

North Table Mountain Sport Climbing by Dave Cooper

As the snow melts, temperatures warm and days grow longer, it's time for rock climbers to look beyond the confines of indoor climbing gyms and head for the local crags.

For Metro-Denver-area climbers, one of the most accessible and popular spots for after-work recreation is right above the town of Golden. With a relatively short approach and hundreds of bolted sport routes, the short climbs on the basalt columns of North Table Mountain attract large numbers of climbers each evening during the spring, summer and autumn months. The exception is when thunderstorms are moving through, since this spot is very exposed to lightning. Actually, winter can also be a good time to visit these mainly south-facing cliffs when they are warmed by the afternoon sun.



Getting to the Trailhead: If approaching from Highway 58, take the Washington Avenue exit in Golden. Turn right and drive northwest on Washington to 1st Street. Turn right on 1st Street and drive 2 blocks, crossing Ford Street and then a small bridge. Turn right on Partridge Circle, then shortly make a left on Ptarmigan Street. Follow as the road curves right and becomes Peery Drive. Where Peery Drive meets Peery Boulevard, turn left and drive to the end of the paved street. Continue through the gate on a dirt road, signed to the main and overflow parking areas. Note that the area is only open dawn to dusk, and please obey speed limits through this residential area.

Difficulty: Technical sport climbs covering a wide range of difficulty.
Gear: A set of Quickdraws and anchor material. The climbs described here only require a single 60 meter rope. You may also wish to bring along a rack for some of the trad routes to be found in the area.
Resources: The guidebook I've used for a long time is Golden Cliffs, Colorado by Peter Hubbel (Chockstone Publishing). Recently a new guide has been published, with updated route information: North Table Mountain: Rock Climbs at Golden Cliffs, by Jason Haas and Ben Schneider (Fixed Pin Publishing). Both can be found at Bent Gate Mountaineering; 1313 Washington Ave. Golden.

Randy Murphy of Littleton on the popular -This ain't Naturita, Pilgrim (5.9)small-3427.jpg

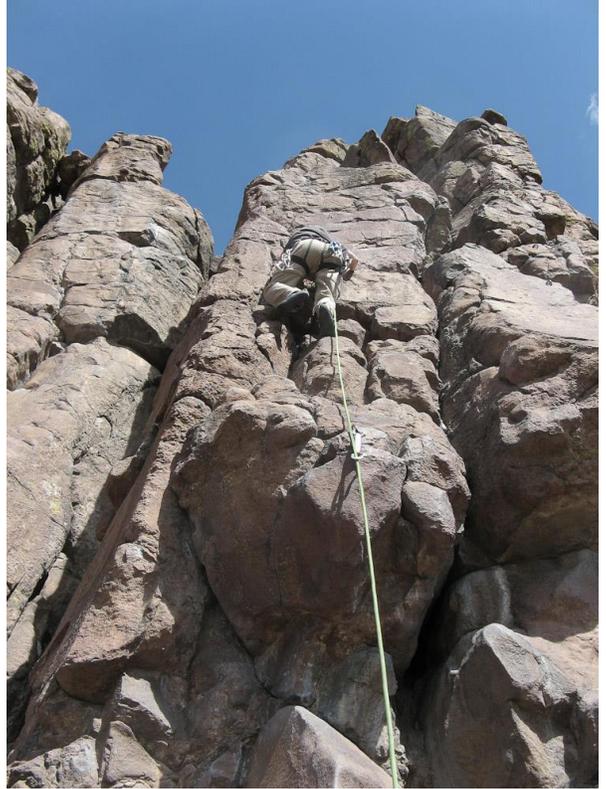
The area, known as the Golden Cliffs Preserve, is owned and managed by the Access Fund (www.accessfund.org) after being generously donated by local landowner Mayford Peery. The Access Fund works to guarantee hiking and climbing access to significant climbing areas around the country.

Approach

From either the lower or upper parking areas, just follow the excellent trail for about 15 minutes to the base of the cliffs. A trail system along the base allows you to reach the climbs. Watch out for rattlesnakes on the trail on those hot summer afternoons - we've seen several over the years.

Climb Description

From the point where the trail reaches the cliffs at the area known as the Brown Cloud Crags, most of the climbs are located by heading left (west). Two gullies provide easy access to the top of the cliffs, one just to the right of the trail junction and immediately right of the climbs Thelma and Louise, the second being several hundred yards to the west.



Steep climbing at North Table Mountain-small-3423.jpg-3423.jpg

The climbing is characterized by vertical walls with small fingery holds. Over the years the hand and foot holds on the most popular climbs have become quite polished, often making the route a little harder. Most climbs are well-bolted and have anchors just below the rim of the cliff. This allows the climbs to either be top-roped or lead-climbed. If top-roping, be especially careful when setting up the top rope system - sometimes it's a good idea to be belayed to get to the anchors. Also, some of the bolt hangers of the anchors have been worn by top-roping directly through the hangers. Always clip the anchors with your own carabiners and slings to avoid excessive wear.

Although the Golden Cliffs Preserve is primarily a sport-climbing area, scattered along the cliffs are a number of excellent trad routes. Probably my favorite is the Big Dihedral (5.8), just to the right of Lemons, Limes and Tangerines. On a few occasions we've attracted some attention when we pull a trad climbing rack out of our packs!

The Golden Cliffs are a great place to meet your friends for an after-work workout, so head up and enjoy.

