

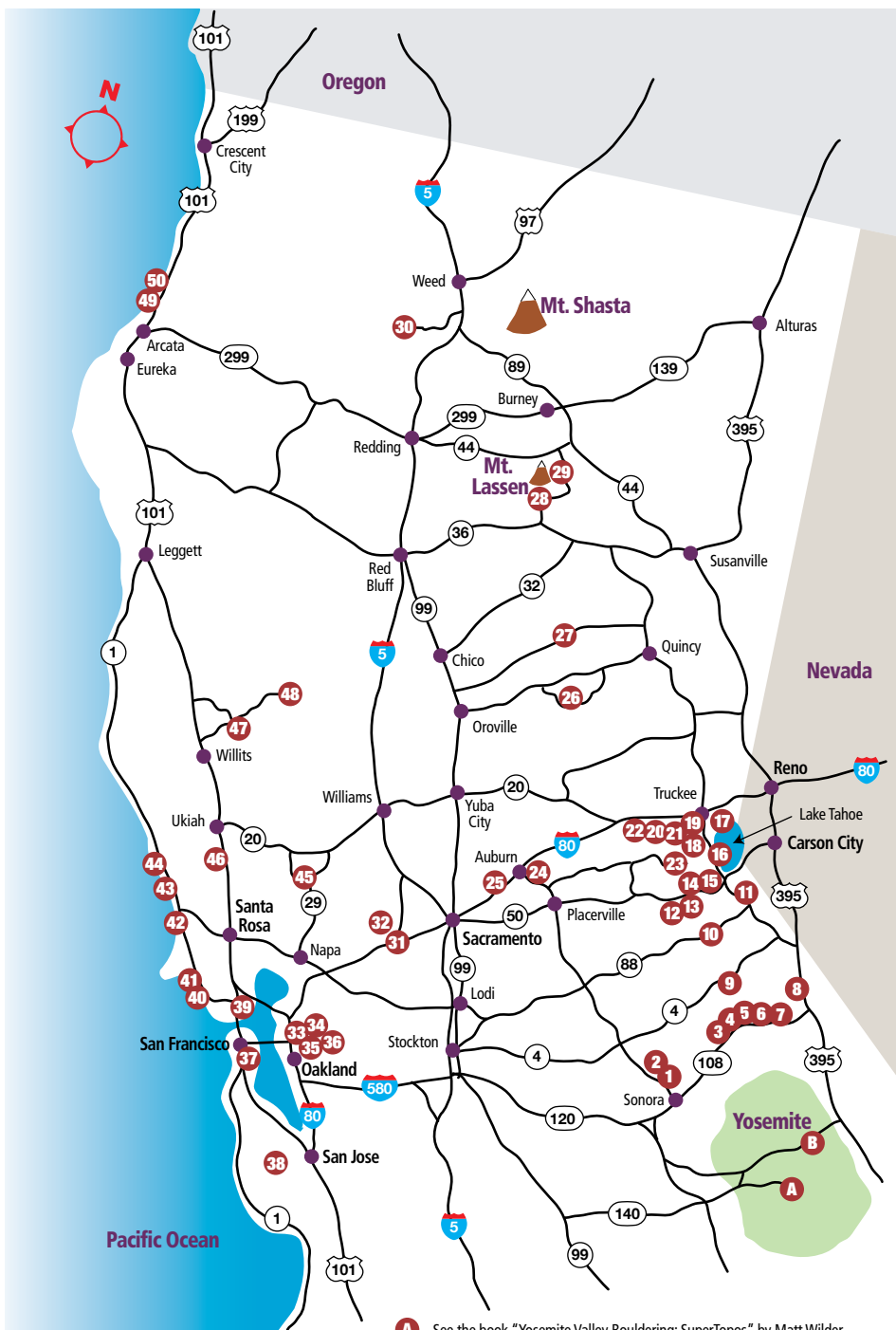


Northern California Bouldering

The Best 50 Areas

by
Chris Summit
Kevin Swift
Chris McNamara

Northern California Overview Map



- A** See the book "Yosemite Valley Bouldering: SuperTopos" by Matt Wilder
- B** See the book "Tuolumne Meadows Bouldering: SuperTopos" by Chris Summit



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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 Northern California. **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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- *Chris Summit*

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Back Cover Photo: Posemaster General on Bunny Arête, Bald Rock.
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Introduction

By Chris Summit

As a proud Northern California native I am a bit partial to my local stone so I will try not to go on and on about how indescribably wonderful I think it is – rather I will just state the facts. For starters, we’ve got the rugged and wild Pacific Coastline that stretches the entire length of Nor Cal. Starting just a few miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge, you will first come to a variety of different rock types on sandy beaches at Mickey’s and Stinson Beaches in Marin County. Traveling further north, you find the solid schist around Jenner. Just north of Jenner, where the San Andreas Fault Line crosses the Pacific Coast Highway, the variety of rock type stops and only sandstone is found all the way up into the central Mendocino Coast. Two of the best of these sandstone areas are the popular Fort Ross and the vast Salt Point with its endless miles of Tafoni sandstone. The rock type changes back to a random mix near the mysterious Lost Coast in northern Mendocino County, not to be confused with the far north Lost Rocks, which will both remain lost. Between the Lost Coast and the Lost Rocks are the rocky beaches of Humboldt County, where you find a tantalizing mix of green, grey, and black boulders at Moonstone Beach and Houda Point near Arcata. Here is a quote from an old geology book: “The rocks on the Pacific Coastline of Northern California are some of the most bizarre and unique in the world.” That pretty much says it. You can boulder on polished green and blue schist rocks with sharp crimpers at Goat Rock State Park near Jenner, for example, and then just a short and scenic 30-minute drive north up the Pacific Coast Highway

