



AAC Publications

North Mountain, The Front Side, The Texas Longroute

Texas, Hueco Tanks State Park

“What about traversing the front side of North Mountain?” Nate Vince asked me on the porch of the Hueco Mountain Hut. With a history of world-class bouldering, Hueco Tanks does not attract many roped climbers, let alone multi-pitch trad climbers. As John Sherman is quoted in the Matt Wilder guidebook, “Rope climbing at Hueco is like drinking wine at Oktoberfest.”

But after tweaking a muscle in my shoulder while bouldering, I turned to Nate and asked, “Do you want to go for the traverse today?” His eyes lit up. It was late in the day, but we drove over to the Front Side—the west-facing aspect of North Mountain. We started near the left end of the mountain on Cakewalk (5.6) and climbed up and down to enter chimneys or bypass seriously overhanging sections like the Cowboyography (5.13b/c) wall. This included a lot of new-routing on loose terrain, including a serious runout with tedious rock-craft gear placements after crossing Purple Microdot (5.10).

Another serious section traversed from Uriah’s Heap to the first anchors on Sea of Holes (5.10-). This pitch is dead horizontal, about 80’ above the ground, and a fall by either climber would result in serious injury. Since the park closes at 6 p.m., we rappelled down Sea of Holes.

On our second outing, a week later, we quickly simulated all the terrain we’d covered on the first try. We then followed Indecent Exposure (5.9+) before making a final upward traverse to the Pink Adrenaline anchors near the top of the mountain. We had climbed 900’ in a few hours and added a great adventure climb to the Front Side. However, back on the porch, I realized that although our route was gigantic for Texas, it was not the longest route in the state. That distinction belonged to the obscure Grand Canonical Finale, a 1,200’ traverse at Enchanted Rock.

A week later, Nate came up to me with a big smile on his face. “I found the true start of the traverse,” he said. The next day we were at the entrance to the Cueva de Leon sector, several hundred feet farther left than where we’d started before. We climbed through a massive hole that led into a horizontal tunnel, with the pitch ending after a wild step to a magnificent perch about 50’ up in the cave. The next two pitches had more of the same. We dubbed this three-pitch start The 4-Dimensional Time Tunnel (5.8).

I took over leading, traversing above Flake Roof and around the corner to the Hourglass. We began simulung, and I placed a few of our smallest cams in good horizontal seams as I led the way. As I neared the bolted anchors of Cakewalk, where we’d started the earlier traverse, I heard Nate yell “Falling!” A handhold had broken. Thankfully, one of the small cams prevented what could have been a very serious fall.

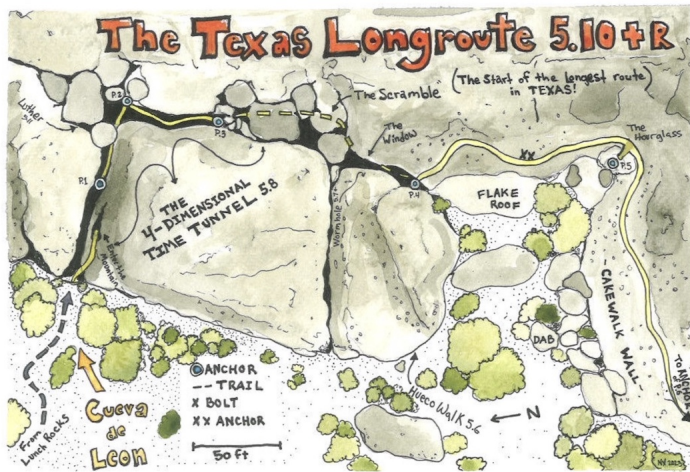
I continued in the lead, and as I reached the top of the mountain, little did I know that, below me, Nate was being attacked by Hueco’s notoriously aggressive bees. But everything turned out fine, and I belayed him to the top. We had done it! After 1,640’ of climbing up, down, sideways, and through caves, we had completed the longest route in Texas. Back at camp, Nate’s dad suggested a name: The Texas Longroute.

Unhappy about his fall, Nate dragged me back a final time in April. We simuled the entire thing, all free. Two hours and 20 seconds after starting, we completed the first no-fall, no-bee ascent of The Texas Longroute (1,640', 16 pitches, IV 5.10+ R).

— Ross Andrea

Editor's Note: A pitch-by-pitch description and more photos of this route are at [Mountain Project](#).

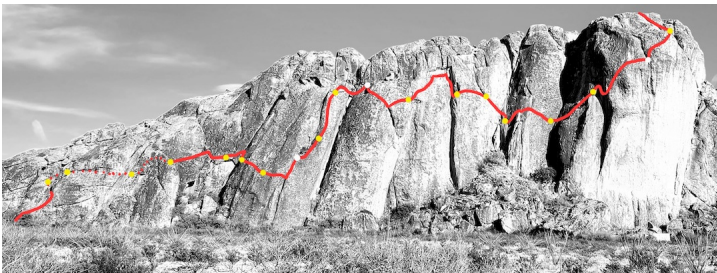
Images



Topo for the initial pitches of The Texas Longroute, Hueco Tanks.



Ross Andrea leading the psychological crux of The Texas Longroute, pitch 14. "Heads up for the leader and follower."



The Texas Longroute (1,640', IV 5.10+ R), a left-to-right girdle traverse across the west side of North Mountain at Hueco Tanks.



Ross Andrea (right) and Nathan Vince on top of North Mountain after completing the first ascent of The Texas Longroute.

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