

Quaite Valley Mini Guide

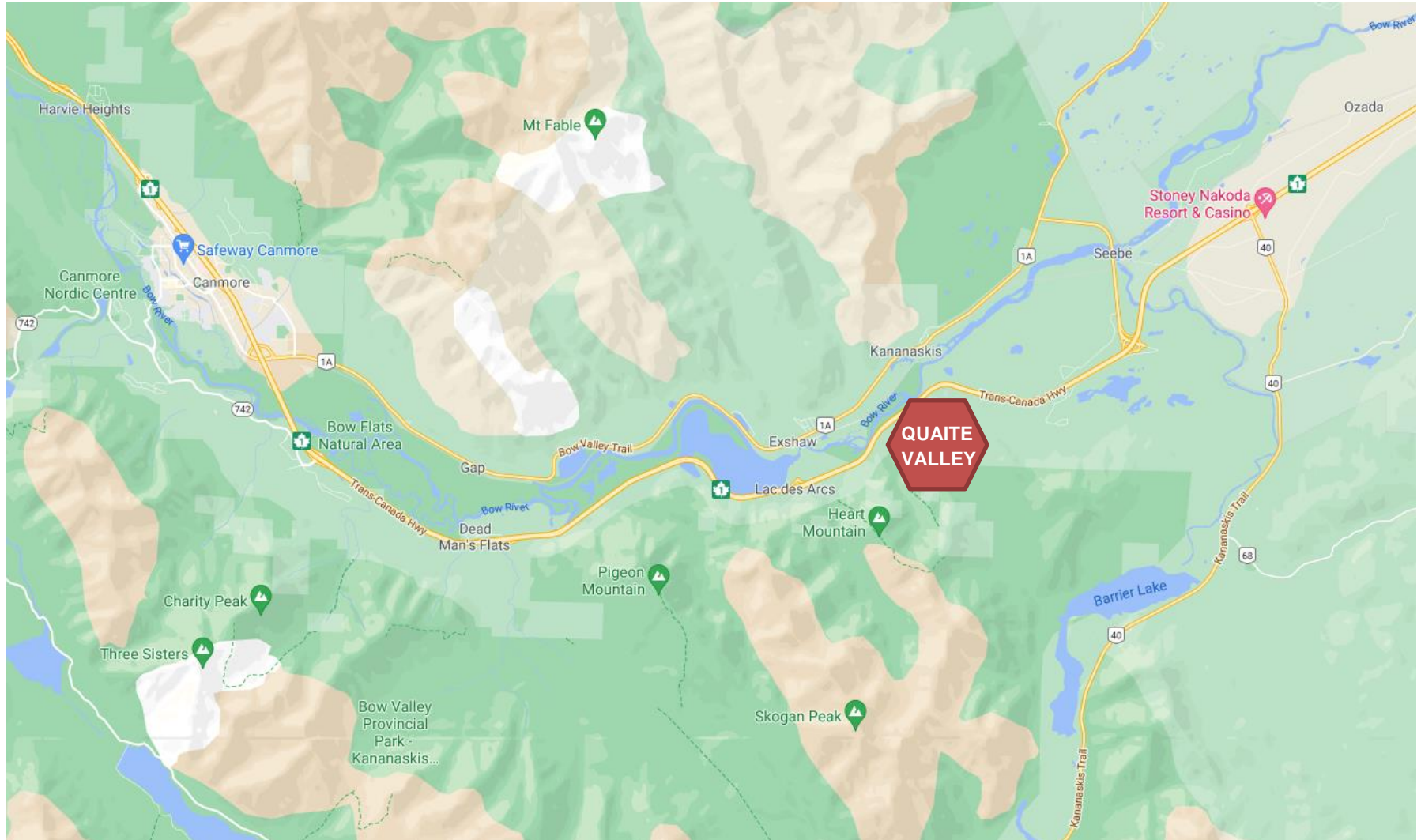


Great Single and Multi-pitch climbing ranging from 5.3 to 5.10a!

Written by Brendan Clark
Version 2.0 – September 29, 2024

Where is Quaite Valley?

Quaite Valley is on the south side of Hwy 1, just east of Heart Mountain and just west of McConnell Point



