

Mount Cory South Peak, West Face

These climbs are adjacent to the climb Cory Crack and combine a relatively short approach (~1 hr.) through forest and meadows with long multi-pitch routes on generally sound rock, to an optional short and enjoyable scramble to a summit. The views from here are tremendous: Assiniboine to the Wapta with the town of Banff far below. With judicious routefinding the descent is a non-technical walk. The climbs have several escape options but with the approach and descent are a bit more involved than many other multi-pitch cliffs. 7-10 hrs round trip.

Approach (1-1.5 hours): *Guidebooks describe a different approach to this cliff but we have found this one to be the easiest.*

Park at the Muleshoe Picnic Area on the Bow Valley Parkway, 5.5 km (6 minutes) from the Trans-Canada turn-off. Take the Muleshoe trail, which starts beside the outhouse. Follow it across the highway and through forest on the other side. It will soon start to traverse a steep hillside. After a few minutes you will come to a trail junction marked by a sign with a hiker icon. Turn left here and go steeply uphill on grassy slopes and open forest. Eventually it traverses above a broad, open gully with expansive views north towards Castle Mountain and the Lake Louise peaks. Watch for a small rock cairn beside the trail close to the head of the gully (~35 minutes).

The next section is nice walking and a trail is beginning to form throughout. Keep your head up and watch for a faint trail, cuttings, blazes and green and red flagging. At the cairn turn right into the forest and clamber over a log. Then follow a faint game trail for a minute until you can cross a gravel wash (remember this spot for the descent). Find the good game trail on the other side and go up and across a steep bank for a couple of minutes until you come to two large burnt trees. Turn left (uphill). From here you will follow a broad, faint ridge through the open forest, trending a bit right at first. Keep trying to follow the ridge, weaving between the burnt forest on the right and the green trees on the left. The cliff is up and right but don't head towards it until you are near the same elevation as its base. At this point traverse almost straight across a steep sideslope through deadfall and small trees (flagging and cuttings). Once on the grass slope beyond head towards the cliff, crossing a small gully just before you reach it.

Follow the base of the cliff down for a minute until you come to the small bay at the base of Cory Crack, which is the large chimney system in the centre of the triangular rock face. This is the start to Mountaineer's Route. To get to Hoka Hey, continue down along the base of the cliff to a large bay with a broad, tree filled gully above. Scramble or get a belay a short ways up 4th class ledges and slabs to gain the gully. There is a single belay bolt on a small outcrop on the right side of the bottom of the gully if you want to belay the 4th class. From here walk up on the right side of the gully to near the base of the cliff above, and then traverse left to a dead snag and another single belay bolt. This marks the start of the 5th class climbing.

Descent (1-1.5 hours): There are three options. **1. Recommended:** Climb to the summit as outlined in the description. From the summit, walk NE down to the first col between Cory South and Cory Main peaks. Judicious route finding from here will keep it to walking rather than scrambling. From the col follow the base of the wall descender's left a short way, then make a long descending traverse descender's right along a treed ramp below cliffs and above a steep gravel wash. Eventually you will be pushed into the gravel wash, go down it until you can see a rockslide of grey boulders to your left. Get out of the wash and walk down beside the rockslide into the mossy forest, which leads to the main drainage. Follow this on either bank to where you crossed the gravel wash in the morning on the approach. Head back right through the forest to the Muleshoe trail which leads back to your vehicle. **2. Faster:** From the top of either route go up a very short ways and then left (north), look for a ledge system that enables you to cross to the north side of the ridge, and work your way into the basin and drainage to meet up with description #1. **3.** Use the descent described for Cory Crack in Banff Rock. This will lead you a little ways away from your vehicle if using the approach described above.

Mountaineer's Route, 5.8 (or 5.7 via the French Connection variation)

FA: Guided parties climbed several variations of this route over the years

Gear: 60 m rope, 10 draws, 4 long slings. **Photos:** page 6 and 7.

Although mostly 5.7 or easier, and bolted, this is not a sport climb. It is a serious undertaking due to some gravelly ledges, a bit of loose rock, the involved approach and descent, and the scrambling sections on the route. Get an early start. Begin in the same bay as the start to Cory Crack.

