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# Introduction

The first time I stood in front of El Capitan I was terrified. From the base of The Nose, the granite wall in front of me more than filled my field of vision. I felt really, really small. Only the Pacific Ocean rivaled El Cap in scale. I had no thoughts of ever climbing this wall. It was impossible in my mind.

Two years later, at 4 a.m. I stood, again, at the base of The Nose. This time, in addition to the terror I had brought before, I had a rack, a few candy bars, a rope and a ropegun named Mark Melvin. For 18 hours Mark mostly led and I mostly followed up the most incredible



Looking straight at The Nose from El Capitan Meadow. Photo by Chris McNamara.

stretch of rock I had ever seen in my life. There was no mistake: this was the most amazing rock climb on the planet.

I was lucky. A master took me under his wing and taught me how to climb in the supreme classroom. He dragged me up El Capitan before I ever led a four-pitch climb. Since then I have climbed El Capitan over 50 times and The Nose four times. Every time, I find El Cap awesome and intimidating.

Most climbers will take a different path to climbing The Nose. Their path will take a little longer and involve a little more self sufficiency but in the end will take them to the same spot—the summit of El Capitan. What follows is a road map for that path. Read this guide. Read as many “how to” books as you can and most importantly, find an expert to give advice and encouragement.

Many people think that The Nose is impossible. Others think that The Nose is easy. My goal is to show you that it is neither. Climbing The Nose is a huge undertaking that is possible for anyone who is dedicated to it. Those who are dedicated should know the climb can be done in two styles:

- A) Do the bare minimum training and climb in a painful and terrifying five days.
- B) Follow the training advice below and climb in an enjoyable and terrifying three days.

(Hint: choose option B.)

This guide takes you through a graduated series of 14 climbs of increasing difficulty to help you build skills, speed, endurance and comfort with big wall exposure. A SuperTopo for all 14 climbs is included, along with special tips and beta to help you. This program is broken into five chapters:

- Chapter 1: Overview of Your Road to The Nose
- Chapter 2: Five Routes to Practice Aid Climbing
- Chapter 3: Five Long Free Climbing Routes
- Chapter 4: Five Classic Big Wall Routes
- Chapter 5: Ready for the Big Stone?