



AAC Publications

Knee Stuck In Crack

Montana, Gallatin Canyon, Sparerib Area

In August, a climber got a knee stuck high on a two-pitch route in Gallatin Canyon. Here, she gets help from a fellow climber. She was freed in a few hours and finished the route. Photo: Climber 1.

On August 15, two teams of two climbers were on the second pitch of a classic two-pitch crack called Sparerib (5.8). Climber 1 of the higher team led the pitch and brought up their partner, Climber 2. While following, Climber 2 got her knee stuck in the crux wide crack about five meters below the top. Meanwhile, Climbers 3 and 4 had arrived at the top of the first pitch.

Climbers 3 and 4 rappelled to the base, and Climber 4 ran down to the car to grab dish soap while Climber 3 hiked up the descent route to the top of the formation. Climber 3 helped Climber 1 put the belay ATC in guide mode, clipped directly to the anchor. Climber 3 then rappelled to the stuck climber to provide her with water, ibuprofen, and snacks. They cut the pants from the stuck knee using scissors from their first-aid kit.

The time was 1:30 p.m., and the group was unsure if they could free Climber 2 before sunset. They activated an inReach satellite communicator, sent an SOS message, and got in touch with local SAR. They conveyed the appropriate information via text and were notified that a SAR team was on the way. Climber 4, having retrieved dish soap from the car, walked to the top and rappelled in. After slippery dish soap was rubbed around the knee, Climber 2 was able to extricate herself. Her total time stuck in the offwidth was about three hours.

The group messaged SAR that assistance was no longer needed. They then ascended to the top of the climb. Climber 1 recalled, "After her knee released, we offered to haul or help her jug a fixed rope, but she preferred to finish the route on her own power." There was minor bruising around Climber 2's knee, but no major injury.

ANALYSIS

Incidents involving stuck knees are not uncommon. This team did everything right. Their successful self-rescue resulted from collective experience, fortitude, and a little pluck. The group was well prepared to help the stuck climber, and fortunately they had dish soap in their vehicle. The Garmin inReach and scissors from the first-aid kit were valuable to have on hand. (Source: Climber 1.)

Images



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