

Another in the Summit Sunset Series

Spark Plug Mt (6230+, prom 440')

Little Spark Plug (6016', prom ~434')

Via Surprise Creek trail (Scenic)

Jan 25, 2011

Diffused sun, high clouds, ~36F.

Saturday and Sunday most of the people I get out with tagged both these peaks. Sunday Brian lost his crampons and dicey thought I'd be a good treasure hunt for me to look for them. Jonesing for some BC Skiing I decided to give the route a solo try.

It was a 7 hour trip following the [NWHikers](#) and UW groups tracks across the creek and up Spark Plug Creek. I stayed left while half way up they ventured right of the stream. Going up was very steep and wet snow. Above Little Plug lake the surface had a frozen crust over 8" powder. The sound of tumbling snow clods was "interesting" Above Spark Plug Lake I stayed left in the open trees (the previous hikers went up the gulley). Then below the ridge traversed to the small saddle east of the summit to the gentle south side and clockwise to the summit. The hikers from the weekend went direct up the gulley rightish steeply gained the ridge then traversed on it SE to the summit.

Good views, but camera was set to "Tungsten" -darn! Sun lighting slopes up with clouds still overhead. A cool red band on the west horizon below the cloudline.

Skiing down was abysmal. Well, nasty. Frozen crust and soft under, real leg breaker stuff. Generally followed my route out to find my lens cap. Shot down and across the middle of the lake and direct up Little Spark Plug, more middle left catching the hiker route on the south false summit. Traversed north to the true summit to watch the sunset (great timing).

Again skiing down to the lake west then CCW above Sparkplug lake and down to Little Plug. Time for a headlamp. Still frozen crap crust survival. This time out of curiosity followed the snowshoe track down skiers left of the creek. Would have been much better following my track up. Below 5200' the crust changed to thick mush. Found it advantageous to replace the old batteries in the headlamp. I could see! More work than I expected down the steep gully mush. Caught my route back down the creek and across the giant log to the east side of Surprise creek for a rapid ride most the time down the track. Kept me wide awake with headlamp, tight twists and turns and a couple quick deviations to avoid the rare bareness. And those downhill step puncheons –watch out at the bottoms...

Only four times took off skis on the way down. Big creek cross was the best I've ever had it. A smaller one had a very narrow ledge and three creeks open enough to walk across with three steps. Kept the skis on to within 200' of the van.

With current conditions I recommend NOT repeating this joyous day. The views and a day out were great.. Always love being on skis, but today question my sanity on the way down.

Stats: To Spark Plug Summit from TH, 4.2m, 4158vert, 4hr50min
Spark Plug to sunset on Little Spark Plug Summit, 9m, 466vert, 42min
Little Spark Plug Summit to van, 4.3m, a little vert, 1hr36min
Total: 9.4m, 4724vert, 7:54 (with lunch and summit breaks)

Oh, being a late day I left the TH almost 11:00 to get the timing for sunset on the last summit. I may post some images later if I can clean up the over blue to be at least presentable.

Happy turns!
-fwb