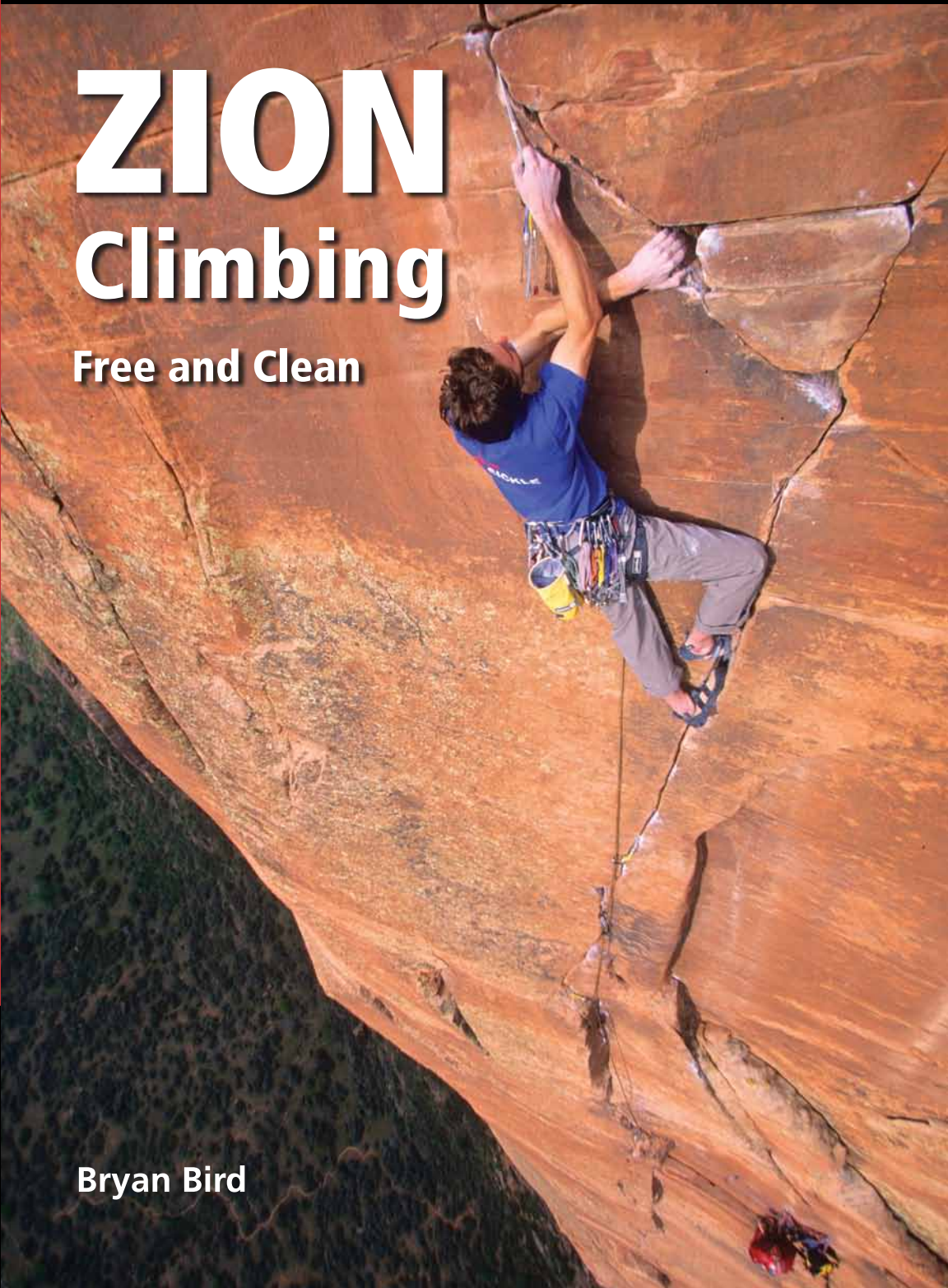


SUPERTOPOTM

ZION Climbing

Free and Clean

Bryan Bird





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-The Hernia			
-S and M			
-Ivory Coast			
-The Silmaril			

Book Credits

Written by Bryan Bird.

Aid climbing topos by Chris McNamara.

Photos by Eric Draper and Bryan Bird (unless otherwise noted).

Edited by Steve McNamara and Chris McNamara

Layout by Chris McNamara

Overview maps and topos by Joseph Puryear and Chris McNamara

Cover Photo: Matt Wilder on Moonlight Buttress. *Photo by Eric Draper*

Back Cover Photo: Joe French on Disco Inferno. *Photo by Eric Draper*

Cover Design by David Safanda Design Solutions. www.safanda.com

Watercolors by Renan Ozturk: Zion Ultrabright. Mixed Media on WaterColor Paper Mosaic 8ft X 3ft

About the Author

Bryan Edward Bird was born in Inglewood California in 1977 and lived in southeast Los Angeles until his world was turned upside down at the early age of 13 when his father moved the family to Beaver, Utah. Bryan realized all too quickly that Beaver was not the place for him and found his way to Zion Canyon at the age of 19 not long after a summer of learning how to top rope in the Tetons. Zion Canyon taught him everything he knows about rock climbing and has become his home. He was fortunate enough to move to Zion at a time when the canyon was ripe for climbing and making friends. These motivated individuals helped shape his future and help him become the active member of the climbing community that he continues to be to this day. Bryan is now 31 years old, lives in Virgin, Utah with his wife and dog, and is still in love with this little corner of the desert.



Warning.

Climbing is an inherently dangerous sport in which severe injuries or death may occur. Relying on the information in this book may increase the danger.

When climbing you can only rely on your skill, training, experience, and conditioning. **If you have any doubts as to your ability to safely climb any route in this guide, do not try it.**

This book is neither a professional climbing instructor nor a substitute for one. **It is not an instructional book. Do not use it as one.** It contains information that is nothing more than a compilation of opinions about climbing in Zion. **These opinions are neither facts nor promises.** Treat the information as opinions and nothing more. Do not substitute these opinions for your own common sense and experience.

Assumption of Risk

There may be errors in this book resulting from the mistake of the authors and/or the people with whom they consulted. The information was gathered from a variety of sources, which may not have been independently verified. Those who provided the information may have made mistakes in their descriptions. The authors may have made mistakes in their conveyance of the information in this book. **The authors cannot, therefore, guarantee the correctness of any of the information contained in this book.** The topographical maps, photo-diagrams, difficulty ratings, protection ratings, approach and/or descent information, suggestions about equipment, and other matters may be incorrect or misleading. Fixed protection may be absent, unreliable, or misplaced. **You must keep in mind that the information in this book may be erroneous, so use your own judgement when choosing, approaching, climbing, or descending from a route described in this book.**

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Acknowledgements

This project has been years in the making and obviously I couldn't have done it alone. Thank you to everyone who has helped me along the way, especially my wife Charlie. Her support and technical advice has been invaluable throughout the project. My most sincere gratitude goes to John "Floyd" Dixon for having the patience to teach me how to properly scare the hell out of myself and for planting a seed in me that continues to grow to this day. Special thanks to my main climbing partners, Joe French, Eric Draper, and Brody Greer. Our adventures together are priceless to me and have had a huge impact on my life. Jeremy Werlin provided encouragement and technical counseling early on in the project. Brian Smoot, Dave Jones, Doug Heinrich, Jersey Dave, Joe French, Dow Williams, Brian McCray, David Bloom, and Mike Anderson (among others) freely provided topos and information. Without them this book wouldn't have been nearly as cool. Mike Tea and Renan Ozturk provided the cool artwork. Thanks to Brian Cabe for the grammar lesson. John Middendorf and Mike Anderson graciously provided the history of Zion climbing. I would like to thank Nate Brown for his encouragement, advice, information, and contributions. Extra special thanks to Joe French for spending countless hours "researching" routes, and for his dedication to the enjoyment of filling his ears with sand. I would like to thank Chris McNamara at SuperTopo for helping to bring this project to fruition. It needed that final push. Thanks to anyone I have ever tied into a rope with. Thanks to everybody who participated in the editing and feedback process. Thanks to everyone who put up a route in Zion. We are all fortunate to be able to rap from your bolts. I would like to thank Ron Olevsky for having a vision for creating clean climbs. Huge thank you to every person who has helped to develop the climbing in Zion. All of the early Zion pioneers had the vision and skill to create incredible adventures for the rest of us to go out and test ourselves on. The following

