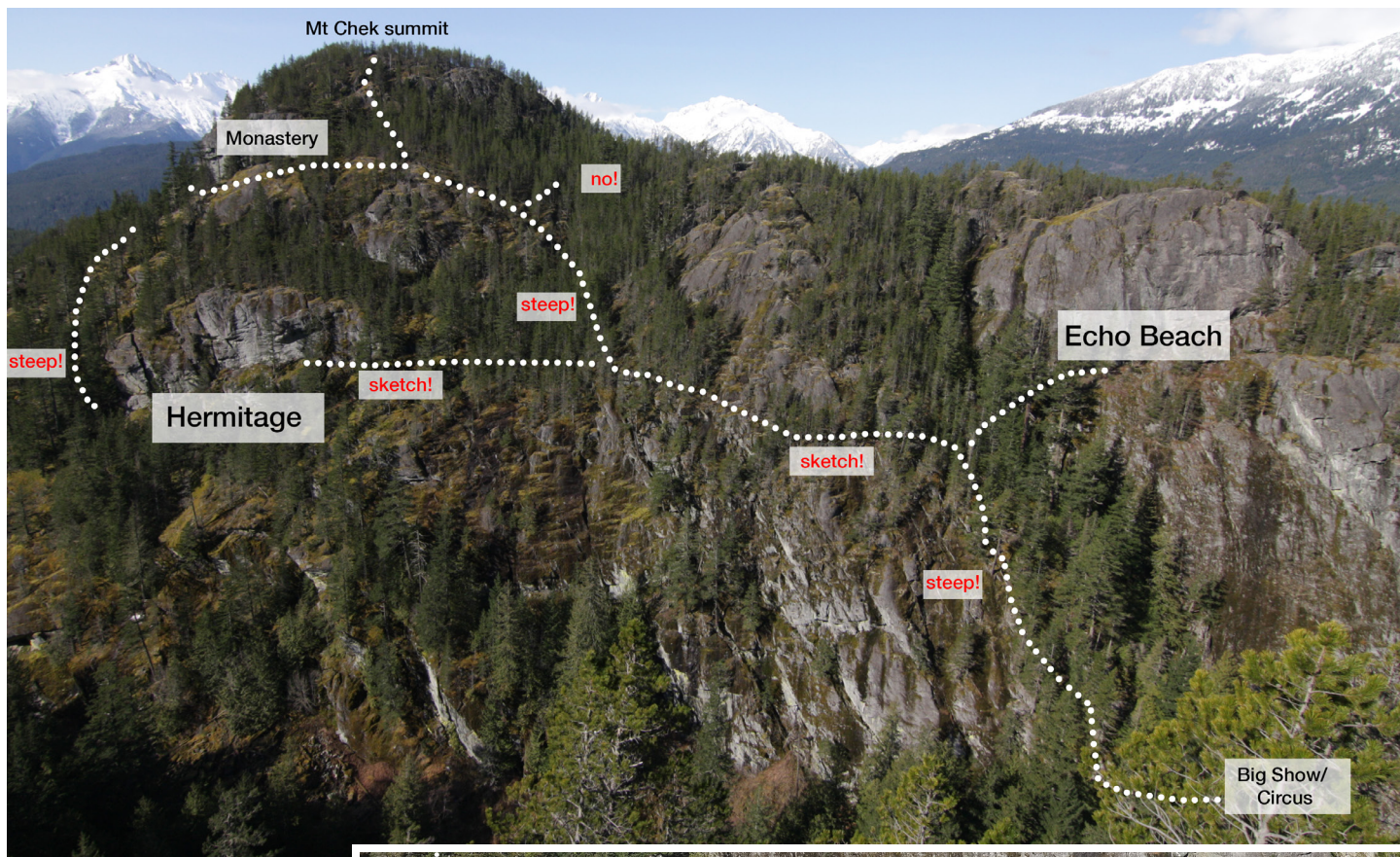
A full-page photograph of a rock climber on a dark, craggy vertical cliff. The climber is positioned about halfway up the frame, wearing a tan shirt and dark pants, and is secured by a rope. The background is a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. At the bottom of the cliff, a line of evergreen trees is visible.