John Sherman flashes Pelican Arête (VOR), Goat Rock.

and you’ll get to pull down on the gritty-textured, pocketed sandstone at Salt Point State Park. That’s just the coast.

We have some of the freshest climbable rock in the world up in the northeastern corner of the state at Mt. Lassen National Park. A lot of the bouldering in the park is on rocks formed in the 1915 eruption, which geologically speaking is like a blink of an eye. Sulfur steam vents and mud pots boil on this active volcano. The nearby Lava Tubes also offer some unique volcanic scenery as well as some bouldering potential. Coming down the Central Valley from the north you’ll first come to the low elevation granite found around Chico at areas like the Feather River Boulders and just south the granite patina blocks on the ridgetops at Bald Rock. Going west from the Central Valley you will come to a small, newly-developed volcanic area near Mt. Konocti at Clear Lake called the Black Forest, which fills the void of publicly accessible bouldering in the Lake County area. These are all just a few of the under appreciated, new/old areas covered in the book—the others are mostly well-known, well-established areas you might already know and love. The best of Tahoe and the Bay Area are included to make a complete collection of Nor Cal’s best. South of Tahoe are a few more new/old areas like the boulders at Hell’s Kitchen near Bear Valley, where every summer one of the only outdoor bouldering competitions in the state is held. Last, but definitely not least, are all the boulders in the far southeast corner of Nor Cal just to the north of Yosemite. These areas make up the first section of the book and they are found in and around the Sonora area. One of the best in this area and one of my personal favorites is the impeccable blue, grey, and gold limestone in Columbia. The other gems of the Sonora area are the steep, featured granite of Pump Rock and the clean white granite blocks at Chipmunk Flat near Sonora Pass. With the best problems on the best boulders in one of the best places in the world you just can’t go wrong. Northern California Bouldering is hella good!



Charlie Padilla working the Cellar Door (V6), Columbia College.
Photo: Anthony Lapomardo.

Hotel (209-532-1479) in downtown Columbia or at the Columbia Gem Motel (209-532-4508). Sonora and Jamestown south to the south on CA-49 along CA-108 have camping/lodging and so does Angels Camp north on CA-49.

Sonora Pass

3. Pump Rocks, 4. Donnell Vista, 5. Chipmunk Flat, 6. Sonora Pass Boulders, 7. Switchback Boulders

GAS/FOOD: The nearest gas and food are on CA-108 at Strawberry or the Dardanelles or to the east on CA-395 north or south of the CA-108 intersection.

GEAR/GYMS: Sonora area climbing gear/outdoor gear: Sierra Nevada Adventure Company (209-532-5621) and Indoor climbing is nearby at Class 5 Fitness (209-532-5556).

CAMPING/LODGING: Camping at the boulders may not be legal. There are many excellent campgrounds in the area just to the east or west on CA-108. Eagle Meadows Campground is nice. The nearest lodging west on CA-108 is at the Strawberry Inn in Strawberry or along CA-108 on the way back to Sonora. Camp or lodge on CA-108 at the Dardanelles or on CA-395 near the CA-108 intersection.

SuperTopo.com

The info below is available at supertopo.com with links directly to the sources for easier trip planning.

Sonora Area

1. Columbia College, 2. Columbia State Park

GAS/FOOD: Downtown Columbia has gas/food. Sonora is just a few miles away to the south on CA-49 or Angels Camp is just a few miles north on CA-49 and both have gas/food.

GEAR/GYMS: Get gear at Sierra Nevada Adventure Company (209-532-5621) and Indoor climbing is nearby at Class 5 Fitness (209-532-5556).

CAMPING/LODGING: Columbia has camping at the 49er RV Park (209-532-4978) and lodging at City Hotel/Fallon

East Side

8. 395 Boulder

GAS/FOOD: To the north Walker is only a few minutes drive on CA-395 and to the south Bridgeport on CA-395 is only about 20 minutes away. Both have gas and food.

GEAR/GYMS: The nearest climbing/outdoor gear retailer is Sporting Rage (775-885-7773) in Carson City about a half an hour drive North and the nearest climbing gym is Rocksport (775-352-7673) about one hour north in Reno.

CAMPING/LODGING: The most popular campground in the area is just north on CA-395 at Topaz Lake Park (775-266-3343). Lodging is on CA-395 near Walker/Coleville at Meadowcliff Resort (888-333-8132).