INTRODUCTION

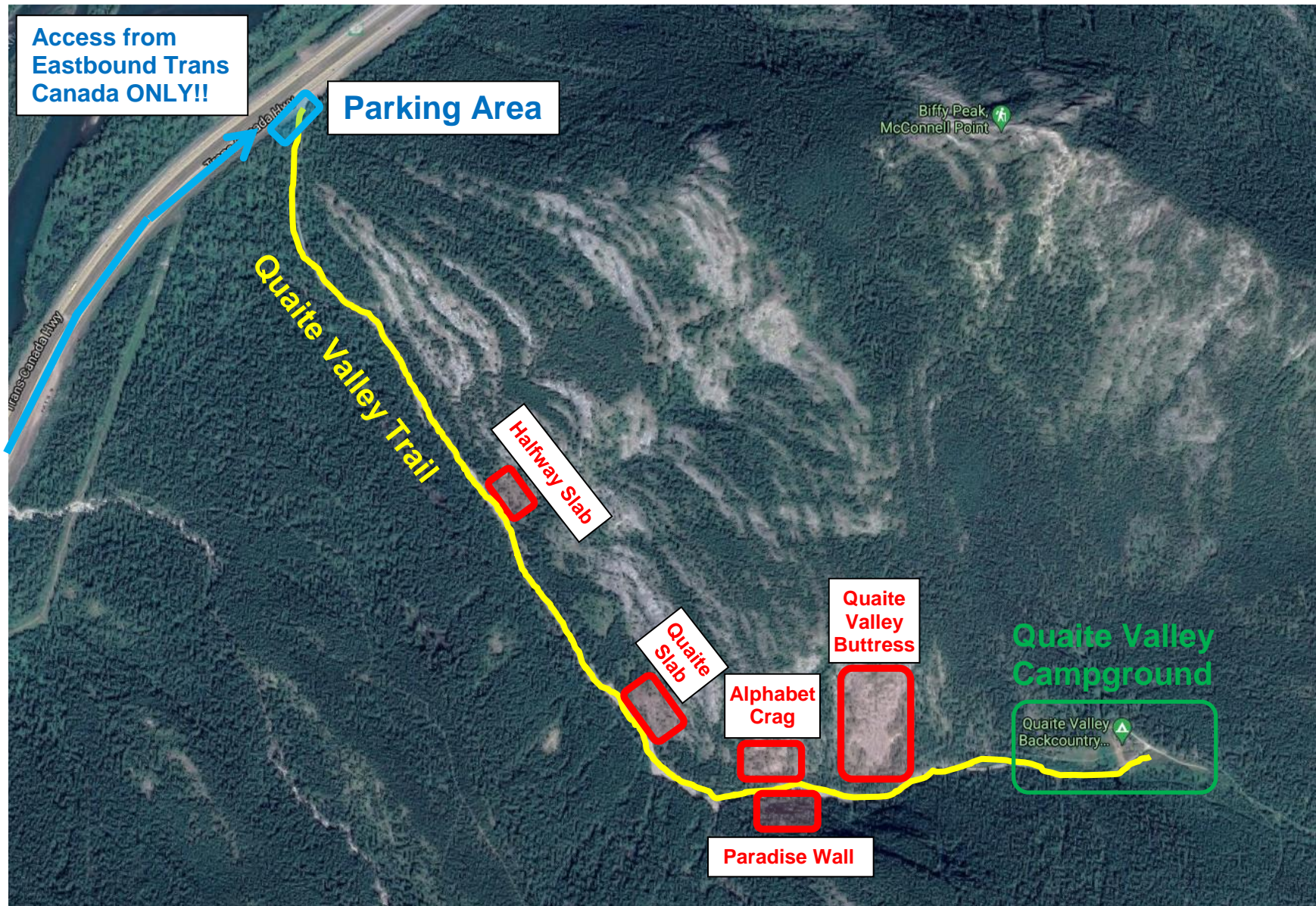
THE SLABS

ALPHABET CRAG

PARADISE WALL

QUAITE BUTTRESS

QUAITE VALLEY OVERVIEW MAP



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WELCOME TO QUAITE VALLEY!

This is a beautiful and quiet valley tucked away on the eastern side of the Bow Valley. Traditionally the home of hikers, bikers and backpackers, it may soon be a popular climbing destination as well. Quaite Valley has seen many generations of climbing development over the years. The first of which was probably on the Quaite Slabs, which host some old-school runout slab climbs. Brian Spear arrived in 2006 and bolted the Alphabet Crag, which as of now is the most popular climbing area up Quaite Valley. That said, it's not uncommon to have the crag all to yourself. The area was once again re-discovered by me (Brendan) for the potential for great easy climbs on the Paradise Wall and some nice longer routes on the Quaite Valley Buttress.

Parking: The parking lot for Quaite Valley is accessible from **EASTBOUND HWY 1 ONLY**. From Heart Creek, the highway bends left, passes the parking area for Acephale, then bends right. **You will pass beneath a set of power lines** and you may notice a white cross on the right-hand side. The parking area is 200m past the power lines on the right-hand side of the highway. Pull off the highway into the ditch and park beside an old gated road. This is the start of the Quaite Valley trail.

Parking coordinates: N 51° 03.757 W 115° 07.973

Access from the East (Calgary, etc): While heading west along Hwy 1, pass by the Quaite Valley parking area and continue for another 2.5 km to the Lac Des Arcs / Heart Creek overpass. Turn off right, head onto the overpass, and head back East on Hwy 1.

Access from the West (Canmore, etc): Simply drive up to the parking area while heading eastbound. At the end of the day, drive 6 km east to the Hwy 1X (Seebe) overpass to head back west (or take the scenic route via the 1A back to Canmore).



The parking area for Quaite is this gravel pullout off Hwy 1

The Trail: The main Quaite Valley trail is a decommissioned road. As such, it makes for very pleasant hiking. The main climbing areas (Alphabet Crag, Paradise Wall and Quaite Valley Buttress) are all easily reached in 20-30 minutes from the car. The trail is also very bikeable (albeit sometimes rough and rocky), and the ride home at the end of your climbing session would probably be less than a 5 minute rip down the trail.



Miscellaneous Notes:

Bears: Grizzly bears frequent this valley. Consider bringing bear spray, making lots of noise and travelling with a group. I have seen many bears on my trips up this valley.

Noise: The climbing crags are situated well enough away from the highway that you get to enjoy peace and quiet without any traffic noise – sweet!

Hikers and Bikers: All crags are within earshot of the trail, and the trail is frequented by families with small children heading to the backcountry campground. Be respectful and share the area.

Quaite Valley Campground: The campground is within a 5-10 minute walk of all the best crags in Quaite Valley. Consider spending a full weekend and climbing all of the routes!

Aspects: The Alphabet Crag and Quaite Valley Buttress face straight south and get plenty of sun all day long from early morning to sunset. Paradise Wall faces north and is cool and shady for most of the day, but is wonderful in the evening when it gets sun from the west.

Season: Due to the south-facing and open nature of the Quaite Valley Buttress, it is essentially climbable year round. The trail is snowy but packed down in the winter, with warm rock up high!

HALFWAY SLABS

Crag coordinates: N 51° 03.410 W 115° 07.726

Not so much a crag, but more so a halfway marker along the Quaite Valley Trail to the Alphabet Crag, Paradise Wall and Quaite Valley Buttress. These 10 m tall slabs are found on the left side of the trail as you hike up, and they reach right down to the trail. The slabs are currently undeveloped, but have potential for a few short and fairly easy pure slab climbing routes with a quick approach. Probably not worth developing unless you're a slab junkie.

Approach details: 800 m, 50 m gain, 10 min. Obvious short piece of slab right beside the trail



QUAITE SLABS

Crag coordinates: N 51° 03.210 W 115° 07.514

The Quaite Slabs are a large 20-25 m high band of slab on the left side of the main Quaite Valley Trail just before the trail bends to the left. Some routes on the slabs have been developed at some point in the distant past. There are 6 old-school runout bolted lines, all graded 5.SLAB. The bolts are 1980-1990's era, and unfortunately the history is unknown. The bolts are rusty (likely not 3/8") and there are plenty of pitons. It is unknown if there are anchors at the top (maybe just trees?). **CLIMBERS BEWARE.**

Approach details: 1.3 km, 75 m gain, 15 min. Obvious slabs on the left side of the trail.



Left side slab: 2 established climbs



Centre Slab: 4 established climbs

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ALPHABET CRAG

Crag coordinates: N 51° 03.186 W 115° 07.336
Crag trail coordinates: N 51° 03.176 W 115° 07.347

The Alphabet Crag is an excellent single pitch sport climbing crag and is currently the most popular climbing area in Quaiite Valley. All routes at the Alphabet Crag were developed by Brian Spear in 2006. The rock on the Lower Alphabet Crag offers steep, textured limestone that's well protected, making for awesome climbing. The rock on the Upper Crag is generally more down-sloping with fewer bolts – making for more challenging climbing.

