

Serpent Climbing Guide

Lee Cujes & Darrin Carter

Introduction

By Darrin Carter, 1999

Thoughts of climbing in south east Queensland bring Frog Buttress, the Glasshouse Mountains, and Kangaroo Point to mind.

During summer, even considering to climb at Frog is too much for most. The long runouts on the Glasshouses aren't for the faint-hearted, and most of us have had our fill of KP's urban atmosphere.

If morning and afternoon climbing in the shade during summer sounds appealing, this may interest you. Take metamorphic trachyte, cool coastal breezes, well-bolted routes, rap stations, a moderate approach and pleasant camping with a creek nearby. All this within an easy 1hr 45min drive from Brisbane makes summer in the Sunshine State much more bearable.

Welcome to Serpent!

The trachyte is generally very solid and well featured which allows even the very steep routes to go at more moderate grades than elsewhere. Mighty jugs abound here, with tiny square-cut edges, giant pockets, and rounded slopers providing the main climbing flavour. The potential for much harder routes only waits on those with drive and ability to pick the plums of the Sunshine Coast.

Rockclimbing Code Of Conduct

Access

Be aware of and observe access requirements and agreements. Avoid disturbing wildlife, crops and livestock. Leave gates as you find them, and report any problems or potential problems to the land owners/ managers.

Impact

Respect sites of geological, cultural, or other scientific interest. Please avoid any actions that cause unnecessary erosion. Use existing access tracks and do not leave unnecessary way marks. Help protect all wildlife. Do not disturb nesting birds.

Waste

To ensure our climbing sites stay beautiful please do not leave any rubbish. Keep campsites clean. Dispose of human waste in a hygienic and environmentally responsible manner. Do not pollute fresh water supplies.

Fire

Fire is a serious threat to both safety and ecology. Avoid all risk of fire.

Traditions

Consider ethical issues such as the use of chalk, bolting and pitons, as well as appropriate climbing styles. Remember that placement of fixed equipment alters the climb and is not permitted at many sites.

Safety

Alert uninformed visitors to potential dangers where necessary, and resolve any emerging disputes in a civilised manner.

Respect and Protect Our Climbing Future!

History

By Darrin Carter, 1999

Myself and Sean Smith (who now resides in the USA) were busy putting up routes on the Black Mountain, or known to most as Beerwah in the Glasshouse. On one new route day in 1997 we were rained out and decided to head to the Sunshine Coast Hinterland to explore the various outcrops of trachyte we had seen previously.

After a couple of navigational errors, Sean and I couldn't believe what we had stumbled across – a swathe of vertical and overhanging trachyte which we dubbed "Serpent". The name came from the two large, fang-like formations which hang down from the main roof system, reminiscent of a serpent's maw.

To date, there have been four other, smaller areas added to this, all possessing high quality wall climbing in the vertical realm. These are The Lookout above Serpent, Circus Wall, Bullet-Hard Buttress and Shotgun Wall.

After that first rainy day, scrutiny was high and every possible moment Sean and I would head up to Serpent with a plum to pick each time. Never having bolted steep ground, a few new tricks had to be learnt and over time, a collection of routes began to form a true crag.

The first of the visitors to Serpent was old guard hardman John Hattink who came to check out what two mad bolters had discovered. With so much potential, Sean and I realised we needed help, so someone young and strong was called in. Gareth Llewelin went on to become a major player in the development of some of the harder lines.

Then came our first climbing day, with a select few keen crankers sworn to secrecy. People such as Chris Finn, Aubury Carter, Darren Saunders, Simon Moses, Peter Robbey, Aaron Jones, Neil Monteith and Scott Lawrence to name a few.

Addendum

By Lee Cujes, 2005

The production of an informal guidelet was something that Darrin began in 1999, roughly two years after Serpent's discovery. Unfortunately, there was some incident with access that put a hold on further guidelet development (for fear of opening the floodgates and getting the entire area shut down). Many years have passed now, and with the construction of a major walking trail for hikers in the area, there should be no reason that low impact climbers can't enjoy the climbing at Serpent.

Enjoy the guide, and please tread lightly so that access is preserved.

Climbing Style

By Darrin Carter, 1999

Serpent began as a sport crag for summer climbing, and as a testing ground for those wanting to get accustomed to steeper ground. Many of the routes rely totally on bolt protection with fixed hangers, but that does not mean that we have ignored good natural gear. Therefore a selection of medium to large wires, small to medium cams and one or two larger pieces if so required for routes like Minotaur won't go astray.

