



## AAC Publications

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### **Four Stranded Parties – Underestimated Difficulties**

Canada, Alberta, Banff National Park, Mt. Rundle Traverse

**There were four separate rescues of uninjured but stranded groups of climbers on the Rundle Traverse in the summer of 2017.** This 18-kilometer (11-mile) traverse follows a ridge across the many summits of Mt. Rundle. The terrain is mostly scrambling, which increases in difficulty from east to west in both route-finding and technical climbing (low fifth class). It is usually done in one very long day.

All of the rescues were in the more technical sections of the ridge, which can require some roped climbing as well as rappels, depending on experience and comfort level. Some of the parties had lengths of rope and a small rack, and some did not. All of the parties called for help by cell phone later in the day and were evacuated via helicopter long line, either that evening or at dawn the next day.

#### **ANALYSIS**

All of these groups said the route was much harder and longer than they expected. People often go light to traverse Rundle and may not bring as much gear as they might carry normally. The difficulties are encountered past the halfway mark along the traverse, so the ease of a “forward retreat” could be a factor in decision making: Climbers elect to keep going rather than turn around and risk being benighted. (All parties should carry enough gear for an unexpected night out.) Limestone is notoriously tricky for route-finding if climbers are not accustomed to that type of terrain, and online descriptions often are inadequate.

These parties had cell phones and were able to initiate a rescue. However, from other nearby areas cell phones may not work, and emergency satellite devices would be required to call for assistance.

## Images

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