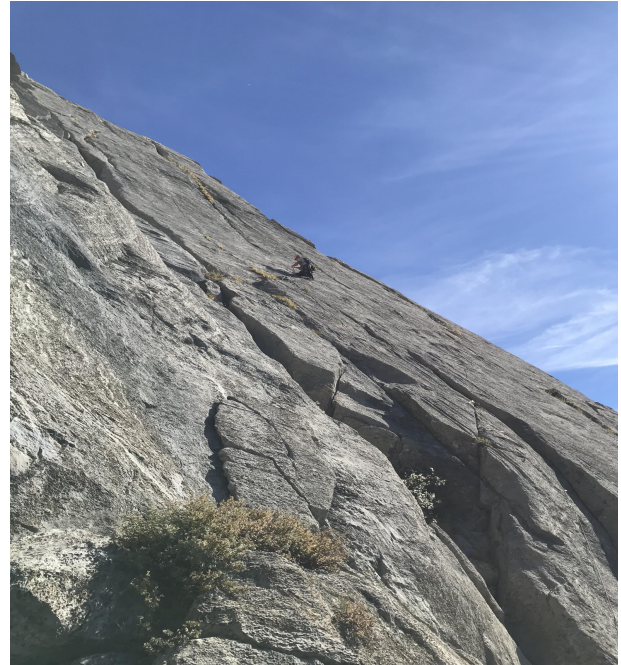


**Melvin Peak, SW Face Route: "Last seasons harvest"**  
**2022, FA Jordan Farquharson and Nic Hamilton**



**Overview:**

Melvin Peak is part of the Van Nostrand Range with a summit elevation of 2,690m. It is near the popular Lussier Hot Springs, Whiteswan Lake campground and Top of the World Provincial Park. The aspect of the established climbing is SW and has a very long season. There is a reliable water source and potential camping in the trees below the route. Mountain goats live here (please respect their space) and you can also expect ticks in the spring. For general information see page 453 of David Jones Rockies South guidebook (note that the approach beta is different than in this book!). The route to the peak is an alpine route as it includes extensive ridge travel with exposed 3rd, 4th, and 5th class terrain. The total travel distance is roughly 10 KM with an elevation gain of 1300M. 650 vertical meters of this is in technical terrain of which there are 11 described pitches although some could be connected. Plan for a 10-14 hour day car to car. The standard descent involves some steep walking so a collapsible pole is handy. The drive is on mostly good forest service roads but higher clearance is strongly recommended for White-Coyote branch and up.

**Gear:**

Single rack, 0.2-3 with doubles of .4-1 including a small selection of nuts. 8 alpine draws and 4 sport draws. 70m rope. Sturdy shoes or boots for the walk off and ridge travel. Comfortable climbing shoes. A BD #4 cam can be placed numerous times but depending on leader comfort at the grade is not necessary.

**Driving:**

1.5 hours from Invermere or Kimberley; 45 min. highway and 45 min. FSR. This is a busy logging road with many users not having radios. Please use a VHF radio to communicate on RR2 frequency. Distances align with posted markers not odometer:

- KM 0 Start up Lussier off highway 95. Pass Lussier Hot springs at KM17
- KM 21 Turn Right on White-Lussier
- KM 29.5 Turn left on White-Coyote (if you go over a bridge you JUST missed it)
- KM 31.25 Left on a rising spur; after crossing small bridge, **second** left that **climbs immediately**. Halfway up the spur road assess cross ditch that might prevent a low clearance vehicle. Park here if needed and walk the road
- KM 33.5 Park at bend in road (50°3'35.74"N; -115°28'0.31"W). Look for wood "cairn".

**Hike Access:** 1-1.5 hours:

Hike through the cutblock (trail indicated by deadfall arranged to outline the track) and find a very good trail. This trail continues all the way to the Melvin basin and can be quite steep in sections. At a junction ~1840m take a left branch that drops down and crosses the creek. This is a reliable water source and about ¾ of the distance in. From the basin follow old trail networks into scrub below the route (between the two major avalanche paths) and ascend easy walking terrain to a cairn at the base of the approach pitches (50°4'19.06"N; -115°26'8.38"W).

