

Cape Le Grand Rock Climbing Guide

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First ascent of *Family Affair* (22) by Rob Wall, photo: Kate Vyvyan

cover: view of Kangaroo Rock from the west, this and all uncredited photos by Ross Weiter

A Warning about Rock Climbing

Climbing is a sport where you may be seriously injured or killed. Read this before you use this guide. This guide is a compilation of often-unverified information gathered from many different climbers. The author and the Climbers Association of Western Australia (CAWA) cannot assure the accuracy of any of the information in this guide, including the route descriptions, the difficulty ratings and the protection ratings. Some routes listed in the guide have had only one ascent and the information has not been verified. Also, difficulty and danger ratings are subjective and depend on the physical characteristics such as height, experience, technical ability, confidence and physical fitness of the climber who supplied the ratings.

Therefore, be warned that you must exercise your own judgement with regard to the route location, description, difficulty and your ability to safely protect yourself from the risks of rock climbing. Examples of these risks are: falling due to technical difficulty or holds breaking off, falling rock and climbing equipment dropped by other climbers, equipment failure and failure of protection including fixed protection such as bolts.

You should not depend on any information gleaned from this guide for your personal safety. Your safety depends on your own experience, equipment and climbing skill. If you have any doubt as to your ability to safely attempt any route described in this guide, do not attempt it. There are no warranties, whether expressed or implied that this guide is accurate, or that the information contained in it is reliable. Your use of this guide indicates your assumption of the risk that it may contain errors and is an acknowledgment of your sole responsibility for your climbing safety.



The Very Short History of Climbing

A good history of the Esperance region is available here <http://visitesperance.com/pages/history/>. The word "esperance" means "hope" in French, and was the name of one of the two ships of the French explorer D'Entrecasteaux who sought shelter in Lucky Bay in 1792.

Slightly later in 2006, another explorer Rob Wall was taking a family holiday and navigating a somewhat smaller ship (a kayak) along the coast when he spotted a large rock that looked like a lying kangaroo - now called *Kangaroo Rock*. Due to the long distance from Perth the find did not cause a stampede. Rob returned in 2008 and put up the first route there - *Family Affair* (22). Some rock got pulled at the first

ascent and some more got pulled three years later by yours truly; however after the start the route is very nice and clean.

Further development then occurred in early 2009. This time Rob was accompanied by the Kiwis Ed and Rachel Nepia, adding four routes to the aptly named Kiwi Wall, including the classic "balance climb" *Flying Kiwis* (19). Shane Richardson arrived and put up a great hard route just right of Kiwi Wall, *Unnamed* (23). By January 2011, Ed, Rob and Shane put up 12 climbs, all at Kangaroo Rock. Rob documented these initial routes on his blog <http://robjwall.wordpress.com/2010/10/27/kangaroo-rock-full-version-of-rock-article>. A modified version of that post was published in ROCK magazine. Due to copyright issues I have used none of the original text or descriptions in this mini-guide; the information presented here is based on my several trips down there, on published route names, and some additional comments kindly provided by Rob via email.

In April and December 2011 I found two smaller additional areas and added 12 additional climbs, notably (in my mind!) the overhanging cracks *Test of Sterone* (22) and *Oomph!* (20). The total number of routes is now high enough to justify the long drive and provide three days of climbing, hiking, swimming, snorkelling and relaxing away from the big smoke.

The Climbing

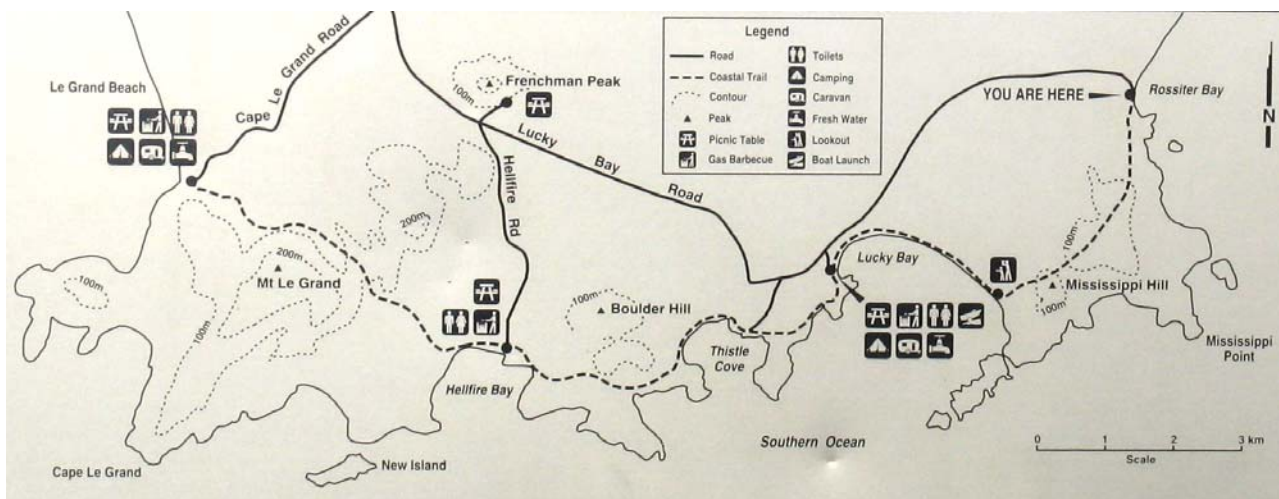
RESTRICTIONS: DEC has stipulated that no additional bolts are allowed to be placed in this National Park. Furthermore, climbing is not allowed at all anywhere on Frenchman's Peak.

The routes are generally 15 – 30 m long, single pitch, and in the moderate grade 13 - 23 range. The climbing areas are listed by their distance from the Lucky Bay camp site. The *Atmosfear Chasm* is just 6 min walk away, *Silhouette Area* and *Kangaroo Rock* are 10 min walking distance from the camp site and *Mississippi Boulders* are reached by driving for 6 km, followed by a 15 min walk. There is no bush bashing involved for any of these areas.

All equipped routes are protected by either expansion bolts with fixed hangers (**EFH**), glued bolts with fixed hangers (**GFH**) or ringbolts (**RB**). All equipment is stainless. It is worth noting that some of the nuts on the EFH have come loose, a common problem with expansion bolts. Carrying a ring spanner hitched to your harness (or your second's harness) is not a bad idea. If leading, clip the bolt before messing with the nut. If bolting, use Loctite under the nut.

The Code of Conduct and the Code of Bolting and New Route Development both apply – they are available here <http://www.climberswa.asn.au/>. These codes establish the standards that all climbers in WA are required to adopt in regard to their climbing activities. Please minimise disturbance to other park users and environment.

Access



Esperance is 8 hours' drive from Perth via Williams, Wagin, Lake Grace, Lake King and Ravensthorpe (727 km). There is an alternative route through Hyden of Wave Rock fame. Although it is 10 km shorter on the map, it is more winding and at times on a narrower road, making it slower and more dangerous at night. Lake King has a 24 hour petrol station, operated by credit card, located at the tavern just north of the main intersection.



Neil Gledhill leads *Parallel Cracks* (17).

A good way to get to Esperance is to leave Perth at 5 pm and drive for 6 hours, almost to Ravensthorpe. Five km before Ravensthorpe is the Overshot Hill Reserve on the L (east) side of the road. The reserve has lots of dirt parking, some picnic tables and spots for a tent, or just sleep in the front seat of your car....this is not as good as a bed but more comfy than an airline seat!! Next morning drive the last 2 hrs to Esperance.

The drive from Esperance to the Lucky Bay campsite takes 45 minutes (60 km). From Esperance go east, following the clear signs to *Cape Le Grand National Park* (\$12 car entry fee). Ignore the "Campsite Full" signs along the access road and at the park entry booth - they seem to be permanently in place even when the campsite is half empty. Instead, go in and see for yourself. The campsite does get full in peak times (Christmas and Easter) but if you arrive before lunch you should get a camping spot (the earlier, the better, which is the main reason for the itinerary suggested above).

In the park turn L at the first junction, drive past Frenchman's Cap and follow the sign right to *Lucky Bay*. Camping costs \$10 per person per night; pay the roaming camp host on arrival as the car park has limited capacity. There are free solar hot showers (bore water only, BYO drinking water), bins for disposal of rubbish, a kitchen area featuring a BBQ and a dishwashing sink with hot running water.



The west end of Lucky Bay has good snorkelling and swimming. If you are so inclined you can drive along the beach to the east end. Watch out for roos on the national park roads around dawn and dusk - driving at or below 70 km/hr is recommended at these times.

