



## AAC Publications

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### **Torssuqatoq Spires, various ascents**

Greenland, South Greenland, Torssuqatoq Spires

On June 24, John Dickey, Prairie Kearney, Lizzy Scully, and I arrived by small powerboat in Torssuqatoq Fjord. The surrounding scenery remained illusive, socked in, but the rain eased as we shuffled loads up the steep, tufty slope to base camp. This beautiful valley lies directly west across iceberg-filled waters from the famous Baron and Baroness, and fits more into alpine than big-wall category.

After a day of snow, the gang headed up valley, finally catching glimpse of the beautiful walls we had ogled in photos the previous winter. The left ridge of the cirque (running north-south) began with a 550m buttress and culminated with a beautiful knife-edge ridge and a tower, Breakfast Spire, named by a British party in 2000. The right side of the valley was a granite sea of walls and ridges: A Half Dome-esque peak (called the Whale's Back), another peak named Flattop, and yet another, the Great White Spire, extended ca 600m above us. Most of the sheer faces were untouched.

On the fourth day, Prairie, Lizzy, and I blasted off to attempt a new route on the left side of the 550m buttress. The peaks were still spattered with snow—our hope was that the perfect, bluebird day would provide us with mostly dry rock.

Our line, Plenty for Everyone (550m, 5.10+/11-) ascends the southeast arête of Barnes Wall, both names in the spirit of an amazing soul, Andrew Barnes, who died climbing in the Black Canyon while we were on this extravagant journey. It was a classic adventure with a little bit of everything: hand-sized splitters, tiny smears and face holds, loose blocks, a clean right-facing dihedral, and a little wet choss before the summit mantel. We hooted and giggled with elation. First try, we'd succeeded on an unclimbed wall. How cool is that! We made it safely back to base camp about 14 hours after starting. We later discovered that this summit had been reached in 2012 by a large French group, via moderate climbing and scrambling up the south ridge.

After one rest day we set off for the south ridge of Breakfast Spire. The scrambling up the steep, slabby slope to gain the ridge was moderate, while the view of neighboring Shepton Spire was jaw-dropping. We flirted with the gradually steeping south ridge for two long pitches before zagging right onto a ramp. This gained a long and clean 5.7 chimney. From here the climbing zigged back over to the left side of the ridge, where it would remain until the summit-block wrestle. Our eight-pitch route contained two stellar stem-box 5.11 corners, one with an offwidth start and the second opening up into a gorgeous hand crack. If in Colorado, Morning Luxury (420m, 5.11-) would surely be a favorite climb. We rappelled the steep east face of the spire, noting its potential.

Our progress during the rest of our stay was not as successful, as news of Andrew's death had us leaving nine days early. We established two shorter routes on Submarine Wall, a north-facing ridge that tempted us from advanced base. Mind Your Ps and Qs and Four Quickies were both 120m and 5.10. We also failed on a big-wall attempt farther left on Submarine Wall after four beautiful left-trending pitches. We never got another opportunity to finish these lines, but I hope to return to this magical place. So many peaks to ascend!

Quinn Brett, AAC

## Images



Looking northwest at (A) Barnes Wall, with the American route and the ridge leading north to Breakfast Spire, part of which is just visible on the right edge of the picture. (B) El Katxalote (Basque-Spanish, 2013). (C) Navianarpoq and the route Nunatak (Basque-Spanish, 2013).



Barnes Wall and the line Plenty for Everyone.



Breakfast Spire and Morning Luxury. In 2000 a British party climbed three routes on the face to the right to reach the skyline ridge, but did not summit.



On the first pitch of Four Quickies on Submarine Wall. The summit high above is Flattop.

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