



AAC Publications

Miter Basin, Six New Routes

California, Sierra Nevada, Eastern Sierra

New routes on the Sky Blue Spires: (1) Hawg Ripper (along left skyline), (2) Bofa Spire, (3) The Conclavity, (4) Spankin' the Marmot (a.k.a. Andrew's Crack), and (5) Journey to the Center of the Earth. Photo by Daniel Dunn

In July, Andrew Tumbusch and I hiked into Miter Basin (a.k.a. Sky Blue Lake Basin), near Mt. Whitney, in search of unclimbed granite. Upon arrival, we found seemingly endless unclimbed cracks in a stunning alpine setting, complete with a meandering trout-filled creek through a grassy meadow. Of particular interest were four spires to the southwest of the Miter, forming a continuous wall along the western edge of the basin.

We began on the southernmost formation, Sky Blue Spire, first climbed by Japhy Dhungana, Zach Lovell, and Rainbow Weinstock in 2024 via Sapphire Crack (700', 5.11d). We chose a line right of their route, starting on the east face and climbing splitter cracks, corners, and flakes up a large, exposed buttress. Aside from one dislodged block that resulted in Andrew taking a dramatic fall, the rock was excellent. We named the route Hawg Ripper (700', 6 pitches, 5.9+).

The following day, we linked up with Rett English to ascend the previously unclimbed second spire via its northeast buttress. We named the formation Sky Blue Spire 2 and our route Bofa Spire (800', 5.8).

After resupplying, Andrew and I returned to focus on the impressive Sky Blue Diamond, first climbed by Dhungana, Lovell, and Weinstock in 2024 via two routes on the right side, Altared State (900', 5.12a) and Stupa Troopers (900', 5.12c). We chose a new line up the central wall, climbing and fixing a few pitches on the first day, heading toward a massive roof. A couple of days later, we pushed through the roof via a very exciting bomb-bay chimney system. From there, we joined Altared State and scrambled the ridge to the summit. We called our route Journey to the Center of the Earth (1,000', 8 pitches, 5.10).

Daniel Dunn and Matt Carpenter high on Spankin' the Marmot, a.k.a. Andrew's Crack. Photo by Andrew Tumbusch

The next morning, Daniel Dunn and Rett joined us to climb a continuous line up the east face of the previously unclimbed third spire—which we called Sky Blue Spire 3, naturally. Wandering corner systems, delightful cracks, and some ramps led us to a steep headwall, followed by easier terrain and the summit. We called this route The Conclavity (900', 5.9).

We then turned to the Miter itself in two parties of two, climbing a new route—with two different finishes—up the west ridge to the south summit. Daniel tried a direct start up a huge dihedral, but the climbing proved too difficult and dangerous, so we dropped down and around to gain the west ridge. Easy, fun, and exposed climbing led to a headwall. Andrew and Daniel climbed a beautiful, steep splitter (5.10) while Rett and I stayed true to the easier ridge. We met at the top and called our new route The Miterhorn (700', 5 pitches, 5.8 or 5.10).

For our final route, we went back to the Sky Blue Diamond to climb a striking splitter Andrew and I had spotted early on. Daniel and I found a way to the base of the crack, taking time to clean the route and add protection bolts. I then aided up the crack and fixed a rope. The following day, Andrew joined us, and after some rehearsal, he led the pitch free. Higher up, he pulled off another committing lead through a somewhat harrowing headwall crux before we gained the ridge to the top. We called our

final route Spankin' the Marmot, a.k.a. Andrew's Crack (1,000', 9 pitches, 5.12-).

—**Matt Carpenter**

Images



Daniel Dunn taking in the view during the first ascent of The Miterhorn (700', 5 pitches, 5.8 or 5.10) on the Miter.



New routes on the Sky Blue Spire: (1) Hawg Ripper (along left skyline), (2) Bofa Spire, (3) The Conclavity, (4) Spankin' the Marmot (a.k.a. Andrew's Crack), and (5) Journey to the Center of the Earth.



Overview of Hawg Ripper (700', 6 pitches, 5.9+) on Sky Blue Spire.



Andrew Tumbusch squeezing through the bomb-bay chimney pitch on Journey to the Center of the Earth (1,000', 8 pitches, 5.10) on the Sky Blue Diamond.



Andrew Tumbusch down low on The Conclavity (900', 5.9), the first route up Sky Blue Spire 3.



Daniel Dunn on the crux pitch of Spankin' the Marmot (a.k.a. Andrew's Crack, 1,000', 9 pitches, 5.12-) on the Sky Blue Diamond.



Andrew Tumbusch sending the crux of Spankin' the Marmot, a.k.a. Andrew's Crack.



Looking down the crux pitch of Spankin' the Marmot, a.k.a. Andrew's Crack.



Daniel Dunn and Matt Carpenter high on Spankin' the Marmot, a.k.a. Andrew's Crack.



Matt Carpenter enjoying a Miter-y fine lifestyle in Miter Basin. The Miterhorn is visible in the background.

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