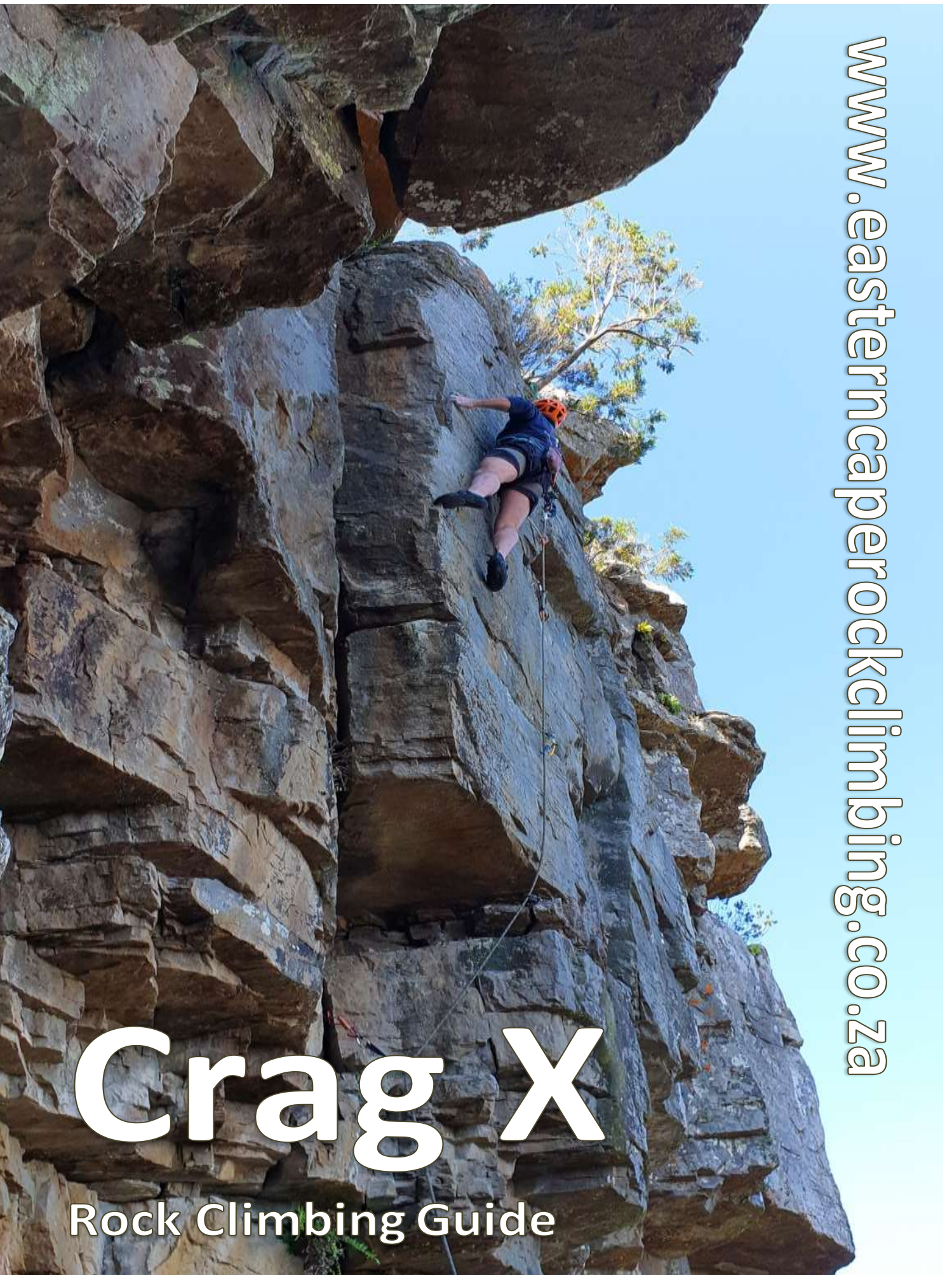


www.easterncaperoockclimbing.co.za

Crag X

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 climb.co.za. The landowners accept no liability what so ever. 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!

