



AAC Publications

Castle Rocks Area: New Route and First Free Ascent

California, Sequoia National Park

On June 5, Neal Harder, Chris LaBounty, and I established the Surge (1,000', 5.8) on the Fortress, in the Castle Rocks area of Sequoia National Park. Our route follows face and flake features to the right of the only other established route, the Siege (AAJ 2013). We found the face climbing to be surprisingly moderate and very similar to that found on Middle Cathedral in Yosemite Valley. The route ascends the east face of the Fortress via five full 60m pitches, with an additional 300' of 3rd class and easy 5th class to attain the summit tower. Bolted belays and the occasional lead bolt supplement the natural protection. It's recommended that future parties approach this formation by following the ridgeline dividing the Fin from the Fortress and then descending the steep rock gully on the west side and contouring around to the base.

The following day, we successfully freed the A0 section of Golden Axe (1,000', 5.12), a route on the south face of the Ax formation that the three of us first climbed in 2006 (AAJ 2007). This was the second known ascent of the route.

This trip marked the last new route established by Chris LaBounty before his untimely death in the Dolomites from a wingsuit BASE accident. Neal and I were very fortunate to have experienced this beautiful and peaceful place with him as the last of our long list of Sierra backcountry trips as a team.

– Brandon Thau

Images

Article Details

Author	Brandon Thau
Publication	AAJ
Volume	59
Issue	91
Page	0
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions