



AAC Publications

East Temple Peak, Thieves in the Temple

Wyoming, Wind River Range

With no real objectives other than finding unscripted adventure in the mountains, Matt Threlfall and I set off for the Winds in early August. We decided to start in the Deep Lake area and do some warm-ups, but upon arrival we were immediately drawn to the sheer walls of the northwest face of East Temple Peak.

After several days of scouting, we discovered a few weaknesses in the wall other than the original 1961 route (Beckey-Chouinard-Gran, [see AAJ 1962](#)). After careful study, we decided to try what looked like a continuous 700' hand- and finger-sized crack that led to the zenith of the wall. The bottom pitch was a bit grassy in sections, and although it looked like 5.9 from the ground, it turned out to be more in the 5.11 R range. The next five pitches featured incredible rock quality—pitches two, three, and four were 5.10, and the fifth pitch (5.11c) saw us up a beautiful rope-stretching dihedral with perfect stone. Pitch six (5.12a) was the crux, beginning with a boulder problem out a roof, then easing up to 5.11 jamming to the top.

After two days of working out the pitches, on August 8, we climbed the route free, alternating leads with no falls. We then rapped the route to the first ledge and hid under a roof as it started raining. It was then we noticed for the first time another party on the wall. Two climbers were a couple pitches up the 1961 route and placing bolts in the rain ([see AAJ 2020](#)). We yelled and ask if they were alright—they paused for a minute and then went back to hammering. We made our way to camp and celebrated. Thieves in the Temple (700', 6 pitches, IV 5.12a) is, to our knowledge, the first free climb up the northwest face and is named after a route at our home crag, the New River Gorge.

– Matt Fanning

Images



Looking up Thieves in the Temple (700', 6 pitches, IV 5.12a) on the northwest face of East Temple Peak. The route follows the splitter cracks in the center of the photo.



The northwest face of East Temple Peak above Deep Lake in the Wind River Range. Thieves in the Temple (700', 6 pitches, IV 5.12a) is in green. The original Northwest Face (5.9 A3, Chouinard-Gran, 1961) is to the left of the black streaks, in the center of the face. Shortly after Thieves in the Temple was climbed, Cassaday Bindrup and Casey Elliot completed Drought Year (1,000', 8 pitches, IV 5.11+), a free variation to the 1961 line.



Matt Threlfall takes in the expansive northwest face of East Temple Peak from a belay cave partway up Thieves in the Temple (700', 6 pitches, IV 5.12a). The original 1961 route (5.9 A3, Chouinard-Gran) follows a series of left-facing dihedrals in the center of the photo.



Afternoon light on the northwest face of East Temple Peak. The left margin is obscured by Lost Temple Spire (outlined), whose right side hides the classic Southwest Arête. During their enchainment of peaks around Deep Lake, Jack Cramer and Grant Kleeves climbed this route, rappelled into the notch, then snuck across a 5.7 traverse (1) to top out on East Temple. The original Northwest Face (5.9 A3, Chouinard-Gran, 1961) followed corner systems in the center, connected by a traverse ledge. (2) Drought Year (1,000', IV 5.11+, 2019) freed the lower portion of the original route then struck off on new terrain. (3) Thieves in the Temple (700', IV 5.12a, 2019).

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