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Thornkloof

Rock Climbing Guide



Legal Note: All climbing is very dangerous & always at your own risk. Nobody is forcing you to climb. You choose to climb, so choose to go home before the risks become too high. Remember even small injuries can take 6 weeks to heal. No responsibility for inaccurate or incomplete information will be accepted by the scribe or Mountain Club of South Africa. The landowners accept no liability at all. Climbers take full responsibility for themselves at all times. Fixed protection will become unreliable, loose rock is common, solid rock becomes loose & RD writers make up most of the information anyway. This RD is only a guide & is no substitute for experience, training, common sense & a touch of caution. So, you are on your own...take care!

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As this is a web-based guide it can be considered a continual work in progress. It is easy to change. So please send missing details, corrections, additions & adjustments to info@easterncaperockclimbing.co.za . All information will be greatly appreciated.

Directions: Follow the R350 out of Grahamstown towards Cradock for 10km. Turn L onto a dirt road to Riebeeck East. Drive for 11km. Turn L though a gate marked Thornkloof. Park below the crag, before the gate. Don't block the road.

Walk-in: About 2 minutes max.

Access: No access restrictions, but this is private land. **Please be mega polite & don't make fires, litter, play music or do anything stupid.** Please don't inconvenience the farmer in any way. The landowner accepts no liability for climbing or any related activities.

History: Thornskloof started out as a trad venue. Joe Maclennan's *A Pocket Guide to Rock Climbing Near Grahamstown*, published by Rhodes University Mountain Club in 1980 records a few trad routes like *Yoyo*, *The Rib*, *Black Hole*, *Zig-zag* & *The Last Route*. These records say that some of the routes were not clean climbed, but used aid moves to ascend. This was the style of those times. Joe's Pocket Guide does not record who opened the routes, but most likely they were opened by Don Maclennan father of Joe & David, John Moss & Geoff Hutchings in the 1970's.

Keith James bolted majority of the sport routes; some are retro-bolted trad routes.

Thanks & Appreciation:

1. Huge thanks to the landowner who has allowed climber to climb at Thorns for decades.
2. Thanks to Keith James for bolting most of the sport lines at Thorns & providing some of the details in this guide.
3. Thanks to Jeff Stevens for his *Crag Fax Grahamstown Crag Guide*. Thanks for many crucial details.
4. Thanks to Joe Maclennan for his booklet *A Pocket Guide to Rock Climbing near Grahamstown*. This recorded the old trad routes at Thornkloof & New Year's River.
5. Thanks to Allen Luck for the photos & marked up routes that made the recording

Star Ratings	
★★★	Classic route in this province
★★	Good route in the area
★	Good route at this crag
No star	Reasonable to bollocks
Abbreviations & Symbols	
	(T) Trad route (natural gear) & grade
	Sport route (bolted) & grade
	Open Project / in-progress & ± grade
	Closed Project & ± grade
	(S) FA was solo & grade
	Potential
	Abseil point
(11B&C)	Number of bolts & top chains
P / RB	Piton / Removable bolt
	Afternoon Shade
	Morning Shade
	Shade all day
	Sun all day
	Dappled shade all day
	Can be climbed in wet weather

of many of the trad routes possible.

Time & Weather: Really hot in summer, so make a very early start, stopping at 11H00 or wait for an overcast day. Winter is recommended.



Potential: There is still some potential for new routes.

General: 23 bolted routes & 25 trad routes.

Rock Type: Sandstone & quartzite mix.

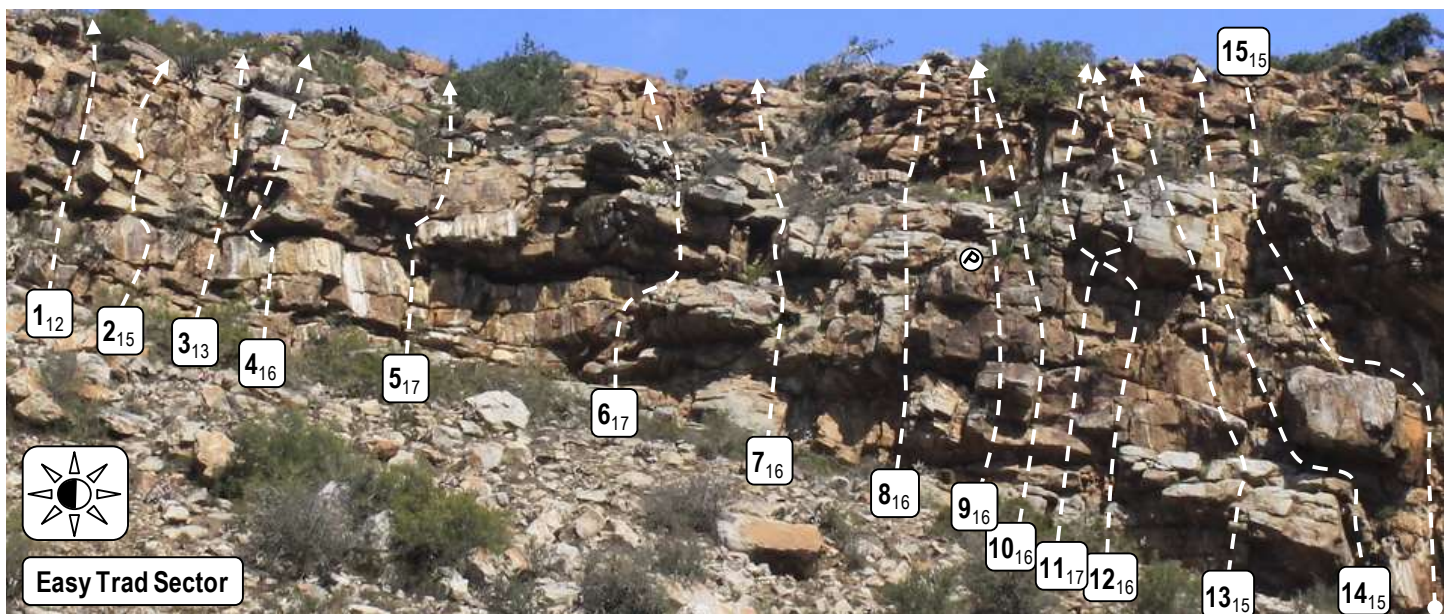
Hazards: Area is horse free, could be snakes.

Accommodation: There are a hundred and one places to stay in Grahamstown. The best would be to stay at the old jail back packers. They have a sweet pub, full of hippies, students & tourists.

Easy Trad Sector



- 1. Craig's Way – 12** Craig Bester & Allen Luck 2003 (T)
Up easy ramp break.
- 2. Lucky Boy – 15** Allen Luck & Craig Bester 2003 (T)
Up ramp trending L to avoid overhangs, break R on nose. Top out.
- 3. Noodle Poodle – 13** Craig Bester & Allen Luck 2003 (T)
Up easy ramp break.
- 4. Lucky Streak – 16** Allen Luck & Craig Bester 2003 (T)
Up splitter crack, at roof move L to break out. Up through laps, overhangs & ledges.
- 5. Happy Place – 17** Allen Luck & Craig Bester 2003 (T)
Easy break to L of large overhang, move R on ramp above overhang.
- 6. The Way of the Allen – 17** Allen Luck & Derek Marshall 2003 (T)
Up open book to R of big overhang, then R to under "very square" overhang, up the break to L of "very square" overhang
- 7. The Way – 16** Craig Bester & Allen Luck 2003 (T)
Up the RHS of rounded overhang. Move R onto ledge with boulder. Move L into roof recess. Easy ground to the top.
- 8. Let It Be, Let It Be** Garvin Jacobs & Derek Marshall 2003 (T)
Up break to L of overhanging square protrusion, up L facing open book & then move L at roof, over ledge to top.



- 9. Brown Bear – 16** Derek Marshall & Garvin Jacobs 2003 (T)
Start 1m L of White Bear, through the middle of overhanging square protrusion. Through the face to L of tree.
- 10. White Bear – 16** Garvin Jacobs & Derek Marshall 2003 (T)
Start below small R facing open book, trend L over ledges, taking the cleanest line.
- 11. Whisper Words of Wisdom – 17** Derek Marshall & Garvin Jacobs 2003 (T)
Through overhanging start. Up below roof, move through roof trending R. Over ledge & brokenness to the top.
- 12. Christ Will Shine on You - 14** Craig Bester & Dave Kruger 2003 (T)
Easy L facing broken open book, at roof move L.
- 13. Rise from Death – 15** Derek Marshall & Garvin Jacobs 2003 (T)
Through small roof below prominent 'V' notch. Directly up.
- 14. That Is Who You Are – 15** Allen Luck & Craig Bester 2003 (T)



Up R facing open book, take first Ledge L under the bulging block. Up R facing open book & then through V notch.

