



AAC Publications

Royce Lakes Basin, Royce Peak, Two New Routes

California, Sierra Nevada, Eastern Sierra

In July 2024, Matt O'Brien and I hiked 11 miles up to Royce Lakes Basin, a beautiful area with three large alpine lakes surrounded by towering peaks. We spent several days there, during which we established two new alpine rock routes.

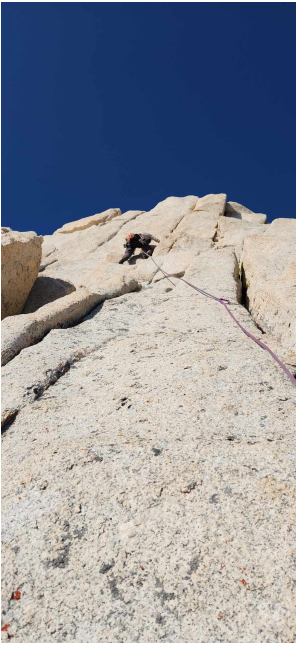
On our second day in the basin, we set out toward Royce Peak (ca 13,280'), where we established the North Ridge Direct (1,500', 6 pitches, III 5.10). Several pitches of steep 5.10 cracks brought us up to the exposed fourth- and fifth-class north ridge—the end of which is also the finish for the Northeast Face (5.6)—which we took to the summit.

During the walk-off to the south, we decided to hook around the east side of the mountain and go back up an exposed, east-facing ridge of the mostly detached spire that towers over Royce Lake. To our knowledge, there are no other routes on this feature.

While we expected easy ridge scrambling, we were surprised to encounter pitch after pitch of quality rock interspersed with exciting ridge traversing. An exit pitch through a deep chimney deposited us on top of the spire. A bit of easy fifth-class traversing and downclimbing brought us to a final third-class ridge and then the summit of Royce Peak for the second time that day. We called the route East Pinnacle (1,500', 9 pitches, III 5.9).

—Matt Carpenter

Images



Matt O'Brien leading the third pitch of North Ridge Direct (1,500', 6 pitches, III 5.10) on Royce Peak, Royce Lakes Basin, Sierra Nevada, California.



Matt O'Brien nearing the top of East Pinnacle, a semi-detached tower on the east ridge of Royce Peak.



Matt Carpenter (left) and Matt O'Brien after finishing the first ascents of the North Ridge Direct (1,500', 6 pitches, III 5.10), on the right, and East Pinnacle (1,500', 9 pitches, III 5.9), on the left.

Article Details

Author	Matt Carpenter
Publication	AAJ
Volume	66
Issue	99
Page	141
Copyright Date	2025
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions