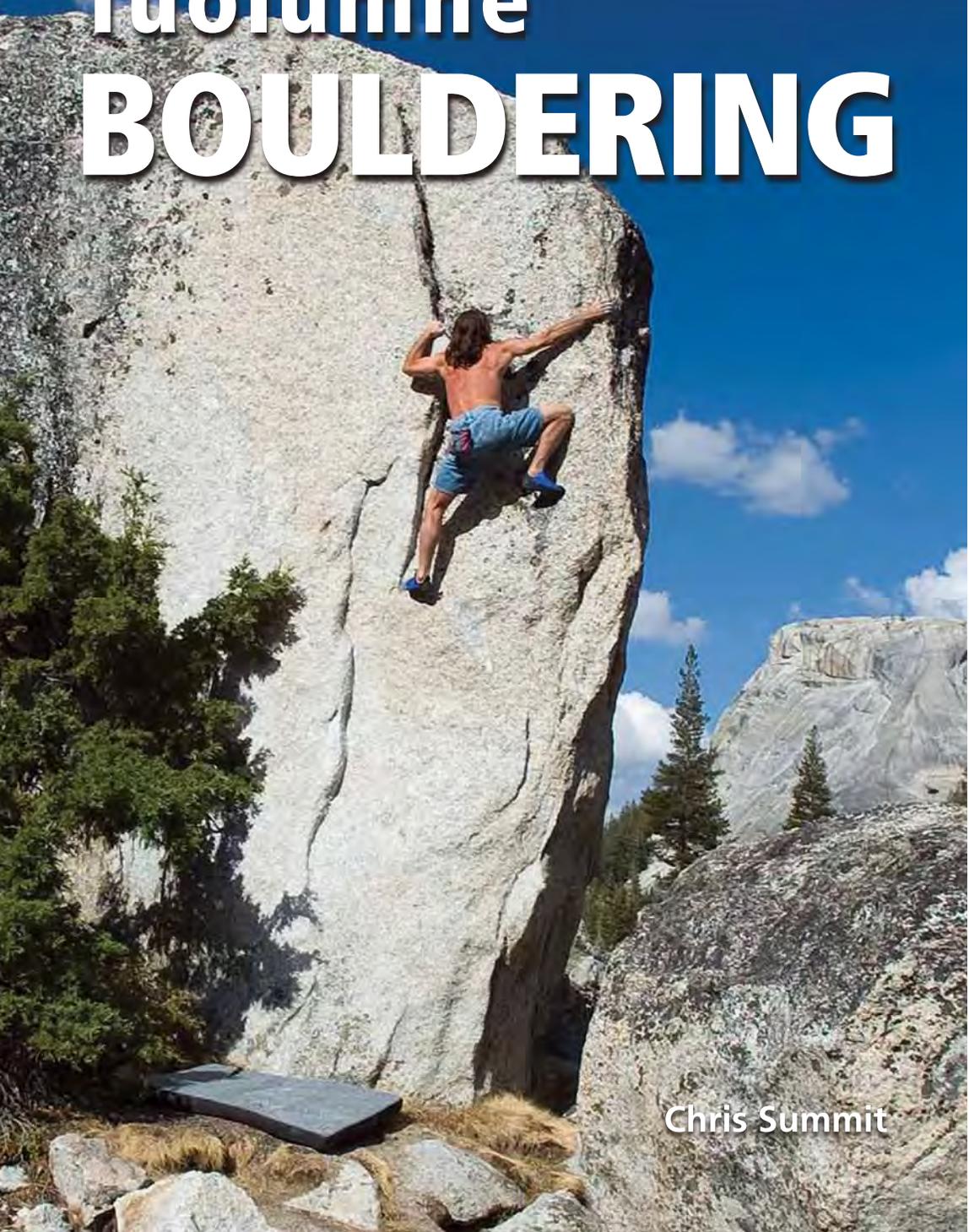


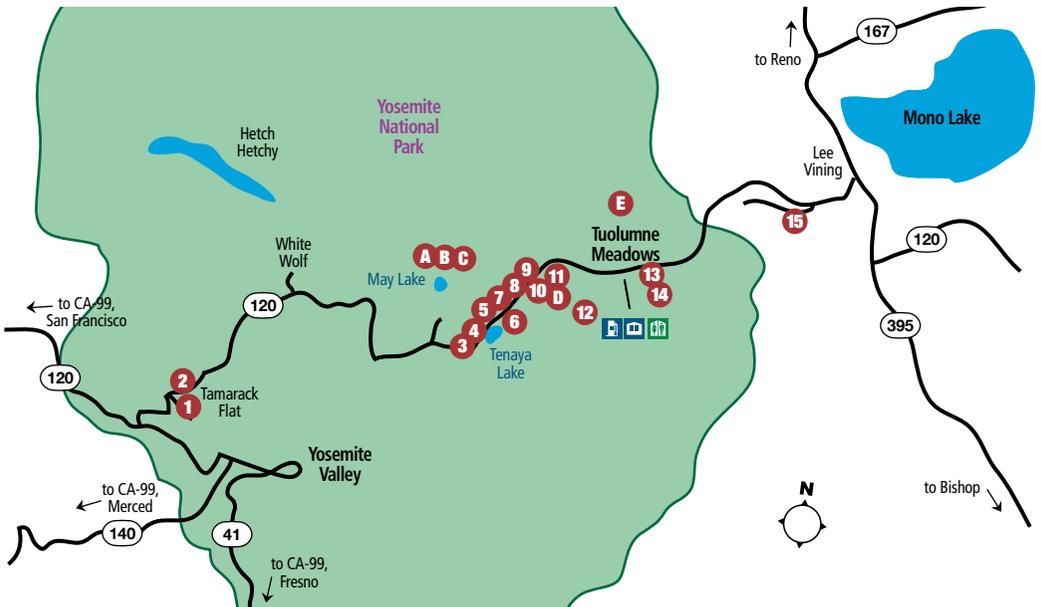
# Tuolumne **BOULDERING**



Chris Summit



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## 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 bouldering in Tuolumne. **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.

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- *Chris Summit*

## Book Credits

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This book is a testament to the years of dreaming, exploring, discovering and developing the rocks in Tuolumne and everywhere else on Planet Earth. More importantly, it is a testament to the years of our lives spent developing our minds, bodies and souls. Many thanks go out to the climbers who blaze the trails for us all, on and off the rocks and many thanks to all the people who helped with this book – life, at every level is a collaboration of sorts – there is no I in team. Let’s all come together on this precious planet and help everyday, everyway to make it a better place for our futures - peace in peace out.

Chris Summit - Earth Day 2009



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# Introduction

By Chris Summit

High in the sky at over 8000 feet in elevation, Tuolumne is the largest sub-alpine meadow in the Sierras. When almost every other Sierra bouldering area is cooking in the heat of summer that is when The Meadows calls. Surrounded by stone, Tenaya Lake marks the western gate of the main Tuolumne climbing and bouldering areas and makes a perfect place to have a scenic picnic or take a dip on a hot summer day as well. The Tuolumne area is the ideal summertime boulder playground with perfect cool conditions to complement Bishop and Yosemite Valley's ripe fall, winter and spring bouldering seasons.

Closed in winter, there is only a window of climb time each year for Tuolumne which equals about half the time you get at other areas with all year access. This shortened window of opportunity makes Tuolumne a place to be appreciated, cherished and respected each and every visit. With a rich bouldering history that reaches back to the roots of Yosemite climbing lore and first ascents by the original "Stonemasters," Tuolumne has always had a reputation for its unique knobs and challenging, uncharted and untamed rock in a wild alpine environment. Superb High Sierra granite with diorite knobs protruding from solid gold, white and black domes, cliffs, and boulders describes the rock. Thin and slabby, run-out face climbs on huge granite domes describes most of the routes. The bouldering is often very similar, just condensed into a shorter, more intense but equally hair-raising experience. In the end, of course, it's always a very rewarding, satisfying and memorable experience. Head-spinning highballs, splitter cracks, balance slabs, thin and tenuous knob

pinching face climbs, and epic long traverses describes the majority of boulder styles. A few overhanging problems are in the Tuolumne area but they are not the norm. The steep stuff is, however, excellent and on mostly well-featured, solid stone with burly, powerful moves mixed with the classic technical granite moves and quite often a heinous mantel top out. Bouldering in Tuolumne is an experience not to be missed.

