



AAC Publications

The Prism, Prism Break

California, Sierra Nevada, Sequoia National Park

Besides being one of the more beautiful places in the Sierra to camp, Tamarack Lake is surrounded by the impressive north face of Mt. Stewart (12,205') and several striking domes, including the Prism. In 2007, Neal Harder, Chris LaBounty, and Brandon Thau established Left Facet (13 pitches, 5.10a R) on the Prism, weaving up natural weaknesses on the longest part of the face. (Since then, at least four other routes have been added; see AAJ 2011.) After Brandon hinted that a more direct line could be wrangled, Pete Fasoldt, Reuben Shelton, and I went to see what potential lay in wait.

The approach to the Prism from Tamarack Lake is a 40- to 60-minute grind. There are good places to cross the creek just below the lake, then an easy traverse up to the base of the stepped slabs leading to Saber Ridge. The pro tip is to stay in the open drainage and on the looker's left side as if you were going up to Saber Ridge until you are slightly higher than the base of the Prism, then cut left and down, staying above all the soul-crushing bushwhacking.

On August 8, between drenching rainstorms, we established Prism Break, a seven-pitch 5.10 with sustained, varied, and well-protected climbing. Only pitches two and seven share the same ground as Left Facet. Pitch five meanders up a wild vertical water chute with move after move of unique tube stemming. On pitch six, Reuben made a bold lead on a striking steep pillar with just the right amount of knobs and flakes.

Prism Break (and all the other routes on the main face) ends on a pinnacle at the top of pitch seven, which is not the actual summit. As with Saber Ridge, the Prism officially ends with a long ridge that gradually merges into the valley crest. We followed the ridge for several more easy pitches to a gap, where two rappels to the west put us on the easy walk-off descent back to Tamarack Lake. Alternatively, the route can be rappelled from the top of the seventh pitch with two 70m ropes.

Editor's Note: Shortly after this route was climbed, Pete Fasoldt and Reuben Shelton established Stewart Little on the northwest flank of Mt. Stewart. See Fasoldt's report [here](#).

— Dave Nettle

Images



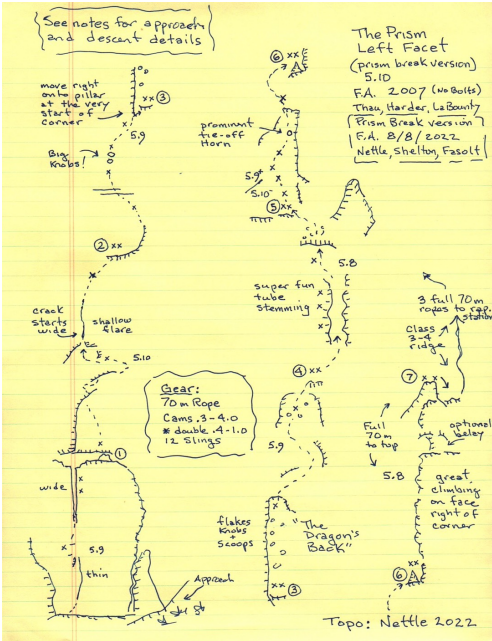
The Prism (left) and Saber Ridge (right). Prism Break—a major variation to Left Facet (13 pitches, 5.10a R, Harder-LaBounty-Thau, 2007)—was established by Pete Fasoldt, Dave Nettle, and Reuben Shelton in 2022, and follows the left skyline.



Reuben Shelton climbing perfect stone on pitch six of Prism Break (7 pitches, 5.10), the Prism, Sequoia National Park, Sierra Nevada, California.



Silhouetted against gathering storm clouds, Reuben Shelton leads the crux 5.10 pillar on pitch six of Prism Break (7 pitches, 5.10), the Prism, Sequoia National Park.



Topo for Prism Break on the Prism, Sequoia National Park, California.

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