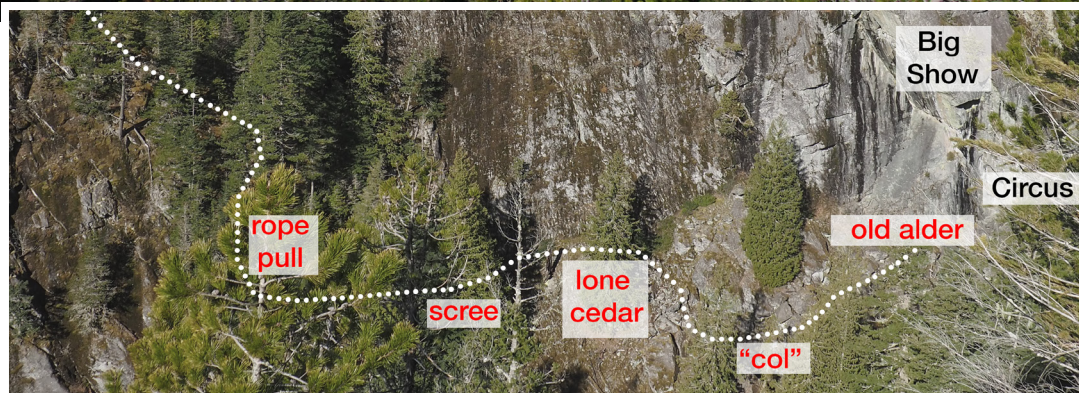
The Hermitage & echo beach

**NEW CLIMBS
OFF THE DEATHTRAP TRAIL**



The “Deathtrap” Trail?

The trail was conceived in 2018 as an alternative approach to the Monastery from the main parking lot at Chek. The road up to Electric Avenue, from where the usual ascent to the Monastery starts, was expected to wash-out eventually (it has) and the parking by the 99 become overwhelmed (ditto). Subsequently the new trail has encouraged exploration of the surrounding area, resulting in the discovery of the Hermitage and Echo Beach cliffs. It has also raised awareness of the amazing old-growth forest in the canyon below (see the “Conservation” section below).



The trail starts from the gnarled old alder at the base of the slab under the Big Show. The first ~fifty metres cross talus and are less well-defined compared to the forest sections beyond. See the detailed inset photo above. Head south horizontally at first for ~twenty metres, crossing a “col” between boulders, then head diagonally upwards for ~twenty more metres to the base of the chossy cliff above, passing behind a solitary bent cedar. From here cross unstable scree in a gully to enter the trees. The route is now obvious, beginning with a rope pull section. After a steep climb above, passing some moderately big firs, the trail forks. Go right for Echo Beach, left for the main trail. The next ~hundred metre rising traverse has several exposed ledge sections. **Not a great place for nervous or clumsy people.** At the end of this section is another fork. Continue horizontally for the Hermitage, passing another sketchy ledge traverse as the cliff comes into view. (It is also possible to access the Hermitage from the Monastery by a steep gully further to the south - see main photo above.) The main trail goes steeply uphill from the fork then curves southwards at a gentler angle to eventually gain the Monastery. Just before the Monastery there is a junction with the short trail that leads to the Mt Chek summit. In reverse this provides a way back to the campground for people who have completed Frontside 180 and carried all their gear with them.

Approximate hiking times from the main parking lot are: to Echo Beach ~15 minutes; to the Hermitage ~ 20 minutes; to the Monastery or the summit ~ 25 minutes.

