

North American Classic Route

Description

Mt. Edith Cavell, North Face Regular Route.

Grade V, 5.7 mixed

Author: Gary Clark, 9/1/1999

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Note: The approach route is marked on one of the images. These descriptions of the approach and descent are from personal experience. The main face information is from other sources. The approach described in Roper & Steck is no longer used due to extreme rock and serac fall potential. Also see the accompanying diagram. This text description has not yet been corroborated with the diagram! This is an adventure route, so use your own judgment and experience in lieu of this description or the diagram.

The Approach: Cross the creek at the right edge of the parking lot to gain an obvious trail leading up the crest of the lateral moraine. When you reach the rock bands, start up immediately rather than traversing to the left (possible cairn here). After a few shelves are overcome, move left to a short chimney. Climb a few tricky moves at the beginning of the chimney, then move out to the left rather than continuing to its top. You are now on easy ground. Move to the highest easy ledge and traverse directly left, dropping slightly to cross a small stream/waterfall. The traverse and crossing should be very easy, or you went too high. Continue horizontally until the slabs above start to lean back, then head up one of several shallow grooves toward a long prominent chimney above that usually has highly visible rappel slings. Climb to the base of the chimney (some easy 5th class), then when it begins to steepen, prepare for serious belaying.

Enter the chimney from the left (5.5), and climb it to a small ledge with 3 fixed pins. A second shorter and slightly easier pitch leads to a stance with a horizontal pinch that offers a good anchor (look for slings). A half pitch more of steep climbing (5.4) leads to easy ground, but no good anchor. Run out the rope to an alcove directly above (gear anchor). This alcove is just right of some running water. Traverse (3rd class) to the right, cross the major creek that you crossed lower (4th class moves). Continue up and right on moderate monolithic rock. There are many options here, but here's how we did it, and we did not need to rope up again: Head right into an area of low scrub trees and bushes, and claw directly up through them until on rock again. Begin trending left on 3rd class rock. Head up a gully toward a square notch on the skyline that appears to be the top, but isn't. From the notch, traverse down and left along the base of a wall for 40 feet to a major gully (mossy, 4th class). This one goes to the summit of the cliffs. All the gullies and shelves have significant quantities of loose rock, but most can be avoided by careful climbing and testing. The major gully to the left of the ones described here may look inviting if it has continuous snow, but the snow slope is undercut severely by the creek. Choose this at your own risk.

A few hundred metres of hiking bring you out on the north side of the Angel Glacier on the terminal moraine. Two good bivy sites can be found with a little searching - one is in a shallow groove between two ribs of the moraine, and the other atop a ridge of the moraine.

The Face: Drop easily down to the glacier from the moraine and cross the glacier well above the serious crevasses. Circle around to the East to climb steepening snow slopes (crampons) to the bergschrund. Depending on it's condition, you may want to belay the final moves onto the rock and up to an anchor. This section is subject to frequent rockfall, so whatever you do, do it quickly.

Easy rock and/or mixed climbing well the left of the crest leads directly up the buttress for several rope lengths to the prominent snow-covered ledge that runs across the entire face. The buttress steepens here. Climb a chimney (5.6, fixed pins) to a bowl left of the crest. A thin traverse right leads to a prominent pedestal on the crest. The crux pitches lie above - 3 or 4 short pitches of 5.7 on steep quartzite with good protection. Mixed climbing in ice gullies leads to a final rock band section. Climb up a weakness in the middle of the buttress (fixed gear), then two more pitches of mixed climbing to the summit snow slopes. Climb a

diagonal line to the left, well below the shale outcropping marking the summit. Do not climb the shale, even if ice covered! It has lured climbers to their deaths, and would only eliminate about a rope length of climbing. Find the easiest spot through the summit cornices (usually only early season).

The Descent: If you're really familiar with it, the East Ridge offers the quickest descent. Beware of ribs that look like the Ridge, but lead you down on the North Face instead! Most people descend the West Ridge, which is long and miserable, but has no technical difficulties: The key is to avoid descending the South Ridge. From the summit, continue along the ridge to the west. Start down the South Ridge, but after a few hundred feet, cut sharply right and traverse back to the West Ridge right under the large triangular shale feature. Cairns and a well-worn climber's trail mark most of this, and it is pictured well in Dougherty's guide. The traverse may be the most dangerous stretch - it is steep and very loose, and can have patches of snow-covered ice that are dangerous to cross without crampons. Once on the ridge, stay close to the crest. It is never difficult, but rarely trivial. Near the col between Edith and the next peak to the west, start down the very long, very loose gully. Many variations exist, and there are no good continuous trails to show the way. Toward the bottom, some cliff bands dictate traverses back and forth across small waterfalls and streams. Short snow patches may allow for easier travel, but these have no runouts, so a glissade would be dangerous.

Small trails become visible below as you reach the end of the difficult talus and cliffs. The trails converge toward a high trail that traverses well above the floor of the Valley where Verdant Creek flows. This trail swings toward the north and eventually intersects the main trail into the Tonquin Valley. A couple more miles on this broad maintained trail brings you to the Tonquin Valley parking lot. Hike the paved road back up to your vehicle. The descent can be expected to take 4 to 5 hours.