Atmosfear Chasm

This is the closest route to camp. Walk from the camp site to the car park at the west end of Lucky Bay, near the Flinders Memorial. When the road ends, keep walking roughly in the same direction, clambering across the rock ridge until you see a large traverse line above a chasm.

GPS 33°59'42.1"S, 122°13'19.4"E.

* **Atmosfear** 40 m, 14 Walk to the bottom of the slab, move into small cave and step across chasm. Go 2m up to gain the broad R-traversing ledge. Follow this for 15 m then up pointed flake and large scoops above to top. Trad belay (#1 and #2 Camalots). *Ed Nepia, John Miller, Jan '11*



Silhouette Area

Walk from the Lucky Bay camp site to the car park at the west end of Lucky Bay. From there follow the trail toward Thistle Cove for 600 m (6 min). Near the top of the rise you will see a balancing rock – some people think it looks like a croissant, some think it looks like a map of Australia with the top of Queensland chopped off. 15 m after this feature turn to the bushy descent gully to your left. Follow the base of the rock curving to your right until you come to a large corner. Routes are described from R to L, as you come across them. GPS 33°59'50.5"S, 122°13'03.0"E.

* **Blown Away** 18 m, 20

The slab and shallow groove above. The crux requires creativity rather than desperation. 5 RB to lower-offs. *Ross Weiter, Dena Rao, Dec '11*

* **Parallel Cracks** 18 m, 17

The twin parallel cracks 2 m L of BA. The start is a bit tenuous (crux) but the rest is an absolute delight. Use a #3 Camalot for trad belay or use the lower-offs of SD. *Ross Weiter, Ruth Murdie, Apr '11*

* **Single Dimension** 18 m, 19

Just R of the chimney lies this cunning slab, which is sure to test your footwork and nerve, especially if you are short! 6 GFH to lower-offs. *Ross Weiter, Ruth Murdie, Apr '11*

