



AAC Publications

Chair Peak, The Upper West Side

United States, Washington, Cascade Range, Snoqualmie Pass

Snoqualmie Pass has been extensively explored by skiers, but there is still plenty of untapped mixed-climbing terrain for those keen on adventure. On January 18, Doug Hutchinson and I skied around to the less-explored west face of Chair Peak (6,238') to see what we could find. A non-technical scramble in warmer months, the face is a jumble of rock buttresses and couloirs. To my knowledge, there were no established winter routes.

Our route climbed a 700' snow and ice gully capped by a cauldron of rock. An ephemeral pillar of ice flowed partway down the right face of the steep headwall. To gain access to the ice, I led an easy mixed pitch up a series of left-facing corners to a comfortable ledge system. Doug took over the lead with a pitch of thin and technical smears and detached curtains. A perfectly placed tree provided a sturdy anchor. The remainder of the route consisted of steep snow and moderate but exposed mixed climbing up a bowl to a false summit, from which we followed the striking northwest ridge—first climbed in winter by Robert Harris and Kit Lewis in 1975—to the top.

Our descent involved several rappels and downclimbing in the couloir on climber's right— what I believe to be the original 1928 summer route up the west face. We finished the day by skiing the remainder of the Chair Peak circumnavigation in the dark. I am not very creative, and all of Doug's name suggestions were too inappropriate. We settled on The Upper West Side (300m, WI5- M5 PG-13 60°).

This side of Chair Peak is anything but climbed out. Later in the season, friends tried a central plumb line, but conditions forced them to turn around. Several more mixed routes seem to exist on the various buttresses, and that plumb line still awaits an ascent.

— Michael Telstad

Images



The first glimpse of the west face of Chair Peak on the approach. The Upper West Side is not visible in the photo.



Doug Hutchinson climbing steep snow near the top of the approach couloir on the west face of Chair Peak.



Doug Hutchinson shakes out before tackling the final bulge on pitch two of The Upper West Side of Chair Peak.



Michael Telstad reaches good ice and easier ground on the first roped pitch of The Upper West Side.



The west face of Chair Peak, showing The Upper West Side, the first known winter route up the face.

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