The name was contributed by a well-known Vancouver sport climber who followed the trail to the Monastery shortly after it was first flagged and immediately sent an aggrieved text declaring it a “deathtrap”. Some sections have been re-routed in subsequent years but the trail remains somewhat adventurous. **Definitely not advisable for non-climbers.**

Style, conditions, safety

These two cliffs share a couple of characteristics: the routes are predominantly in the 5.11-5.12 range and their base areas are ledge systems, which are very pleasant places to hang out on but **could be fatal to slip off. Consider not bringing beginners, excitable dogs or children. This warning applies especially to the right side of the Hermitage, where the ledge is narrow.**

Both cliffs face east and get sun from early in the morning until noon or later. Otherwise, conditions are somewhat different. Echo Beach is a freakishly dry cliff thanks to steepness, an open aspect and very little moss or tree cover above. Since its discovery in April 2020, good climbing conditions have been found there every month, right through the winter. At similar times of day in the off-season it is much warmer than the Circus, where cold air seems to get trapped in the canyon base. Conversely the Hermitage does suffer some seepage from above on several routes. Wait at least a couple of days after heavy rain. The Hermitage also loses the sun before Echo Beach - helpful in the summer shade-chasing season but not on cold winter days.

The rock at both cliffs is generally excellent, by Chek standards. Echo Beach has a faultline that divides it into two very distinct sectors. The left "Wave Machine" wall is a blocky consistently-overhanging face with an undulating rippled surface. The routes climb more like limestone than granite; unusual for Squamish and great endurance training for overseas trips. Over time this wall will shed holds, so belayers (and leaders?) may want to wear helmets. The right "Wild Swans" sector is composed of much more compact rock, forming bulges and steep slab features with good friction and well-defined but sparse holds.

The Hermitage has the same scooped water-erosion features seen at Rock of Ages, on the other side of the hill. However the steep sections are much taller than at RoA and the rock is smoother and less forgiving of imprecise footwork. The faces vary in angle from gently-overhanging to "MoonBoard".



Conservation

The canyon that starts just south of the parking lot and continues beyond these cliffs is home to an impressive collection of old-growth trees, especially Douglas Firs. The full extent of this untouched ecosystem - continuous forest of one square kilometre or more - is much more apparent from Echo Beach and the Hermitage (and the trail between them) than anywhere else at Chek. The largest of the trees are in the riparian area in the canyon base. There are at least ten trees of ~two metres diameter or larger, including one easily-visited example just behind the Well of Souls boulders. Firs of this size are around 400-500 years old. Given that the Conroy Creek FSR area has a long history of logging it is surprising that such a large area has been spared. The most likely reason is that the canyon's hostile terrain - large talus at one end, narrow at the other, steep slopes in between - has been a deterrent. The trees do not have any legal protection.

In 2015, BC Timber Sales proposed a new road along the canyon base, which would have created easier access to the old growth zone and likely caused the immediate logging of the biggest trees, as they grow on the road's intended route. At the time there was not widespread knowledge of the conservation issues, but the likely destruction of talus boulders below the Circus climbing areas did cause Squamish Access Society to write a letter of concern to BCTS, which was apparently echoed by the local Rec Sites manager, Alistair McCrone. The road proposal was dropped "indefinitely". So the presence of climbers has (unintentionally) played a role in saving these trees.

In fall 2020 I nominated two of the largest trees to the [BC Big Tree Registry](#), leading to a visit from UBC Forestry faculty doctoral students to verify their size. Inclusion in this list is not a legal protection but raises awareness of the area's significance. At the time of writing, a proposal to expand the rec site boundary to include new climbing areas was being reviewed by the province. The new boundary would include the old growth area.

