

# BOLFA 2025



**Yosemite report**

**Moonarie**

**An Aussie  
Dirtbag's guide  
to vanlifying and  
climbing in  
Western Europe**

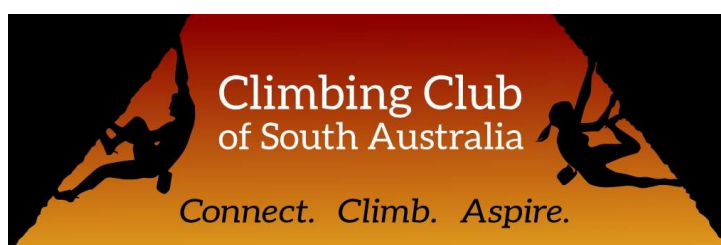
**Q & A with  
Sarah Endlich**

**Crag Police:  
Cragstoppers**

**Climber safety**

**Crag Care**

**Trad Dad vs  
Auto Belay**



# Welcome to BOLFA 2025

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## Presented on behalf of the Climbing Club of South Australia

**On the cover:** Downwind of Angels, a superlative wall and crack climb at grade 19. Located on Moonarie's most obvious feature, the mighty Great Wall, and rated as one of the best climbs at Moonarie at any grade. This is one that Lincoln wanted to give five stars!! I've done it six times! Here Mike Broadbent heads up the fingery initial wall, which leads to the crack, in 1989. Belaying is Mike Mowbray, visiting English medico – Tony Barker.

Rock climbing is dangerous. It is your responsibility as a climber or boulderer to have received adequate training and to know and accept the risks involved.

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Hi all, I'd like to acknowledge the Kaurna people, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where I am writing today. I acknowledge their continued connection to Country, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. A special mention goes to Ngannu, the ancestral body of the Adelaide Hills, and that I feel grateful to be amongst our beautiful natural landscapes.

BOLFA 2025 is here and I'm glad to share with you the climbing and reading love. There's a lot going on, including Sam Ferguson and Chad Freak climbing at Yosemite, a Moonarie feature by Tony Barker with amazing photos, Caleb Skirrow's guide to vanlifying in Western Europe, Q & A with Sarah Endlich, Cragstoppers at the Bluff and more!

In May I was at Morialta, belaying at the bottom of Clea while some climbers were at the top doing things with their ropes. A rock fell from the top and hit me on the back of my helmet and then my upper back / base of my neck. It was a chunky rock, about 20 cm in diameter so this is pretty rare in my experience. I was able to safely lower my climbing partner to the ground, thank goodness. People near me were super helpful. I have two spinous process / outer spine fractures at C7 & T1.

The accident and recovery were quite traumatic but also the healing went well; I am very grateful for the health and medical care I received and for the kind support of Dan, family and friends. This is a reminder that loose rock happens and to be extra careful and aware of the terrain when at the tops of cliffs.

I'm planning to step down from BOLFA – it has been a great experience 😊 A heartfelt thank you to all the contributors of articles and photos this year. Also thanks to webmaster Joel Williams and the CCSA Committee. Thank you for reading BOLFA, I really hope you enjoy the stories.

*Kylie Jarrett*  
BOLFA Editor



*Dan and I at the Kensi*



*Mori love: The Billiard Table, Morialta from a different angle.*

# Yosemite report 2025

## Sam Ferguson

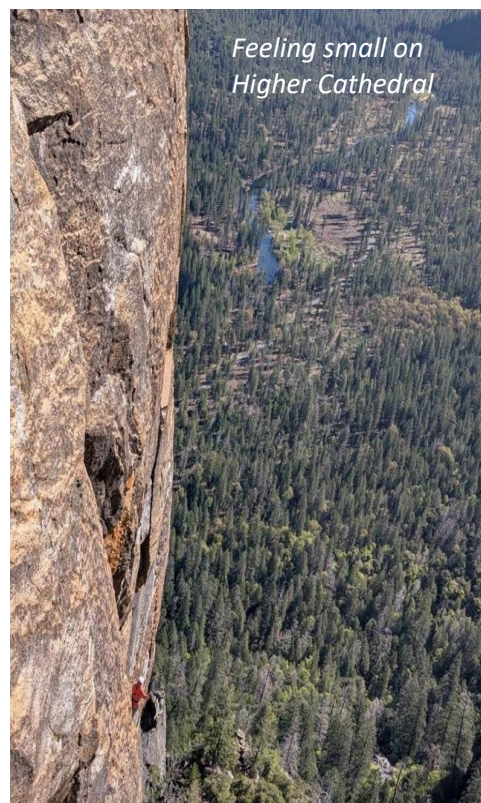
Chad Freak and I are currently both abroad, taking time away from work to travel to wonderful natural places. We met up in Yosemite to climb for three weeks. Below are some short stories from our experiences on the wall blended in with some experiences of travel. My favourite Adelaide crag is the Bluff. Chad's favourite area is Onkaparinga.

Northern California has many similarities to South Australia. Sometimes you feel like you're driving to Port Wakefield, other times through the Riverland. What SA doesn't have is the mountains or sheer population of California's 39 million people. California has extremely poor areas interspersed by extreme wealth. Islands of affluence in a sea of people just trying to get by. Crest Jewel (5.10a, 8 pitches) is a sea of granite situated across the valley from Half Dome. The sparse bolts are islands of safety, and the only way to know if you're on route.



Sometimes the bolts are so sparse you have to grab the draw and crane your neck to spot the next one. Going off route would be sub-optimal. Chad led the cruxes. I worked on getting my head game back after 5 months of no climbing. The day was about 12 hours with Royal Arches as the approach, and a long walk down.

Camp 4 is a confluence of people and cultures all forced to camp next to each other. It's easy to strike up worldly conversations after a simple question of 'where are you from?' Sean was a Parks employee waiting for his seasonal job to begin. Federal budget cuts had left him with no start date (he hinted the cuts are suspiciously only in blue states). He was camping and climbing while he waited. Was Sean the canary in the coal mine for the US economy crash – one federal job cut at a time? Sean was left with no job, no income and alone. Much like myself and Chad on





Higher Cathedral (NE Buttress, 11 pitches, 5.9). We had the huge wall to ourselves (rare in Yosemite), perched high in the valley. Quality stemming, jamming and chimneying on a steep buttress with many hanging belays. Topping out just across the valley, and at the same height as El Capitan!

I suppose topping out the South Face of the Washington Column (5.8 C1) at midnight was a bit like a fight breaking out in a Northern Californian Walmart car park. We didn't ask for it (or the double middle finger salute from the teenager), but it comes with the territory. Even a 5:30am tie in couldn't prevent climbing into the night. Earlier we had battled traffic at the start of the climb with another party who made it clear that they had climbed the Nose! After arriving at the base just after them, we patiently waited, harnessed and ready. Until they began to rack up and go to the toilet! We jumped ahead, eventually letting them overtake when we began the aid pitches which found them on our heels. We shivered for an hour while they passed. All the while the wind picked up to a strength that would blow our ropes sideways if they dangled below.



*Thin cracks on Washington Column*

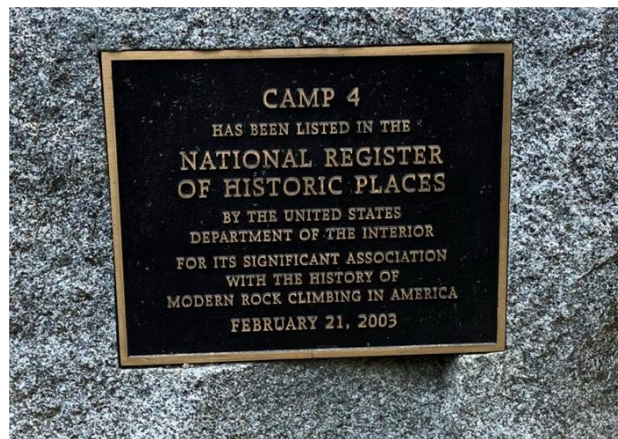
Did we make the wrong decision through generosity? (A week and a half later karma paid me back – finding a Smith Rock guidebook in the campsite (\$80AUD saved)). Chad battled relentless thin cracks on his pitches. Not made any easier by a thin rack and our 120 cm slings as steppers. Of which the other party made a commendation... or comment (most likely the latter). This aid climbing could take some getting used to. Slow, committing, thought provoking and gear intensive!

The 5.10 Finger Crack is a boulder perched above Camp 4. A short walk up the talus field to the 8 metre boulder problem. Combining amazing finger locks and just enough air below you when topping out. The other boulders near camp provide entertainment due to the fact they require more technique and body positioning rather than brute strength. Such good value so close to camp. Speaking of value, the (\$2USD) 1L choccy milks from the supermarket are about as good value as you will find in the valley!



*One of the endless boulders!*





*Stark contrast to the current Arapiles situation...*

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# Moonarie

## Words and photos by Tony Barker

Moonarie is clearly the most impressive climbing area in South Australia, located in the Flinders Ranges. Literally a “jewel in the crown”, it is a set of cliffs proudly cresting the south-eastern rim of Wilpena Pound, over 200 metres above the plain. It is rather remote, being about 400kms north of Adelaide, with about a 5 hour drive to get you there. People have been climbing at Moonarie since 1966, with the sixtieth anniversary coming up next year.

The bush campsite is on private property, and the final approach is a 40 minute flat, then steepening uphill walk. This gets the blood and sweat pumping with the usual 15kg+ pack of gear, rope, food and other necessities. Arriving at Top Camp (a rock platform at the focal point of a wide arc of cliffs towering 100 metres above), you are presented with a magnificent panorama eastward across the Flinders Ranges.

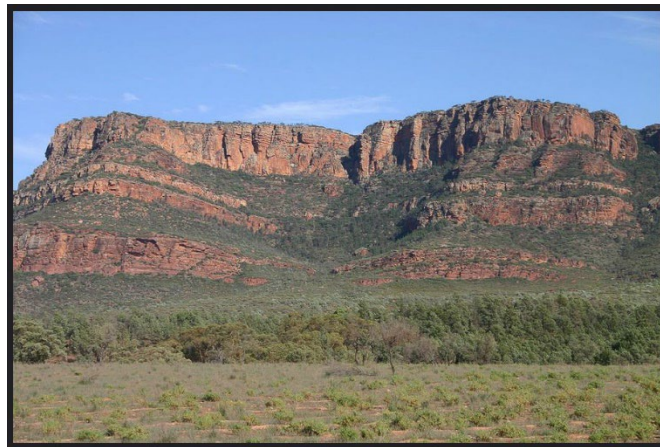
Climbing here is a different experience to that found at Arapiles. This is wilderness climbing. It is a more serious prospect. From a vantage point on a belay ledge, the remoteness is palpable, with cars as distant specks on the road to and from Wilpena Pound Resort. The long routes feel higher, since they already start a long way above the plain. On reaching the top, you are presented with a wonderful vista into the shallow basin of Wilpena Pound, with the summit of St Mary's Peak 10 kms to the north-east. Similar to Arapiles though, the long climbs are often 100 metres, with 4-5 pitches, though many shorter routes abound.

