

# Rock Rendezvous



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## March Meeting Notes

By Simon Kenney...

This months meeting was held at the palatial residence of Ger (aldine Murphy) and her housemate in Sunny Richmond View. After the usual food and beer binge we all settled down to the serious task of the meeting.

Tee shirts!! I managed to extract cash from people in exchange for the rather nice RR tee shirts that I have. I still have some left so those of you that would still like one had better show up at the next meeting before they are all gone (After which I guess we will order more).

Rock Rendezvous campaign drive! In the light of the current political campaigning (And because I am a Brit and can't vote!!), I felt it time to run an advertising drive of our own and get the club membership up. To that end I distributed RR posters to people to put up on every route in the country (There that should do it). Or failing that, at least all of the climbing walls, REI, Marmot, etc. Also all of you folks out there try introducing the club into every conversation you have and point them to our website.

Beyond that I made the usual call for photographs and captions, trip reports or other good articles. So send your ramblings to Carolyn Dent for inclusion in the next newsletter.

With the official stuff done we all settled down to a video (brought in by Em, thanks Em) on Lynn Hill's free ascent of El Cap (and an insight into what an incredible woman she is). Of course this pales into insignificance in the face of what our very own Ricardo achieved last year on Zodiac.

Finally... just to say, don't forget this months upcoming meeting (at my house in East Bay) as we have an extra special treat, when our slide show will be presented by our resident professional photographer Jeff Pfleuger on his recent exploits in the Sierra's. I can guarantee some stunning slides on this.

**See you there. Don't forget to bring along new members with you!!**





The urge to climb in Thailand had a special meaning for me. I had planned to come here over a year ago, following a 1 month trekking/mountaineering trip in Nepal. I did go to Nepal, but when I was ready to go to Thailand I received an urgent email from my then-job telling me I had to return and cut my trip short. I did have the adventure of a lifetime in Nepal, but I was left with the bug in my ear as far as climbing in Thailand. Now that I am not working, it seemed imperative that I take the opportunity to go to Thailand. Everybody I met in the climbing-bum circuit that has been there tells me how great it is. Even the trad climbers that would typically snub sport climbing destinations (as Thailand undoubtedly is) rave about this place.

I set to go to Thailand barely missing the climbing season. The consensus is that the ideal time to come here is between November (when the rainy season is over), and February (before it gets too darn hot). I came here Feb 5, planning to spend the better part of the month. I tried unsuccessfully to recruit a few RR members - I won't mention names but they will burn with jealousy when they read this. At the last minute, I found a group of climbers from my hometown Santa Cruz who were going there, so I coordinated to go with them. One of them, John had been here already, so that simplified logistics and I just tagged along with them.



Our destination was Railay, which is a peninsula near the provincial capital of Krabi. We landed in Bangkok and didn't bother spending anytime there except a night at the airport hotel, and the next morning took a local plane to Krabi. From there a short taxi ride to the beach town of Ao Nang, and then we took a 10 minute longtail boat ride to Railay. Although Railay is a peninsula, it is for all intents and purposes like an island. Because of thick jungle in difficult terrain, no road has been built there. Now the area has been quite developed for tourism (not only climbers), yet it's a pedestrian-only resort.



The weather was hot and humid, and when I arrived I was quite skeptical of what kind of rock climbing





could be done there. I have climbed in hot weather but almost always dry, that I can deal with. But humid? The first time I looked at the rock I saw some marble-like polished surfaces. That did not provide more comfort, I could imagine my sweaty palms slipping off the holds. Moreover, there's the lazy beach resort like atmosphere, quite like images I have of Cancun, with all the bars, clubs, and restaurants, all quite cheap. What kind of place is this for climbing? I had been so used to roughing camping it in Yosemite, Joshua Tree, and even Red Rocks. Climbing needs a little sacrifice doesn't it?

I got used to the rock, and the comfort that goes along with it. Maybe one of the reasons the climbing is so great here is that you can climb and not have to live poorly while doing it. Or, as someone put it, is not about the climbing, but about what you do when you're not climbing.



But the climbing itself has its own merits. The type of climbing is unique enough. It is on limestone, perhaps not common in US but very common in continental Europe. But there can be many different kinds of limestone with different features and texture. Here the formations are predominantly caves, stalagmites, and tufas. The climbing is very steep, often overhung, so routes of a certain grade can look a lot more difficult than the guidebook indicates. Until you get on it and you find that there are plenty of hidden jugs and pockets. But sometimes it is difficult to tell from the bottom. One climb that comes to mind is Stalagosaurus, 6a+ (5.10b/c), it's perhaps 30 degree overhung (OK, maybe it's my perceived exaggeration), it's right in the middle of a whole bunch of 7a (5.11c/d) and harder. Then you get on it and you find pockets here, then a series of stalagmite formations you can (or must!) do stemming. Here you learn to trust the ratings in the guidebook, if you

don't see the hold you feel around and if you don't find it you make a committing move and you'll probably find a good resting hold soon enough before you pump out. Some climbs are rated harder than others, of course, but it is a good thing that there are not very many sandbags, at least in the American sense. You have to think a little creatively, because of the many stalagmites that are coming from above, sometimes you don't see them at first and then you realize the next move is behind you. Many call it "3 dimensional climbing."



As those who are reading this have noticed, the ratings use the Continental European system (some call it French, but it is used in Italy and Spain as well, so I refuse to call it that). Most climbing guidebooks have an equivalency table, but I will keep converting for clarity's sake.

Unfortunate (or fortunate, depending on whose perspective) is that there are not very many "beginner" routes, although plenty of climbs if you're a bit above that. In the 5 range (up to 5.8) there's only a handful, perhaps 10, concentrated in two walls, and that's where all the guides take their clients to do top-rope camping sessions. There's a few more 6a (5.9-5.10a), the good news is that many of these are pretty soft. My guess is that many of these were set up as warm up routes and the route-setters who typically climb 5.12 can't think of a rating to give it so they arbitrarily give it 6a. At 6a+ (5.10b/c) the ratings start feeling consistently on.

One other thing that's particular about the area is the protection. These are all "sport routes", but because of the nature of the rock for protection instead of bolts there are pieces of fixed rope threaded through holes everywhere as you would a sling except is more





durable. Many routes use only this type of rope, and very often including the anchor. So if you want to get really technical about this, you could say these are "trad routes. The other is the quality of the bolts. They rust quickly, many only last 1 season and need to be replaced. The new trend is to put the glue-in kind of bolts that are made of titanium, which are more durable. Since the point of sport climbing is often to climb at your limit and perhaps take a few falls, it's best to stick to "trade routes" that have been retrobolted.

As far as places to stay there are three main areas, Railay West, Railay East, and Tonsai. Railay West is the more up-scale, with lodging costing \$ 40 and up, and if you go on a honeymoon that's probably where you want to stay. Railay East is the next down, lodging typically costs \$ 15, and has a little more of the restaurants and nightlife. The last one is Tonsai, at \$8 and below, and this is where most of the climbers and backpackers stay. It is distinctly separated from the areas by the tide, on low tide you can get to the other areas by the beach, but in high tide you must walk uphill and then downhill on class 2-3 terrain, not fun to do in the dark after a few drinks on Railay East. I kept switching between Railay West and Tonsai, as the people from Santa Cruz I was climbing with were staying in Railay East and West, but when I needed to find other partners it was difficult to find them in these areas so then it was best to stay in Railay West.