Central Sierra**9. Bear Valley - Hell's Kitchen**

GAS/FOOD: Bear Valley has a general store with gas and food.

GEAR/GYMS: Mountain Adventure Seminars (209-753-6556) carries the essentials in Bear Valley. Modesto has a gear shop and indoor climbing at Stonehenge (209-521-3644).

CAMPING/LODGING: From Hell's Kitchen/Spicer Reservoir Rd the nearest camping is at Big Meadow Campground about 1.7 miles west on CA-4 and only about 0.2 miles east of the Big Meadow Picnic Area Boulders. To the east of Hell's Kitchen it is about 3.7 miles to Bear Valley, which has lodging and camping. Just a few miles further east of Bear Valley on CA-4 is Lake Alpine, which also has great camping, fishing and sight-seeing.

Tahoe

10. Momma Cat Boulder, 11. The Secrets, 12. Lover's Leap, 13. Flagpole Peak, 14. Pie Shop, 16. Bliss State Park, 17. Old County, 18. Castle Boulder, 19. Split Rock, 20.

Grouse Slabs, 21. The Saddle, 22. Rainbow
GAS/FOOD: gas, food and supplies are in Truckee, all around the north shore of Lake Tahoe or in South Lake Tahoe. Try Sprouts Café (530-541-6969).

GEAR/GYMS: For outdoor/climbing gear and an indoor bouldering gym go to Sports Exchange in Truckee (530-582-4510) or High Altitude Fitness in Incline Village, NV (775-831-4212). Get gear in Tahoe City at Alpenglow Sports (530-583-6917) and The Back Country (530-582-0909). In South Lake Tahoe, visit Sports LTD (530-542-4000).

CAMPING/LODGING: Free camping is available at Secrets and Castle Boulder or pay camping at Lover's Leap or in Truckee at Donner Memorial Park (Split Rock Boulders are inside the campground!) or at Bliss State Park (bouldering!) or at Fallen Leaf Lake just south of Bliss State Park. There is plenty of lodging is all around Lake Tahoe especially near the Stateline at South Lake or go to rentsouthlake.com.

Central Sierra/Central Valley East**23. Loon Lake, 24. The Bar, 25. Rocklin**

GAS/FOOD: gas/food are in downtown Auburn, Placerville or Rocklin just off of I-80.

GEAR/GYMS: Get gear at REI Roseville (916-724-6750). The nearest climbing gyms are: Granite Arch in Rancho Cordova (916-852-7625) and Pipeworks in Sacramento (916-341-0100) and Rocknasium in Davis (530-757-2902).

CAMPING/LODGING: Auburn KOA is just a few miles north of downtown Auburn (530-885-0990) and Folsom Lake Recreation Area (916-988-0205) is also nearby both areas. Black Oak Stumpy Meadows Campground is south on CA-49 from The Bar about 15 miles from Cool on CA-193 in Georgetown (881-333-4312). Auburn and Rocklin both have ample lodging just minutes from the rocks.

North East - Chico Area**26. Bald Rock, 27. Feather River**

GAS/FOOD: Quincy is found to the east and has gas and food and on the corner of Caribou Rd alongside the Feather River is a small seasonal store with cold drinks and food. To the west are Oroville and Chico - both have plenty of gas, grocery stores, and restaurants.

GEAR/GYMS: Mountain Sports in Chico (530-345-5011) for climbing/outdoor gear.

CAMPING/LODGING: Nice campgrounds are found along Caribou Rd just off CA-70 a few miles east of the Feather River bouldering areas. Free Camping is available at Bald Rock unless otherwise posted. Lodging is available in Chico and Oroville to the west and Quincy to the east.

North East - Lassen Area**28. Eagle Peak, 29. Devastated Area**

GAS/FOOD: Just west of the South Gate entrance to the park on CA-36 is the small town of Mineral with gas and food. Just west of the North Gate entrance to the park on CA-44 is Viola with gas and food.

GEAR/GYMS: For climbing/outdoor gear go to Hermits Hut in Redding (530-222-4511) or The Fifth Season (530-926-3606) in Shasta City.

CAMPING/LODGING: Backcountry camping is allowed in the park (wilderness permits are required). Call Park Headquarters to get one in advance (530-595-4444) or stop by a ranger/entrance station. Many good campgrounds are all over the park and are usually open from June to September. Call Park Headquarters for more info. For lodging outside of the park on the north side Viola and Shingletown are the closest towns with lodging and on the south side Chester near Lake Almanor on CA-36/CA-89 has lodging; Cedar Lodge Motel/RV Park (530-258-2904)

North/Central Sierra

30. Castle Lake

GAS/FOOD: About 10 miles away Shasta City has many gas stations, stores, restaurants and fast food.

GEAR/GYMS: For climbing gear go to Hermits Hut in Redding (530-222-4511).

CAMPING/LODGING: Forest Service campgrounds are about a half mile down the road from Castle Lake with Portable Restrooms but NO DRINKING WATER (530-926-4511) Camping is also available at nearby Lake Siskiyou and lodging in Mt. Shasta City off I-5.

