



## AAC Publications

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### **Second Mendenhall Tower, First Winter Ascent**

Alaska, Coast Mountains, Boundary Ranges

**On February 8, 2025**, Alex Burkhart, Matt Callahan, and I set out to climb the Second Mendenhall Tower (a.k.a. Midget, 58.53415, -134.49092) in winter. Starting at 1:30 p.m. at the trailhead, we planned to climb through the night to reduce the risk of falling debris during the sunny day.

The Second Mendenhall Tower (a.k.a. Midget). Photo by Dylan Stuart

We traveled up the Mendenhall Glacier and reached the base of the south face at 8:30 p.m. After punching up the initial WI2 entry gully, we traversed a 65° snowfield to the couloir that splits the West and Second Towers. The higher we got, the harder the ice became, until we were swinging and kicking like proper ice climbers.

At the notch between the towers, we roped up for the steep, exposed west ridge. We crawled through a unique rime wave, then climbed a squeeze chimney for 30 feet to a ceiling of rime. Punching through this, we popped out on the flat summit just in time to watch a show of northern lights.

We rapped the east ridge with the intention of climbing the west ridge of the Main Tower, but by the time we were done rappelling it was midnight. Thoughts of home outweighed the idea of an even longer night. We got back to the car by 4:30 a.m., having made the first winter ascent of the Second Tower (1,200', WI2 M2).

The conditions were great and the weather was still holding out, so on February 15, I rallied my buddy Zach Rhoades to attempt a repeat of Butter Snickers (1,200', WI3 80° snow) on the Sixth Tower (58.53187, -134.46620). Alex Burkhart, Matt Callahan, and Kevin Walsh first climbed this route on August 9, 2019 (5.8 rock climbing), and Alex and Laughlin Barker returned on January 29, 2023, to climb it in winter, likely making the first winter ascent of the Sixth Tower.

This time high clouds were forecasted, and since the route was not in a massive couloir, Zach and I decided to climb during the day. Starting at 4 a.m., we skied up the glacier once again, following our tracks from the week prior.

We reached the base of the climb at noon and started up the WI3 entry gully. Thick, solid water ice led to a hanging snow gully. From there, easy snow climbing brought us up to the ridge. The snow got steeper and steeper, and just as it was getting awkward, it ended in a notch in the ridge. From there, easy but exposed snow led to the top. We reversed the line and were back to the cars by 11 p.m.

—Dylan Miller

## Images



The West Tower (left) and the smaller Second Tower (a.k.a. Midget) in the Mendenhall group, seen from the south during a flight on February 14, 2024. The first winter ascent of the Second Tower took the obvious gully to the notch between the towers, then the west ridge to the summit.



The Second Mendenhall Tower (a.k.a. Midget) seen from a flight on February 14, 2024. The line of the first winter ascent is shown. The West Tower is to the left and the Main Tower to the right.



The Sixth Mendenhall Tower in winter 2025 with the line of Butter Snickers. The route was first climbed in summer 2019 and later repeated in winter 2023.

## Article Details

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