

# Conda Coolero (Rattle Snake Creek)

**Rating:** 3C-1 | \*\*\*\*

**Time:** 2-3 hours

**Season:** Low: June-Aug Norm: June-Aug High: June-Sept

**Number of Raps:** 3

**Longest Rap:** ~65ft

**Gear:** 1x 200ft rope, 60ft webbing, 3 rapides, wetsuit, technical canyoneering gear

**Rubber:** during high summer, can be done without. Most would probably like a shortie or 2mm/3mm.

**Hazards:** This canyon is pretty much a romp. Basic anchor skills are required. This is some rock fall hazard in the middle section of the canyon.

**Vehicle:** Carefully driven passenger car or high clearance 2WD

**Car Shuttle:** None

**Approach:** None

**Exit:** 0.6mi and +600 vertical feet

**Good Eats:** Ice cream bars at Eel River Station

**Camping:** There are two lovely campsites adjacent to the start of the route

## Introduction:

Conda Coolero is beautiful, short canyon located in the Northern California Coast Range. While not truly a Sierra Canyon, Conda Coolero is an exciting romp through a chert slot canyon. Because of its very manageable flow during the summer and the lack of difficult technical obstacles it is a great place for beginners to get a taste of class C canyoneering and hone their skills. However, be warned, early in the season Conda Coolero will be quite difficult to do significant flow. During this time, the canyon is NOT a place for beginners. Please carefully assess the flow and your group's abilities before attempting this or any other decent.

Conda Coolero is also just plain beautiful. The light grey rock, emerald pools and towering walls should not be missed whether you are just getting your feet wet or you are an experienced class C canyoneer! This one is guaranteed fun.

The flow in Conda Coolero is all natural and will diminish as peak snowmelt gets more distant. Though a decent of Conda Coolero would not be advised during peak snowmelt, the bigger issue will be too little water, not too much. During most years the flow through the canyon will get very low sometime in August, which could lead to stagnant pools and other "Utah-like" water conditions that are probably best avoided. If the first few pools are emerald green, beautiful and inviting, you are probably good to go.

## Driving Directions:

From the Town of Covalo (last stop for gas) on CA-162 follow CA-162 east 7.4 miles to Eel River Station. Eel River Station is the last place to pick-up basic supplies, beer and ice cream bars. At Eel River Station, turn Left on to FS-M1 Towards "Indian Dick" and the Yolla Bolly Wilderness. Follow FS-M1 as it

more or less parallels the Middle Fork Eel River for ~23.6 miles (somewhere along the way M1 turns into a dirt road) until you reach the bridge over Rattle Snake Creek. Cross the bridge and make an immediate left into a parking area with two nice campsites. Park here, camp here if you are planning on camping.

## Approach:

Immediately after entering the campsite area you will notice a parking space on the left. Behind this parking space is a use trail down to the creek. Follow this use trail a short distance to the watercourse. There are a few nice gravel bars to suit up at and get your harness on in the vicinity.

## Canyon:

Head downstream, minor scrambling and downclimbing reveal spectacular emerald green pools. The farther you go the deeper the pools get and the more entrenched the canyon becomes. Eventually you reach a drop that appears to be a somewhat difficult and slippery downclimb that would be hard to reverse. Downclimb here or better yet jump into the pool below from the rocks on the RIGHT (LDC). The pool below is deep, but always send on canyoneer down first to check the depth and for submerged obstacles. Swim this lovely hallway pool and continue down canyon. The watercourse digs deeper and that pools get more and more fantastic. Eventually you will come to the top of a 40 ft waterfall and the beginning of the technical section.

Rap 1: 50 feet from a boulder on the LEFT (LDC). The anchor is about 10 feet back from the lip. This is a single drop with a pool at the bottom. Set rope length or be prepared for a floating disconnect.



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Continue downstream. You will soon reach an open area with pools and some minor downclimbs. It is possible to escape up the canyonside on the RIGHT (LDC) if need be.

Downclimb through the open area and enter into the next set of narrows which are deeper and more dramatic than the first.

Rap 2: 65 feet from 2 bolts on the RIGHT (LDC). This is a single drop with a cool little slide at the bottom that leaves you in an interesting alcove.

Rap 3: 65 feet from 2 bolts on the RIGHT (LDC). The bolts are 20 feet back from the lip. This is a single drop into a deep pool. Set rope length or be prepared for a floating disconnect.

Next up is the narrowest part of the canyon (24"-36") and two slides into deep pools. There is some rock fall hazard in this section of the canyon so be aware. The first slide is about 30 feet long and a little slow but still fun. The second is shorter at 10 feet but is a really nice ride. After the slide, the canyon widens and you will start to see small trees growing in the middle of the canyon bottom. Just past the trees, the canyon funnels into a 25ft waterfall surrounded by a rock ramp. Downclimb the ramp to the RIGHT (LDC) of the waterfall. Pack gear below.

#### **Exit:**

Follow a small side drainage up that enters on the right (LDC) at the base of the final waterfall. Traverse sidehill, just above this drainage in the grass and slowly contour around onto a grassy slope with a few oak trees at the bottom. Look up at the top of this grassy slope and identify a funny looking rock on the ridge above. Climb the grassy slope, aiming for about 100 yards left of the rock. At the treeline at the top of the slope pick up a use trail that meanders through the woods along the rim of the canyon and eventually deposits you in the back campsite at the trailhead. Beware of poison oak on this trail.