Most of the climbing is single pitch, but some of the best quality climbs are multipitch. Here's some I did:

- Humanity 6b+ (5.11a), 5 pitches. First pitch (which by the guidebook is not considered part of the climb, but I disagree) begins by climbing a tree with not many branches. I wondered for a second how well my rock climbing skills translated to tree, but amazingly I managed to do it using quite a bit of crack climbing technique. Then the real climbing begins. The climbing is not that hard but often you don't see the next move until you commit. This is 3 dimensional climbing at its finest!
- Ao Nang Tower 6c (5.11b), 3 pitches. It's on an isolated island, we had to hire a boat to take us there and have it wait while we did the climb. In the end we rappelled into the boat, and we almost did not get our ropes wet.



- Thailand Wall. There are many multipitch climbs here. As they begin quite a ways above the ground directly above the water (after a steep trail) you get great exposure on these right away. Unfortunately to do any of the long ones to completion you must negotiate at least a 7a (5.11c/d) pitch, which is beyond my comfort level, maybe next visit. But you can go many of these at least a few pitches and experience some of this great exposure.

As seems to be the tradition, everyone seems to have their list of favorite 10's. To complete it, here's other fine single pitch climbs:

- Missing Snow, Tyrolean Wall (6b+). Very popular "project" route for that grade.
- Fit To Be Thaid, Thailand Wall (6a+). At the far right of Thailand Wall. Great exposure.
- Genghis Bond (6b), The Keep. nice long route, great views
- Totem Pole (6a+), Eagle Wall. Climbs a huge standalone stalagmite.
- Stalagasaurus (6a+), Tonsai. One of the few "easy" climbs at the overhanging Tonsai Cave, looks improbable, but the features are there.
- Babo Does Thailand, The Keep (6c). One of the few climbs of this grade I onsighted clean, that's why I like it.
- Getting To Know You, Thailand Wall (7a). The only reason I was able to do this is because I didn't look at the guidebook carefully and thought it was a 6b!

After being nearly one month there and scheduled to fly home I didn't feel I had seen much of the "real Thailand" so I extended my trip and decided to head





north to the city of Chiang Mai. Being the 2nd city in Thailand, it's much smaller, user friendly, yet almost as complete. There was some climbing to be done there, but being the end of the dry season, many farmers are burning the fields ("slash and burn"), so visibility was a bit disappointing. The climbing is good for a local crag but in my opinion not "world destination" like Railay is. I would say a week's worth. But there are other things to do in Chiang Mai. I took a cooking class, and then took a Thai massage class. For those not familiar with the style (and even if you think you are, read on), it's a "hard" style, using different parts of the body like hands, elbows, much similar to Shiatsu. Some would say it's like yoga being done onto you. I think it was my background in martial arts that interested me in this, much of it is about using your body as efficiently as possible, with the difference that you use it to help the other person not hurt them, and unless you're the sort of person who's looking to get into a lot of trouble much more likely to apply. And I even managed to learn a few words of Thai, as difficult as the language is, just in time before leaving. If I stayed in Thailand a bit longer, the next temptation would have been to join a Muay Thai (kickboxing). But I think sticking to massages is a bit safer...



For more photos, check out the upcoming online at <http://www.ekabal.com/~adan/>, which should be ready by the time this newsletter gets published.

## Winter in Beijing

George Patterson reports from China



I have been in Beijing China for more than 1 month and have gone to the Capital Gym a few times climbing indoors. The weather here is now only just warm enough to climb outdoors. This is not me, but a picture that I took at the Capital Gym in Beijing showing the climbing wall.





# J.Tree and Red Rocks

By Hamid

In the past 2 years I would spend at least a month climbing in the desert over the winter break but now I'm a responsible working member of society (not really!), and so I had to do with around a week of climbing.

I was to meet Richard and Fran from Las Vegas in J.Tree in the morning on Saturday the 20th, so I drove to J.Tree on Friday night. Richard and Fran were both on time at 8:30 am. At that time we picked up a 4th person, Scott from Vancouver and hit the rocks. The weather was perfect and incredibly empty for a weekend in J.Tree.