15. Ledge Lizard – 14

Don, Joe & David Maclennan late 1970s (T)

Up the easy recess under the LHS of the huge roof. Across the ledge & up on the LHS of the huge roof.

16. Inane Wars – 17

Derek Marshall & Garvin Jacobs 2003 (T)

Up L trending ramp break. Under the roof, traverse L & out past the roof.

17. Yoyo - 16

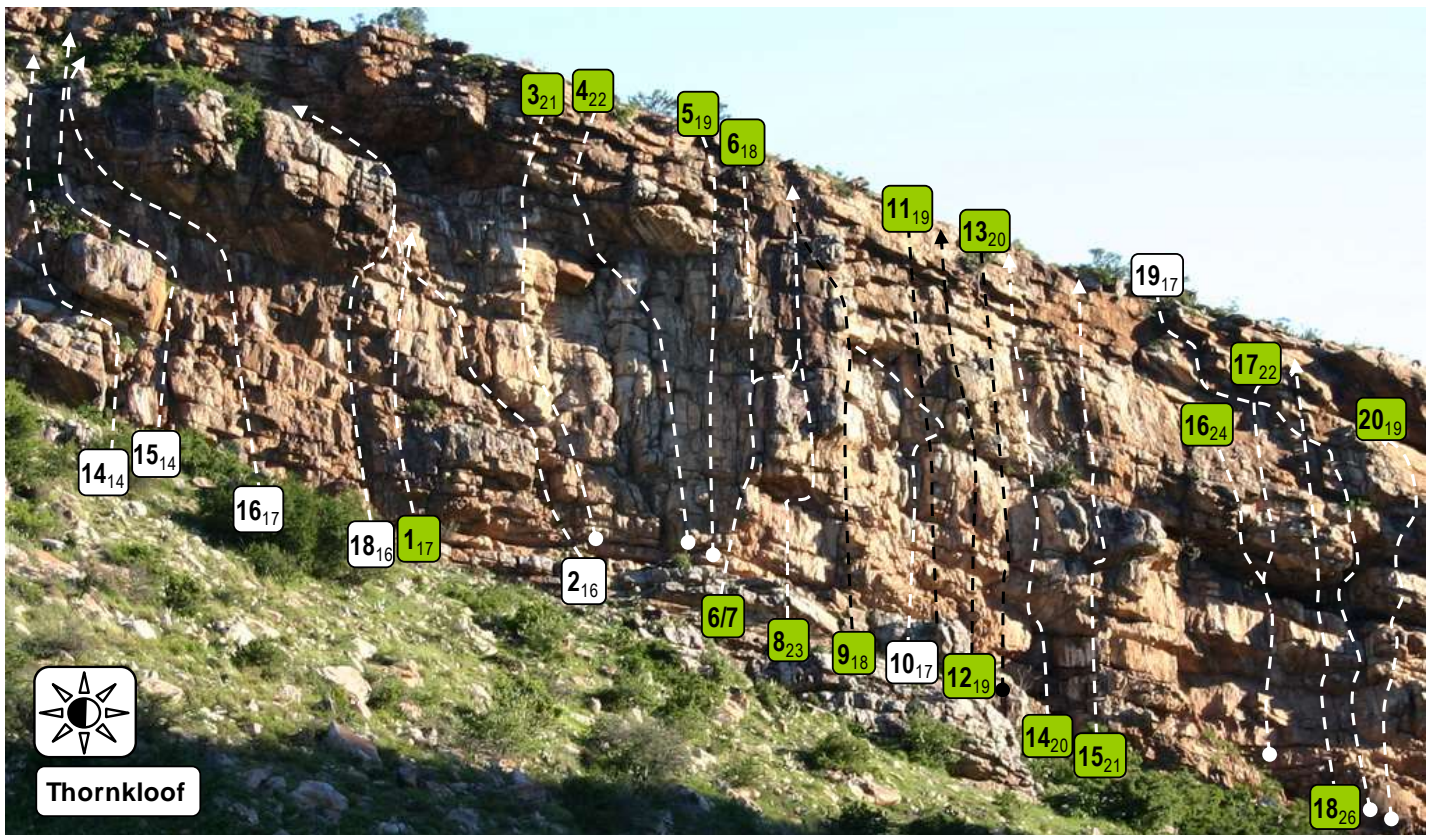
Don, Joe & David Maclennan late 1970s (T)

Takes the steep corner on the RHS of the huge roof. Continue up the face & end on a committing layback up the corner where the huge roof meets the face on the R.

