

## Lost World Crag, Paradox Valley - Rock Climbing by Dave Cooper



*The setting sun catches the Lost World Crag, with Lone Cone and Middle Peak in the distance - small.jpg*

While exploring the Paradox Valley this past November, we picked up a copy of the book “The Wild Wild West - Rock Climbing in the Wild West End of Southwestern Colorado”, by Charlie Fowler and Damon Johnston. Since little has been published on climbing in this area, this was an exciting find, and we determined to make good use of the guidebook. To that end, we returned to the Paradox Valley in April to spend a couple of days checking out one of the areas described in the book - The Lost World Crag.

Charlie Fowler, world famous climber and photographer, met an untimely end on a peak in China in November 2006, along with his partner Christine Boskoff. Fowler had a huge impact on the climbing community, with many significant ascents in Colorado and around the world. He also provided valuable

**Getting to the Trailhead:** Take Highway 550 south from Montrose to Ridgeway, turning west in Ridgeway onto Highway 62. Take Highway 62 over the Dallas Divide and continue to the junction with Highway 145. From this junction drive west to the town of Norwood. Pass through Norwood and reach an intersection with Highway 90. Turn left on Highway 90 and drive to the town of Naturita. Continue west on Highway 90 to the intersection of Highway 90 and Highway 141, 1.9 miles west of Naturita. From this intersection, drive into the Paradox Valley on Highway 90 for 5.2 miles and turn right onto County Road EE22 (also known as the Long Park Road). Drive northwest on EE22, a good gravel road, for 1.8 miles. At this point a rough, unmarked road heads right. Take this road as it heads northeast towards the Lost World Crag. After driving 0.2 miles on this rough road it makes a right turn before climbing sharply over rocky slabs. Continue as far as you are comfortable driving. At 0.6 miles from EE22, at the base of a steep hill, the road divides. Going straight up the hill on a very rough road will take you to the upper parking area, while turning right and heading southwest will take you to the designated campsites at the base of the crag, 0.75 miles from EE22. There are many side roads, so care is needed.

**Difficulty:** Climbs range in difficulty from 5.6 to 5.12+. Most are bolted, but there are a few trad routes. Climbs are between 35 and 50 feet long.

**Technical Gear:** Most routes here need less than 8 quickdraws. For the trad routes a fairly small rack should suffice. A second rope might be useful if top roping, since not all routes have top anchors.

**Guidebook:** “The Wild Wild West - Rock Climbing in the Wild West End of Southwestern Colorado”, by Charlie Fowler and Damon Johnston. Mountain World Media, 2004.

**USGS Quad:** Uravan, CO; Naturita NW, CO.

**GPS coordinates for trailhead/camping area (NAD83):** 38°14'59"N, 108°40'29"W, 6214 feet.

information on climbs through his guidebooks. I still have a copy of his hand-written guide, "San Juan Ice Climbs", which has provided us with many enjoyable days of climbing.

The Lost World Crag is a small formation along the Sawtooth Ridge, which forms the northern edge of Paradox Valley. With around 75 recorded routes ranging in length from 35 to 50 feet, there's plenty to keep you busy for a day or two. The routes are mostly bolted, but there are a few gear-protected routes. It is also relatively straightforward to top-rope the climbs, though you may have to set up your own anchors. The rock is Dakota Sandstone, a relatively hard, conglomerate sandstone. Pebbles embedded in the rock often provide hand and footholds.

Climbing is possible year-round, but expect hot weather during the summer months. South-facing routes can offer climbing from Fall through Spring, though after a recent snowfall the dirt roads can be muddy and impassable. Since you shouldn't be climbing on wet sandstone anyway, this probably isn't an issue. A high clearance vehicle is needed to reach the crag, though with a little care a Subaru was able to drive almost to the base of the climbs.

*Diane climbing the fun warmup route -Whispering Wind (5.6) - small.jpg*

We found the climbing on the crag to be enjoyable, in a very scenic location and with plenty of primitive camping available (the land is under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management). A good introduction to climbing in the area, and a good place for both beginning climbers and those more advanced. Add this to your list of warm, sunny crags.

### **Approach**

Appropriately, the two sides of the crag are named "Sunnyside" (south facing) and "Shadyside" (north facing). To access the Sunnyside climbs, either head uphill on the faint but cairned climbers' trail directly above the camping area, or walk up the jeep road at the west end of the crag, then just before reaching the saddle, turn right (east) on another road. When this road peters out, head uphill on faint trails to reach the southwest corner of the crag.

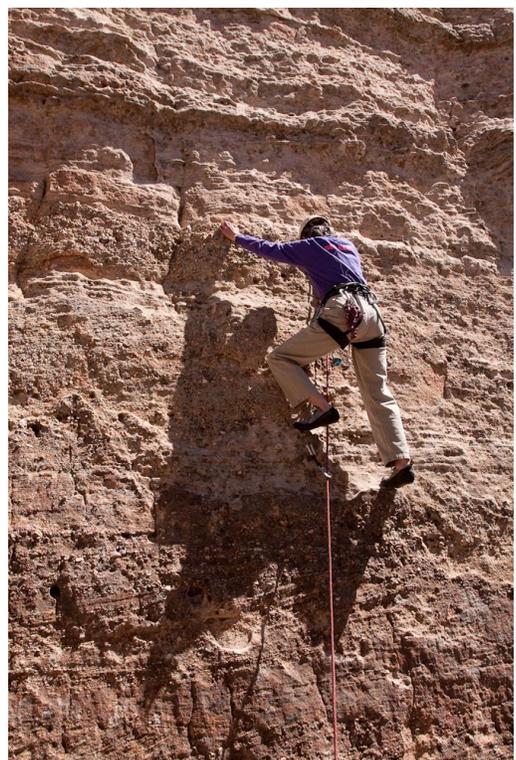
To access the Shadyside climbs, either continue around the east end of the crag from the Sunnyside climbs, or head there directly from the saddle at the west end of the crag.