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## SuperTopo.com

The information below is available at [supertopo.com](http://supertopo.com) with links directly to the sources for easier trip planning.

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## Essential Tuolumne Beta

Below is some fundamental information for planning a trip to Tuolumne. However, for more updated and extensive information you should visit the Tuolumne Beta Page on the SuperTopo web site: [www.supertopo.com/climbingareas/tuolumne.html](http://www.supertopo.com/climbingareas/tuolumne.html)

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## Getting There

Tuolumne Meadows is located 1.5 hours northeast of Yosemite Valley. Since most climbers start their trip to Tuolumne by first driving through or near Yosemite Valley, you should visit the SuperTopo Yosemite Beta Page at [www.supertopo.com/climbingareas/yosemite.html](http://www.supertopo.com/climbingareas/yosemite.html). There you will find more information and links for airports, buses, trains, and car travel.

### Air Travel

Reno/Tahoe Airport is the closest airport to Tuolumne. From there, you will need to rent a car (three-hour drive) or take a bus or shuttle to Mammoth. The bus service is The Crest/Inyo-Mono Transit (800-922-1930), and the shuttles are the Mammoth Shuttle (760-934-6588) or Sierra Express (760-937-8294). From Mammoth take YARTS to Tuolumne (see Bus travel). Oakland or San Francisco airports are farther from Tuolumne but are preferred over Reno/Tahoe because there are more flights to choose from. You can also fly into Sacramento or Fresno. Each of these places is a 3.5- to 5-hour drive from Tuolumne Meadows.

**Bus Travel**

YARTS (877-989-2787; www.yarts.com) provides bus transportation from Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne and from the Eastern Sierra to Tuolumne. During July through Labor Day, YARTS leaves from the Tuolumne Meadows Store every morning and from Yosemite Lodge each evening. It provides access between Yosemite and Mammoth, with the schedule and prices varying according to demand, even depending on day. Once in Tuolumne, a free shuttle bus provides convenient access throughout the Tuolumne Meadows area between the Tuolumne Lodge and Olmsted Point (including Tenaya Lake) during the middle part of the summer, and even sometimes to Tioga Pass a few times a day.

**Car Travel**

From Yosemite Valley, it's a 1.5-hour drive east on Highway 120 to Tuolumne Meadows. It's a 4.5-hour drive to Tuolumne from the Bay Area, a 3-hour drive from the Tahoe area, and about a 1.5-hour drive from Bishop.

Gas is available by next to the Tuolumne Meadows Store, 15 miles east in Lee Vining, and on Highway 120 at Crane Flat.

If you don't have a car, you can rent one at any airport or major city. International climbers who stay in the United States for more than a month often buy a cheap used car in San Francisco or Los Angeles and sell it (or scrap it) at the end of their trip.

**Driving times and distances to Tuolumne**

From	Time (hours)	Distance (miles)
Boulder, CO	18:00	1,150
Fresno, CA	3:30	150
Truckee, CA	3:00	150
Los Angeles, CA	6:00	340
Mammoth, CA	1:00	50
Oakland, CA	4:30	220
Sacramento, CA	4:00	210
Salt Lake City, UT	10:00	620
San Francisco, CA	4:30	230
Yosemite Valley	1:30	60

**When to Climb**

Tuolumne Meadows has some of the best weather of any alpine rock climbing area on Earth. That said, Tuolumne is in a massive mountain range that receives severe thunderstorms, lightning, and rare major Pacific weather systems throughout the summer.

All climbing in Tuolumne is accessible from Highway 120. Because of its high elevation, Highway 120 east of Crane Flat and west of Lee Vining is closed in the winter. The road closes on the first snow of the year (usually November) and opens sometime in late May to June, depending on the snow year. During the winter, it is possible to climb in Tuolumne, but few people make the arduous ski in.

