

Hozomeen Mt -South peak (8003')

July 14-16, 2010

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Pre-“ramble”:

Thursday morning 6:47am... phone rings... Missed the call, it was Carla. Gees, so early. I call back. Heading where? I just left Ross lake 13 hours ago and home for about 6 hours. Yawn, didn't hear right, was still asleep. You want me to jump out of my warm bed and go where? Ferry leaves at 10? It's 25 minutes from the parking lot and how long a drive. Hmm, can't make that time. Yak, yak, yak... okay, I don't want to be running for the bus as it drives away... Okay, gotta' get off the phone.

Find clean hiking clothes, cram stuff back in pack and unused days meals from Picket trip. Hot oatmeal times two and out the door. Back car up and run in to get boots and clean socks... On the road at 7:15a. Call again, what do I need to bring –no tent, no stove, fuel... call again, where are you? I'm passing Everett... A call, “we're stopping at the Ranger station...” Zoom, zoom... yes the turbo charger does work... Behind very slow tourist with cigarette hanging out the window... Whew! Parking lot at 9:15a, 45 minutes to catch the boat and a note on my window to run and they are 5 minutes ahead of me. Well, a brisk walk to the dock passing a group of 12-13 year old Outward Bound kids. Carla met me with a smile, that I made it with time to spare. 10 o'clock and the boat with co-driver four legged “Lady” whisked us up to the north end of the lake and Hozomeen dock in 40 minutes.

Day 1 - Short version, approach:

From the dock we followed a trail along the lake north missing the “un-marked” turn to the right. We made it back from a ramble around Winnebago Flats back up the road. The “Un-marked” trail reaches the gravel road just north of the creek. To the left of the bunkhouses an easy to find wide trail rises very shortly to the parking lot of the trailhead to Hozomeen Lake.

3.4 easy yet hot miles (1hr15min) to the lake and a break. We circumnavigated the lake CCW crawling over heavy windfall. Easier closer to the lake heading north with an old trail visible at times. Past the end of the lake, over a small mossed rock opening then right (west) on the next gulley. Gulley leads to wider gulley and waterfall with steep sidewalls (c3600). Last water for a while. Up waterfall then left (NNE) to the ridge. Lightly brushed steep slope (west) mellows around 4800'. At c5200' exit ridge right (ESE) under a buttress into a gulley. Left (west) up the gulley a few hundred feet exiting at the wall to the right (south) up a ridge directly under the buttress on the left (c5400'). Soon opening to the Main basin with views of the route of the climb and a dripping waterfall on the left that we crossed to get to the basin. We found spots to bivvy in the middle of the basin among the small trees and waterbarely flowing in the small drainage gulleys.

---now you can skip the long winded story version to “summit day”.

Day 1 - Longer story version, approach:

No signage of maps to find the TH. We followed the trail along the lake passing a turn to the right. Later would learn we should have turned up this un-marked trail. Soon at Winnebago Beach and no trail. Another campground north, but didn't look right. I found a map on a reader board and we turned and headed south up the road. Crossed an un-marked creek and buildings on the right. Not sure where to go. A wide trail on the left led up to another cabin. Hey! Near the cabin a TH reader board. About fifty minutes of wandering around and we finally were at the TH and headed to Hozomeen lake (11:40am).

Temps were getting hot. Maybe I made a mistake coming on this trip. Water pouring from me like a fountain, dragging... The heat was pulling me down. The trail was a gradual rise and flattened off. An 1hr5min left trail to lake. 10 more minutes and at a camp spot near the lake for lunch and water (12:55, 1hr15min, elev 2831'). From here we had a good sight of the peaks and the gully we believed we needed to ascend. We read Fay's TR on the lack of water and filled up. After a 45 minute break (1:40p) we worked our way CCW around the lake. A faint trail helped a little close to the lake. What didn't help was the abundance of piles of windfall. I can understand why the first ascent attempts used a raft to cross the lake. Past the lake crossing a rock moss rock field (2:45, 1hr5min from the lunch break, 2830'). A few more minutes another rock flow. At this one we turned right and headed up staying in the main gully that formed. First was dry and a relief for quicker ascent than the woods with abundant windfall. A wild life sighting of a very small frog and soon a waterfall (4:15p, 2hr35min from lake break). We refilled on water and took to canyoneering up the falls. The Creek walls were becoming steep (c3600') so we exited left (north). And up the steep wooded hillside. It was steep. Around 4900' (~5:30p) the pitch lessened and we came upon the Large rock area From Fay's report as their camp. No flat areas, we kept heading up after several breaks.

c5200 feet we exited right under a buttress (6:20p). Directly under the buttress, through alder, not disturbing a bird nest with eggs in it. Up a deep narrow dry gully to the end and out right under the buttress again coming out to the main gully c5400' (6:50p). This was too easy compared to the Tr from Fay's trip. I ventured around the basin area looking for spots for bivies. Amongst some small trees we nestled in and dinner by 8:30 and ready to head to sleep for an early start. Sitting on the steep slope at the bivy it was a great view watching the sunset over the Chilliwacks. Waking in the eve I watched the moon set across the Mox peaks and the stars of the Milkyway –stunning.

