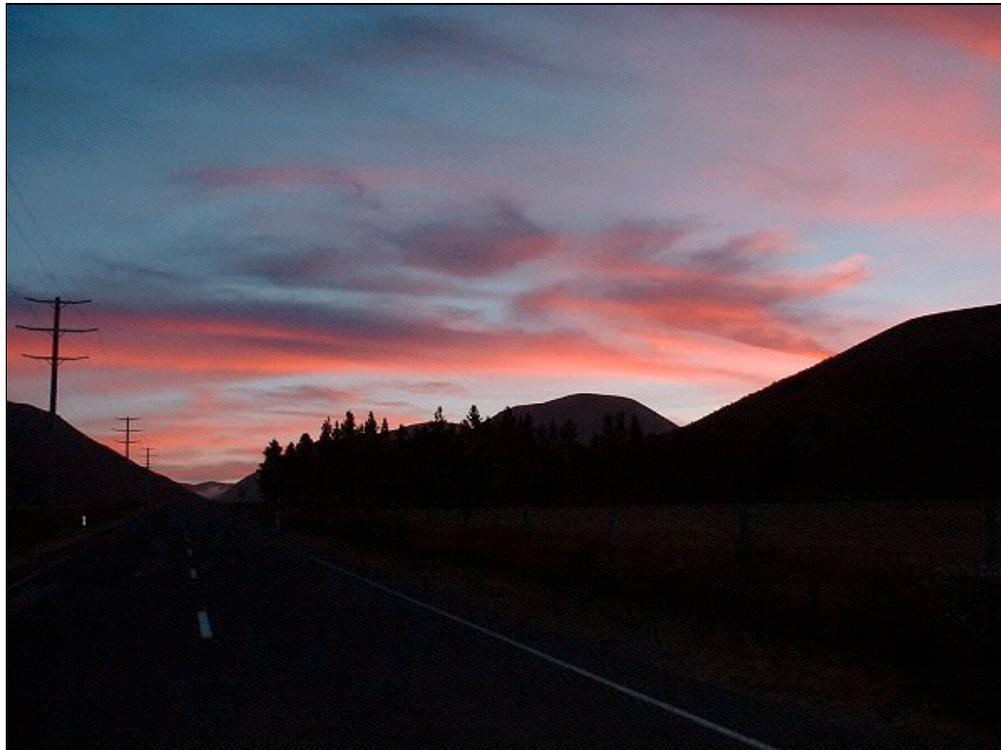


The Fiendish New Zealand climbing guide, pt 3 of 3:

South Island by Fiend



Every good climbing day should end like this. Sunset at Castle Hill, NZ
© Fiend

Paynes Ford:

- **General:** Hangdog Camp - despite the sad demise of Willy, its bonkers owner, this should still be THE climbing bum hangout. Cheap, basic and very climbery indeed - 2 minutes from the crag and very relaxed. It, along with the crag, can get quite busy (by NZ standards) at Christmas and New Year. The swimming holes are well worth it too.
- **Description:** SI sport climbing mecca #1. Limestone, but don't expect Stoney or anything equally foul. Expect solid rock, steepness, slopers, occasional sharp pockets and thin crimps, and thoughtful, satisfying climbing.
- **Guidebook additions:** Grades very fair. See local guide. The drive over Takaka Hill is as gnarly as it gets in NZ.
- **Fiend's pick:** Again hard to pick, there's a lot of good routes here. It's also a good place to get into the scene and push things a bit. The Rat Trap Wall area is great for something a bit longer.
- **Ef's pick:** A fair selection of good easier stuff esp. Creese Wall and Little Lost Wall. Then go for Elvis Lives In Takaka 18 and the mighty Temples Of Stone 18.

Pohara Seacliffs:

- **Description:** 10 minutes from Paynes Ford and set back a little from the sea. A slightly different and quieter area with routes varying from juggy steepness to long edgy face climbing. The rock can be a little bit fragile though.
- **Guidebook additions:** Grades generally fair.
- **Fiend's pick:** Bo Peep Slab!
- **Ef's pick:** Sea Grass Wall.

Charleston:

Unfortunately we were unable to visit these well regarded trad climbing gneiss sea-cliffs, despite wanting to. Other climbers who had been recently said there was good climbing there, enough for a day or two.

Castle Hill:

- **General:** The Sheep Shearer's Ranch: Another great hangout. This time it's the unadvertised shearer's ranch just opposite Castle Hill station. Pay Mike \$15 a night and enjoy a big kitchen, lots of small dorms, great showers, an open fire and no administration at all. Chill. You can then walk directly across the farmland with permission. You might also be able to camp stealthily for half-price if you ask nicely. When it gets too hot or your body demands a rest day, a trip through

the awesome and surreal Cave Stream is obligatory.

