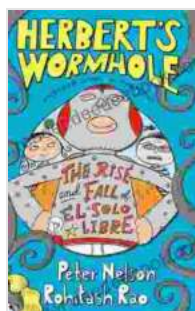


# The Rise and Fall of El Solo Libre: When Free Solo Climbing Became a Deadly Obsession

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a new style of climbing emerged that sent shockwaves through the climbing community: El Solo Libre.



## Herbert's Wormhole: The Rise and Fall of El Solo Libre

by Peter Nelson

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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El Solo Libre, which translates to "solo free" in Spanish, is a style of climbing without ropes, harnesses, or any other safety equipment. It is considered to be the most dangerous form of climbing, and it has claimed the lives of several high-profile climbers.

The rise of El Solo Libre was due in part to the popularity of climbers like Alex Honnold and Tommy Caldwell, who made free solo ascents of some of the world's most famous climbing routes.

Honnold, in particular, became known for his daring free solo ascents of big walls, including El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. In 2017, he became

the first person to free solo climb the entire Nose route on El Capitan, a feat that was hailed as one of the greatest climbing achievements of all time.

Caldwell, too, has made several notable free solo ascents, including the Dawn Wall on El Capitan in 2015. Caldwell's Dawn Wall free solo was particularly impressive, as it involved climbing a long and difficult route that had never been free soloed before.

The popularity of Honnold and Caldwell inspired other climbers to attempt free solo ascents, and El Solo Libre soon became a global phenomenon.

However, the popularity of El Solo Libre also came at a price. Several high-profile climbers, including Dean Potter and Ueli Steck, lost their lives in free solo accidents.

Potter, a world-renowned climber and BASE jumper, died in 2015 while attempting to free solo climb the Fitz Roy Traverse in Patagonia. Steck, a Swiss climber known for his speed ascents, died in 2017 while attempting to free solo climb the Annapurna I in Nepal.

The deaths of Potter and Steck shocked the climbing community and led to a reassessment of the risks of El Solo Libre.

In recent years, the popularity of El Solo Libre has declined, as climbers have become more aware of the risks involved. However, the legacy of El Solo Libre remains, as it has pushed the boundaries of what is possible in climbing.

## **The Pioneers of El Solo Libre**

The roots of El Solo Libre can be traced back to the early days of climbing, when climbers would often climb without ropes or harnesses for safety.

One of the most famous early pioneers of El Solo Libre was John Bachar, who made a number of daring free solo ascents in the 1970s and 1980s.

Bachar was known for his bold and aggressive climbing style, and he was one of the first climbers to free solo climb some of the most difficult routes in Yosemite Valley.

Another early pioneer of El Solo Libre was Peter Croft, a British climber who made a number of free solo ascents in the 1980s and 1990s.

Croft was known for his technical skill and his ability to climb onsight, which means climbing a route without any prior knowledge of it.

Bachar and Croft were two of the most influential climbers of their generation, and they helped to popularize El Solo Libre.

## **The Rise of Alex Honnold**

Alex Honnold is widely considered to be the greatest free solo climber of all time. He has made free solo ascents of some of the most dangerous and difficult climbing routes in the world, including El Capitan in Yosemite National Park.

Honnold began climbing at a young age, and he quickly developed a passion for free soloing. He made his first free solo ascent at the age of 12, and he has since gone on to free solo some of the most iconic climbing routes in the world.

Honnold's free solo ascents have been captured in several films, including the 2018 documentary *Free Solo*, which won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

Honnold's popularity has helped to raise the profile of *El Solo Libre*, and he has inspired a new generation of climbers to take up the sport.

### **The Fall of El Solo Libre**

The popularity of *El Solo Libre* has come at a price. Several high-profile climbers, including Dean Potter and Ueli Steck, have lost their lives in free solo accidents.

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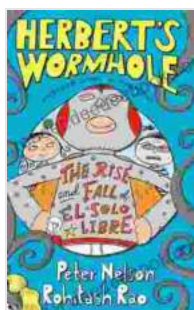
In recent years, the popularity of *El Solo Libre* has declined, as climbers have become more aware of the risks involved. However, the legacy of *El Solo Libre* remains, as it has pushed the boundaries of what is possible in climbing.

### **The Legacy of El Solo Libre**

*El Solo Libre* has had a profound impact on the world of climbing. It has pushed the boundaries of what is possible in climbing, and it has inspired a new generation of climbers to take up the sport.

However, El Solo Libre has also come at a price. Several high-profile climbers have lost their lives in free solo accidents, and this has led to a reassessment of the risks involved.

In recent years, the popularity of El Solo Libre has declined, but its legacy remains. El Solo Libre has pushed the boundaries of what is possible in climbing, and



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