



AAC Publications

Mendenhall Towers, The Curtain, Inside Passage

Alaska, Coast Mountains, Boundary Ranges, Juneau Icefield

Sam Cohen climbing the splitter hand crack on Inside Passage's final headwall pitch. Photo by Brandon Kupczyk.

In early August, Clay James, Brandon Kupczyk, and I established a new route in the Mendenhall Towers outside of Juneau. Our line is on the Curtain, a south-facing wall between the Main and Fourth towers, and follows a clean crack system for roughly 1,000'.

We arrived on the Mendenhall Glacier with hopes of putting up a new route, and despite Juneau's rainy nature, we found ourselves in the summer's best weather window. We camped below the Curtain where, in 2009, Blake Herrington and Jason Nelson established Iron Curtain and Resisting A Rest (see AAJ 2010). Clay and Brandon spotted our line from camp, to the right of the 2009 routes, and one evening we began questing up its first pitches in a corner and crack system. Two pitches of splitter hand jams, a fingery roof pull, and steep laybacking hinted at the route's quality. The next morning, we climbed the route in full and topped out with plenty of sunlight. We intended to follow Blake and Jason's Iron Curtain rappel route but ended up making several anchors with tat and nuts.

The Mendenhall Towers are an interesting place, eerie yet comfortable. Gaping wide moats and harrowing descents make each endeavor a bit spooky, all while having 5G phone service. We named our route Inside Passage (5.10+) in reference to the waterway connecting Washington state to Alaska.

—Sam Cohen, USA

Images



The first and second pitches of Inside Passage. The group's 2024 rappel line and the route Iron Curtain are to the looker's left.



Clay James switching cracks on pitch four of Inside Passage.



Sam Cohen climbing the splitter hand crack on Inside Passage's final headwall pitch.



Sam Cohen, Clay James, and Brandon Kupczyk's route Inside Passage, on The Curtain aspect of the Mendenhall Towers. The two prior routes on this formation, both climbed in 2009, ascend rock on the left side of this photo.

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