



AAC Publications

Ptarmigan Mountain, Towers 2 and 4, Southeast Faces

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park

The Ptarmigan Towers, with Pika Kombat on Tower 4 (left) and Unoriginal Sin on Tower 2 (right). Other routes are not shown. Photo: Michael LaDue Collection

During the summer of 2025, some friends and I returned to Ptarmigan Mountain (12,324') on the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park, where we had put up two routes in 2024 on the Ptarmigan Towers (see AAJ 2025). This time, we set our sights on the steep and imposing southeast faces of Towers 2 and 4. Tower 2 had no documented routes on the main southeast face, and Tower 4 had one route following the path of least resistance up the northeast arête (Gries-Hamilton, 1975).

Over the July Fourth weekend, Mike Lane and I picked an obvious line up Tower 2: a dihedral and crack system in the middle of the wall that goes from the ground to a large ledge about halfway up the tower. We encountered an old Star Dryvin bolt at about 30 meters (right at the beginning of our pitch two), as well as a bail/tat anchor at about 65 meters (partway up our pitch three). We saw no evidence of climbers higher up.

On day one, Mike and I climbed through the top of pitch two and fixed ropes to the ground. The next day, we top-roped to our previous high point, then continued to the summit via a meandering path that skirted a large, blank face to the left, onsighting every pitch. The crux second pitch is a well-protected and beautiful corner system with thin face moves. On pitch three we climbed around some very loose blocks—possibly the reason for the bail anchor. We called the route Unoriginal Sin (800', 7 pitches, 5.11c).

Later that summer, Jack Ward and I attempted a new route on Tower 4's southeast face. I had previously climbed the first pitch with Lyle Harte, as well as done a scoping mission on pitch two with Mike Lane. Jack and I finished pitch two, then hand-drilled bolted rappel anchors. Pika Kombat (270 feet, 2 pitches so far, 5.11) climbs beautiful splitters and corners through high-quality rock to a ledge about halfway up the tower. We named the route after Jack's good friend PK, who tragically passed in the mountains last year. I will be returning to finish the line to the top of Tower 4.

—Michael LaDue

Images



Michael LaDue climbing on pitch one of Unoriginal Sin.



Jack Ward on pitch one of Pika Kombat.



Mike Lane on pitch two (5.11c) of Unoriginal Sin.

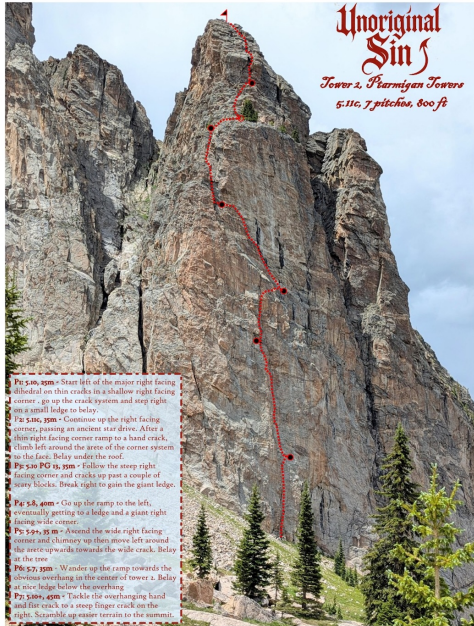


Photo-topo of Unoriginal Sin on Tower 2 of the Ptarmigan Towers.



Photo-topo of Pika Kombat on Tower 4 of the Ptarmigan Towers.



tower topos tower 2 and 4
The Ptarmigan Towers, with Pika Kombat on Tower 4 (left) and Unoriginal Sin on Tower 2 (right).
Other routes are not shown.

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