- **Description:** The other special NZ climbing experience....totally fucking bonkers. The photos just can't prepare you for what these hillsides covered in blank, bulging, rounded limestone buttresses and boulders are actually like. The climbing makes grit feel like a climbing wall - thin, holdless, smearing, mantling, laybacking, sloping, slapping madness. Enjoy - and don't neglect the excellent routes just because bouldering is so damn trendy these days.
- **Bouldering:** The Hill is famous for bouldering and no wonder. There's thousands of great problems scattered around, mostly with good grassy landings. A perfect way to get used to the tenacious and technical climbing. Expect to bridge holdless scoops, lay off rounded aretes, jump to and then mantle single pockets, and bellyflop to finish.
- **Guidebook additions:** Grades are stiff - routes invariably feature genuinely hard moves. Some of the coach bolts can be a bit wobbly. It's all more complicated than it looks, expect to get lost.
- **Fiend's pick:** A superb trio of classic 21s, none of which have typical Castle Hill climbing: Nether Edge, Rambandit, and Mal A L'aise.
- **Ef's pick:** On Some Faraway Beach 16 gives a taste of classic CH madness at an easier grade, while Tales From The Riverbank 17 requires some sterner pocket pulls.

Port Hills:

- **General:** Christchurch - if you're going to stay in one city in NZ, this should be it. 15 minutes to the Port Hills, 1 hour to Banks Peninsula and Castle Hill, 2 hours to Hanging Rock area. There's a reasonable climbing wall at the YMCA with good leading but inferior bouldering. Consider staying in Lyttelton as it's quieter, more scenic, and the port is cool to watch. The Tunnel Vision backpackers there is nice, fairly cosy, and good value. While in Chch, take advantage of a variety of good Asian food, two excellent curry houses - Raj Mahal and Tulsi, and watch the constant stream of ludicrous boy racers parading their "gaping rear orifices" down the main streets each night for added entertainment.
- **Description:** A fine, diverse, selection of crags await on the Port Hills. Very varied, accessible, and with a magnificent all-encompassing view across the sea, city, port, peninsula, plains and distant mountains. There's both good trad and sport climbing here.
- **Guidebook additions:** See below. Grades fair unless otherwise stated.
- **Fiend's pick:** The Keep on Castle Rock is invariably brilliant. Jane Fonda is very inspiring for the confident, and The Tors has a couple of great routes.
- **Ef's pick:** Rapaki for easy (grade 11+) fun on solid rock, and Castle Rock, an obvious choice for a fine selection of routes 16-18.

Jane Fonda Wall:

A sheer 30m wall with a longer walk-in and more exposed feel than average. Technical and sustained routes on subtle rock from 19 upwards give some satisfying classics. Grades tough.

Three Sisters:

An underused granite-like crag but with a few quality routes 17+ in a bush setting - worth a visit. It's best to walk in in front of the Twisted Sister, just before the big choss on the left. Some grades are easy.

Lyttelton Rock:

Steep! A granite-like crag with plentiful flat holds that barely compensate for the steep pumpiness. A mixture of sport and trad routes 17+, the steep trad stuff will appeal for fans of Higgarr Tor. Gulp. Grades tough.

Evan's Pass, Cattlestop Crag and Mt Pleasant:

3 varied, small, granite-like crags (two sport and the latter trad), that host few minor mid-grade classics.

Britten Crags:

http://www.aspiring.co.nz/brit_ind.htm - grades very soft, deduct 1-2 grades off most routes above 19. An extensive granite-like sport crag with a lot of short steep routes from 18 upwards. Safe, mindless, climbing wall style cranking, but good fun anyway.

Castle Rock:

The trad centerpiece of the Port Hills. Splendid position and a host of trad classics from 14 upwards on nice, flake, edgy rock. Very English in feel but excellent none-the-less.

The Tors:

More good trad stuff on interesting flakey rock. There's only a few classics here, 17-21 but they're pretty good.

Rapaki Rock:

To round off the Port Hills experience, a good beginner's crag. Well worn granite-ish rock and nice trad climbing from 11-18.

Banks Peninsula:

- **Description:** More varied trad stuff on volcanic rock, but with the attendant horrors of LONG WALK INs. Ugh. This does mean that some crags will be very underused. But there's a few accessible places too.
- **Guidebook additions:** The grades don't seem to take into account gear or lack thereof. Be

warned. There's a new 21-tastic sport crag, details at <http://www.aspiring.co.nz/dawnwall.htm>

- **Fiend's pick:** Anything that appeals at Ote when you're feeling bold.
- **Ef's pick:** Diploma 12 at Ote is the best 12 I've done, and Voie Classique 16 is very good with above average protection.

Holme's Bay:

Don't bother. CJM 19 is good but the crag is overgrown.

Otepatatu:

Hmmm! Not a typical NZ sport crag. A very attractive crag in the bush, with various trad routes on subtle grey rock. Despite a few bolts, many routes vary from bold to pretty deadly - a classic example, The Ultimate Horror 16, Starts with 12m of sustained grade 16 climbing and one poor cam... Despite this the actual climbing is usually very good and interesting.

