

A person wearing a bright red puffy jacket and a light blue baseball cap is seen from behind, sitting in a wooden canoe. They are holding a wooden paddle. The canoe is on a calm body of water. In the background, a towering, rugged rock cliff rises steeply from the water's edge. The cliff face is grey and textured, with some green vegetation growing on its upper parts. The sky is a pale, clear blue.

Madawaska Rock
Palmer Rapids ON

An Incomplete Guide to Rock Climbing at
Diamond Lake

Boat Belay Tips!

Check the route description for specific relevant information.

Moor your boat both at the front and back to prevent it from drifting (this also makes it easier for the climber to establish on the rock). Anchor points will likely require trad gear. Adjustable tie-downs work great to connect the boat to anchors.

Use boat fenders/buoys to avoid damaging the boat against the rock. They also do a great job stabilizing the boat when moored tight to the cliff face.

Stick clip! Nothing worse than taking a sip before establishing on the rock. Some routes have low cruxes.

Having the belayer go direct into the first bolt or into gear will make for a more comfortable belay experience.

Lower-off sport routes and clip into the permadraws where available to serve as directionals.

If rappelling off a route, use the saddle method for rope management to prevent rope ends falling in the water.

Use the **Stick-Clip-Trick** when pulling the rope down off rappel rings and directionals; clip the rope through a quickdraw on an extended stickclip and guide it down the last few meters into the boat.

For some climbs that traverse and the climb is seconded by the belayer, it might be expected for one of the climbers to swim back to retrieve the boat. Bring appropriate attire.

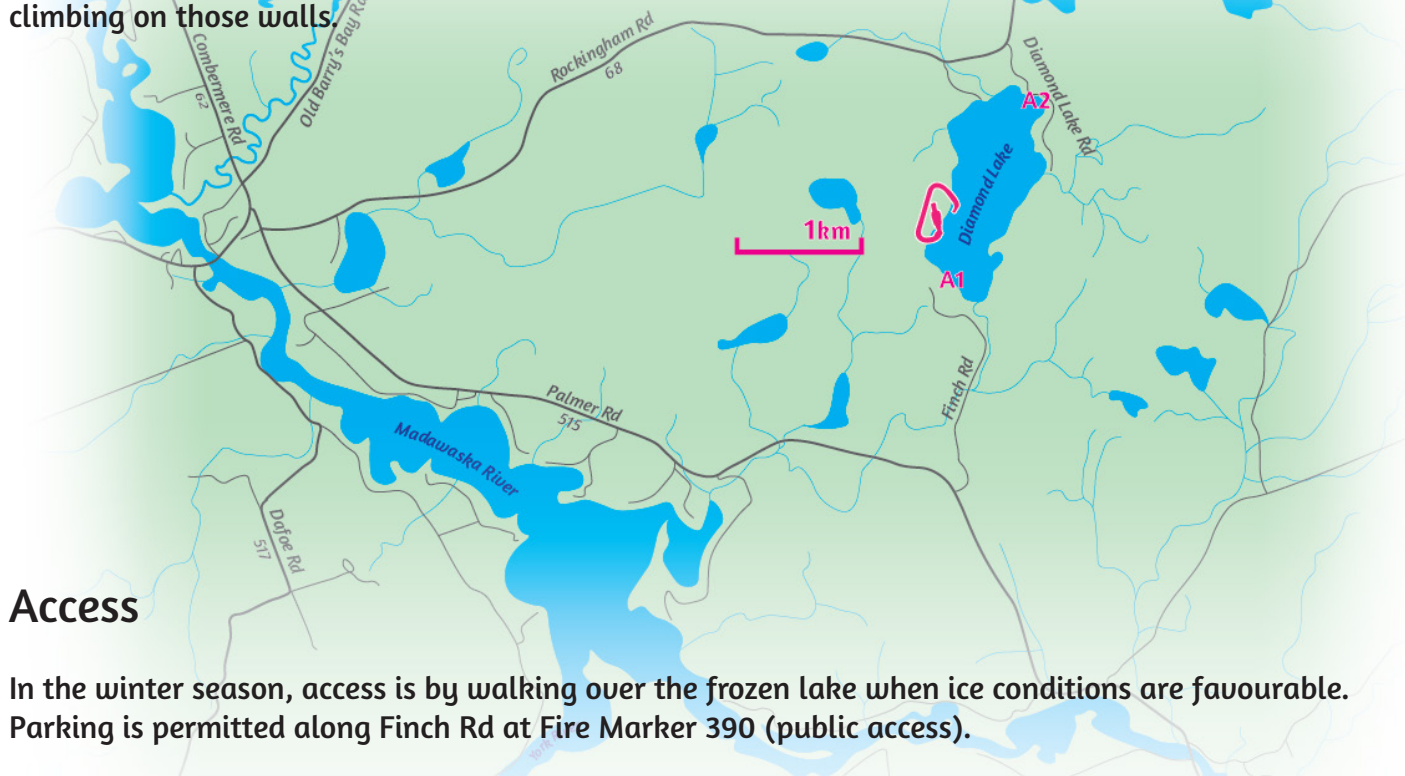
Introduction

Rock climbing is inherently dangerous and certain crags have special circumstances like remoteness or water access that carry additional considerations. This guide is meant to be used as one tool climbers can utilize alongside up-to-date local knowledge and a refined level of experience. Plan for contingencies in case of an accident and for the ability of self-rescue.

This guide is INCOMPLETE for a number of reasons. Diamond Lake has seen several disjointed endeavors of development, from Ontario's climbing pioneers in 1980s to the ice climbing boom of the 2000s. Some routes have limited information about their original development, others have only remnants of development with no known records of ascents. Unknown or incomplete information will be highlighted **yellow**. New development is ongoing. The goal is to consolidate a more complete version of this guide in good time. Input is most appreciated, contribute by emailing madawaska.rock@gmail.com.

Diamond Lake is some of the most inspiring rock and ice climbing in the Madawaska Valley. Oak Ridge is the name of the main cliff that protrudes out of the water and stands at 40 meters tall at its highest. Oak Ridge and any land within 30 meters of the lake is public land due to the Crown Shoreline Reserve. There are smaller walls that are found slightly north and inland from Oak Ridge, however do not have any known developed rock climbing and are situated on private land.

Ravens and peregrine falcons nest on the north end of Oak Ridge; from early spring to mid-summer avoid climbing on those walls.



Access

In the winter season, access is by walking over the frozen lake when ice conditions are favourable. Parking is permitted along Finch Rd at Fire Marker 390 (public access).