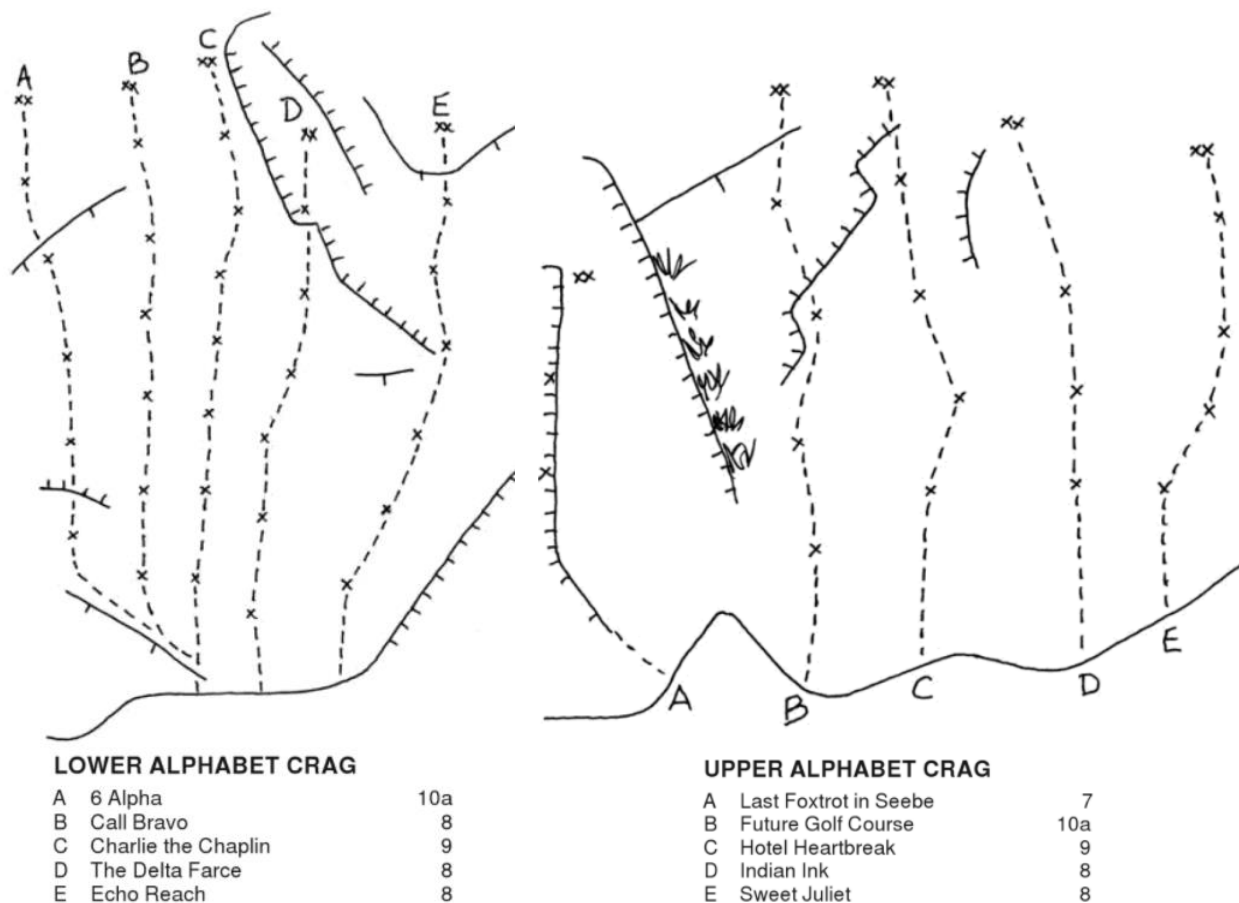
All routes are about 20 metres long, and 8 quickdraws plus an anchor will be enough for all the routes.

Note: There are training anchors at the far left side of the Lower Alphabet Crag to practice lowering / rappelling / anchor building, etc.

APPROACH: Hike up the Quaiite Valley Trail for about 1.5 km until you turn left and pass over an obvious culvert. The crag is about 100 m beyond the culvert on the left side of the trail. A nice but hidden trail leads up to the crag. The Lower Crag is only about 25 m from the main Quaiite Valley Trail. The Upper Crag is accessed via a steep trail leading up from the right side of the Lower Crag.

Approach details: 1.5 km, 100 m gain, 20-25 min

All routes FA Brian Spear, 2006

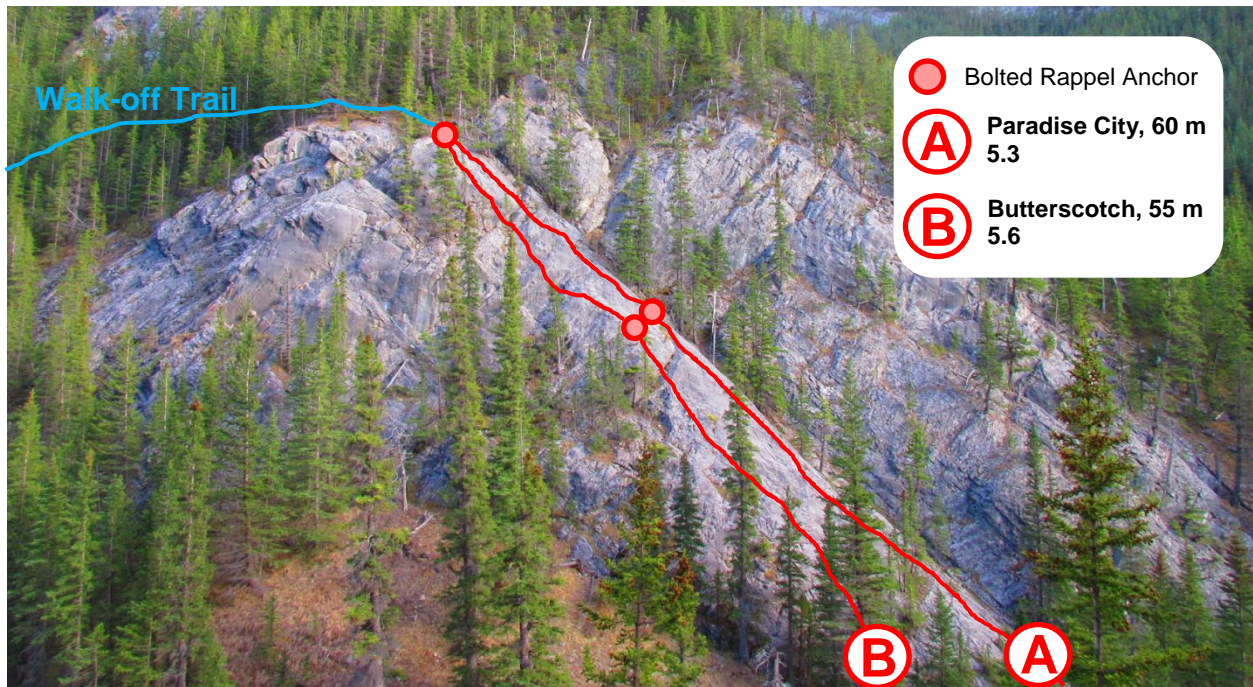


Topos from Sport Climbs in the Canadian Rockies, 6th Edition, John Martin & Jon Jones