During early season (late May–June depending on snow year), Tuolumne conditions are often the best: no crowds, no mosquitoes, and long days. However, some approaches and climbs may be wet or snowy. Around June 15 the crowds arrive in Tuolumne—along with the mosquitoes. The crowds are not bad relative to Yosemite, but you will probably have to wait in line for the most classic routes. The mosquitoes on the other hand, can be terrible. Be sure to bring long pants, long sleeve shirts, and bug repellent. In September, the crowds and mosquitoes leave Tuolumne and while the climbing conditions are still great, the days become short and the nights frigid.

Thunderstorm cycles are common in the summer. Typically, the storms hit in mid-afternoon and slowly increase in strength over several days, clearing up each night. However, heavy thunderstorms and rain can set in for days at a time. And in a few recent summers, an almost total lack of thunderstorms over the entire summer have perplexed locals.

**Current Road and Weather**

There is no specific weather phone report for Tuolumne so your best bet is to check the general High Sierra weather at www.supertopo.com. For current road conditions, call 209-372-0200, or the CalTrans voice-activated system for major highway conditions at 800-gas-road or 916-445-7623

## Staying in Tuolumne

Unlike the Yosemite Valley experience, Tuolumne Meadows is relatively uncrowded and serene and provides just enough basic services to comfortably camp. If you are craving some better food, more services, or just a day excursion, Lee Vining, Mono Lake, and Mammoth Lakes are all less than an hour away.

### Camping

The only campground in Tuolumne is the Tuolumne Meadows Campground, which is centrally located and very large (over 300 sites). Half of the sites can be reserved in advance at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) (reserve them at least 2-3 months in advance for peak times) and half of the sites are on a first come, first served basis (stand in line in early morning to ensure you get a site.) Sites cost \$20 per night with a six-person, two-car limit. Be aware that mosquitoes can be particularly fierce and bears patrol the campground so proper food storage is mandatory.

Located 7 to 12 miles east from Tuolumne Meadows are ten Forest Service campgrounds, many of which are first come, first served. Several of these campgrounds are at elevations higher than Tuolumne Meadows and can help with acclimation. Twelve miles east of Tuolumne Meadows, the campgrounds in lower Lee Vining Canyon are lower altitude, more sheltered from the wind, and near to services in Lee Vining. You will pay between \$12 and \$17 per night on a first come, first served basis. The prices at these campgrounds have climbed steeply in recent years, in some cases more than doubling in less than a decade.

Along Highway 120 toward Yosemite Valley are several additional campgrounds with moderate to long drives (30 minutes to one hour). The campground reservation office in Tuolumne has information on current campground conditions.

### Lodges and Cabins

In addition to campsites, there are more plush accommodations available in Tuolumne and the High Sierra, including the Tuolumne Meadows Lodge, White

Wolf, and the High Sierra Camps ([www.yosemitepark.com/html/accommodation.html](http://www.yosemitepark.com/html/accommodation.html)). Just outside of the park boundary is the Tioga Pass Resort ([www.tiogapassresort.com](http://www.tiogapassresort.com)), which offers cabins year-round, a small restaurant, and an espresso bar. Drive 15 miles east from Tuolumne Meadows and you will reach Lee Vining, a small town with a few motels, restaurants, and other basic services.

### Food

A limited selection of high-priced groceries are available at the Tuolumne Meadows store. In addition, you can purchase groceries in Lee Vining at the Lee Vining Market. Mammoth has a large Vons supermarket.

The Tuolumne Meadows Grill serves hamburgers, fries, etc, but has very limited hours, closing hours before dark in mid-summer. The Tuolumne Lodge has a restaurant that serves breakfast and dinner in the middle part of summer. Eight miles east of Tuolumne Meadows, the Tioga Pass Resort houses a cozy dining room with good food. Surprisingly, the Mobil Gas Station, located 14 miles from Tuolumne Meadows in Lee Vining, has the best food in the area. This isn't just any gas station—Tioga Toomey's Whoa Nellie Deli has a great selection of sandwiches, pizzas, fish tacos, and a variety of other savory treats for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Frequent local bands and even a trapeze out front are other features of this unusual gas station.