Central Valley West

31. Vacaville, 32. Putah Creek

GAS/FOOD: Vacaville has gas, food and shopping malls right off I-80 only a few miles from the Vacaville Open Space bouldering areas and Winters has gas and food just minutes from Putah Creek at the CA-128/I-505 intersection.

GEAR/GYMS: The nearest climbing gear/indoor gym is at Rocknasium in Davis.

CAMPING/LODGING: Lake Berryessa has seven private resorts that have camping. Most of the resorts are on the west and south shores off CA-128 or Knoxville Rd only a few miles from the Vacaville and Putah Creek bouldering areas. Napa has a good campground: Skyline Wilderness Park on 2201 Imola Ave which is about 15 miles west of Lake Berryessa and the Putah Creek bouldering area (707-252-0481). A fair amount of lodging is in Vacaville off of I-80 or in Napa off CA-29.

Berkeley

33. Indian Rock, 34. Mortar Rock, 35. Remiliard Park, 36. Grizzly Peak

GAS/FOOD: Oakland/Emeryville/Berkeley all have an ample supply of gas, food and shopping. Try the eclectic mix of food vendors at the Emeryville Public Market 5959 Shellmound St. off I-80/I-580/I-880 in Emeryville south of Berkeley and north of Oakland take the Powell St exit east to Shellmound St. Enjoy an assortment of food and shops on the busy Telegraph Ave in downtown Berkeley; take Ashby Ave a few miles east of I-80.

GEAR/GYMS: Get gear at REI, Marmot, or Wilderness Exchange. The largest indoor climbing gym in the Bay Area is Berkeley Ironworks (510-981-9900). There is also a gym in Oakland called Great Western Power (510-452-2022)

CAMPING/LODGING: Southeast of Oakland and Berkeley camping is available at Lake Chabot in Anthony Chabot Regional Park. Call in advance: (510-562-2267)

Camping is available in the hills between Oakland and San Jose at Sunol Regional Wilderness near Pleasanton. Enjoy a short hike and some fine basalt cragging at Indian Joe Caves on Indian Joe Creek Trail inside the park. Call in advance (510-562-2267) South of Berkeley and the Bay Bridge is the largest city in the East Bay, Oakland and its neighboring city Emeryville, both have a wide variety of lodging. Try Hegenberger Rd off I-880 near the Oakland Airport for the largest selection.

South Bay - San Francisco

37. Castle Rock, 38. Glen Canyon

GAS/FOOD: San Francisco's Chinatown is one of the largest outside of Asia and offers many choices for fine food. Try the R&G Lounge (415-982-7877). gas, supplies and fine food, you name it and San Jose has it all within an hour drive of some of the best bouldering in the Bay Area at nearby Castle Rock. For great beer and food at reasonable prices, enjoy Gordon Biersch Brewing Company on 33 E. San Fernando St. (downtown).

GEAR/GYMS: In San Francisco, Mission

Cliffs (415-550-0515) and Planet Granite (415-692-3434) have indoor climbing and gear or for more supplies go REI San Francisco.

CAMPING/LODGING: Camp at Big Basin Redwoods State Park (the First State Park in California). It is 25 miles north of Santa Cruz and about 65 miles south of San Francisco on CA-236 near the town of Boulder Creek and just a short drive from the Castle Rock bouldering area. Call (800-444-PARK). World class lodging to fit most budget is all around San Francisco.

North Bay

39. Ring Mountain, 40. Mickey's Beach, 41. Stinson Beach

GAS/FOOD: San Rafael has gas, rock gear and a lot of great places to eat a couple of which are: Brooklyn Pizza at 900 Andersen Drive and High Tech Burrito at 484 Las Gallinas or 2042 Fourth St..

GEAR/GYMS: Just off US-101 in Corte Madera (south of San Rafael) is an REI. Take the same Paradise Dr/Tamalpais Drive exit as for Ring Mountain but go to the shopping center on the west side of US-101 off Tamalpais Dr. The closest gym is Planet Granite in San Francisco.

CAMPING/LODGING: Sugarloaf Ridge State Park off CA-12 just west of Kenwood and east of US-101 in Santa Rosa has good boulders within walking distance of the campground. Take Adobe Canyon Rd from CA-12 for a few miles to the park entrance and campground just past the bouldering areas. Call (800-444-PARK). Marin has camping available at Mount Tamalpais State Park (near bouldering areas), Samuel P. Taylor State Park (15 minutes west of US-101 on Sir Francis Drake Blvd) and Point Reyes National Seashore. For reservations at Mount Tamalpais or Samuel P. Taylor contact Reserve America or for information about camping at Point Reyes Call (415-663-8054). North of San Francisco off US-101, Marin County's oldest, San Rafael has a wide variety of lodging most of which is off US-101. In the heart of Napa County's Wine Country just north of I-80 and Vallejo is the thriving city of Napa and a variety of lodging. On US-101 about one hour north of San Francisco in the heart of Sonoma County's Wine Country is the booming city of Santa Rosa (mi casa) and a wide variety of lodging.

Arch Rock, Winter Solstice. Photo Jerry Dodrill.com.



