



AAC Publications

Garlic Dome, Hold Your Nose

California, Western Sierra Nevada

As lifelong Kings River fishermen, Daniel Jeffcoach and I have visited the valley below Garlic Dome many times. Talking one day, we decided that a fisherman may be able to spend a lifetime in that valley and never have a problem with that great bulge of unclimbed rock looming over him, but for a climber who happens to be fishing there it's a different story altogether. It is distracting.

Visible from many vantage points along the Upper Kings River, as well as from Highway 180 near Yucca Point, Garlic Dome is the prominent rock feature on Garlic Spur, a long finger ridge that runs north-south from Rodgers Ridge down to the Kings River. Although seen by many, it had gone unclimbed and unnamed, due in part to being supremely well guarded by a steep, brushy approach.

In September 2021, Daniel and I made our first attempt. From the Garnet Dike raft put-in, five miles of newly improved trail (many thanks to Mountain Warriors trail crew) along the north side of the river, then roughly one mile of near-vertical bushwhacking, got us to the formation. While we were caught off-guard by the sheer tenacity of the whitethorn, as well as by an 80-foot-tall band of rock that is invisible from below, we persisted to the base of the route.

Having taken fully five hours to progress the last mile off-trail, we began climbing the route after noon. Daniel led us through several pitches of less-than-straightforward route-finding. Ultimately, we were forced to retreat from the top of the third pitch due to an unpredicted storm. It turned out to be the right decision: The storm lasted all night and was fierce enough to snap trees by the river where we had camped. I could not remember a time I was more grateful to be in a tent down in a valley and not up on an exposed ridge.

We returned in April 2022, armed with the prior year's knowledge of how not to approach. Our friend Joe Woolsey joined us for round two. Unfortunately, after an ill-advised attempt on my part to stash three gallons of water the day before our attempt, I became delirious with some sort of heat-related illness that forced us to bail five miles in on the approach.

October 29 marked our third attempt. Daniel Jeffcoach and I reached the summit. (Joe had a last-minute change in scheduling, but was still kind enough to fly me over the rock later to get pictures.) Hold Your Nose (800', 5 pitches, 5.10a) has interesting climbing on high-quality rock and follows the prominent nose of the formation, a southwestern-facing aspect. Discontinuous crack systems varying from fingers to offwidth, mixed with fun face climbing throughout, made the climb well worth the effort of the approach. We can now fish in that valley without distraction.

— Drew Wood

Images



Daniel Jeffcoach sizing up the roof near the top of pitch one of Hold Your Nose on Garlic Dome.



Drew Wood on pitch two, a 5.7 he called "the most fun pitch" of Hold Your Nose (800', 5 pitches, 5.10a) on Garlic Dome.



Drew Wood climbing the final slab on Garlic Dome.



Hold Your Nose (800', 5 pitches, 5.10a) on Garlic Dome in the Sierra Nevada. Climber and pilot Joe Woolsey couldn't join Daniel Jeffcoach and Drew Wood for the final attempt that resulted in the first ascent, but flew Wood by the formation to get this shot.

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