Note from the scribe: Please note that this is a web based guide, easy to change, so send corrections, additions & adjustments to info@easterncaperockclimbing.co.za . You are welcome to print this out or use the info for a better guide. But please don't distribute in anyway other way. I look forward to first ascents being claimed, old pictures, forgotten notes...please send it all to me.

Access: Mountain Drive is municipal land & there are no access restrictions.

Walk-in: About 5 minutes on a good path.

History: Keith James discovered *Crag X* in 1989¹ a few months after he moved to Grahamstown. There had been a big fire & while Keith was out walking on Featherstone Ridge (to the south west), he looked back on the burnt hillside & spied a band of rock exposed through the burnt trees. He explored off Mountain Drive, found *Crag X*, completely entangled with burnt vegetation (mix of alien & indigenous). Over several weeks he cut away the crap, exposing the indigenous trees & of course the crag.

The obvious great line is the classic *Celestial Omnibus*. Keith first worked it on top rope, off some very old school piton anchors. The bolted top anchors were added later. In the spring of '89, he climbed it cleanly on top rope & then lead it. Paul Schlottveldt did the first on sight lead & later soloed it after Microbe (Mike Roberts) on sight soloed it in 1990. Paul Schlottveldt also top roped & then lead *Blue Funk* (25). All the other lines were lead or soloed, mostly after top rope inspection first in 1989. Numerous shorter boulder problems & circuit traverses,



which are the quintessence, of the place. were developed between '89 and '92-ish.



Celestial Omnibus has had boulder/solo ascents from about 6 climbers over the decades. Only three of those were on-sight. The late Bret Ribbink soloed *Celestial Omnibus* regularly after he wired the route on top-rope.

Very few climbers go to *Crag X* these days to climb the routes, mostly it's just the circuit traverses that see any action. In earlier years Keith had a system of circuits which gave him 1000 feet of climbing in an hour. Beware these circuits are highball-ish, make sure you have the stones & the guns!

Jeff Stevens', *Crag Fax Grahamstown Crag Guide*, published in 1994, records *Crag X* as a top rope & bouldering area. He only recorded the 10 routes that have top anchors. Somehow in current times *Crag X* is still considered a top rope & bouldering area. This is a bit of a shame, as *Crag X* is a reasonable single pitch trad area. Stephen Holness who climbed with Rhodes Mountain Club around 1992 confirmed that all the routes recorded in *Crag Fax Grahamstown Crag Guide* were led ground up in his day.

Thanks & Appreciation:

1. Massive thanks to the Makana Municipality for allowing us to climb at *Crag X*.
2. Keith James for keeping *Crag X* alive for nearly 40 years & all the information that was passed on to be recorded in this guide. *(The history is paraphrased from what he e mailed to me, I hope you can hear Keith's classic way of speaking & telling it!)*
3. Jeff Stevens for his *Crag Fax Grahamstown Crag Guide*. Thanks for all the crucial details. Names would have been lost & maybe the crag forgotten if it was not for your initial guide.
4. Dave Harding for various details.

Time & Weather: *Crag X* is great in summer & winter. South facing. Full shade. *Crag X* is known to seep after heavy rain & takes a while to dry.

Potential: There are lines that have not been recorded. That said, any lines attributed to the Derek Marshall or his mates may only be the first recorded ascent.

Rock Type: Witterberg quartzite. 19 single pitch trad lines.

Hazards:

1. Area is reasonably safe, but take the usual precautions as the crag is close to town.
2. The top anchors are old & rusted. Try to back them up.

Environmental: Eish! No littering, especially stompies. The locals will become mightily pissed off. This is going to be ugly!

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
BS	Bum Start
SS	Stand Start
	Highball - high / dangerous
	Lowball - small / low
	Afternoon Shade
	Morning Shade
	Shade all day
	Sun all day
	Dappled shade all day
	Can be climbed in wet weather



1. X Rated – 19

Craig Swartz & Tyson Baars 09/08/2019 (T)

Undercut recess crack, into a small low roof, up to under projected roof. L of roof & out.

2. Jam Factor – 22

Keith James 1989 (T&C)

Up wide undercut crack. R to single chain.

3. The Ripper – 22

Keith James 1989 (T&C)

Up undercut rails, diagonally R into wide open book. Up to roof, rail R under roof, L along the lip of the roof & out over nose.