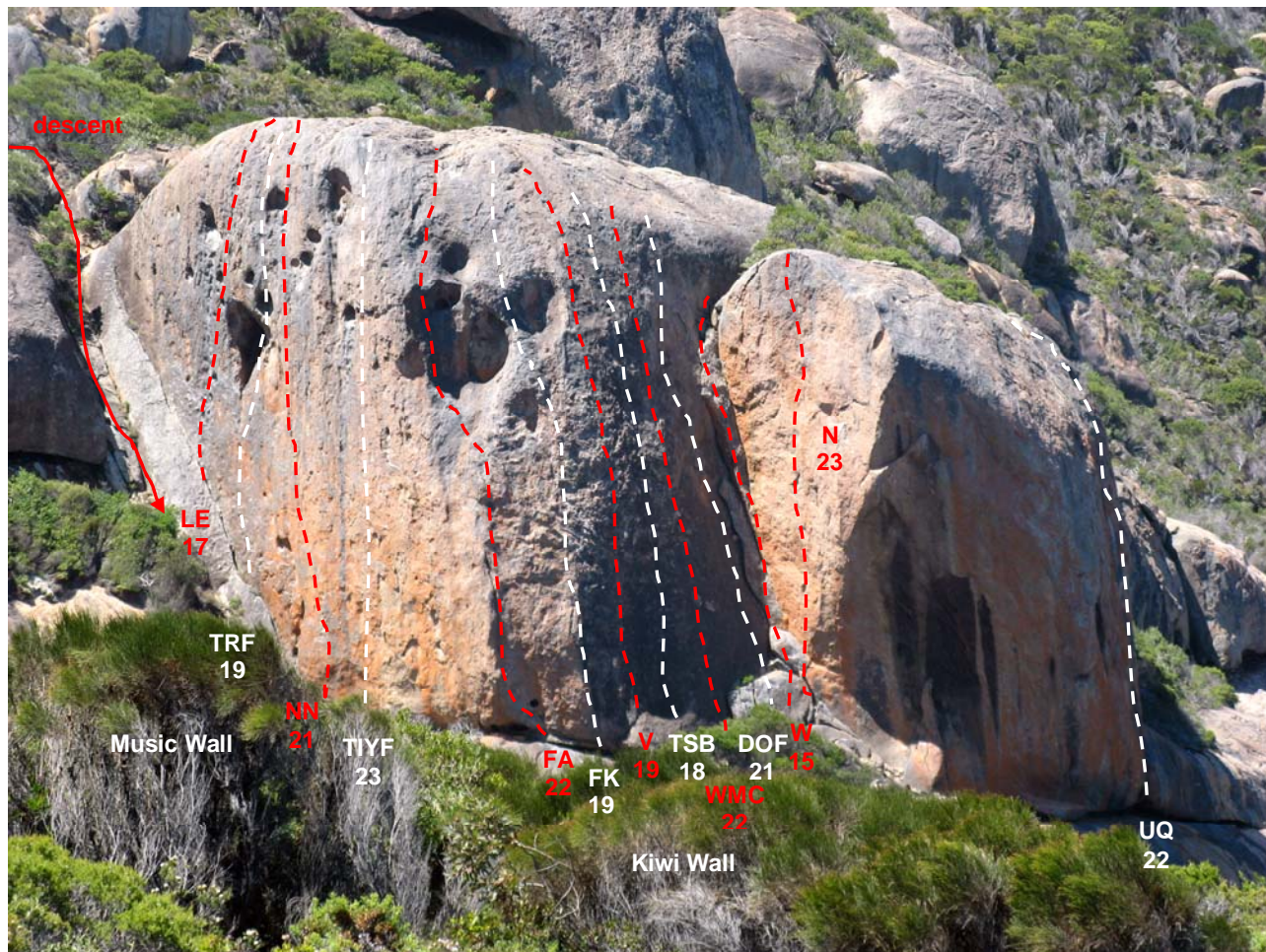
** **Silhouette** 15 m, 18

This photogenic route takes the pinnacle L of the chimney. Well featured climbing past 4 GFH to lower-offs. *Ross Weiter, Ruth Murdie, Nov '11*

Test of Sterone 16 m, 22 One for the connoisseur! From *Silhouette* descend for 8 m along the boulder base, then traverse 4 m on under-clings onto rock ledge. In the back of it lurks this overhanging off-width crack. Bring two #4 Camalots and some smaller cams. After exiting R at the top continue up slab for 4 m to lower-offs just L of giant hole. *Ross Weiter, Dec '11*

Kangaroo Rock

Continue past the *Silhouette* turnoff for 30 metres, and then take the left fork in the track. You will come to the top of a large crag, with several belay points installed. This is the top of Kangaroo Rock, the first and main climbing spot in the park. It is a good idea to leave your gear on top and descend by abseil, as the scramble down is not that pleasant. It also saves the gully from erosion. GPS 33°59'53.6"S, 122°12'59.3"E.



Music Wall

* **L'Esperance** 15 m, 17

Take the steep face L of cavern past 6 EFH. *Demelza Wall, Dec '09*

* **The Roaring Forties** 20 m, 19

After the tricky and slabby start, follow 6 EFH up face to the right of cavern (rest), then through two large huecos (holes). *Ed Nepia, Jan '11*

** **No Name** 22 m, 21

Fun climbing on jugs, with a strenuous reaching move at the top but the crux is half way up. 8 EFH. *Shane Richardson, Dec '09*

* **Tingle in Your Fingers** 24 m, 23

Yet another thin start...the thinnest, actually. 6 EFH. *Rob Wall, Dec '09*

Traversing along the base, surmount the high step with the aid of a bolt and fixed knotted rope.

Kiwi Wall

* **Family Affair** 28 m, 22

Crux start at the rock hole.....a few holds have been ripped off here. The 2nd and 3rd bolts are too high and difficult to clip from stances but a medium nut or a small cam can be placed between them so take some trad gear. Go left at the giant hueco near top. 6 EFHs. *Rob Wall, Apr '08*

**** Flying Kiwis** 28 m, 19

This is very good! Follow the shallow groove until it runs out, then tackle some thin moves (crux) to gain large white crystal holds and cruise to the top L of giant hueco. 7 EFHs. *Ed Nepia, Jan '09*

*** Verlaine** 28 m, 19

This climb is easy to find as it has the distinctive grey Fixe hangers and no nuts (bolts are glued in). Start at the lowest point of the slab. Up past 3 bolts, place two bomber nuts (#2 and #5 Wallnuts) just above each other, then past 3 more bolts to the top. *Ross Weiter, Ruth Murdie, Apr '11*