individuals (in no particular order) deserve our gratitude and recognition for their efforts in helping to make it so much fun to climb in Zion National Park: Fred Beckey, Galen Rowell, Pat Callis, George Lowe, Jeff Lowe, Cactus Bryan, Mike Weis, Ron Olevsky, Dave Jones, Glen Rink, Mark Pey, Mike Strassman, Bill March, Bill Forest, Brian Smoot, Scott Fischer, Jim Dunn, Jim Beyer, John Tainio, Barry Ward, Alan Humphreys, John Middendorf, Brad Quinn, Bill Hatcher, Kyle Copeland, Daren Cope, Mugs Stump, John Allen, Lynn Wheeler, Billy Westbay, Conrad Anker, Cameron Tague, Jeff Hollenbaugh, Craig Luebben, Doug Hall, Calvin Hebert, Doug Byerly, Randy Aton, Brad Barlage, Drew Bedford, Seth Shaw, Doug Heinrich, Stacey Alison, Mark Austin, Joe French, Eric Draper, Nate Brown, Brody Greer, Dave Littman, Jared Greer, Mark Folkerson, John Varco, Klaus Schock, Dean Woods, Travis Tomlinson, Scott Morley, Andy Carson, Rob Sears, Rob Sears Jr., Karl Dunn, Dave Smith, Mike Anderson, Mark Anderson, Rob Pizem, Wes Krause, Randy Cerf, Kaleb Padgett, Gaar Lausman, Zack Lee, John Saylove, John Sedone, Dan Snyder, Robbie Colbert, Bill Ohran, Troy Anderson, Tyler Phillips, Carl Oswald, Dave Anderson, Drew Spalding, Ty Hydrusko, Kevin Jaramillo, Ammon McNeely, Brian McCray, James Martin, Paul Turecki, Larry Derby, Cameron Burns, James Garrett, Geoff Scherer, Ron Ramone, Dan Stih, Les Ellison, Boulos Ayad, Renan Ozturk, Cedar Wright... and everyone else who has contributed to the climbing community.

-Bryan Bird

Authors Note

Before I even get started I want to talk about the difference between this guide and other SuperTopo books. Thanks in large part to the World Wide Web, many of you have become accustomed to extra-super-duper accurate and detailed information found in many modern day guidebooks. This book is going to leave some folks scratching their heads and maybe even a little bit upset by the vague and non-detailed nature of some of the information. Many of the routes in Zion National Park have only been climbed once or twice. That fact means that there isn't a consensus opinion on how hard or good something might be. In places like Yosemite the climbs have been done so many times that you have an overwhelming amount of input or feedback on what a climb may be like. Here in Zion it's just not the case. My favorite part of the activity of rock climbing is ADVENTURE, (i.e. not knowing the outcome of the day) and because of that I have tried to leave it up to you, the guidebook user, to do some of the figuring out on your own. Many of the folks who have drilled the bolts, cleaned the cracks, built the trails, and drawn the maps are, or have been, prolific in the canyon. That means they enjoy the choss, weirdness, wideness, etc. and also that they are good at dealing with it. This is not your average climbing area. Zion is a very alpine climbing arena. Besides that, climbing isn't supposed to be easy. If it were, every jock and his girlfriend would crowd every one of our cliffs across the country. Thank god that isn't the case. Please use your own judgment. It has been my intention to leave my opinions out of the equation.

I have spent most of my climbing career in and around Zion National Park. Over the years friends and acquaintances asked me to put my collection of information together into book form so that other people could enjoy what's available in Zion.

The following information is an attempt at doing just that.

Collecting information pertaining to climbing in Zion started out as just a hobby that has led to an obsession. With so much rock to look at, I wanted to know just what had been climbed. So I set out to compile as much info as possible. Over the years my three-ring binder of topos, descriptions, maps, and stories has swollen beyond capacity. This book is my attempt at putting these pieces of information together in an organized and comprehensible manner. I have done my best to compile the information accurately, but with a project this size, there is much room for error. I have also tried to climb as many of the routes contained here as possible, but I have not done them all. Many of the route descriptions are second-hand at best. A good approach to the climbing in Zion would be an attitude that adventure is the main goal, not so much about the numbers. Climbers who adventure around Zion should expect to encounter poor and soft rock, inadequate anchors, vegetation, and of course sand. A pair of binoculars and some good judgment can go a long way. My friends and I have done much adventuring here and are accustomed to the nature of the area. Our views on what's good, bad, hard, or easy may or may not reflect your views. So... basically I'm trying to tell you to take this information with a grain of sand, be careful, and most importantly, have fun!

Introduction

By Bryan Bird and Chris McNamara

Often called the sandstone Yosemite, Zion National Park encompasses some of the world's largest and steepest sandstone walls. In the main canyon. The Virgin River has carved through 2,000 feet of Navajo sandstone laid down as dunes about 170 million years ago. The is arguably the country's most beautiful big wall and long free climbing destination. There are hundreds of aid and free climbs in the 800-1500-foot tall range and more than a few taller than 2000 feet. Some climbs are "sport wall climbs." meaning there is almost no approach and you can bail at any point on chain anchors. Other climbs involve intense bushwhacking through cactus-covered slopes followed by massive commitment on a week-long climb followed by a nasty descent. And, of course, there are a lot of climbs between these two extremes.

What stands out about Zion is just how many dead-vertical 1000 plus foot walls there are. Zion Canyon is a little smaller

than Yosemite Valley. However, while Yosemite has just a dozen vertical big walls with a lot of low angle terrain and forest in between, almost the ENTIRE Zion Canyon is bordered by big walls ranging between 800 to 2500 feet in height. There are hundreds and hundreds of tall rock climbs and nearly endless cragging possibilities.

SuperTopo.com - stop on by!

There are three reasons to visit www.supertopo.com before you trip:

- 1) All the info in this introduction will be more up-to-date and have links directly to what you are interested in.
- 2) You can get route beta on all the climbs in this book in the Route Beta section.
- 3) You can post questions to the Climbers Forum and ask for advice for your trip.

Zion Climbing Skills

This ain't Yosemite! Zion climbing is intense and adventurous. Prepare to get a little scared. A lot of experienced granite climbers are terrified when they first climb here. It's hard to know exactly how strong the rock is so even bomber-looking placements are sometimes suspect. It's not that the rock is terrible (it's usually just a little lower quality than Indian Creek) it just takes a little

Bridge Mountain at sunset. Photo by Bryan Bird



getting used to. You place more gear than you would in solid Yosemite granite and you must develop a sense when the rock is strong and when it's crap.

Watch for loose blocks in cracks and on ledges. Face holds may be rounded or sandy and take some getting used to. Solid crack climbing skills are necessary. The cracks are generally vertical, have poor rests, and few face holds. The leader needs extra endurance to hang out in strenuous positions in order to place gear at least every six feet. Most climbers use athletic tape to protect their hands from abrasion.

Climbing After Rain or Snow

When sandstone is wet, it loses much of its strength. If this were just a safety issue, you could climb after a storm and maybe you would blow a piece or two. You probably wouldn't die. Wet rock, however, is an environmental and aesthetic issue. Climbing (especially aid and face climbing) on wet rock eats the cracks up and key free climbing holds blow off. You could destroy the route. There are several face climbing routes such as the aptly named Made To Be Broken that could be completely erased by a careless individual unwilling to wait long enough to allow the rock to dry out. So how long should you wait after a storm? When the days after a rain consist of 100-degree heat, and the rock started out hot and dry,

you can climb after a day or two. Wait at least a week in winter and early spring and when there is high humidity, cold temperature and already moist conditions.

Zion Climbing Gear

Sandstone cracks are mostly parallel-sided, which means they accept cams and often reject nuts and hexes. That said, a lot of Zion aid routes follow lines of piton scars so having 2 to 3 sets of small offset nuts is key. On some routes like Desert Shield, it's nice to have 4 to 5 sets! Protection pulls, even from textbook placements. Be conservative, and borrow or buy a lot of gear. Two 50m or two 60m ropes are standard for rappels. Always back up every anchor, including bolted anchors. While most of the classic Zion climbs have good bolts, there is no such thing as an absolutely bomber bolt or cam in sandstone. Be cautious. Leave your cam hooks at home, they are destructive to Zion rock. A standard Zion free climbing rack consists of a minimum of two sets of cams ranging from 0.4-4" with one set of 4.5-6", one set of nuts (again offsets are preferable) and long runners. Climbers who are unfamiliar with sandstone climbing will undoubtedly want more cams on their rack specific to a particular route (i.e. more finger to hand-sized pieces). Cordelettes are handy for building anchors as well as backing up fixed anchors for descents.



Leave No Trace

Sandstone climbing and the desert environment in general is fragile. Here are some guidelines for climbing on sandstone:

- When hiking, stay on approach trails and off the crunchy, black cryptobiotic soil. If there is no clear approach trail, stay in the bottom of river drainages when possible.
- Keep your rack from scraping the rock.
- While rappelling or belaying, prevent your ropes from carving grooves in the rock. Rappel slings wear out quickly in this environment; be prepared to replace them with rock-colored webbing.
- Pitons destroy sandstone. Most popular aid climbs are done clean.
- Use clean gear whenever possible (except cam hooks, which damage the rock). Check to see if your intended route has been climbed clean.
- Avoid hauling if possible. Some popular routes are getting scarred with white streaks where haul bags have scraped off the brown surface coloring of the sandstone.
- Free climb as much as possible. Every time gear is weighted it erodes the sandstone a little more. It seems negligible now, but over decades, weighting gear as little as possible extends the life of Zion's routes.

Bolts and Fixed Gear

There are far more established lines in Zion than most people realize. It's extremely important for you to make sure that a route has not been done before you decide to drill any bolts. Adding of new bolts to existing routes is unacceptable and should be avoided at all costs. If additional, or replacement anchors are necessary, the best choice, by far is the Rawl 5-piece bolt. The deeper the anchor, the better. A minimum diameter of 3/8" and a minimum depth of 3" is the standard. Power drills are illegal. Camouflaging anchors is of the utmost importance. This pertains to all components of an anchor i.e. using neutral colored webbing, and painting bolts and chains to match the rock. Back up fixed gear at all times. The density and quality of the stone in Zion varies considerably with aspect and elevation. Climbers should be cautious and allow themselves time to develop the skills necessary to determine the quality of the rock. Visit www.safeclimbing.org to learn more about anchor safety and replacement.

"Zion Ultrabright" Mixed media on water color by Renan Ozturk.



Getting to Zion

Zion is in southwestern Utah, along SR-9, about 25 miles east of I-15. Once inside the Park, if visiting April-October, the shuttle bus can get you to 90 per cent of the climbs.

Air Travel

St. George has a small airport, about 50 minutes west of Zion, with pricey scheduled flights to Salt Lake City and Burbank.

The closest larger airport is the McCarran International in Las Vegas, about a 2.5 hour drive. Salt Lake City Airport is a 4.5 drive to Zion. St. George Shuttle (800 933-8320) takes you from the airport to St. George. Without a car, you would need to hitchhike from St. George to Zion.

Car Travel and The Shuttle Bus

You can reach most Zion climbs by riding the free shuttle bus that runs April through October. During this time, driving up-river of Canyon Junction is prohibited unless you acquire a permit for a one-day ascent of a big wall. Permits are available at the backcountry desk in the visitor center.

There is also a free shuttle that runs up and down State Route 9 through the town of Springdale. Busses run as often as every six minutes during peak visitation times. The town shuttle buses begin running before dawn and continue well after dark. Space is limited in the parking lot at the visitor center. Zion National Park encourages visitors to park in the town of Springdale at the numerous and well marked areas along / State Route 9 and ride the free town shuttle to the river entrance located adjacent to Sol Foods Market. During the off season, driving your car up the main canyon is allowed and its possible to park below or near your climb in the numerous paved pull outs along the road.

Mileage from the South Entrance booth:

Drilled Pocket Boulder:	0.4 mi
Oak Creek turnoff (road to maintenance yard):	0.5 mi
Canyon Junction:	1.5 mi
Mt. Spry N.W. Face pullout:	2.2 mi
Twin Brothers pullout:	2.5 mi

Court of the Patriarchs shuttle stop:	3.1 mi
Practice Cliffs pullout:	3.4 mi
Moroni/Employee Canyon pullout:	3.8 mi
Emerald Pools Trail Head:	4.1 mi
Zion Lodge shuttle stop:	4.3 mi
The Grotto shuttle stop:	4.8 mi
Great White Throne pullout #1:	5.3 mi
Great White Throne pullout #2:	5.5 mi
Great White Throne pullout #3/Angels	
Landing east face:	5.6 mi
Weeping Rock shuttle stop:	6.1 mi
Touchstone/Organism pullout:	6.3 mi
Big Bend shuttle stop:	6.6 mi
Cynthia's Hand Job/Moonlight Butt.:	6.7 mi
Desert Shield/ Moonlight Butt:	7.1 mi
Leaning Wall (Space Shot) pullout:	7.2 mi
Temple of Sinewava shuttle stop:	7.8 mi
Pine Creek Bridge (The Fang Wall):	1.9 mi
Pine Creek Swimming Hole pullout (Cowboy Bob):	3.0 mi
Great Arch pullout (Cragmont):	4.0 mi
Tunnel pullout (Headache, Ataxia, Kung fu, etc):	4.7 mi

Driving Distances to Zion:

Bishop, CA:	7.5 hours
Denver, CO:	9 hours
Lake Tahoe:	11 hours
Las Vegas, NV:	2.5 hours
Los Angeles, CA:	6.5 hours
Salt Lake City, UT:	4.5 hours
San Francisco, CA:	11 hours
Yosemite:	10.5 hours

Climbers and The National Park Service

Anything that we can do as individuals and as a "user group" to insure our permission to climb in Zion and other national parks is crucial and is the responsibility of everyone. Keep climbing areas clean: pick up after yourself and others. Trash at the base of cliffs is one of the things that park officials notice the most. Try to keep the use of chalk to a minimum, especially on the roadside crags and boulders. So far the relationship between the NPS and the Zion climbing community is a fairly good one. There are few rules established to govern the climbers. Climbers thus far have basically been left alone, on the pretense that we have the ability to govern ourselves efficiently. Heavy regulation has been levied on the

canyoneering community because of the perceived impact of their sport. As climbers we should take this as a warning. With the influx of more people to the sport and the area, this attitude of self-governing will undoubtedly change. It's paramount that we all make an attempt to maintain a positive relationship with the NPS.

When to Climb

Spring and fall offer the best climbing conditions. Winters are unpredictable and summers are scorching and crowded. Temperatures in the sun and shade differ dramatically. With no wind, 65° in the shade can mean 100° in the direct sun. Always bring plenty of warm clothes and water. Some routes are closed for peregrine falcons from March to September. Consider the flow of the Virgin River when approaching on Angels Landing. In spring and early summer it can be cold, tricky or even impossible to cross.

Fall

Climbing temperatures are often ideal from mid-September to mid-November with temperatures ranging from high-80s to mid-60s. It can be scorching in September or perfect.

Winter

Winters can be extremely cold unless you are climbing in the sun. Before heading to Zion, check the weather to make sure that the high temp is at least 50° for climbing walls and 40° for the crags and boulders. Snowstorms are frequent and may last for days. Nighttime temperatures dip well below freezing even in the best winter conditions. The area usually doesn't get more than a few feet of snow each winter. Remember you will have to wait days and maybe even a week after a winter storm for the rock to completely dry out.

Spring

Daytime temperatures begin to climb into the 60s and 70s in March. However, expect cold nights and possible snow into early April. Mid-April to mid-May offer good climbing temperatures, with more frequent

wind and rain than in the fall. The tourist crowds show up in mid-April.

Summer

Temperatures hover around 90-100°. Climb the most north-facing walls possible. Expect tons of tourists.

Cliff Closures and Permits

Many walls are closed from March-September for peregrine falcon nesting. Visit the NPS Zion Climbing site for a list of closed cliffs: www.nps.gov/zion/planyourvisit/climbing.htm Commonly closed cliffs are; Mt. Kinesava, Streaked Wall, Isaac, Angels Landing, Cable Mountain, The Twin Brothers, and East Temple.