Sport Sector



- **1. Convalescence – 17** Keith James 1992 (5B&C)
- 2. DEF - 16** Don, Joe & David Maclennan late 1970s (T)
Start as for *Slow Fade*, follow a diagonal line L to the committing layback open book of *Yoyo*.
- **3. Slow Fade - 21★★** Keith James 1994 (10B&C)
- **4. The Burl – 22 ★★★** Keith James 1995 (9B&C)
- **5. Fear of the Dark – 19** Derek Marshall & Terence Trevaskis 19/01/2013 (8B&C)
- **6. Re-animator – 18 ★** Terence Trevaskis & Derek Marshall 19/01/2013 (8B&C)
- **7. The Purple Pillar – 16 ★★★** Keith James 1987 (8B&C)
Originally this line was called *The Rib* (13, A0). Was led clean on trad by Keith James in 1987, bolted in 1992.
- **8. Sheer Rage – 23 ★★★** Keith James 1991 (6B&C)
This was the first route bolted at Thorns, with a 12v Bosch which could drill 2 holes on a charge!
- **9. Flaked Out – 18** Keith James 1992 (8B&C)



- 10. Black Hole – 17** Don, Joe & David Maclennan late 1970s (T)
Up the recess just R of the pillar, up to a hole & a nest under the roof. Move R to a belay ledge, then traverse L to the pillar. Up the front of the pillar. Route was climbed in two pitches.
- **11. Le Petit Tois – 19 ★** Keith James 1989 (7B&C)
Originally led free on trad gear, terrifyingly at the exit, in 1989. Bolted in 1992.
- **12. Pickpocket – 19 ★** Keith James 1992 (7B&C)
- **13. Sleight of Hand – 20★★** Keith James 1996 (10B&C)
- **14. Crater's Corner – 20 ★** Keith James 1989 (10B&C)
Originally led free on trad gear in 1989, bolted in 1992.
- **15. Battalions of Steel – 21** Derek Marshall 2001 (6B&C)



● **16. Spectre – 24**

Keith James 1994 (7B&C)

● **17. Introspectre – 22 ★★**

Keith James 1993 (8B&C)

Originally led free on trad gear in 1993 by Keith James, bolted in 1994.

● **18. Renaissance Man – 26 ★★**

Jeremy Colenso 1996 (7B&C)

Bolted by Keith James. Re-bolted by Juan-drays Marshall Jan 2011.

19. Zig-Zag -17, A0

John Moss ~1978 (T)

Up the recess, over a small roof & into a cave roof. Follow the sloping ledge under the roof to the L, break out to a small tree. Move out L. Route was climbed in two pitches.

Apparently when John Moss reached the cave roof, he pushed off a huge block & under the block was an unhappy Cape Cobra.

● **20. Retrospectre – 19 ★★★**

Paul Schlotveldt 1988 (7B&C)

Originally led free on trad gear in 1988 by Paul Schlotveldt, bolted by Keith James in 1994.

● **21. Mirror of Horrors – 23**

Keith James 1996 (5B&C)

● **22. Twisted & Vile – 23**

Keith James 1996 (7B&C)

● **23. Jewel of the Nile – 23**

Keith James 1996 (6B&C)

● **24. The Beach – 21**

Mike Roberts 1989 (6B&C)

Originally led free on trad gear by Mike Roberts in 1989, bolted by Keith James in 1994.