I have found the climbing to be steeper than a lot of Arapiles climbs, and consequently more strenuous. This is a trad climber's paradise, though there are now a reasonable number of sport routes. Quality, starred routes tend to begin around grade 12 here, perhaps making the easier classics at Arapiles a better start to multi pitch leading. I first climbed here 50 years ago, having done 4 routes at Morialta. Talk about a rapid introduction to wilderness and multi pitch climbing! Fortunately I wasn't put off and have made nearly 70 trips to this great cliff over the intervening years.

I was one of the miscreant climbers who stole the sign from the former airstrip just north of town in 1975, with the acronym BOLFA becoming the name of our Club's magazine. Two of us are still climbing!



Here's some photographic highlights from a talk about Moonarie, which I gave at a CCSA meeting about 10 years ago. Most of these images come from the "Golden Years" of new route development in the 70's and 80's.

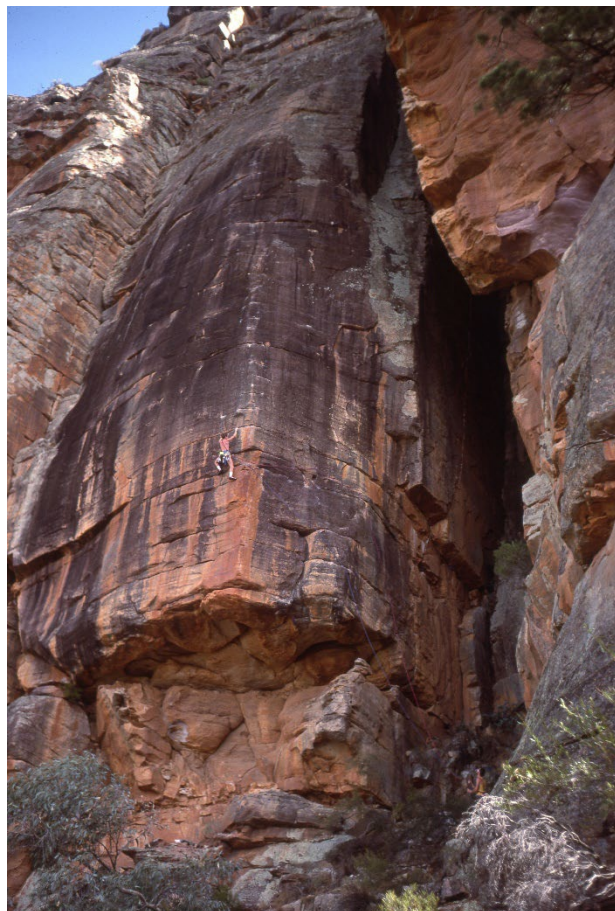
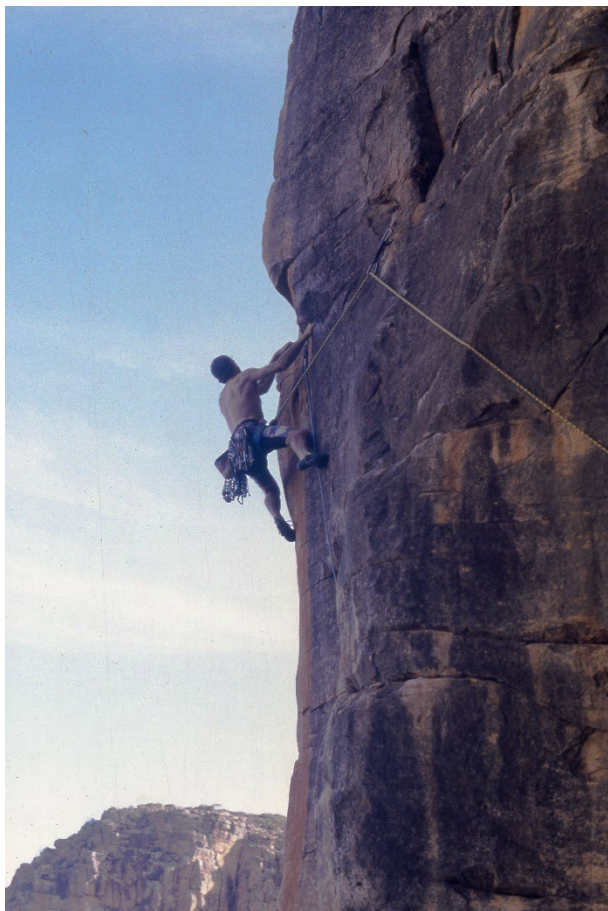




The mighty Pine Crack, a three pitch 19 on Checker's Wall to the left of Top Camp. In this image the intrepid Colin Reece reprises his first ascent from 1977, this photo being several years later, taken on a misty day. Colin did many, many new routes at Moonarie, often in a bold style, climbed ground up with no pre-inspection. Despite his squint, he had a good eye for a great line!



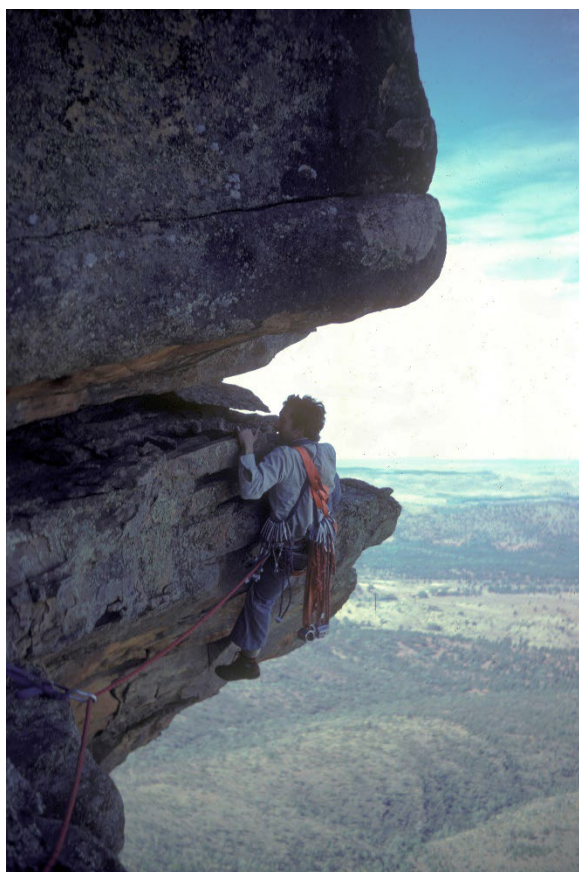
Walking rightward from Top Camp brings you to Goblin Mischief, a classic 23 along the Ramparts. This was one of Lincoln Shepherd's greatest creations in the very fruitful year of 1982. It takes a proud line up the buttress left of the Great Chimney, starting just inside the chimney. Here Tim Day is silhouetted on the arete, and some visiting Poms strut their stuff, from the late 80's. ↓



From the same start, another three star route commences: Fingernickin' 24 which takes the superlative vertical crackline on the left wall of the Great Chimney. First freed by Eddie Ozols in 1979. Mark Barnett is captured on lead in 1991.



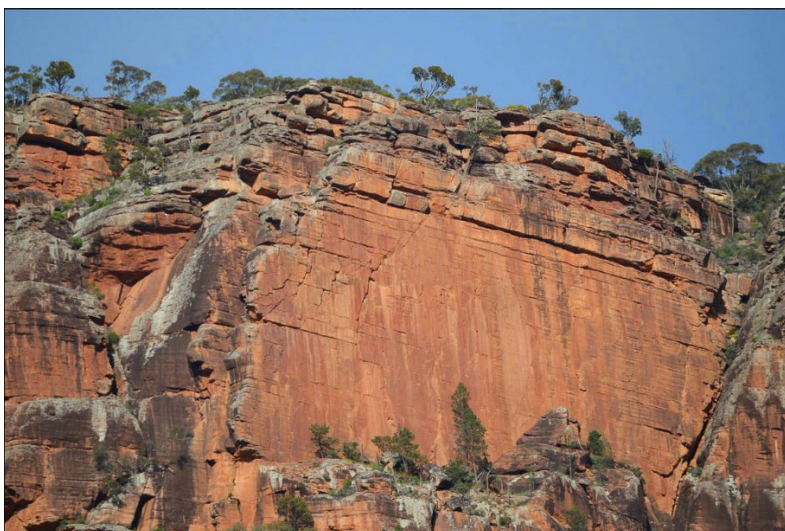




Further exploration brings you to Callitris Corner, where the cliff is shorter and becomes more sunny. The best easier route in the vicinity is Hangover Layback 15, a benchmark for the grade at Moonarie. Another Colin Reece first ascent from 1973, here being repeated by a youthful Mike Broadbent in 1978.



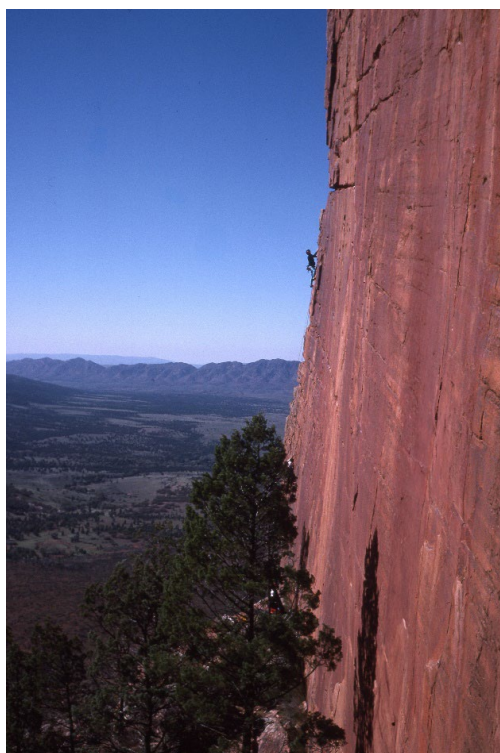
Onwards now to Moonarie's most obvious feature, the mighty Great Wall. This vertical 50 metre expanse of crimson sandstone holds a big fistful of two and three star classic routes. Indeed Lincoln Shepherd even proposed a five star rating for this wall, as the climbs are so good!



