

Red Rock Canyon - Rock Climbing
by Dave Cooper



Red Rock Canyon. The Whale and Whales Tail are located beyond the lake.jpg

OK, I'll admit to having mixed feelings about climbing on sandstone. Not the metamorphosed, hard sandstone of Eldorado Canyon, but the soft, gritty kind that is found in some areas of southern Utah, for example. For that reason I've avoided climbing in places like the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. Something about the texture makes me a little nervous - it can sometimes feel as though you're stepping on ball bearings, and to my way of thinking gives you little warning before gravity overcomes friction.

Recently though, friends had returned from an area

Getting to the Trailhead: From I-25 in Colorado Springs, take the Highway 24 exit (Exit 141) west for 3.2 miles and turn left onto Ridge Road at the sign for Red Rock Canyon Open Space. Follow the road left past the first large parking area to the end of the road at a second parking 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.
USGS Quad: Manitou Springs, CO.

Climbing Disclaimer

near the Garden of the Gods called Red Rock Canyon Open Space. It has a lot of excellent sport routes on generally good rock. Somewhat dubious but hoping to be pleased, we headed down there to check it out and ended up having a fun day in a beautiful setting.

This relatively new area boasts around 90 well-bolted routes. Regulations for technical rock climbing here are the same as for neighboring Garden of the Gods. Register and sign a waiver at the Garden of the Gods Visitor Center, and pick up a guidebook ("Red Rock Canyon Open Space - A Rock Climber's Guide - Colorado Springs, Colorado" by Stewart M. Green). If the Visitor Center is out of stock, the guidebook should be available at local outdoor stores.

Whether you're a climber or not, Red Rock Canyon Open Space is worth a visit.

Scenic Red Rock Canyon is worth a visit whether you're a climber or hiker-small.JPG

Approach

For our first visit to the area we selected climbs on the Whales Tail and on the Whale. To reach the Whales Tail, from the second parking area, walk either on the trail or along the road, south into the canyon. After only 0.2 miles you'll reach a picturesque lake on the right. The Whales Tail and the Whale are visible just beyond the lake. The Whales Tail is the first formation. Take the right hand (west) hiking trail past the lake and continue until there is a break in the rock face to your right. A trail of sorts climbs up through the break to the base of the climbs. To reach the Whale, continue on the main west-side trail until it makes a hard left jog before turning sharply left again. At this left turn, a climber's trail heads over towards the rock face, up some steps made from concrete blocks.

Steps leading to the Whale-small.JPG

Climb Description



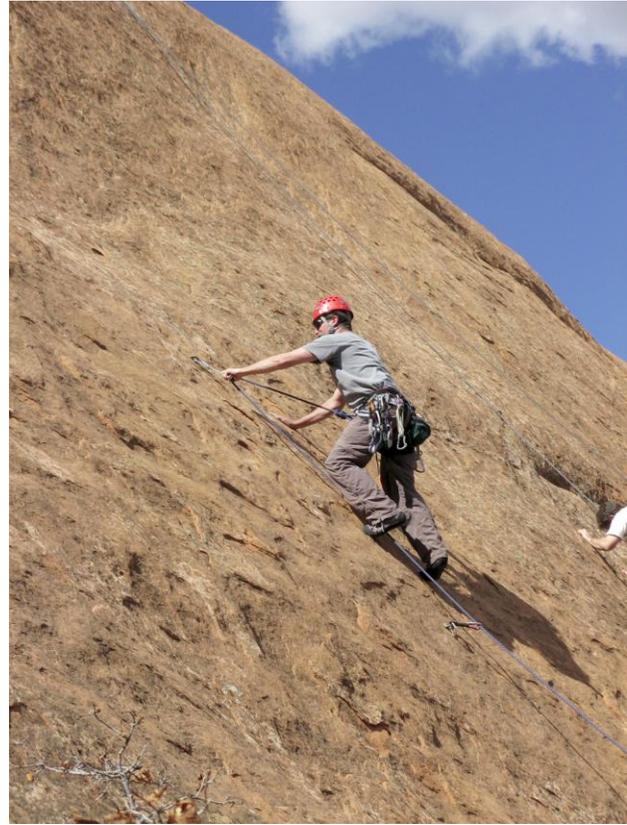


Climbers on the Whale's Tail. At left, Diana is climbing The Rose, (5.7), while Mike leads Jason's Argonaut(5.10a). Pockets a' Plenty (5.9) is just to the right - small.jpg



The Whale's Tail offers three well-bolted routes from 5.7 to 5.10a. The Whale is much more extensive and has generally better rock quality than that found on the Whale's Tail. Twenty-four bolted routes provide mainly moderate climbs ranging in difficulty from 5.5 to 5.10b. All climbs are well-bolted and have two-bolt anchors.

Diana leading Finnacle (5.7)-small.JPG



Mike leading the excellent climb, The Captain (5.9)-small.JPG