4. X Factor – 23

Keith James 1989 (T&C)

Same start as *The Ripper*, but rail past the open book & up the thin crack in the head wall.

5. Celestial Omnibus – 23 ★★★

Keith James 1989 ¹ (T&C)

This is Grahamstown's original test piece. Up undercut rails, diagonally R, through a roof & over an unusual feature.

6. Blue Funk – 26 ★★

Paul Schlottveldt & Keith James 1989 (T&C)

Up undercut rails & overhangs. Diagonally L through a thin head wall.

7. Generation X – 19

Derek Marshall, Ruben Snyman & Brad Innges 07/09/2019 (T&C)

Start under twin jutting blocks, up through overhang, moving L into prominent crack. Step R to chains of *Celestial Omnibus*.

8. Citizen X – 19 ★

Derek Marshall, Ruben Snyman & Brad Innges 07/09/2019 (T&C)

Start under, under cut 'V' notch, below L trending ramp open book.

9. X Sê Vokken Whoa! – 19

Derek Marshall, Ruben Snyman & Brad Innges 07/09/2019 (T&C)

Start up on staggered jutting blocks. Up to below roof, rail L into ramp open book. Into horizontal rail crack. Diagonally R across ramp to belay on jutting point.

10. Ma Hat Ma Ganja – 22

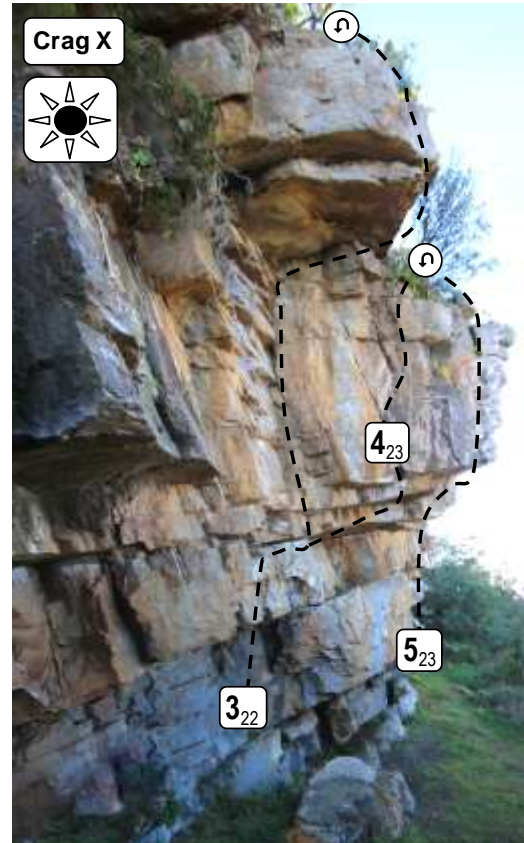
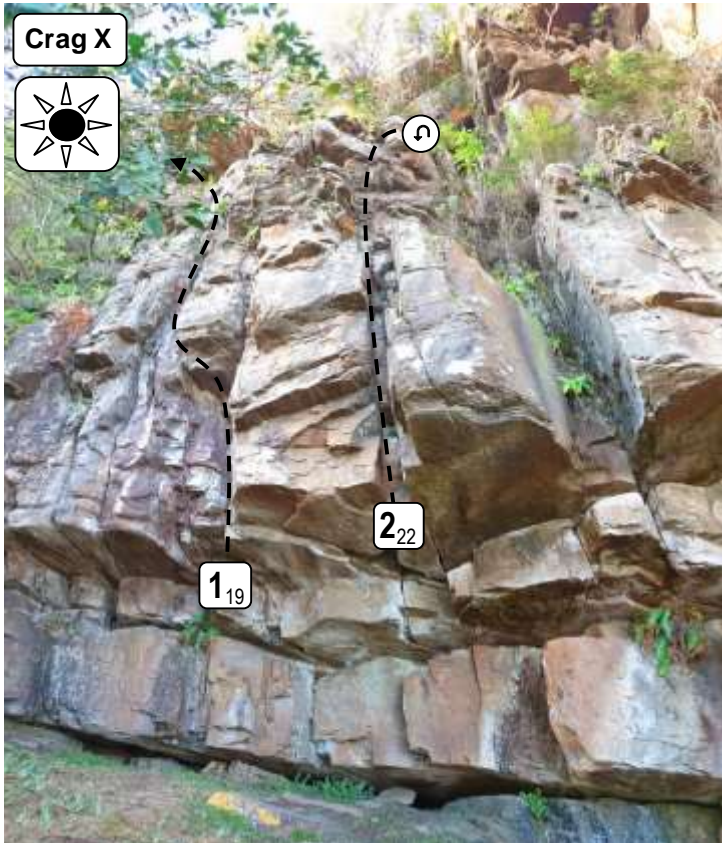
Keith James 1989 (T&C)