You need a \$10 backcountry permit from the Visitor Center to stay overnight on a big wall. Only 12 climbers per day are issued permits for the most popular walls. Visit the backcountry reservation site to see which walls have the 12 climber limit and to learn about paying an additional \$5 to reserve a permit. (Even with a reservation, you still need to pick up your permit at the Visitor Center and pay \$10.)

Staying in Zion

Springdale is a great place to hang out. Climbers visit the town in the spring and fall. Winters are empty and peaceful. Great camping abounds and motels lower rates in the off-season.

Camping in Zion National Park

The **South Campground** is located near the South Entrance and Visitor Center. It costs \$16 per night and is open from March 13 to October 31 on a walk-in basis (it fills up early in the day).

The **Watchman Campground** is also located near the Visitor Center. It costs \$18 per night and is open year-round. Reservations are accepted for camping from late March through October or by calling (877 444-6777). Campsites are available on a first come/first served basis during the off season.

Motels

There are a lot of nice motels in Springdale. The better priced ones:

- **Bumbleberry Inn** - (435 772-3224)
- **Majestic View** - 2400 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-0665)
- **Quality Inn** - 479 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-03237)
- **Terrace Brook Lodge** - 990 Zion Park Blvd. (800 342-6779)
- **Zion Park Motel** - 865 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-3251)

There are much lower priced motels in nearby Hurricane.

Restaurants

Here are some of our favorites in Springdale:

- Coffee - **The Mean Bean** (932 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-0654)
- Breakfast - **The Pioneer Lodge** (828 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-3009)
- Cafe - **Oscar's Cafe** 948 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-3232) breakfast, lunch, dinner
- Pizza - **Zion Pizza and Noodle Co.** (868 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-3815)
- Cafe - **Sol Foods** - 95 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-0277) breakfast and lunch. Great patio.
- Bar/Dinner - **The Bit and Spur Saloon** - 1212 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-3498)
- Thai Food - **Thai Sapa** - 145 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-0510)

Groceries

Springdale Fruit Company - 2491 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-3822) Three miles west of the park entrance and sells natural, organic and gourmet foods plus a great deli. **Sol Foods Market** - 95 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-0277) has the largest grocery selection in Springdale. For a supermarket, drive 20 miles west to Hurricane. There is a **Farmer's Market** supermarket in La Verkin at the junction of SR-9 and SR-17. The biggest close supermarket is **Lin's** in Hurricane.

Water and Alcohol

Fill water bottles at the Visitor Center or the campgrounds in the park. You will only find 3.2% alcohol content beer in Utah supermarkets. For the good beer and booze, go to the liquor store at the Switchback (877-948-8080) and pay a premium.

Climbing Gear

There are two places in Springdale:

- **Zion Rock and Mountain Guides** - 1458 Zion Park Blvd. (435) 772-3303) Full gear selection and some rentals.
- **Zion Outdoor Center** - 868 Zion Park Blvd. (435) 772-0990) Basic selection of climbing gear. Some climbing gear rental.

Climbing Guides

Here are the guiding services in Springdale (they are not allowed to guide in Zion but can guide in nearby areas):

- **Zion Adventure Company** - 868 Zion Park Blvd. (435) 772-0990) - Some climbing gear rental
- **Zion Rock and Mountain Guides** - 1458 Zion Park Blvd. (435) 772-3303)

Other Services

- Post Office at 624 Zion Park Blvd.
- Showers for \$5 at Zion Rock and Mountain Guides - 1458 Zion Park Blvd. (435 772-3303)
- Coin laundry at the Quality Inn.
- ATM at Zions Bank at 921 Zion Park Blvd.
- Wireless internet at Pioneer Lodge Cafe at 838 Zion Park Blvd.
- Springdale Public Library at 126 Lion Blvd (435 772-3676)

Rest Days

There are a lot of great hikes in the park. Some of the favorites: Chinle Trail, Coalpits Wash, Angels Landing and Cable Mountain. There are also a number of great slot canyons you can learn about on Tom Jones' web site (www.canyoneeringusa.com). A popular tourist option is to hike The Narrows. There is world-class mountain biking just outside the park, all within a 40-minute drive: Gooseberry Mesa, The JEM Trail and Hurricane Rim Trail. Zion Cycles (868 Zion Park Blvd, Springdale) rents bikes and has topos. Coral Cliffs movie theatres in Hurricane have a discounted family night on Mondays; \$3.50 (normally \$7.50) on current films.

Nearby Climbing Areas

Mesquite, Kolob Canyons, Virgin River Gorge, St. George Sport Climbing, The Overlook

Human History

by Bryan Bird

Due to the lack of written account, little is known about the early inhabitants of the Zion area. Evidence suggests that the first inhabitants of Zion date back to 8000 years ago or 6000 B.C. The first signs or evidence of farming appears to have begun 2000 years ago. Archaeologists divide human history into four cultural periods:

The Archaic Period, this period covers 6000 B.C. to A.D. 500 when small nomadic groups of hunters and gathers roamed the area and left very little evidence of their passing. By 300 A.D., these peoples began to farm corn, beans, and squash and have been labeled Basketmakers. The Basketmakers left an abundance of baskets in the pit houses in which they lived.

Farming became increasingly more common into the Formative Period: A.D. 500-1300. Archaeologists found evidence of small villages or pueblos throughout this period as the nomadic practices began to die off. Little is known about the details of day-to-day life of the Anasazi. The use of the bow and arrow became more common. The two main groups of people of this era who left trace of their existence in Zion were the Parowan Freemont and The Virgin Anasazi. These two groups are believed to have interacted with one another during the end of the Formative period. The record of human history nearly vanishes around 1300 and is believed to be caused by widespread drought.

The Neo-Archaic Period spans from A.D. 1300 to the 1700's when traces of the Southern Paiute and Ute people began to become more evident. They spoke common languages, traveled large distances and also grew crops. The Historic Period refers to the time span between 1700 and into the 1900s.

The Historic Period retains a more documented history and is overshadowed by European exploration and settlement. On October 13, 1776, Spanish padres Silvestre

Velez de Escalante and Francisco Atanasio Dominguez rode north from Mexico and eventually up the Virgin River and passed near the area of Kolob Canyons. They are the first known Europeans to visit the area. Jedediah Smith is believed to have explored the region sometime around 1825. Mormon settlers began moving into the Kolob region by 1847 making their home near New Harmony, Utah. In 1858 Nephi Johnson followed a Paiute guide to the mouth of the Narrows on a scouting mission to determine the farming potential of the Virgin River drainage. His guided trip resulted in the settlement of the town of Virgin in 1861. In 1863, Isaac Behunin settled his family in the upper Zion Canyon near the modern day site of the Zion Lodge. He grew fruit corn beans and tobacco and is credited with coming up with the name of Zion for the canyon. The Crawford family followed the Behunins into the upper Virgin drainage and settled the area now known as Oak Creek where the park museum now sits. The Crawfords also had much success farming in the canyon. Cattle became common in the region during this period. Around this time, the towns of Springdale, named after a pond located on the banks of the Virgin River near the middle of town, Adventure (now called Rockville), Shunesburg (a modern ghost town located within the Trees Ranch orchards), and Grafton, (another ghost town located just outside the town of Rockville) were settled. John Wesley Powell and his cohorts visited the canyon in 1869 after their foray into the Grand Canyon. Powell believed the Paiute name for the canyon was Mukuntuweap and the name stuck. In 1895 W. R. Crawford, O.D. Gifford, David Flanigan and three others climbed the peak between The Watchman and Bridge Mountain to scout a route for a possible road down Pine Creek, which they found impractical. John Winder began the construction of the East Rim Trail with the help of the residents of Springdale. This trail would provide access to the site of the cable works on the rim of Cable Mountain, where a 2000-foot cable car was erected for the task of moving timber from the high country down into

the Virgin River drainage. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh created paintings of the canyon that were exhibited at the Worlds Fair in St. Louis in 1904. His paintings helped to spark modern day tourist interest in Zion. In 1909, President William Howard Taft proclaimed the area Mukuntuweap National Monument. Then 1917 gave birth to the National Park Service and the first director, Stephen Mather, who changed the name to Zion National Park. Congress added more land to the monument and changed the name officially on November 19, 1919. The Kolob canyon section of the park became a separate monument in 1937 and was added to the park in 1956. The first automobile roads reached Zion in 1910. The first tourist accommodations, called The Wylie Camp, sprang up around the site of today's Zion Lodge with a road going up the canyon as far as the Grotto in 1917. The road to the Temple of Sinawava was completed in 1924. Nevada Contracting Company began construction of the Zion-Mt. Carmel tunnel to connect the east side of the park to Springdale and finished in 1930. The tunnel was the first million-dollar road project in the country. The Angels Landing

trail was finished in 1936.

Little in the way of significant developments occurred in Zion Canyon between the years of 1940 and 1990. One of the largest floods on the Virgin River occurred during the mid 1970s.

The numbers of tourists visiting Zion National Park have continued to grow with the times. Due to the overwhelming amount of visitors and their vehicles, the shuttle bus system was implemented in the year 2000 and continues to thrive to this day.

The Jungle Bivy, Desert Shield. Photo by Andrew Burr



Geology

by Bryan Bird

The magnificent scenery of Zion National Park is over 250 million years in the making. The Virgin River has slowly carved a beautiful canyon exposing almost 7000 feet of strata. Erosion is a constant process, working diligently on the slopes and walls of Zion National Park. The cliffs in Zion are relatively stable in comparison to higher altitude environments, where freeze and thaw play a more vigorous role in the changing environment. However, as rock climbers we are frequently reminded by rock fall that geology is constantly happening. In 1950 Herbert E. Gregory was the first scientist to take interest in and record the geological story behind Zion National Park.

The Colorado Plateau is a mass of land encompassing 130,000 square miles that fill the space between the Rocky Mountains on the east and the Basin and Range to the west. Zion is part of the formation known as the Grand Staircase, which reveals many of the layers of the Colorado Plateau. The uplift of the Colorado Plateau is caused by the collision of the North American and the Pacific Plates. The western and eastern borders have been shaped and changed by tectonic forces. This land mass averages just over a mile above sea level and remains intact as a solid unit. Of the three types of rocks found on the earth (igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic), only the first two are seen in the park. The majority of the exposed stone in the park is sedimentary, and comprised predominantly of seven different layers of rock. These seven layers, in order of oldest to youngest or lowest to highest: Toroweap Formation, Kaibab Formation, Moenkopi Formation, Chinle Formation, Moenave Formation, Kayenta Formation, Navajo Sandstone, Temple Cap Formation, and Carmel Formation. The Navajo Layer, the largest exposed layer in Zion and most spectacular of them all, is home to the majority of the rock climbing in the canyon.

The deposition of layers of rock in the

history and creation of Zion National Park took place during the Mesozoic Era, a time period running from 245 million years ago to 65 million years ago. This was a time period in which the sea covered much of the North American continent. The seashells and fossils provide evidence of this and are found throughout the lower layers of rock in Zion. As the Colorado Plateau began to lift with the collision of the different continents, the sea began to recede and the middle layers of the canyon were exposed. During the middle of the Triassic period the Pangaea formation began to break apart. A long arid period on the Colorado Plateau followed, resulting in the formation of rivers, lakes, streams, and dunes. The lowest layer that will be of interest to rock climbers is the Springdale Sandstone Member of the Moenave Formation, commonly referred throughout this book as the Springdale Band or “lower cliff band.” The Springdale Band is a close cousin to the Wingate layer found throughout the Canyonlands area of Utah. Although not as spectacular as Wingate, it does demonstrate similar characteristics in the way it splits.

As the North American continent continued to migrate northward out of the Pangaea formation, the mountains of Colorado and Nevada created a rain shadow over the Colorado Plateau, resulting in desert conditions and propagating the spread of what was known as the Navajo Desert. The Navajo Desert covered 150,000 square miles and is the largest dune formation known in North American geologic history. Late in the middle Jurassic Period the sea level began to rise again, contributing to the erosion of these dunes and beginning the creation of the dramatic cliffs that we climbers enjoy in Zion Canyon. The uplift of the Rocky Mountains stretching from Mexico to Canada caused the recession of the sea once again and gave way to the creation of the Virgin River, whose power continues to cut through the

ZION GEOLOGY

TEMPLE CAP FORMATION

NAVAJO FORMATION

KAYENTA FORMATION

MOENAVE FORMATION

CHINLE FORMATION

MOENKOPI FORMATION



layers of rock and create the spectacular Zion Canyon.

The average day in Zion presents the Virgin River as harmless little creek. Those fortunate enough to witness the Virgin during flood stage can attest to its awesome power to move sediment. The Virgin's headwaters originate from the Markagunt Plateau north of Zion Canyon on Cedar Mountain. The Virgin has two main arms or branches: the North Fork, originally named Mukuntuweap (main Zion canyon) by native Paiutes, and the East Fork, originally named Parunuweap Canyon. These two canyons join at the south end of the town of Springdale and flow southward to Lake Mead in Nevada.

Navajo Sandstone is comprised of fine quartz sand with variable amounts of iron oxide, (which gives it its red or pink color) and calcite. Calcium carbonate and silica act as the glue that holds the grains together, allowing the Navajo layer to reach up to over 2000 feet in thickness. Desert varnish is commonly found throughout the park, especially on the lower two thirds of the Navajo layer. Desert varnish forms face holds and gives some of the rock a bullet hard outer layer. The Navajo layer is well bonded and less susceptible to erosion than the lower layers in the canyon. This superior resiliency has resulted in the formation of slot canyons such as the Narrows, where

the walls are over 1000 feet thick and as little as 16 feet apart. Compare this to the canyon further downstream near the town of Springdale where the river cuts through lower rock layers and the canyon is up to two miles wide. Spectacular top-to-bottom crack systems are a trademark of the Navajo cliffs of Zion and are well known throughout the climbing community.

The Hurricane fault line runs north to south and extends from the Grand Canyon to Salt Lake City and is the only major fault line located within the park's boundaries. However, there are many minor fault lines that spur from the Hurricane Fault line and help promote plate movement activity, resulting in cracks in the floor and walls of the canyons. The most recent major earthquake along the Hurricane Fault line occurred in 1992 and registered a magnitude of 5.8. This tremor caused major damage to structures, evident in the Balanced Rock subdivision located half a mile from the South Entrance to the park. Gettin' Western is one of the few routes in the canyon with documented change caused by this earthquake. The second ascent party reported more debris and "looseness" than the first ascent party. Since 1992, only minor tremors have been felt along the Hurricane Fault line.

It is estimated that Zion Canyon has been two million years in the making. Zion Canyon is a desert setting unmatched in beauty and grandeur. Forces such as plate movement, volcanic activity, drought, flood, freeze, thaw, and erosion have all played their part in its creation. The Virgin River continues to carve its way deeper into the earth. This relentless process shows us that geology is ongoing and is happening before our very eyes.



Dust settling after a large rock fall from an unnamed peak above The Watchman Trail. Photo by Bryan Bird

With Regard to Zion Alpinism

By Nate Brown

Not often do climbers associate the desert with alpine style mountaineering. The desert is generally hot, flat and dry. Zion can be hot and dry, but don't let this part of the desert fool you. The alpine routes of Zion, as opposed to the trade/aid routes, wonderful free climbing and family hiking, have historically been described with a skull and crossbones. These routes are not for everyone and their grave reputation is not an embellishment.

The larger peaks of the park, West Temple, Bridge Mountain, Great White Throne, Watchman, Sentinel, Abraham, Isaac, Kinesava and the Towers of the Virgin, offer an incredible arena for mountaineering. Take peaks of this ilk seriously. Many of the routes up these peaks have only seen one or two ascents. Scout descents prior to an ascent. It would be irresponsible, and perhaps deadly, to depend on topos and written descriptions while descending the Sentinel or the Throne in the dark. Often the best way to become familiar with a descent is to ascend it first. A bolt kit is also advisable for the alpine routes.

Ron Raimond used the French alpine rating system to rate the technical stretches of his bold traverse of the Towers of the Virgin and the peaks of the Court of the Patriarchs. In the future it may be that this is the best way to describe this type of climbing as opposed to the YDS, which only describes the technical aspect of the pitches. A 5.9 leader might find a route like the South Ridge of Kinesava (5.7) to be exciting and scary. Not because of the difficulty of the climbing, but because of the exposed, loose, and heads-up nature of the route (up and down). Expect to find lots of loose rock, big run-outs, stretches of vertical bushwhacking, difficult route-finding,

poisonous flora and fauna, little or no fixed gear, extreme weather, almost no in-situ water, and plenty of sand.

