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Mt. Francis Farquhar, Northeast Face of North Fin, Smooth Talkin' Sociopath

United States, California, Sierra Nevada, Kings Canyon National Park

Vitaliy Musiyenko and I both have long lists of formations to explore for new route potential, and the northeast face of Mt. Francis Farquhar's (12,893') lower northwest summit, sometimes called the North Fin (ca 12,500'), is a beautiful alpine wall where our lists overlapped. We teamed up for it in early July. The 15ish-mile approach from Road's End in Kings Canyon, although brutal in a day, was one of the most scenic I've done, following thousands of feet of waterfalls up North Guard Creek. We camped near North Guard Lake and started the walk to the base of the wall at dawn the following day.

Our route [route 2 in the photo at left] ascends to the right of the North Fin's only other reported route, Blank Stair (IV 5.10+, McDaniel-Nettle, 1997), and just right of a prominent vertical dike. We expected lots of alpine cracks, so we didn't bring a bolt kit, and were surprised by the steep and discontinuous systems we saw from the base.

Eventually we found a spot to start. Vitaliy led the first pitch, which had somewhat tricky gear and a thin bulge that ended up being the crux. I took the second pitch, traversing left a bit, where I found a fun finger crack in a small left-facing corner. On the third pitch, Vitaliy headed right toward a massive left-facing corner we had seen from the base; to get to it, he fixed a beak for pro before finally finding the endless cracks we had expected. The cracks came just in time, as the hammer jumped for freedom a few minutes later and made it all the way to the talus below. After topping out the corner, we generally trended up and left until reaching the summit at sunset.

For the descent, we followed vague instructions from previous climbers by scrambling down the gully on the north side of the wall, paralleling a sharp ridge to our left. We made one rappel toward the bottom. As it was dark, I'm not exactly sure where we went; I just know it was steep! Eventually we stumbled into camp by North Guard Lake and hiked out the following day.

Our route, Smooth Talkin' Sociopath, climbs 1,000' in six long pitches. It has a 5.10c crux on the first pitch and requires cams from tiny to 3" and small to medium offset nuts.

— Daniel Jeffcoach

Images



Vitaliy Musiyenko crossing between two of the many waterfalls of North Guard Creek, during the approach to the northeast face of Mt. Francis Farquhar, Kings Canyon National Park, California.



Vitaliy Musiyenko heading up the friction slabs by North Guard Creek on the approach to Mt. Francis Farquhar.



Vitaliy Musiyenko checking out the northeast face of Mt. Francis Farquhar during the approach.



Vitaliy Musiyenko at the start of the massive corner on pitch three of Smooth Talkin' Sociopath (1,000', 6 pitches, III 5.10c) on the northeast face of Mt. Francis Farquhar, Kings Canyon National Park, California.



Vitaliy Musiyenko looking down from the top of the “fun part” on pitch three of Smooth Talkin' Sociopath (1,000', 6 pitches, III 5.10c), northeast face of Mt. Francis Farquhar, Kings Canyon National Park, California.



Vitaliy Musiyenko belaying the beginning of pitch four on Smooth Talkin' Sociopath (1,000', 6 pitches, III 5.10c).

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