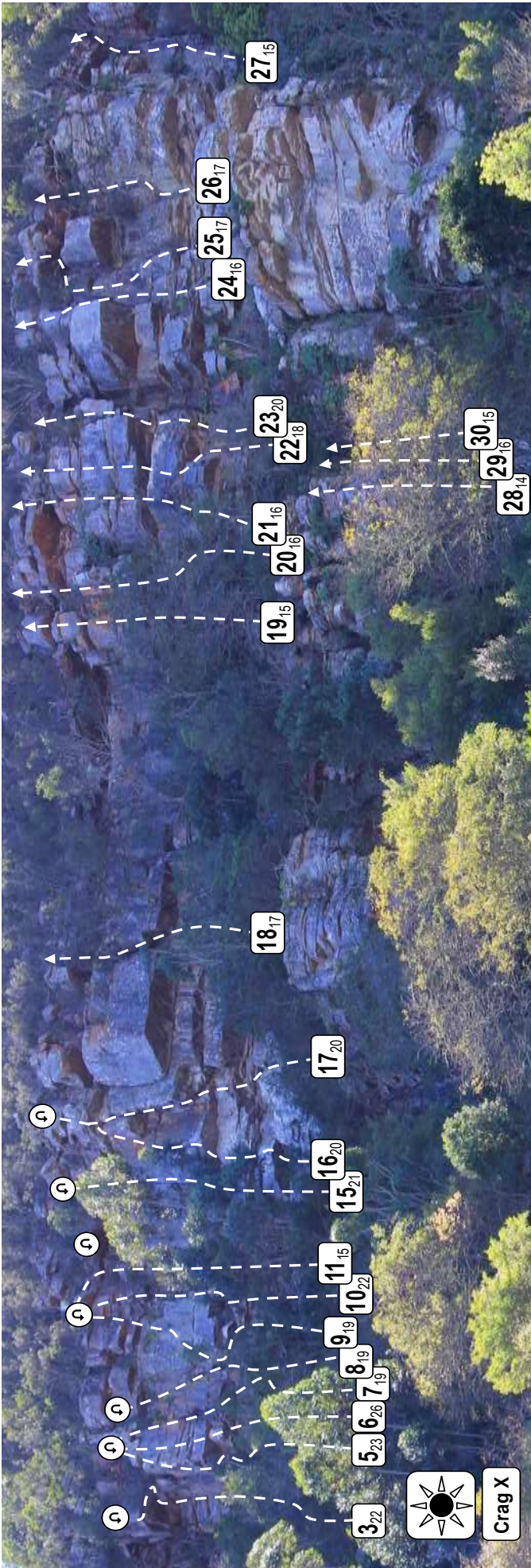
Up undercut rails & overhangs to a roof, break out R & up off-width. Belay on jutting point.

11. Gareth's Gall – 15

Keith James 1989 (T&C)

Up broken gully break. Belay on jutting point.





12. Xstasy – 20 ★★

Keith James 1989 (T,1B&C)

Up open book, at low roof rail L & up the prominent L facing open book.

13. Blank Xpression - 21 ★★★

Keith James 1989 (T&C)

Same start as *Xstasy*, but at low roof rail R & gain the seemingly thin face. Through the middle of the face. Step R on ledge to chains of *Moon Shadow*.

14. Moon Shadow – 19 ★★★

Keith James 1989 (T&C)

Same start as *Xstasy*, but at low roof rail R & into a prominent sweet break. Directly up.

15. Moon Shadow Direct – 21

Mike Jäger 1992 (T&C)

Start up rails & overhangs directly below *Moon Shadow*.

