

Long Mt -South Peak 4917' (gps)

Feb 15, 2009

Summit coordinates: 10 U 604367 5327141

Approach: Mt loop Highway, Marten Creek Trail

Descent: Same

Weather: 30-38 deg F, sun little to no wind/ start snowing at 2pm

Trail: Snow/Ice first 1/8 mile. Bare to 2400ft, then snow covered, boot packed. Pitch up knee deep average (sometimes waste deep, sometimes 6" with weak crust layer, A few very firm to nearly ice under the snow layer).

Start Elev: Marten Creek TH 1425' (gps)

Max Elev: (Summit) 4917' (gps)

Time to summit (includes trashing with skis, stashing and route exploring): 5hrs (down 2hrs dark with no lamp).

Total time: 7.5hrs, ~xx miles

Topo Map: Green Trails xxx, [USGS Silverton](#). [My GPS track \(click here\)](#)

Short of it: Solo outing to test rehab of my knee, first summit of the year...

Long of it:

A bit of an adventure. I was given so-so to BAD beta...

I started on skis on icy crap. Patchy snow that diminished to bare path. I walked in the boot saddling my skis for a third mile. Still no sign of snow. What was the, "you'll love it, you can ski down it and make quick time..." ? After the forestry test patch I ditched the skis and tele boots behind a log, putting on my insulated glacier boots. What a load relief:-) After 2600' vert of kickstepping I was glad to have the stiff and warm boots:-) At ~2400 a slight descent and snow starting cover the old road. Pass a very thin avy gulley uphill on the right. Road ends and a path traverses rightish. Pass a small avy path with first views of a peak and at ~1.9m a large avy opening and views to the top (?).

I was told they went too far and hit a cliff bank and turned around. They said to look for the spot they came down, "...it will be obvious..." This looked like the spot they came down, so I went up. I found one of their water bottles and a little ways up a rest seat for two or so and two piles of used match sticks. Humm, come on guys, you give the Mounties a bad name leaving debris. Slope was under 30 degrees, varying ~8" powder over a soft layer. A test hole showed it stable. Their boot tracks wet up through a narrowing spot with the snow pack broken/calving. I didn't like the looks of it so went left to skirt around and above it. Then up the gulley -hmmm, I didn't feel have a warm feeling looking at it and when I measured it at 38 degrees -not my fav number. Another test showed it stable. At times hardness less than 6" down, decent kick-stepping. Some places near bottomless and further up some serious multiple kicks needed to break into a thick crust.

At 3800' the previous days party's tracks ended where the gulley narrowed to less than 10'. The pitch gradually increased to 45-50 degrees. Sometimes good progress, sometimes too soft. Again checked and slope appeared stable. Gulley had sloughed and the trick was to follow the sloughed areas for some firmer kicks (and ice axe/tool belay the whole way. Looking back down it definitely started to look to be a LONG way down. I could see a ridge approaching above. Thought normal 30 minutes, but at the tough progress was over an hour, it was taking forever to get there. Then the pitch got steeper... I measured it at over 60deg. Was basically at the top of the gulley and there were trees. Considering a fall would send me north off a cliff, I pulled out my scramble rope, set an anchor, made a diaper and self belayed the rest of the way (four pitches). Belaying myself I was feeling better and not so worried about a whip with a stop vs. the other options.

Looking over the ridge I could see north to Long Mt. Bummer... I went up too early and followed up the wrong peak. I could see yesterdays crew's tracks and glissade mark up to the last chutes (~200' shy of the summit). I'd hoped I'd be just having a traverse to drop over to that side, but cliffs on my left would need a full rope (or two) and a couple raps to get to the basin. Thinking on it I was better on this peak since I could protect with slings on trees. The main peak had a seemingly doable gulley to the left of where they stopped. Hard to tell the steepness with the flattening effect and looked like would be best if it was steep to use the rock for pro (no trees). Once to its ridge it would be a ridge run to the top.

Back to my ascent... I had sparse trees to climb past and used them to reset new belay points. Second pitch the snow was supper soft and over 70 degrees. I dug down to a hard crust and ice layer to get good purchase. Past that crux needed to traverse 10' right. Snow was hard, many kicks to set a step, but a lot of digging to find something hard enough for the tools to bite. Last tree and less than 20m to the ridge. Yippie, it was the top and flat, too soft for the tools to hold so made hand pockets and mantled over. As Usual an amazing view. I'd watched the skies go from blue to dark grey and lightly snowing. I could still see Three Fingers, though shrouded in clouds. Looked like the way I came up was the easy way. I wonder if it had been done before by others, didn't look like any better route up.

I had forgot my camera at home so tried a few pics with the phone (turned out crappy), ate a bite, a drink from the thermos and started down. I did five raps then a tied into the end and lowered myself testing plunge stepping. Feeling confident I kept going. Got some good loooong glissading on the 50-40deg pitch. The snow that kicked loose stopped sliding shortly when I stopped -Good thing. I was able to find the glove that fell and tumbled on my way up. I stopped at 3700' to coil the rope I'd been dragging, grab a bite and drink some more hot fluids. The platypus hose had frozen and it was cooling down. After being with Dicey and her thermos I decided the extra weight was worth it -I'm getting to like the thermos thing:-). The lower area was too shallow for my skinny butt to glissade, so last 600' was plunge stepping. Three and a half hours up from the trail and 40 minutes down (Raps took a while to setup). It was 5:10 and way behind schedule. Even being late I was curious where the better way up was and headed north sans pack. Earlier I'd heard voices when I was at ~4100', now I could see snowshoe and one set of fresh boot tracks.

Around the corner from the field I came down was a gulley/avy chute with boot steps coming out. This is where they came down from Long Mt's peak Saturday. At ~ 1/8 mile from where I came down was a very large avy field with boot prints heading up to the right of the creek gulley through the woods. There were also tracks that veered slightly down and kept going. I think they went up through the woods and stay right of the gulley to get to the avy field heading up Long.

Well, enough of the curiosity, I hightailed it back to my pack. It was 5:35 and I was happy I'd brought my headlamp. I walked out as it was quickly getting dark. Richard's lost water bottle was still where I'd left it to pick up on the way out. Past the snow to bare ground it was dark and a mile to go by headlamp. I quickly remember that the batteries were low while I watched it dim and a small round circle of light blink out. I lasted about five minutes. Good thing I walk with the lamp off a lot. Slower going and a few surprises. ...Hill on the left and saving the last glow to find my skis and boots when the slope goes up on the right. Switchback... maybe... click on the light, see my skis behind a log before the light dims out. Whew! Only a (nasty) third of a mile to go and not stumble in the dark. Car headlights way off through the trees... Ahhh... a little ice sliding, the trail flattens and the last hundred feet to the car. 6:30 and feeling good. I blew a few ligaments in the knee before Christmas. This was a test to see how it was healing. Besides some sharp pains half way up and swelling I felt good (and out of shape). A bag of snow for the way home and I'd be fine:-)

I still need to go back for Long Mt.
Pictures are ugly -from my phone.

All in all it was a good adventure and exploration.

Climb on!
-franklin

Equipment:

30m 8mm rope, slings for anchors and diaper harness, ice axe/tools, sunscreen, crampons (not used), Dead lamp batteries:- (well used)