



AAC Publications

The Sphinx, Northeast Buttress, Cotton Mouth Khafra

California, High Sierra, Kings Canyon National Park

As full-time desk jockeys, Daniel Jeffcoach and I did not have an extra day for an approach that gains 4,000' over seven miles. We did not want to carry much water either. We thought our new route on the Sphinx (9,146') would go quickly and be no more than 600'. [The Sphinx has two other routes, much shorter and easier in difficulty. See R.J. Secor's guide to the High Sierra.]

After downclimbing a 1,000' slab with fifth-class moves during the approach, we soon realized our one liter of water was to be much less than desired. Not willing to bail, we started up the northeast buttress from the base of the wall. The first pitch began with solid 5.10 climbing off a ledge; a ground fall from 30' was a possibility I managed to avoid. The rest of the climbing was often spicy, but Daniel provided excellent stress relief.

After many hours of waterless climbing, sustained in the 5.9–5.10 range, with a 5.11 crux, we eventually reached the top of our 1,500'-plus new route in the fading light. We had drilled one bolt to back up an anchor comprised of a single half-decent cam. We would've placed a few more but had no time to waste. We had barely enough daylight to scramble down to our packs and come up with a clever name for our route: Cotton Mouth Khafra (IV 5.11a).

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

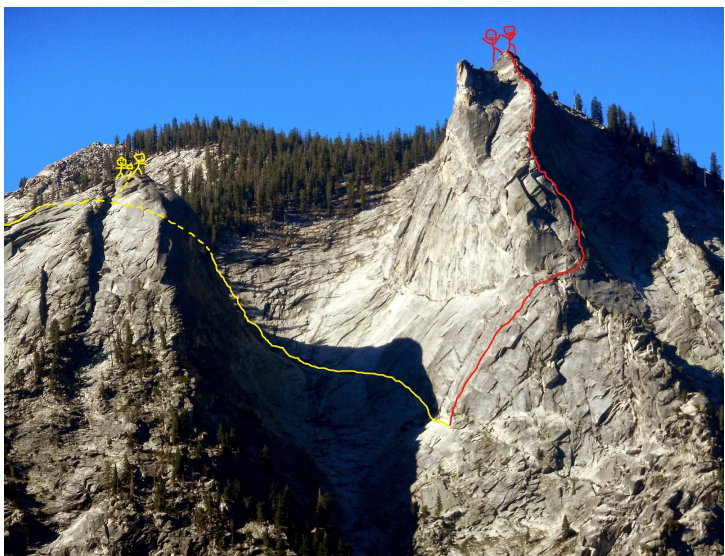
Images



The northeast side of the Sphinx.



Looking down the second pitch of Cotton Mouth Khafra.



The approach to Cotton Mouth Khafra is marked by the yellow line; the red line shows the route.



Daniel Jeffcoach leading.

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