

Ragged Ridge traverse

Aug 13-15, 2010

Mt Holyoke (aka Katsuk Peak) 8680' (E & W)
Panther Peak (aka Mesahchie Peak) 8795'
Gendarmes Peak (aka Kimtah Peak) 8600+'
Ragged End (aka Cosho Peak) 8332'

Cub Peak 7985'
Kitling Peak 8003'
Honeymoon Hump 7690'

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Another hot weekend, time to go up high for cooler temps and take advantage of this weather window. Ragged Ridge has been bugging many of us since last year's lightning storms. Registered at the Marblemount ranger station and only one car at the Easy Pass trailhead. A new large structure lay in the lot –will be interesting what they are doing. It's staying dark later so we got going around 6am. Warm out, yet cool hiking in the pre-sun morning. The Easy Pass trail is as it implies –easy and also enjoyable each time I've been on it. A third the way to the pass, over the creek, another third up from the lower basin to the upper in the shade of the trees. Last third switching back and forth low angle up scree to heather and larches at the Pass c6700 (1h40min, 3.2m, 2570vert). Stunning views looking into Fisher Creek and still cool out.

From the Pass we traversed the tilted meadows, gulleys, ribs, rock to camp in the 6600' basin at 10:30am (4h40min, 5m, +2760'). We relaxed for an hour then set off west up a bump 200' up. We had read several trip reports and most seemed more confusing than anything else. We did get to go up the left side of a ridge to the west. Being early in the day we took a scenic route west up grass to the next flat bump at c6900' Beautiful scenery and in your face views of Fisher Creek, Arches, Logan and more. From this flat we scrambled cl3 dirt and rock over point 7430 and on up the left side of the black rib to about 8300 and left to our first summit. The rock was a mix of solid and loose all with a nice downslope. The holds were solid and the scrambling fun. Up and left we summited the East peak of Mt Holyoke (8680') aka Katsuk Peak (1:40p, 2080' from camp) In a small aluminum can the original register from John Roper first ascent (Aug 22, 1968). Many recognizable names in the register. The usual relaxing, name that peak and food. A short scramble down the west side passing the close west summit on the south to the west side of the second summit, slightly on the north and cl3 scramble to its summit to find a register left in 2004 by Mike Collins.

We headed back east from the summit the way we came. Looked down the gully, but looked like a ledge left dead ended. Big mistake was not going further to check. Seemed to be the trick for the weekend –go for a ledge and it will appear once you are upon it. From afar or even half close route didn't look feasible. Well, on this one I went up too high and we downclimbed a very exposed pitch with downsloping granite slab chunks. The pitch was steep and each ledge sloped down at 30 degrees. Not fun, but just kept a hold all the time and the granite also had decent traction. Down to about 8200 we veered west to the saddle (c8250, 3:45p).

From the saddle veer NE a few feet and up a cl3 gully that veered leftish. We stayed more on the sides to avoid loose rock and near the top best staying far right in this gully for easiest access to the summit of Panther 8795', aka Mesahchie (4:30p). A register from Mike Torok July 29, 1994 and two feet away another Mountaineers register (new) left three weeks ago. Wonder why another tube being left? We hung out for more of the usual on top of the world. Looking west and down it was obvious why this is called Ragged Ridge. Pointy, rough, angular, steep and tall. An hour on the summit and we worked our way carefully down the west gully avoiding sending rock down. Near the bottom keep left to get back to the saddle and not suckered north. Found a dime at the tent site on the saddle and played Easter Bunny hiding it in plain view. Up about 30' on the ridge then precariously across the slabs on a mini flower ledge to the ridge at c8200' where we could see a ledge that skirted west around the vertical

buttress. A few cairns and a sweet ledge brought us at 8200' at the gulley we'd come up originally. Would have been so much easier if I'd looked further along the ledge in the first place. Look for grey cairn amongst orange rock on east of gulley at c8200'. Down to point 7430 we cut around a cornice to shortcut direct to camp. "Hey look, there are people down there." "what?" "There are people in camp." First a group of three Signe, Greg and Carter, then near our spot DonB, Beth and Karen. Dinner and chatting. Biggest question was from Don. "Anyone have spare shoes or boots?" All I could off was a spoon. I couldn't imagine the traverse from Easy Pass in Chako saddles and then the route up in them.

Dinner, buddies, a beautiful sunset with alpenglow, stars, Milkyway and the meteor showers.

Day 1 stats: 7.7m, 13h42min, +6336, -3448

Day 2,

Up early and out of camp at 5:30. Up the first bump to 6800'. And Maybe not the best choice up some cl4 and 3 to point 7430. Traverse per Stefan's advice at 7400' to a creek and ridge. Up to about 7500' around into a orange gulley and kept traversing. Each gulley and looked un-surmountable. Once in each and to the next wall it looked obvious the route. Many gulleys (over a half dozen) I worked up easy ledges and went too high on the ridge at 7800'. We dropped down to a col at 7600, worked around many more gulleys to a gulley. The terrain was a maze of gulleys, ribs and gendarmes. We went down south 30 feet or so then up a few cl3 gulleys to a ridge we spotted at c7700' This ledge was a relief. The gulley and rib action was slow. The ledge wound around the base of gendarmes, around ribs, through a cliff caveish area then at a creek a gentle up a green ramp to land in a large grey gulley of large granite rocks and an orange wall west.

Easy cl 2-3 scrambling direct up to the summit ridge and right to the true summit. Looked like class 4 up the block, but once there cl3. Summit Gendarmes (Kimtah) 8600' at 10:05a around 4h30min from camp.