PARADISE WALL

Crag coordinates: N 51° 03.160 W 115° 07.338
Crag trail coordinates: N 51° 03.165 W 115° 07.359

The Paradise Wall hosts what I think is some of the Bow Valley's best easy multi-pitch sport climbing. This is the perfect location for beginners, kids, climbers learning multi-pitch and anybody looking for a few nice easy routes on great rock. Both of the climbs currently established on this wall are well bolted for the grade and are a delight to climb. Enjoy!



APPROACH: Hike up the Quaiete Valley Trail for about 1.5 km until you take a left turn and pass over an obvious culvert. From the culvert, hike 50 meters further to where the bank is cut out on the right hand side. You should be able to see some rock through the trees on the right – this is the Paradise Wall. Cut across the ditch and pick up a trail on the other side. Paradise City starts on the very right side of the slab. Butterscotch starts 15-20 m further left by a big tree.

Approach: 1.5 km, 100 m gain, 20-25 min

DESCENT: Walking off from these routes is the preferred descent option. Not only is it safer, easier and quicker than rappelling, it also makes it safer for any climbers who may be climbing below you. From the top shared anchor of Paradise City / Butterscotch, head up and slightly left to find a cairn and a trail. The trail traverses left for about 50 m before descending via zig-zags down through the forest. Follow the trail as it turns back skier's left and continues along a grassy bench before dropping back to the beginning of the climbs.

The routes are set up for rappel with a 60m rope. **Be careful rappelling the first pitch of Paradise City – you have to exit onto the scree gully with a 60m rope.** Rappelling off Paradise Wall is recommended for more experienced climbers only. You will need to carefully reverse down-sloping slab. The walk-off is the preferred method of descent.

Paradise City, 5.3 2 pitches, 60 m

FA: Brendan and Jamie Clark - July 25, 2021

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.160 W 115° 07.337

Paradise City is one of the best easy multi-pitch climbs in the Bow Valley! This route is an absolute delight on excellent water-worn stone, definitely well above average for the Rockies. The climbing is on well textured and featured slab with plenty of great handholds. The route is bolted for somebody who would be challenged by the 5.3 grade, and is an excellent introductory climb for anybody interested in rock climbing. Paradise City starts at the very bottom right of the slabs, just to the left of a long scree gully. Start on a small ledge near a tree, or maybe a little lower near a fallen log. For more experienced climbers, just keep in mind that this is a 5.3 route and you will have a great time. All things considered (the approach, the rock, the route, the bolting, the walk-off descent), Paradise City is well worth the attention of climbers looking for an easy multi-pitch rock climb. Enjoy your visit to Paradise!

P1 – 5.3, 35 m, 8 bolts

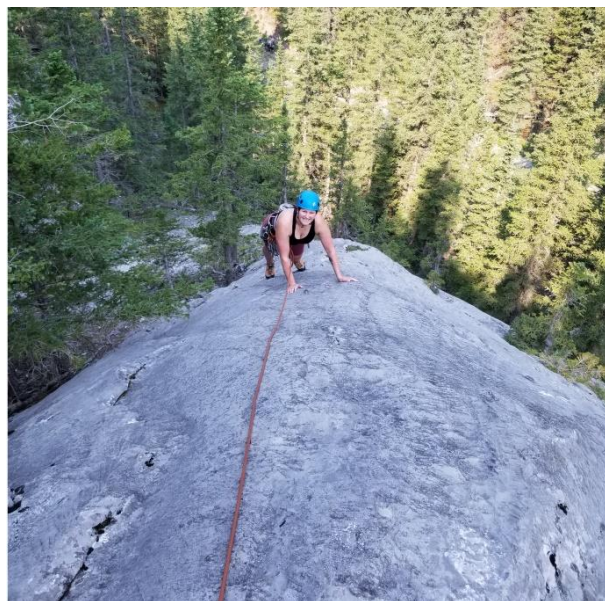
Climb up decent rock to a slightly loose ledge to the right of a tall tree. From here the rock gets better; follow the prow of the rock on great textured and water-worn stone. The crux is a well protected slabby move. Belay at a large comfy ledge with a 2 bolt anchor.

NOTE: Rappelling back down this pitch with a 60m rope requires you to step off into the scree gully on the right (not a big deal, **but tie knots in the ends of your rope**)

P2 – 5.3, 25 m, 7 bolts

Continue up the prow of the stone on excellent rock. Higher up, **traverse left** – follow the bolts but don't go above them onto the loose ledge. Easily step over a gully and pull the steep move (well protected) onto the upper section of rock. From here, follow the dreamy water-worn slabs up to a 2-bolt anchor at the top that's shared with Butterscotch.

Descent: Walk-off by heading up and left. The walk-off trail will loop you back to the base of the climb in about 5 minutes. Rappelling the route is not recommended unless you are experienced in rappelling – it requires some careful footwork on slabs to reverse the route. **Be careful rappelling pitch 1 with a 60m rope – tie knots!!**



Jamie on Pitch 1 on the first ascent



Looking down Pitch 2

Butterscotch, 5.6 2 pitches, 55 m

FA: Brendan and Jamie Clark - July 25, 2021

Start of climb: N 51° 03.157 W 115° 07.319

Butterscotch is another beauty little 2 pitch climb on the Paradise wall! The route starts about 15-20m climbers left of Paradise City (ie 15-20m from the far right side of the slab) beside a large tree. It's a harder line than Paradise City - but if you didn't have any trouble with that route and you're looking for a little bit more fun, you should definitely check out Butterscotch. For experienced climbers, you will enjoy the great rock and the nice moves.

