

Early Labour

10 pitches, 5.10+ 300m

FA 2026 Nic Hamilton and the Kimberley Climbing Crew (Cecilia, Brad, Aaron and Ben)

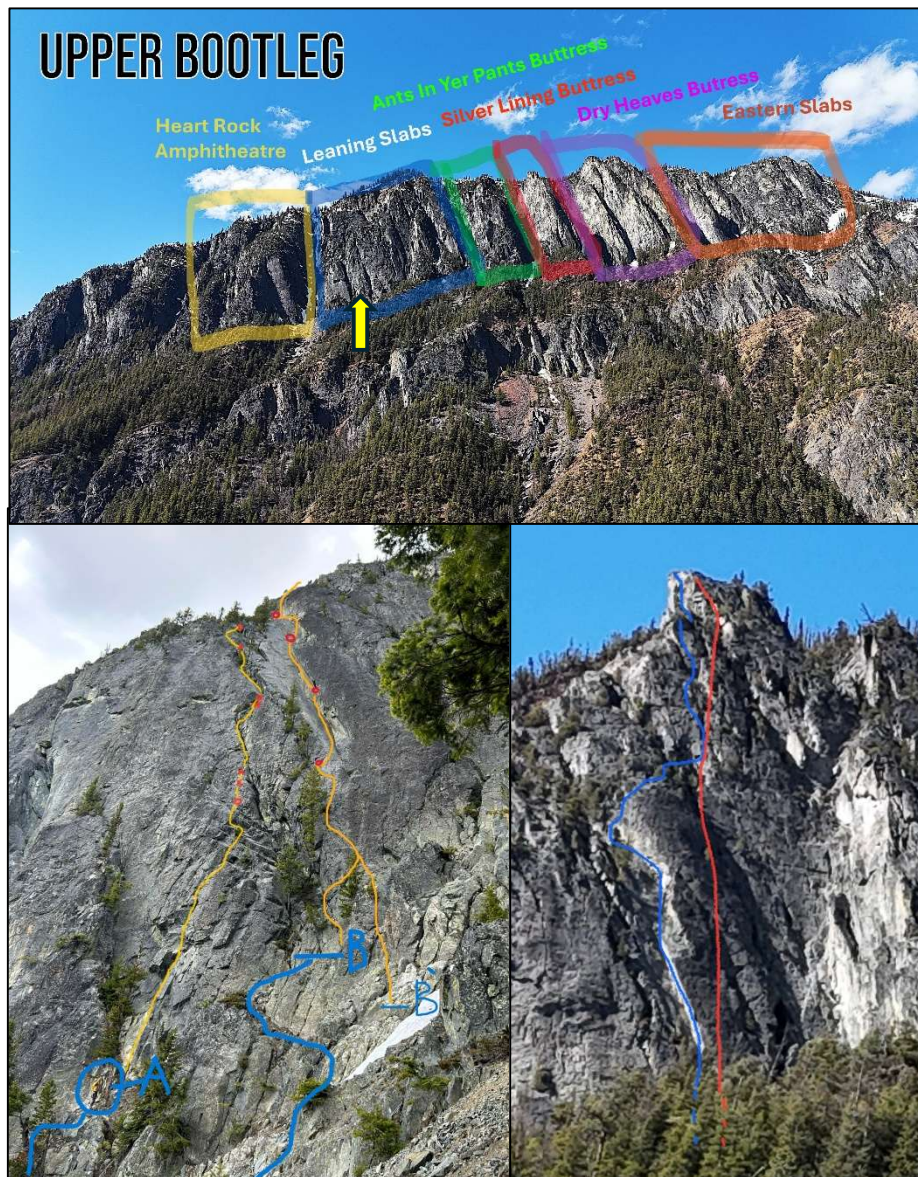
Early Labour was named because I got the call that my wife's water had broken while cleaning the last pitch! It is in the "Leaning Slabs" sector of Upper Bootleg. It begins up a striking dihedral and tops out on a tower way above the valley below. The route is "modern mixed" with bolted anchors, protection bolts where needed and a designated rap line. It has seen several ascents and several days of cleaning but be mindful of loose rock and give it a scrub as you go; you might just find a helpful placement.

Photos:

Left: A: Connect 4; B: Early Labour (B': Early Labour alt. start)

Right: Blue = ascent + Red = rap line

***More route photos on last page



Approach 1.5+/- hours (2.5km+700m): Follow the guidebook description for Highside Crag. Continue through this sector climbers right on a well-defined trail. This trail works up and alongside a couple gullies with some short-lived section of 3rd class. After the largest gully and a high step passed a big tree follow long switchbacks through the woods crossing talus in places until you come to a red dirt/rocky zone. Keep your head up to stay on the buffed trail. Once through the "red" section the trail contours into the Heart Rock Amphitheater. Continue along the trail and cross a big scree gully. Walk under the route "Pleasure and Pain" through a short orange rock step and continue along the trail until you get the first glimpse of the large dihedral which is the best way to orient yourself. There is a trail to the base using scrappy ledges that can be hard to distinguish so be prepared to follow your nose a bit through this section. Find a zig-zag ledge system (see photo line) that leads to an improved belay stance with a leaning, mini-fridge sized chockstone and small tree that is looker's left of the big dihedral.

Rack & Beta: 70m rope. Single rack .2-3 and doubles .3-2. 6-8 nuts. 14-16 draws. Bolted anchors. The belay at top of pitch 2 is semi-hanging; if climbing as 3 consider ways to limit number of people here.

Pitch	Grade	Length	Notes
P1	5.9	35m	Start at an improved stance below a chockstone boulder and a scarred tree. Begin with a few meters of 4 th class up to a #2 placement. Trend right (small run out) to a placement and a bolt. Head back left, passing another bolt and aim for a weakness beside a few small trees. The pitch steepens as you punch up through a bit of broken rock. This has been tested extensively but test your holds. At the top of the steep part clip a bolt, step left and stem up into easier ground to the station. The last part requires some cleaning to find a few more gear placements or run it out.
P2	5.10b/c	35m	Leave the belay, enter the corner. A variety of face climbing stemming and chimney moves get you up to a bolt protected layback crux. This is a tight, semi hanging belay.
P3	5.10c	40m	One of the cruxes of the route. Technical face climbing mixed with some corner movement ending with jamming and more physical climbing to the top. A sustained pitch with plenty of bolts but requires gear placements. At the top of the pitch where the corner lays back, look for thin cracks (0.3) that take you up and left to the belay.
P4	5.7	35m	Rejoin the corner for some nice jams and stemming. At the top of the corner follow the arching seam with flakes up and left. Some good rock here and some hollow rock; place your gear accordingly.
P5	5.10b	25m	A techy start on bolts that has some pump. Continue up into the corner and eventually exit the corner right onto a scruffy lichen face and continue up to a great ledge belay.
P6	4th	30m	A “moving the belay” pitch that crosses a gully system. Follow the easiest ground up through a groove and right around the corner. Walk ledges passed a few cut trees down into a small alcove. Stem your way up and pull around the corner to the right. Place some gear, being mindful of rope drag. Walk right to the lunch ledge and belay at ring bolts. This station is used on the descent line.
P7	5.10c/d	50m	The crux of the route. Follow a great hand crack straight up with stemming and jugs. As you ascend look left for a diagonal finger crack. Plug some excellent gear and make the delicate traverse across to the finger crack on precision feet. The pump is on as you work up and left using the crack and face holds. The crux is mainly small cams (.2-.4) but a .75 is useful early. Once the finger crack ends you are through the business of the pitch. Continue up looking for the cleaned line through the black lichen. Gear can feel sparse here but there is plenty if you look around. it has been scrubbed but isn't perfect. The 2-bolt anchor is directly above a mini corner on a ledge. Visible ring bolts out (far) right are off the climbing line and part of the descent.
P8	5.10a	35m	Climb the corner through a tricky bulge then use cracks to move up and left to a small ledge. Above this there are several cracks. The right one yields the best climbing and the gear will appear. Gain a rubbly ledge, then boulder up a small wall to the anchor.
P9	5.4	25m	Scramble up off the belay looking for the best rock instead of the easiest way. The terrain eases off and there is an excellent view of the final pitch. Follow a diagonal foot rail passed a bolt to a hidden belay in an alcove
P10	5.10b	30m	Clip 3 closely spaced bolts as you climb steeply through some mediocre rock off the ledge and up into the corner. Eventually, you will be drawn out of the corner as the rock becomes blocky. You will pass a bolt before gaining a ledge, and another bolt below the final wall. This bolt is placed to offer an exit left or right and to hang the rope for the second. The intended finish is left, so clip with a 120cm sling and move left to a cupped hand jam crux passing two more bolts. Mantle at the end to top out the route! If short on time use the right exit as you top out at the first rap station.