A 50m rope will suffice for most of the routes, but a 60m will do all the routes while also making rapping easier. About 10 quickdraws will be heaps and a couple of shoulder length slings to reduce drag. A handful of removable keyhole hangers will also be needed, for some routes still sport a carrot or two. All routes have lower-off rap stations, although some are shared.

When you reach a lower-off, please adhere to the international silent rule and place your own carabiners/quickdraws to top rope or work a route, otherwise the fixed gear is worn out very quickly and suddenly becomes a concern. When simply rappelling or lowering just the once, by all means use the fixed gear.

The trachyte at Serpent is very sound and most routes here have had plenty of traffic. The friction is good and the features quite amazing, but this is rockclimbing and a loose block or two may still be encountered, so take care.

New Routes

By Darrin Carter, 1999

For those wanting to put up new routes at these particular cliffs, there are a number of considerations including time, money, the quality of fixed gear, and ethics. The rock is extremely hard to drill therefore a power drill is the only way of installing large bolts effectively. The minimum hardware requirement is 10 x 75mm flush head, 316 stainless steel expansion bolts for low angle routes. All steep routes require a minimum of 12 x 75mm flush head, 316 stainless steel expansion bolts with a thick commercial hanger. The harder the route, the better quality the hanger must be to stand the number of falls likely to be encountered while working a route. Also, please maintain your own routes.

If you want advice or help with new routing, please don't hesitate to call me and discuss your plans. A route good or bad is a mark against your name, so be willing to put up quality. Contrived or crowded-in routes will be subject to close examination, so if you're not sure, please ask.

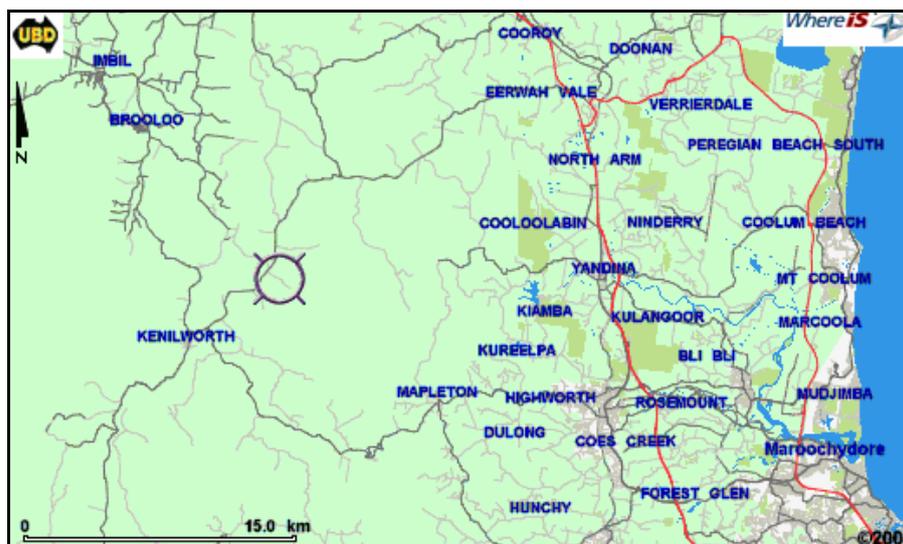
To quote John Sherman:

"Good style or bad style, however you choose to climb is your own business, until it threatens the climbing privileges of others." Chipping holds on any cliff will not be tolerated – period.

Important note:

Fixed gear is not booty! New cliffs sometimes require the placement of fixed gear such as 'biners, ropes, slings, keyhole hangers on belays or whatever. **Do not remove this gear!** There are always reasons gear has been left. Don't temper people's desire to put up new routes by stealing their gear.

Directions



Serpent is located in the Blackall Range, NW of Nambour. Allow two hours travel time from suburban Brisbane. Driving north from Brisbane on the Bruce Highway, take the Eumundi-Noosa Road exit. At the roundabout, take the Eumundi-Kenilworth Road and travel north alongside the main highway for a few minutes until it veers left (west). Continue along this for approximately 22km to Gheerulla State Forest (signposted). Turn left onto Sam Kelly Road (dirt).

The camping area is about two kilometres from the entrance.

To park for climbing, stop at about 1.7km at the large red gum with an old survey marker carved into it. Park in the small area just before the tree on your right, facing the direction you drove in (hard to see).

The walk should take around 25 minutes, give or take, depending on fitness level. Follow the track which crosses the stony creekbed and leads to an intersection of walking track and motorbike track. Go straight ahead on a foot-track until you reach another intersection with a 4WD vehicle track. Turn right and walk along this dirt road for a few minutes until you see a large fallen tree with a prominent saw-cut end facing you (left side of road). You'll note a well-worn path leading uphill. Go up this. This track intersects with a newer, cut-in switchbacking path. If you choose to follow the switchback track (longer but easier), ensure you leave it (break left) at the green hiking-trail signpost, and keep going directly up the ridge on the original foot track. Eventually you'll spy the black rock of Serpent Wall.

