



## Arrowhead Peak, North Ridge

Alaska, Brooks Range, Arrigetch Peaks

**In late July, Tim Halder and I ventured into the remote and mythical Arrigetch Peaks for three weeks of packrafting and climbing. I'd first read about this range in David Roberts' autobiography years ago, and had dreamed about granite towers, blueberries, and grayling in the heart of Alaska's Brooks Range.** Dreams became a stark reality as we tried to manage a yard sale of climbing, fishing, and rafting gear on an Alatna River sandbar on our first day of the trip. We floated to the confluence with Hot Springs Creek and were soon wading up the icy-cold water to avoid dense riparian brush and bears. Two days of bushwhacking with large burdens found us in the shadow of Shot Tower in an alpine fork of Hot Springs Creek that had rarely been visited.

We set our sights on a fine, arrowhead-shaped peak at the valley headwaters, on the ridge that divided the Alatna and Kobuk rivers. Embarking on a marginal weather day in the middle of a tentbound stretch, we set out to scope the climbing potential of the upper valley and find a way across the Continental Divide to the headwaters of the Kobuk River. After finding a reasonable pass to the Kobuk, we started up a rotten gully on the southwest (far) side of the Divide and regained the ridge in three long pitches. The rock quality improved above the Divide, as we continued up the north ridge of the Arrowhead for four moderate pitches to the summit (ca 5,000', 5.8). We lounged in the sun on the windless summit, taking in the numerous nameless peaks and plotting our eventual course down the ribbon of the mysterious river that winded south.

Eager to climb more peaks on the Kobuk River side, we took advantage of poor weather to retrieve our rafts down at the Alatna/Hot Springs confluence and shuttle our loads over the Divide to a side valley of the Kobuk River. However, we waited in vain for a week in gloomy weather under the soggy and imposing northern walls before giving in to the irresistible pull of the wild and unknown Kobuk. We floated over 100 miles in five days through the wildest country we'd ever visited. Grizzly, moose, and wolves tracked every available stretch of sand, and we pulled grayling out of crystal-clear pools for sustenance as our supplies dwindled. The weather improved as the river widened, and we often looked back to see the Arrigetch Peaks shrouded in storm clouds.

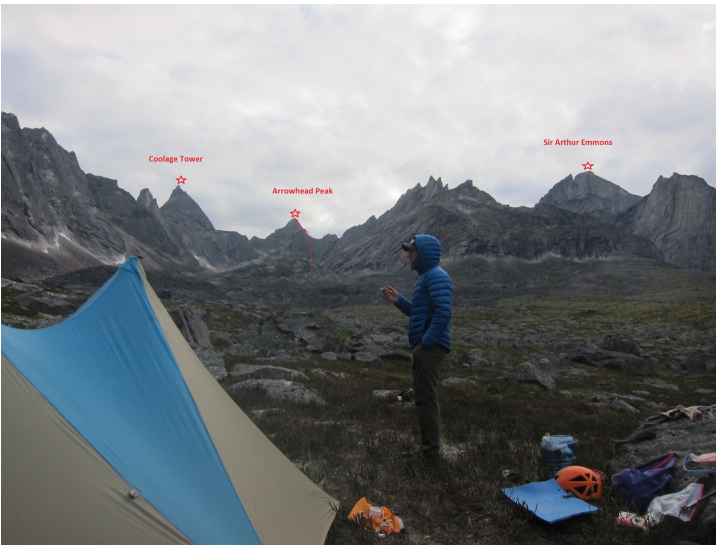
We have hopes to return, perhaps with just rafts and fishing rods. August might be the best time for avoiding mosquitoes and harvesting blueberries in the Brooks Range, but the weather is notoriously bad. The Arrigetch has much yet to be explored by rafters and climbers.

– Jason Schilling

## Images



Tim Halder taking packrafting literally near the headwaters of the Kobuk River.



Camp on the west side of the Divide, showing Arrowhead Peak and its neighbors.



Arrowhead Peak.



Map showing the location of Arrowhead Peak.



Tim Halder climbing on the north ridge of Arrowhead Peak.

## Article Details

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