



AAC Publications

Ulamertorsuaq, Piteraqa, Nearly Free Ascent

Greenland, South Greenland, Tasermiut Fjord

Bernadette Zak and I went to Greenland with the aim of free climbing the ca 1,000m west face of Ulamertorsuaq (old spelling Ulamertorssuaq), specifically the unrepeated and poorly protected aid route Piteraqa. This climb, established in 2000, lies between Moby Dick and the Geneva Diedre/War and Poetry variations.

On arrival in Nanortalik we discovered that the ship freighting our gear would not arrive until July 6, cutting a week from our already tight schedule. On July 8 we began the climb, and on the 9th reached the Heart, where the wall steepens. We found the first 500m to be poorly protected, with many dangerous runouts above spaced bolts and gear. Above the Heart the climbing on the exposed pillar was hard and steep. On July 10 we reached a point seven pitches below the top. Then it began to snow, the wall got wet, and we did not have enough food or water to wait for better weather. We retreated.

The final three pitches of Piteraqa are the same as War and Poetry. When the weather improved, we decided to climb Geneva Diedre/War and Poetry variations to the top, then rappel and climb the last seven pitches of Piteraqa. From July 15–18, we climbed to the top; I managed to onsight all the hard pitches (difficulties up to 7c).

On the 19th we rappelled Piteraqa and attempted to free the last seven pitches. The first of these (A3) was originally climbed by drilling bat-hooks up a blank wall. We discovered a natural feature that could be free climbed, but reaching it involved a 3m traverse across a compact wall. Already tired, we found it impossible to free this section with our remaining time and strength, and resorted to a pendulum; the rest of the pitch went at 7b R. We climbed Piteraqa in 28 pitches (ca 1,200m) at 7c R/X with a 3m pendulum, placing two bolts on our variations to the original line. An entirely free ascent remains a future challenge.

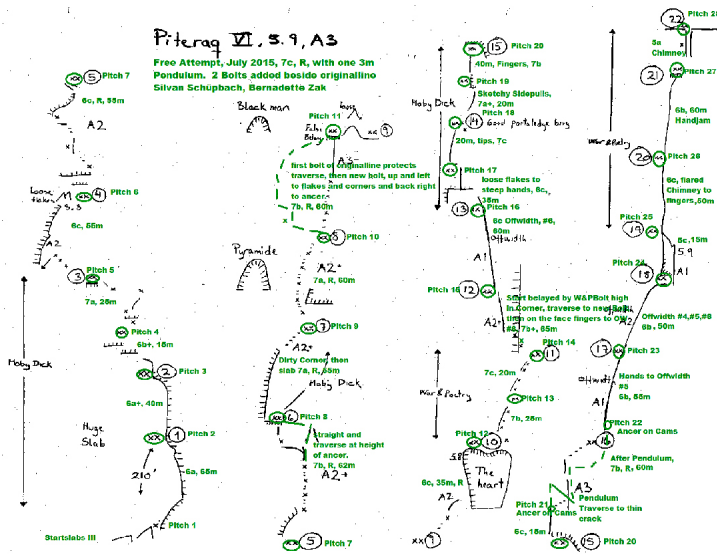
Silvan Schüpbach, Switzerland

Editor's note: The 22-pitch Piteraqa was climbed siege-style, from June 27–July 18, 2000, by Lars Haugen (Norway), Matthias Körner (Germany), Torben Redder (Denmark), and Jens Søndergaard (Denmark). It shares a number of pitches with both Moby Dick (Albert-Gargitter-Glowacz-Götz-Langen-Masterson, 1994; freed at 7c+ by Beranek, 1998) and Geneva Diedre/War and Poetry (6b A4, Dalphin-Piola-Probost-Wiestlibach, 1983; freed at 5.12c by Bechtel-Bechtel-Lilygren-Mallamo-Model-Piana-Skinner, 1998). Thirteen pitches are entirely independent. The original ascensionists met everything from tiny copperhead cracks to wide chimneys, and while the rock in the lower section is not entirely good (and in some cases rotten), the upper section has perfect granite. The original grade was VI A3+ 5.9. Nineteen of the 22 pitches were climbed entirely on aid, and a total of 50 bolts were placed, 29 of these at belays. All bolts were hand-drilled but are not stainless steel and, the hangers, other than those on bolts placed for belay anchors, were removed.

Images



Bernadette Zak follows steep cracks on the west face of Ulamertorsuaq



Piteraq topo. The (green) free ascent is superimposed over the original (black) aid topo.



Silvan Schüpbach and Bernadette Zak on their first portaledge bivouac at the base of the west face of

Ulamertorsuaq.



Piteraqaq on the ca 1,000m-high west face of Ulamertorsuaq.



Silvan Schüpbach on the offwidth crack of pitch 16 (6c) on Piteraqaq.



Silvan Schüpbach climbing through roofs during the ascent of Geneva Diedre/War and Poetry.



Silvan Schüpbach on pitch 10 (7a R, originally A2+) of Piterač.

Article Details

Author	Silvan Schüpbach
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	186
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions