



AAC Publications

The Candlestick, West Face

California, Sierra Nevada, Sequoia National Park

The steep upper reaches of the Candlestick's west face. The first ascent route is not visible but is near the left skyline. Photo by Daniel Jeffcoach

In my years of exploring the Great Western Divide and Monarch Divide in the Sierra Nevada, I kept spotting a remote spire poking up above the low profile of the Tablelands to the south. I don't know when I first saw the tower, only that about 16 years ago I added it to my "to investigate" list.

I could find nothing about the formation online, nor in any books, nor from the veteran climbers I asked. So, this past September, Vitaliy Musiyenko and I headed out from the Wolverton trailhead in Sequoia National Park for an up-close look at the tower, which is set at the head of Box Canyon.

After about 15 miles and 5,000 feet of elevation gain, the two of us were pleasantly surprised to see what looked like a rock made for climbing—very steep and heavily featured—perched between two beautiful lake basins. We were unpleasantly surprised to find no fish to catch. As I often do, I brought ramen with hopes of adding fish for protein, but we had to be content with ramen alone.

We started the next morning, September 12, at first light. The rock in the surrounding area can be anything from perfect orange granite to grainy choss, and this formation turned out to be better than expected, with 800 feet of fun and secure climbing (up to 5.10a) on steep cracks, with almost no loose rock. We followed a prominent corner directly up the west face to a vertical orange headwall, reaching the summit, at approximately 11,300 feet, in a light hailstorm. The only bolts we placed were on the rappel route down the south ridge: three rap stations (two ropes needed) and some scrambling in between.

Rising from the south ridge is a steeper, thinner, and more delicate spire that we nicknamed the Box Cutter and hoped to try the same day, but the stormy weather chased us off.

In keeping with the idea of Tablelands, we called our tower the Candlestick.

—Daniel Jeffcoach

Images



The west face of the Candlestick, seen from the south. The first ascent route was near the left skyline. The smaller tower, nicknamed the Box Cutter, remains unclimbed.



Vitaliy Musiyenko midway up the west face of the Candlestick, with the headwall above.



The west face of the Candlestick, seen from the south, with the route drawn in on the skyline.



Daniel Jeffcoach traverses out below the headwall on the west face of the Candlestick, Sequoia National Park.



Vitaliy Musiyenko at the end of the last pitch on the west face of the Candlestick, just as hail started to fall.



Daniel Jeffcoach (left) and Vitaliy Musiyenko on top of the Candlestick, Tablelands, Sequoia National Park.



This angle shows the steepness of the upper reaches of the Candlestick's west face.

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