



AAC Publications

Valley of the Gods, New Routes

Utah

IN NOVEMBER, Emily Reinsel and I completed a quest to summit all 22 freestanding formations we identified in the Valley of the Gods (VOG) of southeast Utah.

During the process, we established nine new routes, including the first ascents of two buttes, and made first free ascents (to the best of our knowledge) of three other formations. The two new buttes were Juniper Butte via the Original Route (II 5.9) and the Hen House via Free Range (II 5.11-).

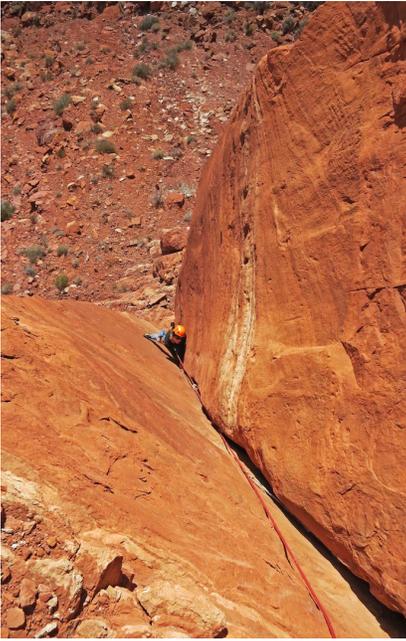
We made the FFA of Tommy Knocker Tower via a new line, Tomfoolery (II 5.10+), as well as the Hand of Puttima via another new line, Northwest Face (II 5.10+). We also made the likely FFA of the Putterman Residence by a new route, Dirty 30 (II 5.10).

We also put up two more free lines on the Putterman Residence: Demise of the Roaring 20s (II 5.11-) and Three Decades Down (II, 5.11). On Franklin Butte, we established Elbow Grease (II 5.10 C1). The final new route was on the formidable Hidden Tower—Rubble Rouser (III 5.9 C2). All routes were established ground-up, onsight, and followed obvious crack systems; only one protection bolt was required. Details for all of these routes can be found on Mountain Project.

We completed our circuit just days before President Trump's administration announced reductions to the Bears Ears National Monument, in the process stripping the VOG of its recently protected status. The last few years have given us a chance to enjoy the empty expanse and sometimes unsettling solitude of the area on much the same terms as its climbing pioneers did decades ago. (Throughout this process, we never saw another climbing party anywhere in the VOG.) We can only hope that the VOG is spared from resource extraction and the associated developments, and that climbers years from now can experience it in a similar condition to what we found.

– Trevor Bowman

Images



Emily Reinsel following the first pitch of Original Route (II 5.9) on Juniper Butte. Reinsel and Trevor Bowman made the first known ascent of this formation via this new route, one of nine new climbs they completed in Utah's Valley of the Gods.



Emily Reinsel hiking toward the Hand of Puttima in Utah's Valley of the Gods. The Valley of the Gods lies in a portion of Bears Ears National Monument that recently had its protections removed under the Trump administration's reductions.

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