

**Climb Denali: A Reflective Journey**

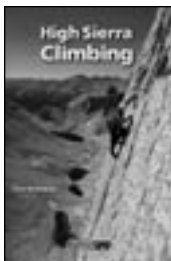
By Laurent Dick  
Reviewed by Steve Davis

This is a terrific book. What makes "Climb Denali" so good is that it uses pictures to tell the story—accompanied by quotes from notable climbers—rather than relying heavily on the written word. Starting from the first encounter with the mountain, Laurent Dick, an experienced Denali guide, takes the reader through the various phases of the Denali climbing experience. The book is organized by themes that capture in pictures and words what climbing the west buttress of North America's "The Great One" is all about. The themes begin with "Encounter," and are followed by "Challenges," "Home," "Humbled," "Glimpses," "Summit," and ends with "Reflections." Since this is a picture book, it can be enjoyed in a single setting. It also provides a collection of photographs, reproduced on high quality paper, which first-time climbers can use to better understand the challenges one will face while on this mountain.

I have been on seven expeditions to the Alaska Range, and "Climb Denali" brought back vivid memories. I especially enjoyed the collection of photographs. They seem fresh, even though they were taken in many of the customary places along the west buttress route. These views on the route during various moods of the mountain brought back memories of the sun, the cold, the wind, and the camaraderie that you find while spending three weeks on the mountain. The quotations that accompany the pictures are an excellent collection of perspectives and thoughts that capture the views of some of the most experienced Denali climbers.

I highly recommend this book to both first-time Denali climbers, as well as seasoned veterans.

*Steve Davis is a former AAC board member and section chair who has climbed extensively in Alaska. He lives in Eagle River, Alaska, and chairs the Club's Alaska policy committee.*



**High Sierra Climbing**

By Chris McNamara  
Reviewed by Andy Selters

Only a few years ago, the High Sierra had no climbing guide in print. Now we have a fifth: Supertopo's "High Sierra Climbing." First, a disclosure: I was hired to write history segments for many of the routes in this book, but I have no financial stake in whether the book sells well or not.

"High Sierra Climbing" is a very complete and accurate guide to a select few of the best rock routes in the Sierra—27 routes on 17 peaks, to be exact. Author Chris McNamara climbed every route he wrote about, and with editor/designer Sara Felchlin, they have extended their successful super-detailed guidebook formula from Yosemite to the high country. The book is designed for crag climbers who are looking for high-country-technical routes, and so there is a bias toward the most airy climbing on the best rock. For instance, there are no ice climbs included, only a couple of routes under fifth class, and no climbs at all on the more-alpine main crest of the Palisades. But, from Keeler Needle to Mount Goode, and from Mount Dana's "Third Pillar" to Matterhorn Peak, all the routes he chose are superb. The characterizations of each are spot-on, the photos are beautiful, and the "beta" is all there—from approach maps to detailed topos, strategy suggestions, rack recommendations, escape ("retreat") possibilities and special considerations. The errors are impressively few and minor, and, with all due modesty, the history segments that Chris asked Steve Roper and me to do contribute toward making well-rounded portraits of these routes. Peter Croft's "The Good, The Great and The Awesome" is a similar select-book and these two books overlap with 20 of the same routes described. Which would I recommend? Well, pick for your style. Croft's has 40 routes total with more diversity; it also is accurate, and it has character that only Peter could build in. McNamara's has more refined detail, better topos, and a focus that makes Yosemite-based climbers feel more at home. Read "High Sierra Climbing" well and you will have an accurate feel for the overall character and many details of a route before you even see the peak, which is what's both good and bad about this new level of guidebook.

When we know so much even before we go, we gain technical efficiency, but we also lose no small opportunity to experience both failure and discovery. When the routes are cherry-picked for us and the strategies outlined, when the scary sections, surprise jamcracks and belays are labeled with the key pieces, our road to the summit has fewer wrong turns and drier palms. We can't really mourn the loss of hours pondering over maps, following rumors and hunches, coming across unexpected runouts, and interpreting from a traditional guidebook. But with the expectations laid out, we're a step closer to being consumers and not adventurers. Such is the progression of things since technical climbing began, and the "Supertopo" series does a great job of making harder climbs more accessible. Remember though, there's a thousand other routes in the Sierra not so well documented, and the previous era still reigns there.

*Andy Selters lives in Bishop, Calif., where he is a guide, photographer and author of the critically acclaimed Ways to the Sky: A Historical Guide to North American Mountaineering.*

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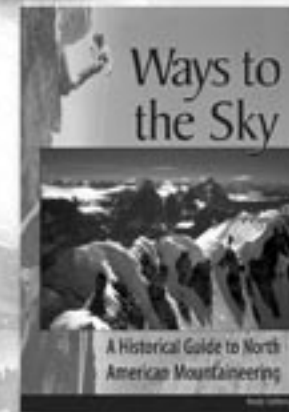


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