P1 – 5.5, 30 m, 8 bolts

The climb starts out steeply through a few bolts before the angle eases off. Follow up the slab, step over a little gully and pull a move up a short overlap. Belay in a rock scoop a few meters left of the Paradise City pitch 1 anchor.

P2 – 5.6, 25 m, 7 bolts

Follow up to the first bolt, clip it, then traverse left without bringing your feet above the first bolt.

This should leave you traversing onto a nice ledge below a steep bulge. Clip a bolt and pull the well protected steep and fun move (5.6). From here, follow up on great rock. Step over a gully and climb up a shallow groove with awesome water-worn rock. Admire the stone then continue easily up to the 2 bolt rap anchor shared with Paradise City.

Descent: Walk-off by heading up and left. The walk-off trail will loop you back to the base of the climb in about 5 minutes. Rappelling the route is not recommended unless you are experienced in rappelling – it requires some careful footwork on slanting slabs to reverse the route. A 60m rope is fine for rappelling.



Climbing up Pitch 1



Perfect stone near the top of Pitch 2

QUAITE VALLEY BUTTRESS

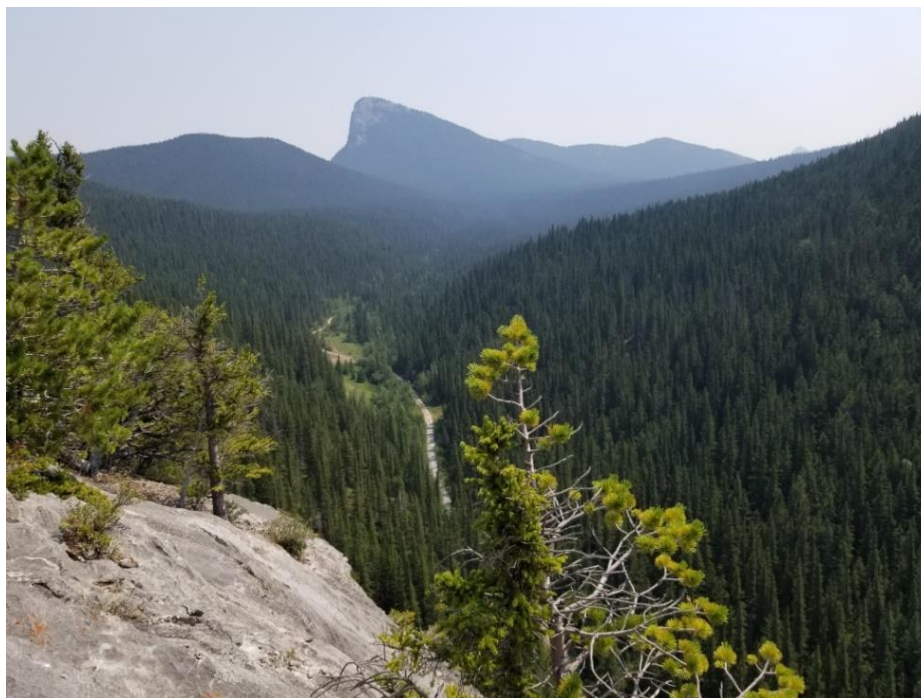
Crag coordinates: N 51° 03.197 W 115° 07.194
Crag trail coordinates: N 51° 03.185 W 115° 07.187

Quaite Valley Buttress offers the longest multi-pitch climbing routes up Quaite Valley, with several 3-4 pitch routes in the 100m range. The rock quality on the established pitches ranges from fair to excellent, but there is plenty of loose rock around if you stray off the cleaned routes.

The nature of the rock is steep and nearly vertical at the bottom, turning into angled slab the higher you go. Due to this, the pitch grades start out in the 5.7-5.9 range then ease off to mid/low 5th higher up. The routes are still well worth climbing in full. The first pitches are awesome and all offer great climbing, then the higher pitches offer extra fun & views, all on good stone.

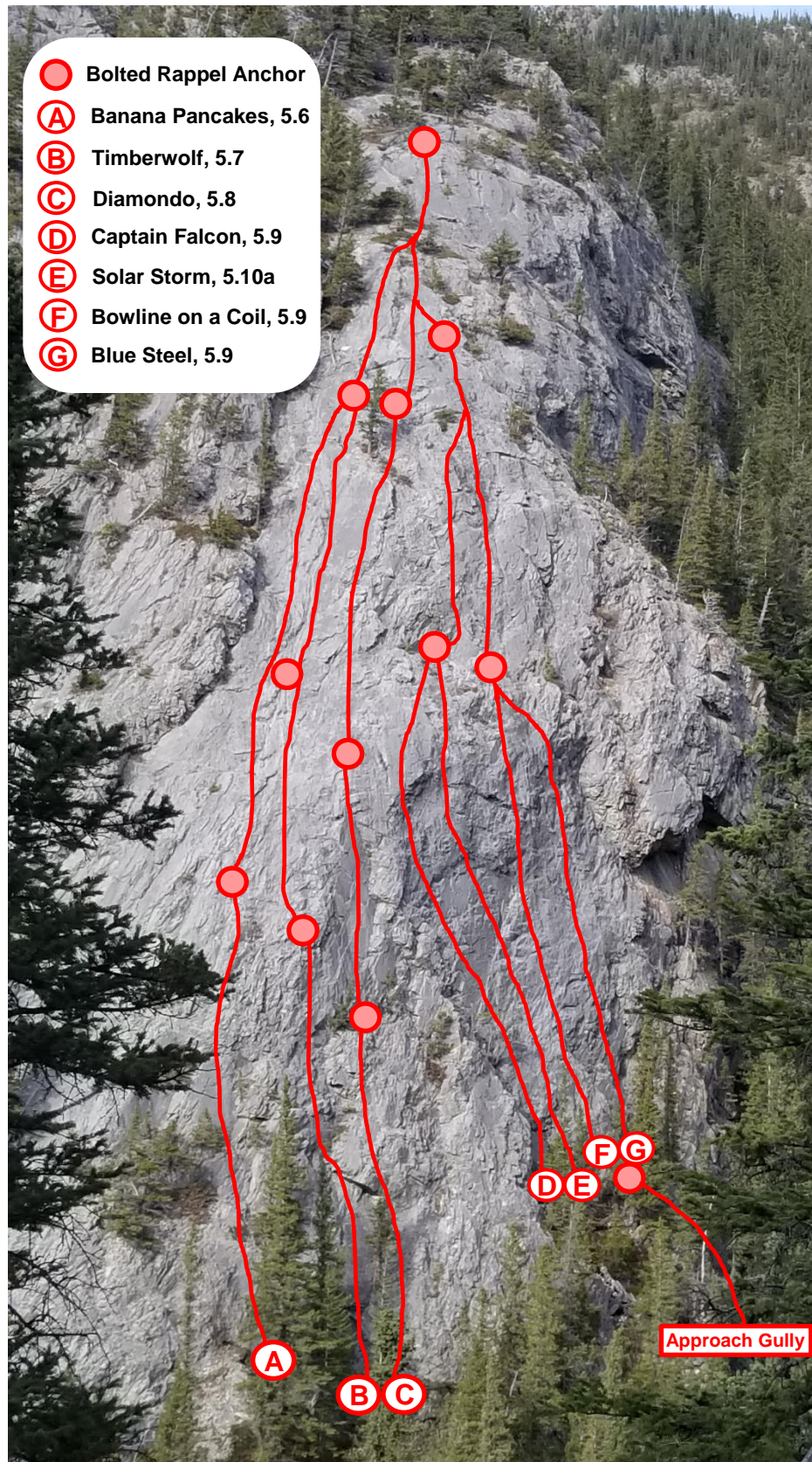
Approach: Hike up Quaite Valley Trail for about 1.5 km until you take a left turn and pass over an obvious culvert. From here, you should be able to look straight ahead and see a tall wall – this is the Quaite Valley Buttress. Continue past Alphabet Crag and Paradise Wall for about 200 meters. You should be nearing the base of the buttress. Continue to a slight S-turn in the main trail – it curves left then soon after curves right. Just after the left turn of the S, look for a rough trail on the left hand side with a small cairn. If you look up, you should be directly below some steep overhanging cliffs. From here, follow the approach details for each climb. **Approach: 1.7 km, 120 m gain, 25-30 min**

