



AAC Publications

The Pencil

Oregon, Mt. Hood

On January 28, 2017, Tim Bemrich, Jacob Oram, and I made the first ascent of a feature long known as the Pencil, a steep, very narrow ice line on the north face of Mt. Hood, between the North Face Gully routes and the Eliot Headwall.

We approached via the standard slog up the south side to the Hogsback, from which we soloed the Devil's Kitchen Headwall by headlamp, putting us on the summit for sunrise. From there, we descended the Sunshine Route to the shoulder above Snow Dome, where we roped up and crossed the upper Eliot Glacier to the bottom of the route. We were happy to find solid sticks and moderate climbing up to an obvious horn with a sling, left during a previous attempt on the line. I led off on the second pitch, which was to be the crux. The line of least resistance took us through a series of steep sections on variable, mostly thin ice with the occasional rock move for nearly a full 60m of WI3/3+.

The third pitch was a very quick section of secure WI3- right off the anchor that gradually mellowed into a snowfield with good névé. This took us to the top of the ridge in a 60m-plus rope stretch, where a very short but quality pitch of WI3 brought us onto the Cathedral Spire snowfield. We simulclimbed snow and ice to the top of Cathedral Spire, from which we did a short downclimb in loose, unconsolidated snow to reach the notch above the Ravine. From there we joined the North Face Right Gully route to reach the summit the second time that day.

This route is one of the more aesthetic lines on the mountain and offers some of the longest and most consistent ice of any of the routes on Mt. Hood, with four pitches of quality ice climbing.

– Alex Parker

Images



Alex Parker starting up the crux pitch of the Pencil, a previously unclimbed ice feature above the Elliot Glacier on Mt. Hood.

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