WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS

Grade: M4, 350m
Location: North Crowfoot Peak, Banff National Park AB
Base Elevation & Aspect: 2310m, Northeast facing
First Ascent: Nick Baggaley, Greg Barrett, April 2022

While C-Train is the earliest mixed alpine route established on the north peak of Crowfoot Mountain with probably the best quality climbing, many other possible routes at a range of grades await on the buttresses of the mountain nearby. Up a snowy ramp to the left of the gully leading to C-Train lies one of these buttresses, which now hosts this route – a pleasant yet still challenging introduction to alpine mixed climbing in the Rockies.

Greg Barrett on lead on pitch 4. Photo: Nick Baggaley
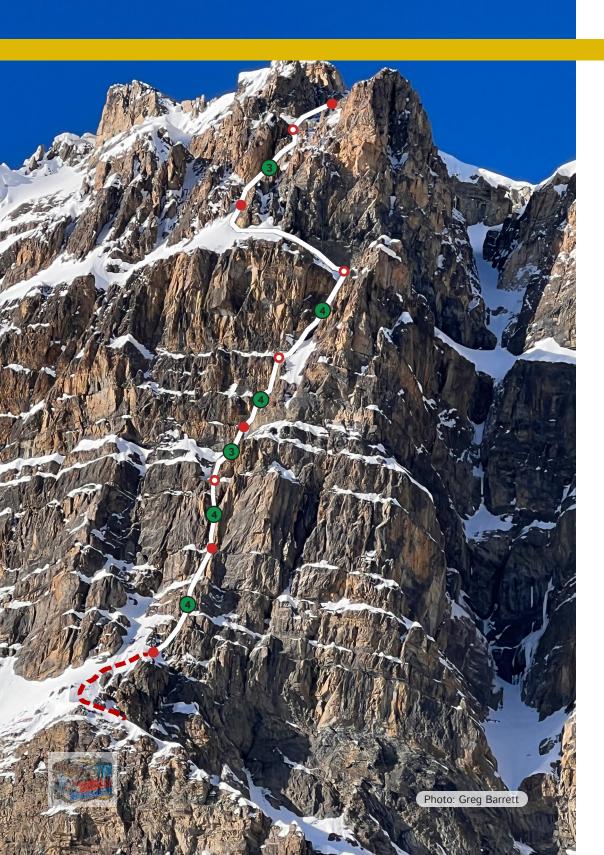
Approach

Drive up the Icefields Parkway to the Bow Lake parking at Num-Ti-Jah Lodge, 35km north of Highway 1 (51.6790°N, -116.4647°E).

Head down to the lake, and cross the frozen surface to the opposite side below the prominent avalanche path coming down from the biggest north-facing gully on North Crowfoot Peak. Head up to the top of this debris cone, with a slightly lower-angle and less threatened approach on the south (climbers' left) of the path. Pass through the choke point in a lower cliffband into the hanging bowl, then head left up a snowy ramp (the 'Sidewalk' of the name) to the crest of the buttress on the left of the gully. The climb starts in a faint gully right of the gash above (51.6651°N, -116.4672°E). 1.5-2.5 hours from the car.

If the lake is not frozen, it will be necessary to take the summer trail around the west end of Bow Lake, and return across the south shore. This may add 1-2 hours to travel time.

SIDEWALK - APPROACH

Lodge
Bow Lake
P
Route viewpoint
93
Choke point in cliffs
Bottom of avalanche path
Take snow ramp out of gully
C-TRAIN
WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS
0km 800m 2km
N
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Nick Baggaley exploring new terrain. Photo: Greg Barrett

Photo: Greg Barrett

P1: M4 40m
Head right from the snow and climb the wide bay up cracks on its left side. Pass a steep wall and a wide snow ledge, and keep going to a gear anchor below a prow, right of a chimney on a narrower ledge.

P2: M4 30m
Step left and climb the iced-up chimney. Start left, switching sides as needed. Climb past an awkward chockstone, then step left out of the corner and climb blocks and slab to a ring-bolt belay.

P3: M3 30m
Go 2m left of the belay, and climb the loose-looking but solid corner to its top. Above, climb snow up and left to a thin gully. Follow this for 5m to a gear belay in a roof crack in a very low cave. The initial climbing on this pitch can be bypassed by the snow gully on the left.

P4: M4 40m
Climb the loose corner above the belay, taking care to avoid rockfall, to a ledge. Walk right on the ledge past a crack to a right-facing corner, then climb the gently stepped corner to a gravelly ledge and a ring bolt belay.

P5: M4 50m
Step right around the loose prow into the gully. Head up into a cave, and use ice on the right wall to climb up and around the roof into another gully. Keep going up snow past mixed steps to a bolt belay on the right side of a massive overhung bay. This pitch would be a lot harder without the ice and high snow.

P6: Snow 70m
Traverse left out of the bay and past two snowy crack systems to below a buttress. Continue around the buttress and up the right side of the snow gully to a gear belay on ledges.

P7: M3 50m
Climb one of a number of snow-choked gully systems right of the main snow couloir. Near the top, trend to the left of a large rounded buttress and climb a gully on its side to top out into lower angle snow. Walk over to a bolted belay on the left wall.

P8: Snow 30m
Stomp up snow and scree to a flat ledge on the top of the buttress. Heavy cornicing prevented the first ascent party from continuing from here.

Descent
Downclimb back to the top of P7, and make a 60m rappel down to a gear anchor at the end of the traverse of P6. Lead back across the traverse to the anchor of P5, then make 3 double rope rappels to the anchors of P4, P2 and back to the Sidewalk. Reverse the approach.

Rack
Cams from #0.2-3, with optional #4. Doubles from 0.4-2 can be useful. Full set of nuts, 7-10 pitons from KB #2 to angle #2. Rappels require at least 2x60m ropes. Ice screws not needed.

Conditions Viewpoint
The route can be seen from the Icefields Parkway at Bow Lake (51.6736°N, -116.4500°E)

Nick Baggaley leading Pitch 5. Photo: Greg Barrett