Day2 - Summit Day shorter version:

Started at 5:45a, up red dirt to slabs. Zigzag up wet and loose rubble cl3-4. Across some small creeks more right side moving left toward a knob on the left of the saddle (the south east to west running saddle). Loose ball bearings and on the right side of the knob to the saddle (c6900', 8:00). A small snow cornice left and dry on top. There was a nice bivy spot. We dropped a few hundred feet south down the south basin. CL3 loose rock and dirt then stone left under a buttress and to a ridge of a south running rib (c6820', 9:25a). From the ridge could see the route all the way to the summit. Can see mini ledges low, but above the summit block appearing impassable.

From ridge use CL4 small mini ledges and loose handholds toward next ridge (SSE running). Before the ridge heather and nice Cl 2 scramble up gaining ridge at c7100', 9:45a. Following ridge the right turns into a gully. Top of gully exits vertical several thousand feet. Back down to c7400 to cross. A good knob to belay from (crux crossing) (11:00am). Hairy traverse from here 2-300 feet higher across this fourth basin of the day to the notch at c7520' (11:15a).

Up ridge on gravel over rock and some vertical moments of better rock to a wider ledge on right of ridge. Left crampons and ax, then left up a cl4/low5 up 15' to the ridge again (c7685', 11:50am). There is still a large old piton in a crack on the top of this pitch. Now up solid cl4 to ledge with mini tree (c7720'). To another bivy ledge (c7740'). Move left, ledge goes right then doubles back on another ledge to a wide spot ending in a vertical wall (c7760, 12:15). To the left of the wall drops thousands of feet to the bottom. This is the 12' 5.6 pitch. Would be good if protectable, but is loose. Up the mid about 6-8 feet from the far left. Double sling anchor ten feet right of pitch to avoid rock drops. About 8-10 up a small spot for a #5-6 stopper. Then nothing else. Careful of the loose and portable holds. Belay/rap station at top of this pitch. Leave rope. Work up again right of the ridge cl3, then scramble right on wide gravel ledge (c7820') and up a faint gully ((c7854') to leveling summit (c7920'). Small cairn on summit with glass jar register. Altimeter was off by 82', reset to 8002'

We rappled down the 5.6+ pitch and the cl 5 V. At the SE summit saddle now reading c7150'. Retrace track back and rap around the narrow gully after a lunch break. Going back not much better than way up. The heater steps of basin 3 felt good as relief from the extreme exposure. We made the first saddle (c6880') again at 4:30 for another break. We tried a double 60m rap down the initial slabby top. Not the best idea. Rope stuck, sling was too short and rope wrapped in tree. I prusiked up the 200'+. The slope was not steep and loose rock everywhere. It was not possible to rap or pull the rope without knocking rock down. While going down a large dumptruck plus sized rock fall happened to our right (less than 200' away) that bounced throughout the entire basin and past our bivy spots. On our way down we had two of these. It explains what woke me up the night before. Camping in the basin seemed like a good idea, but not a safe one. Imagine camping in a tank bombing range... One member tired and we took the time to re-climb to him and lower him as far down as possible. The delays had us walking off the rock past sunset. Going down was slower than going up –hard to see foot placements.

At our bivy we had a warm meal and slipped off to sleep just before 11pm.

Day 3 –heading home:

Another star filled eve. Moon again setting early over The Twin Spires. Thinking, a few weeks I will be there... Ferry at 2:00 so felt like plenty of time. Left camp slowly before 7am. Tough scramble over morainish gullies, past dripping waterfall under buttress c5450. Dropped into a hidden gully and down a 100' and up to ridge c5200'. We descended a little right of our ascent route aiming at the summit of Little Jackass Mt. Light underbrush and windfall. The upper part very steep and once at Lake level flatter terrain. Some riblets offered cleaner travel and soon to level ground (c2300'). Large log walk over a creek with old growth Devil's Club. Another bigger creek and swamp area with giant log bridges and smaller ones too. When a side hill appears we exited the swamp up 50' or so still heading left of Little Jackass summit. We hit the trail just under 2400'. The 1.3m walk to the TH felt literally like a cake walk. We waited for everyone to exit then down to the road, right, across the creek and a trail eay to miss on the left. At the first turn left across to flat log bridges. 11:15a, at the dock we took a deep breath, we'd escaped South Hozomeen intact.

Jeff went for a dive, while the rest of us dangle feet in the water. Standing in the water little fish nibbled at my legs and feet. Warm sun and a relaxing three hours resting and waiting for the boat. Gail, had given me a ride to the south end dock on Wednesday after the Pickets trip motored up and unloaded finishing his week at the lake. At 2:00 the fast moving ferry arrived for the 40min trip to the south end of the lake. From here we dispatched the final mile in 25 minutes. Fresh clothed and on to Marblemount for refreshments and food at "Good Food".

Glad the trip is behind me, though still moments racing through my head. A place I don't plan to return to anytime soon. Good thing for this trip good partners were along. Thanks guys.

Happy trails and take care,
fwb2

gear: Bivy (no tent areas), 60m rope, slings doubles and singles, harness and device, helmet, insanity