

El Capitan, Secret Passage. Sean Villanueva and I arrived in Yosemite wanting to free climb in a fun style: no fixing, no jugging, no rappelling, just finding our way and bringing the mandolin and flutes for some El Cap freestyle jamming. The first time up we mostly followed the aid route Eagle's Way, while exploring a labyrinth of possible free-climbing variations. Everything seemed possible until two pitches from the top, when our hopes dropped with 4m of blank rock.

Back on the Valley floor we took two daytrips to work the lower hard cruxes. We never fixed rope. In early October we set off again, and after five days we reached the 4m blank section. Until then I'd redpointed every pitch, many of them right at my limit. As I readied to aid the rivet ladder, down and to the side I saw a tiny bit of dirt sticking out of the blank, polished granite. I lowered and discovered a thin laser-cut seam: the Secret Passage. It was one of the raddest pitches of the route and allowed the climb to go free.

The route follows a mix of two established aid lines (Eagle's Way's first 10 pitches, then Bad to the Bone) and a bit of new terrain. The 15-pitch route is run-out and dangerous in sections and extremely steep and sustained (5.10+R, 5.11, 5.9, 5.10+, 5.12aR, 5.13cR, 5.13a, 5.12+, 5.12c, 5.13c, 5.12cR, 5.13a, 5.13a, 5.11R, 5.10+). We added a bolt to an unprotectable face climbing variation and another next to a rivet for a safe anchor. Interestingly, it might be the only route on El Cap that goes free without the use of pin scars. We found only minor signs of scars on the first and sixth pitches, but we didn't need to use them.

NICOLAS FAVRESSE, *Belgian Alpine Club, AAC*

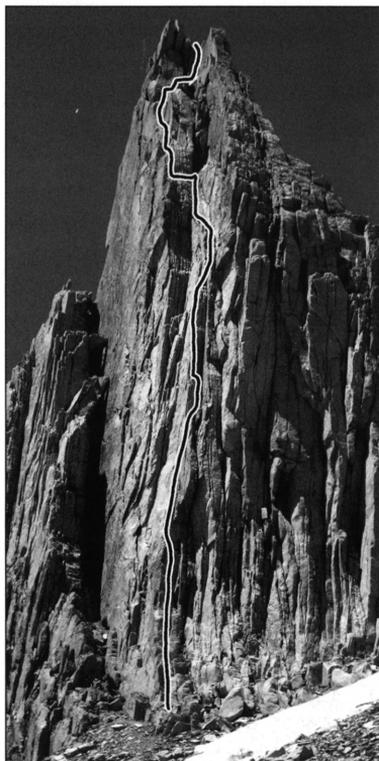


Secret Passage on El Capitan. *Nicolas Favresse*

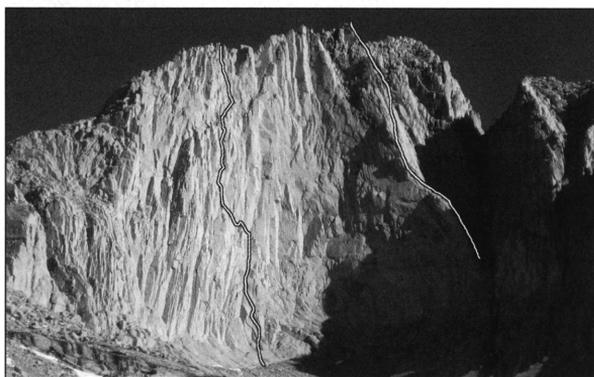
SIERRA NEVADA

Granite Park Spire, first ascent, White Peregrines. Em Holland and I were lured to Granite Park by Rick "The Chief" Poedtker's tales of stellar climbing on an untouched high point of the Sierra Crest. Rick had climbed half the route the previous year with Zak Schneider, but freezing September winds and waning daylight checked their enthusiasm. What Rick glossed over in his glowing descriptions was the 4,500' entrance fee to set foot on the rock! Regardless, last summer Rick, Em, and I paid our fee, but Em and I needed a rest day to recover and acclimatize.

The following day, July 28, we headed for the large dihedral system at the juncture of the monolithic south face and the more broken east face. We utilized the longer days and our larger team to our advantage, with one person equipping the route for the descent while the other two climbed. Nevertheless, it was late in the day by the time we completed what we believe is the first ascent of the spire and started the rappels, and just before midnight when we finally



Granite Park Spire with White Peregrines, the line of first ascent. Bruce Bindner



The Cleaver's Cleavage Dreamer (left) and Southeast Arête. Nate Ricklin

bedded down in camp. Our route, White Peregrines (5.10c, 6 pitches), gains 850' from talus to summit; the roped climbing is 650-700'.

Granite Park is set deep in the eastern High Sierra, eight miles from the Pine Creek Pass Trailhead. "Granite Park Spire" (12,800'+, name submitted to U.S. Board on Geographic Names) is truly the matriarch of the basin. Overlooking the col between Granite Park and Bear Lakes Basin, its elegance and stature present a challenge to climbers weary of standing in line for classic rock.

Our route offers every kind of climbing—chimneys, offwidths, laybacks, splitter cracks, wild face moves—all at a fairly consistent level of difficulty. White Peregrines is one of the best climbs I have experienced in the High Sierra, having called the Range of Light my home range for more than four decades.

BRUCE BINDNER, *Old Climbers' Home*, Mill Valley, CA

Cleaver, Cleavage Dreamer and Southeast Arête. Imagine a dead-vertical alpine wall a thousand feet tall and a thousand feet wide, the summit over 13,000', countless virgin vertical crack systems, and only a few hours' hike from a trailhead. This is the south face of the Cleaver, a stone's throw from Mt. Whitney. After spotting the face, we learned that it had only one route, the South Face (Arthur Killian and Tom Condon, September 1961), which we believe is on the far left.

On June 28 Kostas Stamatou and I got an early start from Whitney Portal and went for it. Cleavage Dreamer (III 5.10) starts near the center of the south face and climbs through two pitches of laybacks and hand cracks to a good ledge below polished overhangs. From here we traversed left to the base of a

large detached pillar (the Greek Finger). Next came the crux dihedral, a shallow, wide crack requiring body English we did not have, so we aided a short section (Scotty Nelson and Lin Pearson called this pitch 5.10 on their FFA a couple of weeks later). The final pitch was exciting—questionably protected questionable holds and 5.10 moves through the summit overhangs to the knife-edge summit ridge.