First Richard led Pope's crack (5.9) in Echo Cove and Fran followed it. Then I led it and Scott followed me. I think this is a solid 5.9 J.Tree crack. Very beautiful. Then we top-roped British Airways and got spanked! After that I led the Snatch (5.10a). First time I led this climb, I walked it. This time I got spanked badly. Scott followed it and didn't have an easier time. After that Scott and I took turns leading the 5.6 and 5.7 slab climbs on the Echo Cove formation. We needed to feel more confident after the humbling experience on the Snatch, and we did feel better after climbing these enjoyable routes.

The next day (21<sup>st</sup>), I climbed half the day with Richard. I led Double Cross (always a pleasure to climb, but 5.7 ?!!). Richard then led Hands Off (very cool thought provoking 5.8) and Looney Toons (super cool solid 5.9 crack climb). Then Scott and I headed to Lost Horse Wall (my favorite wall in J.Tree), and made quick work of the Swift(5.7) and Bird On a Wire(very soft 5.10a).

I headed that night to Vegas to climb with Noriko at Red Rock.

I was supposed to do work on Monday the 22nd and Tuesday the 23rd. On Monday however I found out that someone has copied all my credit cards and gone Christmas shopping with them and that my cell phone has died. So all day I was running around Vegas getting all that sorted out. When Noriko called me that night, I said f-- it, I'm going climbing. So Tuesday we went to climb Bealuha's Book and Sundog on Solar Slab wall, I'd climbed everything else on that wall, so I wanted to tick these two climbs as well.

Tuesday 5:40 am: Noriko wakes me, we get ready, drive to the parking lot and start hiking. We probably started climbing around 8:30 am. I led every pitch of these climbs

onsight. Noriko followed and gave bitchin' belays. I took the 5.9 arête variation on Bealuha's book and found it to be protected and enjoyable. At 10:45 am we found ourselves at the base of the upper portion of Solar Slab wall, and by 11:15 am we had located the one bolt which serves as the belay anchor for the first pitch of Sundog and we were flying. You kind of need 60m ropes to do this climb in 4 pitches and make it to the bolt anchors, but since we only had 50s and I really wanted to make it to the top I had to setup belays in the middle of the pitches.

We still managed to do the climb in 4 pitches. Sundog is kind of serious climb. 5.7 runouts on very loose stuff. But parts of the climb are very cool indeed. We both found the 5.10a section to be more like 5.8. the last off-width pitch, as to be expected at Red Rock isn't really off-width, there are holds everywhere. We were at the bottom of Sundog at around 3 pm. I knew the rope would get stuck at the last rappel and sure enough it did. It got to the point that I had lead and down-climb most of the first pitch to retrieve the stuck rope but the rest of the rappels in the Solar Slab gully went uneventfully.

Wednesday December 24th:

It drizzled the night before so we decided to do some short climbs in Black Velvet canyon. I onsighted Wholesome Fullback (5.10a) and Sand Felipe(5.10a). Wholesome Fullback is probably the finest single pitch crack climb I've ever done. Absolutely amazing! Sand Felipe is very nice too, very pumpy. Later on, on another trip I did Triassic Sands as well! SUPER COOL climb.

The weather was to turn shitty starting that night at Red Rock so Noriko and I decided to head back to J.Tree and climb there for a couple of days. I left Wednesday and we decided that I would meet Noriko on Thursday morning.

Thursday December 25th:

I woke up at about 7 am, it was super windy so I thought I'd go call Noriko and also check the forecast and determine whether it was really worth staying and climbing in J.Tree or whether I should be responsible, go home and get some work done.

I went into 29 Palms, made a call to Noriko and decided that it was best that I go home. I went back to my campsite at Jumbo Rock, packed up and started driving to the J.Tree entrance at around 8 am. The road was very empty, I would see another car every 5 minutes or so. The desert was very beautiful that morning. Such pleasure to be





making those turns in that beautiful scenery. I was probably going around 60 mph in the 45 mph zone. I bent down to change the track on the CD player when I hit the shoulder of the road suddenly. I hit the brake but it was too late. The car went out of my control. I swerved with great speed to the other side and went into the bushes. At this moment, the thought in my head was: "F---, that must be a lot of damage to the car". I hit a tree, and the car rolled over head first.