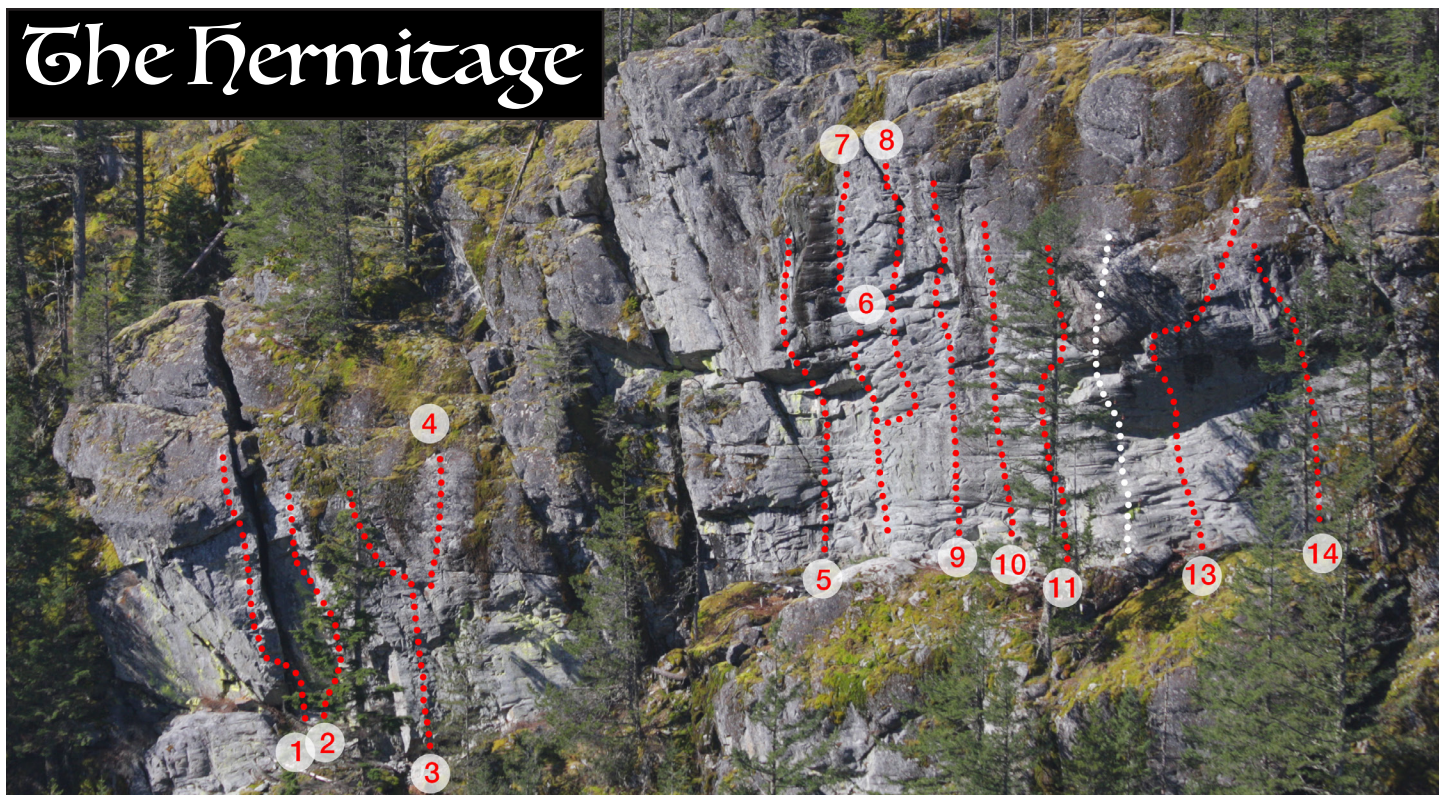
Thanks

Several people have helped with the trail system and base prep work below these cliffs over the last four years. In chronological-ish order: Bob Jasperson, James Foord-Kelcey, Chris Hecimovic, Coast Mountain Academy students, Krissy MacKay, Ian Strachan, Emili-sa Fridrich, Yuki Kuroda, Ben Webster, Tyrone Brett, Chris Singer, Luc Martin, Sean Martin, Kyle Martin, Keiko Yamahara.

The majority of the climbing hardware was privately funded. The [Sea To Sky Route Development Fund](#) provided hardware for five routes at Echo Beach (highlighted in green type). Alex Ratson donated a large number of carabiners for the lower-offs.

Route developers are all acknowledged in the FA notes for each climb. The top five routes at these two cliffs are highlighted in red.