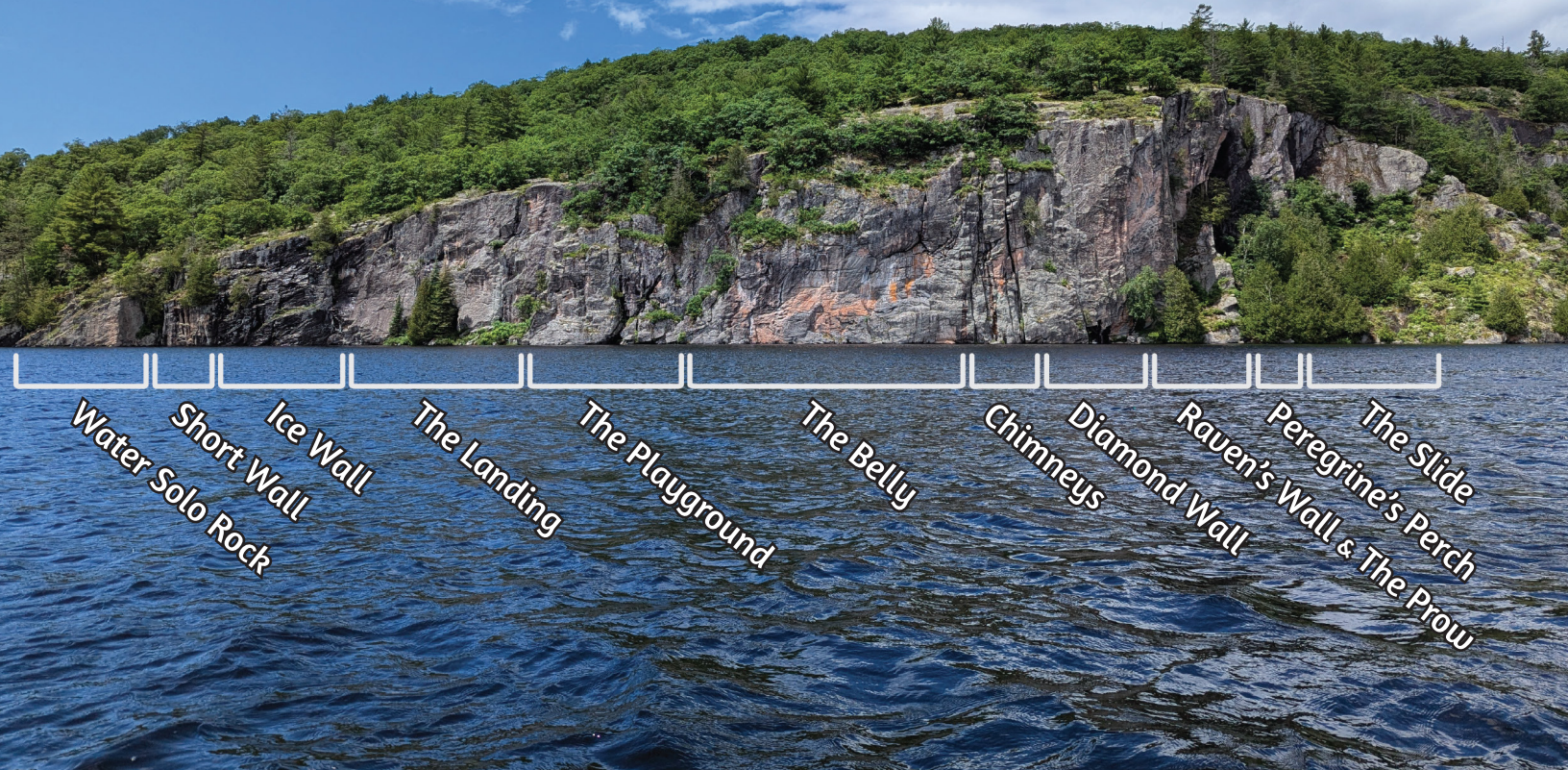
In the summer season the logistics are more involved since the approach is by boat. Two points of access are available as seen on the map above.

A1: 390 Finch Rd (cars with some clearance will be able to drive right down to the shoreline if trail conditions are dry).

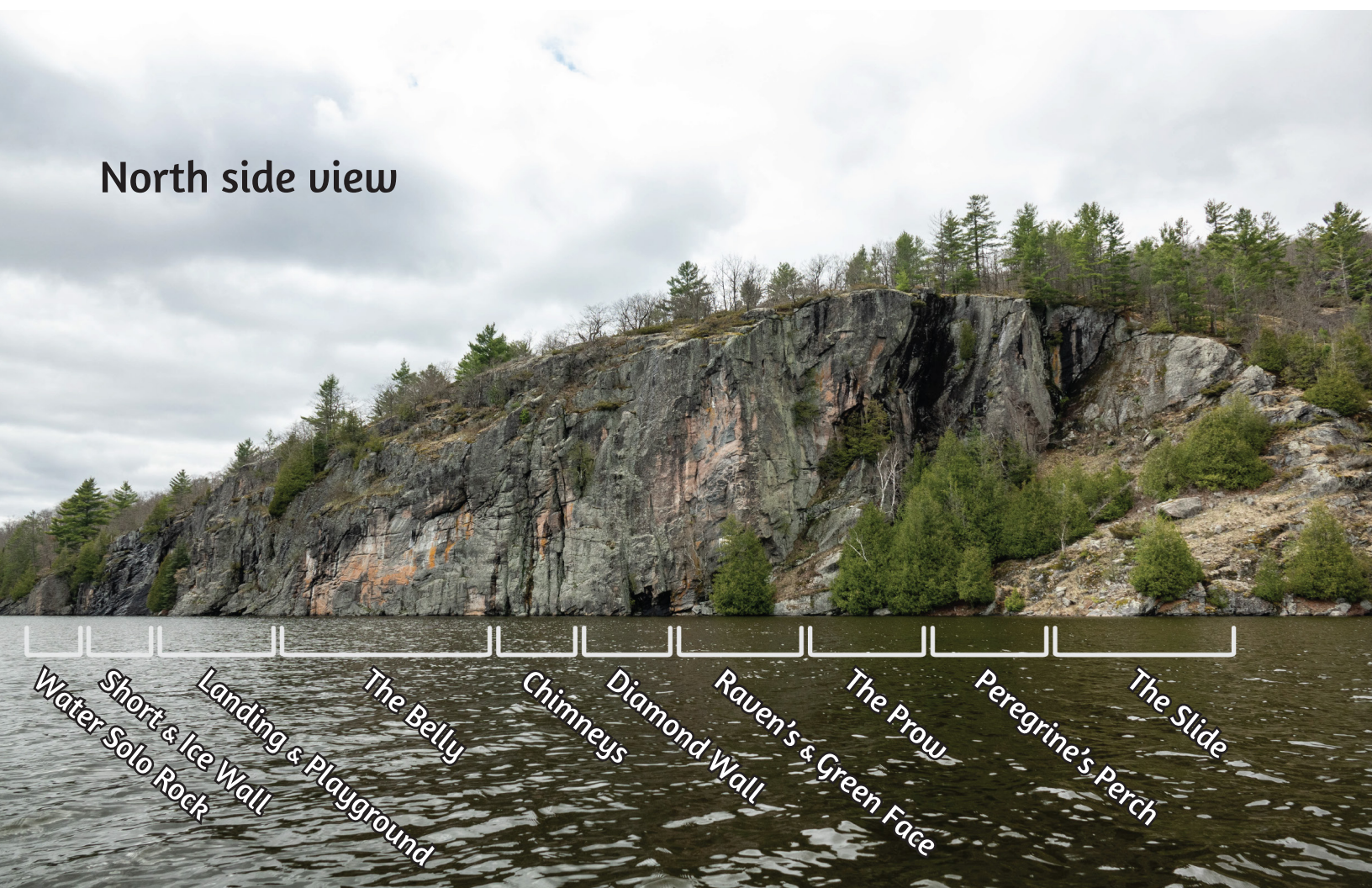
A2: 108 Diamond Lake Rd boat launch, which is easier for larger boats or vehicles with low clearance.