There She Blows 28 m, 18

Six EFH, plus an optional #3 wallnut after 3rd bolt. Bit run out at top but safe. *Ed Nepia, Jan '09*

Where's My Cyclone? 28 m, 22

Where are the holds? A few vague ripples are all you get at the start. 7 EFH. *Ed Nepia, Jan '11*

**** Dance on Fires** 28 m, 21

It starts off as a dismal slab but then gets more interesting higher up, with a selection of small awkward features and overlaps. Sustained and absorbing all the way. 6 EFH plus #2 or 3 Camalot at overlap (take both). *Rob Wall, Jan '09*

*** Windjammer** 22 m, 15

The trad corner-crack with lower-offs at the end of it. *Ed Nepia, Jan '09*

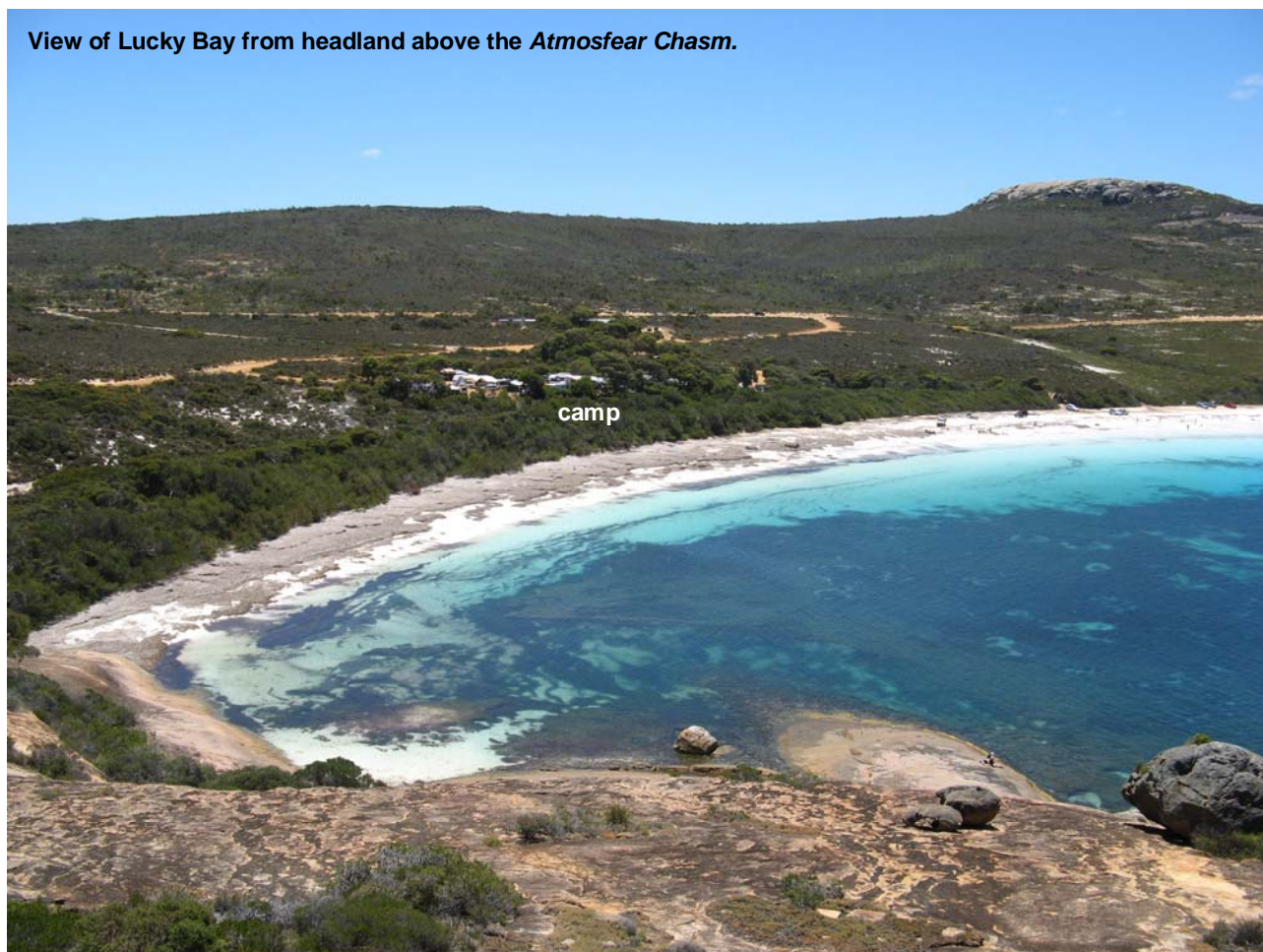
***** Nameless** 22 m, 23

This is the crag classic, with nice edges that get thinner as you go up. The crux is at the end, a dyno is optional. 6 EFH. *Shane Richardson, Dec '09*

