

North American Classic Route Description



Mt. Moran, South Buttress Direct, Upper Section

Grade IV, 5.8, A1

Author: Michael Anderson, 9/01

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From the ledge at the end of the hand traverse, climb up slabs on the right (east) side of the ridge crest for about 300' into a large cirque (5.6). Watch for loose rock in the cirque. Exit the cirque on the left side via chimneys (5.5) and ledges staying to the right of the ridge crest. About 200' above, the ridge steepens. Traverse right around these gendarmes, which will place you on a large shoulder at the start of the long horizontal section of the ridge. From here, there is a very exposed knife-edge section for about 200'. Climb this on both sides (5.5) with good gear. There are many down-climbing sections so protect it well for the second. Eventually you will climb down from the ridge crest on ledges on its right side which will lead to a notch with several pine trees. The walk-down descent goes down the gully to the left from this notch.

From this point you will notice a steep headwall 200'-300' tall. It can be climbed directly via 5.7-5.8 cracks. The faster alternative is to climb to its base where a wide, grassy gully leads down into a bowl. There was a snowfield in this bowl in early July of '01. Descend to the snowfields and fill your water bottles; this is the last water for a long time. From there, head east up a couloir on the right side of the bowl until it is possible to exit left on tree and grass covered ledges. There is a lot of loose rock in this couloir, be careful. Crampons and ice axes are not necessary. Once on the ledges work back to the left towards the ridge crest for 500', regaining it above the steep headwall.

From here, head right for many hundreds of feet staying on the right side of the crest all the time. The summit looks deceptively close. Don't worry, it's still very far away.

After several hours of easy fifth class scrambling up the right side of the ridge, you will get to a point where the ridge seems to end at a notch. There will be a gigantic bowl to the right and steep headwalls above. From the bowl, there is an easy (5.3) ramp that heads 300' up and to the left, around the corner. Follow this ramp around to the west side of the mountain. The ramp is capped by a short steep 30' chimney, which deposits you on the left side of the ridge. A short traverse on a ledge to the North will lead you to a large shoulder on the West side of the mountain where the west ridge comes into the summit plateau. You are in the right place if you can see the Black Dike in front of you. From here you have one pitch to the top. Head straight up the headwall on very clean white granite with good cracks (5.6) about 60' where a left angling ramp enables you to traverse left to another ledge. From here 30' more of steep climbing up a chimney (5.6) will put you on the summit plateau.

Descent (CMC Route): Get a good topo for this descent out of the guidebook, it is very tricky. Start the descent South of the Black dike. You will notice a long (1500'?) slab descending to the East. This can be down-climbed most of the way, it's about 5.6, or it can be rappelled. We didn't find any rap anchors until we were about 500' down the face. If down-climbing, many options exist, so find the best one and watch for loose rock. Rappelling isn't a great option, the rope will get

tangled and caught on all of the slabby protrusions. While descending the face you will tend to the south, heading for "Drizzlepus", a large blunt tower (not tall and pointy). As you get closer (within 300') rappelling will become mandatory. The final, critical rappel lies just above the notch between Drizzlepus and the SouthEast ridge which forms the south edge of the large slab. We had to traverse about 100' South to reach this station. A 50' rappel will put you in the notch. Climb up the West face of Drizzlepus following large ledges which zig-zag across the face connected by short fifth class boulder problems. This climb is about 150' high and should be no harder than 5.5. From the top of Drizzlepus, descend 200' down easy slabs to the trail down the grassy slopes. The trail from here is obvious and well marked.