

Backpacking Kearsarge Pass in the Sierras and Climbing Nutcracker 5.8 5p and Snake Dike 5.7R 8p up Half Dome in Yosemite! June 2022

June 12th '22 Sunday—

I get back home around 11am and after a quick nap I have to get back up and go to a family friend's high school graduation party. Later that day some of my friends, Jacob, Nat and Sawyer come over and we shoot the breeze. When they leave I begin to pack for the early morning ahead of me.

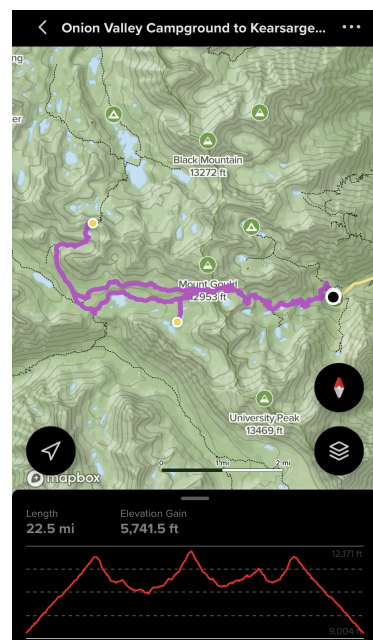
June 13th '22 Monday—

4:50am I wake up and head over to Dublin to be there to pick Aglaia up at 6:15am. I pull-up to this girl in her big orange puffy (despite the moderate weather) and a big silver suitcase. I am honestly amazed that this trip is actually going to happen! We shuffle some of the things in my car and head off. We still have about 6 hrs to drive and somehow I manage/decide to drive the whole way. We stop for gas around Bishop and I'm taken aback by the steep gas price of 7.50!!! In Boston it's not even past \$5 and people are still complaining (it's all relative though). I also manage to snag a speeding ticket going 87 in a 65—the officer has no sympathy—he hands me the ticket and then walks back to his car. Great start to the trip! I shake it off and we push on and up the long curvy road that hugs the cliffside up to the Onion Valley Campground Parking Lot.

Backpacking kearsarge Lakes (22.5mi, 5,741ft elevation gain):

[Alltrails Kearsarge Pass Backpacking Trail \(Alltrails Map\)](#)

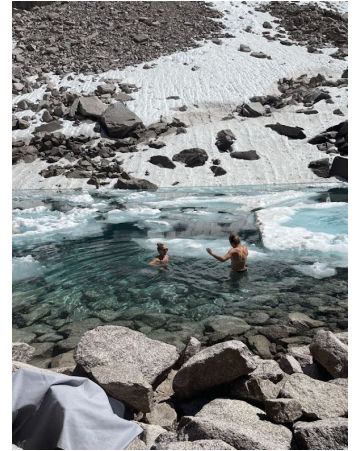
We arrive at the parking lot (Onion Valley Campground) around 2pm on Monday and meet up with the whole crew (Lukas, Liam, Isa, Nat). Then we get going by 2:40pm with plenty of sunshine left. We head up and at some point Aglaia and I and Nat start to work on a Boulder problem "Pendulum"? Aglaia tries it barefoot and I try it with my altras. I have no idea how she does it barefoot, it seems like the rock would just slice you up. But I work out that I need to get a high right heel hook (which requires an interesting high left right foot first to set the right heel) Sorry Nat for taking so long! Eventually we abandon it and continue up. After a while we crest the pass where all the others are waiting! I mean WOOWWWWW. The other side of the pass is spectacular 🤩 the lakes are beautiful and there are more trees and more greenery and amazing mountains. I climb an adjacent block-like rock to the south that also has a little clay memorial. After chilling for a bit we continue down the pass and to the kearsarge lakes. Soooooo many people fishing. We want to try to get away from the people



so we walk in a bit extra and hop between rocks to go between 2 of the lakes. 6:30pm We set up camp in this large open area nestled between some rocks and then I set to cooking up some ramen with Thai noodle packs, dehydrated veggies, dehydrated mushrooms, crushed red pepper flakes, and furikake seasoning. Mmmmmmmmm. We watch the sun go down and then play card games until 11pm.

