



AAC Publications

Darth Vader Tower; Eagle Scout Creek Dome, West Face

California, Sierra Nevada, Sequoia National Park

Climbers like to argue about which is the most difficult summit in the High Sierra. Some claim Castle Rock Spire, others note Clarence King, Devil's Crag, or other challenging peaks in remote parts of the range. After climbing most of these aforementioned peaks, I would plead that Darth Vader Tower is the one.

Brian Prince and I hiked over Timber Gap along Cliff Creek and set up camp near Granite Creek, with Darth Vader Tower and nearby Eagle Scout Creek Dome on our agenda. The morning after completing this 12-mile approach, we made a hellish bushwhack up the south fork of Granite Creek to reach Darth Vader Tower. Boulder-hopping from one slippery rock to another, I questioned my motivations for such outings.

When we finally arrived at the base of the tower's south face, we decided to scramble up a lower-angle dihedral. For the second pitch we roped up, and then we unroped for another 300' of scrambling. Above this initial section we roped up for five pitches. A final knife-edge ridge led us to the summit block, which is overhanging on all sides and gave Darth Vader Tower its name. Fortunately, I was able to grab a chicken head and heel-hook another feature, which allowed me to mantel and reach a perfect tabletop summit. Even the smoke from a nearby wildfire could now be appreciated, adding a mystical touch to the first ascent of this tower (III 5.9). We walked all around the summit block and found no opportunity for a natural anchor and no sign of previous passage. After drilling a bolt—the first of the day—we rappelled to a notch with a single 60m rope. Another roped pitch of downclimbing and we were down.

The following day we approached Eagle Scout Creek Dome via the north fork of Granite Creek, which was easier to travel than the south fork. We picked the most prominent system in the middle of the west face. It includes pumpy jam cracks from thin to offwidth, awesome stemming, and burly boulder problems. The rock quality was mostly good to great. We free climbed everything 5.11 and easier but gave into gear-pulling in a few spots for speed. On top of the fourth pitch we drilled a bolt and made a pendulum left. From there we continued taking the most direct line to the top. All eight pitches were at least 5.10, but usually harder—the Direct West Face (IV 5.11 C1). It could be done free by someone willing to put in the effort. To descend, we scrambled east with a few steps of fifth-class climbing.

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

Images



The south face of Darr Vadar Tower in the foreground. The route goes up the foreground sun-shade line. Hamilton Dome, the Hamilton Towers, Angel Wings, and many other prominent features can be seen in the background.



The west face of Eagle Scout Creek Dome (9,540'). The Direct West Face (IV 5.11 C1) climbs steep terrain up the central left-facing corner system.



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