Wine Country (Sonoma Coast)

42. Goat Rock, 43. Fort Ross, 44. Salt Point

GAS/FOOD: A gas station/mini mart/deli is the main stop in Jenner. The excellent Rivers End restaurant offers fine food, wine and sunsets. The Sizzling Tandoor on the corner of Willow Creek Rd (the road to Pomo Canyon Campground and bouldering area) and CA-1 just south of Jenner also has good food and good views. Less than 10 miles south of the Jenner climbing areas is the quiet fishing village and beach getaway of Bodega Bay. Get gas, beer, food and supplies at Diekman's Store on CA-1 and enjoy the catch of the day with great bay views at The Tides Wharf and Restaurant (seen in Alfred Hitchcock's classic "The Birds"). Guerneville (east of Jenner) has gas, a 24-hour Safeway and the tasty Andornos Pizza (16205 First St.).

GEAR/GYMS: The nearest climbing gear is at REI (707-540-9025) and Sonoma Outfitters (707-528-1920) in Santa Rosa and the nearest indoor climbing gym is Vertex in Santa Rosa (707-573-1608)

CAMPING/LODGING: Just a couple miles north of the Fort Ross bouldering area and about 16 miles north of Jenner on CA-1 is Stillwater Cove Campground. Call (707-847-3245). A few miles north of Fort Ross and Stillwater Cove and about 20 miles north of Jenner on CA-1 are the amazing Salt Point State Park and Salt Point bouldering areas. Camping is available at Gerstle Cove Campground and Woodside Campground. CALL (707-847-3221). Pomo Canyon Campground is off CA-1 just south of Jenner and CA-116 and just north of Goat Rock State Park in Bridgehaven. Take Willow Creek Rd east from CA-1 for about 2.5 miles to the right turn onto the dirt road that leads to the campground. **CLOSED IN WINTER** Less than 10 miles south of the Jenner climbing areas is Bodega Bay and a variety of lodging.

Clear Lake

GAS/FOOD: A gas station mini-mart is on the corner of CA-29 and CA-281 and another is about halfway from CA-29 to Konocti Harbor on CA-281. Soda Bay is about 2.5 miles northwest and has a general

store, dining and a harbor. Lower Lake, Lakeport and Kelseyville also have an ample supply of food and gas to choose from.

GEAR/GYMS: The nearest climbing gear is at REI (707-540-9025) and Sonoma Outfitters (707-528-1920) in Santa Rosa and the nearest indoor climbing gym is Vertex in Santa Rosa (707-573-1608).

CAMPING/LODGING: Clear Lake State Park Campground (800-444-7275) is between Kelseyville and Soda Bay about four miles northwest of The Black Forest. Open all year. www.parks.ca.gov Konocti Harbor Resort (800-660-LAKE) is 1.5 miles from the Black Forest and has year round concerts, shows, fine dining, a marina and inn and spa all on the shores of the gorgeous Clear Lake.

Wine Country (Mendocino County)

46. Squaw Rock, 47. Dos Rios, 48. The Falls

GAS/FOOD: Willits (US-101 south) or Laytonville (US-101 north) are the largest towns near Dos Rios and The Falls with 24-hour gas and food. Covelo also has a small gas/food store. The nearest gas/food to Squaw Rock is Hopland (US-101 north) or Cloverdale (US-101 south).

GEAR/GYMS: The nearest climbing gear retailers to the south are REI (707-540-9025) and Sonoma Outfitters (707-528-1920) in Santa Rosa and the nearest indoor climbing gym is Vertex in Santa Rosa (707-573-1608). The nearest climbing gear retailers to the north are Northern Mountain Supply (800-878-3583) in Eureka and Adventures Edge in Arcata (707-822-4673) and the only gym to the north is Far North Climbing Gym in Arcata (707-826-9558).

CAMPING/LODGING: Camping at the rocks in Dos Rios is usually okay. The Falls has free camping but requires a mellow 15 minute downhill hike on a good trail. Free camping can also be found off the dirt roads in the Mendocino National Forest all around The Falls. Willits and Laytonville (about 30 minutes north or south on US-101) are the closest towns with lodging at several hotels and motels found along US-101. **DO NOT CAMP AT SQUAW ROCK – IT IS ILLEGAL.**

North Coast

49. Moonstone, 50. Houda Point.

GAS/FOOD: The Eureka/Arcata area is just a few miles south on US-101 and has plenty of gas stations, grocery stores, and restaurants.

