



North American Classic Route Description

Royal Arches, Rappel Descent

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April 2001

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Ed. Note: Royal Arches has two standard descents. The original descent route goes over the top of Washington Column to the North Dome descent gully, and involves hiking only. It is not described here. The rappel descent is more recent, and was installed to avoid the epics often experienced by those who got lost on the original descent.

Rap 1: Is **before** the last pitch (the traverse pitch into the jungle is **not** done). If you want to go to the jungle (there's a spring there for water) and then rappel, you'll have to reverse it. With beginners along, you can consider leading the pitch, then fixing the line so others can use it as a handline with two carabiners clipped to the line for safety. The leader must reverse it on belay. The first rappel is about **130'** (don't go too far!) and somewhat west of the fall line in a little dish.

Rap 2: To the obvious tree about 100' and a little east of your station (the first tree you see).

Rap 3: You can do a short rap if you're worried about rope stickage to the next tree (new bolts), but you can also continue the rappel past this tree and out onto the face to eliminate one rap.

Rap 4: Assuming you've gone down onto the face... it's a sheer cliff with lousy stances at the stations, and there are many rap stations out here. I go straight down about 140' to the obvious beefy station just 60' before a roof. It's about as far as you can go with 50m ropes.

Rap 5: Go over the small roof through a tree (which is mostly gone now) and on to a ledge with bolts. This ledge is just above a **huge** terrace, which the ledge is part of. You can walk down to the next station unless people are nervous (class 3): Go down the gully that heads down and west, then over a small lip (10' drop) straight south. If you rap this instead, the ropes will bunch up because of the low angle.

Rap 6: The next rap is over the lip to the south down a steep mostly-smooth wall to another huge ledge system. This is where people often get lost. You are tempted to walk west here, and many people have, because it's easy to traverse this ledge to the west and down. (It's possible to get down in 3 more raps this way, but the anchors are poor.) **Instead**, walk down 20m and **slightly** west. There is a big tree here which used to have rap slings on it. Continue walking (2nd class) down and east along the lip of a big drop off for about 100' to a dead tree. There are 3 new bolts (a bit hard to see) just west of this tree.

Rap 7: From the bolts, go to the ends of your rope and strongly west (be careful to watch the ends on a 50m pair!). This lands you near the base of the 2nd pitch of Royal Arches. Pull your ropes (they will get wet in early season) and walk 100' southwest to a big tree with slings.

Rap 8: Rap to the ground.