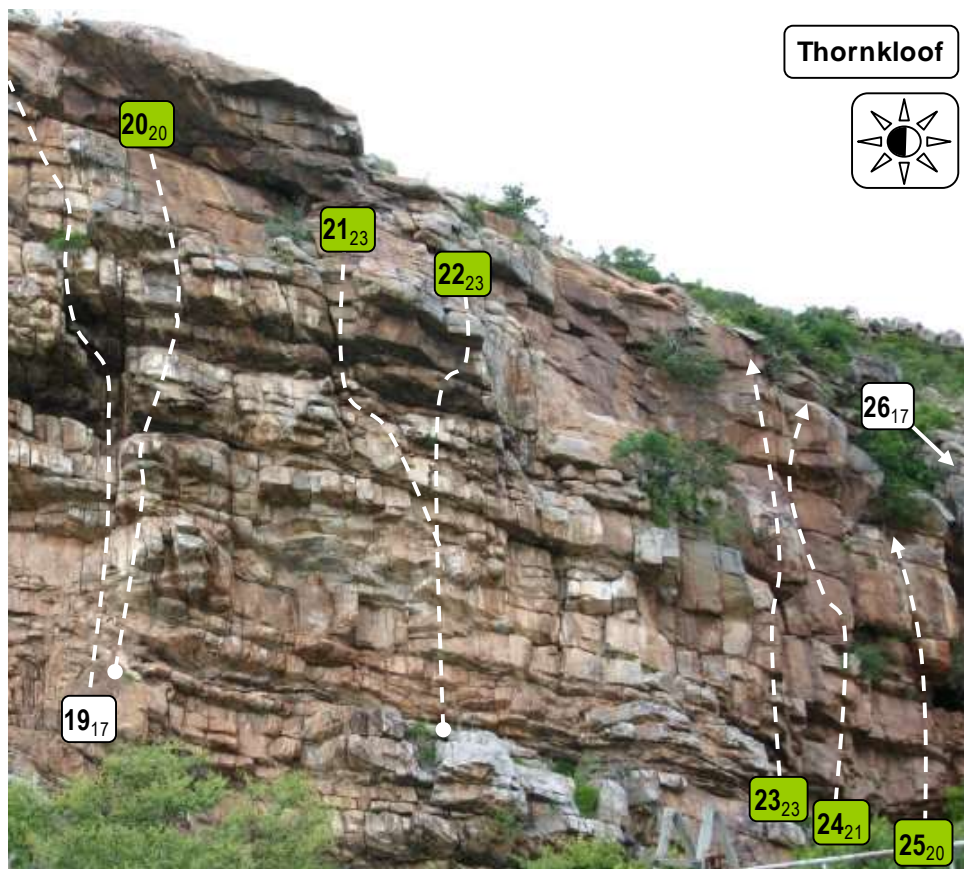
● **25. Archimedean Screw – 20**

Keith James 1994 (6B&C)

26. The Last Route – 17

Don, Joe & David Maclennan late 1970s (T)

Starts to the R near the river. Scramble to a sloping ledge. Climb up blocks on the corner on the L. Traverse back R above the belay to a sloping, overhanging crack. Climb this crack to a stance. Route finishes up pleasant easy bulges. Route was climbed in two pitches.



● 27. Lenti – 28

Jeremy Colenso 1994 (4B&C)

On the hill opposite the main Thornkloof crag. Bolted by Keith James.

Historical snippet: Jeremy had a Staffordshire bull terrier called Lenti at the time of opening.





New Year's River

Continue along the road running below Thornkloof. There is a prominent saddle in the ridge ahead. The road curves R to the farmhouse. Walk through a gate on the L towards a windmill & some animal pens. Through a donga & up the hill to R of saddle, following a fence. From the top of the hill you can see into the New Year's River valley. Head down to a horseshoe bend. New Year's cliff is 100m high. Access has not been determined yet & nobody has climbed here in many years...as far as we know.

The routes are not recorded in order.

Sharp Edge – 17

John Alexander 30/11/1983 (T)

P1 Move through steep open book, then traverse R onto ledge.

P2 Traverse using handrail under roof. Exit overhang onto easy exit slopes.

The Frontal Route – 16

P1 – 50m Follows the inside corner of the big scoop below the main central overhang.

P2 – 35m A diagonal traverse R brings you to a wide ledge.

P3 – 25m Climb short faces to the steep corner where the cliff above meets the face on the R.

P4 – 17m Move up the corner & traverse L across a steep wall. This is the crux pitch.

P5 – 10m Continue more easily L then climb a wall to the top.

Fire Break – 14

P1 – 40m Follow the spur on the R of the big scoop to a big ledge.

P2 – 15m Meander R then come back L, side-stepping roofs, to a prominent fault going diagonally R. This is about 20m R of the crux pitch of *The Frontal Route*.

P3 – 35m Climb the fault (crux) & either finish easily up to the L or do an exposed traverse out to the R, before breaking out to the top.

The Goat Walk – 13

Climb the big scoop & then traverse a long way L just beneath the overhang. Once clear of the overhang, walk about 25m L to a clean break up the last band of rock.