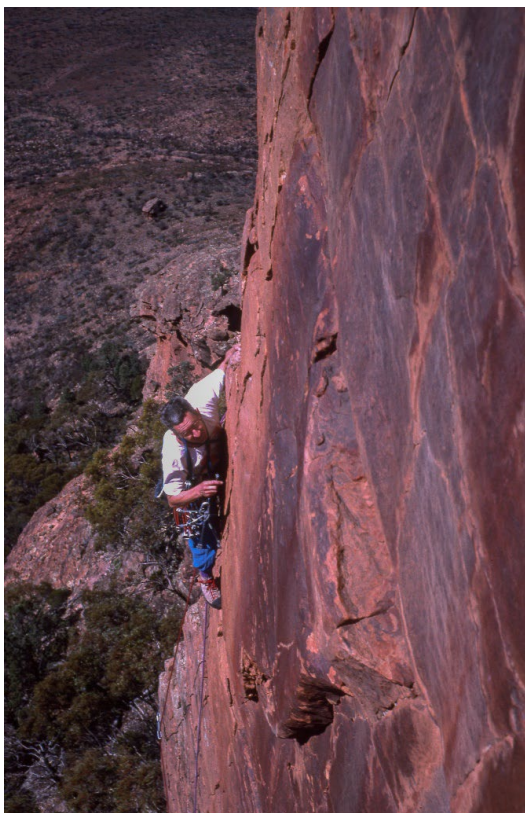
First up is the left arete, Outside Chance grade 16. Done by Colin Reece, this time accompanying visiting American climber "Hot" Henry Barber, on the South Australian leg of his Australian tour in 1975. Henry had amazed climbers at Arapiles by pushing Australia's hardest grade from 21 to 24 and for introducing chalk to Australia! Nonetheless, Outside Chance is a classic at the grade, in an airy position.



← Simon Wooley (fellow BOLFA thief) starts up the arete, in 1989.



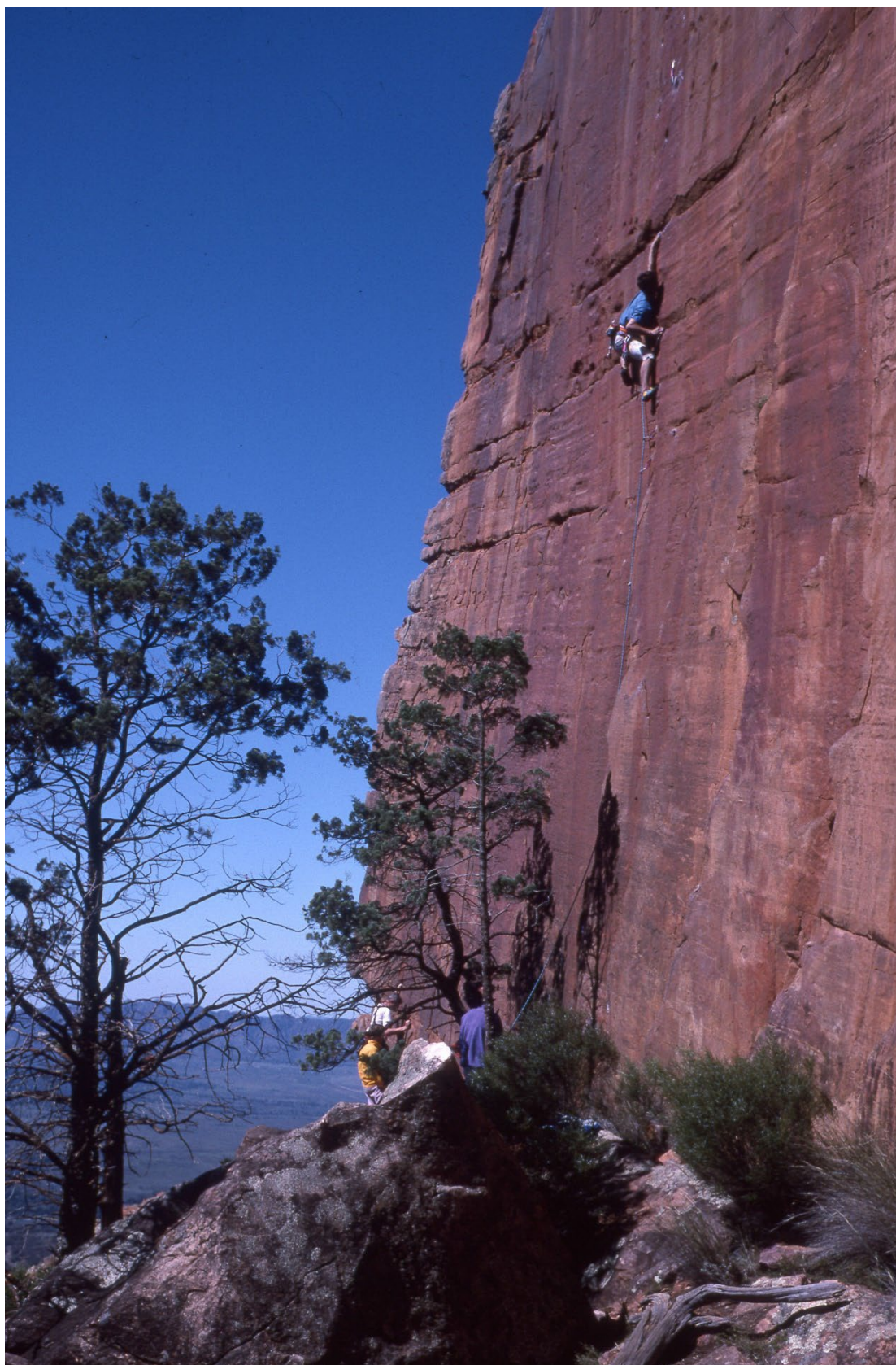
↑ Nick Neagle finishing the first pitch, in the late 80's.



← Simon again, photo taken from the belay ledge atop the first pitch.



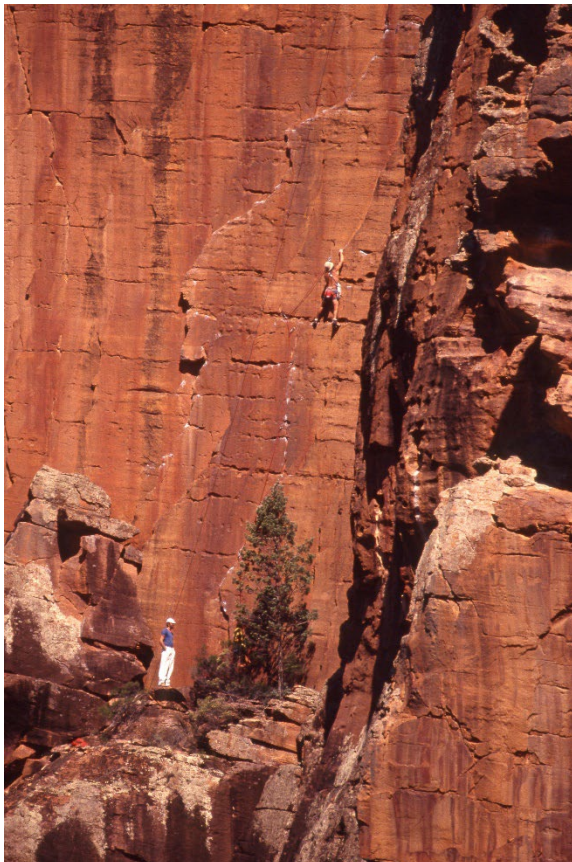
Right of Downwind of Angels is Languish in Anguish 25, yet another three star route from Lincoln Shepherd again in 1982. Here Jared McCulloch performs some gymnastics, in 1989.







Against The Wind 23 was a climb put up the centre of the Great Wall under the threat of an approaching storm, by none other than Lincoln, in 1982. Here Mike Broadbent pushes himself, noting a lot of hostile territory between himself and the top. Taken in 1983, note the vintage Whillan's Sit Harness, double ropes and EB climbing shoes.



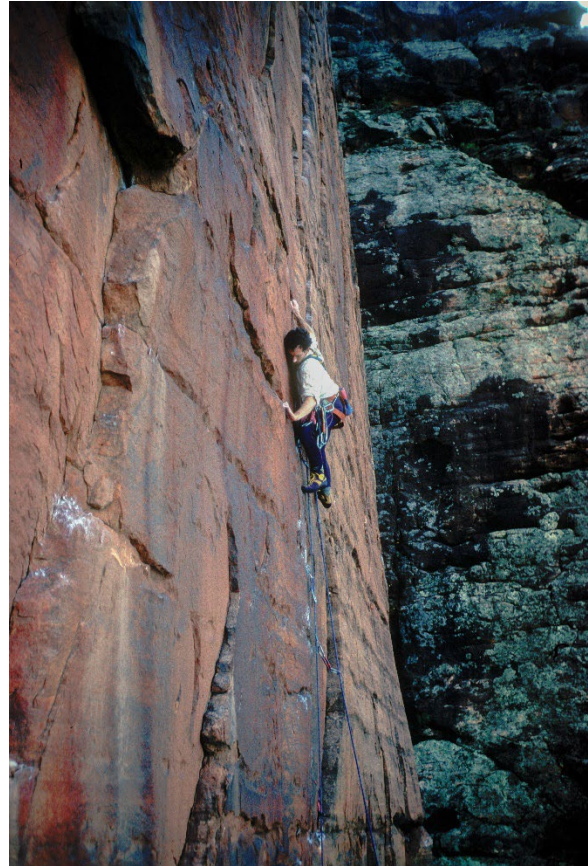
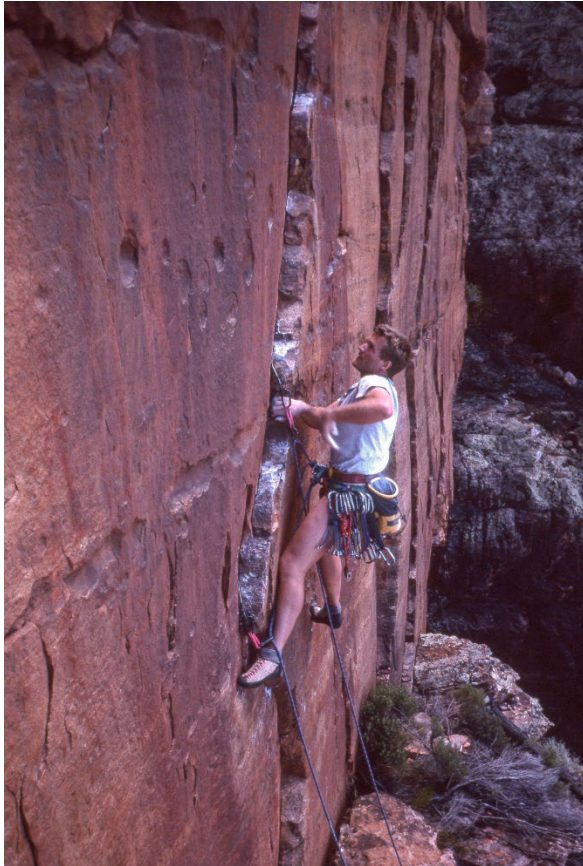
The final featured route on the Great Wall is Dry Land, which has a fateful history. Led by Lincoln, seen here on the first ascent in 1980, with brother Chris on belay, and Eddie Ozols supervising. Eddie is dressed in Hot Henry Barber's fashion chic of Californian baggy painter's trousers and flat hat worn on his 1975 visit.





