



Lupupa Rock and Pedras Negras, New Routes

Africa, Angola

From August 31 to September 12, Stacy Bare, Maury Birdwell, Ted Hesser, and I went to Angola to sample the climbing and do some nonprofit solar-energy installations through the Honnold Foundation. The climbing exceeded expectations, particularly in Pedras Negras, which someday could be a world-class sport climbing area. The main difficulty is just getting a visa to enter the country, since this requires invitation. Once there, it was relatively easy to get around and climb. We had an outfitter, Eco-Tur, which arranged logistics.

We first visited the area around Lupupa. On big granite domes with super-compact rock, wide cracks and chimneys were pretty much all we could climb. Everything was very vegetated. (The country is equatorial.) On September 1 we climbed our first route, Bare Wrestling (450m, 5.10). This takes one of the proudest lines up Lupupa Rock: the big right-facing corner and chimney system on the main wall. It was the most sustained and strenuous chimney climbing I've ever experienced.

After this route, we established two shorter climbs. Bare Trap (5.13-) is an overhanging, leaning offwidth crack, requiring number 4 and 5 Camalots—*heinous!*—and Maury's Roof (5.12+) is a splitter roof crack, perhaps the Separate Reality of Angola. These two routes, probably the hardest in Angola, are around the right side of Lupupa Rock, on the ridge with the prominent orange boulder. We hoped for good sport climbing here but had to settle for strenuous cracks.

After this we traveled to Pedras Negras. This was the real gem, an area of amazingly solid and featured conglomerate stone that could someday rival Margalef in Spain and is certainly better than Maple Canyon in Utah. It just needs a ton of bolts. Here, we established the Bare Hug Arête (2 pitches, 5.13c) up the southeast corner of the Sentinel, after climbing the standard north face route. The second pitch isn't fully bolted, and we didn't manage the redpoint.

In short, Angola offers some adventurous rock climbing and some major potential. It felt totally safe for traveling and was not nearly as expensive or intense as things previously written about it would indicate.

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Images

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