



AAC Publications

Ribbon Falls Amphitheater, Sawanobori

California, Sierra, Yosemite Valley

Over three days in early September, Chris Koppl and I completed a fun aid climb up the gut of the Ribbon Falls Amphitheater. On our first attempt, in 2020, we found beautiful seam nailing in otherwise mega-polished monolithic rock, climbing about two-thirds of the line. We were itching to return and find out if the high-quality cracks would continue to the top. They did. What surprised us is how much easier the climbing became on the pitches we had already nailed.

During the first attempt, on a key pitch, I ripped four consecutive micro-beak placements during a 30-foot fall. I got back up and kept placing a string of other micro-beaks and two RURPs, plus three hook placements on small natural edges, before getting good gear. It genuinely felt like A4-. However, after the pitch was climbed and cleaned, it felt A2-ish, thank God. It's hard to give this route an honest rating, but our best guess would be A3. There are no enhanced hook placements or bolts to get through blank sections.

Our route follows superb rock directly up the line of the waterfall, and we called it Sawanobori (1,612', 5.7 A3), the Japanese word for the art of climbing running waterfalls and streams. Despite the name, this route is only climbable in mid to late summer or fall, when the waterfall is dry. Don't try it if there is any chance of a storm unless you bring a kayak.

Bring five to six beaks of all sizes, a few Lost Arrows, a couple of knifeblades in each size, triples in small cams and doubles in cams up to BD number 4. A single 5 and 6 are optional, and so are the hooks. Portaledges are mandatory, as there are no natural ledges that can be used for a comfortable bivy. All the anchors have two bolts, aside from the last three anchors, which are equipped with a single bolt. We descended by rappelling the route with two 60m ropes.

— Vitaliy Musiyenko

Images

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