

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara Sandstone



Rising 3000 feet above Santa Barbara, the Santa Ynez Mountains are home to the warm sandstone outcrops that provide this historic city with its climbing. Although not extensive, the climbing in and around the area is good and varied enough to keep the surf boards on the car.

Gibraltar Rock, located along Gibraltar Road, is where the best climbing is found. "The Rock" has two main faces about 70 feet high. The south face is a good beginner's area, with easy to moderate topropes. To the left, on the southwest corner, is *The Nose*, a highly-exposed overhanging hand crack (5.10+). Just below is the newly-climbed *Smooth Arete*. This overhanging arete is Santa Barbara's first 5.12. Moving around the corner, onto the west face, is *Mirror in the Bathroom*, a bolted aid route which leads to 5.10+ free moves. Further to the left is the most popular climb at Gibraltar, *T-Crack*, a smooth T-shaped crack (5.9) about 20 feet long which leads to a mantle, followed by a small roof split by a finger crack (5.10).

About 150 yards before Gibraltar Rock is a 90-foot wall on the right side of the road bearing the *Bolt Ladder*, which can be freed at 5.9 or 5.11. The short double finger cracks to the right (5.10) are usually top-roped.

A three-quarter mile hike to the east of Gibraltar is the Cold Spring's dome formation (*The Dome*). There

are two popular routes: on the sunny side, *Fun in the Sun* (5.9) is a good face route which passes over two small roofs, and on the shady, overhanging side, *Makunamia* (5.11) is an overhanging finger crack about 75 feet long, and generally regarded as the best climb in the Santa Barbara area.

The other main climbing area is in San Ysidro Canyon, reached from the end of San Ysidro Road. Three-quarters of a mile up a good trail, to the left, are large low-angle slabs offering 15 fair to excellent climbs (5.4 to 5.10+). San Ysidro Creek runs most of the year, providing relief from the heat. Blackwall on Highway 33, north of Ojai, offers good slab climbing. For the boulderer, the two large rocks three miles up Painted Cave Road provide the best bouldering in the county.

Climbing in the Santa Barbara area is best in fall, winter, and spring. Rainfall is minimal. In summer it is best to climb in the morning and evening to avoid the heat and flies.

Apart from climbing, Santa Barbara offers good surfing, windsurfing, diving, boating, hang-gliding and mountain biking. There are state campgrounds on the beach at Refugio and El Capitan, both north of Santa Barbara, and at Carpinteria to the south. A climber's guide for the Santa Barbara area is available at mountain shops in Santa Barbara and Ventura.

—Frank Brodarick



Photos: Frank Brodarick

Above: Dave Griffith on *Makunamia* (5.11), *The Dome*. Below: Blaise Dewey on *T-Crack* (5.10), Gibraltar Rock.