Here's Mike Mowbray and Mike Broadbent both leading the lower section in 1989.

Tragically, two very experienced South Australian climbers Mike Hillan and Simon Bou died in 2019 after a fall from this climb.

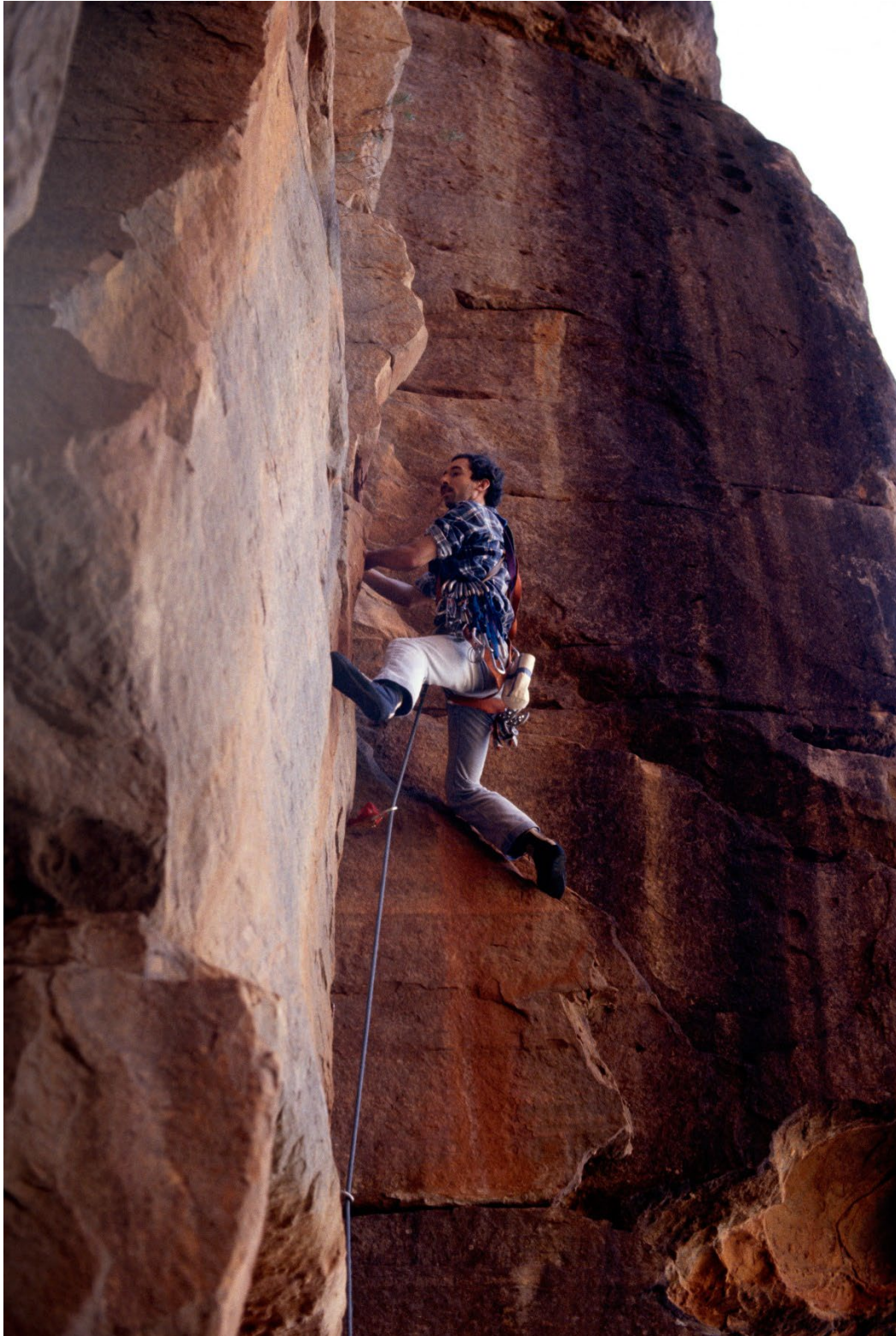


A green advertisement for Paddy Pallin, a climbing store. The top left features the logo "Paddy Pallin" in white script with "SINCE 1930" below it. The background is a collage of climbing-related images, including a climber on a rock face and a large black carabiner. The text "Adelaide's only dedicated climbing store for over 35 years." is written in white. The bottom right lists several climbing brands: KONG, WILDCOUNTRY, PETZL, Black Diamond, SCARPA, and CAMP. An orange banner at the bottom reads "WE ARE MOVING to 192 Rundle St, Adelaide" and "Hang tight for details: paddypallin.com.au". A small photo credit "Adam Sabic" is in the bottom left corner.



Finally, crossing the northern descent gully brings you to the Northern Crag, a 50 metre high shady cliff, with some exciting offerings.

Cold Blue Steel 18 is another Colin Reece / Eddie Ozols sustained climb, from 1977. Here, Mike Broadbent comes to terms with the first pitch, sometime last century.





# An Aussie Dirtbag's guide to: Vanlifer and climbing in Western Europe

**Caleb Skirrow**

In November of 2023, I flew my trad rack, camera gear, hiking equipment and myself to Paris. After a train ride to escape the city, I met up with my girlfriend, Sarah, and Gracie: our newly acquired, 30-year-old VW transporter and home for the next year. Sarah had just crossed the channel from England, where she finished her final medical school placement and bought the van. After I submitted my final university assignment from a French McDonalds, we began the drive south to warmer weather. Our climbing gap year had begun!

Until the following November, we:

- Visited 10 countries,
- Climbed over 500 routes (mostly sport),
- Improved our redpoint and onsight grades,
- Went skiing, snorkelling, hiking, bike and boat touring, dancing, clubbing, caving, skydiving and kayaking,
- Visited too many churches, and
- Only broke down about 5 times.

And we would do it all again in a heartbeat! Just with a few tweaks after learning plenty along the way. Below are some of our favourite tips for the Aussie Dirtbag wanting to see

what all the fuss around limestone is about, plus our favourite spots and seasonal recommendations\*. I hope you find the list useful to inspire your own vanlife travels!

\*We mostly stayed in Western Europe, venturing only as far East as Frankenjura and Arco.

## #1 van-hunting tip:

Spend plenty of time looking into the rules and regulations regarding international travel, your citizenship/s, and insurance requirements to determine where to buy your vehicle. We bought

in the UK, but when we came across insurance issues such as not having UK citizenship and an address, and wanting to travel out of the UK for the full year, we almost had to end the trip after one week!

Also, don't commit to a vehicle unseen; instead, hire a car for a few days and drive around until you find the right fit. We organised our buy online and ended up paying thousands more than we should have.

## #1 money saving tip:

Don't underestimate how well you can stretch your budget by sticking to one climbing carpark and only shopping



*Sarah on Sara (7a+) - El Chorro*

## BOLFA 2025

once or twice a week. Keeping your itinerary and diet simple, and deliberately moving slowly can make your money stretch more than expected.

### #1 post-climb meal:

Patatas Bravas in any Spanish café; fried potatoes in paprika sauce with a beer are the perfect post-climb refuel. For our pick for a restaurant, go with Le Crux Pizza in Céüse. The pizzas are not only outstanding and huge; but also named after your projects. Great with chilli oil too.

### #1 driving and camping tip:

Get around the Park4night app. Even the free version lists places to stay, eat, camp, refuel, and find water all over Europe. This can be key to spending close to \$0 on camping costs, especially in France and Spain. But read recent comments carefully: in Switzerland the cops may move you on, and in places like Marseille, burglars are a bigger concern.

### #1 climbing beta tip:

The Rockfax® app & monthly subscription is the best bang-for-buck overview of many European crags, and a great starting point. Topos are clear, informative and intuitive. However, the contents of these topos are not always accurate or up to

Climbing Club of South Australia date. Combine this app with the occasional cross-reference flick-through of a guidebook.

### #1 tip for climbing on limestone:

Limestone slabs were unlike anything we had climbed before; our first few weeks were just spent acclimatizing to “easy” slab routes. There’s also a weird trend that “a slab can’t be 7a (23)” all across Europe, so always, *always*, be aware of the 6c+ slab sandbags.

And now for my **top picks of climbing locations by season:**

#### Peak Summer: Rue Des Masque

The whole Briançon region is arguably the best spot in summer, but Rue Des Masque stands out – the street of the masks (you’ll see why it’s called that when you arrive). A unique conglomerate crag; river stones and pebbles fused together by compacted dirt. When you climb conglomerate, you’re either holding these stones as slopers, or using the pockets from where some have fallen out! Rue Des Masque is the most well-bolted conglomerate cliff around. The shady “alleys” are cool, but vehicles bake in the unsheltered carpark atop the hill. If your vehicle allows, combine climbing here with a visit to the new and world-class **La Saume**.