### Climbing Gear and Climbing Guides

The Tuolumne Mountain Shop (209-372-8436) located at the Tuolumne gas station offers a small selection of climbing equipment. For a more extensive selection of gear, you will need to drive 50 miles to Mammoth (Mammoth Mountaineering Supply; (888-395-3951, [www.mammothgear.com](http://www.mammothgear.com)), 90 miles to Bishop (Wilson's Eastside Sports; 760-873-7520, [www.eastsideports.com](http://www.eastsideports.com)), or 60 miles back to Yosemite Valley (Yosemite Mountain Shop; 209-372-8396, [www.yosemitgifts.com/wetoyomosh.html](http://www.yosemitgifts.com/wetoyomosh.html)).

You can get climbing instruction and arrange for a guide through the Yosemite Mountaineering School (209-372-8344), which is based in Tuolumne at the Mountain Shop/gas station.

### Altitude

At elevation it takes a few days for most people to adjust to the rarefied air, so drink plenty of water and take it easy. On your first day in Tuolumne, climb a route with a short approach to let yourself acclimate. In addition, eat a low-fat diet for the first day or two. Wear extra sunscreen and a hat—the UV levels are greater at altitude and severe sunburns can happen quickly.

### Thunderstorms and Lightning

Tuolumne has mostly beautiful, sunny weather in the summer, yet severe thunderstorms occur. Small, puffy clouds seen before 10 a.m. are a frequent predictor of afternoon rain, hail and, worst of all, lightning. Thunderstorms often appear in cycles and generally during periods of hot, calm weather in the Central Valley.

Lightning tends to hit high points, trees, and water, but will also hit low points next to high rocks, flat areas near trees, and dry land around lakes. A climber was struck by lightning on Cathedral Peak in 2000, and many other close calls have occurred.

Know how to perform CPR. Unlike nearly any other type of injury that stops the heart, electrical shock victims can suddenly awaken even after extended CPR. But remember, the best strategy is to avoid thunderstorms in the first place. If you're on

a climb and get nervous about developing clouds, it's time to turn around.

### Bears, Marmots, and Mosquitoes

Bears have damaged cars for as little as a stick of gum or an empty soda can. If you want what's yours to remain yours, remember three things: bears are hungry, smart, and strong.

When bears smell food, even if it's locked in your trunk or glove compartment, they shift into high gear. They get turned on by odors of containers that used to contain food. They even go for toothpaste and sunscreen. Bears don't need to smell food; they see something like a grocery bag or an ice chest, and associate it with food. In fact, they don't even need to see that much. If a bear sees clutter inside a car, he'll think, "I wonder what's under all that stuff?" and go to work.

Breaking into a car is a trivial exercise for a bear. He inserts his claws at the top of the door frame and pulls down. Then he climbs in and trashes the car. You can't outsmart or outmuscle a bear. Always stash your food in one of the bear-proof storage lockers provided by the Park Service in the campground, at various trailheads including Cathedral Lakes, or at the Wilderness Permit Center.

If camping in the backcountry, use bear canisters, which are available at the Wilderness Permit Center. Tuolumne bears are experienced at cutting the lines to hung food, and the tattered remnants of the lines can be observed on nearly any tree near a backcountry campsite.

In addition to bears, be on the lookout for marmots. Cute from a distance, these plump critters love nothing more than scrounging for food in climbing packs while you watch helplessly from two pitches up. Be sure to hang your backpack high on a tree branch—even if it does not have food in it. Marmots are tough, smart, and strong-toothed and can quickly gnaw through nearly anything—leave zippers open.

Nasty mosquitoes are very common for most of the summer in Tuolumne, so come prepared. Consider long sleeve pants and shirts, which not only help with mosquitoes but help prevent sunburns.

**Cell Phones, Wireless Internet, misc. Stuff**

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The closest wireless internet to Tuolumne is Latte Da coffee shop in Lee Vining (you need your own laptop). Cell phones work sporadically through Tuolumne if you have ATT. Other carriers are less reliable. There is a good signal around the Tuolumne Store and on top of most domes.

