



## AAC Publications

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### **Off Route, Stranded—Underestimated Route**

Canada, Alberta, Banff National Park, Mt. Rundle

**On October 2, a climber soloing the Rundle Traverse from Canmore to Banff requested a rescue after attempting to retreat near the end of the route.** The Rundle Traverse is a long, exposed technical ridge consisting of 11 distinct peaks. The ridge has significant route-finding challenges, with several unmarked rappels and a technical grade of about 5.5.

On a clear, sunny day, after traveling a significant portion of the ridge, the solo climber reached the section before the 11th peak. Unable to find the best route through the exposed terrain, the climber attempted to retreat down the south-west slope of the mountain to the valley. While retreating, the climber encountered several cliff bands they were unable to navigate. Eventually, the combination of exposed terrain, fatigue, and incoming darkness led the climber to call for help. In the final minutes of daylight, the local rescue team was able to locate and extract the unharmed climber via helicopter long-line.

#### **ANALYSIS**

Despite the low technical grade, the Rundle Traverse, like many undertakings in the Canadian Rockies, is a serious objective and not to be underestimated. For much of its 12-mile length, the ridge involves poor rock quality and exposed, complex terrain. The average time to complete the route is between 11 and 16 hours. By October in the Canadian Rockies, the sun sets around 7 p.m. These shorter days provide less daylight to complete an objective of this length, and the limited daylight also plays a factor in the ability to carry out a rescue.

Along the ridge are many opportunities to retreat down the southwest slopes of Rundle. However, there are many places that appear suitable to descend, yet retreat actually is not possible. Preplanning exit spots along the ridge helps to ensure a successful escape if needed.

The climber selected a good weather window, and the route was in good condition, free of snow and ice. They were carrying an appropriate communication device and were able to call for help, which allowed for a successful rescue. (Source: Parks Canada.)

**Images**

Article Details

Author	Parks Canada
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	75
Page	106
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Accident reports