← Caleb on Violant Cop (7c) - Rue Des Masque. Photo by Caitlin Schokker.

Sarah on Ananda (7a) – Ceuse ↓





### Shoulder Summer: Céüse

Céüse is as mythical as promised: the rock is immaculate, lines are tall and stunning, and the cliff goes on for kilometres. Even the infamous

Camping in the carpark is a delight: you can put in orders for fresh croissants and baguettes to be delivered daily, Le Crux Pizzeria is just around the corner, and the hike is the shortest.



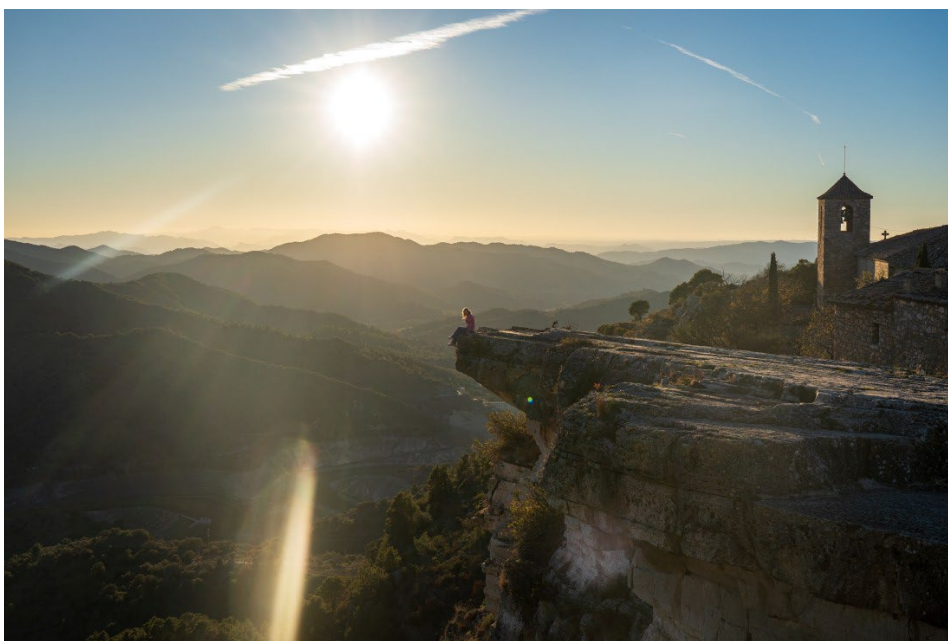
← Karen on  
No Man's Land  
(7b) – Buoux

Views from the  
Caminito del  
Rey (King's  
Little Walk) - El  
Chorro →



approach adds to the experience and routine; running down the mountain as the sun sets caps off each amazing day. Being so good, the crowds can be daunting in July and August. We were there from mid May to mid June, and that was a sweet spot of great conditions, without the crowds.

For endless jugs on outrageously steep terrain, try Bibendum (7b+/26), and for an iconic French sandbag, try Beau Mouvement (7a+24).



Sarah  
admiring the  
views from  
Siurana  
Village -  
Siurana

**Autumn/Spring: Buoux**

April in Buoux was magic. Amazing routes in both sun and shade, a rich climbing and medieval history, and great French towns and vineyards to explore on rest days. If you time it right, there's also a climbing festival; a band played live music from 60 m up the cliff! The unique sandstone - limestone mix gives a blend of horizontal features and pockets - lots of pockets. There is no camping in the valley however, so stay at Plateau des Claparèdes instead. No Man's Land (7b/25) was one of my favourite routes of the trip; a pumpy pocket traverse, followed by a technical headwall up an exposed arete. Scorpion is a great sector for climbs in the French 6's, including La Montee aux Enfers (6b+/20) and Des Verts Peperes (6c/21).

**Shoulder Winter: Siurana**

It was amazing to get to Siurana, after all the hype, only to find it climbs similarly to the Blue Mountains. While it made us grateful for what we have back "home", we certainly weren't underwhelmed. The style is amazing, and the history and surroundings add a lot. The Siurana Village is beautiful, approaches are short, and every route is just so much fun. The shallow corner crack Tikis Mikis (7a/23) was my favourite, but don't miss the El Pati sector. Complement climbing here with nearby Margalef for a dream combo.

**Peak Winter: El Chorro**

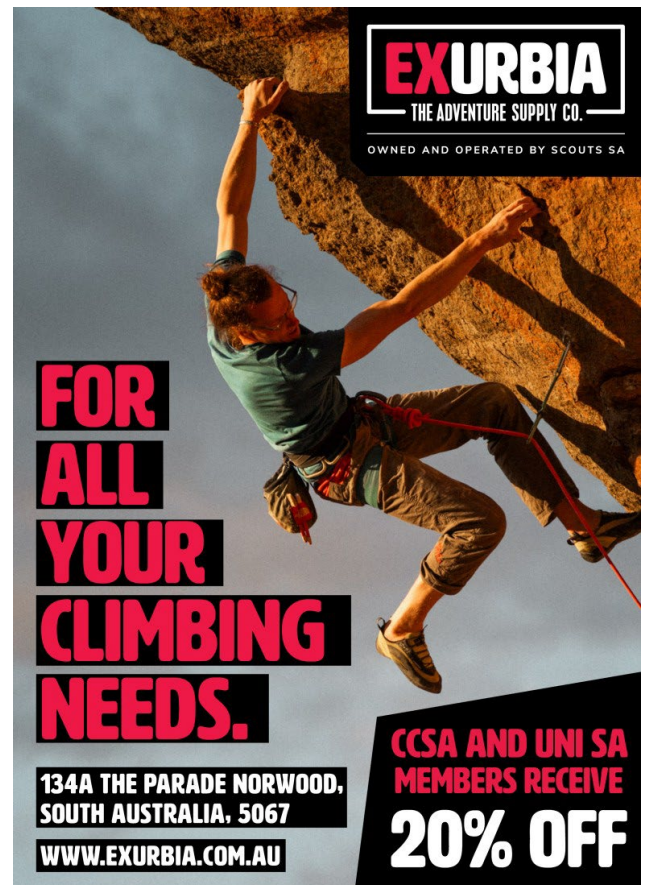
El Chorro was as far south as we climbed, making it ideal to battle the cold. We enjoyed the town, the iconic hike through the gorge, great camping views and having friends at the Olive Branch Hostel to sneak showers through. Las Encantadas has amazing face climbs in the French 7 range, including Sara (7a+/24) and Generacion Limite (7b+/26), and take the drive to Desplomilandia when it's warmer for routes like Akira (7b/25) or Captain Sardina (6C/19). The multis on the main Frontales wall were underwhelming, and the main cave (Poema de Roca) is very polished.

**And a final note for couples:**

Worried about surviving a cramped vanlife together? We met 3 other Aussie couples on our journey, and since returning to Australia, all 4 of us have gotten engaged! Not a bad trend.

I hope reading this has left you inspired for your next big trip! For more information and photos, and for any questions, go to

<https://gowiththefro.co>



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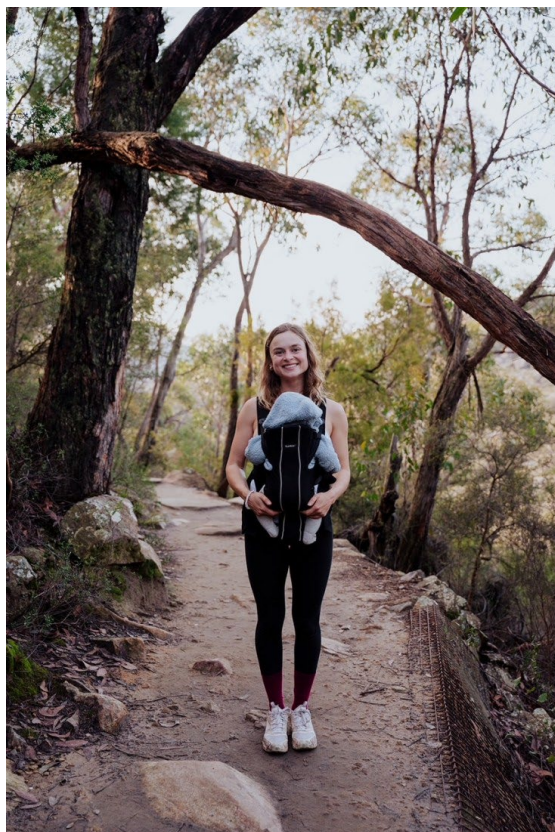


# Q & A with Sarah Endlich

## Kylie Jarrett

### 1. Tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into climbing.

I'm 25, I'm from Austria originally, I came to Australia in 2008 and it's very much my home now. I work as a doctor and right now I'm a full time mum, and I have been climbing for a long time. I started when I was 11. I used to be terrified of heights, I would get one metre off the ground at the Scout outdoor wall and start shaking from head to toe. In 2011 my mum suggested that I climb the three metre wall at Adelaide Showground with an auto belay. I came to a point where I couldn't keep going because I was too afraid to add more height, and I also couldn't let go because I didn't trust the auto belay. My mum realised I had this quite crippling fear of heights and she wanted to teach me that I could overcome that fear. So we went to Vertical Reality every Saturday and I started off having quite a grim time with her yelling at me in German to encourage me to keep going. But after three months I overcame that fear and slowly but surely came to love it, and have loved it ever since.



*Sarah and Gwendolyn on the walking track of the Pinnacle walk and lookout in the Grampians / Gariwerd*

### 2. What do you love about the sport?

I love it because it takes you outside to all these beautiful places that only the birds and lizards often see. One time I was belaying a friend on Hangover Layback at Moonarie and I remember

looking over the arid lands and just seeing nothing manmade at all. That made me feel really small, but in a good way because I realised how small our problems are in comparison to

the vast expanse of our environment. It makes things very simple.

### 3. Share with us some of your finest SA climbing moments

I love this question! My finest climbing moment in South Australia was at Moonarie as well. I had a great day out on the Moon and my great goal I had came up in discussion. I really wanted to climb Downwind of Angels on that trip, and it became such a big thing in my mind I almost didn't want to in case I didn't do it correctly. I was with two psyched individuals and at 4pm we decided let's go, it's the last climb of the day, let's do it. And we had a blast. I didn't lead it then, but just

being on the Great Wall was the highlight of my trip. We got to the top of the climb at sunset, organised the rappel and by the time we had done that it was near pitch black. I was the last person to rappel down with my headtorch on, and as we were halfway down I turned my headtorch off as did my two friends. So I was abseiling down pitch blackness, just the velvet air around, and that moment was quite special. It was the most peaceful experience in a very rugged kind of way.