There is moderate cell reception on the cliffside.

Diamond Lake Oak Ridge

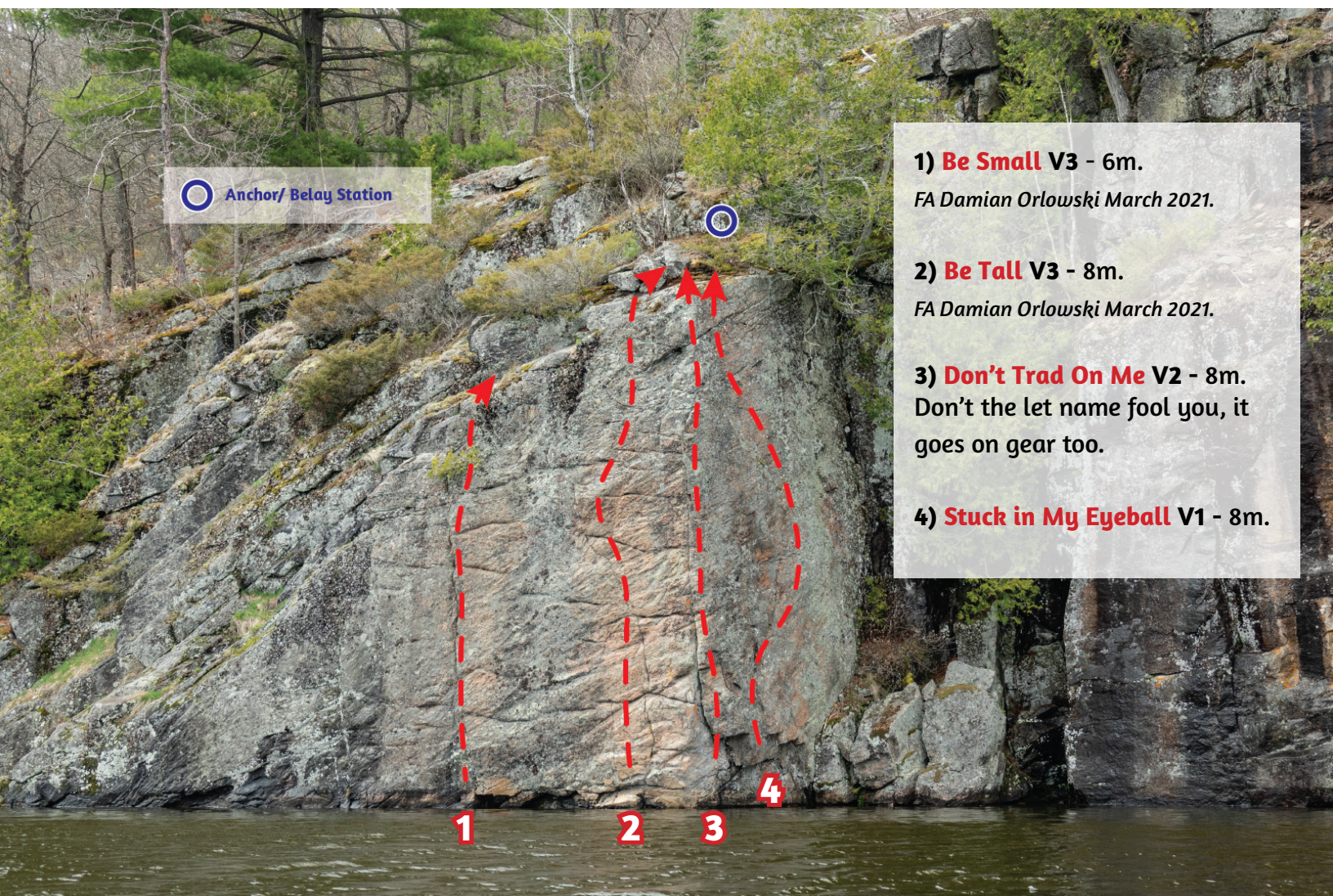
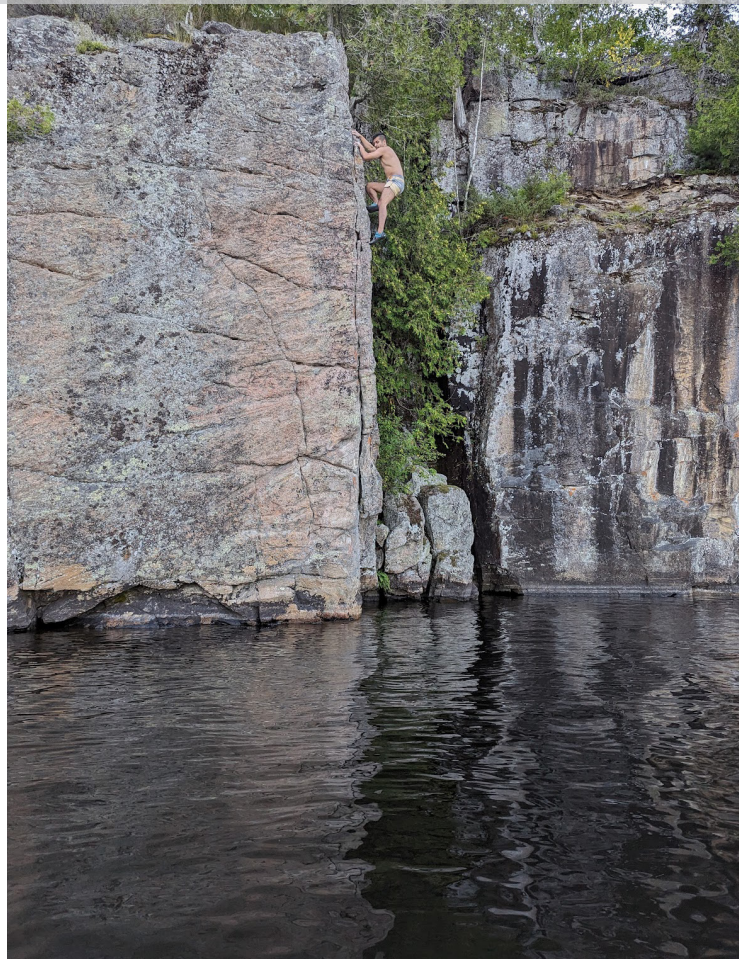