**Miscellaneous Beta**

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Showers cost \$2 and are available at the Tuolumne Meadows lodge between noon and 3 p.m. There is a post office located next to the Tuolumne Store, which is open most of the season.

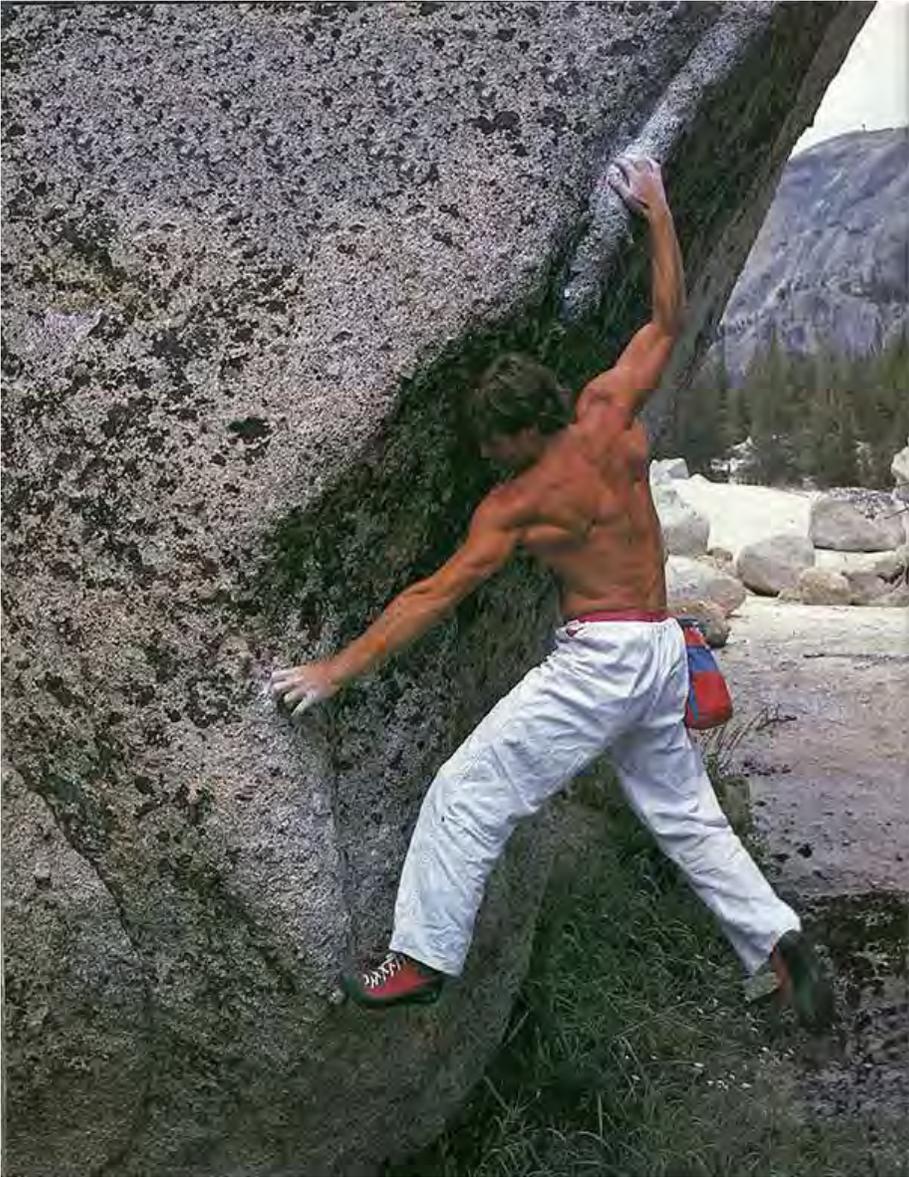
A message board is located outside the Tuolumne Meadows Store, and another larger one is along the entrance road to the campground. Most climbers use the Store board, but make sure if arranging messages with friends to specify which board.

