

Kaputar

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How do you characterise climbing at Kaputar? How do you capture the contentment of sitting on a belay ledge part-way up the Governor, basking in the first of the morning sun? How do you express the relief of reaching the summit half an hour after sunset? How do you describe the sheer beauty of the place? Let me try . . .

Although there are three main climbing venues in the Kaputar National Park—Ningadhun, Euglah Rock and the Governor—it's the Governor that is the star attraction. This cliff's dominant feature is a massive set of roofs which overhang an attractive mosaic wall by some 15m. These roofs stretch across about 100m of the main face, but only a few routes manage to thread their way through them; and only one tackles them head-on—the Great Barrier Roof. This route was first climbed in 1979 (by Tobin Sorenson and John Allen) and has had few ascents since then. Still, it might be argued that this climb epitomises rockclimbing at Kaputar.

The Great Barrier Roof winds its way through some of the most hostile territory imaginable. Indeed, it *looks* much harder than the meagre 23 it receives in the guidebook, but the difficulties, as with so many climbs at Kaputar, are psychological rather than physical. For example, you're frequently required to commit to an apparently long unprotected section only to be pleasantly surprised by a runner placement once you move up.

There's also the exposure, which often belies the 80–90m height of the cliff. This is never more striking than after you traverse out to the hanging arete which leads to the Great Barrier Roof's second tier of overhangs. It usually requires a few trips out there before one acclimatises enough to think about anything other than retreating!

As for the rock. In typical Kaputar fashion, it ranges from superb, chocolate-brown, trachyte to . . . well, let's just say it varies. When I did the Great Barrier Roof several years ago, I inadvertently kicked the lip of a roof as I pulled through the second tier of overhangs. I was horrified to hear what sounded like the whole of the Governor's central roofs resonating like cathedral bells! Yet once above this section, one is treated to some of the best rock Australia has to offer.

I could go on, but I suspect that in the end whatever I say will fail to convey the spirit of climbing at Kaputar. Climbing in this fantastic place really needs to be experienced first-hand.