#### **4. Were there any climbing mentors who inspired you?**

Yes but I don't think they actually knew that they did that at the time. When I first started climbing outdoors I would climb with anyone that would take me which meant there were people with varying degrees of experience themselves. My education at this point, before I did the leading course, consisted of YouTube videos. This one gentleman at the Summit called Phil Davis taught me how to use a Grigri properly. I think he could see that I was young and super enthusiastic but not very good at using a Grigri to lead belay. He came up to me in a way that felt not at all paternalistic, just very kind, open, wanting to help and offer me knowledge. He taught me how to be safe in a way that felt easy and natural. He inspired me with his quiet confidence which I hope to share with others when I teach them. Phil was projecting a new route at the time, Eddie and Dudley's Excellent Adventure. The best teachers are open minded and don't judge your level of experience.

#### **5. Tell us about some of the joys and challenges about being a climbing mum**

The joys of being a climbing mum are that climbing for me is a way to reclaim my body after the changes of pregnancy and birth. To feel like myself again. The second day after giving birth I did my little ab exercises and hang boarding while my baby was sleeping, and every training session that I did, I felt a little bit stronger. I could feel my ab muscles come back together. So climbing has been an outlet for me to remember who I was and still am before being a mum.

The challenge is actually finding the time to climb outdoors. We've gone out with baby Gwendolyn maybe 10 or 20 times now and some days we've had amazing sessions and others we've had to abort mission. It's about realising that you've got to give yourself and your family grace, that not every day climbing is going to be the best day. The journey and experience of it is enough sometimes. There was one time when

we went down to Red Cliff at Onkaparinga and were there for maybe half an hour – my fiancé Caleb did one climb. But it was just too wintery cold for Gwendolyn and too cold to change her nappy in a comfortable way and we had to leave.

During pregnancy every week felt different because your centre of gravity shifts a little. I stopped climbing in week 34 of pregnancy, had a two month gap until Gwen was born, then I climbed again. It's a big toll on your body. The ability to sit back, relax and be OK with doing what you can, was an exercise for me to practice.

#### **6. What's your fondest climbing memory anywhere in the world?**

My fondest climbing memory would have to be last year in Céüse, France. The climb was called Beau Mouvement (7a+ / 24) and it is a perfect blue streak on a grey-orange wall, 35 metres tall, starts on jugs and then slopey crimpers near the top of the climb. Technical foot sequences on limestone. The reason is because with this climb I feel I overcame my fear of falling. Well, I'm still afraid of falling, but I felt confident with falling on that climb. Where falling off was thrilling, as the bolts in Céüse are placed quite adventurously. That climb and its difficulty made the falling OK because I was just thinking about the climbing sequences and not registering falling until I was caught by the belayer. There's something freeing about when you remove that fear of falling aspect from your mind because you're just so involved in what your hands and feet are doing, with no room for anything else. You zero in so intensely on the smallest details, no room for doubt or worry or any other thought in that moment. Then I got pregnant two weeks later! Some of the doubt and worry about falling came back, but that's OK, it's all part of it.

#### **7. What's van life like?**

Van life is one of the freest kinds of holidaying and lifestyles, but it's wildly over-romanticised. Caleb and I lived in quite a small van. I had a van



in Australia and then our van in Europe was a bit bigger and we had a wonderful time. You can go anywhere you like at the drop of a hat. You can drive and pull over if you see a beautiful spot, which feels fabulous at sunset or sunrise. Within reason – in Switzerland the police will come knocking. Cooking very simple meals and having very little material possessions makes you realise that you don't need that much to be fulfilled. The challenges of van life are having a van. We had so many mechanical issues. This



*Sarah climbing on Chorreras Wall,  
Chulilla, Spain*

van was from 1977 which explains it! We had a leaky roof, it dripped onto our mattress, so we avoided the rain. We essentially chased the sunshine the whole year round which was a bonus! We were in Europe for 14 months.

#### **8. Can you describe your experience of building confidence through climbing?**

Yeah, I can. When we first arrived in Europe, I hadn't climbed on limestone before and so the first crag we rocked up at in France, we got our shoes on, were super energised with 35

quickdraws on us. We're going to climb today! We hopped on a 6b / 19 and had a shocking time because we couldn't see the footers. It was like we had to relearn climbing because the technique on limestone was so different. We got seriously schooled on those first few days.

It was frustrating until I started putting my big toe on things that I thought were footholds but maybe weren't. I'd put my foot on the smallest indentation and wouldn't take it too seriously. If I fell, no big deal. I found out those small indentations were actually enough and the things I did as a joke brought me up the wall in a way that was less stressful than before, when I tried so hard to get it right. So the way to build

*Sarah on a 6C on the south / sud  
wall side, St Léger du Ventoux*

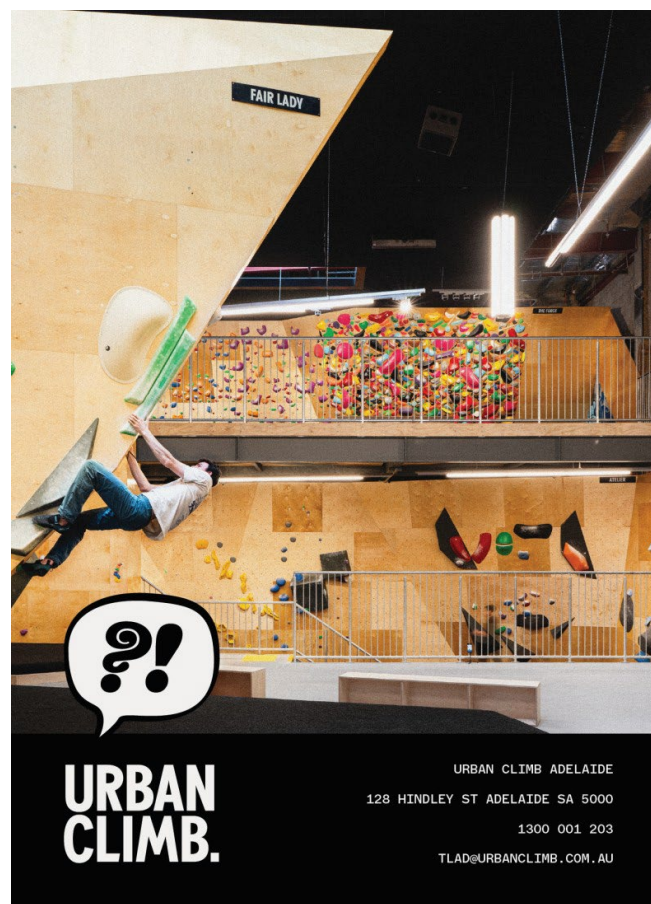


confidence for me was to stop taking it so seriously and do things just for fun, and see where it takes you. More often than not, progress will happen just by doing. I really enjoyed it.

**9. Do you have a pearl of advice for your younger self or for people starting out on their climbing journey?**

I think it's important to know that as soon as someone gets a bouldering or climbing gym membership the chances of them living in a van increase dramatically. They need to be aware of that, to be prepared to tell your family and friends that you're going MIA for a year. Prepare your relationships in knowing this might turn out to be your whole life for a little while. And prepare for the identity shift that comes with realising that problems on rock or on plastic become so much more important than other problems in your life. That can be quite freeing but also surprisingly refreshing.

**Thank you so much for your time for Q & A  
BOLFA 2025!**





# CRAG POLICE

## CRAGSTOPPERS

# WANTED

**Name:** Daniel Toone

**Known as:** Typhoon/Toony/The Weapon

**Height:** 5'9"

**Ape Index:** +5

**Weight:** About as much as a small labrador

**Wanted for:** Treating crimps very badly, putting his feet where no one else can and flashing other people's projects

**Famous for:** Nearly killing his belayer through shock when he fell off at the chain of Tim in the Gym during a flash attempt, having only clipped the first three bolts

**Last seen:** Hopes in Slopes, The Bluff



Dan Toone is armed and dangerous. Known as 'The Typhoon' by some, he is rumoured to be responsible for at least 30 or so 'killings' of anything graded 27 or above quicker than it takes an Uber driver to arrange an escape plan. His understated nature results in ungraded creations (or under graded depending how you look at it), with many unrepeatable such as 'Limitless' at Red Cliff or his piece de resistance 68-move bouldering marathon 'Typhoon' at Secrets. An informant located his whereabouts and we were able to interrogate him with the following questions:

**CP: Congratulations on repeating Hopes in Slopes. What drove you to do something like this?**

**DT:** Cheers. I first heard about the line when a friend spoke about some crazy weak guy that had lead it after rapping off his rope. I was keen to check it out but didn't get around to it until this year when it had a repeat by Nati local Chris Glastonbury (who radically tried to onsight it!). That sparked my interest on it again. I kinda get sucked into routes that don't get much attention.

When I first rapped over the route solo it had just rained. I didn't even bother taking climbing shoes down with me. There was not a single sign of chalk or obvious line on the huge runout blank slab. The only thing that looked like a decent hold was the famous sky hook crimper which was about 12m below the anchor. I now understood why this thing has had so little ascents.

