

The Finger, Napsihu Ridge, 5.8

This is the NW Ridge of The Finger in the Sawback Range, west of Banff. Napsihu is Finger in the Stoney language. Emphasis is on the second syllable and the correct spelling is nā pθihu.

If you have ever climbed the regular “Jim Board” route on The Finger and were disappointed by the unpleasant approach, poor climbing and horrendous descent, then rest easy - the route this cool looking tower deserves is here. This climb has an enjoyable two hour approach, 12 pitches up to 5.8 with some scrambling, all on good rock, and an efficient rappel descent.

FA of NW ridge - Unknown climbers a long time ago. A few old pitons were found although there are no records of the ridge being climbed. The lower pitches were almost certainly bypassed on loose ledges to the east.

*FA of NW ridge integrale - Banff Climber's Club, 2016**

Gear

- 60 m rope.
- Camalots 0.4 to 3 (grey to blue). Optional: a few medium-large wires.
- 10 alpine draws.

Park

- Sawback picnic area, about 11 km from the Highway 1/1A junction.

Approach: 3 km, 750 m elevation gain

- Angle NE through brush (avoiding trails that go N to Ranger Creek) towards the valley that drains the west side of Cockscomb Mountain and the north side of The Finger.
- In about 500 m you will gain a dry gravel outwash. Follow this up valley.
- Staying in the creekbed seems to work best, getting into the forest on the banks is harder travel.
- There usually is water about 1 hour up the creek.
- After about 2.5 km, below the walls of Bumper Buttress, the creek makes a bend to the southeast. Turn this corner and then gain the forested ridge on the right that leads to the peak (cairn).
- Climb through mostly open forest near the ridge crest on a faint trail. Steep moss leads to easier walking higher along the ridge.
- There are two scrambly bits higher on the ridge.
- At about 2150 m in the forest you will come to a short rock step with a bolt anchor at the base.

Climb: 12 pitches plus scrambling

- **Pitch 1: 5.4, 15 m.** Climb the short step to the left of two protection bolts.
- Continue walking up the ridge through the last of the trees and into talus. Bypass the first, short steep step of the rock ridge proper by following the base of a wall and a grassy ramp below the ridgecrest (on the west) until an easy ledge can be taken left to the ridge itself.
- Fun 3rd class scrambling leads directly up the ridge crest. At a little step, take a short 4th class exposed downsloping ledge on the east side (left) past two bolts.
- Continue on 3rd class to the base of the first large, steep step. There is a bolt anchor at the base of the step.
- **Pitch 2: 5.8, 30 m.** Climb steeply to the second bolt. Move right on a ledge to a 3 m long corner. Climb the corner (hidden side pull on right to exit). Step left and climb easier slabs past more bolts to an overhang. Make an unlikely series of crux moves slightly down and to the left to easier

