



AAC Publications

Sky Blue Lake Basin, Four New Routes

California, Sierra Nevada, Sequoia National Park

From July 16 to 24, Japhy Dhungana, Rainbow Weinstock, and I established four new routes in the Sky Blue Lake basin, a.k.a. Miter Basin, south of Mt. Whitney. While none of the climbs are particularly long, they're rich with good stone and great crack systems, with potential for more routes from future parties.

We approached from the Cottonwood Lakes trailhead and set up base camp in the idyllic Penned Up Meadow (36.50518, -118.27652). The following day, we hiked northeast 1.5 miles to the southeastern aspect of a previously unnamed spire (ca 12,300') on the west side of Rock Creek. After three or four pitches of mid-fifth-class climbing, we arrived at the base of a stunning headwall crack that offered two excellent pitches from offwidth to fingers. Our line wrapped to the east side of the formation for one final pitch to the summit. We downclimbed the brief north ridge to the first westerly gully, which needed only one rappel. We named the formation Sky Blue Spire and the route Sapphire Crack (700', 5.11d).

Next we established two routes on what we called the Sky Blue Diamond (ca 12,700'), a formation just north of Sky Blue Spire with a striking diamond-shaped shield on its northeast aspect and stupa-shaped summit blocks.

First, we entered an Altared State (900', 5.12a): one continuous crack system that ranged from strenuous hands to baggy fingers for three or four pitches, a stretch of 5.8–5.10, and a few hundred feet of third-to low-fifth-class soloing to the top.

The following day, we established Stupa Troopers (900', 5.12c), which had multiple pitches of 5.12 before joining the same easier terrain on Altared State. We descended both routes by downclimbing and rappelling the ascent route to a large ledge atop the main shield, from which we found a glorious walk-off to the north.

On the final climbing day, we did a new route on the west-southwest buttress of the Miter, a peak that has been climbed many times. We named our route The Pen Is Miter Than the Sword (600', 5.10), a reference to a series of [Boston Globe](#) articles written in the early 2000s regarding the Catholic Church. We descended via the north ridge and hiked out on July 24 with full hearts and tired fingers.

—Zach Lovell

Images

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