North side view



Water Solo Rock

This is the furthest climable feature on the south end of the crag (climber's left). Ice climbers added a bolted anchor above the ledge and an additional bolt at the top of the arête. In the winter this feature provides excellent highball bouldering and falls are comfortable when crash pads and a tarp are laid on a deep snow base. In the summer access by boat/SUP and commit to the water solo, although it is sketchy due to the vertical nature of the wall. Always do a sweep of the underwater topography and take extra caution with water soloing. These lines are top-rope accessible, and **Be Small V3** will require a piece of gear at the top as a directional. Easy access to the top by the ramp on the left. Popular spot for cliff jumping.



1) Be Small V3 - 6m.

FA Damian Orłowski March 2021.

2) Be Tall V3 - 8m.

FA Damian Orłowski March 2021.

3) Don't Trad On Me V2 - 8m.

Don't let the name fool you, it goes on gear too.

4) Stuck in My Eyeball V1 - 8m.

Short Wall

A short and slightly steeper-than-vertical face just right of Water Solo Rock. Possible additions to winter bouldering/ short lead routes at the crag. No known developed lines.



Ice Wall

An impressive wall of ice in the winter known as Guardian Angel Ice Fall. For much of the summer season this wall is a wet series of ledges. Bolts found in this area for mixed-ice climbing.



The Landing

A tall wall with a variety of slab, vert, and slight overhang. All routes can be accessed by landing your boat on the brushy meadow.

5) Unknown 1 - Two bolt belay anchor off low ledge above the water approximately 5m left of the left-most tree. Three bolts noted on the wall. No other information.

6) Jewel of the Lake 5.11c - Sport, 24m, 8 bolts + P1 ring anchors & P2 chain anchors. The two pitches can be linked, bring a double length sling for extension at the first set of anchors to reduce rope drag.

P1 (13m, 4 bolts) Start just to the right of the often wet alcove, and follow the bolt line to the large ledge with ring anchors.

Bolted & FA Gus Perez May 2025.

P2 (11m, 4 bolts) From the anchors continue through steeper headwall until you reach easier climbing that takes you out left to a large ledge just below the cliff edge. The last bolt is optional, as it can be bypassed by easier climbing out left early, but a good choice to use with an extended draw if setting up a toprope.

Bolted Damian Orłowski May 2025. FA Olivia Perryman 2025

7) Dream Wave Project - Sport, 12m, 5 bolts + ring anchors.

Climb up the center of the slab, and get creative through the transition into the overhanging wall.

Bolted Damian Orłowski May 2025.

8) Pipe Dream 5.11a - Sport, 12m, 4 bolts + ring anchors.

Shares first three bolts with **Dream Wave Project**. Traverse up and right at the third bolt through fun sequence. Shares the last bolt and anchors with **Halfpipe**.

Bolted & FA Damian Orłowski June 2024.

9) Halfpipe 5.11a - Sport, 11m, 3 bolts + ring anchors.

Climb the right side of the slab for the direct line, shares a crux and anchors with **Pipe Dream**.

Bolted Damian Orłowski & Matthew Stirling June 2024. FA Matthew Stirling Oct 2024.

10) Unknown 2 - Potential trad or mix-ice line to the right of **Halfpipe**. Two bolt anchor at the lip of the cliff, no other known information.

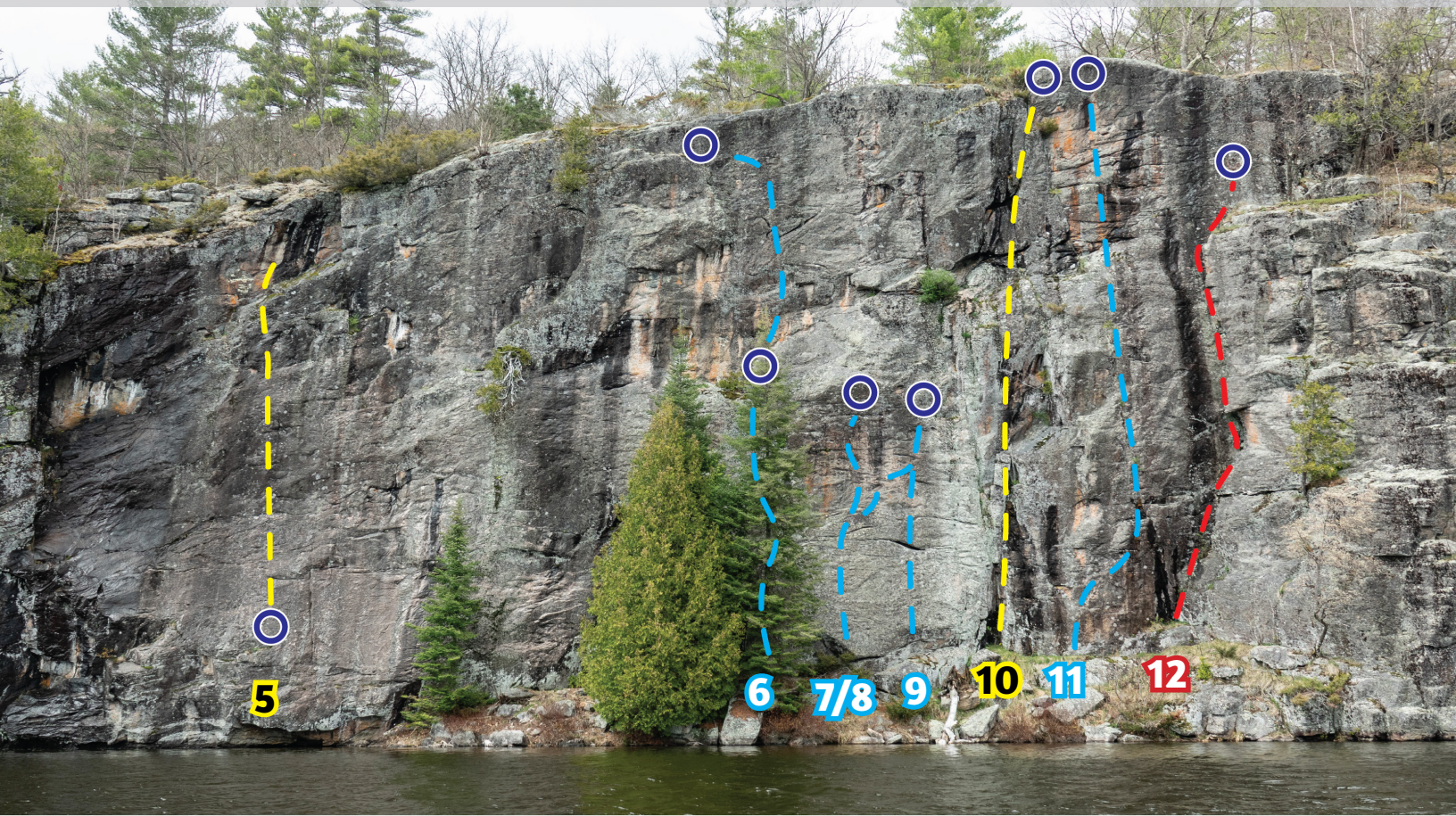
11) WAKABBADLE 5.11c - Sport, 24m, 8 bolts + ring anchors.

