



## Snowpatch Spire, East Face, New Routes

Canada, Purcell Mountains, Bugaboos

**Over the last decade or so, the 500m east face of Snowpatch Spire has been transformed into one of the finest alpine free climbing walls in North America.** Formerly best known as an aid-climbing venue, it is now covered in free routes—mostly difficult ones, usually with at least a couple of 5.12 pitches. The climbing is almost entirely traditionally protected, with some bolts to connect crack systems via face climbing. Perhaps the most amazing thing about this wall is that almost every pitch is good! It has been one of my favorite zones for over 10 years now.

In the 2014 season, Michelle Kadatz and I investigated the lower-middle section of the east face, where a large flake had fallen off. We combined parts of several routes for the first three pitches, including Les Bruines Es Pentinen, Deus Ex Machina, and the original Sunshine Wall. An obvious scoop feature at the bottom went okay, but the next 80m of climbing required extreme care to remove leftover debris from the rockfall. Nevertheless, it didn't take much effort to buff this into a nice free climb—and a fairly moderate one for this wall. After five pitches, we had established Minotaur Direct (5 pitches, 180m, 5.11+). This felt like a better start than the original Minotaur (14 pitches, 600m, 5.12a), a route I established several years ago with Colin Moorhead that started on Labyrinth before traversing in. Michelle and I returned to add belay stations to Minotaur Direct in 2015, and then continued up the amazing climbing on Minotaur.

Alik Berg and I teamed up in mid-July of 2015 to complete another new route. We started on Minotaur Direct and then ventured left into Deus Ex Machina (at our sixth and seventh pitches). We were pleasantly surprised to get through the great roof system that spans the face at 5.11+ (the roof was previously rated A3). We then continued up new terrain until slowed by mossy cracks about 10 pitches up. We cleaned them and rappelled. Two weeks later, in early August, we were back with plans to finish the line. On the first day we climbed the first four pitches and fixed our two ropes. (Our friend Taran Ortlieb joined us on this day.) This allowed a bit of head start the next day, as we ascended the two lines and then made a continuous free ascent to the summit, adding four more pitches above our previous high point and sending every pitch first try. It was a very satisfying day on a fun route with a lot of varied climbing: Welcome to the Machine (13 pitches, 5.11+). Every pitch is between 5.10- and 5.11+, and I would recommend rappelling the route.

– Jon Walsh, Canada

## Images



Alik Berg leading a fingertips corner on pitch two of Welcome to the Machine.



Alik Berg on a face climbing section of pitch four of Welcome to the Machine.



Alik Berg leading up a steep flake on pitch six of Welcome to the Machine.



Alik Berg leading the steep and juggy pitch 12 of Welcome to the Machine.



The east face of Snowpatch Spire showing the route Welcome to the Machine (13 pitches, 5.11+). Of the 13 pitches, 12 are new and one is shared with the route Deus Ex Machina, an A3 pitch that Walsh and Berg free climbed at 5.11+. Every pitch on the route is between 5.10- and 5.11+.



Jon Walsh leading the A3 pitch of Deus Ex Machina at 5.11+.



Jon Walsh and Alik Berg atop Snowpatch Spire after completing Welcome to the Machine (13 pitches, 5.11+).



Taran Ortlieb leading the first pitch of Welcome to the Machine (13 pitches, 5.11+).

## Article Details

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