



## AAC Publications

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### **Gheralta Massif, new routes; Adwa Mountains, new routes; Simien Mountains, reconnaissance; Gondar mountains, new routes**

Africa, Ethiopia, Tigray

In January 2012, Magali Salle and I made a trip to Ethiopia, hoping to explore and climb new routes. First stop: the Gheralta region. The area is full of colorful sandstone, though we sometimes found places where it's more sand than stone. Despite the many others who have climbed here, the area still contains many towers and mountains yet to be fully explored. We climbed two new routes, both on the Gheralta Massif: Flying Magali (TD 6b+), on the "American Pillar," and Guebre (140m, TD 6a+) on Mt. Essamba.

Second stop: the Adwa Mountains. The rock here is volcanic and of good quality, often resembling the Hoggar Mountains of southern Algeria. We climbed routes between 140m and 300m, but we also saw walls 400m or taller. On Mt. Tihous we climbed: Relais sur Euphorbias (300m, TD 6a) and Vive Adwa (190m, TD 6a+). On Mt. Otowodiko we climbed: Timkat (180m, TD+ 6a+A1), 50 Ans et Toutes Mes Dents (180m, TD 6a), and Si Gentils (120m, D 5).

Third stop: the Simien Mountains (also spelled Semien or Simen). We didn't climb here but explored the area for six days. East of the village of Adi Arkay (on the road between Axum and Gondar) we found very impressive rock towers, but from a distance could not judge the rock quality. Using a 1:100,000 map of Simien Mountains National Park, it appears that a whole-day approach would be necessary to reach the base of these towers, and that's with mules and scouts. In the main Siemen Mountains the cliffs are impressive but quite grassy and loose, except for Mt. Buyait's east face, where the rock is clean and there are steep 200m walls. Most of the high cliffs top out around ca 4,000m. The temperature can be cold at night (below freezing) but after sunrise reaches good climbing temperatures. A guide or scout is required, as is permission from the park warden in Debarek. Chennek or Debarek would be the best spot for staging an expedition.

Our fourth and final stop: the mountains south of Gondar. Prior to our trip, I had seen some shadows via satellite maps, but I could not have imagined so many rock spires! We only climbed two routes—one of poor rock and the other of great quality—but the potential is very high in this area. Generally, the mountains are not very concentrated. Addis Zemen or Gondar would act as a good base camp. We saw other magnificent mountains east of Gondar; however, I don't know how to approach them—a challenge for the next time! On Molalit (close to Meksenit) we called the higher quality route Aferan (200m, 5+). There's room for at least 15 more routes on that wall. For the other mountains between Meksenit and Addis Zemen, the approach ranges from a half hour to two hours, and the cliffs are between 200m and 300m high. A local scout or porter is highly recommended.

Throughout our trip, we established base camp in cities. You can do it in the wild, but it will cost more because you will have to employ guards or scouts night and day to look after your camp. We placed one bolt (for descending) on our new routes and left only three pitons in place.

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## Images



Topping out Mt. Otowodiko.



The new route Aferan on Molalit in the Gondar Mountains.



Mt. Tihous, in the Adwa Mountain.



The view from the top of Mt. Essemba, part of the Gheralta Massif.

## Article Details

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