Serpent Wall

Climbs listed R to L, starting from the very far R-hand side of the overhung main wall.

Arcane Secrets 12m 18 (S)

Up the shallow groove around the corner from the main wall. Three BR's (hard to see!) to chains. The middle one is fat and needs a bigger bracket.

Darrin Carter 1997

*** Off With The Pixies 18m 13 (S)**

Good beginner slab. Starts about 5m L of AS in scoop on the far R-hand side of the main wall. Runout but easy to black FH. Nice moves R up slab past a further two black FH's to AS's chains. Gareth Llewellyn, Ross Denington 1998

Berserker 15m 17 (S)

Start as for OFP in scoop. Easily up slab to high silver FH, then L into corner. Up corner past two FH's to chains.

Lee Cujes, Erik Smits 8/10/05

*** The Sundog Traverse 18m 21 (S)**

Starts 4m L of B. Boldly up to BR (needs large bolt plate) and trend left across slab passing FH's to stance. Now up overhanging terrain past more FHs and lower-off.

Darrin Carter 1997

Beiser 15m 27 (S)

Some dodgy rock on this one, but offers some very tiny holds for you to pit your tips against. Start about 8m L of TST at the slabby crack.

Inspiration: Gareth Llewellyn

Perspiration: Simon Moses 2000

*** Medusa 12m 23 (S)**

About 15m L of The Sundog Traverse. A 45 degree overhanging line past three FH's with a sinew-stretching final move. Harder if you're short.

Gareth Llewellyn, Aaron Jones 17/10/99

Lots of "wow" roof stuff in here.

Gatekeeper 25m 23/24/25 (S)

Up Minotaur to cave. Now right out cave and launch rightward along traverse line passing bolts. Trend up (crux) and up face.

Inspiration: Darrin Carter

Perspiration: Unknown, but has been climbed several times

**** Minotaur p1 20m 17 (S)**

Up passing bolts into cave. Out this on pockets and up slabby face to lower-off. A big cam (#4 camalot) is optional.

Darrin Carter 1997

Minotaur p2 15m 14 (S)

Runout, but quite nice! Two FH's to chains. Can just get down off a 60m rope if you linked them.

Darrin Carter 4/1997

Stingray p1 20m 22 (S)

10m L of H. Up technical chimney to rooflet. Around this and up face. FH's.

Darrin Carter 1997

**** Stingray p2 30m 19 (S)**

Six FH's to finish on grassy ledge with 3 bolts. Rap.

Darrin Carter

*** Loki's Mischief 12m 25 (S)**

Starting L of Stingray's cave. Four FH's up the steep stuff.

Simon Moses

(Pandora's Box 12m 27+?)

Unclimbed, with broken undercling hold. Needs middle bolt.

Open Project. Attempted by Cameron and Aaron.

*** Harpe 6m 21 (S)**

Popular. Four FH's protect the juggy flake traverse to lower-off. Stickclip the first.

Darrin Carter 1997

Harpe Direct 8m 21

Up Harpe for the first two FH's, then up L passing a fixed wire and another FH.

Darrin Carter

Cyclops p1 20m 18 (S)

Five FH's to ledge and chains. Not great.

Gareth Llewellyn, Aaron Jones 4/4/99

*** Cyclops p2 10m 24 (S)**

A second pitch to the previous route. Four FH's. Careful on 2nd clip!

Gareth Llewellyn, Aaron Jones 28/3/99

Crimes And Punishment 15m 16 (S)

Up pocketed slab to tree with lower-off. Two FH's and gear?? I thought there should be three bolts, but I could only find the first and last FH's, leaving a huge runout and potential groundfall. Perhaps there is gear there but I didn't see it.

Darrin Carter 1997

Very Delicious Cheesecakes 10m V3

Starts just left of Crimes And Punishment and traverses left on slopers and pockets.

Gareth Llewellyn 1997

Doing Time 15m 14

Natural pro traversing left under the flake.

Darrin Carter 1997

The Lookout

A small buttress located above and to the left of Serpent (above Crimes And Punishment). From the left hand end of Serpent, walk uphill on a vague track for about 60m. Towards the top of the hill it's possible to cut back right along a small terrace beneath a smooth and compact small wall with a slab at its base. Two excellent routes exist here to date.