I found myself upside down with the contents of the orange juice I was drinking a minute ago all over my clothes. In a minute or two, I managed to open the window

a little and yell "Help!". A nice couple came by after a few seconds and helped open the door.

I came out of the car without a single scratch! I was incredibly lucky to be alive. I called the ranger and AAA and had the car towed, Bought a Southwest ticket and was on my way home at around 3 pm, thanks to Noriko who generously drove me to the Ontario airport.

Last f----- time I EVER speed! I learned my lesson.

And that concludes the trip report of my crazy journey to the desert. Drive and climb safely out there folks!

## The Rock Rendezvous Tee-shirt!

### Now available...

The 2004 Rock Rendezvous tee-shirt is now available. The cost is a paltry \$10:50. How could you pass up such a bargain!



If you are interested in purchasing one e-mail Simon ([simon.kenney@nolte.com](mailto:simon.kenney@nolte.com))





# 2004 Calendar of Events

This calendar has been put together from various suggestions and offers to organize trips by members. If you would like to organize a trip please let me know ([carolynldent@aol.com](mailto:carolynldent@aol.com)), and I can add it to the calendar, and advertise it nearer the time too...

Please also let me know if you want your contact details (phone number and/or e-mail address) to be included in the newsletter. I am aware that some people do not like personal details publishing, so I will not do so unless you give me permission.

<b>Proposed dates</b> (dates in bold are confirmed trips)	<b>Trip</b>	<b>Organizer</b>
<b>April 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Red Rocks	Peter Monks
<b>April 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup></b>	Campsite booked at Pinnacles Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> . Climb 10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> .	Kathy Nerud <a href="mailto:Knerud@ortc.com">Knerud@ortc.com</a>
<b>April 16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup></b>	Yosemite Valley campsite booked	
<b>April 24<sup>th</sup> –25<sup>th</sup></b>	Joshua Tree – contact Carolyn if you are interested in joining us.	Carolyn Dent
<b>April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Yosemite Valley campsite booked	
May/June	Owens River Gorge	Rachel Louie
<b>May 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup></b>	Yosemite Valley campsite booked	
<b>May 23<sup>rd</sup> – June 11<sup>th</sup></b>  (except May 28 <sup>th</sup> , 29 <sup>th</sup> , 30 <sup>th</sup> and June 5 <sup>th</sup> )	Paul has booked campsites in Yosemite, and looks like having extra space. Contact him if you are interested in joining them...	Paul Drew <a href="mailto:pd@metaswitch.com">pd@metaswitch.com</a>
June 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup>	Sue Edwards has offered to host a weekend at her cottage close to Consumnes River Gorge and Calaveras Dome.	Sue Edwards
???	Sonora Pass	Sue Edwards and Em Holland
<b>June 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Yosemite Valley campsite booked	
<b>June 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup></b>	Tuolumne Meadows campsite booked	
June/July	Lovers Leap	
July 4 <sup>th</sup>	Courtright reservoir (or possibly an alternative location)	Simon Kenney
<b>July 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Tuolumne Meadows campsite booked	
<b>July 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup></b>	Tuolumne Meadows campsite booked	
<b>August 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup></b>	Tuolumne Meadows campsite booked	
Autumn	Yosemite Valley campsites to be booked	
Thanksgiving	Red Rocks, J. Tree or an alternative location	







## Next meeting: Tues April 6<sup>th</sup>, 7pm

Our next meeting will be at Simon and Amy's house in the East Bay. Their housemate Jeff Pflueger will be giving the slideshow:

Directions can be found below...



Photographer Jeff Pflueger presents images from an attempt at the summit of Alaska's Marcus Baker via a new route from the sea.