June 14th '22 Tuesday—

Woke up around 8am (too early) with a headache, but despite this we set off for a fairly long day hike. We set off towards the pass to Rae lakes (Glen Pass). We get up there and Isa and I both take a glorious nap. I wake up feeling SOOOOOO much better! Then we went for a dip in a lake with small little icebergs. COLD does not even begin to describe how cold it was lmao. But it was so beautiful. The blue of this lake is out of this world. It was wild to wade in at first and literally push aside icebergs to get in. Then one by one everyone gets into the lake. It's such a fun afternoon where we all forget our worries.



On the way down the mountain I decide I want to run down to the next intersection so I tell Liam (who is behind me). Liam says he will come with me so we tell Aglaia we're going to THE Intersection. We get to the first intersection and I ask Liam if he wants to wait here, but we just keep on going another .2 miles to the big intersection in the middle of the open plain. We wait for about 15 minutes and the first people we see are Isa, Lukas and Nat. At this point we start FREAKING OUT. Where is Aglaia?!

I run back up to the last intersection and then down the alternate trail for about a mile & a half and see no signs of Aglaia and the hikers there do not know where she is. I run back to the group and we decide to split into two groups of 2 to scour adjacent trails while I wait at the intersection. Both groups come back empty handed... At this point it is getting late, it is about 6pm and we've waited at the intersection for over an hour. Our fears continue to build, but it is time to head back to camp which is 4 miles away and just hope that Aglaia is back at camp. Liam and I take the upper path and Lukas, Isa, and Nat take the lower path back to camp.

Thank God, oh my, Aglaia is back at camp when we arrive at 7:30pm. We are all so relieved—it has been almost 4 hours of not knowing where she was...

We settle in for the night now that everyone is accounted for. Natalie begins making a lentil and rice dinner that is absolutely amazing. I whip out my vodka and mezcal tequila and mix some cocktails from a dry mix I brought in an empty plastic coke bottle. Actually pretty tasty. We played cards the night before, but tonight we are all far too tired from the emotion and physical exertion of the day. We set our alarms for 8am and go to bed.

June 15th '22 Wednesday —

Aglaia and I wake up at 8am and get going. By 9am we've packed up, said our goodbyes and we are out! We make good pace up the mountain and are up by 10am. I eat a dried apricot and just cherish the view 🌄 On the way down we mostly speed out but we stop for the "Barefoot Pendulum," name in progress tbh (later corrected it to be Aglaia's Pendulum). Aglaia isn't feeling too good, but I was feeling pretty dandy—on the second try I got it after rehearsing/miming the moves many times. For me I have to dial in the handholds and make sure to do a very specific hand match. Then I swing the right foot across to another heel hook that I get in place by first pulling up a bit with my left foot. Then with the right foot anchored I was able to move my hands to the jugs. I ended the route with a dynamic mantle up to the ledge. The whole experience made me wish I had my climbing shoes though...! I posted this climb on Mountain Project too ([It's linked on the website!](#))



We wrap up and then resume the hike down back to the cars. There we met Pickle, Sped and Encore who were hiking the Pacific Crest Trail(PCT)! One of them was the partner of Grayson—one of Aglaia's colleagues. We give them a ride into Bishop where they will be for a couple days! Best part of today is we stop for gas and get strawberry and mint chip milkshakes 🍓🍌. Oh my god the vibes are so good as we speed along to Yosemite to get our permits with German music bumping :)))) We are going quickly because we have to get there before 5pm to get the permit, but we are stopped by roadwork on the main Yosemite road. We park at Curry Village and run to the permit office and get there 4 minutes to 5pm. Just In Time! We also changed our plans from bivvying at the base of Snake Dike to camping at Little Yosemite Valley Campground.



Then we ended the day at Swan Slab so that Aglaia and I could actually climb together for the first time LOL. We got on Penelope's Problem 5.7 with this fun big flake that you can hand jam and I reached the top and traversed over to a tree to the right to make an anchor. In the time I was climbing a large group with two leaders started climbing the climb next to me and set up an anchor on the tree I was also about to use. I should have just rappelled down their rope, but to be honest I have very little experience sharing crags with others and the thought didn't even occur to me. So instead I make my own anchor and rappel down and then pull the rope. By the time I'm down, both of the leaders are extremely annoyed and I tell one of them "sorry for taking so long on the rappel I didn't mean to hog up the route" and one of them responds "It's ok, everything takes longer when you're new." Like a bullet to the heart honestly. I mean I did take a while on the rappel, but I also was on the climb first and I was being safe and I chose to not use their rope in part so that I wouldn't use any of their gear. I really should have said something, but they were also there with a group and it was not the time or place for it I think. Anyways, with that done Aglaia