The Hermitage



1. Apprentice Arete, 5.11a ★★

Start on the right and swing left to the deceptively-tricky arete. No foot dabs across the chimney! Originally graded 5.9! 7 bolts. FA Tyrone Brett, summer 2018

2. Hermit Groove, 5.12a ★★★

Blocky face climbing leads to the steep corner feature. . 6 bolts. FA Marie Palmer, September 2020, prep Tyrone Brett

3. Hermit Crack, 5.10b ★★

Start on good holds then follow the leftwards trending crack to an awkward finish. Best cleaned on top rope. 5 bolts. FA Tyrone Brett, July 2020

4. Hermit Face, 5.10b ★★★

A direct version of the previous route. 6 bolts. FA Tyrone Brett, July 2020

5. The Cenobite, 5.12a ★★★

Jugs lead to bouldery moves through the stacked overhangs to finish in an easy groove. 8 bolts. FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, Leo Foord-Kelcey, August 2019

6. Misanthropes, 5.10c ★★★★★

A tough start leads to moderate but steep climbing to the best finishing holds in Squamish at two-thirds height. Fun! 6 bolts. FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, May 2018 direct August 2019

7. Sociopath, 5.12b ★★★★★

aka "The Money Line". Continue above the Misanthropes anchors to the top on very smooth rock. Two ways to do the crux. 11 bolts. FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, Chris Hecimovic, May 2018

8. Lone Wolf, 5.11c ★★★

Start on Misanthropes but move right after the second bolt, and head straight up via the wide crack. 9 bolts. FA Colin Moorhead, Emilisa Firdich, April 2020

9. Hair Shirt, 5.12c ★★★★★

Crimpy technical start to pumpy midway bulge. The finishing moves are fun and easier. 8 bolts. FA Chris Hecimovic, July 2018

10. Critical Mass, 5.12b ★★★

A similar style to Hair Shirt but slightly easier throughout. 8 bolts. FA Chris Hecimovic, Toby Foord-Kelcey, May 2018

11. The Contrarian, 5.12c **TOP FIVE**

Follow the shattered dike to a the mid-height ledge. Cross the small overhang then traverse right into the crux groove. Amazing rock. Lateral thinking helps. 8 bolts. FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, June 2019

12. Closed project

Prep Leo FK

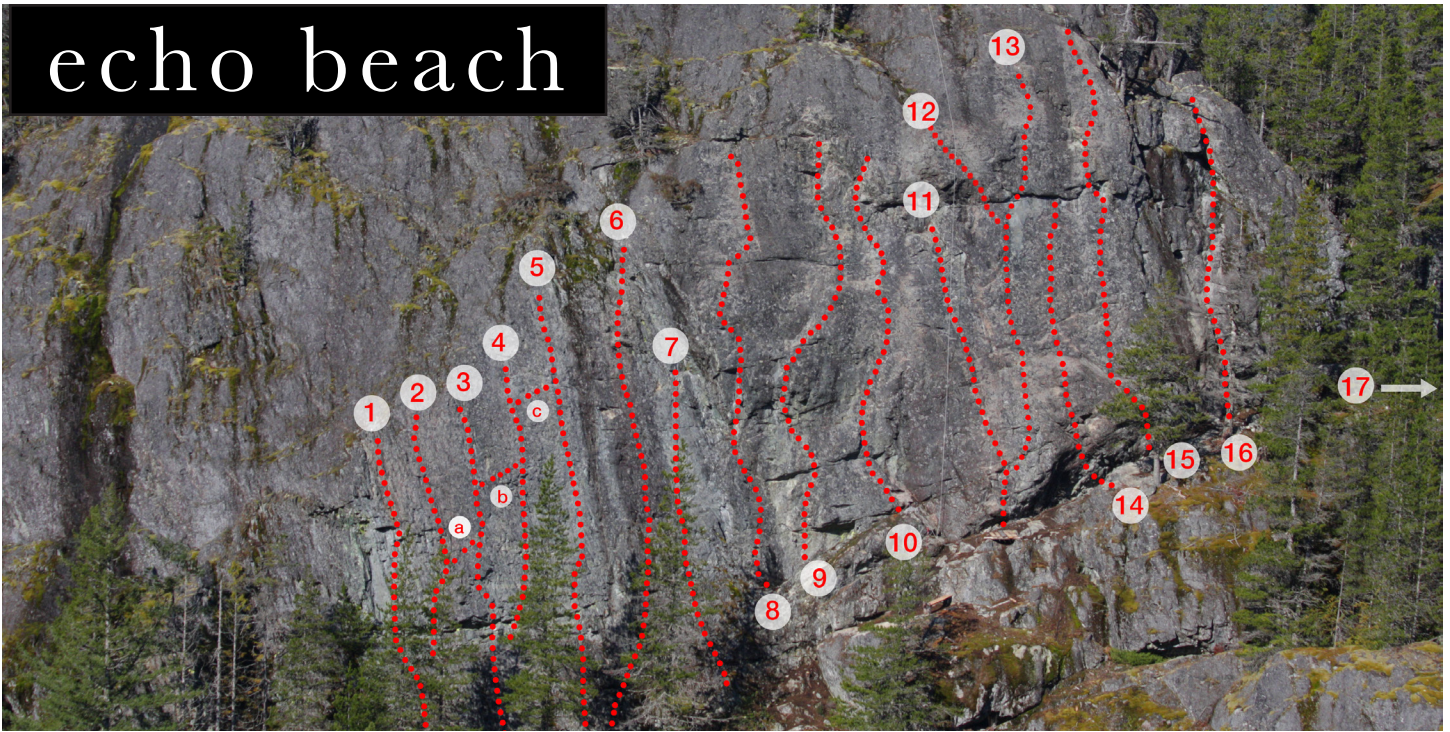
13. Patience Grasshopper, 5.12d **TOP FIVE**

