

Slip Slidin' Away (WI4) - Skylight Area by Dave Cooper

Long before the Ice Park made the small town of Ouray an internationally-famous ice climbing destination, the naturally formed climbs along the Camp Bird Mine road were justifiably popular with ice climbers. A series of gullies cut into the rotten shale above the shelf road is known as the Skylight Area and provides a high concentration of quality one and two pitch climbs.

While the approach isn't as short as for many climbs in the Ice Park of the Box Canyon, it is hard to complain about the easy half mile walk along the road. If you want to get away from the crowds, consider heading up to this area for some great climbs in a spectacular setting.

While not as well known as some of its neighboring climbs, Slip Slidin' Away, named after the song by Paul Simon, makes an excellent warmup. Plan to spend a day in the area playing on the traditional ice climbs, or test your skills on some of the newer hard mixed routes which have been established here.

Since the area has some avalanche potential it is best to stay away during high risk periods.

Slip Slidin' Away is the climb on the left



The Approach

From the plowed parking area start walking southwest up the road. The first obvious south-facing ice, in the gully immediately above the switchbacks, is the Senator, a fine climb but currently off limits. Continue on the road and after just less than a half mile reach a climb which gives its name to the area, "The Skylight" (WI5, M5/6), distinguishable by a large chockstone twenty-five feet up.

The next major gully is home to another great climb, "Choppo's Chimney" (WI4/5). "Slip Slidin' Away" is in the next major gully.

Topping out on Slip Slidin' Away

The Climb

Scramble up the snow slope to the base of the ice and belay on the right side.

Climb the left-sloping ramp and either set up an intermediate belay on the left side of the gully or continue up a steep curtain of



ice on your right. The exact line taken determines the length of the vertical section. Cross a low angled section to a steeper finish below the belay/rappeel tree. The rappeel slings should be obvious. If you decide to do the climb as one long pitch, pay attention to the potential for rope drag.

Descend by rappelling the route. One double rope 60 meter rappeel will get you most of the way to the road.

Include the usual climbing disclaimer , perhaps with the observation that ice climbing has additional hazards.

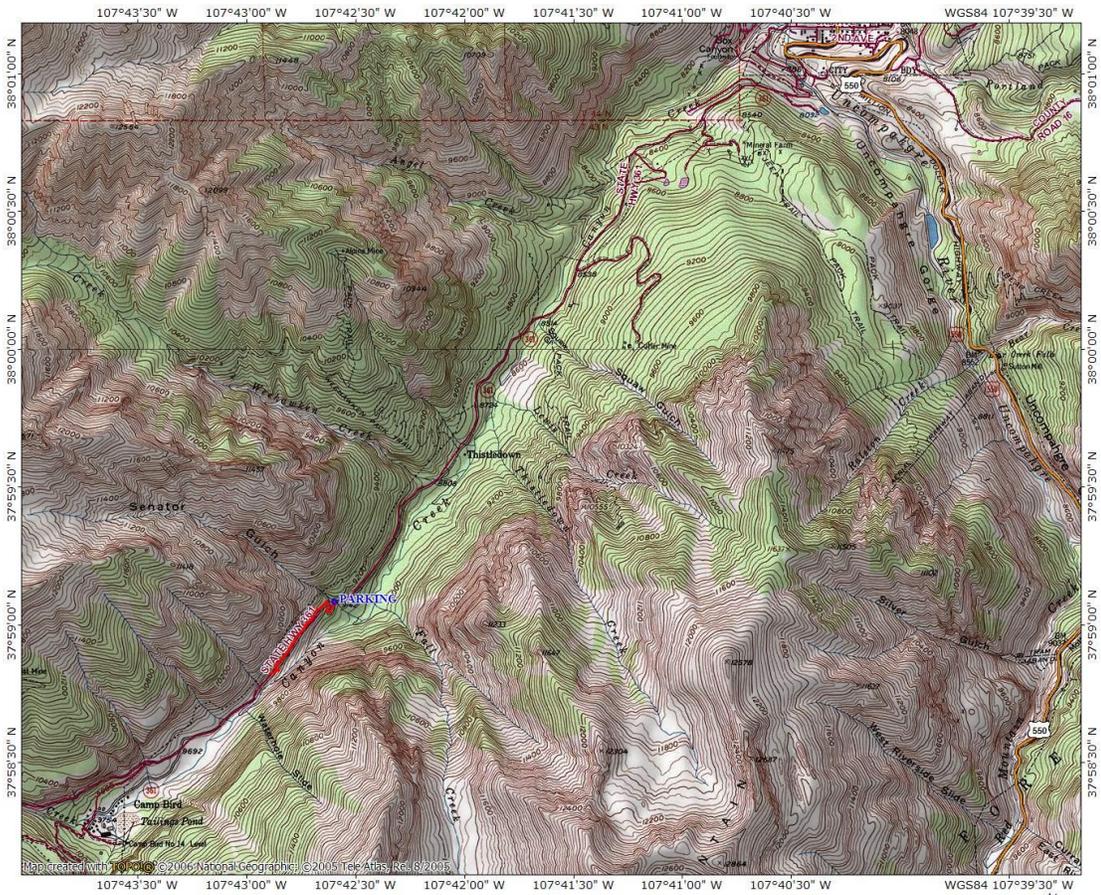
Getting to the Trailhead: From the town of Ouray, head south on US Highway 550 towards Red Mountain Pass. Immediately after the first major left hand bend, 0.3 miles out of town, turn right onto the Camp Bird Mine Road. Take this road for 3.5 miles to the end of the plowed road, just below the switchbacks. Four wheel drive or chains may be necessary. On the way you'll have a good view of the Ice Park.

Difficulty: The climb can be broken into two shorter pitches or climbed as one long pitch with a 60 meter rope.

Gear and Guidebooks: A standard ice rack. Two 60 meter ropes are needed to rappeel the route. Take slings to back up the rappeel anchor. For more information on the area, including descriptions of the newer mixed routes, see "Colorado Ice, Volume 1" by Jack Roberts.

Rappelling back down





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