Start a couple meters to the left of the first bolt, stick clip is highly recommended. Harder climbing as you traverse right under the first bolt (and then big move to the ledge!). Easier adventure style climbing leads to a final headwall, save some strength to clip the anchors.

Bolted Basile Robitaille & Damian Orłowski May 2025. FA Damian Orłowski May 2025.

12) Sunshine Corner 5.6 - Trad, 18m, bolted anchors with chain painted red, **unknown setter or FA**. Enjoyable climbing up the dihedral with the crack providing plenty of mid-to-large protection.

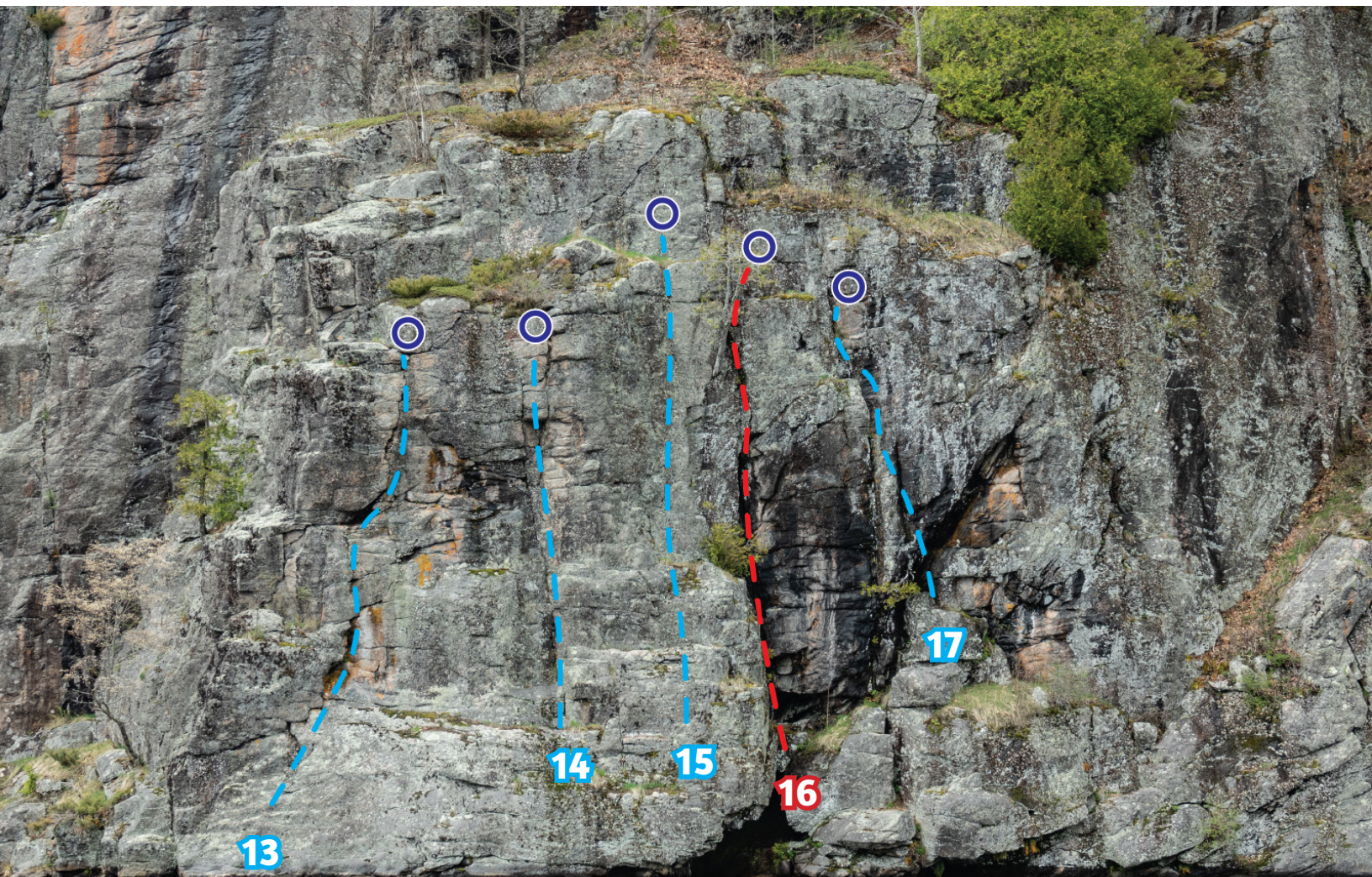




The Playground

This area was bolted by ice climbers as an intro to mixed ice/ drytooling.

The first three routes from climber's left are accessible by mooring your boat at the Landing and scrambling around the base of the wall from the bottom of Sunshine Corner. Access directly off a boat is an option, and some gear for mooring may be necessary.



13) Tactile Experience 5.10b - Sport, 12m, 5 bolts + ring anchors. Bolts painted grey. Easier climbing leading to a rest ledge, then follow the finger crack to the anchors. Can be protected with gear only as well. Follows an established mixed-ice route (Clinic Route 1 M5).

Access: In the summer, land your boat at the Landing and traverse the rocks around the base of the cliff. Stickclip recommended. In the winter walk and belay off the frozen lake.

Descent: Lower-off the rappel rings. Use the stickclip trick to avoid splashing the rope in the water.

Bolted [name,date]. FA mixed-ice [name,date]. First known rock FA Damian Orlowski Feb 2023.

14) Clinical Trial 5.9 - Sport, 12m, 5 bolts + ring anchors. Bolts painted grey. Quality climbing that increases in difficulty the higher you go. Follows an established mixed-ice route (Clinic Route 2 M5).

Access: In the summer, land your boat at the Landing and traverse the rocks around the base of the cliff. Stickclip recommended. In the winter walk and belay off the frozen lake.

Descent: Lower-off the maillons. Use the stickclip trick to avoid splashing the rope in the water.