Project Someone sunk 3 bolts into the wet slimy face/prow 6 m R of *Nameless*. The reddish brown ripples have a peculiar affinity for moisture.....

Ultimate Question 20 m, 22 Trad crack with 1 EFH. Take a #8 Rock for the crux. *Rob Wall, Jan '09*

View of Lucky Bay from headland above the *Atmosfear Chasm*.



Mississippi Boulders

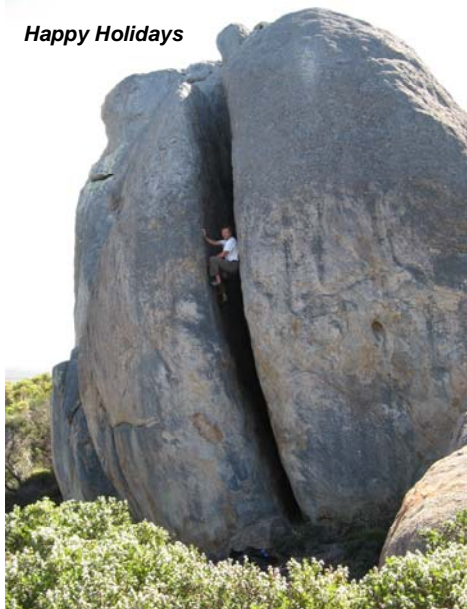
From Lucky Bay drive east to the Rossiter Bay car park. From here follow the walking trail to Lucky Bay for 15 minutes until reaching the top of a steep rise. To your right will be some 15 m high boulders and from the closest point on the trail you will see the chimney of *Happy Holidays*. Climbs are described from R to L, as you come across them.

South Boulder

All routes finish at the same trad belay on top, bring along #1 and 2 Camalots and some medium nuts or just sling the rock spike. To descend, take the slanting crack east of the chimney behind *Lizard Corner* or abseil off opposite sides of the boulder (going down *Crank Start* and *Hole Kaboodle*: the second abseiler uses the first one for ground anchor).



Happy Holidays



Happy Holidays 12 m, 10

(left photo) The chimney on the S side of the S boulder, adjacent to the walking track. No gear. *Ross Weiter (solo), Apr '11*

Crank Start 22 m, 19

Ten metres L of *HH*. Crank the short hand jam crack to Y-junction 3 m above deck (crux), then take the R option to gain ramp. Up ramp easily to top of block, then tenuously up the bridging corner to gain the top. # 4 Camalot is essential for the top moves. *Ross Weiter, Apr '11*

Jaws 22 m, 18

Up the short unprotected chimney, then slab, then enter the bottomless "jaws". Place #2 and #5 Camalots here and a #6 Camalot higher up. A bit grunty. *Ross Weiter, Peter Thomas, Apr '14*

** Oomph! 22 m, 20

This ugly-looking chimney is full of features and fully bolted. It offers many unusual moves not found in face climbing, so don't let appearances put you off! Just when you think that it is over, there is the slab finish. 6 EFH, trad belay. *Ross Weiter, Dena Rao, Dec '11*



Further along to the left are these two good climbs.

*** Hole Kaboodle** 20 m, 17
Stick your hand into the hole half way up to see who is home? This route is fully independent of LC, do not use the crack at start. The low traverse right is the crux, but the mantle at the end is interesting also. 5 EFH and trad belay.
Ross Weiter, Dena Rao, Dec'11

**** Lizard Corner** 18 m, 13
Up the impressive R-facing corner/crack. Excellent trad gear.
Ross Weiter, Ruth Murdie, Apr '11

