



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Providence, South Face, Journey Through the Castle of Providence**

Alaska, Alaska Range

**On April 25–27, 2025**, Tad McCrea, Anna Pfaff, and I completed a long-dreamed-of new route on the south face of Mt. Providence (11,200', 62.896379, -151.052324) in the Alaska Range. Journey Through the Castle of Providence (1,000m, WI4 M5 5.10 and steep snow) follows the most direct route up the face to the summit. This line had captured our imaginations since we first saw it, and after a 2024 attempt with Thomas Bukowski that stopped just below the summit because of bad weather, we were determined to return.

Anna Pfaff and Andres Marin climbing the steep summit ridge of Mt. Providence. Photo by Tad McCrea  
Mt. Providence rises in an isolated corner of the Central Alaska Range, far from the spotlight of Denali or Huntington. Its south face is a striking sweep of steep snowfields, ice ribbons, and compact granite walls, topped by sharp, corniced ridges. I first spotted a possible line up the face from a branch of the Southwest Fork of the Tokositna Glacier. As we found during the 2024 attempt, the line has a bit of everything: ice, rock, mixed climbing, and steep snow.

After a stretch of inclement weather, we were lucky to catch a narrow weather window and fly into the range on my birthday, April 22, for another attempt. Thomas was unable to join us this year, so Anna and I initially planned to climb as a party of two. As we were waiting on the tarmac in Talkeetna, we caught up with Tad, who had just finished guiding in the Alaska Range. Talkeetna Air Taxi's Paul Roderick asked him to join us for the scenic flight. As we were unloading our bags on the Tokositna, Tad couldn't stop commenting on how cool the face looked. Jokingly, I told him he should grab his gear and fly back in the next day to join us for the climb. He immediately accepted, and sure enough, there he was on the glacier with us 24 hours later.

Conditions on the face were better than we could have hoped: good ice, solid rock, and connected features. We climbed the lower half through steep snowfields, ice, and mixed terrain, eventually reaching a rock headwall lined with huecos and chicken heads, which I led with rock shoes. After a bivy, some steep snow slopes and an exposed, corniced ridge finally brought us to the seldom-touched summit. On the summit ridge, our line met up with the 1997 route that was the first documented ascent of the mountain (Hall-Lewis-Ramsden; see AAJ 1998).

Standing atop Providence felt like touching something beyond the physical. The name itself, "Providence," speaks to fate or maybe the unseen hand that guides us through challenges. For us, this climb became a two-year test of patience, vision, and commitment.

—Andres Marin

## Images



The south face of Mt. Providence (11,200') in the Alaska Range showing the line of Journey Through the Castle of Providence (1,000m, WI4 M5 5.10 steep snow). Andres Marin, Tad McCrea, and Anna Pfaff made the first ascent of the route in April 2025. It was their second expedition to the mountain. They were stopped just below the summit due to bad weather during a 2024 bid.



The south side of Mt. Providence (11,200'), with (1) Outside Providence (Anderson-Hall, 2016), (2) Divine Providence (Johnson-Piggott, 2004), (3) Journey Through the Castle of Providence (Marin-McCrea-Pfaff, 2025), and (4) Hall-Lewis-Ramsden Route (1997).



Tad McCrea at the bivy on the south face of Mt. Providence.



Anna Pfaff starting up a beautiful ice runnel on the south face of Mt. Providence.



Anna Pfaff (foreground) and Andres Marin climbing the steep summit ridge of Mt. Providence, after climbing a direct line up the south face of the peak.



Andres Marin belaying Anna Pfaff on the crux rock pitch of their new route on the south face of Mt. Providence.



Anna Pfaff, Andres Marin, and Tad McCrea (L to R) on the summit of Mt. Providence.

## Article Details

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