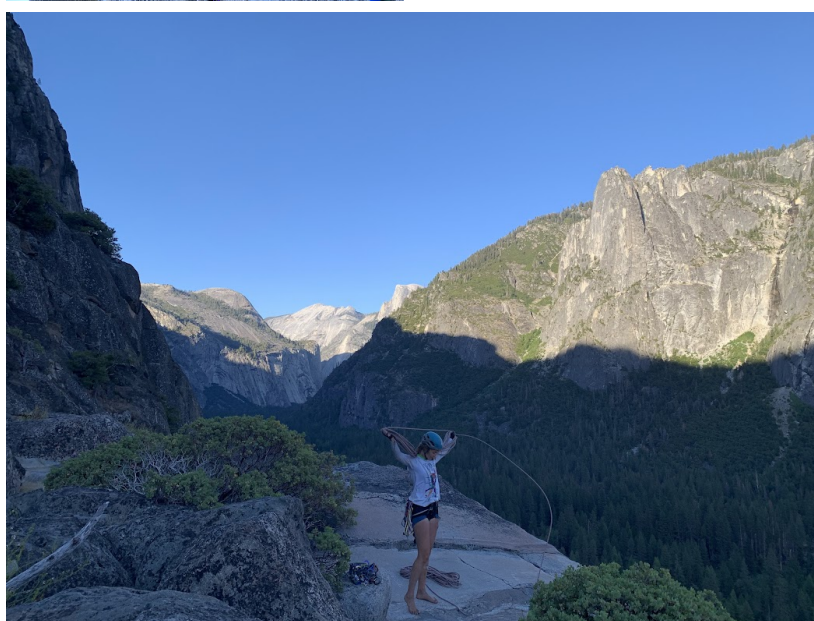
goes over to lead a Bobcat Crack 5.1 and get some experience placing gear. We wrap up quickly and go over to the backpacker's campground right next to North Pines Campground. I drop Aglaia off to set up camp and make food and I go to park the car at Curry Village. I run over and have brief thoughts of "what if I can't find her" "where is the tent?!"—remnants of losing her at Kearsarge. But I find her with the unmistakable collapsible lantern that she has. We eat and both sleep well. She has her giant inflatable mattress and I use her smaller sleeping pad that is sooooo much better than mine!

June 16th '22 Thursday

We wake up around 8am and go to do Aid Route 11b at Swan Slab. It was sick but between bolt 1/2 I fall multiple times. But then somehow I power through the crux and then I send the rest clean! I have to go back to redpoint this climb! Lovely, hard, straightforward movement for the pin scars at the start and then great hand/finger crack up to the first anchor and then lower from here. It can be easy to just blow past the set of anchors on the left so be careful. But it is a lovely pitch and I will have to go back to do the second as well. Then we go over to climb nutcracker 5.8 5 pitches. Beforehand we eat some lovely ramen in the parking lot with dehydrated veggies and mushrooms. I also manage to break my nalgene :(.



We start the climb at 1pm (Aglaia was a bit concerned that we were starting so late given we had Snake Dike the next day, but we just went for it). The first few pitches go smoothly and Aglaia sets up a great first gear anchor on the second pitch. We got stuck behind another party and tried an alternate route for the 4th pitch to try to get ahead but they didn't let us pass (which is fine because they did get there first and they were taking their time and doing what made them feel safe). Honestly no problem, it was beautiful up there and the climbing was super fun and well protected. Aglaia got a bit cold after the 4th pitch so she borrowed my long sleeve shirt. On the 5th pitch there is a super fun mantle move that I loveeeeeed. But then shortly after, while trying to place an offset nut, I try to set the nut into place by pulling down and I yank down hard. The piece blows and my finger scrapes hard against the sharp rock. I look down at my finger and I can see a 4mm diameter circle of exposed bone on the left side of my biggest knuckle on my left hand middle finger. I resign myself to bleeding heavily and not having protection. I run up the last runout bit to the top of the



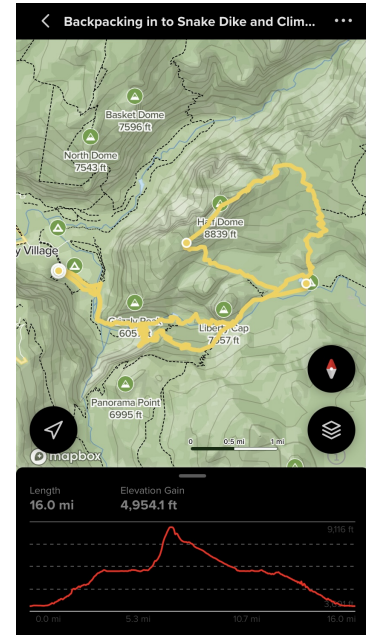
climb! I set up an anchor in the cracks in a rock above and call Aglaia up! The top ledge was sooooo magical especially at that time of day.

