

Higgar Tor...

is easily one of the most visually striking of all the crags in the northeast Dark Peak; a large overhanging blob of 'god's own rock' perched high on the hill-side of the same name. Not only does it dominate the area visually it also impacts on many climbers' psyches as well. Few climbers are able to ignore Higgar for long and inevitably get sucked-in for what often turns out to be a punishing affair. Higgar takes no prisoners, the overhanging nature of the main face sees to that! But even away from the main face and on the so-called vertical faces, Higgar still challenges. And yet many climbers return frequently to Higgar and can't rest until they have ticked the place! Finding a new line must be nirvana; Neil Foster knows the Peak as well as most and has used his knowledge to good advantage several times at Higgar. Block Party (E3 6a) is his latest addition, the first ascent of which was captured for posterity and the calendar alike!



Featured Route: Block Party (E3 6a) is the second 'girdle' style line to be done on Higgar and despite being added only very recently is something of a classic. The break along which it traverses is a real sloper on the crucial section though so Block Party is no push-over.

Tips: Good body positioning and core stability will help enormously on the crux, whilst good jamming technique is more than useful throughout. Come up short in any one of these departments and you'll be in for a tough time. By the way, you will need to take an experienced second along with you otherwise you'll be abseiling for your gear or seconding it yourself!

Clips: A standard trad rack, plus a few extra cams and a roll of tape, is all you should need gear wise.

'Must Do's': The File (VS 4c) and The Rasp (E2 5b), by Don Whillians and Joe Brown respectively, are grit mega classics and hence absolute top ticks at Higgar.

Alternatives: Flute of Hope (E4 6a) and Rock around the Block (E4 5a, 6b, 5c, 4c) both have a considerable horizontal element within their length if you are looking for more side-ways movement. Other stand-out straight-ups are The Rasp Direct (E4 6a) and Bat Out of Hell (E5 6a).

Rest Days: The Peak has some great walking, running and mountain biking to do as well as having the cultural/tourist hot-spots like the Chatsworth estate to check-out. Similarly, the markets of Chesterfield and Bakewell are well worth a visit. The show-caves in Castleton aren't that far away either; the Blue John being famous and unusual in roughly equal measure.

Essential Beta

How to get there: From Sheffield take Ringinglow Road towards Burbage Bridge and then continue towards Hathersage avoiding the Stanage road. Park in the roadside bays as the road dips and then traverse the hillside to the crag. Alternatively, approach from Hathersage leaving the A6187 just before Millstone.

When to Visit: Higgar is very exposed and hence gets any weather going. This can be a blessing as well as a problem! Seepage is rare. Higgar faces southwest hence gets sun throughout the day.

Where to Stay/Shop: Hathersage and the Hope Valley has plenty of B&B's and hotels. The nearest campsite is at North Lees, Stanage. Shops, are equally plentiful, as are cafes.

Which Guide: Burbage, Millstone and Beyond (published BMC) is the definitive guide. Eastern Grit (published Rockfax) offers comprehensive coverage to the area, including Higgar Tor.



Photos: Main: Neil Foster on the crucial section on the first ascent of Block Party (E3 6a). Secondary: Neil again, polishing off the final difficulties on Block Party.