

## Second Apron, Mount Evans - Alpine Rock Climbing by Dave Cooper



*Approaching the Second Apron - small-2.jpg*

High on the flanks of Mount Evans, rising above Summit Lake to meet the west ridge at over fourteen thousand feet, there are several impressive rock slabs known as the “Aprons”. These rock faces offer 500 -600 vertical feet of mostly moderate, technical climbing. The Second Apron in particular has a variety of possible routes, mostly in the 5.7 - 5.8 range. As with most alpine routes, a part of the adventure is in the route-finding, which is why the old adage about being able to climb one to two grades harder than the published grade of the route rings true here.

On a perfect, late summer day we headed up to climb a line towards the right side of the face, nominally rated 5.7. By staying on the easiest line, which involves a fair amount of wandering back and forth, following crack systems up the face for four to five roped pitches, you can keep the grade at this level. Deviate from this

**Getting to the Trailhead:** Drive on I-70 to Idaho Springs and take Exit 240. Drive south on Highway 103 (Mount Evans Road) to Echo Lake (13.3 miles), then turn right on State Highway 5 (Mount Evans Road) and drive to the Summit Lake parking area, 22.4 miles from the Interstate. This is a US Fee area, collected at the entrance station at Echo Lake. America the Beautiful cards are accepted here.

### **Hiking and Climbing Statistics:**

1300 feet of elevation gain in 1.5 miles, from Summit Lake to the parking area near the summit of Mount Evans. The climbing portion constitutes approximately 500 feet of this elevation gain.

**Difficulty:** The route described here is rated 5.7 and is climbed in four to five roped pitches. Expect an alpine environment; after all, you’re climbing at fourteen thousand feet. Keep an eye on the weather. Thunderstorms are common during the afternoons in the summer months.

**Technical Gear:** A standard rock rack and a 60 meter rope should suffice. Double ropes can be good to have if the weather turns bad. Don’t forget your helmet.

**Resources:** I’m not aware of any guidebook that describes climbs on Mount Evans summit Aprons. The best resource I’ve found is on the web at the excellent site [http://mountainproject.com/v/colorado/alpine\\_rock/mt\\_evans/105744358](http://mountainproject.com/v/colorado/alpine_rock/mt_evans/105744358)

Complete information on the Mount Evans hiking trails can be found at <http://www.14ers.com/routelist.php?peak=Mt.+Evans>

**USGS Quad:** Mt Evans, CO.

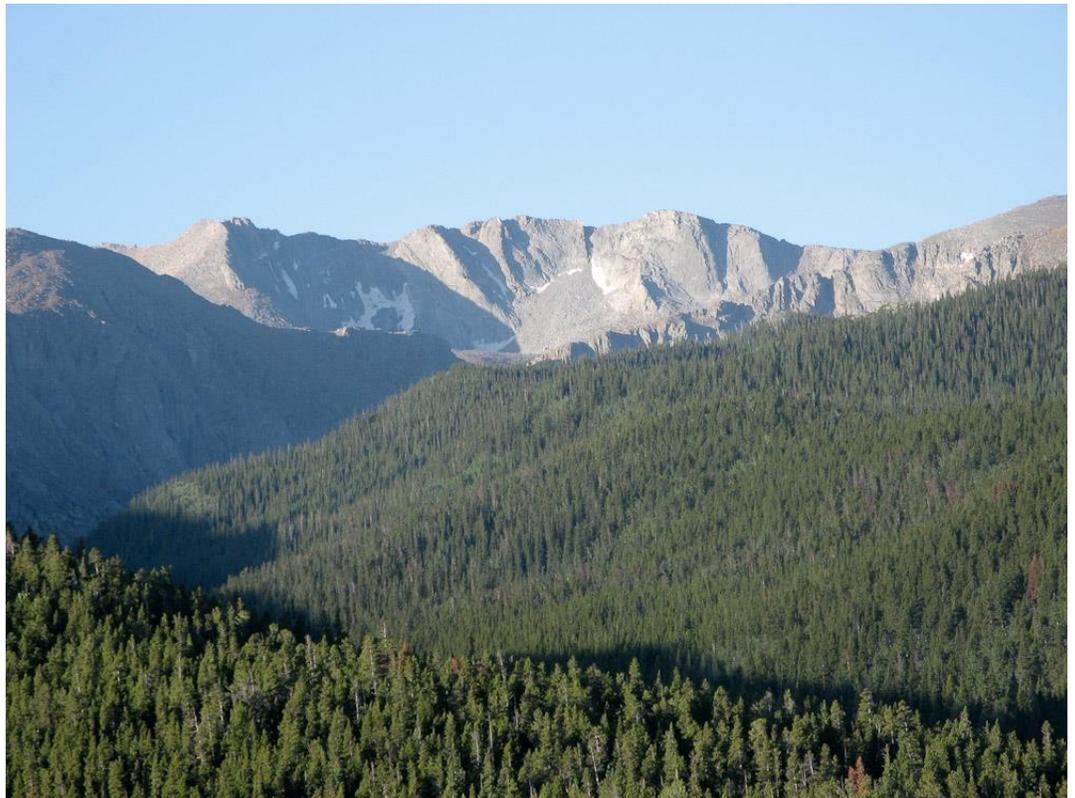
line, as I suspect most parties do occasionally, and you may find yourself on more difficult ground.

*The rock faces of the Aprons dominate in this view from Echo Lake 1 -small.jpg*

Also, remember that you're climbing at 14,000 feet, probably carrying your pack and all your gear (so that you don't need to return to the base of the climb later), so the climbing will likely be more strenuous than at your local crag.

A bonus for climbing here is that after the short, half mile walk along the west ridge to the parking area near the

summit, you may be able to catch a car ride back down to Summit Lake. We unashamedly took advantage of this after our climb, arranging to meet friends who were hiking one of the standard routes.



### **Approach**

From the parking area at Summit Lake, pick out the Second Apron (it can be identified by the vertical dihedral immediately left of the right edge of the slab). Head southwest from the lake directly towards the route, making a rising traverse. Aim for a spot at the base of the route just left of the dihedral at the right side of the face at an elevation of 13,600 feet. The approach is 0.9 mile and takes approximately 45 minutes.

*The Aprons, seen from Summit Lake. The Second Apron is the large expanse of rock just right of center - small.jpg*



### **The Climb**

Using a 60 meter rope we climbed the route in four long pitches. Depending on the exact route you take and where you find belay stations, it may require a fifth pitch. The climb ends on a large grassy area. From that point it is a short scramble up to the ridge.

*Climbers on the first pitch of the Second Apron - Right Side route -small.jpg. The lead climber can be seen traversing left on the belay ledge.*



This route has been described as a “climb-anywhere” route ([http://mountainproject.com/v/colorado/alpine\\_rock/mt\\_evans/105755131](http://mountainproject.com/v/colorado/alpine_rock/mt_evans/105755131)). Certainly many variations exist. In general, take the line of least resistance. We started on a ledge below a pair of right-facing corners (where the belayer in the photo above is standing). Wander up to a large ledge system which trends up and left. Belay on this ledge, being careful to avoid any loose blocks.

*Climbing the first pitch. Summit Lake can be seen in the background - small.jpg*

Most parties seem to start the second pitch by moving left along this ledge until reaching what has been described as a large, inset “M”, then climbing a left-facing corner forming the right edge of the “M”. We found a reasonable, if slightly runout, variation to the right of this feature. Whichever way you go, expect enjoyable climbing on high-quality granite, sometimes with tricky pro (protection) placements. Two or three more pitches should put you at the “meadow”, a flat grassy area that marks the end of the technical climbing.





*Climber on the second pitch - small.jpg*

After reaching this “meadow”, you can probably coil the rope and scramble up to the ridge. Turn left and walk half a mile to the parking area.

### **Descent**

Take either the northeast ridge or northeast face route back to Summit Lake, or, as we did, catch a ride down. The website “<http://www.14ers.com/routelist.php?peak=Mt.+Evans>” has more information on these hiking routes back to Summit Lake.

#### **Caution:**

Be aware of the potential for rockfall and always wear your helmet. On our climb, a rock barely missed another climbing team on the center route.

Remember, climbing is an inherently dangerous activity and you should always climb within your ability after carefully judging the safety of the route. We write about it, you take all the risks.