Then we hike down to the car and immediately start packing for backpacking into Snake Dike and we separate the climbing gear we need to do the climb. Then we drive over to the parking lot nearest the start of the trail, drop the car and start walking at 9PM. Immediately we see a wildfire starting in the distance and we pause for about 10 minutes to see how concerned we should be. We check twitter and it seems it has just started and they are responding to it currently. I actually almost look at the fire as an excuse to get out of backpacking and doing the climb... I'm tired and I know Snake Dike will be hard and my mind is weak... But Aglaia is not having it and we decide to keep going and risk the wildfire spreading! I am so glad she got us going!

The next 3 hours is a haze of red headlamp light and mist from the pounding waterfall, and infinite steps upwards and darkness and sweat and hallucinations and by 12am after 4.4 miles and over 2,000 feet of elevation gain with our backpacks laden with gear and rope we somehow arrive at Little Yosemite Valley campground. Aglaia quickly cooks food, while I set up the tent and we shovel the food down and get in bed by 1/1:30am.

Doing Snake Dike:

[Backpacking in to Snake Dike and Climbing up Half Dome \(Alltrails map\)](#)



June 17th '22 Friday

We then wake up around 3:30am and eat the same thing we had for dinner—lentils and rice—and I fill up our water containers. We set off and after a bit of sketchy slab and some route finding and some improvised restroom breaks with leaves and sticks for toilet paper we make it to the base of Snake Dike around 7:20am and start a little before 8am. Sometimes it's almost as if I forget how much climbing excites me. Once everything is set up and it's my turn on the sharp end I am psyched!

I start up the 1st pitch and it is pretty chill, but then I start up some runout slab and I feel like I will be injured if I take a fall, because my last piece is 25ft below me along with a big ledge I could fall on. Also the wind picks up and nearly blows me off the face so I just hunker down on the rock and have a small meltdown for several minutes. All I can think about is the Mountain Project comment by a couple who said:

Josh Hampton
Provo UT, Merced, CA

me and my girlfriend tried snake dike...

the hike there was longer and more strenuous than we had originally thought it would be. curns pointed the way, just hard to find them all the time.

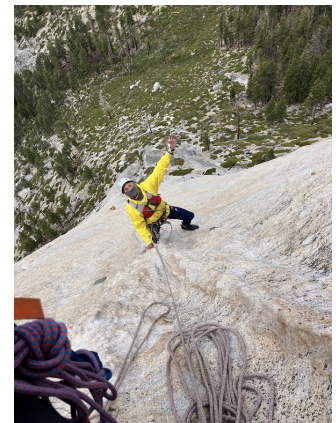
finally getting to the dike. ive never climbed on gannet or done a "friction" climb so maybe thats why it was so hard? ? ? ?
i had brand new 5.10 prism they didn't seem to stick to the rock at all. it seemed no matter what i did, i would feel very unsure and would slip a few times on the smooth rock. which made the first 3 pitches VERY SCARY !!! my girlfriend also had 5.10 shoes but seemed to do a little better than me, but was pretty scared too.. we were unprepared for the Friction parts of this climb. and i consider myself a hard climber. i tried to find everything i could on snake dike before we left so i wouldn't have any surprises. she and i eventually felt like doing the rest of the climb could be left for another day a repelled off and went home. :(