In the past, warnings such as this have been repeated in climbing media as a generalization for the entire park. Hopefully this book helps dispel the myth that Zion is only a place to climb scary aid routes. It isn't fair to describe Fred Becky's Great White Throne route and the Headache in the same grave manner. The park has more to offer climbers than the legend and lore of the past has led many to believe.

That being said, the serious nature of climbing in Zion cannot be over-emphasized. This goes for short and long routes alike. Good judgment rules over all decisions in any adventure found in Zion. Solid fundamental climbing skills are necessary to navigate the cliffs of Zion. For many the legend will not be debunked and the loose, scary, myth will not be busted. Those who buy into that mindset should take their Zion apprenticeship slowly, and have much respect for the realm they enter. For others, especially those with an open mind and a positive attitude, many new, exciting, and, yes, chossy, doors will be opened.



Joe French on top of Mt. Johnson. Photo by Bryan Bird

Ratings

Grade Ratings

Grade ratings give a sense of the overall commitment required on a climb. Grades I and II refer to short crag routes. These ratings are seldom used.

Grade I and II refers to cragging routes.

Grade III refers to half-day routes.

Examples: Voice From the Dust, The Wisdom Tooth.

Grade IV refers to full-day routes. *Example:* Shune's Buttress, Touchstone Wall, The Vigil.

Grade V refers to shorter big wall routes.

Fast parties may only take a day, but most parties spend two to three days on the wall. *Examples:* Crack in the Cosmic Egg, Lunar Ecstasy.

Grade VI refers to longer big wall routes.

All but the fastest teams require at least two days and usually many more.

Grade VII refers to extreme alpine big walls that require at least ten days of suffering on a huge wall in poor weather in a remote area. *Examples:* Great and Secret Show, Baffin Island; Grand Voyage, Great Trango Tower, Pakistan.

Free Climbing Ratings

If you are not used to Zion sandstone, start a few numbers below your ability. If you climb 5.11 at your home crag, start on a 5.9 or 5.10. Ratings of offwidths and chimneys seem much different than those for face routes and finger cracks. Because offwidths and chimneys are initially so foreign and unpleasant, few people dedicate the necessary time to learn the techniques required to climb them efficiently. A long route in Zion without an offwidth is rare.

Aid Ratings

Keep in mind that aid ratings are only

one measure of the difficulty of a wall climb. Weather, the length of the climb, skill, physical condition of the climber, the number of previous ascents, approach and descent, and many other factors all combine to determine the overall difficulty of a wall. Pitch ratings also can't include the dangers of bad bolts and poor fixed gear.

Aid ratings are based on the number of bodyweight placements in a row. How is a "bodyweight" placement differentiated from a "bomber" placement? The only way to know for certain is to take a fall. The next best way to find out is to ask yourself, "Would I belay off this?" If the answer is "no" then it is probably a bodyweight placement.

"C" This pitch goes hammerless.

"A" This pitch generally requires a hammer to place pitons or copperheads. No routes that require hammers are in this book.

A0 Pulling on pieces for progress while in free climbing mode. Generally no aiders are used.

A1 or C1 Easy aid: All placements are bomber. Little danger of falling except through pilot error. Most A1 pitches take from one to two hours. *Examples:* Many pitches on Touchstone and Space Shot.

A2 or C2 Moderate aid: one or two bodyweight placements over bomber gear. Five- to 30-foot fall potential. *Examples:* Crux pitches on Prodigal Sun, Space Shot. Most A2 pitches take one to three hours.

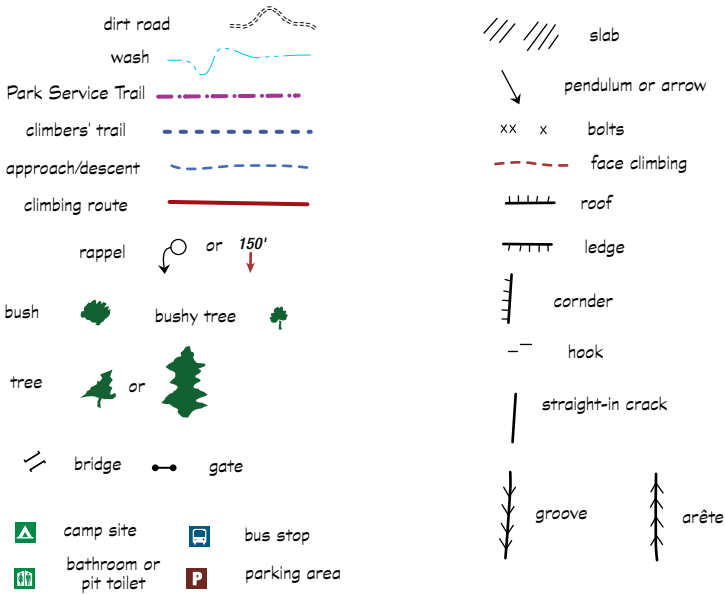
A3 or C3 Hard aid: Three to five bodyweight placements in a row. Thirty- to 50-foot fall potential. *Examples:* Headwall of Desert Shield and Swoop Gimp.

A4 or C4 Serious aid: Six to eight bodyweight placements in a row and a 50- to 80-foot fall potential.

A5 or C5 Extreme aid: More than nine bodyweight placements in a row. Eighty-foot plus fall potential. Most A5 pitches take more than four hours.

Understanding the Maps

Topo Symbols



Notes on Rack

- “nuts” refers to any nut, stopper, or chock. “micro” = #1, 2; “sml” = #3-5; “med” = #6-8; “lrg” = #9-13
 - for cams, “2 ea .75-1.5” means bring two sets of all sizes between .75” and 1.5”.
- Check the cam size chart to see which cam corresponds to which crack size.

Topo abbreviations

ow = offwidth
 lb = lieback
 p = fixed piton
 R = runout (dangerous fall)

Metric system conversions

1 inch = 2.54 centimeters
 1 foot = 0.305 meters
 100 feet = 30.5 meter
 50 yards = 45.7 meters

West Temple

Approach time: 1.5-2.5 hours Descent time: 2-3 hours

When to climb: September-May Aspect: Southeast

Elevation gain: 2200' on routes, 3300' total

The West Temple, also known locally as Steamboat Mountain due to its western profile. This massive formation is one of the tallest sandstone cliffs in the world and at 7810 feet the highest objective in Zion. Up until the spring of 2008 the only routes established on the mountain were on the east faces. Brody and Jared Greer and Bryan Bird finally cracked the huge expanse of the west face in April of 2008 via a route up the center of the west face that went mostly free except for a few body lengths of climbing. They named their route How the West Was Won (not included in this guide).

In 1998 Ron Raimonde and Dan Stih completed an impressive multi-day traverse. They began on the South Ridge of the West Temple and finished on the north side of the Altar of Sacrifice. Along their way they summited every major peak in between. As a result of their efforts three unnamed peaks in the Towers of the Virgin complex received new names. The peaks between the Sundial and the Altar of Sacrifice, from south to

north are now known as the Witch Head, the Broken Tooth, and the Rotten Tooth. All five peaks in the traverse were climbed free. The climbs are described from left to right.

1. Southwest Ridge

III 5.7

FA: Newell and Norman Crawford, 1933.

This is a big hike and scramble with a few 5th class moves. There is more elevation gain than Cowboy Ridge but less exposed ridge climbing. Follow the approach for Cowboy Ridge to the top of The Springdale Band.

Move right, looking for a long-bush covered ramp that enters a "V" notch in West Temple's southwest ridge. Avoid following the wrong rubble ridge up to the start of this ramp to avoid having to lose elevation via intersecting gullies (take the time to study your approach).

Once in the ramp, continue along steep walls to your left until an obvious chimney break and access the notch from there (relatively easy ground with little if any technical difficulty).

You enter the ridge above 6000 feet. Start out left from the notch to gain the ridge and climb it direct, sometimes hiking, sometimes scrambling. Eventually you descend to another deep notch by down-climbing a tall mature tree for the final step or two to



the ground. Regain lost ground to the left of the ridge. Again you will find a ridge that goes from scrambling to hiking back to scrambling and forms a staircase of sorts to the base of the red-colored sandstone and crux of the route.