The Tuolumne Meadows Stables (209-372-8348) is the pack station in Tuolumne.

The nearest ATM is at the Lee Vining Market. The nearest bank is Mammoth. You can get cash back with a credit card purchase from the Tuolumne Store.

Ron Kauk on The Cross at The Knobs. Photo by Chris Falkenstein





Ron Kauk at The Knobs. Photo from John Bachar.

## Knobs

By John Bachar

Back in the late seventies, I had heard stories of climbing the magnificent domes of Tuolumne. Bob Kamps and Royal Robbins were putting up wicked run out edging routes. Little did I know but there was some seriously great bouldering to be done.

We didn't have vertical or overhanging face climbing at the time so our only way to get that fix was by bouldering. We had no idea there existed any steep bouldering potential in the Meadows. Everybody thought the Valley was where it was all happening until Dale Bard started climbing there in the summers. He came back with stories of what we wanted to hear, "There are some killer boulders up there man." We listened to his tales of fine granite blocks with "crystals" on overhanging blank faces.

Since we didn't have cars we finally made it up a few days later. The car stopped when we first saw the Cube. Then we hit the Knobs. It was all new. Pristine, unclimbed problems were everywhere.

There were already a lot of Bob Kamps' problems around and Dale Bard was putting up some testpieces as well. Texas Radio and Machine World were some of his best. In the late seventies and early eighties Ron Kauk, Chris Falkenstein, Ed Barry, myself, and others had put up more stuff. By mid eighties, sport climbing had hit the States, which allowed me to have the place virtually to myself. People just weren't into bouldering anymore, so by pure luck I had the good fortune of "discovering" the Gunks and bagging all the first ascents.

Still, the majesty of the granite and the depth of the blue skies draw, to this day, climbers and boulderers from all over the world. Unclimbed gemstones are awaiting discovery by present and future dreamers. Regardless of the times or the fashions, the Meadows holds a mystique and a rich tradition which will never leave us. It will continue to inspire us all at our deepest levels.

See you at the boulders.

## Spirit of The Meadows

By Ron Kauk

The summe of 1972 I found myself learning how to stand in aid slings at Puppy Dome. I'd signed up for a week-long Yosemite Mountaineering School course; I think they called it Alpine Craft. At 14 years old this was like living a dream. My guides were TM Herbert – with his white t-shirt and cotton knickers he was the real thing – a true Yosemite climber; Chris Vandiver took us up on the Great White Book (5.6) in his Levis, styli shirt and longer hair; Loyd Price showed us how to make technical free moves at the Knobs bouldering area before it was the Knobs bouldering area. To finish the week my brother and I hiked to the top of Mount Lyell. It has been 36 summers since then in Tuolumne Meadows for me. Every summer has brought new adventures, education and more understanding about how precious and beautiful these boulders and domes are. Tuolumne continues to teach me about what it means to feel a sense of place and how important it is for us to respect nature.

As a climbing community we have been given a great privilege to climb in Tuolumne Meadows. It will be up to us all to take good care of the areas we climb at so Let's move into the future together and enjoy the opportunity and freedom to become better climbers and human beings.

# Tamarack Boulders

Number of problems: **35 total/ 20 listed**

Time of Day: **Sun/Shade Mix**

Difficulty: **VB-V6/7**

Coming from the west, these roadside boulders are the first you come to on CA-120. Most are found on Tamarack Flat Road and are only worth a stop if you just can't wait any longer, you're camping at the secluded Tamarack Flat Campground or it's raining or snowing up in the Tuolumne Meadows area. Not that there aren't a fair amount of problems here, but compared to how many are just 45 minutes away to the east around the Meadows it is just a pit stop.

The rocks are also not as knobby as the Meadows, having more edges, buckets, cracks, and arêtes. There are also a few good problems in the campground at the bottom of the road and potential for more all over the Tamarack area.