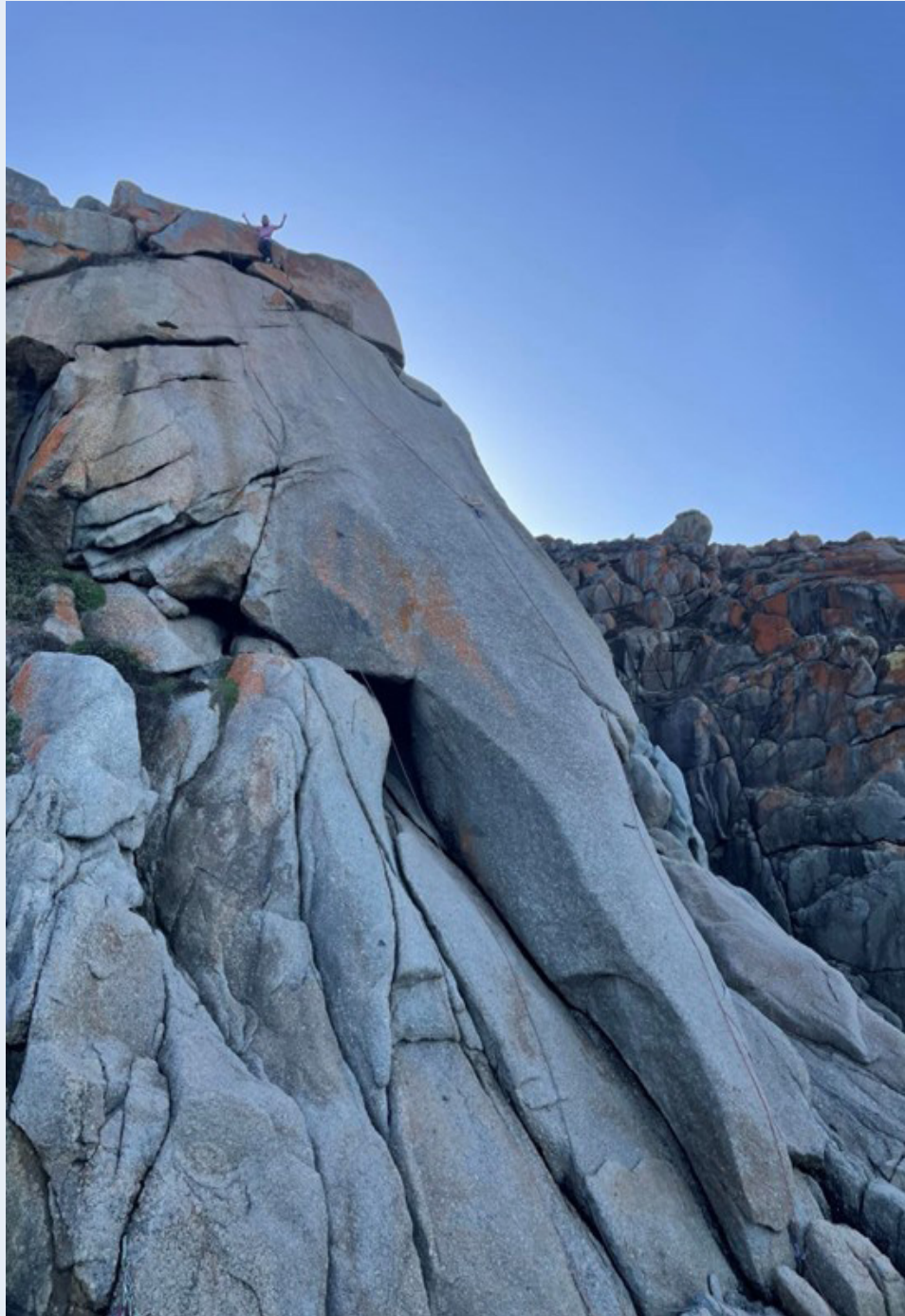
**CP: Were you in the midst of relationship problems, or under any counselling?**

**DT:** No counselling but maybe I should sign up. I think I just enjoy the problem solving of when it first feels impossible, to when you break through and prove it wrong. That's the addiction. This route however was not physical but all mental. I spent a session rope soloing the route and didn't fall on a single move, but the constant footers flaking off when smearing was a bit concerning. On lead I had confidence in my ability but the rock quality was always in the back of my mind.

# **CRAG POLICE**

## **CRAGSTOPPERS**

# **WANTED**



*Daniel Toone, having just made it to the 'thank God ledge' at the top of Hopes. The last 'gear' can be seen below him on the slab (twin skyhooks)*



# CRAG POLICE

## CRAGSTOPPERS

# WANTED

**CP:** This route famously has skyhook placements about halfway up then no other gear beyond that. Did you take any with you or did you just use bluetack?

**DT:** The hooks were the last of the gear placed. Any gear that I had stayed at that crimp to weight the sky hooks. There is a cam placement up the top but you have to place it in a very exposed position on very small feet after a big runout. I chose to continue for three more moves to the mantle. Then it's all over. Somehow it seemed a safer option. I backed up the sky hooks with an equalised small peanut and the smallest offset cam I owned. If the sky hooks failed, the cam would have probably blown the crimp off the wall, but I figured more shit pro was better than none.

*A close up of the skyhooks*



**CP:** Now that it has had 3 repeats this year, will it become the Bluff's 'Peregrine'?

**DT:** Not a chance. You can top rope it and the climbing is great, but to tie in and lead it is not for the weak minded. There are three defined sections of this route and all have serious consequences if you were to fall off. Add in the less than ideal rock quality and it's a very spicy number.

**CP:** Any ambitions to get on other 'chop routes' now that you've led this?

**DT:** I'm always up for an adventure. There is another one that has been on the mind for a few years now but haven't managed to go for a look yet.

**CP:** Finally, did any brown come out or was it uneventful?

**DT:** The jocks stayed clean. However when I left the skyhooks setting off on the traverse to the head wall I looked down at my belayer (Mike Christensen) having to move to higher ground as a wave tried to wash him into the Southern Ocean. At this point I knew the next sequence wouldn't take long to the top, much like the next set of waves to come in.

MC grinning back at me fuelled the commitment. I think he was having as much fun as I was.



*The rack used*

# CRAG POLICE

## CRAGSTOPPERS

# WANTED

**Name:** Michael Christensen

**Known as:** 'MC'

**Height:** 6'2"

**Ape Index:** +15

**Weight:** Can only be calculated via various algorithms on his laptop when connected to Wi-Fi and his home toilet

**Wanted for:** Reaching past cruxes and knee barring

**Famous for:** Discovering the world of downgrading through redpointing

**Last seen:** Hopes in Slopes, The Bluff



Michael Christensen aka 'MC' applied an ingenious disguise as a lowly trad climber before being discovered by The Crag Police as a random redpointing hitman. Hired by numerous people to go into crags and obliterate anything that moves, especially if it has a grade on it deemed 'soft' or put up by someone called Kinnane. An extremely well rounded climber (technically – not through appearance), he has onsighted hard trad with things like Hypertension (24) and headpointed Telemachus Direct (24R), which no doubt placed him in good stead for Hopes in Slopes. He has now gone back into hiding and sent us the following transcript:

**CP: Rumour has it you smoked this route in a single session – were you forced into doing it at gunpoint?**

**MC:** If there was a gun it was in the form of Dan's infectious psyche. He was proper g'd up for the line and after he sent through a picture of the proposed rack and an old ROCK article, I was stoked to head down and give him a catch. I was genuinely there just in support mode but obviously couldn't resist having a little play as well. Turned out that the conditions were perfect, the moves were very doable and it all felt very right to tie into the sharp end as well. It was super fun to tap back into the mindset for bold pursuits I embraced with climbing the Gritstone in the UK.

**CP: How did it feel comparable to other dangerous routes you've done?**

**MC:** Well, the sky hooks that you undertake the top runout from seemed quite good when you place them, but they quickly seem ludicrous when you're 5 or 6m past them on friction smears thinking about the inevitable 20m ground fall should they fail. Add in the fact that you're at the bottom of a sea cliff and your partner is likely to just roll you into the sea and pretend he never saw you that day if you came off - I'd say it's equivalent to an easy day out on the Grit.



# CRAG POLICE

## CRAGSTOPPERS

# WANTED

**CP:** Did you find any kneebars on it?

**MC:** To my horror, I had to actually climb the thing instead of my usual technique of sneaking around cruxes with a knee pad.

**CP:** So after 46 years yours is probably the 5th or 6th ascent, with three of them being made this year. Not too many people sign up for this level of excitement. Do you find that disappointing or is it a case of 'choose your own adventure'?

**MC:** I think we are all chasing those experiences where we succeed after being tested close to the edge of what we are able to achieve; they're always the most rewarding and memorable. Hopes in Slopes isn't particularly difficult physically and wouldn't be much more than a pleasant few minutes if it were a full blown sport route. What makes the route hard is that you know the consequences of a mistake are so high. It's overcoming the weight of those potential consequences that enriches the experience of climbing it.

I have to be in the right mindset to get onto something like this and there's a skill in being able to pick your battles. Are the conditions right? How difficult is the physical climbing? Does my climbing ability today, now, given the conditions and the difficulty, provide enough margin to accept the risk? Is my eagerness to do the route driven by ego? Am I caught up in the moment of Dan's send experience?

Climbing sketchy routes really develops this skill and knowing what to say yes or no to facilitates these amazing experiences that few people have. It also keeps you safe when things are not in your favour.

An argument could be made that climbing these sorts of routes is foolhardy or irrationally egotistic.

I agree with that assessment if they're undertaken recklessly. But it's the very fact that it is so dangerous that makes the experience of climbing it so much richer.

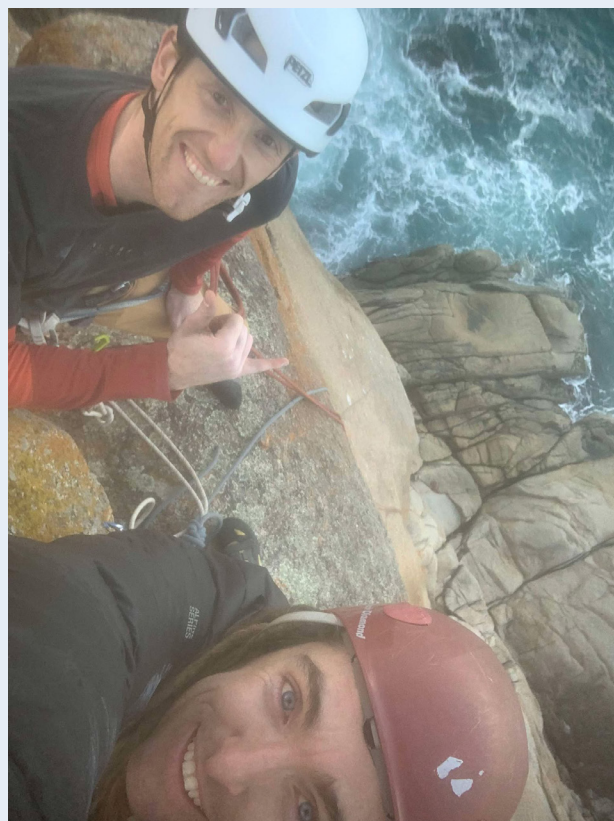
**CP:** Did The Typhoon slip you some special chalk prior to the ascent, or do you strictly carry your own?