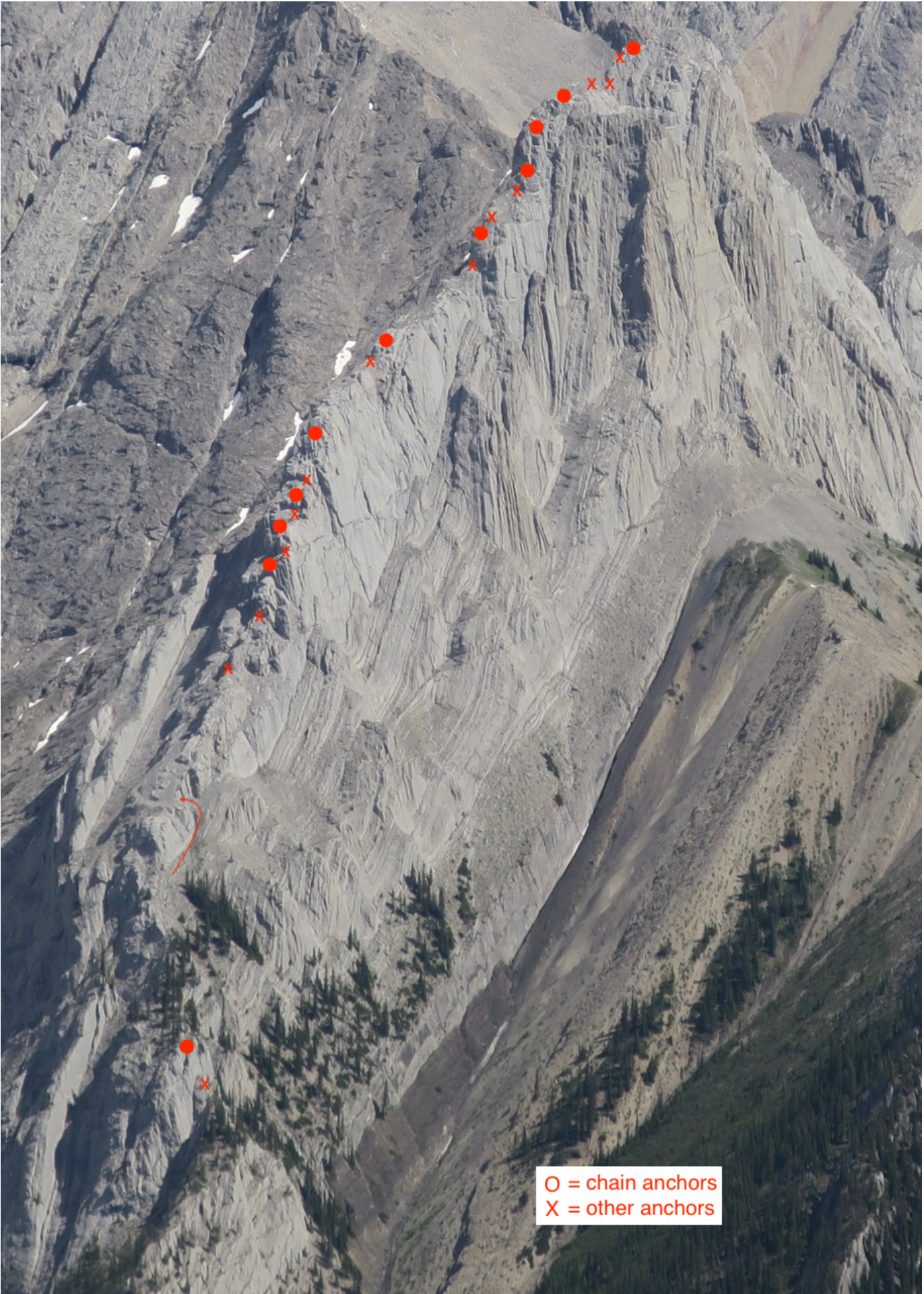
- ground. Climb up to a chain anchor. Judicious use of long slings will eliminate rope drag. 8 bolts.
- Move up easily for several meters to a single ring bolt at the base of a steep wall.
- **Pitch 3: 5.5, 20 m.** Step right and climb to a bolt on the west face. Romp up big holds to a chain anchor on a slab. Either belay here or move up several meters to an anchor to the left of a chimney.
- **Pitch 4: 5.7, 20 m.** Start up the easy chimney until you can step left to a bolt on the arête. Make a couple of steep, slabby moves to easy ground. Climb past the chain anchor above to a two bolt anchor several meters further up.
- **Pitch 5: 5.6, 30 m.** Step down then move right onto the face. Climb past bolts, then continue up corners on the right (gear placements) to a chain anchor.
- Scramble up the short chimney above to easier ground. Move along the easy ridge, down climb a short slot, and continue a few meters to a dip with a slab on the other side. There is a single belay bolt on the north side of the dip.
- **Pitch 6: 5.5, 20 m.** Go through the dip and climb past two bolts via the slab and a steep move. Chain anchor on the clean slab above.
- Scramble/shortrope to the base of the next steep step and a two bolt anchor.
- **Pitch 7: 5.8, 20 m.** Step down to the left, then make steep moves to a bolt. Move left and climb up more easily (bolt to the right of the climbing). Continue up and left to a ledge below a steep wall. Another bolt protects steep climbing on jug holds, initially to the left of the bolt and then up and right to a short, steep crack. Stuff a cam into the crack then hand and finger jams and face holds lead to a ledge. A green cam can be blindly flung into the crack on the ledge to protect the final moves to the anchor.
- 10 m of loose 4th class climbing leads to a single ring anchor.
- Scramble a short ways to a single ring anchor on a big ledge below a steep wall.
- **Pitch 8: 5.6, 20 m.** Step right and make a few steep moves past a bolt to a cam placement and then more easily to a chain on a ledge.
- **Pitch 9: 5.8, 25 m.** Stem and layback three steep steps up the corner crack to a chain. The gear is good cams and then bolts that protect the final crux moves.
- **Pitch 10: 4th, 25 m.** Loose ground leads past a small cam placement to a chain on the flat ridge.
- Scramble a short ways to an anchor above Parkour Notch.
- **Pitch 11: 5.5, 15 m.** Downclimb past a bolt into the notch, step across when able and climb out the other side past 2 bolts to an anchor. On ascent you probably only want to clip the upper bolt on the south side. On descent, down climb into the notch clipping both bolts on the south side but don't clip the bolt on the north side.
- **Pitch 12: 5.4, 20 m.** Climb past a bolt and continue past a ring anchor (this is the rap that goes down the original east face descent) to a chain a few meters further up.
- Scramble a few minutes to the summit.

Descent: 11 raps plus downclimbing

- Back the way you came. Chains signify raps. A few other anchors can be used to belay short sections of easy down climbing.

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O = chain anchors
X = other anchors