Awesome climbing through the "Action Directe" style bulge. Dynamic through the steepness for most people. Extra points for a double dyno. 9 bolts. FA Leo Foord-Kelcey, April 2020, prep Toby FK

14. Hermit Crab, 5.13a ★★★

Effectively a direct start to Patience Grasshopper. The hard section is short-lived but powerful. 7 bolts FA Josh Duncan, April 2021, prep Toby FK

echo beach



The first rock encountered after completing the approach hike is the Wave Machine wall. A detailed topo is on the next page.

1. **Redacted**, 5.11a ★★
2. **Chicken Joe**, 5.11a ★★★★★
3. **Tessellation**, 5.12a ★★★★★
4. **Surf Park**, 5.12a ★★★★★
5. **Wave Machine**, 5.12b **TOP FIVE**
6. **Zut Alors**, 5.11c ★★

At the right end of the Wave Machine wall is an obvious shattered corner which delineates the transition to the compact rock of the Wild Swans sector.

7. **Shark Teeth**, 5.10d ★★
Start down and left of the corner. Easy climbing with spaced bolts leads to a short crux section in the pale streak. Don't cheat right into the chossy corner. Not a good warm-up.
7 bolts, FA Nic Beaulieu, April 2021

The next two routes start with a short scramble to a ledge.

8. **Shameless**, 5.12b ★★★★★
The obvious steep grooved arete. The approach past the first few bolts is uninspiring but the overhanging section is fun.
12 bolts FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, May 2020 **S2SRDF funded**