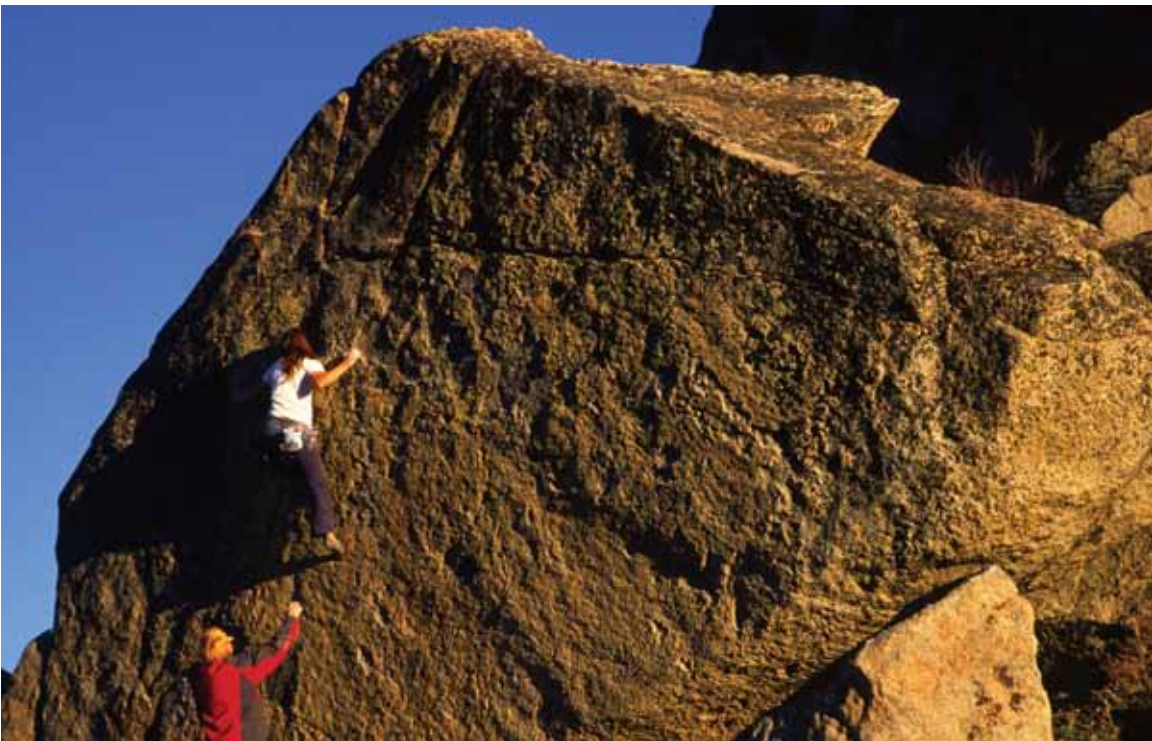
GEAR/GYMS: Adventures Edge in Arcata (707-822-4673) has climbing/ outdoor gear as does Northern Mountain Supply in Eureka (800-878-3583). The local gym is Far North Climbing Gym in Arcata (707-826-9558). Local guiding through North Coast Adventure Centers: www.northcoastadventurecenters.com

CAMPING/LODGING: Camp at Patricks Point State Park (which has rocks with climbing and bouldering) about 15 miles north on US-101. Eureka/Arcata is just a few miles south on US-101 and offers plenty of lodging from cheap to spendy.

Bouldering Ratings Compared

Hueco	Y.D.S	Font
VB	5.0-5.8	<3
V0-	5.9	3/4-
V0	5.10a/b	4-/4/4+
V0+	5.10c/d	4+
V1	5.11a/b	4+/5-
V2	5.11b/c	5/5+
V3	5.11c/d	6a/b
V4	5.12a/b	6c/c+
V5	5.12b/c	7a
V6	5.12c/d	7a+
V7	5.13a/b	7a+/7b
V8	5.13b/c	7b/7b+
V9	5.13c/d	7b+/7c
V10	5.14a	7c/7c+
V11	5.14b	7c+/8a
V12	5.14c	8a+
V13	5.14d	8b
V14	5.14d/5.15a	8b+
V15	5.15a/b	8c
V16	5.15b/c	8c+

Anya Miller on top of the Snowshed Wall, Donner. Photo by Charlie Berg.



History

The History of bouldering in Northern California begins with your definition of the word bouldering. If bouldering is any scrambling or easy climbing on small boulders or cliffs, then it probably started with Native Americans long ago. If you define bouldering as more of a modern style of unroped climbing distilled down to its purest, most difficult form, then its starting date is a bit more recent. In Europe, Characters like the English mountaineer Oscar Eckenstein and his pupil Aleister Crowley took part in some of the first ever documented “bouldering” as far back as the 1880s. They probably were doing about V0 on the modern scale of difficulty (noting that it is not about the ratings) and they did it in big leather boots with nails in the bottom for better edging. By the 1930s, Pierre Allain and his crew, the “Bleausards” were doing the first bouldering circuits up to about V3/4 in the sandstone forests of Fontainebleau, France. These early boulderers were mostly mountaineers/explorers who were finding more than just practice on the smaller rocks.

When bouldering in the more modern sense of the word began taking root in Europe around the late 1800s/early 1900s California was still a rugged and wild place for the most part. Few cities were built yet and gold fever was still in the air. By the 1920s to 1930s people in Northern California had finally caught up with civilization. At Indian Rock Park in Berkeley at this time, a couple of rock climbers (Dave Brower and Dick Leonard) invented the first dynamic belay technique that is still used all over the world today to catch a falling climber. Since the 1940’s, Northern California has been on the cutting edge of technology, culture, and sport. From the young radicals in Berkeley with the free speech movement and the hippies’ free love movement in San Francisco in the sixties, up to the modern day dotcom high-tech revolution in Silicon Valley, Northern California has been



Kenny Ariza does Slab Crack at Rocklin. Ken Ariza Collection

and will always be pushing the limits of civilization’s evolution.