#### **Non-Technical:**

Non-technical hikers can have a blast swimming and scrambling around in the pools at the top of Conda Coolero. It is possible for a good climber to make it all the way down to the top of the first rappel and then reverse their route back out.

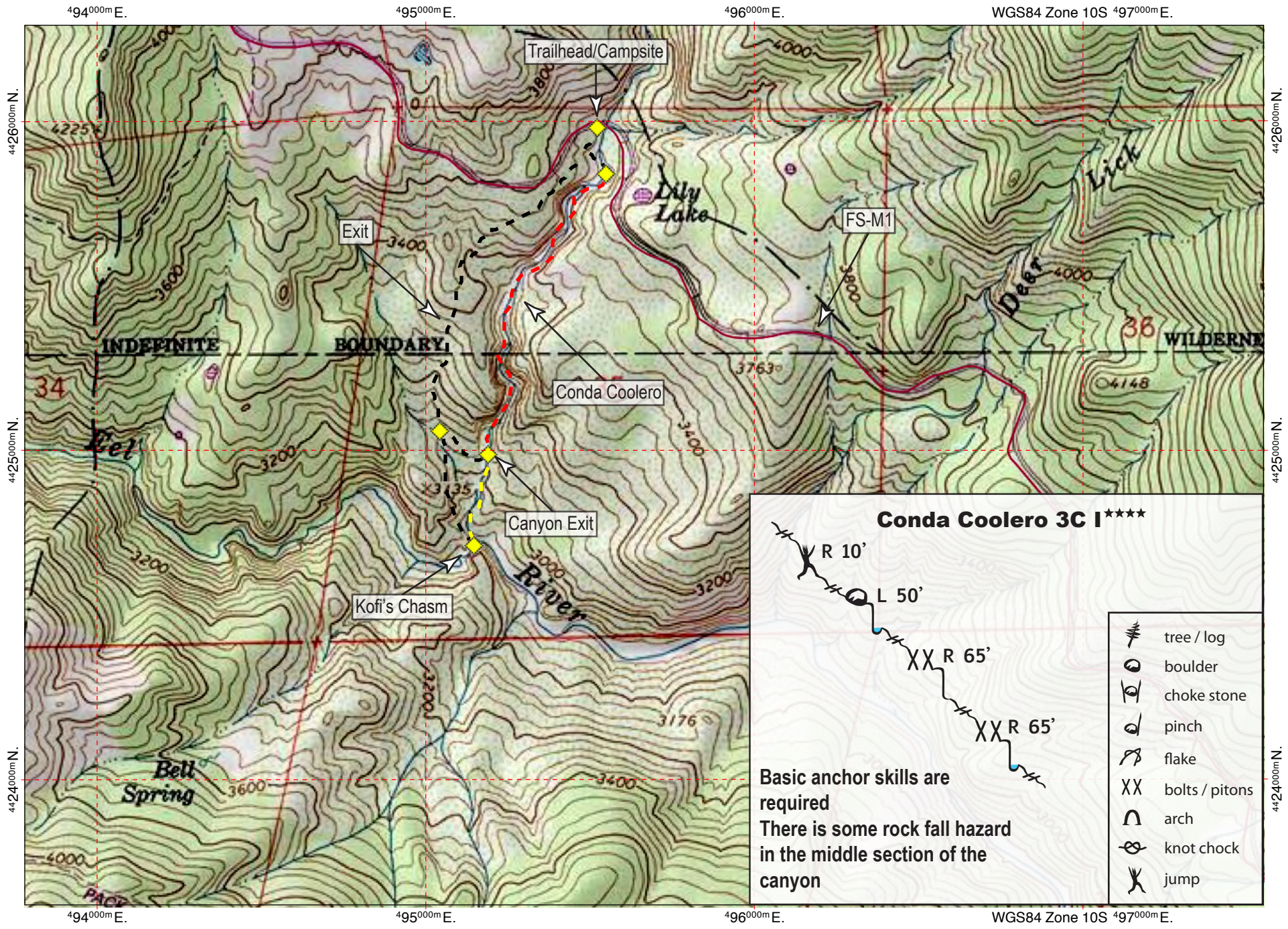
Another option is to follow the exit trail from the trailhead all the way down to the Middle Fork Eel River at the confluence with Rattle Snake Creek. At this confluence is a wonderful swimming hole known as

Kofi's Chasm. There are plenty of rocks to lounge on and jump from here.

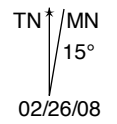
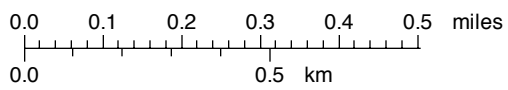
There is also a third option in the area for the non-technical hiker. Back near the intersection of CA-162 and FS-M1 there is a water park of swim holes known as The Eden Pools. To access these pools, park at the first pullout on the left after getting on FS-M1 and follow a trail down. The first pool is spectacular and you will be tempted to stay there all day. Be sure to hike your way upstream where you will find at least 7 other pools complete with waterfalls and super secret underwater tunnels. Bring a pair of swim goggles and see if you can find them. Enjoy!







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