Aug 19, 2009

There is a point where I feel like I am about to fall off... but I pull myself together and say "This is not a gym climb, you cannot just decide to fall, you are going to finish this and you are not going to fall!" so I start heading up even though the wind has not abated and OH MY GOD I finally reach a jug and am able to put in a cam. HALLELUJAH. By 8:34am I am up the slab. I've been on this 70ft section of wall for 30 minutes. Aglaia follows and takes a chill runout ramp for the 2nd pitch... I mean as chill as runout climbing can get I guess. Then I take the 3rd pitch where I traverse out left on unprotected slab 5.7 friction slab crux and I am 30ft out left from my quickdraw on the anchor. Another can't fall situation. I make it to the dike and then try to clip anchors to the left that are far below me. I have to hold a right hand pinch and completely stretch out to the left to clip a quickdraw to the anchor. I can't just let go of the quickdraw to then grab the rope and clip it though because if I let go I won't be able to reach the quickdraw so I hold the quickdraw and then put my left foot against the quickdraw to hold it in place and then while still holding it in place with my left foot I clip the quickdraw. A sigh of relief.



Then I head up the dike on more runout but at least this climbing is more like 5.5 and I can actually put my hands on things. At the next anchor I clip in quickly and am soooooo fucking relieved. Jesus. I think from here on out the day is much easier. However I am very cold and have not brought enough clothing and I have massive cramps down my obliques that wrack me every time I turn to any side. My forearms are also cramping. However, thankfully I am able to work through them. Aglaia follows and takes the 4th pitch easily and is totally getting the hang of runout climbing. The next few pitches fly by until the 7th pitch where I setup on a nice ledge. By this point the group behind us—Kevin and Conor Byrne if I remember their names correctly—come up behind us and also anchor on the ledge while Aglaia takes the last real lead.



She has to do some route finding , but does a C-shape like thing to the left and up and finds her way to a very safe belay spot.

At this point I suggest unroping, but Aglaia is still concerned so I lead another pitch, but mostly place nothing and setup up another anchor. This time Aglaia agrees to unrope although is very scared and repeatedly states "This is stupid." Maybe it was stupid but this 4th class-5.0 slab felt so much safer to me than the runout slab I had to do before (even without a rope). It was interesting to see where our comfort zones were, because I think Aglaia was a lot more comfortable than me running it out with a rope and I felt a lot more comfortable free soloing on 4th class stuff with no rope. We start heading up, but Aglaia has a meltdown and together we're able to get through it and keep clambering up. Soon the ramp starts leveling off and suddenly we're at the top of Half Dome!!!!!! It is 3:10pm. 360 views, nice calm clouds and blue sky and the fire we saw from yesterday smoking, but still the same size occupying maybe a few tens of acres. I think we are just both so happy to be alive in so many ways. We're overcome with happiness and also it's just been a wild 24 hours of athleticism. We revel for a while, but then get back to business because we still have to hike down the cables, back to camp, pack up to camp and get back to the car.



Going down the cables is sketchier than I thought and we clip into the rope with slings as we descend. After 20 minutes we reach the bottom and then hike down a couple miles to our camp, pack up and head back to the car. Everything is aching and we are tired, but we keep on and make it back to the car after nightfall. By the time we start driving it is 9pm. Aglaia picks a restaurant at a bar and we get there around 11pm and it feels like a fever dream. We are both running on 2 hours of sleep and the bar is loud and alive with live music and people mingling and drinks spilling. It's hard for us to take everything in after 5 days of backpacking and climbing and quiet and being in nature. I order a salmon patty sandwich and fries and hot chocolate with coffee. Aglaia gets a BLT with fries and cheese and a ginger beer. I get a coconut shrimp appetizer. The food is tasty, but we take forever to finally close the tab and by the time we sidle back into the car it is 12:30am and we still have to drive 3 hrs to drop off Aglaia 🤔 The rest of the night escapes me but we both make it back home and thankfully this time Aglaia does take some of the driving, because my vision starts to go hazy and I cannot concentrate on anything.



June 18-20 '22 Sat-Mon

The rest of my time in California flies by as I have my mom's birthday party the next day and then climb with my friend Geoff at Mortar Rock in Berkeley and finish up by meeting up with friends backpacking a loop by trail running in on the monday right before I leave.

[Bear Valley to Coast Camp \(Alltrails Map\)](#)

The trail running is beautiful and I get to meet some new friends aside from Isa, Sinan, Natalie, Lukas, and Liam. It's a super good way to end the trip and get a little trail running. AHHHHHHHHH such a good trip!!!!!!!!!! :) All things considered over the course of 7 days I did 52.4 miles 12,664 ft of elevation gain and 16 pitches of climbing with FRIENDS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! OH MY! If that's not an amazing week I don't know what is. I am blessed.

