



AAC Publications

Great Potato, East Ridge

New Mexico, San Mateo Mountains

Years ago I stumbled upon some entertaining written history about a large, unclimbed freestanding tower called the Great Potato (8,510') in the San Mateo Mountains, southwest of Socorro. The formation was named due to its location in upper Potato Canyon. I eventually mentioned the tower to Walt Whetham, who was extremely interested in an excursion.

In late March we made it into the area and found the formation without difficulty. A few miles of hiking from a snowy dirt road (ca 9,200') gave us a good view of the tower, and from there we descended about 1,200' into the canyon. Though only about 200' tall on its longest side, it is still an impressive formation in person.

Over two days (due to hand-drilling some anchor and protection bolts on lead) we established the first route up the tower by its airy east ridge (2 pitches, 5.6 R/X). The rock is comprised of poor quality tuff and andesite and presents almost no natural protection opportunities, so the climbing was a bit bold though never difficult. Despite the runouts, this was an extremely awesome and rewarding adventure. We left a summit register and drilled a two-bolt anchor on top to descend.

– Jason Halladay

Images



Photo top of the east ridge on Great Potato.



View of the north face (uphill) side of the Great Potato.



Walt Whetham following the first pitch of the east ridge.



Walt Whetham following the second pitch of the east ridge.



Jason Halladay stands on top of the Great Potato.



View of the Great Potato from upper Potato Canyon during the approach.

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