



AAC Publications

The Tusk, Complete South Ridge

Alaska, Chugach Mountains

Tim Stephens leading across a rock tower on the south ridge of the Tusk. Photo by Ryan Hokanson

The Tusk (6,825', 61.01692, -145.54298) is a prominent rock spire approximately ten miles southeast of Thompson Pass in the central Chugach Mountains. It's quite visible from many locations in the area, standing out in contrast to the surrounding snowy summits.

The Tusk was first climbed by Pete Lowney and Josh Varney in April 2012 via a route beginning on the Tusk Glacier, due north of the formation. The team ascended a snow slope to the west of the spire to a shoulder, then traversed around to the south side before climbing one or two pitches of rock to the summit. This was the only known ascent of the peak by climbers. In April 2011, Dean Cummings landed via helicopter on the summit, then proceeded to rappel and ski the north face.

On April 1, 2025, Lauren Brand, August Franzen, Tim Stephens, and I left the Richardson Highway on snow machines and traveled approximately 20 miles to the Deserted Glacier, parking at about 3,700 feet below a large glaciated bowl directly west of the Tusk. We then skinned up about 2,000 feet to a spot just below the low point in the south ridge. Caching our skis, we booted to the ridge and began the technical ascent.

In all, we did nine or ten roped pitches and minimal simul-climbing. The route had a mix of snow climbing with rock steps and mixed sections. We mostly stayed on the ridge, but avoided some overhanging ground by climbing on the east side. Overall, the route offered sparse but adequate protection; good anchors were always available. A couple of steps felt like 5.8 or 5.9, but there was nothing sustained at that level. The final pitch was a spectacular knife-edge with tremendous exposure.

On the summit, we found an old rope slung around the summit block. We backed this up with a cam and did one 60-meter rappel down the southwest side to a snowfield. After downclimbing 500 feet of snow, we rigged another 60-meter rappel through the lower cliffband. A few minutes of booting led to our skis.

After enjoying 2,000 feet of highly variable skiing down to the machines, we loaded up and got to enjoy some obligatory snow machine shenanigans, resulting in a very late but safe arrival back to the road system.

—Ryan Hokanson

Images



August Franzen approaching the Tusk (6,825') from the southwest. The south ridge is the right skyline, starting from the prominent saddle. The team descended via the mountain's southwest side, facing the camera, with two long rappels and downclimbing.



Tim Stephens leading across a rock tower during the ascent of the complete south ridge of the Tusk.



August Franzen and Tim Stephens climbing snow early on the south ridge of the Tusk.



Tim Stephens, August Franzen, Lauren Brand, and Ryan Hokanson (left to right) on the summit of the Tusk.



August Franzen leading a mixed pitch on the Tusk.

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