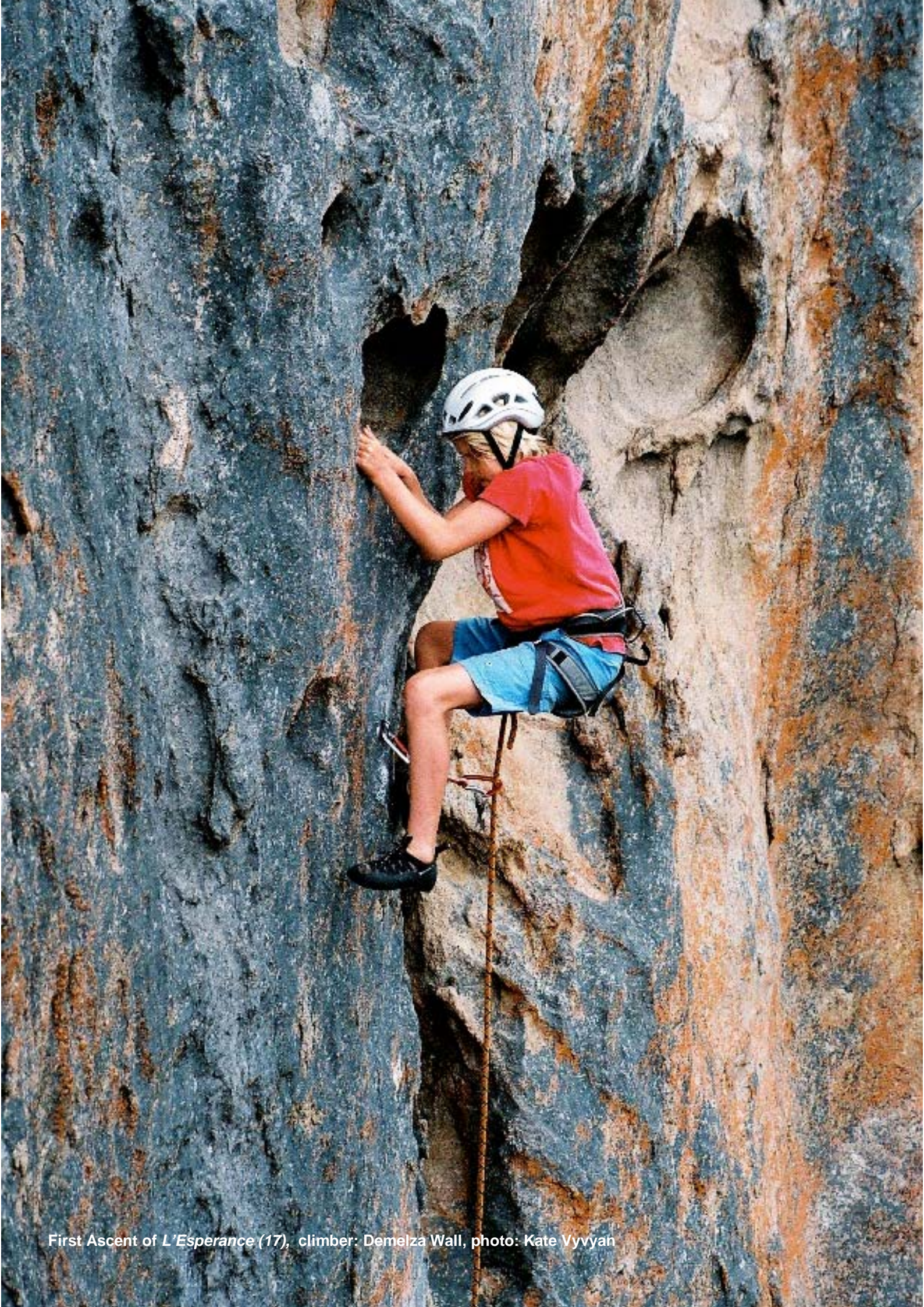
North Boulder

Next two climbs are on the smaller northern boulder. To descend, down-climb the short chimney on the side opposite to *Frollick*.



Frollick 14 m, 8
Start from the pass between N and S boulders. Follow the wide crack gully up the S side of the S boulder. Pleasant and easy, it can be led on trad gear.
Ross Weiter (solo), Apr' 11

*** Jack the Stripper** 14 m, 20
On the W face of the N boulder. Take the R trending crack to ledge, then the first L trending crack to top. Features some large moves.
Ross Weiter, Ruth Murdie, Apr '11



First Ascent of *L'Esperance* (17), climber: Demelza Wall, photo: Kate Vyvyan