



AAC Publications

Notch Peak, South Face, Airavata

Utah, House Range

From November 28 to December 9, Karl Kvashay and I established the first route up the prominent south face of Notch Peak (9,654'), a limestone mountain much better known for its huge north wall. This was our second go at the line after a strong but failed attempt in the spring of 2015.

We spent two days on either end of the climbing hauling our kit to and from the wall. We accessed the route from the peak's south drainage until we reached an obvious gully that was used to breach a maze of many 3rd- and 4th- class steps. The headwall was climbed in nine pitches, totaling 1,755' of technical climbing, with a total of 18 belay or protection bolts drilled by hand.

Airavata (VI 5.10R A4 PDW) was climbed ground-up, in full winter conditions, with temperatures regularly dropping into the negatives. [Editor's note: PDW is a big-wall grading designation that originated in Zion National Park and stands for Pretty Damn Western. It denotes very serious climbing.] One snowstorm pinned us down for 36 hours in our portaledge. The route required careful navigation through many teetering and fractured features; all belays were thoughtfully placed to protect against leader-induced rockfall. A full wall rack with ample beaks was key to protecting both the free and aid sections, and a 70-meter rope was utilized to its full extent.

– Kristoffer Wickstrom

Images



The south face of Notch Peak in Utah's House Range, showing the line of Airavata (VI 5.10R A4 PDW).



Looking back to the final belay on Airavata (VI 5.10R A4 PDW) while juggling the haul line on the last pitch, which overhung 15 feet.



Karl Kvashay and Kristoffer Wickstrom on the south face of Notch Peak during the first ascent of Airavata (VI 5.10R A4 PDW). The two climbers can be seen below the prominent elephant's trunk feature that gives the route its name. Airvata is the Hindu elephant god.

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