**Climbing sequence:**

The climb is in four distinct parts: Approach pitches, approach ridge, main face, summit ridge.

**Approach Pitches:** 4 pitches following corners and slabs.

P1, 5.3 45m: follow corner climbing easily on the slab and placing gear in the corner as needed. Climb past a bolt and clip it with a short draw (to keep rope out of rubble) and continue to bolted belay above. This pitch still has some loose rock and rope management is important.

P2, 4th class 40m: Traverse horizontally left from the belay through a small step and follow grassy ledges. Place gear as needed to protect a slip-some stones in ground may be loose and grass tufts can be dubious. Build gear belay in the corner (hand size pieces). This is a horizontal pitch to move the belay to better climbing.

P3, 45m 5.4: Climb a really unique pitch...the lowest angle chimney you've ever climbed. Finish up and left to bolts.

P4, 45m 5.4: Follow a nice corner, step across a grassy notch and continue on slabs through to a grassy gully and a bolt belay.

**Approach Ridge:** Primarily 3rd class with some 4th moves (nearly the entire ridge can be walked in grass climbers right to speed things up). Follow ridge to broad gully. Contour the gully

with one 4th class move and one distinct low 5th move (cairn may/may not exist) to exit. Top of both steps have protection for the second. Exposed walking to the base of the featured face to find an improved belay stance and the start of SW face route.

**SW Face:** 5.7, 210m over 7 pitches. Bolted stations. Rigged for rappel on 70m rope.

P1, 25m 5.7: Climb up easy ground to a thoughtful move on flakes and fins. Continue up easy ground to ledge. A few belay options exist here (tree or gear). No fixed station.

P2 30m 5.6: From a small bay above some blocks climb up and right into a prominent crack. Follow it and step left, across some slab. Make this move before the crack closes as you don't want to get sucked too high. Once across the slab follow cracks up and right looking for a bolted belay on the face.

P3 32m 5.6: Retrace your steps back to gain a wide crack/chimney. Climb to a stance with bolted belay.

P4 35m, 5.6: Continue up the chimney into cracks. Finish on slab, clipping two bolts that lead to a bolted belay.

P5 32m 5.5: Climb an easy, wide vegetated crack. Before a loose rocky ledge, move left onto clean slabs and follow easily to a gear placement before gaining ledge. Cross the scree ledge looking for a bolt on the slab above. Continue up to belay.

P6 23m 5.5: Climb a right-rising, vegetated crack to a sloping ledge with a bolted belay.

P7 34m 5.6: Continue up the crack through small, steeper steps. Follow weakness to ridge and bolted anchor.

**Route can be rappelled on a single 70m rope.**

**Summit Ridge:** The summit ridge continues for 200m of 3rd, 4th and some 5th class scrambling to the summit of Melvin Peak at 2,690m. You are likely still an hour from the top. The crux of the ridge is deciding whether to follow a nice ledge system (which will force you to climb a 30m 5.3 step to then regain the ridge) or to continue along the ridge with very exposed 4th/low 5th moves. "Player's choice" : taking the ledge and pitch of climbing is certainly more straightforward.

### **Descent:**

Several descent options exist.

1. Standard descent: From the summit follow the NW ridge. Good route finding keeps the travel in 4th class terrain. Descend ~100-150m vertical along the ridge into a grassy



bowl. On tired legs, this tufted, steep grassy terrain is tedious so leave some energy in the tank.

2. To escape the approach pitches and approach ridge head climbers left. Many places this simply involves walking/scrambling but may include up to a 35m rappel, location dependent (there are no fixed stations to aid escape from approach pitches/ridge some webbing may be required if bailing off the ridge).
3. If needed the main face is fixed for rappel. Use all stations as on ascent with the exception of pitch 1 tree/gear anchor. The last rappel anchor is protected, tucked around the corner climbers left and is not on the climbing line. Once at the base of the main face you can retrace your steps to the approach ridge and scamper down grassy bowls to the base. Alternatively, there is also a way off that descends skiers left from the base of the route. This line requires tricky route finding, potential exposure and is quite scrappy with loose footing. In some situations this may be faster but takes on a bit more complexity.



Approach Pitches and Route Overview



SW Face Route