In the 1950s American bouldering would have its true birth. American John Gill would have a final piece to add to the puzzle before bouldering was respected as a noble and proud pastime, the final part to add to the turbo V10 engine of psyche known as bouldering. Until Gill (a gymnast, mountaineer, math professor and visionary) combined his talents into the ultimate form of physical and mental challenge that we all know today as bouldering, no one had ever actually pushed the limits of what was possible on rock. Gill’s dynamic techniques, static power moves, and training habits were highly specialized for that time. He is also considered revolutionary for being the first to ever use chalk. Gill is recognized as the first to really perfect the ideas and techniques of modern day bouldering. He is considered the first true boulderer. Gill single handedly pulled the bar up to about V10 on the modern scale. Another

early bouldering pioneer, Jim Holloway, pushed standards up even higher all the way to about V12 in the 1960s. Then, the groundbreaking highball classic *Midnight Lightning* in Yosemite was first climbed by Nor Cal native Ron Kauk in the 1970s. Since then a steady flow of strong, talented, and inspired characters has also joined the American bouldering crew and some would join the Nor Cal crew as well.

John “Verm” Sherman would be one of those who made a mark in both. In America he made his mark with the development of the original classics at the world-renowned Hueco Tanks, as well as the invention of the modern day V scale for estimating difficulty (V is for Verm). Verm made his mark in Nor Cal when he started bouldering in Berkeley in the 1970s and left problems that stand the test of time (like the classic *Impossible Wall* at *Mortar Rock*) for local climbers to test themselves on for ages to come.

The history of bouldering in Northern California is as elusive as most of its rocks. It is still being written today just like some of the best rocks are still being found. With most of the development going on in the back woods and the forgotten beaches by hardcore, modest locals, not much of it has ever been documented. A few things that are certain is that it started in the Bay Area and Yosemite around the time bouldering was getting started everywhere in America in the 1960s and 70s. The development moved out from those areas to places like Lake Tahoe, Columbia, Sonora Pass, Sonoma County, Moonstone Beach near Arcata, and Bald Rock near Chico in the 1970s and 80s. Mt. Lassen in the desolate northeast corner of the state and Lake and Mendocino Counties were some of the last to have major bouldering discoveries in the 1990s. We still find new problems at all these areas and even at some secret areas in between.

In the 1990s the crash pad was not only invented but it was accepted as a legitimate tool for everyday bouldering. The pad changed it all: sit starts were added to everything, problems over rocks that were

once too dangerous now looked fun and the highballs started getting higher. Since back in those days when I started climbing with my friend Marcos Nunez we have had a great crew of friends/psyched local boulderers: Jim and Jason Campbell, Jory Morgan, Mark Howe, Richie Esquibel, Kenny Ariza, Dominic Sichel, Shawn Rogers, Keith Bischoff, Ryan Padgett, Sean Brady, Charlie Barrett, Andrew and Dave Wallach, Ryan Tolentino, Ryan Smith, and Kevin Jorgeson. We all searched, found and developed the boulders and crags along the one-of-a-kind Sonoma Coast and the hills, mountains, valleys and rivers around the Wine Country, as well as the Sierras. All through the 1990s and past the turn of the century right up to today we are still finding new rocks all over Nor Cal! Some of the major West Coast players of Nor Cal Bouldering from the past, present and future are: Russ Bobzien (Bay Area), Mark Nichols (Tahoe/Bay Area), Scott Frye (Mickey's/Berkeley), Greg Loh (Tahoe/Berkeley), Jim Thornburg (Mickey's/Castle), Victor Copeland (Bishop/Sacramento/Tahoe), Dustin Sabo (Sierra Buttes/Tahoe), Dave Nunley, Mike Papciak (Berkeley/Mickey's), Bruce Morris (Castle Rock), Frankie Ocasio (Mickey's), Paul Barraza (Tahoe), Travis Klawin (Mount Lassen), Ben Pope (Columbia), Jesse Bonin and Noah Kaufman (Tahoe/Bear Valley), and John “Verm” Sherman (history).

One of the main players of Nor Cal bouldering is Chris Sharma, who humbly got his start in the gyms and on the rocks of Nor Cal and quickly proved himself on the rocks of the world. His mellow Nor Cal vibe is what I think helps him succeed. The laid-back, peace-loving, freedom-worshipping, Bohemian hippie culture is still alive and kicking in the big cities, on the far out beaches, and way out in the back cuts of the redwood forests of Nor Cal.

Add your own chapter to the history books: come boulder in this natural paradise and leave your worries behind.

Bald Rock

Number of problems: **50 total/25 listed**

Rock: **Granite**

Difficulty: **VB-V5/6**

Granite in the Central Valley foothills! At about 3000 feet elevation these are some of the few granite boulders in Northern California that stay dry through most of the winter. With a fairly short 5-10 minute approach and a few short top-ropeable cliffs, this is a popular local weekend hang out for Chico area climbers and also for classes. The multi-pitch Bald Rock Dome is also nearby in the Feather River Canyon. Check out the sixth largest waterfall in America: the awesome Feather Falls.