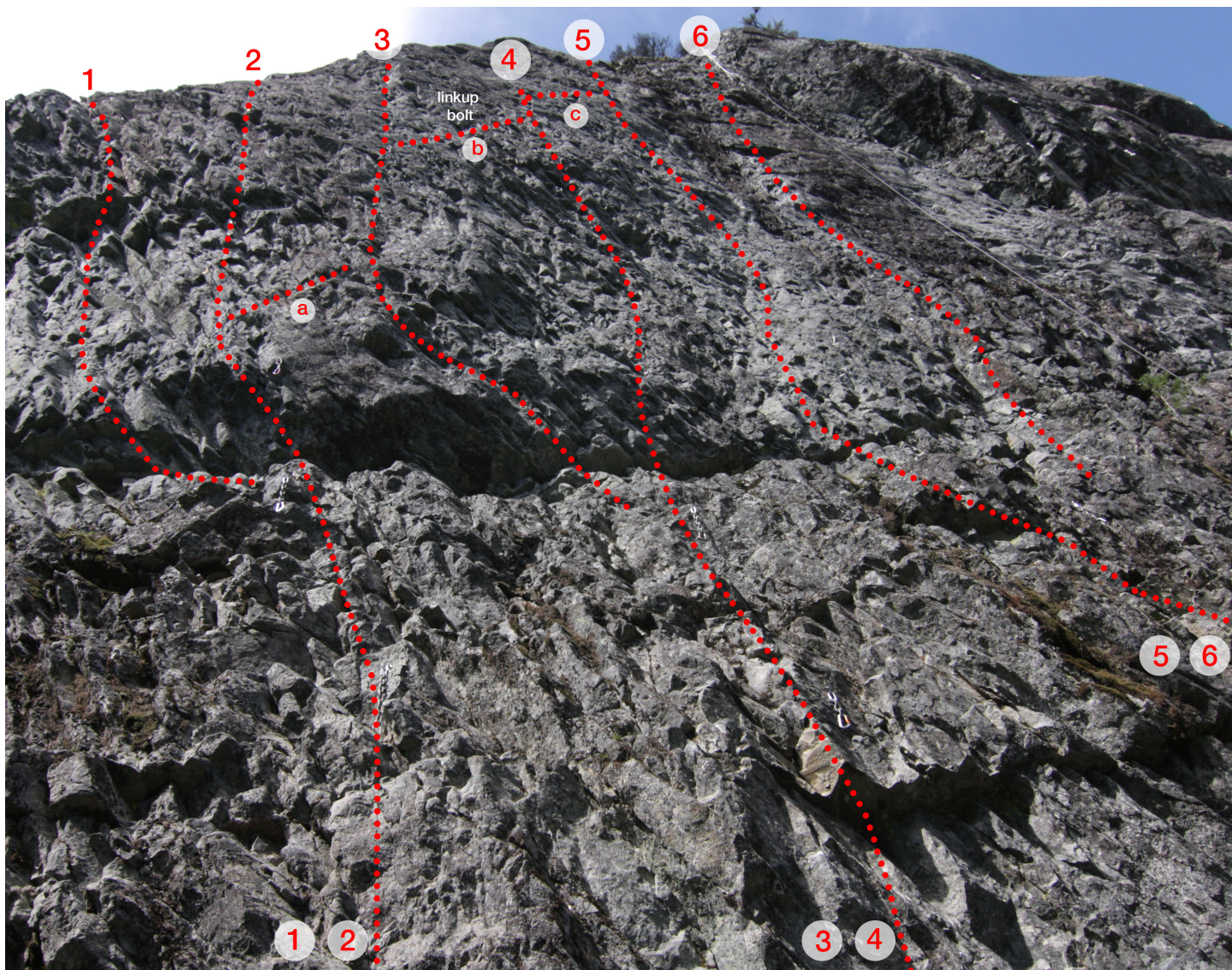
9. **Wild Swans**, 5.12c **TOP FIVE**
Connect the scoop features on consistently excellent rock. An unusual and satisfying route testing footless arm power then balance and footwork.
12 bolts FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, July 2020 **S2SRDF funded**

For the next route, belay from the bare rock ledge above (which has great views of the cliff and the canyon).

10. **The Overton Window**, 5.12c ★★
Scramble up to the next level then follow the easy ramp to a very technical groove and cryptic slab beyond.
10 bolts FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, October 2020 **S2SRDF funded**

The remaining routes start from the upper ledge system.