(Sirens 20m 24)

On L. Second hanger is missing.
Project: Darrin Carter

*** Lost At Sea 20m 18 (S)**

Stickclip start. Up slab then ginormous undercling slap to massive jug. 5 FH's.
Darrin Carter and Grant LeLievre

Circus Wall

From the left hand end of Serpent, follow vague track uphill passing the turnoff for The Lookout. Continue along the base of the massif itself. Approximately 200m from Serpent will be a right facing corner starting from the ground with a wide crack and a slab to its right. Climb up the fixed rope up to large tree and then another rope leads L along a small ledge (care!). *Ferris Wheel* starts from this ledge. Follow more fixed line to Circus Wall proper.

*** Ferris Wheel 13m 16 (S)**

Start on ledge just after second rope. Up the lovely wall passing a FH and two BR's to tree belay. The top section is runout.
Chris Finn, Darrin Carter

Circus Wall Proper

Climbs listed L to R.

Wide crack

Unclimbed.

*** Snake Charmer 20m 20**

Surprisingly sustained. Climbs through an interesting roof/cave section. Four FH's and a BR on the headwall to chains. Take a medium hex or big wire (optional).
Inspiration: Neil Monteith 1995
Nicked by: Chris Finn

Unknown - 20m ??

Corner. Scary. RP's. Has a bolt up high.
Darrin Carter, Aaron Jones

Bo Bo's A Clown 20m 17

Pocketed seam. Has a PR and a FH up high.
Needs natural gear.
Darrin Carter, Chris Finn

Bullet-Hard Buttress

Small section of wall right next to the walking track, about 50m before you get to Shotgun Wall. These routes get shade before Shotgun, so are good for early afternoon.

Climbs listed R to L.

Splatter Pattern 12m 20 (S)

Quite varied climbing. Bouldery start up seam onto balancy slab/corner. Contort L into finger crack to layoff though bulge, then easier slab climbing to top (station on L). Four FH's. Please be careful clipping the second bolt, or stickclip it.
Lee Cujes, Tiffany & Paul Botwright 22/10/05

Hot Lead 12m 22 (S)

Some thin cranking. 1.5m L. Up the broken flake to balancy ledge. Hard moves pulling onto the wall (way hard if you're short?), then up to station. Four FH's.
Lee Cujes, Tiffany Botwright 22/10/05

Shotgun Wall

From the left hand end of Serpent, follow worn track uphill along the base of the massif for approximately 400m. You will pass the access point for Circus Wall on your right (rope leading up slab). You'll also pass Bullet-Hard Buttress with its couple of bolted lines. About 50m past this is Shotgun Wall. At the R-hand end of this wall, an arching crackline is found. This is the start of *Semi Auto*. Continue along to the first pocketed orange streak. This is *Pump Action*. Walk a little further up onto a raised platform. There is a fixed line on your L down a gully to access other routes.

Climbs listed R to L

*** Semi Auto 15m 20**

Up the crack on wires to rooflet. Over this (FH) and up face to lower off.
Darrin Carter 1997

Under Fire 15m 21 (S)

Bolt protected and quite hard and a bit runout. Three FH's.
Darrin Carter 1997

**** Pump Action 15m 25 (S)**

Slick and devious climbing up the attractive pocketed line.
Gareth Llewellyn 11/1/98

Out Of Ammo 15m 19 (S)

Powerful. Starts about 4m L of PA. Up black rock passing FHs. Crux is around the third one. Top is runout, and finishes at PA's chains. Never feels like a 19.
Darrin Carter 1997

*** Pistol Whipped 17m 19 (S)**

Technical. Starting on the pedestal 3m L of OOA. Line of FH's up the easiest looking section. A stern crank down low leads to an intricate and excellent upper half.
Darrin Carter 1998

Buy-Back Scheme 13m 20 (S)

Starts 6m L of OOA. Up through small roof and up superb stone on the headwall passing a fixed thread to lower off.
Darrin Carter 1998

Misfire 15m 14

A pretty average natural route put up to get to a good photo spot for Ricochet. Follows ramp right of Ricochet and then up headwall left of the top of Out of Ammo.
Chris Finn

Scramble down the fixed line down the gully to access the next routes.

**** Ricochet 17m 27 (S)**

Easily up slab to high first FH. Carefully clip second FH zigging L then zagging back R to jug at the base of the business (FH). Unlock the first crux to stance with mono pocket and out-of-reach final FH. Now lean into the second crux before a long runout to the anchor.
Inspiration: Darren Saunders 1998?
Perspiration: Lee Cujes 6/5/06

*** Itchy Trigger Finger 15m 24 (S)**

3m L of R. Superb orange pockets with a crux up high. FH's. Another hard onsight!
Gareth Llewellyn 30/7/98