### Driving directions

About four miles east of Crane Flat. About 55 miles west of Lee Vining/CA-395 (about 35 miles west of the Tuolumne Meadows Store) on Tioga Pass Rd./CA-120 near Tamarack Flat. Follow separate directions to the individual areas:

### TAMARACK ROAD BOULDERS

#### Tamarack Road Boulders

3.8 miles east of Crane Flat and about 54.5 miles west of Lee Vining/CA395 on Tioga Pass Rd./CA-120 turn onto Tamarack Flat Rd. and drive downhill toward the campground for 0.2 miles and park on the left next to the main boulders or on



Marcos Nunez flashes Tamarack Dyno (V2).

the right at 0.3 miles from Tioga Pass Rd./CA-120. Parking GPS 37.76200, -119.77066

### Approach

No approach. The boulders are alongside the road or within a stone's throw.

### Number of problems by difficulty

VB	V0	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	≥V11
1	3	6	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0



**North Boulders**

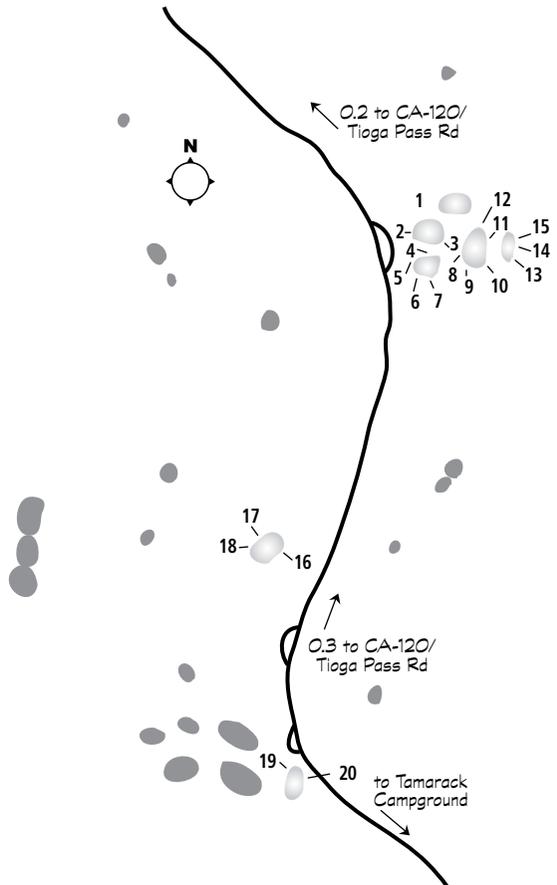
- 1. V2/3★★ Short crack.
- 2. VB★★ Left side of slab with jug crack ledges or VB Jug arête on right side of slab.
- 3. V1★★ Bulge face..

**South Boulder**

- 4. V1★★ Flake to slab top.
- 5. V0★★★★ Slab to hueco top – easy way to up/downclimb.
- 6. V1/2★★ Left-hand undercling start to slope jug to top.
- 7. V2/3★★ Right-hand undercling, go up left past slope jug to top.

**Dyno Boulder**

- 8. V1★★ Stand start on diagonal crimper edges go up over short bulge.
- 9. V? Steep slashed bulge/face.
- 10. V2/3★★ Stand start in dirty scoop go over short bulge left of “Tamarack Dyno.”



☐ **11. Tamarack Dyno V2★★★** Stand start dyno from big jug to little jug – V3 Sit start.

**11a. V4** Low right start same as (V6/7) right arête low start.

☐ **12. V6/7★★★** Low start overhanging right arête – V5 Stand start.

**Green Face**

☐ **13. V0★★** Diagonal crack up left side of face.

☐ **14. V?★★** Center slab face.

☐ **15. V1★★** Right slab face.

**Dirty Hueco Boulder**

☐ **16. V!?** Steep bulge facing road.

☐ **17. V?** Center of face on the back hillside to dirty hueco?

☐ **18. V?** Right face on back hillside past hollow pockets to dirty hueco?

**Hueco Mantel Boulder**

☐ **19. Hueco Mantel V0★★★** Stand start tips layback dihedral up to hueco/thread mantel. (up/downclimb) – V1 Sit start.

☐ **20. V1/2★★** Slab facing road.



The Roadside Classic: Hueco Mantel (V0)

