



AAC Publications

Pisce Wall, The Great Bear

Montana, Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness

In August, Patrick Kingsbury, Patrick Odenbeck, and I set off into the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, returning to a wall I first saw in 2009. This remote wall is located above Lake Pisce, in a high cirque north of the Two Sisters and slightly detached from Two Sisters West. It is approximately 1,100' tall and was previously unclimbed, with the only known attempts failing to even reach the wall.

Starting on August 15, we made the approximately 20-mile approach via Lake Plateau, dropping into the top of Flood Creek. The trail down this drainage is unmaintained, and there is no trail to the wall. The hiking is steep and overgrown, with numerous areas of deadfall and sections of talus to negotiate. The alternate approach from Stillwater River, heading in at Cathedral Point and lower Flood Creek is considered even worse and is not advised. We set up our camp between Needle Lake and Comet Lake, about 40 minutes below the wall.

On August 18 we established the Great Bear (IV 5.11c R) in a 13-hour, tent-to-tent push. We led every pitch onsight and placed no fixed gear. The route comprises 11 pitches and follows an obvious corner system on the tallest portion of the formation. The climbing was varied and very clean overall, with only a few loose sections. There were many highlights, including pitch three, which we dubbed the Bear Flare, a strenuous, bottoming crack and the physical crux of the route (5.11c). Pitch five was the mental crux, featuring a 35' run-out traverse to the belay (5.10 R). We dubbed pitch 10 the Golden Pitch, as it features an immaculate 5.8 splitter that leaves the corner system and climbs the headwall directly, making for a spectacular position high on the route.

We walked off the backside. Although this looked improbable at points, a slow, thoughtful pace through the steep talus brought us down to Avalanche Lake, and eventually back to our tents. Though our time-window only allowed for the one ascent, there are plenty of worthy objectives for future parties in this hard-to-reach cirque.

Images



Scoping the Pisce Wall from the base.



The very remote Pisce Wall, showing the 11-pitch route called The Great Bear, the only known route on the formation.



Looking down from mid-way up the climb.

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