



AAC Publications

Temple of Sinawava: Datura (First Free Ascent), Dr. Spaceman

Utah, Zion National Park

Last March, I spent my spring break in Zion National Park with Mike Brumbaugh and Andy Raether. Not caring about grades, crowds, or really anything other than having a good time on a sandstone big wall, we set out to find something that piqued our interest. We came away with two free ascents of adventurous routes: Datura (900', 5.12 R, originally climbed solo by Jim Beyer at 5.9 A2, AAJ 1981) and Dr. Spaceman (900', 5.12 PG) a mostly-new route that climbs adjacent to an older aid route.

We first set our sights on a gaping chimney on the Temple of Sinawava, near the start of the Narrows. Since we only had one week, we opted to rap in and see what we were in for before starting our attempt. We quickly found old buttonhead bolts in the chimney, indicating a much earlier passage. The next day the three of us battled brush, loose rock, cactus, and sand to reach the base of the chimney. Mike was ever cool, as he's in his element off the beaten track; Andy was a nervous wreck; and I was a ball of excitement and determination.

Datura turned out to be quite fun. The route began with a mixture of scary, unprotected, but easy Zion-style crack and face climbing. Above this a 10' horizontal undercling out a five-inch crack gains the chimney. Once inside, the shade took over and casual moves up a chimney filled with giant tree stumps—remnant's of logging days on Zion's rim—led to the final, and crux, pitch. Where Jim Beyer went left, aiding across a blank face to reach a dihedral, we stayed right to the top. The 40m pitch included a mixture of everything good about climbing. The route was free and we had time to find another!

The line of Dr. Spaceman is about 150' right of Datura on the same wall and looked incredible, so after finishing Datura we decided to rap in and check it out. We rappled into the night, impressed with the quality cracks just right of the original line. Unlike Datura, this route was going to require some hammer time to go free. After top-roping it, I decided the first pitch (5.12 PG) would need over a dozen bolts in addition to gear. Even this amount of protection was enough for Andy to say that he would "never lead this pitch." Another pitch halfway up the route required some heavy-duty cleaning as well, and we established bolted anchors atop every pitch. After resting a day we came back for the ground-up send. The first pitch took me about 45 minutes to lead free and I was one terrified puppy. The next pitches went smoothly, and we were rewarded by belays on small ledges with perfect corners leading all the to the final pitch. Of all the pitches on our route, the final pitch appears to be the only one where we joined the original route. The crack is 5.11+/5.12-, and the exposure, position, and overhanging orange rock put it up there as one of the most standout pitches I've climbed in Zion.

– Rob Pizem

Images



Datura climbs the obvious chimney in left center. Dr. Spaceman follows a line in the center, topping out near the saddle on the rim.

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