1. **The Gmaster.** This pitch climbs the left corner of the bay. Start in the middle of the bay to bypass a steep move at the base. Move left to a bolt then up the corner past a couple more bolts. When you hit gravel move right to a belay on a tree in the centre of the wide gully. 5.6, 30 m

2nd class straight up the gravelly, treed terrain for about 60 m to a single belay bolt at the base of the wall left of the Cory Crack chimney.

2. **Conradical.** Making sure to use holds to the left at the start and avoiding laybacking, climb the wall past bolts. Step right into a break and ascend that to two trees and go between them. Scramble up a few metres to a belay at the base of the next wall. 25 m, 5.7

3. **President's Choice.** Climb up and left. 15 m up is a tricky but well-protected step left where it is important to keep your feet low. Then keep going up past an emergency rap anchor that is to the right, trending left into a corner/gully. Go up it to a second anchor on the right. 50 m, 5.7

4. **Republic of Laristan.** Traverse left across the gully. Carefully friction left around a rib to easier ground, again keeping your feet low. Then climb up and left to a ledge and an anchor to the left. This is immediately below scrambling terrain. 25 m, 5.7

Escape: from here walk up and left (north) into a gully. Walk down this gully constantly bumping descender's right to get to open slopes and the approach trail.

2nd and 3rd class up easy ground to a tree (belay). 4th class up and right on a ramp/corner 15 m to a single bolt (belay). 4th class right then up a short wall to a single ring bolt at 15 m (belay). 3rd class for 60 m, starting a bit right then back left, then up to a big ledge. Belay (no anchor – big ledge) the short steep wall of good stone above to a single bolt (belay) below easy ground.

Escape: a 30 m rappel off a chained tree 10 m to the left of this bolt brings you to a bolted chain anchor (climber's left). Another 30 m rap goes to an easy gully. Walk down this gully constantly bumping descender's right to get to open slopes and the approach trail.

To continue up the climb, from the single bolt 3rd class up and right to the base of the large steep wall above. There is an anchor about 5 m left of the Cory Crack chimney. A 4th class traverse **straight right** past 2 bolts for 15 m goes to a bolted anchor on the other side of the chimney. Climbers often go too high on this traverse, it is important to go **straight across** rather than up.

5. **KDK Memorial.** Climb to the right of the tree then up to a bolt above. It's easiest to move left at this bolt to get to the ledge above. Continue up past bolts, an emergency rap anchor, and more bolts to another anchor on the right, below a steeper wall. 55 m, 5.6

6. **My Saving Grace.** Climb up and left to the third bolt, then trend slightly right to a hidden bolt. Up to the anchor. 25 m, 5.7 (Pitches 6 and 7 may be combined and is recommended).

7. **Where Eagles Dare.** Climb straight up. Sustained and Awesome with a capital A. Keep an eye out for the resident eagles soaring above. 29 m, 5.7 (Pitches 6 and 7 may be combined and is recommended).

8. **Mountaineer's Pitch.** Walk to the base of a short corner and climb up the loose face beside it past 2 bolts to the base of a steeper corner. 20 m, 5.4

9. **C-Zach Corner.** Stem, smear and layback the short granite-like corner to jugs and then easier climbing above. Do it! 29 m, 5.8

9a. **French Connection.** If C-Zach seems too much, start on the wall above the anchor and climb it past a couple of bolts. Then gain the upper part of the C-Zach Corner and finish off that way. 29 m, 5.6

10. **Scrambler's Pitch.** Climb the break above to large gravel ledges and an anchor. 35 m, 4th

3rd and 4th class along the nearly horizontal ridge above leads to the summit in 30 minutes. Rappelling the route is not recommended due to rockfall potential. *If you do rap be very careful pulling your rope on pitch 6. If it jams behind the block directly above the anchor and you pull the block off **you will not survive.** This block is not on the climbing line.*

Scroll down for the Hoka Hey! description.

Hoka Hey! 5.8+

FA: Banff Climbers Club, 2014

Hoka Hey means “let’s go” in the Lakǰóta Sioux language. It was often combined with the phrase “it’s a good day to die” as part of a war cry shouted while riding into battle. The pitch names come from the Nakoda (Stoney) language, which is a Siouan dialect spoken by the local indigenous people.

