



AAC Publications

Panther Peak, South Face, New Routes

California, High Sierra

Panther Peak (9,006') is a small peak in Sequoia National Park, located along the ridge connecting Moro Rock and Alta Peak. Its steep south side, with two prominent buttresses, is displayed nicely for hikers on the popular High Sierra Trail. To my surprise, this 600–700' formation had not gotten much attention from climbers, with no reported routes. [Editor's Note: A trio from Three Rivers is believed to have climbed a few odds-and-end pitches on Panther Peak in the 1980s.]

After Daniel Jeffcoach made an initial attempt on the south face of the western buttress with Matthew Schutz and Adam Sheppard, he invited me along for a go at the upper pitches. What we discovered was mind-blowing: a purely vertical wall covered with crimps and horizontal dikes. These features allowed for free climbing of the highest quality. We finished establishing the upper pitches and decided to come back for a proper ascent on a later date.

In April, Adam Sheppard and I climbed the full route ground-up, while Daniel Jeffcoach and Adam Burch opted for a completely new route on the south face of the eastern buttress. Adam Sheppard led the initial two pitches (steep cracks with face climbing cruxes), and I was barely able to redpoint the upper two pitches (airy face climbing) due to a nasty thunderstorm. With our climbing gear buzzing, 30mph winds preventing any sort of productive communication, and snow flurries slapping our faces, both teams scrambled the final pitches to the summit.

Adam, Daniel, and I dubbed the west buttress line the Krymptonite (650', III 5.11). This route features four sustained pitches of steep free climbing (all pitches feature 5.11 cruxes with sustained 5.9-10 climbing in between), followed by a pitch of 5.7 with a boulder problem to reach the top. In my opinion, the route is as fun as Don Juan Wall in the Needles, with a shorter approach. The rock is clean, there's adequate protection, and it is ready for visitors.

Adam and Daniel dubbed their east-buttress line Rack'em Up, Reid (III 5.10-). The first and last pitches weren't great (they retreated to the west buttress summit due to the storm); however, Alaina Robertson, Daniel Jeffcoach, and I returned to complete a more fun start and finish (finishing on the east buttress summit) when an attempt at another independent line on the east buttress ended poorly. More details about this and the other climbs can be found on SEKlclimbing.com, Daniel's website, which contains plentiful information about the climbing in Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and the surrounding area.

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

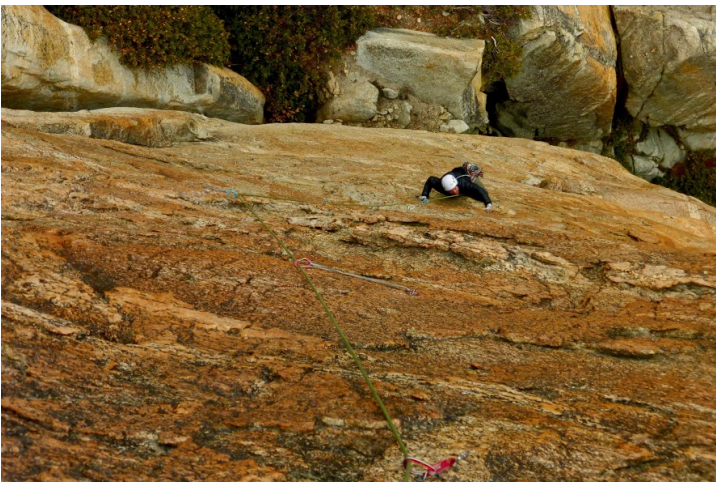
Images



Vitaliy Musiyenko belaying with Adam Sheppard following pitch three of Kryptonite.



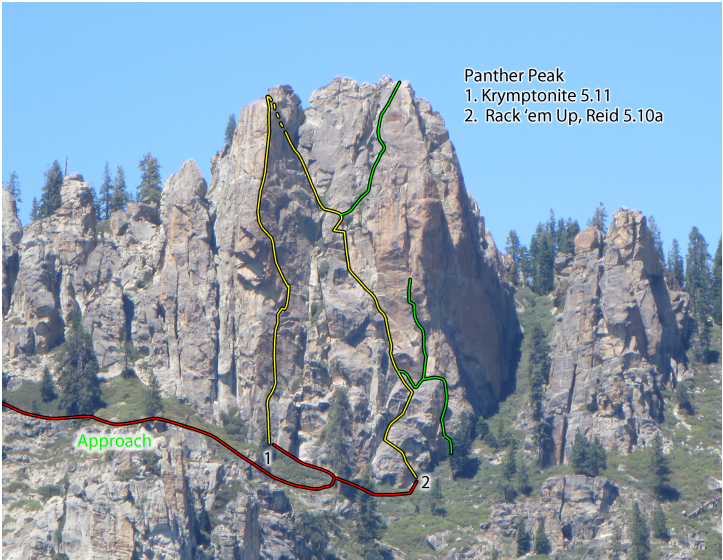
Adam Sheppard leading up the Kryptonite (650', III 5.11).



Steep face climbing on the Kryptonite (650', III 5.11).



Aerial photo of Panther Peak.



Panther Peak showing, from left to right, Kryptonite (650', III 5.11), Rack'em Up, Reid (III 5.10-) with the original start and finish, Rack'em Up, Reid (III 5.10-) with the alternative start and finish (middle green lines), and an unfinished route (right-most green line).

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