Descent:

From top out go across then down skiers left to the top of a small tower and find off-set ring bolts. The rap line utilizes the anchor at the top of P6 but is otherwise an independent line. The last rap comes up 5m short of the original start stance. There is a single bolt to belay through a 3rd class tree squeeze if required, but otherwise simply scramble down and pull the rope.

EARLY LABOUR RAP: LINE BETA

Rap	Length	Notes
R1	34m	Rap through low angle terrain, slightly more climbers right than you think, to a ledge and link into next station. Despite cleaning, some loose rock may still be present here.
R2	35m	Rap through the dirt down climbers left to find a small arete (caution: keep rope off a sharp edge here). Rap into gully and across it to find the next station
R3	30m	Rap, trending climbers left into an alcove.
R4	33m	Rap fall line and a little climbers left to the top of P6
R5	34m	Cross gully climbers left. Dirty rap, so take care of your ropes.
R6	34m	Fall line, cross a micro gully and find station in an alcove
R7	35	Fall line on slabs splitting the trees
R8	30m	Fall line on slabs
R9	35m	Fall line to a ledge system just above the route start. A single bolt is here to belay extra 10m to the route start or downclimb using a small tree.

Alternate descents:

There are ways to bail from nearly anywhere on the route (simply) with a 70m rope. As all stations are bolted, you can still reverse the longer pitches, but they are more complicated with just a single rope.

1. The route is reversible for the first two pitches, but these anchors are not equipped with rings.
2. The next bail option is the 2-bolt anchor at top of P4 (no rings), where you can leave the station and rap aggressively climbers left into an alcove. This is the top of the route Connect 4. You can rap this route with a 70m rope and it is equipped with rings.
3. The top of P6 is part of the rap line and a logical place to bail if needed.
4. On P9 you can scramble up to a main ledge system and walk easily climbers right to find a rap station as well. The station here is the 2nd rap of the designated line.



Looking down P1



Looking down P2



top of p3



Looking up P4



lunch ledge (top of P6)



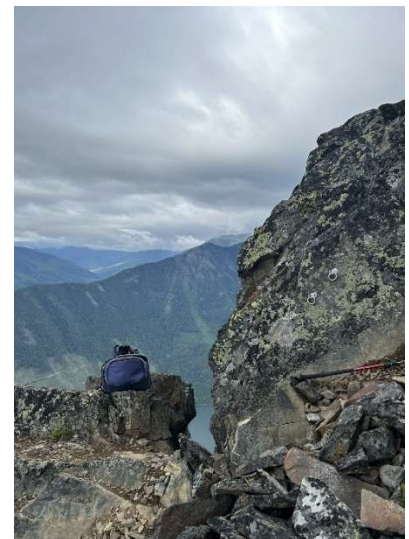
Looking up P8



Top of P9 with P10 above



last moves of the route



first rap station