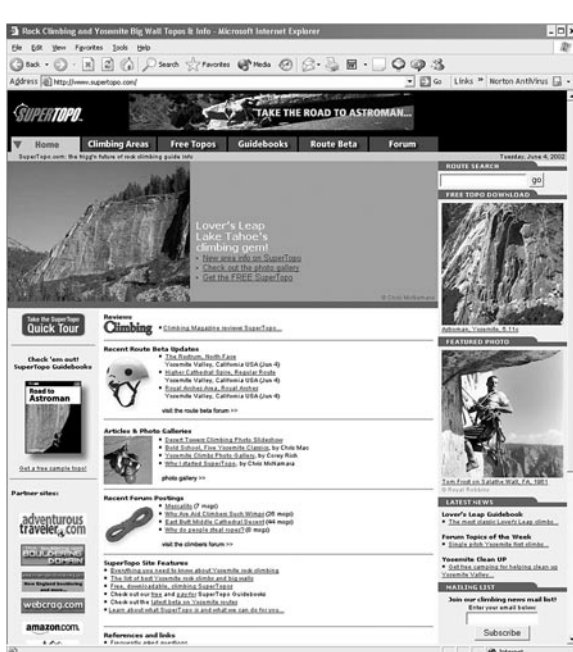
There is much more beta available for free on the SuperTopo web site: www.supertopo.com. This information is more current than the beta available here.

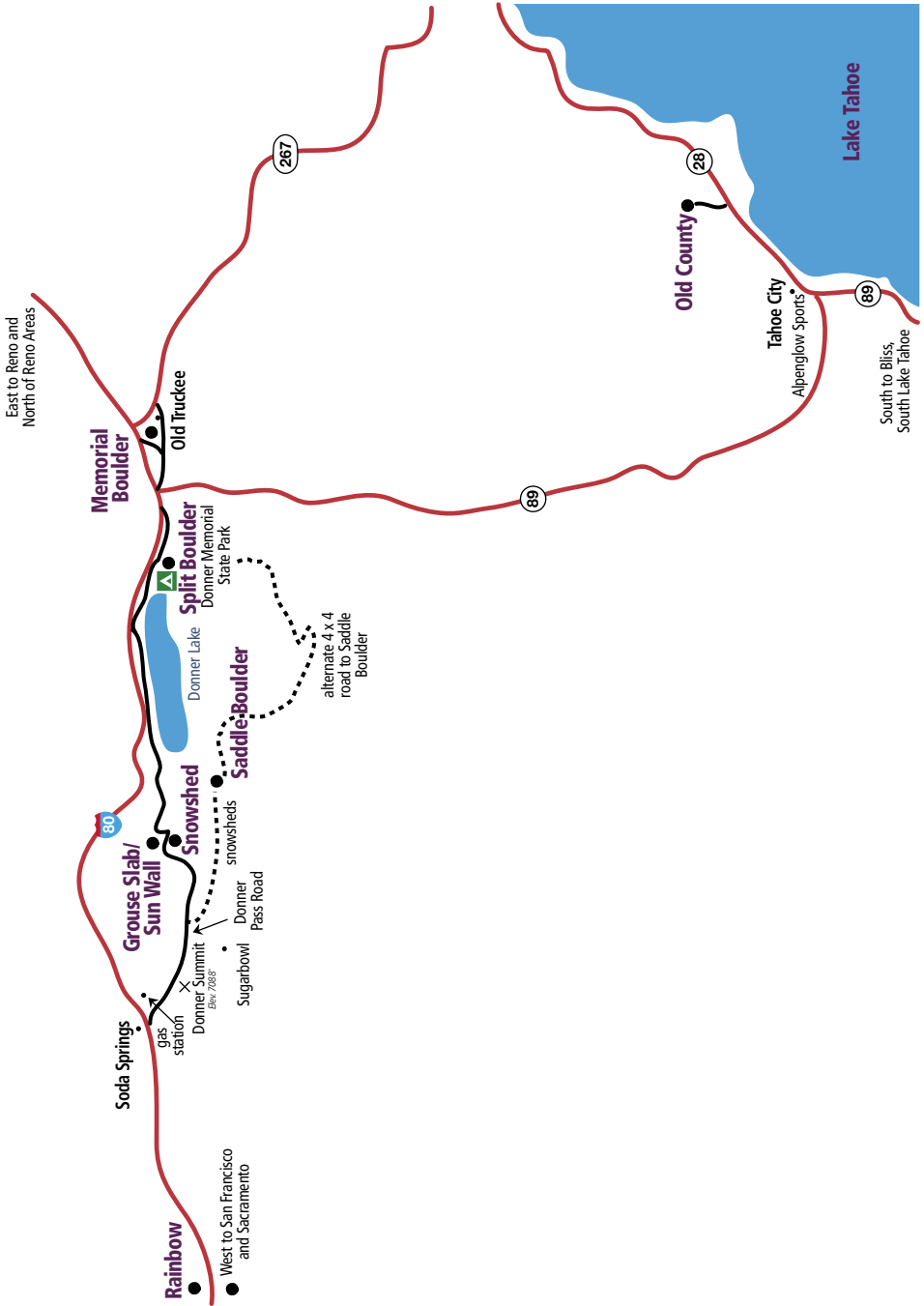
SuperTopo offers additional free beta for each climb:

- photo galleries
- trip reports
- route condition updates
- closures and rockfall warnings
- route beta email alerts

The web site is packed with general Lake Tahoe info:

- free downloadable color topos
- road and weather conditions
- everything you need to know about staying in Tahoe
- good routes for first-time Tahoe climbers
- general trip planning info





South Lake Tahoe Overview Map

