



AAC Publications

Fatal Fall on Rock — Climbing Unroped

Canada, British Columbia, Mt. Robson

The upper half of the south face of Mt. Robson, seen from a rescue helicopter. The deceased climber fell from the yellow X and was later found on a ledge 750 meters below (yellow rectangle). Photo: Parks Canada

On August 31, two climbers near the summit of Mt. Robson (12,972 feet) requested a rescue. They reported that a third member (male, 25) had fallen off the mountain.

The party had ascended the Wishbone Arête route (IV 5.6) and was 350 meters from the summit. It had snowed the night before the accident, which may have been a contributing factor in the fall. The deceased climber had been unroped when he fell. The two survivors spent the night near the summit before being flown off by Parks Canada SAR.

ANALYSIS

The Wishbone Arête is an exceptionally long and serious climb on Mt. Robson, the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies. Though featured in Fifty Classic Climbs of North America, it has been called “the worst route in Canada.” This moniker is derived from poor rock quality, meandering climbing, and the fact that much of the route involves 3rd- and 4th-class terrain, often tackled unroped. Terrain like this exposes climbers to serious fall potential and protection is poor to nonexistent. In a full report on this tragic attempt (linked to at the ANAC website), one of the surviving climbers wrote, “There is just no safe way to climb it [Wishbone Arête].... If you are considering climbing Mt. Robson, find another route.” (Sources: The climbers, Parks Canada, and CascadeClimbers.com.)

Images



Mt. Robson is majestic when viewed from afar. The Wishbone Arête traverses the lower face to gain the sharp ridge diagonaling up and left to the summit. In August 2024, a trio of climbers was nearing the top when one of their party fell.



The upper half of the south face of Mt. Robson, seen from a rescue helicopter. The deceased climber fell from the yellow X and was later found on a ledge 750 meters below (yellow rectangle).

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