You come to a very cool (if still standing) white sandstone feature directly on the ridge. Ascend a small face which sports a crack (that takes gear). Coil the rope and scramble along the ridge to the base of the 5.7 crux pitch. The final pitch begins in a chimney with a flake, then continues up and right past a few bolts to bolted anchor on the rim (50').

Once at the top, the true summit will come into full view to the northeast. It is a typical square top that can be accessed from the south by dropping down into a broad flat bushy plateau and maneuvering your way through the brush to the other side, where you can hike up some loose scree to a summit cairn with a register. You can continue on to the communications tower shelter for better views down into Zion Canyon and the Three Marys.

- Text by Dow Williams

Rack: 1 ea .5-1.5", slings, 1 rope.

Descent: reverse the route making one rappel (the 5.7 pitch).

2. Gettin' Western

V 5.11

FA: Darren Cope and Brad Quinn, 10/90 (originally Gettin' Western VI 5.10 A2). FFA: Doug Byerly and Doug Hall, 10/93.

One of the more adventurous free climbs in Zion. Be bold and be warned. Expect a bit of everything: quality rock, choss, run outs, unprotectable chimneys, and bushy pitches. An earthquake in 1992 may have altered the route (i.e. more loose debris than what the first ascent team may have encountered).

There are two parallel crack systems that begin at the base of the cliff and head towards the large, lone, ponderosa pine tree marking the bivy for the first ascent team, and the halfway point of the route. Both cracks are climbable and there are options all over. Use your binoculars, and scope the best way for you. From the big ponderosa pine, the angle kicks back a bit and the route climbs the big left-leaning cleft in the peak.

Approach: From the entrance to the park drive south through Springdale. Turn right on Lion Blvd. (second street on the right). Drive west on Lion Blvd. to the cul-de-sac at the end of the road. Either park in the cul-de-sac or, if your spending more than a day, park in the dirt lot about 400 feet back down the road towards the city park. Walk up the paved road past the O.C. Tanner Amphitheater and drop into the drainage.

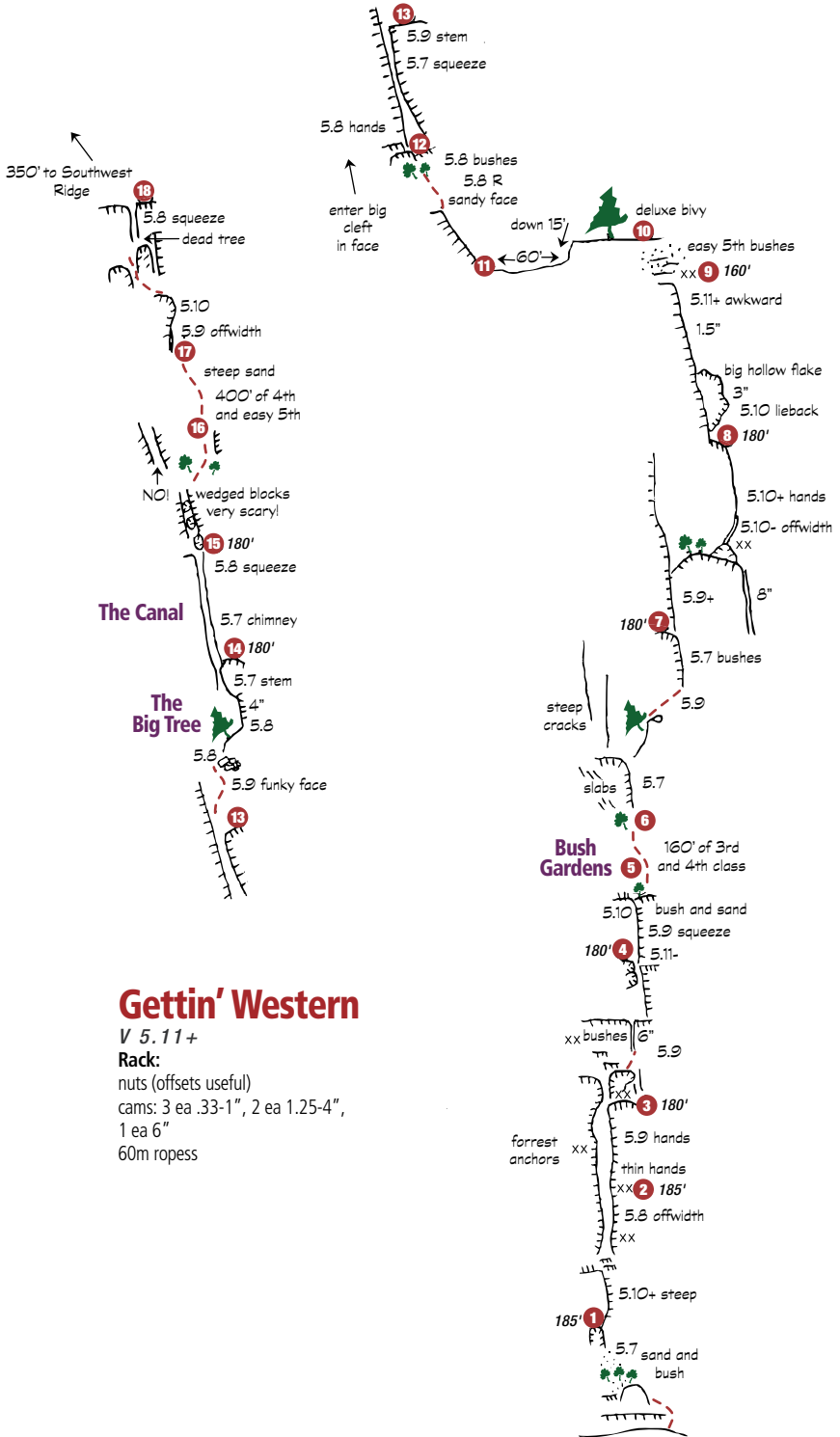


SW Ridge

The Big
Lebowski

Gettin'
Western





Gettin' Western

V 5.11+

Rack:

- nuts (offsets useful)
- cams: 3 ea .33-1", 2 ea 1.25-4", 1 ea 6"
- 60m ropes

Continue up the drainage for ten minutes. Go left at the first fork in the drainage for 100 feet, then begin to angle up towards the base of the cliff. The trail ascends a steep sandy slope. Pay attention to two cliff bands. It is possible to skirt both of the cliff bands if you are careful to stay on the existing, but faint, trail. A thick bushwhack is highly probable on this seldom-used trail, especially if you are not careful in your choice of routes to the base of the cliff.

Rack: see topo.

Descent: Southwest Ridge (recommended) or rap The Big Lebowski.

3. The Big Lebowski IV/V 5.11a/b

FA: Eric Draper, Brody Greer, Jared Greer, and Bryan Bird 3/19-21/04. FFA: James Martin and Brian McCray, 4/13/04.

This is one of biggest, longest and best free routes in Zion. Almost every pitch is challenging and high quality. The route follows an obvious crack system that terminates on the large forested ledges under the left end of the plateau below the actual summit cap. Just to the left of the

route lies a white headwall with a prominent red streak in it. The crux is a five-inch crack a couple of pitches from the top. The Big Lebowski was originally 5.10+ C1 put up over several days, 95 percent of it going free. Three weeks after the first ascent, James and Brian climbed it in an impressive, one-day push freeing all pitches.

Approach: from the Springdale town hall and City Park walk west up the dirt road across the street to the south until it forks. Take the left-hand fork until it starts to curl back around to the east. Pick up a faint trail that heads up the ridge towards the toe of the lower cliff band. Climb easy ground through The Springdale Band and follow the ridge to the base of the West Temple. Just before the foot of the wall the trail traverses right and downhill to the start of the route.

Rack: see topo.

Descent: rap the route (the rappels are surprisingly clean and straightforward) or descend the Southwest Ridge route.



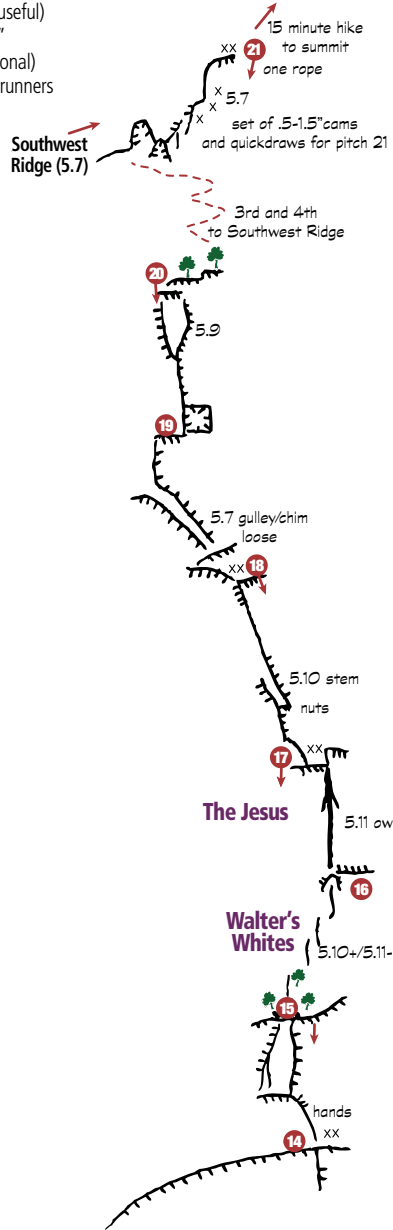
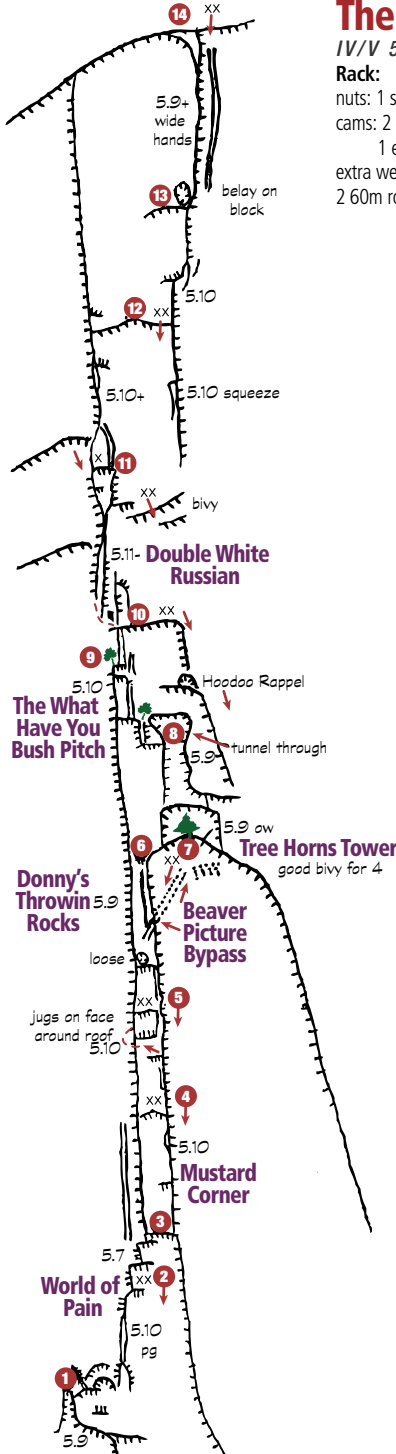
Jared and Brody Greer descending the Southwest Ridge of West Temple. Photo by Bryan Bird

The Big Lebowski

IV/V 5.11 a/b

Rack:

- nuts: 1 set (offsets useful)
- cams: 2 ea .33-5.5"
- 1 ea 7" (optional)
- extra webbing and runners
- 2 60m ropes



The First Ascent of The Big Lebowski

By Mike Anderson

The collective climbing consciousness reveres the ideal of the climbing lifestyle – arranging life around climbing, not the other way around. Most climbers, at one point or another, wonder what it would be like to live in the mountains and climb every day the sun is shining, but the vast majority of us don't do it; either we're reluctant to sacrifice modern conveniences, or we simply don't have the courage to move boldly into the unknown. For some folks, bold moves are just a way of life. Now this story I'm about to unfold took place back in the early 2000s, just about the time of our conflict with Saddam and the Iraqis. I only mention it because sometimes there's a group of men—and I'm not going to say “heroes”

because what's a “hero?” But sometimes there's a group of men who are, well, The Men, for their time and place. And I'm talking about the Springdale Crew in Zion National Park.

In 1994, Eric Draper didn't realize he was setting his life's path, but he knew he wanted out of Salt Lake City, and he wanted to climb in Zion, so at the tender age of 18 he found a job cleaning rooms in the Zion Lodge (a plausible cover to legitimize his new lifestyle), and moved to Zion. Eric is a good man, and thorough. That same year a 17-year-old Bryan Bird first visited Zion from Beaver, Utah, where he had been transplanted from SoCal by his family. Bird was soon corrupted by the local climbers,

Jared and Brody Greer suiting up for another day on the FA of the Big Lebowski. Photo by Eric Draper



and in 1997 he realized he needed to move to Zion. “Jersey” Dave Littman introduced Eric and Bryan, and they started climbing together. Their first wall route was Desert Alpine, a long, complex summit route on Bridge Mountain. They hiked past what is now the Kung Fu Theatre and Confluence Crags on the way to that route, spotting plum lines and hatching future plans.

The brothers Brody and Jared Greer grew up in the small mountain town of Morgan, Utah. When Brody moved to St. George to attend Dixie State, he fell in love with the canyon country, and thought better of going to college. In 1998 he set up a permanent residence in Springdale and his little brother Jared, aka The Kid, soon followed. This foursome of Draper, Bird, and the Greer brothers, along with Joe French, who arrived in 1995, would form the core of the Springdale climbing community, the latest generation of Zion locals who have made an unprecedented contribution to Zion climbing, easily doubling the number of routes in the canyon in a decade.

Alex McAfee became enthralled with one of several conspicuous crack systems on the West Temple’s magnificent Southeast face, building a trail to the base of the route. But he couldn’t convince anyone to climb it with him. In 2003 the Greers picked up the torch, building psyche for an attempt in the spring of ’04. They recruited Eric and Bryan, who had dreamed of climbing that wall for almost a decade, and the party was on. The crew aligned their days off and after a day of fixing and what have you, they set out. Only an hour into the climb, Jared was jugging the first pitch when he noticed something unusual above him on the rope. Bird soon realized it was a huge core shot caused by chaffing on a patina flake.

“What do I do?” Jared pleaded.

“Hurry the f!&@ up and get past it!” Bird screamed. Jared obliged and quickly raced past it, averting disaster. They rotated leads on the route’s 21 pitches, ensuring a very fresh leader on each pitch and festive belay sessions on the many spacious ledges. As they climbed, the route’s features seemed to mesh perfectly with passages from the crew’s favorite movie, *The Big Lebowski*.

Treehorn’s Tower, Walter’s Whites, Donny’s Throwin’ Rocks, and The Jesus were perfect descriptions, assuming an appropriate frame of reference. Without it, well then, you’re like a child who wanders into a movie...

They climbed the route in a three-day push, freeing all but about 50m, and establishing a modern classic, and one of Zion’s longest routes.

Soon after, they told Brian McCray about their new route and he roped up with James Martin for a free attempt. They climbed light and fast, hoping to finish the route in a day. On the “what-have-you Bush” pitch, James was moving slowly -- too slow for the record-setting McCray. So Brian started simulclimbing up underneath him, pulling in slack on the gri-gri as he climbed. It pissed off James, but also sent a message. Higher, on the crux Jesus pitch, McCray liebacked the insecure offwidth, all the while sliding their lone #5 camalot up the crack. They freed the massive route without a single fall, on-sight, in one day. While the route isn’t the hardest in the canyon, it is hard (don’t let the 5.11 rating fool you), and stylistically speaking this effort by Brian and James stands out as the best free ascent in Zion history.

The Big Lebowski is not well known at the time of this writing, but at 2000 feet tall it is Zion’s most accessible long route. With high quality climbing, spacious ledges and fantastic views, it is destined to become a modern classic. The Big Lebowski represents only a tiny portion of the overall contribution made by the prolific Springdale Crew, and rest assured they will continue discovering fantastic routes for the rest of us to enjoy for years to come. I don’t know about you, but I take comfort in that. It’s good knowin’ they’re out there, the Crew, takin’ her easy for all us sinners. Sheesh... well, that about does her; wraps her all up... it was a pretty good story, don’t ya think?