**MC:** This would be a perfect opportunity to give a shout out to a sponsor, but I am too much of a punter to have any. I'm just pleased we remembered chalk.

**CP:** Finally, which was more dangerous, the route, or Toony's home brand port?

**MC:** I made it through both of them alive. Therapy is ongoing for one of them.

*DT & MC on the summit*



# Climber safety

## Mark Witham

Recently I was about to abseil from the top of a pitch. I had threaded my rope through a two bolt belay and equalised so that both ends of the rope were on the ground. I connected my belay device (an ATC) and was about to step off the cliff to abseil when at the last second I looked down at the ATC and saw that one end of the rope had not gone through the carabiner. I froze thinking how close I had come to dying. If I had stepped off, one of the ends of the rope would have held and the other would have zipped through the bolt belay and I would have died.

I told some other climbers about this and they recommended having a separate sling to clip my harness into the bolt belay before sitting on the rope to test the abseil set-up, and only when I have certainty that everything is going to hold then disconnect the sling and proceed to abseil. I thought this was good advice and I have been doing this ever since. The other thing I learned from this experience is that my practice of visually checking my set-up saved my life.

Since this incident I have started reading the posts on the climbing accident sites so that I can learn from others' mishaps. There are aspects of safety in our sport that I have not considered before. For example how dangerous it is to climb indoors without good ventilation. A study published by a team of University of Vienna researchers in the *Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* Air examines the air quality from five indoor climbing gyms in Vienna along with four from France, Spain and Switzerland.

The Austrian researchers found that climbing shoes release an array of toxic chemicals into the air, which is then inhaled into the lungs. Most climbers would be familiar with the black residue left on footholds on indoor climbing walls. Friction between the shoe soles and the footholds generates rubber particles which can be aerosolised and inhaled directly upon generation, due to the brushing of holds, or by climbers falling onto mats and resuspending rubber particles that had settled. Eventually, aerosol particles also settle elsewhere as dust.

The study team included environmental scientist Professor Thilo Hofmann who noted, "the levels we measured are among the highest ever documented worldwide, comparable to multi-lane roads in mega-cities." These chemicals have been linked to lung inflammation, organ damage, respiratory illnesses and even some types of cancer.

Following their results, the research team are now calling for climbing wall gyms to ensure effective ventilation and for climbing shoe designers to change the materials used to help protect climbers and gym staff. In the meantime it is recommended that climbers always wear some form of face mask covering nose and mouth when climbing indoors. More details on this study can be found at: <https://www.ausleisure.com.au/news/effective-ventilation-found-necessary-for-indoor-climbing-wall-centres>

The Australasian Leisure Management website (<https://www.ausleisure.com.au>) has a number of articles on gym safety, looking at safe staff / climber ratios and the fatal misuse of auto-belay systems.



# Crag Care

**John Baxter**

## Morialta Crag Care

Some days the weather is dank and frigid, the bush is thick and scratchy, and the olives seem to go on forever. You wonder why you bother.

Surely, the weeds grow faster than we can pull them? Surely, there's no way we could ever get on top of this impossible task?

But as you walk down to the crag, you pass the results of 11+ years of persistent community contribution.



*11th birthday!*

Do you remember the thickets of olive and broom that plagued the bush above the cliffs? So dense and menacing, you might have wondered whether you'd return one spring day and find the walking track overgrown. The weeds sucked the water and nutrients out of the soil, and literally blocked out the sun.

But now, you walk down to Boulder Bridge through an open woodland. The sun filters through the trees. The bulk of the weeds are gone. It's hard to even find the young weed seedlings. They are there, of course, but a little bit of follow up each year will keep them in check.

Every year, there are less.

The native understorey is recovering. Slowly, but inexorably.

The gum trees, free of the worst of their competition, survived the drought in remarkably good condition.

What about the fields of cape tulip that used to carpet the meadow at the top of Far Crag? They were pretty, I'll give them that. I'm sure they're a wonderful addition to their native South Africa. But they are not supposed to be here, and they were taking over.

I remember them, and I remember weeding them. I remember thinking... this stuff is everywhere! There is no way we're going to make a dent in this!



*Tony 'Boneseed's Bane' Barker*

At the time, it seemed like an almost pointless, impossible task. We were many, but they were many more. They had bulbs and seeds and millions of weedy little friends.

But we were there, and for a few hours on a couple of Sundays, why not just give it a go? We had tongs, we had dabbers and screwdrivers, we had good company and plenty of helping hands, what harm could it do?

Well, a few years on, if a member of the society of evil botanical masterminds wandered through last spring, they would have been alarmed. A once lush meadow of weedy South African cape tulips is all but gone!



*Cool kids*



## CAPE TULIPS AT FAR CRAG, IN DANGER OF LOCAL EXTINCTION.

Bush care has no magic bullets, but if you stick at it long enough, the efforts add up.

So next time you walk down to the cliffs at Mori, have a look around. The top of the cliffs is now in remarkably good condition. The bush is bouncing back.

The bottom of the crags is more mixed. Blackberry at Far Crag gives way to olives. Patches of good bush between patches of weeds.

But fear not! Every second Sunday of every second month, we will be there. Sometimes we're 2 people and sometimes we're 20. Crag care is like life, it comes in waves. But as long as the waves keep coming, the results will come too.

Olive grove at the bottom of Boulder Bridge? Already on its way out. Blackberry at the base of Far Crag, cramping your belay? Its days are numbered.

WATCH OUT WEEDS, WE'RE COMING FOR YOU

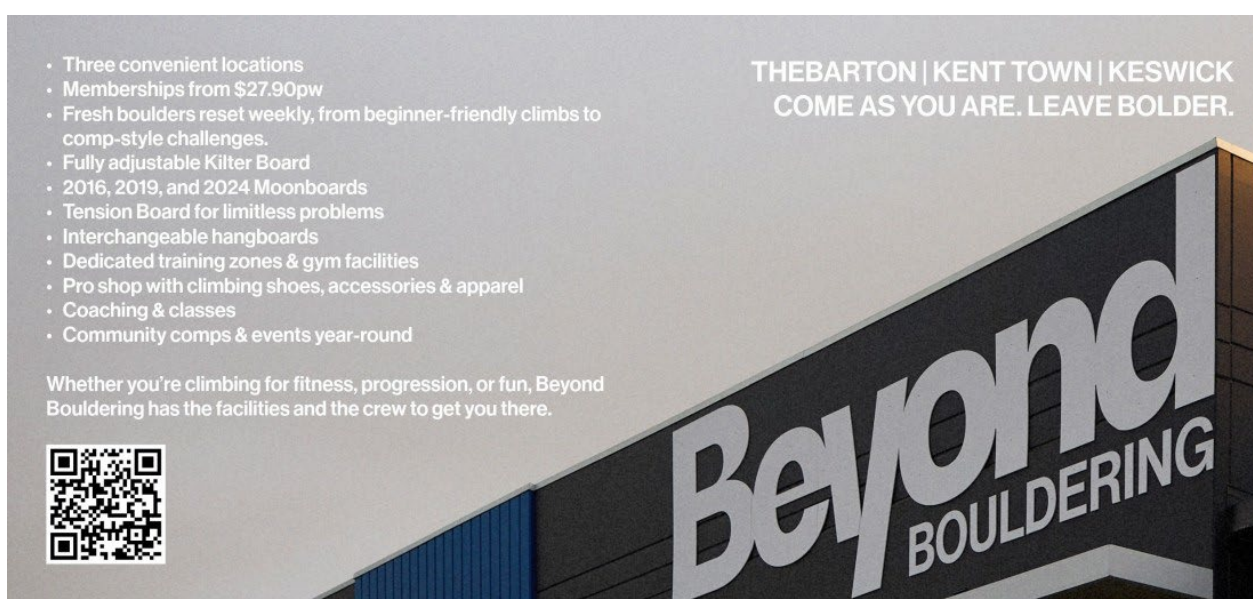
**Crag Care**

Meet 9:30am at the top gate, Gate 15, Climbers Track, Norton Summit Rd.

Second Sunday of every second month.

*Except May, because it's Mother's Day, and we don't want to have to compete with your mum!*

2025-2026: Sundays 14th Sept, 9th Nov, 11th Jan, 8th March, & Saturday 9th May.



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• Memberships from \$27.90pw  
• Fresh boulders reset weekly, from beginner-friendly climbs to comp-style challenges.  
• Fully adjustable Kilter Board  
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• Pro shop with climbing shoes, accessories & apparel  
• Coaching & classes  
• Community comps & events year-round

Whether you're climbing for fitness, progression, or fun, Beyond Bouldering has the facilities and the crew to get you there.

THEBARTON | KENT TOWN | KESWICK  
COME AS YOU ARE. LEAVE BOLDER.

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BOULDERING

# Trad Dad vs Auto Belay

## Luke Adams

We had arrived in Johannesburg the night before but our bags with our climbing gear had been delayed.

So decided to check out City Rock Gym for the afternoon while we waited for our luggage to arrive.



*Luke and Dan at City Rock Gym*

The Gym was massive with high walls that could be top roped, lead climbed and some had auto belay systems plus a large bouldering area.

We hired harnesses and shoes that sort of fit but not quite.

I had a ream of paperwork to sign and a belay test to pass before being let loose in the gym with Dan.

The lovely gym staff member asked me had I used an auto belay system before and I confidently lied that I had.

Dan and I had a fun afternoon exploring the belayed climbs and the bouldering.

I clipped into a grade 16 on the Auto Belay system confident I would work it out at the top. Fun and easy climbing saw me at the top of the 15 metre wall fairly quickly.

All of a sudden, I didn't feel that brave anymore, pulling on the strap connected to my harness only produced slack where I was expecting the device to lock.

Dan yelled up just jump off and the device will activate. I wasn't so sure so I start to down climb as fast as I could.



Eventually I had to hold on to the strap and jump off. Sure enough once my weight hit the Auto Belay the strap pulled tight and slowly lowered me to the ground.



I think everyone in the gym thought it was hilarious.

I tried again soon after on a 17 next door and once again started to down climb before having to trust the system. There is a moment of terror before the device activates.

Such an interesting experience, hopefully I will be able to let go a bit easier next time I come across an auto belay system.

We finally picked up our bags 24 hours after arriving and were on our way to Boven for a week of sport climbing.