Descent: There is a nice walk-off trail, and this is the recommended descent if you climb to the top of the buttress. From the top, head up low angle slabs. Follow cairns slightly left at first, then turn and angle up and right. Cairns lead up about 25m of elevation gain to a crest, then follow the trail off the right side into the forest. The trail goes steeply down one section, then soon after take a hard right and follow the cairns down through the open slope. Near the end of the open area, pick up a good trail, turn right, and head back to the base of the buttress. You can also rappel – see the rappel map. Watch for loose rock.



Views from the top of Quaite Valley Buttress towards the Campground and Barrier Lookout

QUAITE VALLEY BUTTRESS – PHOTO TOPO MAP



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Banana Pancakes, 5.6 3 pitches, 100 m

FA: Brendan and Jamie Clark - July 28, 2024

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.194 W 115° 07.206

The easiest route up the Quaite Buttress and also the furthest left route. A nice quality route for the grade which takes in the best rock on the left-hand side. Would make for a perfect warm-up for some of the harder routes to the right.

Approach: Reach a cairn after a few steps off the main Quaite Valley trail. Turn left at the cairn and follow a steep zig-zag trail up through the trees to the left side of the buttress. There are a few scramble steps on the way up the trail. The climb starts about 5m left of belay ledge and the large V-shaped feature of Timberwolf.

P1 – 5.6, 25 m, 8 bolts

A steep start on good rock leads through the crux sequence, before more ledge climbing in the middle of the pitch. Above pull a well protected slabby move and head up and left to a nice belay ledge.

P2 – 5.4, 40 m, 10 bolts

Head straight up above the anchor and continue up easy but enjoyable slab on excellent rock! Climb past a mid-way anchor that can be used for rappeling and continue climbing up left of the groove feature and to the right of a right-facing corner (stay out of the corner – loose rock). Continue up to a shared anchor with Timberwolf.

P3 – 5.3, 35 m, 7 bolts

Climb straight up from the anchor up easy slab. At a ledge continue up and right for the final 3 bolts on great rock.

Descent: The recommended descent is the walk-off option off the top. To walk off, hike up from the top about 25 m of vertical, angling slightly left at first before angling right. Follow the cairns and pick up a trail that heads right through the trees, then steeply down to the base. Or rappel the route with a 70m rope.



Looking up Pitch 1 of Banana Pancakes



Jamie at the top of the 2nd pitch on the first ascent

Timberwolf, 5.7 3 pitches, 100 m

FA: Brendan and Jamie Clark - July 25, 2021

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.194 W 115° 07.206

This is a great climb on solid rock. The first pitch offers awesome steep climbing, and the second pitch is pretty sweet too as it climbs a great water-worn groove feature. The top pitch is easy, but gives a fun option to top out the buttress. Overall it's a very worthwhile route that offers a little bit of everything. Enjoy!

Approach: Reach a cairn after a few steps off the main Quait Valley trail. Turn left at the cairn and follow a steep zig-zag trail up through the trees to the left side of the buttress. There are a few scramble steps on the way up the trail. The climb starts up the left side of the obvious V-shaped feature.

P1 – 5.7, 28 m, 9 bolts

This pitch offers great climbing on excellent stone, and is the crux pitch of the route. There are 2 or 3 distinct 5.7 crux moves that are all well protected. The anchor is on a small ledge that provides good views down the whole pitch.

P2 – 5.4, 37 m, 11 bolts

Head straight out left from the anchor, then climb up into an awesome groove. Continue past a mid-way anchor that can be used for rappelling. Stem up the bomber rock and head up to a shared anchor with Banana Pancakes.

P3 – 5.3, 35 m, 7 bolts

Climb straight up from the anchor up easy slab. At a ledge continue up and right for the final 3 bolts on great rock.

Descent: The recommended descent is the walk-off option off the top. To walk off, hike up from the top about 25 m of vertical, angling slightly left at first before angling right. Follow the cairns and pick up a trail that heads right through the trees, then steeply down to the base. Or rappel following the rappel map.



Looking up Pitch 1 of Timberwolf



Jamie on the 1st pitch on the first ascent

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Diamondo, 5.8 4 pitches, 100 m

FA: Brendan and Jamie Clark - July 28, 2024

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.194 W 115° 07.206

Overall an easy route with a harder second pitch.

Approach: Reach a cairn after a few steps off the main Quaite Valley trail. Turn left at the cairn and follow a steep zig-zag trail up through the trees to the left side of the buttress. There are a few steep scramble steps on the way up the trail. The climb starts on the right-hand side of the V-shaped rock feature.

P1 – 5.5, 20 m, 6 bolts

Start from the belay platform on the right side of the large V-shaped feature. The rock is better than it looks and offers good climbing up and then left to an overlap. Pull the steep move then continue easily to the anchor.

