

“Sunup” 5.8 Unaweep Canyon - rock climbing
by Dave Cooper



Granite crags line the walls of Unaweep Canyon-small.jpg

Getting to the Trailhead: If approaching from the Denver area, take the Clifton Exit (Exit 37) on the eastern edge of Grand Junction and take Highway 141 south, following the signs to Delta. Turn southeast onto Highway 50 and drive 2.6 miles to the junction where Highway 141 diverges from Highway 50. Drive southwest on Highway 141 for 18.5 miles to a small pullout on the north side of the road, located between two private driveways. Look for the brown and white sign indicating the start of the approach trail. This pullout is 4.3 miles west of the junction with Divide Road.

It is always exciting to explore a new rock climbing area. Each area has its own personality and rock characteristics.

We recently had the opportunity to visit a climbing area that is relatively unknown but has tremendous climbing potential.

Unaweep Canyon, located close to Grand Junction is an unspoiled climbing area in an amazing setting. As you drive into the canyon the road descends through geologic time, passing initially through canyon walls of red sandstone before emerging into a landscape of towering Precambrian walls of granite and gneiss. Climbing routes vary from one pitch sport climbs to multi-pitch traditional climbs on high quality steep rock.

Gear: For "Sunup", there are 7 bolts plus anchor chains. A single 60 meter rope is adequate for this route.

Amenities:

The comprehensive guidebook to the area "Grand Junction Rock – Rock Climbs of Unaweep Canyon and Adjacent Areas" by KC Baum (Graphic Press) contains information about camping in the area.

Many of the climbs and approaches are located on private property. Climber access to many of these has been allowed to this point. The guidebook to the area, "Grand Junction Rock – Rock Climbs of Unaweep Canyon and Adjacent Areas" by KC Baum (Graphic Press), is a good starting point for access information.

Some climbs are on BLM land, while three of the most important crags (Hidden Valley, Fortress and Sunday Walls) are owned by the Access Fund, a national non-profit organization dedicated to keeping climbing areas open and conserving the climbing environment. The Access Fund does a tremendous job of supporting local climbing groups' efforts to keep the crags open. For more information, check out <http://www.accessfund.org/>.

One of the shorter and very accessible routes highly recommended by locals is a sport route on a feature known as the Lower Sun Tower. On private land, the owners have allowed access to the crag. It is important to respect the privilege and to behave responsibly. This well-bolted moderate route called "Sunup (5.8)" turned out to be a delightful climb and a good introduction to the area.

This area deserves an extended visit. We'll be back.

Sustained and interesting face climbing on this enjoyable route-small.jpg

Approach

The trail, marked at its beginning with a brown and white sign asking you to stay on the trail to and from the climbs (and a warning that you climb at your own risk), heads uphill a short distance before turning west and contouring above a private residence. The trail to the Lower Sun Tower is well marked. Follow this excellent trail for perhaps 15



minutes to the base of the Lower Sun Tower. Sunup is the bolted route directly in front of you.



Sign indicating the start of the approach trail for Sunup.jpg

The Climb

Varied face climbing on excellent, steep rock past seven bolts brings you to the chain anchors after 80 feet. Tall climbers will find their height an advantage in reaching the first clip. A small roof after the sixth bolt provides additional variety.

We found it better to rappel rather than lower, due to the placement of the anchors, even when you extend the anchor. The gully to climbers' right can be used for a walkoff but is quite loose.