11. **The Third Rail**, 5.11d ★★
The leftwards-slanting quartz vein to low anchors at the bulge. Interesting climbing in the first half, less so above.
8 bolts FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, Luc Martin, November 2020
 12. **Flamenco**, 5.12c ★★
Follow Rodeo Clown to the upper break then step left to tackle the leftwards-slanting seam through the bulging headwall. Likely to feel harder for anyone of average height or shorter.
13 bolts FA Leo Foord-Kelcey, June 2022 Prep Toby FK
 13. **Rodeo Clown**, 5.12b **TOP FIVE**
Start as for Third Rail but climb straight to the ledge, then tackle the steep slab, overlap and shallow groove in the headwall. A great route with multiple cruxes at a consistent standard.
13 bolts FA Danica Marsden, May 2021
 14. **Stihl the Daddy**, 5.11b ★★
Swing into the overhanging start then follow the leftwards ramp to the ledge. Climb the steep slab to low anchors at the bulge.
8 bolts FA Toby FK, Luc Martin, Sean Martin, December 2020
 15. **I Schooled the Old Man**, 5.11b ★★★★★
Layback start to the ledge, then climb the face, bulge and a final delicate slab. Two distinct cruxes. Another tough onsight!
9 bolts FA Luc Martin, Sean Martin, Toby FK, July 2020
 16. **Picûre de Mouche ça Bite**, 5.9 ★★
Tricky start, then easy climbing over to an awkward chimney.
7 bolts FA Kyle Martin, Sean Martin, Luc Martin, August 2020
- Walk a few metres further to find this final gem:
17. **Trenchancy**, V5 ★★
Fierce micro-route out of the obvious trench. Fixed draws but no anchors: top out, un-tie, drop your rope, hike off. Choose your own YDS grade - it is really just a boulder problem.
4 bolts FA Cody Abercrombie, April 2021, prep Toby FK



The Wave Machine wall routes start with a short section of chossy climbing up to the ledge that runs across the face. All the routes use one of three shared starts. We got bored of cleaning the choss zone once it was climbable. If it doesn't meet your aesthetic standards, feel free to scrub/ pry some more ...

1. **Redacted**, 5.11a ★★

Follow the first bolted line to the ledge, then hike a couple of metres left to more bolts. Moderate climbing leads to an abrupt upper crux. Only climb this if you have done everything else.
9 bolts FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, October 2020

2. **Chicken Joe**, 5.11a ★★★★★

Follow Redacted to the ledge then climb the fun sustained face straight above. The best warm-up at the cliff.
10 bolts FA Nic Beaulieu, Toby Foord-Kelcey, June 2020

3. **Tessellation**, 5.12a ★★★

The next bolted line has a hard move off the talus. From the ledge take the left-hand bolt line with thin moves at mid-height.
10 bolts FA Leo Foord-Kelcey, Toby FK, Nic Beaulieu, June 2020

4. **Surf Park**, 5.12a ★★★★★

Follow Tessellation to the ledge then the right-hand bolt line which gets steadily harder to a distinct crux below the chains.
10 bolts FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, May 2020 **S2SRDF funded**

5. **Wave Machine**, 5.12b **TOP FIVE**

The third shared line to the ledge starts off a tree stump. The long steep face above is sustained all the way to the anchors. A classic endurance test.
13 bolts FA Toby Foord-Kelcey, May 2020 **S2SRDF funded**

Rising traverses from left to right make it possible to link the cruxes on the three 5.12's (use long draws, back-cleaning):

2abc. **Sheboygan** 5.12c ★★★ Climb Chicken Joe to bolt #7 then traverse into Tessellation. From that route's bolt #8 traverse diagonally right (one extra bolt) into Surf Park at bolt #10. Climb that route's final crux to a large diagonal sloper rail then traverse right to bolt #11 on Wave Machine and finish up it. Pumpy!
14 bolts FA Leo Foord-Kelcey, April 2021

3bc **Cape Fear**, 5.12c ★★★ Start Sheyboygan from Tessellation. Fractionally-harder? 13 bolts FA Nic Beaulieu, April 2021

4c. **Nazaré** 5.12b ★★★★★ Just the Surf Park - Wave Machine link. Flows nicely. 13 bolts FA Leo Foord-Kelcey, April 2021

6. **Zut Alors**, 5.11c ★★★

Start as for Wave Machine but trend right immediately to the next bolt line. Moderate climbing but sustained.
11 bolts FA Ben Webster, Samantha Jang-Stewart, Toby Foord-Kelcey, Chris Hecimovic, Nic Beaulieu, September 2020