A note about Moss Crack: *Banff Rock describes the major corner system at the start of this route as being part of Moss Crack. I don’t think it is. The description of Moss Crack in the 1970 CAJ states:*

“A new route on the southwest face. First ascent September 1969. D. Steenkamp and J. Moss. Grade II, F6. This climb takes a crack line starting approximately 100 yards to the right of the ‘Cory Crack’ and just to the right of a prominent inside corner.”

Seeing as it is described as a 5.6 crack to the right of a prominent inside corner I believe Moss Crack is the same climb as Arboreal Delight, named two years later by another party thinking they were climbing a new route. That said, John Moss (FAs of Babel E Face and Balrog) certainly could have led the big corner even with virtually no gear. But I don’t think he did that day. That said the big corner has been climbed previously - FRA Geoff Thornton-Trump and Isabelle Lemelin, early 1980’s. Anyone been up there previous to that?

Gear: 60 m rope; 14 draws; 4 long slings; Camalots: #0.4, #0.5, #0.75, #1, #2 (grey to yellow)

Start the route at a single bolt beside a dead snag below broken ground leading up and left to the big corner. See approach for additional information. **Photos:** page 6 and 7.

1. **Yéθka (Those Without Blemish)** Climb up a short ways to a bolt at the beginning of a left leaning ramp. Climb the ramp past horizontal cam placements to a ledge. Go up the wall and corner above, past bolts to a ledge. Some loose rock. 50 m, 5.6, mixed

2. **Ī-ktomñĩ (Trickster)** Climb the interesting ramp on solid stone to a semi-hanging belay. 20 m, 5.6, mixed

Escape: You can get back down to the gully using the anchors and a tree in three 30 m raps

3. **Wakā Tāga (Big Spirit, aka John Moss Corner)** Climb the long, sustained, fantastic corner on immaculate rock. Belay on lower angled terrain on the left. Some climbers will feel this pitch deserves the 5.9 grade but if you are familiar with limestone stemming corners it is 5.8, albeit every single move is that hard. John Moss died of cancer in South Africa in 2010; he may have climbed this pitch in 1969! 55 m, 5.8+, bolts

Escape: Go left from the anchor and downclimb and/or rap off trees to the base.

4. **Īyǎhé Nakoda (Mountain People)** Keep climbing the fantastic upper corner. The first few moves getting into the corner are as hard as anything on the route. Belay at the right end of a ledge or continue to the anchor at the left end of the ledge. 55 m, 5.8, mixed

Escape: From the anchor at the left end of the ledge, rap off and then downclimb and/or rap off trees to the base.

5. **Wotawa (War Banner)** From the anchor at the left end of the ledge, step left to the arête on the edge of Cory Crack and climb it to the anchor at the beginning of Mountaineer’s Route pitch 5. 35 m, 5.6, mixed

4th class a couple metres **straight left** to a bolt, clip it and then step down and left to cross Cory Crack, clip another bolt, and then move left to an anchor. This is the same traverse as Mountaineer's Route, done in the opposite direction.

Escape: Scramble down climber's left (north) to a tree with a chain at the edge of a gully. A 30 m rap down and climber's left brings you to a chain anchor. Another 30 m rap goes to an easy gully. Walk down this gully trending descender's right (north) to the forest below and the approach route.

6. **Wasiju (Ugly Hairy One)** From the anchor climb up and left over ledges and short walls, past a few bolts. Some loose rock. 50 m, 5.6, bolts

7. **Yuya (Golden Eagle)** Make a hard move left past a bolt, then easier climbing leads up a left facing corner above. 40 m, 5.8, bolts

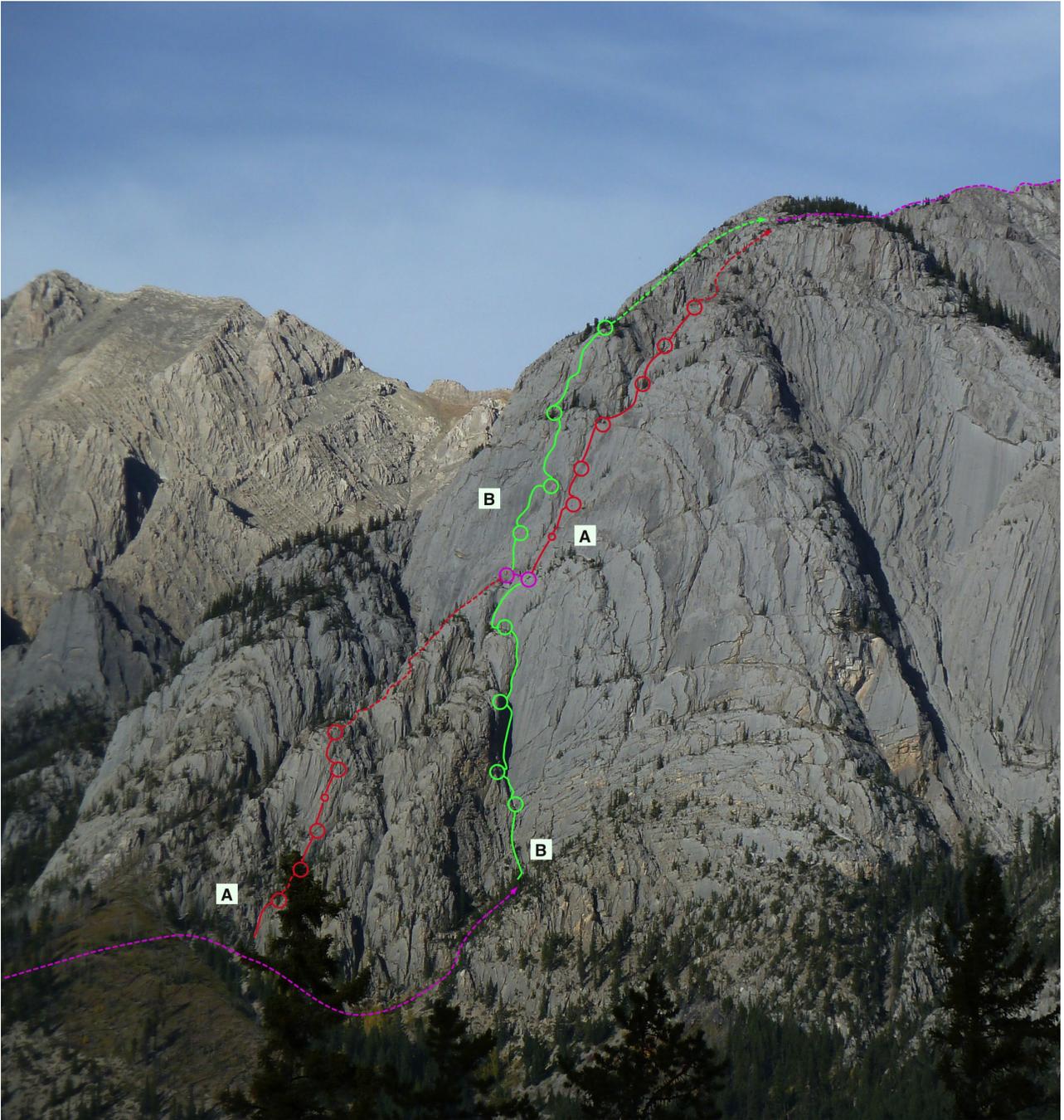
8. **Hoka Hey! (Let's Go!)** Head up and left to the crack, jam up that, then step right onto the face and go up to an anchor. It is mandatory to shout the war cry part way up the pitch. 55m, 5.8, mixed

Move your belay up and left 15 m across the large ledge to a single bolt anchor near a dead snag.

