



## Ancient Art - Fisher Towers



**RATING:** 5.8 C0 / 5.10  
**LENGTH:** 3-5 hours  
**GEAR:** One set of cams, one set of nuts, and a bunch of draws (8-10). 1-70 m ( 230 ft ) rope or 2-50 m ( 165 ft ).  
**MAPS:** Fisher Towers, UT

### Hype:

Ancient Art has to be one of the most unique summits around. Easily recognized as it is often photographed. This is a must do if you are looking for a unique and breath taking moderate climbing experience.

### Trailhead:

The climb is in Fisher Towers, which is about 27 miles north of Moab on the River Road (State Highway 128) past Castle Valley. The turnoff is signed. Follow the good dirt road to it's end at a small campground and parking lot.

### Route:

September 14, 2007  
Climbers: Ryan Cornia and Jim Schnepal  
Written By: Ryan Cornia

Ancient Art is a tower I have obsessed about climbing for years. Three years ago my partner and I found a guided group of 16 at the base, and we're faced with either waiting many hours to get on the route, or throwing in the towel. We threw in the towel. This time I enlisted Jim to come give it a go with me. We decided a Friday afternoon may give us the best chance of getting on the route, and started hiking in around 1 or 1:30 on a hot, cloudy Friday afternoon.

The approach takes 20-30 minutes, with the tower visible for much of the hike if you know where to look. It is impressive and intimidating. After admiring the Cobra on the approach trail, we soon began racking up at the base of the Stolen Chimney route. As an obsessive compulsive worrier I was worried about wind, rain, and pretty much the whole endeavor. In typical fashion, Jim was rather casual about the whole affair.

I called the first and second pitches. Mostly because I had heard the second pitch was the technical crux, but at least in small part to defer the airy last lead to Jim.

#### **Pitch 1:**

The route starts with some broken, easy lower 5th class climbing to the base of the water groove and start of the chimney proper. I placed one red camalot (#1) in this section for piece of mind, but it was not really needed. Once at the bottom of the bolt ladder, it is 4 or 5 bolts to the anchor. The climbing looks pretty reasonable to free, but pulling on draws seemed even easier, so I simply pulled my way up it while Jim poked fun at my questionable free climbing ethics. The pitch feels fairly short, maybe 25 m ( 83 ft ).

#### **Pitch 2:**

In some ways I would consider this the technical crux of the route, but certainly not the mental. From the belay, you head directly up the chimney. It is interesting climbing. In several spots you get under small overhangs and need to stem slightly out to get up and over them. There is a bolt (and another very poor old bolt) at one point in the chimney, right below the crux. I protected the crux bulge right above the bolts with a red camalot (#1). Above this, the climbing gets a fair bit easier. Protection throughout the chimney seems adequate. There are not a ton of placements, and the placements seem a little light, but overall it felt safe. At the top of the chimney, a small squeeze under a boulder ends the pitch at a large ledge. From this ledge, you can see the 2 upper pitches. Pitch length is a bit over 30 m ( 99 ft ).

#### **Pitch 3:**

Jim took this pitch. It is short. A couple of moves up a crack to a 3 or 4 bolt ladder and anchor. Maybe 8 m ( 27 ft ) total. This takes you to the base of the sidewalk. Although I am sure Jim could have freed it, he pulled on bolts as I had done on pitch 1.

#### **Pitch 4:**

The money pitch. Jim's pitch again. I poked fun at him as he sat down to cross the sidewalk. What is he doing? The girlfriend method of crossing the sidewalk? Instead of the jump-and-hump method of surmounting the diving board, he approached it from the side and climbed it like getting on a horse. Very smooth and controlled. He styled the short bolted spire and was soon standing on top. Amazing. I lowered him to the diving board, and he reversed the sidewalk with some hesitation.

My turn.

I began boldly walking the sidewalk only to immediately sit down and cautiously inch my way across as Jim had done. The exposure is IMMENSE. If the sidewalk were a foot off the ground, you could run across it without a second thought. With that exposure though, crawling seemed more prudent. Due to rope angles, being on top rope does not really make the sidewalk much easier. I chose the jump-and-hump method of surmounting the diving board, with a chuckle at the ridiculous position it was, and soon made my way to the summit. It is the smallest summit I have

ever been on. Wow!

Lowering proved a bit problematic. Jim suggested I clip into the other side of the rope in order to get a guided lower back to him. Seemed like a great idea, so I did it and he began lowering me. Instead of heading to the sidewalk, however, I was being lowered over the void just to the side of the sidewalk. Yikes!!!! We decided I should un-clip from the other side of the rope and reverse the sidewalk as he had done. Un-clipping causes several feet of slack to come out of the rope and me to drop a couple of feet unexpectedly. My heart has never raced so much in my life. It deposited me right on the diving board. I cautiously jumped down to the sidewalk and reversed back to safety. Jumping down from the diving board to the sidewalk is an intense experience.

**Getting Down:**

From the sidewalk, it is a short rap down to the top of pitch 2. If you have a 70 m ( 230 ft ) rope, you can rap from the top of pitch 2 to the top of pitch 1, then from the top of pitch 1 to the ground. With a 60 m ( 197 ft ) you will need 2 ropes for both raps.

**Rack:**

One set of cams, one set of nuts, and a bunch of draws (8-10). 70 m ( 230 ft ) rope or 2-50 m ( 165 ft ).