### **The Climbing**

The climbs are mainly short, bolted routes, some with top anchors, some requiring that you fashion your own anchor, either with gear or using trees. A second rope or static line is useful if setting up a top rope. There are also some fine trad lines. Climbs range in difficulty from 5.6 to 5.12.

*Early morning sun warms the rock on -Save the Children (5.7)- - small-2.jpg*

Near the southwest end of the crag, just east of the point where the trail reaches the crag, are several of the more moderate routes. A fun arête, well-bolted and with positive holds offers a good introduction to the climbing - Whispering Wind (5.6). Immediately left of this climb is a face in a corridor with three more short climbs, two of which, "Save the Children (5.7) and Positively 4th.



Street (5.8), share a 3-bolt anchor. Positively 4th. Street is the rightmost climb on this face, near the arête.

We also enjoyed “Natty Rita Goes Shopping” (5.10), a superb short hand crack to a single bolt on the upper face. I was happy to top-rove this one, since the finish (even though protected by the lone bolt), on sandy, rounded features, was a little tricky. To reach Natty Rita, walk east from Whispering Wind past four climbs and look for a right-facing corner.

*The fine handcrack -Natty Rita Goes Shopping (5.10)- - small.jpg*

Approximately 100 yards east of Whispering Wind is a large detached boulder with a couple of good, moderate routes. Inside the corridor is a well-bolted route, “Do The Easy Thing” (5.7), while on the outside, west corner of the boulder is a 5.9 route (“Purple Daze”) that gave us full value. Both of these climbs end at the same anchors atop the boulder.



*Do the Easy Thing (5.7) - small.jpg*

#### **Descent**

Descent from the climbs is either by walking off (best done via corridors on the west end of Shadyside, or by rappelling. A little exploration may be necessary to find the best walk-off.

*Ginni leading -Purple Daze (5.9) - small.jpg*

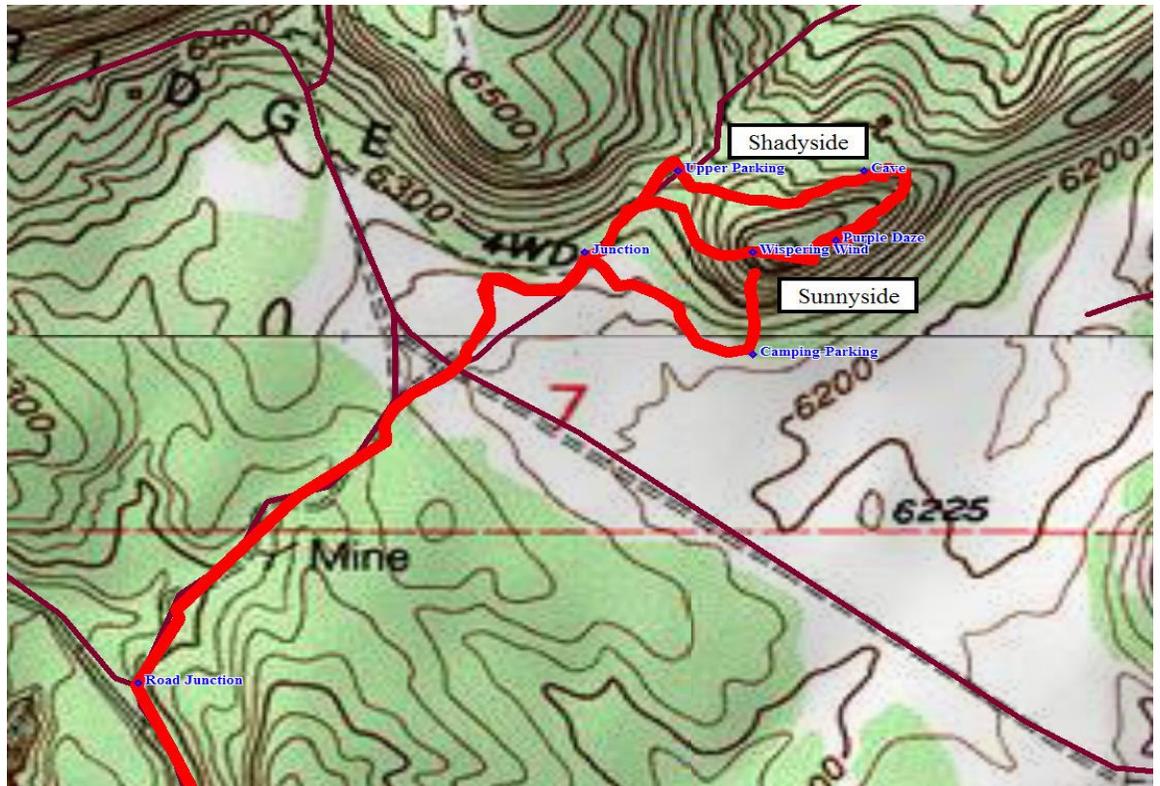


**Caution:**

The rock is a sandstone conglomerate. Both belayers and climbers should wear helmets due to the possibility of small rocks falling.

Remember, climbing is an inherently dangerous activity and you should always climb within your ability after carefully judging the safety of the route. We write about it, you take all the risks.

*Map detail showing the location of some climbs*



TOPO! map printed on 04/20/10 from "Untitled2.tpo"

108°41'10" W 108°40'40" W 108°40'10" W WGS84 108°39'20" W