16. Mambo Jumbo – 20

Mike Jäger 1992 (T&C)

Up undercut rails & overhangs to a roof. Break through the roof using a side pull block. Move R & up more tails to top.

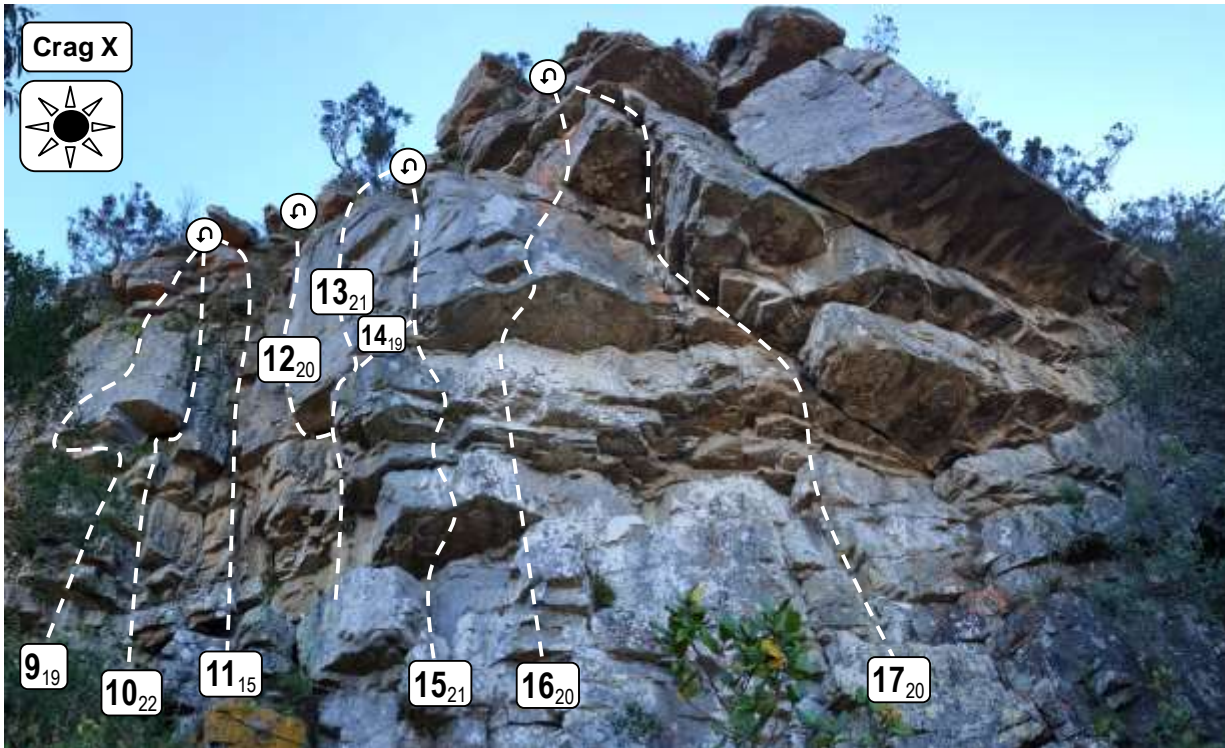
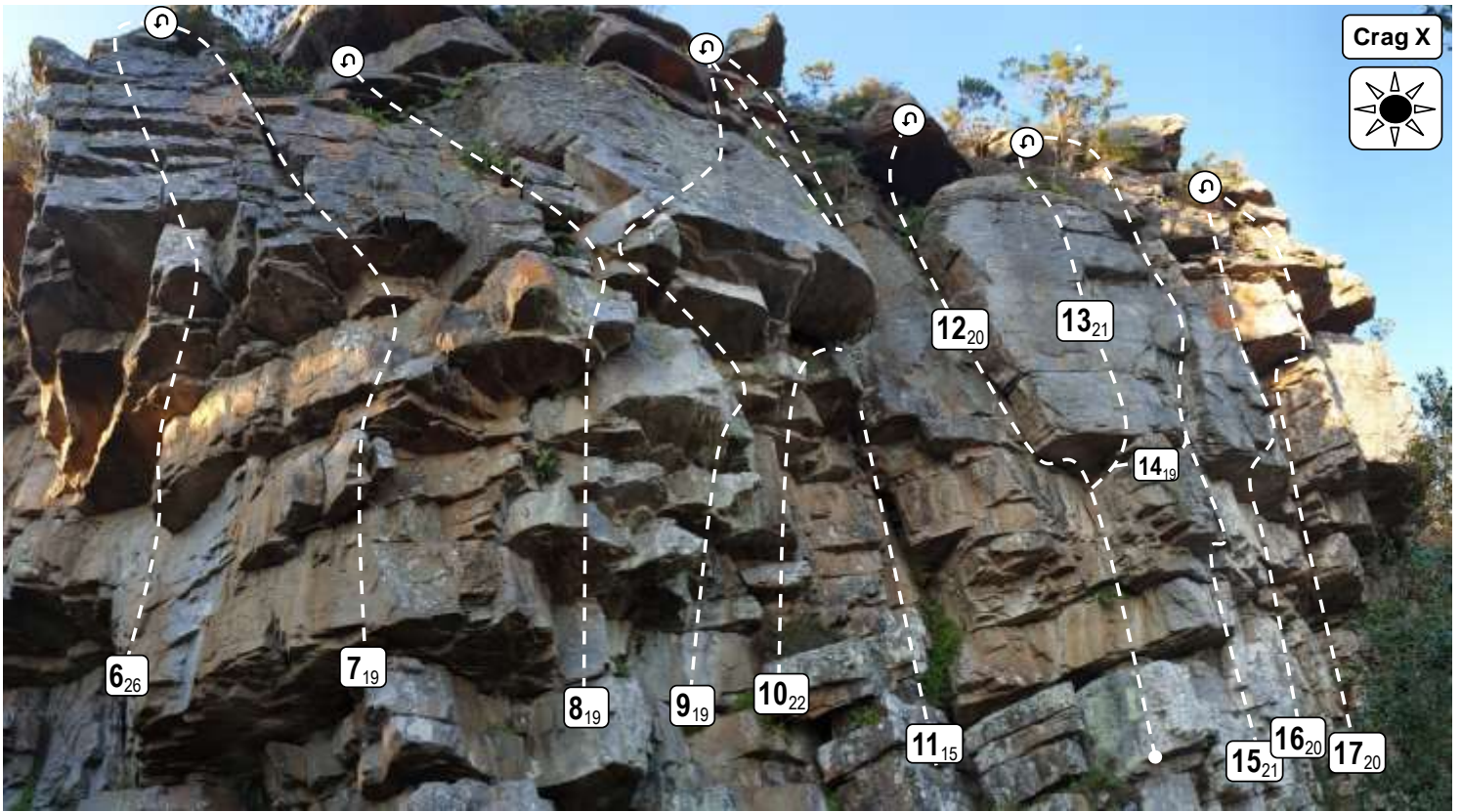
17. Jetlag – 20