Bolted [name,date]. FA mixed-ice [name,date]. First known rock FA Damian Orlowski Aug 2023.

15) Family Matters 5.8 - Sport, 14m, 6 bolts + ring anchors. Climb the bolted slab with a crux higher up on the route. Follows an established mixed-ice route (Swiss Family Robinson M5).

Access: In the summer, land your boat at the Landing and traverse the rocks around the base of the cliff. Second option is to moor your boat with gear near the climb, belay either off the boat or while standing on the sloped ramp, preferably anchored directly to gear or a bolt. Stickclip recommended. In the winter walk and belay off the frozen lake.

Descent: Lower-off the rappel rings. Use the stickclip trick to avoid splashing the rope in the water.

Bolted and FA mixed-ice Josh Smith, Doug Smith, Andriy Kolos 2016. First known rock FA Gus Perez Aug 2023.

16) Trade Route 5.9 - Trad, 13m, bolted anchors. Single rack of cams. Follow the obvious crack, often wet. Follows an established mixed-ice route (A Turn For the Douche WI/M *unknown grade*).

Access: In the summer, moor your boat with gear in the cove under the climb, belay while standing on platform above the sloped ramp to the right.

Descent: Lower-off the rappel rings. Use stickclip trick to avoid getting rope wet.

Bolted and FA mixed-ice Josh Smith, Doug Smith, Andriy Kolos 2016. FA rock Damian Orlowski Sept 2023.

17) Robinson 5.6 - Sport, 13m, 6 bolts + ring anchors. Follows an established mixed-ice route (Crusoe M5).

Access: In the summer, moor your boat with gear in the cove to the left of the climb, belay while standing on platform above the sloped ramp.

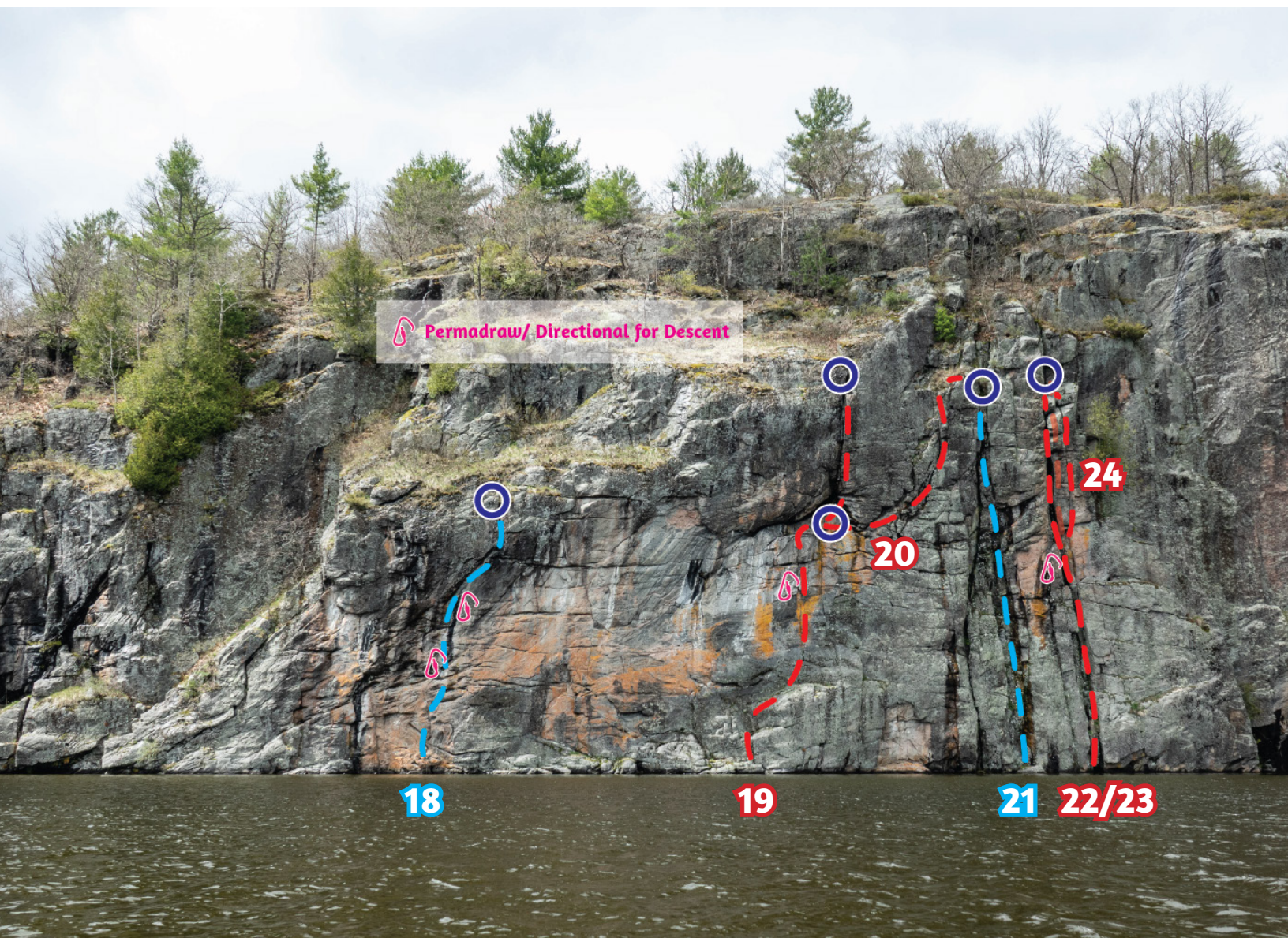
Descent: Lower-off the rappel rings. Use stickclip trick to avoid getting rope wet.

Bolted and FA mixed-ice Josh Smith, Doug Smith, Andriy Kolos 2016. First known rock FA Damian Orlowski Sept 2023.

The Belly & Chimneys

The Belly is a intricately featured wall in the middle of the cliff, split into slab lower part and overhung upper face. It holds potential for developing more hard climbs.

In either 1981 or 1982, Brian Hibbert had an impromptu climbing day with his friends Roger and Lucia (whose family had a cottage on the lake), and they pulled off the first ascent of the chimney now known as **Chute for the Stars**, kicking off the first recorded modern climbing at the crag. In 2017 ice climbers Andriy Kolos and Brent Elliot reanimated the face by opening the left chimney as an accessible bolted mixed-ice climb, named Dirtyer Harryer in homage to Dirty Harry chimney at Eagle's Nest in Bancroft.



18) Fresh Off the Boat 5.12c - Sport, 16m, 7 bolts + ring anchors. The climb can be split into 3 sections: a difficult and reachy boulder off the water and followed by a good rest; then fun climbing to jug rests on the lower end of the diagonal crack feature; and finally a final crux problem that eases up to finish at the anchors. Stick clip first and/or second bolt.