P2 – 5.8, 18 m, 6 bolts

The money pitch! A steep move from the anchor leads up into the awesome large diamond-shaped rock feature. You can chicken out to the left on easier ground or stay on the right side in the groove for the enjoyable 5.8 crux.

P3 – 5.4, 30 m, 7 bolts

A nice easy slab pitch on great rock! Climb straight up and pull through some slabby moves on textured stone. The anchor sits at an excellent ledge that overlooks the entire Quaite Valley.

P4 – 5.3, 35 m, 6 bolts

Head right from the anchor then straight up the slab. The pitch is broken in two parts at a loose ledge, but scramble through it then continue up one more piece of great slab up to the top. A longer pitch than you might think!

Descent: The recommended descent is the walk-off option off the top. To walk off, hike up from the top about 25 m of vertical, angling slightly left at first before angling right. Follow the cairns and pick up a trail that heads right through the trees, then steeply down to the base. Or rappel following the rappel map.



Looking up Pitch 1 of Diamondo



Looking up the stellar rock of Pitch 2

Captain Falcon, 5.9 4 pitches, 100 m

FA: Brendan and Jamie Clark - July 25, 2021

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.195 W 115° 07.192

The 5.9 pitch of Captain Falcon is AWESOME and is one of the best pitches up Quaite Valley. Continue above for easy cruisey climbing and great views, or maybe just rappel down and enjoy some of the other steeper routes.

Approach: Reach a cairn after a few steps off the main Quaite Valley trail. Turn right at the cairn then continue straight up towards the steep wall above. The climb starts just left of the huge overhanging wall in a dirty gully.

P1 – 5.2, 10 m, 3 bolts – Approach pitch

Climb up the dirty and scrappy gully to an anchor that you can clearly see from the bottom of the gully. Head left from the anchor of this approach pitch onto a small ledge. Captain Falcon starts on the far left end of the ledge.

P2 – 5.9, 30 m, 11 bolts

A fantastic pitch! Climb up nearly vertical terrain on super rock. Reach the bottom of a steep bulge and figure out the seriously fun sequence to pull through up onto the slab. Clip 2 more bolts up on the slab before angling slightly right to the anchor situated in a nice protected ledge.

P3 – 5.4, 30 m, 6 bolts

Climb up a small rib just to the right of the anchor and continue up easy but fun terrain. Clip 4 bolts, then continue on the right side of the bush, clipping the last 2 bolts to the anchor.

P4 – 5.3, 30 m, 5 bolts

An optional but fun and easy final pitch that can be used to access the walk-off.

Descent: Walk-off down the trail (recommended) or rappel the route with a 60 m rope.



Pitch 2 of Captain Falcon

Solar Storm, 5.10a 30m, 9 bolts

FA: Graeme Garner & Brendan Clark - May 10, 2024

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.195 W 115° 07.192

Starts just to the right of Captain Falcon – you have to climb the dirty 5.2 approach gully to the ledge to access this climb. It's a beauty single pitch route that is one of the hardest at Quaite Valley. Start up easily through excellent rock then tackle the crux at the obvious steep section at the top. Well bolted. Reach the anchor shared with Captain Falcon. You can either rappel the route or continue up higher following P3 of Captain Falcon.

Descent: Rappel the route with a 60 m rope.



Bowline on a Coil, 5.9 4 pitches, 100 m

FA: Brian Spear & Shaun King, 2006

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.194 W 115° 07.184

Retro-bolted: Brendan Clark, September 2021

The original route had some mixed metal rusty bolts/hangers, with generally very runout protection. With permission from Brian Spear, the route was retro-bolted into a fully equipped sport climb in September 2021. It is now a well protected bolted climb. The 5.9 crux pitch is excellent!

Approach: Reach a cairn after a few steps off the main Quaite Valley trail. Turn right at the cairn then continue straight up towards the steep wall above. The climb starts just left of the huge overhanging wall in a dirty gully.

P1 – 5.2, 10 m, 3 bolts

An approach pitch for access to the steep wall above. Climb the loose and dirty gully up past 3 bolts. Stick to the right hand side where the bolts are for better rock. Get your belayer to stay out of the firing zone of the gully – best to hide just around the right side at the bottom.

P2 – 5.9, 30 m, 10 bolts

A beautiful, steep pitch. Either climb from the anchor of P1 (awkward), or even better to go left from the anchor a few meters to start from a nice ledge. Head straight up then pull some steep moves and belay on a decent ledge above.

P3 – 5.5, 30 m, 6 bolts

Head straight up from the P2 anchor. A move or two of 5.5 at the bottom, then easy slab climbing to the anchor.

P4 – 5.3, 30 m, 5 bolts

An optional but fun and easy final pitch that can be used to access the walk-off.

Descent: Walk-off down the trail or rappel the route with a 60 m rope.



Pitch 2 of Bowline on a Coil

Blue Steel, 5.9 30m, 9 bolts

FA: Brendan and Jamie Clark - July 28, 2024

Start of Climb: N 51° 03.194 W 115° 07.184

The final route developed up the buttress. Head up and right from the anchor of the approach gully pitch. Enjoy good climbing on steep rock. The holds are all there, but they sometimes take some work to find! Continue up to a shared anchor. You can either rappel the route or continue up higher following P3 of Bowline on a Coil.

Descent: Rappel the route with a 60 m rope.