About the rock

Mostly vertical faces and arêtes with a few slabs and overhangs.

When to climb

Spring and fall are best. Expect 90-plus temps mid summer. After a wet winter storm, wait a few days for the boulders to dry out.

Driving directions

From CA-70 in Oroville take CA-162/Oro-Quincy Highway east through the city of Oroville and past Lake Oroville. About 19 miles from the CA-70/CA-162 intersection in Oroville, take a right onto the well-marked Bald Rock Rd. Go 7.2 miles uphill



Mission Improbable. Photo by Valentine Cullen.

to the left turn into the parking area at Bald Rock Trailhead. Parking GPS: 39.64656, -121.34148

Approach

From the parking area follow the obvious Bald Rock Trail for about five minutes to a short rocky uphill section. Angle right up to the ridgetop. Once on the ridgetop, spot the boulders on the slabs to the north of the cliffs. GPS of boulders: 39.64753, -121.34663

Number of problems by difficulty

VB	V0	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	≥V11
0	8	4	2	4	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

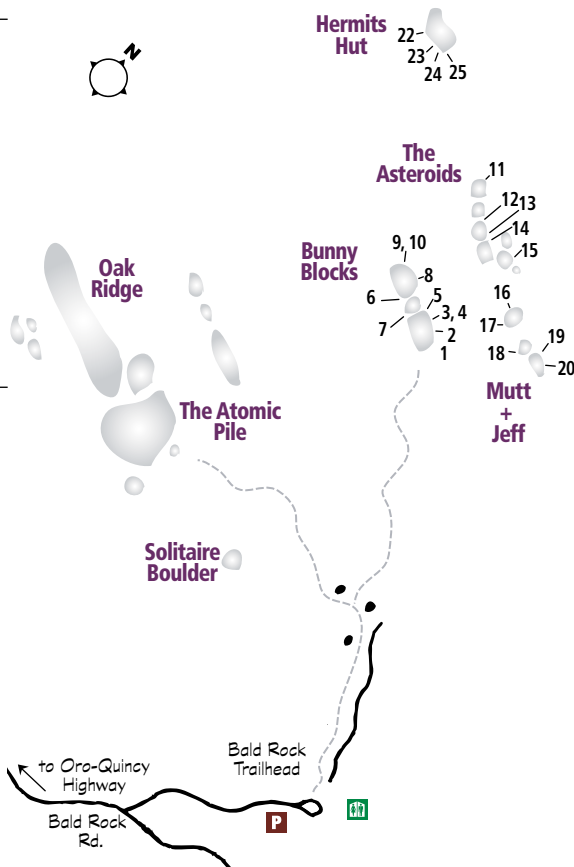


John Gill Memorial Boulder

- 1. Left arête?
- 2. Mission Impossible V5/6★★★★★ Face right of arête.
- 3. Center face?
- 4. Mission Improbable V4/5★★★★★ Face left of arête.
- 5. V0★★★ Right arête.

Bunny Blocks

- 6. Hugh Hefner V0★★★ The left of the two cracks. Jam and face climb up the split.
- 7. Hared Out V0★★★ Jam the offwidth crack between John Gill Memorial Boulder and the other block.
- 8. V1★★ Stand start on horizontal edge on the left side of the steep face.
- 9. Bunny Arête V0★★ Right arête.
- 10. V2★★ Traverse from Bunny Arête to the left along the lip and finish on 8.



The Asteroids

- 11. **Asteroids Traverse V3★★** Traverse pumpy lip of juggy boulder right to left.
- 12. **Asteroid Bash V0★★★** Juggy right arête. V1 sit start.
- 13. **Maneater Arête V2★★★** Stand start the arête right of chimney. Go up either side.
- 14. **Meateater Arête V1★★★** Stand start the arête on the left side of the big chimney.
- 15. **Eros Direct V3★★** Stand start steep left arête in tight corner. Hueco top out.
- 16. **V4★★★** Stand start on scooped sloper face.
- 17. **The Birdbath V1★★** Mantel into big hueco.

Mutt Boulder

- 18. **Mutt Arête V0★★** Stand start slab arête. Mutt Arête Direct V1: Sit start under short steep arête. Pull over onto slab.

Jeff Boulder

- 19. **Northwest Face V4★★** Sit start right side of short vertical crimper face.
- 20. **Northeast Face V4★★** Sit start on the left side of the short vertical crimper face.
- 21. **Jeff Traverse V3★★** Traverse left to right along the top lip of the Jeff Boulder.

Hermit Boulder

- 22. **Ramblin Recluse V0★★★** Start on overhang right of Hermit Hut. Go up left. Reckless Recluse V1: same start but traverse low and left. Same finish.
- 23. **V3★★** Vertical rail.
- 24. **El Hermano V1★★** Right arête. V2 Direct start left of arête.
- 25. **Flea on Hippo V0★** Bulge start to slab. Downclimb descent.