Battles with bears • 120 miles by Kayak • 9,000 feet of climbing in the Chugach • Prolonged groveling in a climate Bradford Washburn has characterized as "Terrible beyond any stretch of the Imagination"

Jeff's photography has appeared in *National Geographic Adventure*, *Paddler Magazine*, *Experience Life*, *American Alpine Journal* and many more publications.

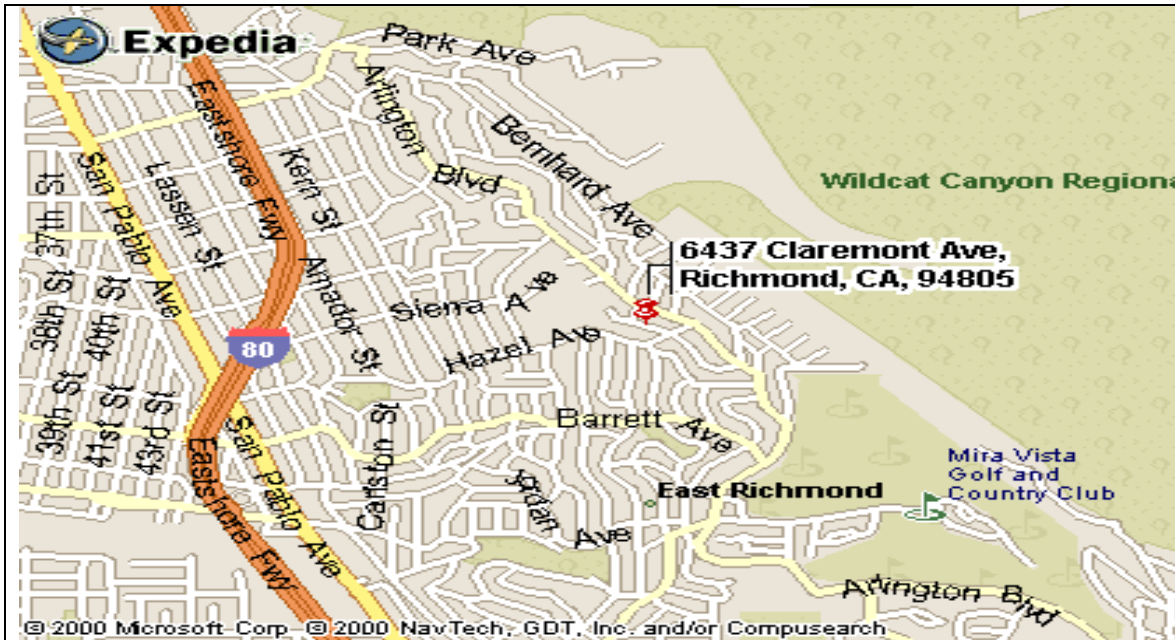


**Where:** 2467 Claremont Ave., Richmond (Along Arlington)

**When:** April 6th, 7 pm

**What to Bring:** Beer, Beverages, and/or snacks.





Phone:

(510) 237 1466 (home)

(415) 505 1189 (Simon's/ Amy's cell)

(925) 279 4428 (Simon's work)

**Directions:**

- I 80 Exit at San Pablo Ave
- Go south 1 block on San Pablo Ave and turn left at lights on Barrett Ave.
- Follow Barrett Ave to the top of the hill where it intersects with Arlington Blvd. Turn left on Arlington Blvd.
- After about 4 blocks turn left on Olive and immediately right on Claremont. We are about 4 houses in on the right.

6437 Claremont Avenue  
Richmond, CA 94805

### Warning/Disclaimer

San Francisco Rock Rendezvous is not a teaching organization and does not endorse or insure rock climbing. Trips advertised in the newsletter are private and are only listed to allow for the co-ordination of car pooling and camping. Each participant on a trip is solely responsible for his or her safety during the entire trip, including the transportation to and from the climbing area and site, and any necessary insurance.