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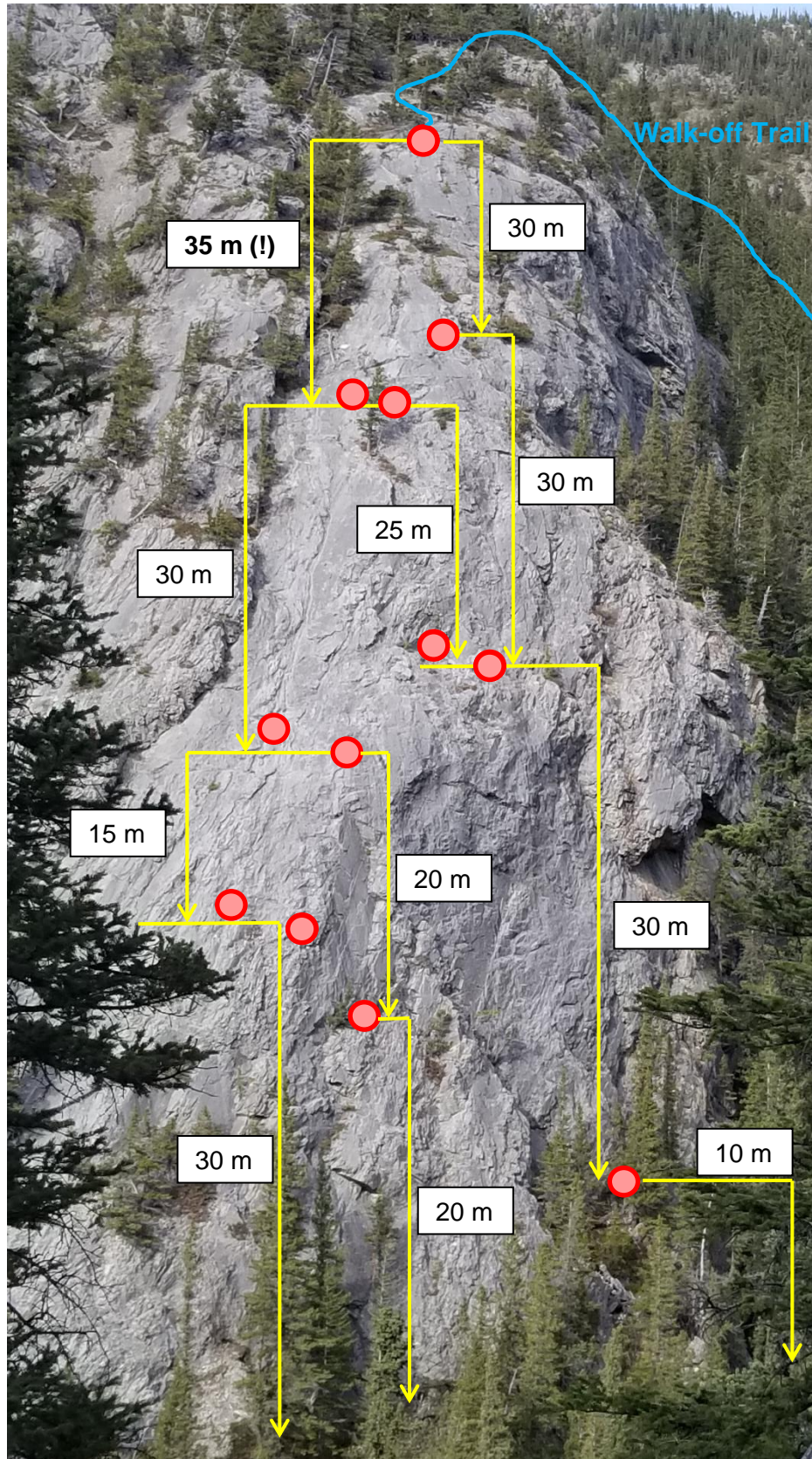
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QUAITE VALLEY BUTTRESS – DESCENT MAP



Quaite Cave – Potential for some hard climbs?

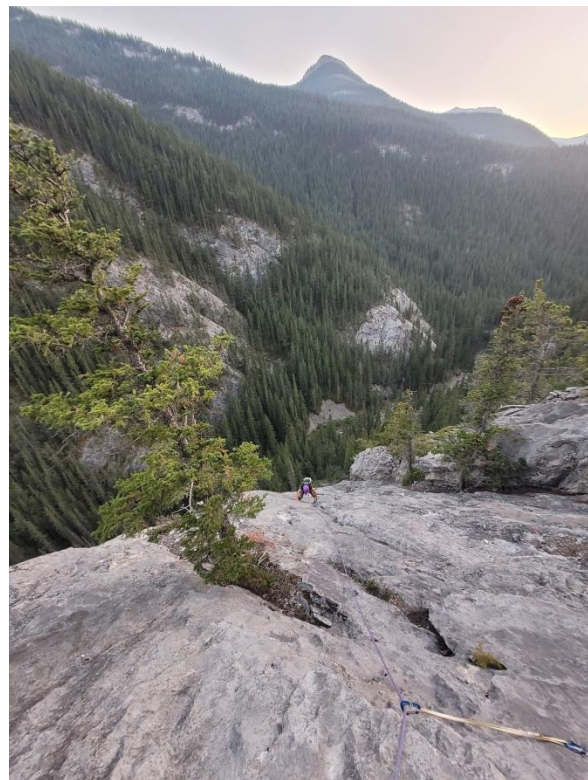
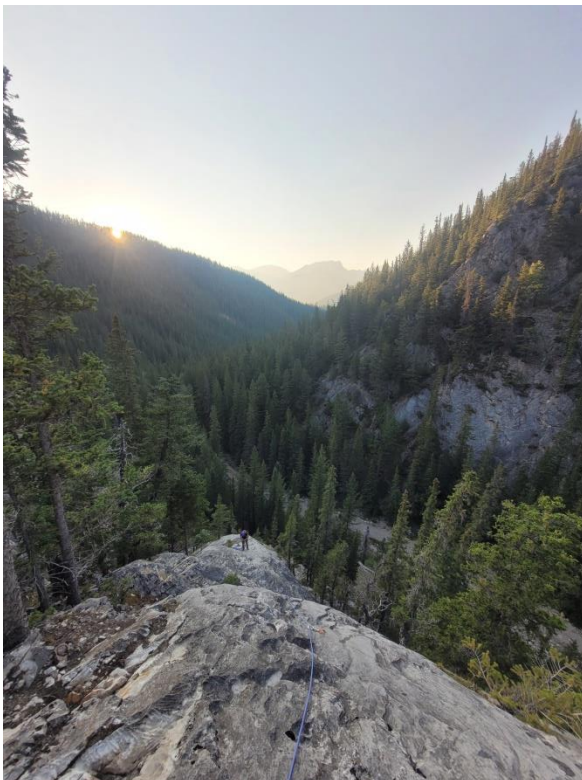
On the right side of the Quaite Valley Buttress (just right of the 5.2 approach pitch) is a section of steep rock. There's one old unknown sport route on this wall that is thought to have been developed by Mike Charboneau – unfortunately no details are known about the name, grade or FA. I don't even know if it was actually climbed. Appears to me to be in the 5.12 range? If you're looking for some steep rock to develop some hard climbs, this might be worth a look... it's not a huge area but there's surely room for at least a dozen steep lines.



Quaite Cave – maybe worth a look for steep routes?

Quaite Valley – Barry Blanchard approved!

“Great work up there mate. We thought that it was so cool to find, and establish routes on, some decent stone.” – Barry, after climbing here as part of his recovery in 2022



ENJOY YOUR VISIT TO QUAITE VALLEY!



Jamie on the final pitch of Timberwolf,
topping out the Quaite Valley Buttress for the first time