Sebastapol Bluffs, Mt Cook:

- **Description:** Very nice orange greywacke-ish slabs on a big bluff with mega-views over the Mt Cook area. Sunny and spectacular with well-bolted delectable slab climbing from 14 - 20.
- **Guidebook additions:** Grades soft. There's some new routes and some confusion at the base of Red Arete, so get the one page guide from Alpine Guides.
- **Fiend's pick:** The typically lovely Clean Hands 20, if only for the best belay base in NZ.
- **Ef's pick:** Shark Attack 16 and Red Arete 14 for great bumbly fun - take a picnic as SIR recommends. Serriass 19, now well rebolted, has excellent slab climbing.

Hanging Rock area:

- **Description:** More mad limestone. A vague blend between Castle Hill and ignimbrite. Thus you get massive bulging buttresses, technical climbing, but a fair bit of pocket pulling too. Sounds good? It is, very good, if a bit underused. Hanging Rock itself is the rather impressive main cliff, Beautiful Valley is a peaceful and worthy companion, and Raincliff has cranky climbing in a shady setting.
- **Guidebook additions:** Grades tough (what did you expect?).
- **Fiend's pick:** Margins Of The Mind 21, an awesome hanging arete for the fear, most other starred routes at HR (and the underrated Conquistador 20) for quality, Shotgun Wall at BW for jug-pulling.
- **Ef's pick:** The river under the Hanging Rock...



A rare NZ low grade classic - Ef committing Nursery Crimes 10, Hanging Rock, NZ
© Fiend

Dunroon area:

- **Description:** Yet more limestone, getting weirder as one heads South. This time you have teeth-grindingly technical Castle Hill style bouldering at Elephant Rocks, and mindless climbing wall style roof nonsense at Hulk Hogan wall. Plus a few interesting routes scattered around this eerily quiet area.
- **Guidebook additions:** Grades okay. Watch out for the rock and bolts, both as dodgy as the guide says - I pulled a ledge off one route...
- **Fiend's pick:** Hang On Simon 20 is simply very nice. Good TR potential at Elephant Rocks plus the V3 groove there would make a cool trad lead.
- **Ef's pick:** No.

Long Beach, Dunedin:

- **Description:** Well worth going to for some genuinely fun trad and mixed action on fairly normal volcanic rock. It's set on a scenic beach which gives the only real problem - sand. Make sure you have a ropebag or tarp or two. Otherwise revel in the good rock, good protection, easy access and quadruple bolt lower-offs. Good honest convenience trad!
- **Guidebook additions:** Grades are fairly easy.
- **Fiend's pick:** Crime and Punishment 22, not least because it has a full page essay in the local guide, after warming up on Burning Sky 19. And the rest.
- **Ef's pick:** Burning Sky 19 and some very traditional easy climbs on The Pinnacle Sunnyside.

Queenstown:

- **Description:** Around the XTREEEEM ACTION tourist hell capital of the Southern hemisphere, lurks some nice genuine adventure for us climbers. Most crags require a fair bit of a walk, especially the much-renowned (if you climb 23+) Wye Creek. Great scenery and funky quartz schist provide interest.
- **Guidebook additions:** Just hope the local guide is around.
- **Fiend's pick:** Not really.
- **Ef's pick:** No.

Little Thailand:

NZ's only deep water soloing crag?? 3 fair easy routes and the lake is oh-so-pretty.

Sunshine Bay:

Decent little crag for some crisp edge pulling - watch your rope. Grades easy and worth an evening look.

Wanaka:

- **Description:** SI sport climbing mecca #2. Like Paynes there are loads of accessible routes

throughout the grades. This time it's schist, varying from thin rough slabs through to steep cranky walls with various big enticing features thrown in for good measure. In general it's all about good edges though - get crimping. There's some good bouldering too. The area and nearby Glendhu Bay campsite could get busy around summer.

- **Guidebook additions:** Grades vary but are mostly fair (e.g. Roadside can be stiff, Phoebe Creek quite soft). As is traditional slabs are graded easier than steep stuff. In some areas where the climbs are quite similar, they don't get many stars but objectively deserve some. The bouldering guide can be quite vague.
- **Fiend's pick:** Phoebe Creek is really nice, don't ignore it just because of the drive. Otherwise follow the stars - e.g. balance up Naked On The Neve 20, absorb yourself in Cleansing The Stone 21, crank through Everything But The Formalities 22, and launch into orbit on Roche Mutton 23.
- **Ef's pick:** All the routes on The Diamond - great technical slab climbing. The "sunset climb" classic, The Crack 17 (and the other mid-grade routes) on The Tombstone. Shortcut To Exposure 17, Happy Fat Men 18. And some nice easier routes at Roadside and Riverside - the latter offering swimming, deep-water bouldering (ish!) and picnic potential whilst waiting for the shade to reach the crag.



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