A break, then over to the west false summit for a look at the route to our next summit west (Ragged End, aka Cosho). As we took in the views Signe, Gary and carter arrived and headed to the east summit. Not knowing the ledge we cruised over on would take us easily to the next col we needed to cross to the north side, we dropped the west ridge. Steep loose, moved right over a few ribs to descend the closest gulley to the north/southridge. Worked ledges over past cols til one with a few feet drop to the snow/glacier on the north side and a fast easy way around Thieves Peak. We followed tracks to the east base of Cosho then up cl3 rock. Part way up I watched as my water bottle glissaded down the glacier... darn! Back down and retrieved the bottle were it stopped in some rocks and again up Ragged End (Cosho). Cl2-3 rock brought us to the summit at 1:00.

A warm day, slight breeze, fun challenges. Three options to get back (excluded a helo ride). We were looking at ways to not traverse –took way to long and not sure of the route back. Idea of dropping to Fisher Creek and head east then up the hill to camp.. But how was it getting down and where to go up? Another idea of cross the north glaciers to Mesahchie saddle then down the route we did yesterday. Not sure of a rib to get over north of Kimtah/Katsuk, crevasses, no crampons or rope... Soon Signe, Greg and Carter arrived. We chatted a bit and decided to return traversing using what we'd each learned on our way over.

Going back east was still a mind tease. From the Thieves Col the ledge took us past the Grey Gulley, under the Grotesque Gendarme and above the col east of Gendarmes Peak. Hear a little complicated, but everything would work to get down to the col. 7500' worked great for the traverse. Going lower ran into deadends. At 7500' as you got to the next wall the route would magically appear.

On the way west I'd lost count at 28 gulleys. Not the typical sidehill traverse. The last stretch to Point 7430 was much more direct, staying on solid rock and high (7400') to avoid the scree. Beth and Karen were camped, relaxing after their summit day. We stopped, gave them beta to help their next day's trip, hoping to spare them the joys of some of our route.

Down to camp to find the Marmots or snafflehounds had been snacking on Dicey's pack. Another warm eve, alpine glow, moon setting behind the knob SE of camp and the Milkyway to stare at.

Day 2 stats: 6.7m, 13h38min, +5131, -5131

Day 3,

A lazy warm morning (still needing a puffy). Visited with Signe, Greg and Carter. They would head up for two more peaks in leisure mode while we'd traverse out and nab a few more peaks. We left near 10am traversing out and slowly up from camp. Above many gulleys and around ribs. We'd past many good opportunities to head up Cub, though continued east til at the scree field in full view of Kitling. Left our overnight packs and headed up absolutely nasty loose thin layer of scree. Shortly the ridge east of Cub and fifty feet up the summit block. Here we found an old register from Roper (Aug 68) and a new one from Fay (Aug 06). Great views of Mesahchie glacier and of course all around.

We departed and took the east ridge toward Kitling. Snow and glaciers on the left, scree on the right and sharp ridge rock under foot. At the col and full tent spot and if we wanted could get on the glacier. Up the west ridge of Kitling with more the same rack scrambling and trying to avoid the loose rock. We took a longer break on Kitling to air out the feet, eat and relax. It was warm, I could imagine how hot it was lower. Another Fay register from Aug 06. After an hour we departed heading back the way we came up. At the col a lovely traverse of the thin scree. Luckily over in 10 minutes. Now to zig back east across the scree again, to the snow and up. Here we should have traversed higher on the ridge, but stayed 3-400 foot lower in thin scree. I must be crazy, or just trying to remind myself why I love it so...

At the east ridge of Honeymoon Hump I dropped the pack and ascended while Dicey headed to Easy Pass. She had been to this summit and Kitling with Logan years ago and didn't feel like breaking her 2 peak a day limit. 15 minutes of easy cl2 scramble up the ridge, past a tent spot... the summit had the usual good views, no register and the day was getting old. Looking at the watch I figured we had plenty of time (45 minutes to spare) to get to Marblemount and food. On the way to Easy Pass I came upon many ground squirrels. At the pass more and a mixture of bugs deciding we were lunch. The Walk from Easy Pass was pleasant and went by quickly. Squirrels and upper basin bugs blended to cooler shaded trees, to the lower basin. A spread out group of three young gals heading to Fisher Creek Camp and later a solo hiker. All of these guys heavily burdened with large pack loads. The lower basin transforms to beautiful forest after the creek best being the shade and soft easy footing. At the TH (6pm) a large hole had been dug for footings. Looks like the large wooden structure is an elaborate sign holder. Wonder why such an expensive and elaborate construction?

We relaxed with ice cold refreshment –amazing still so cold after three days in the car. This was a fun trip of real rock scrambling. I did notice that my new boots (9 weeks old) soles and rand are worn through –the price to pay for travelling in the mountains. Good challenges navigation and terrain, great people, met new faces to relate to names, bluebird weather and perfect temps. Found out later down lower was downright HOT.

Day 3 stats: 6.8m, 8h50min, +2632,-5511

Trip stats:

TT, 21.2m, 36h10min, +14099, -14090

Happy Trails!

fwb2

We referenced PaulK's and Fay's TR:

<http://www.summitpost.org/trip-report/216797/of-ragged-moons-and-ragged-cheeks.html>

<http://howbert.com/cgi-bin/report.pl?reportid=235>

<http://howbert.com/cgi-bin/report.pl?reportid=238>