



## AAC Publications

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### **Going-To-The-Sun Mountain, South Face, New Route**

United States, Montana, Lewis Mountains, Glacier National Park

**For years, I have gazed at the steep 4,500' south face of Going-to-the-Sun Mountain (9,642') and imagined what it would be like to quest up this intricate terrain.** Topo maps and aerial images revealed numerous possibilities, showing massive freestanding towers and fins of ancient sedimentary rock, coupled with shadowy chimneys that just might offer passage. From a distance, the rock looked decent, at least by Glacier standards. And, best of all, there was practically no approach, with the base of the face just above Going-to-the-Sun Road.

Early on August 13, Stefan Beattie and I headed up with a light rack and a 40m rope. We were not looking for a super-direct line that would require hours of hard climbing. Rather, we planned to put our route-finding skills to the test, linking natural weaknesses we hoped the mountain would reveal. We chose a line in the center of the face and quickly soloed the first 2,500', with mostly fun 3rd- or 4th-class scrambling on clean, solid rock in a large gully.

At 7,700', we entered the bottom of a massive rock bowl, and the climbing became more engaging and exposed, with some short steps of low 5th class. At 8,700', we reached the top of the bowl and the bottom of the 1,000' cliff band that soars to the summit ridge. Far to climber's right, we saw a huge chimney that looked like the most reasonable weakness to attempt. Here we began the sustained pitched climbing.

I took the first lead and stemmed my way upward until stopped short by some loose and dirty rock. This forced Stefan out of the chimney and onto the face to the left on the second pitch. This ended up being the crux (5.7), with some tricky down-sloping holds on a vertical face. Two more pitches, with continued exposure, brought us to a large ledge that led to some easier terrain to the right and put us back into another chimney. We scrambled a couple of hundred more feet until we were blocked by a massive chockstone. Again, we were forced onto the face outside of the chimney to the left. Stefan took the next lead, which was a traversing pitch on horribly rotten rock. Protection was sparse and required creativity and a cool head. Lucky for me, the next lead was much the opposite: downright fun 5.7 with steep and airy moves on solid rock and plentiful cracks that ate up the rack. There may have even been a hand jam or two.

A couple more pitches of low 5th class put us on top of a large fin of rock in between the massive chimney to our right and another huge chimney to our left. We scrambled more easy terrain to the top of the face and crested the east ridge at about 9,400'. Following the ridge to the summit, we took a long rest in the sun before heading down the standard west face scrambling route.

We found no traces of climbers on our line and initially believed our South Face route (IV 5.7) was the first on this face. However, much climbing history in Montana remains undocumented. I reached out to Terry Kennedy, who is one of Glacier's most accomplished alpinists. Sure enough, I learned that in August 1987, he and Dexter Hale climbed a route on this face. Their line through the upper cliffs began about 100m to climber's left of ours, with climbing up to 5.7. Perhaps someone else will put up another line before 40 more years pass?

— Adam Clark

## Images



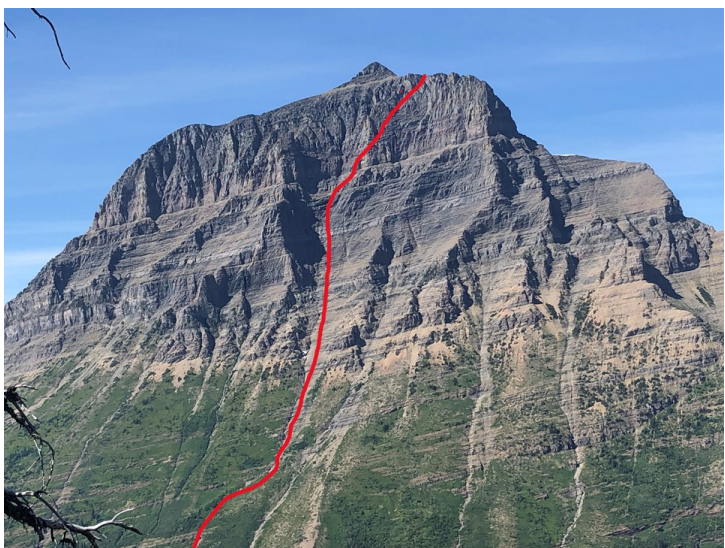
Adam Clark leads a pitch in the large lower chimney that he and Stefan Beattie followed during their new route up the south face (4,500', IV 5.7) on Going-to-the-Sun Mountain.



Stefan Beattie nears a belay on the South Face (4,500', IV 5.7) of Going-to-the-Sun Mountain, with the Going-to-the-Sun Road visible far below.



Stefan Beattie leads out of the upper chimney on the south face (4,500', IV 5.7) of Going-to-the-Sun Mountain.



The 2022 route up the south face (4,500', IV 5.7) on Going-to-the-Sun Mountain, in Glacier National Park. An earlier route up the face, climbed in 1987, took a line farther left through the upper cliffs.

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