Access: In the summer, moor the boat under the first bolt using gear: the right horizontal crack can take any cam size between #0.4 to #1; the left diagonal large pocket takes cam #1 or #2. Depending on conditions, the route is climbable in the winter season, with access walking over the frozen lake.

Descent: Lower-off the rappel rings. Keep the rope clipped into the two permadraws (placed May 2023) so they can function as directionals on your lower descent back to the boat and to prevent the rope from falling in the water when retrieving it. Use the Stickclip Trick to guide the rope to the boat at the end when pulling the rope down.

Bolted Damian Orlowski Feb 2023. FA Jorge Gabayet May 2023.

19) Boberek 5.11a - Trad, 25m, 2 pitches, bolted anchors. The two pitches can be easily linked, no additional gear required.

P1 (15m), same as **Tremolo**, from the mooring bolt climb the easier 5th class terrain using path of least resistance to the alcove (*you will pass an old bolt and carabiner on your left, this will be a directional for the descent*). At the alcove there are two bolts for an anchor.

P2 (10m), exit the alcove going up and get your jam on, going up into the flaring-chimney-turned-hand-crack, and finishing on a cozy ledge. Protection single rack of cams to #4, with doubles #1.

Access: In the summer moor your boat on the single (somewhat hard-to-see) bolt at the bottom of the route, and there is also plenty space for gear to stabilize the boat.

Descent: Rappel or lower-off the rappel rings. Keep the rope clipped into the directional (old bolt plus aluminum carabiner) on your descent back to the boat and to prevent the rope from falling in the water when retrieving it. Use the Stickclip Trick to guide the rope to the boat at the end.

Bolted (top anchors) Damian Orlowski Mar 2023. FA Damian Orlowski Oct 2024.

20) Tremolo 5.7 - Trad, 30m, 2 pitches, bolted anchors. Easier to split into two pitches to avoid rope drag.

P1 (15m), same as **Boberek**, from the mooring bolt climb the easier 5th class terrain using path of least resistance to the alcove (*you will pass an old bolt and carabiner on your left, this will be a directional for the descent*). At the alcove there are two older bolts for an anchor.

P2 (15m), exit the alcove traversing right. Second half of the route requires some serious scrubbing, but provides excellent moves and exposure for the grade. Currently the finish uses same anchors as **Dirty Wet Gloves**, they are hard to find as they will be at your feet and facing away from you at the finishing ledge.

Access: In the summer moor your boat on the single (somewhat hard-to-see) bolt at the bottom of the route. In the winter season, access walking over the frozen lake.

Descent: After your belayer follows and cleans the route, rappel off the rappel rings (60m rope is long enough) onto a rock ledge just above water level, someone will need to take a dip and fetch your boat.

FA Damian Orlowski & Olivia Perryman July 2021. Initially climbed as a single pitch and onsight, be warned about rope drag and that rock needs cleaning.

21) Dirty Wet Gloves 5.7 - Sport, 25m, 9 bolts, ring + maillon anchors. Dirty and often wet until late season. Start at the rock platform just above water level. Easier climbing separated by ledge rests all the way to the top. Follows an established mixed-ice route (Dirtyyer Harryer M6).

Access: In the summer, moor your boat using gear (cams #3 and/or #0.3 work well) at the base of the route. Hop onto the rock platform and get comfortable. Stick clip recommended.

Descent: Rappel or lower-off from the anchors. Pull the rope through and drop the rope onto the rock platform, hopefully there isn't a gust of wind!

Bolted and FA mixed-ice Brent Elliot & Andriy Kolos 2017. First known rock FA Matthew Stirling Oct 2024.

22) Chute for the Stars 5.8 - Trad, 25m, ring anchors. Climb the dirty chimney about two-thirds up the route (*note the directional-permadraw that you'll use for descent on the climber's left*), and continue up the large chimney. Top out on the outside of the wall. Ring anchors at the ledge (shared with **Crap Chute** and **That's a Paddlin**). Takes gear up to #8, but with a little (soul) searching you can protect enough with gear to #0.75, single rack. Very licheny!

Access: In the summer, moor your boat using smaller gear (cams #0.3 and #0.75) at the base of the chimney. Stick clip the single bolt at the start to avoid a bad slip'n'dip.

Descent: Rappel off the ledge. Clip rope into permadraw directional on the way down to avoid giving your rope a wash. Expect lots of drag when initially pulling the rope through, having an ascender on hand makes it much easier.

FA Brian Hibbert et al. 1981 or 1982. Bolted anchors Damian Orlowski Feb 2023.

23) Crap Chute 5.7 - Trad, 25m, ring anchors. Same start as previous climb. Up the dirty chimney about two-thirds up the route (*note the directional-permadraw that you'll use for descent on the climber's left*), up the large chimney and then continue deeper into the chute as it goes into the cliff. Spelunk out on the backside of the pillar. Ring anchors at the ledges (shared with **Chute for the Stars** and **That's a Paddlin**). Same gear as **Chute for the Stars**, because once the routes part ways no additional pro is required. Wet until late summer!

Access: In the summer, moor your boat using smaller gear (cams #0.3 and #0.75) at the base of the chimney. Stick clip the single bolt at the start to avoid a bad slip'n'dip.

Descent: Rappel off the ledge. Clip rope into permadraw directional on the way down to avoid giving your rope a wash. Expect lots of drag when initially pulling the rope through, having an ascender on hand makes it much easier.

Bolted anchors Damian Orlowski Feb 2023. First known rock FA Damian Orlowski Oct 2024.

24) That's a Paddlin 5.10c - Trad, 25m, bolted ring anchors. Same start as previous two climbs. Up the dirty chimney until you reach a nice ledge (*note the directional-permadraw that you'll use for descent on the climber's left*). Chimney a little higher and do a short traverse right to gain the finger-to-hand-to-fist-to-offwidth crack. Finishes on ledges, shares anchors with previous routes. Takes gear up to #6 cam, single rack including bigger gear is adequate. Close to the top, don't traverse right to the chossy ledge by the cedar.

Access: In the summer, moor your boat using smaller gear (cams #0.3 and #0.75) at the base of the chimney. Stick clip the single bolt at the start to avoid a bad slip'n'dip.

Descent: While rappelling off the ledge, clip the rope into permadraw directional on the way down to avoid having the rope fall into the water. Use the Stickclip Trick to guide the end of the rope into the boat. Expect lots of drag when initially pulling the rope through, having an ascender on hand makes it much easier.

Bolted anchors Damian Orlowski Feb 2023. FA Damian Orlowski Oct 2024.

North Sector

The North Sector includes the most impressive walls of the crag. *Diamond Wall* is an incredible 40m tall sheer cliff, where you will find the iconic route **Diamond Dogs**. *Raven's Wall* is easily distinguished by its bright pink-orange rock, and a large ledge where ravens are frequently nesting. No known routes have been attempted on this steep wall. *The Green Face* is home to two more iconic routes, with **Corvus Corax** climbing the tallest sections of rock on the arête between Raven's Wall and the Green Face. *The Prow* is the towering overhanging rock. The dark dihedral to the right under The Prow forms as the daunting *Where Ego's Dare* ice climb in the winter. Next is *Peregrine's Perch*, where the falcons nest and climbing is to be avoided in spring until mid-summer. At the north end of Oak Ridge you'll find *The Slide*, a low angle slab with potential easier routes that would still require cleaning and bolting.



Safety note: no recent repeats of these climbs are known to the author, and the condition of fixed hardware has not been assessed.

25) Diamond Dogs 5.11b - Protected by pitons down low and bolts (only 6 found from afar) on the face, gear unknown. Only information and topo reference is found in David Smart's Ontario's Finest Rock Climbs (1998). Requires some more research and scouting on ropes.

Access: In the summer, dock your boat on land under Raven's Wall and walk over to where the cliffbase and shoreline intersect (later in the season water level is lower and access is easier). Find the pitons in the dihedral to be sure you start enroute. In the winter, the majority of the route appears to be in climbable conditions with only the first few meters posing issues due to the thick ice formation seeping out of the rock. The approach is over the frozen lake.

Descent: Appears to be a walkoff or possibly rappel off anchors atop of The Prow routes.

FA Norbert Kartner & Kevin Lawlor 1989.

26) Corvus Corax 5.11d - Sport, 40m, 2 pitches, 14 bolts + 2 pairs of anchors. Climbs the impressive arête. Condition of the bolts and anchors has not been recently inspected, and the anchors are just two side by side hangers (no rappel rings or chains).

Access: In the summer, land your boat under Raven's Wall. In the winter walk over frozen lake.

Descent: Appears to be walkoff or possibly rappel off anchors atop of The Prow routes.

FA Norbert Kartner 1989.

27) Koyaanisqatsi 5.11a - Mixed-Trad, 40m, 7 bolts + anchors. Excerpt from David Smart's Ontario's Finest Rock Climbs (1998): "*Climb the crack until level with an overhang on the left. Clip the bolt and climb the face above past another bolt to a thin crack on the right. ... Hard moves protected with nuts lead to a face protected by bolts. Climb this to a rest, place a nut and climb to the overhang, which is not as difficult as it first appears. Climb the difficult face above past bolts to the anchors. Equipment: Some very thin nuts and cams to 1.5 inches are required.*" Hand drawn topo can be found in the same book.

Access: In the summer, land your boat under Raven's Wall. In the winter walk over frozen lake.

Descent: Appears to be walkoff or possibly rappel off anchors atop of The Prow routes.

FA Norbert Kartner, Mary Lou Langton 1989.

The Prow

28) Gneiss Project - Mixed-Trad, 35m, 2 pitches, bolted anchors.

P1 (20m, pitons and 3 bolts + bolted anchors) is shared with the **Acquitted Project**. Climb the tricky near-vertical slab past a piton to gain the easy climbing up the large flake and passing three bolts (avoid placing protection in the giant hollow flake, however, at the time of writing the 3 bolts require hangers to be placed). Continue with strenuous laybacking, pass a piton and then reach past the small roof for jugs and the midway anchors.

P2 (15m, one bolt + bolted anchors) follows the overhanging large left crack to the top anchors (also shared with the **Acquitted Project**). From the P1 anchors, do a tricky climbing sequence up left to a large ledge and a series of jugs. Clip an optional bolt, although there is many gear options. Follow the crack as it narrows to finger locks to the top. Rack up cams #0.3-2, with multiple #0.4-0.75 range for comfort.

Possibly good idea to link as single pitch to avoid high factor falls on the midway anchors. Pretty straight line, rope drag shouldn't be a terrible issue.

This climb follows the established mixed-ice routes Left of Where Ego's Dare WI4+ (P1) and Metamorphosis M10+ (P2).

Access: Dock your boat on land and walk up to the base of the route.

Descent: 70m rope rappel to base of route.

FA Mixed-Ice: Stas Beskin & Daniel Martian 2019. Local legends of aid climbing attempts dating back to the 1960s.

29) Acquitted Project - Mixed-Trad, 35m, 2 pitches.

P1 (20m, pitons and 3 bolts + bolted anchors) is shared with the **Gneiss Project**. Climb the tricky near-vertical slab past a piton to gain the easy climbing up the large flake and passing three bolts (avoid placing protection in the giant hollow flake, however, at the time of writing the 3 bolts require hangers to be placed). Continue with strenuous laybacking, pass a piton and then reach past the small roof for jugs and the midway anchors.

P2 (15m, sport) follows the overhanging crack feature to the right that is fully protected by bolts to the top anchors (also shared with the **Gneiss Project**).

This climb follows the established mixed-ice routes Left of Where Ego's Dare WI4+ (P1) and The Trial M9+ (P2).

Access: Dock your boat on land and walk up to the base of the route.

Descent: 70m rope rappel to base of route.

FA Mixed-Ice: Nathan Kutcher (2014)



Peregrine's Perch & The Slide

30) Wet Blanket Project - Trad, approx 30m. Follows the wet dark dihedral along where the ice route Where Ego's Dare WI4+ forms in the winter. Natural anchor.

31) The Mouse 5.11c - Sport, 20m, 6 bolts + ring anchors. Look for the namesake Mickey Mouse silhouette on the rock face near the bottom of the climb. The crux of the route is getting to the first bolt. Highly recommended stickclipping. From the rock platform located under the black line from seepage, establish on the wall by doing a high step onto the horizontal rail and grabbing the high slanted crimp and right undercling. Solve the finger intensive sequence to traverse left to the first bolt. Enjoy the 5.10 climbing to the anchors after that.

This climb follows the established mixed-ice route Little Snowblower M6+.

Bolted and FA mixed-ice Andriy Kolos, Josh Smith, Steve Snopkowski 2017. FA rock Damian Orlowski Sept 2023.

32) Peregrine's Perch 5.11a - Sport, 25m, 7 bolts + maillon/chain anchors. Stickclip off the ramp to the right and climb from that spot, crux of the route is to the first bolt. Excellent climbing to the top.

This climb follows the established mixed-ice route Peach Sparrow M6.

Bolted and FA mixed-ice Andriy Kolos, Mike Reaume 2016. FA rock Damian Orlowski Sept 2023.

33) Inbetweeners Project - Trad, approx 25m, natural anchors. Climb the vertical dihedral.

This climb follows where the ice-climb Between Egos and Wimps WI4+ forms in the winter.

34) Crooked Slide Project - Trad, approx 25m, natural anchors. Climb the slab dihedral offwidth crack.

This climb follows where the ice-climb Where Wimps Dare WI3 forms in the winter.