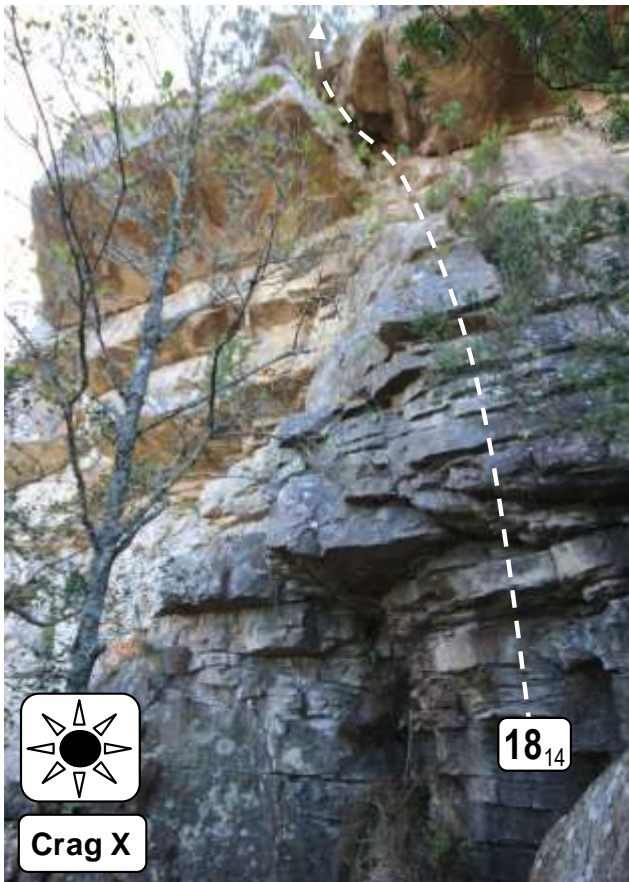
Mike Jäger 1992 (T&C)

Up undercut rails & overhangs to gain an open book. Up the open book to a roof. Rail L & out of roof. Directly up to chains.