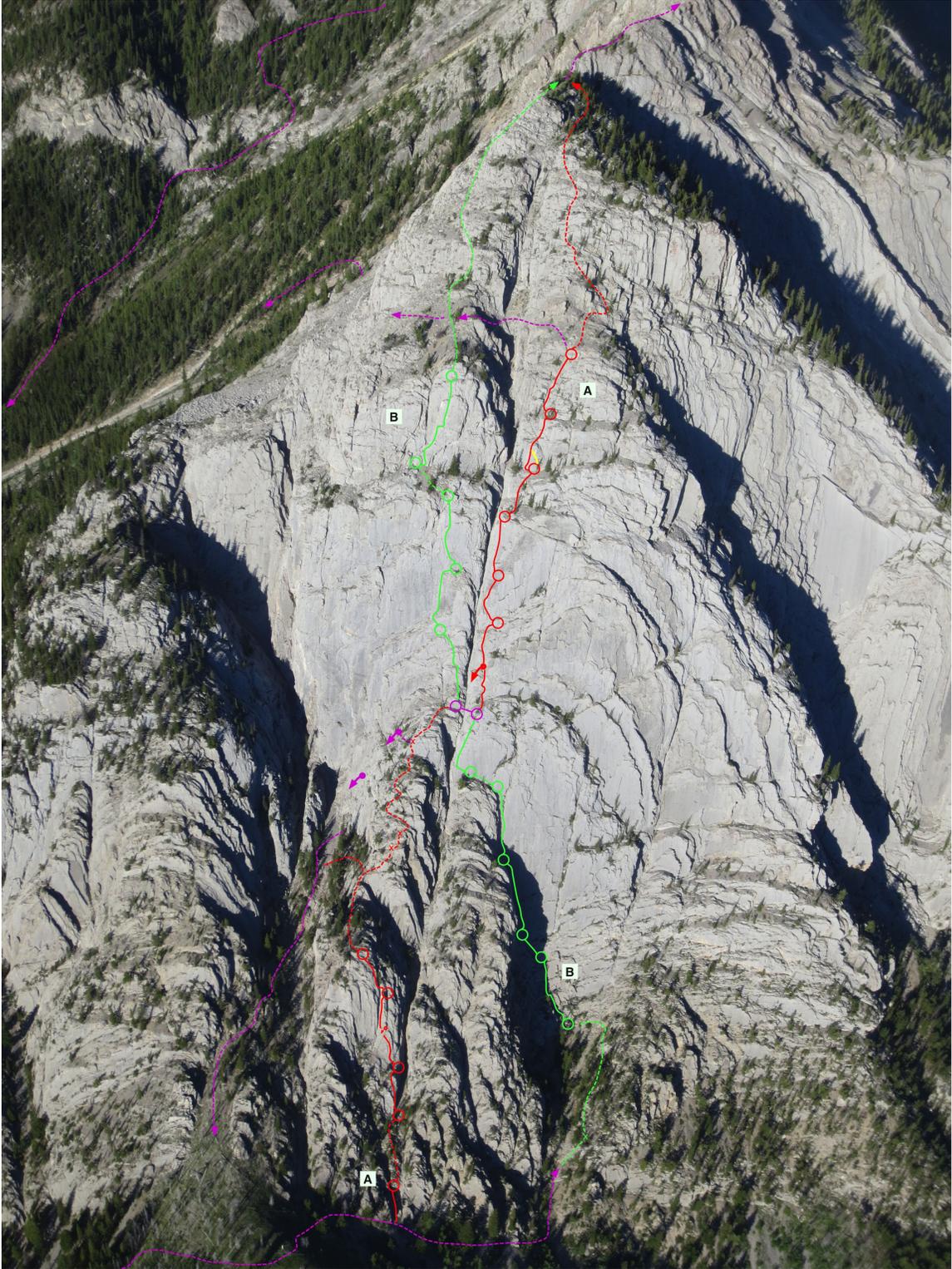
Escape: Walk right on the big ledge, rap off a tree into Cory Crack, and climb easily up a few metres to the chain anchor at the top of pitch 7 of Mountaineer's Route. Rap that route to the easy traverse. Go across the traverse to the left then scramble down ledges climber's left (north) to a tree with a chain at the edge of a gully. A 30 m rap down and climber's left brings you to a chain anchor. Another 30 m rap goes to an easy gully. Walk down this gully constantly bumping descender's right (north) to the forest below and the approach route.

9. **Éhagé Nakoda (The last Nakoda)** Climb up and right to the top. 50 m, 5.7, bolts

3rd and 4th class along the nearly horizontal ridge above leads to the summit in 30 minutes.



A: Mountaineer's Route. B: Hoka Hey!



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Photo: Conrad Janzen