18. XXXL – 14 Derek Marshall & Ruben Snyman 07/09/2019 (T)

Up ramp & then through chimney roof break.





19. XYZ - 15

Derek Marshall & Craig Swartz 09/08/2019 (T)
Up low off width, directly up on nice rock. Bamba for the top.

20. Xropriate - 16

Derek Marshall & Tyson Baars 09/08/2019 (T)
Up over jutting low point, L on rails. Bamba for the top.

21. Xtort - 16

Derek Marshall & Tyson Baars 09/08/2019 (T)
Up diagonal R trending break, then up over small rooves & rails. Bamba for the top.

22. Viewed in X - 18

Derek Marshall & Craig Swartz 09/08/2019 (T)
Up onto ledge below roof, rail L under the roof. Break out onto prow, over rails to next roof. Break through roof on side pull. Bamba for the top.

23. Hardcore XXX - 20 ★

Craig Swartz & Derek Marshall 09/08/2019 (T)
Up onto ledge below low roof, through the roof using arete. Up into V roof, break out L.

24. X Marks the Spot - 16

Derek Marshall & Terence Trevaskis 09/08/2019 (T)
Start under overhangs, up into open book, move L onto small face. Bamba for the top.

25. X Men - 17

Terence Trevaskis & Derek Marshall 09/08/2019 (T)
Up groove recess, move L onto ramp & up o roof. Traverse R under roof & onto dassie squirm ledge.

26. Xcalibur - 17

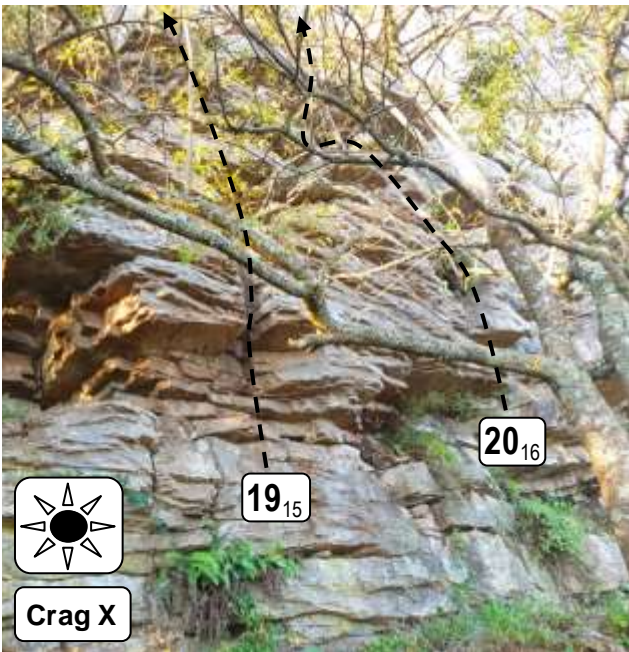
Tyson Baars & Craig Swartz 09/08/2019 (T)
Up recess open book, move R into twin parallel recess. Directly up

27. X² - 14

Nelmarie van Staden & Tyson Baars 07/09/2019 (T)
Straight up on ramp arête, out R at roof.

28. My X -14

Nelmarie van Staden & Brad Innges 07/09/2019 (T)
Up the arête, R of roof to get out.



29. The Great Xcape - 16

Up vert with rails, out R at roof.

30. XXX Files - 15

Vertical with rails & pinches.

Nelmarie van Staden & Brad Innges 07/09/2019 (T)

Tyson Baars & Nelmarie van Staden 07/09/2019 (T)

References:

¹ Keith James

SA Climbers Club, May - Aug 1989 Newsletter

