



## AAC Publications

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### Sedona, Various New Routes

Arizona

**DURING MY TIME** as a geology graduate student at Northern Arizona University, I've enjoyed easy weekend access to the fantastic sandstone spires in the nearby Sedona area. Motivated by the vast potential for moderate traditional adventures and inspired by a solid group of like-minded partners, over 14 months I participated in establishing more than two dozen new routes. Most of these lines were originally done in ground-up style, employing a hand drill to install bolts where needed. Many were then retrofitted for future climbers.

My most memorable escapade to date was the west buttress of Peak 5,634', the white-capped butte dividing the mouths of Boynton and Long canyons in west Sedona. Scouting missions drew me to a tantalizing dihedral hanging 30m up the nose of the buttress, but accessing the starting ledge by safe free climbing turned out to be a puzzling affair. It wasn't until my third visit, in December 2016, that I discovered a natural, perfectly cylindrical tunnel boring 5m through the formation—a human-size tube offering direct passage to the starting ledge from the opposite (north) side. After squirming through the tunnel and climbing the dihedral (5.8), I continued another 50m up the sculpted buttress (5.9 R), hand-drilling five bolts from friction stances. My friends and I have since made several return visits to equip the route with additional hardware, recognizing the demand for good moderate routes in the area. The route is called Nirvana (75m, 5.9) and has already seen dozens of repeat ascents.

Two of the lengthiest new routes are found on the previously unclimbed west aspect of Peak 5,436', the prominent butte between Gibraltar Rock and the Church Spires. This unnamed summit had already been reached via the east gully (5.8). Airborne Sage (130m, 5.10+) boasts steep crack climbing in virtually every size, including a flawless 25m chimney and an exposed finger-crack crux. Pocatererra (100m, 5.10-) takes a rambling path up the more amenable southwest aspect of the same formation.

Farther back in the canyons southeast of Peak 5,436', about 45 minutes' bushwhack from the base of Pocatererra, Giselle Fernandez and I climbed a presumably virgin pillar in one long April day. The formation is partially attached to the northwest cliffs of Lee Mountain. We summited via the north face, an overhung prow of golden Coconino sandstone split by a wide crack and decorated with wild three-dimensional features. There was no anchor on top, and we called this route the IMAX Experience (65m, 5.10). Despite the relatively moderate grade of climbing, this route is so steep that we were not able to touch the wall at any point during the rappel from our two-bolt anchor.

In January 2018, Giselle and I completed the first free ascent of the Direct South Chimney on Blowjob Rock. The first ascent (100m, 5.10 A1) was done by Doskicz, Spencer, and Barnas in 1999, using pitons to aid a 20-foot seam on the second pitch. With Doskicz's permission, we added one protection bolt to allow the crux to be free climbed (5.11).

Some other ascents are noteworthy in that they took place on unclimbed aspects of important towers. These include Hangnail (55m, 5.10-) on the northeast face of Devil's Thumb, Cracked Code (50m, 5.10) on the south face of Mystery Spire, Inversion Virgin (50m, 5.11) on the east face of Mystery Spire, Treehouse Jam (40m, 5.11-) on the north face of Lookout Tower, and Roast Beast (55m, 5.10-) on the south face of North Castle Tower.

Topos and additional beta for all of these climbs can be found on Mountain Project. Although it may not be a secret to all, I am delighted to report that the golden days of traditional exploration in Sedona's magical red-rock country are far from over.

– Derek Field, Canada

## Images



Dave Spies stepping across to begin the crux pitch of Airborne Sage (5.10+) on the west aspect of Peak 5,436'. The town of Sedona is visible in the background.



Derek Field leads the second pitch of Hangnail (5.10-) on Devil's Thumb, outside Sedona.



Nate Heald and Alexis Trudel emerge from the approach tunnel on Nirvana (75m, 5.9) on the west buttress of Peak 5,634'. This bizarre human-size tube runs five meters through the formation and provides access to a ledge below the first-pitch dihedral.



Giselle Fernandez laybacks the first-pitch dihedral of Nirvana (75m, 5.9) on the west buttress of Peak 5,634'.





Derek Field leads the first pitch of Pocatererra (100m, 5.10-), which takes a rambling path up the amenable southwest aspect of Peak 5,436', a prominent butte between Gibraltar Rock and the Church Spires.



Derek Field follows the second pitch (5.8+) of IMAX Experience (75m, 5.10). This route climbs a previously unclimbed formation partially connected to the northwest cliffs of Lee Mountain, in a canyon southeast of Peak 5,436'.



Derek Field leads out to the lip of the massive roof on IMAX Experience (5.10-). This route ascends a previously unclimbed formation, and features overhanging climbing at a surprisingly moderate grade.



Bean Lewenstein grips a sandstone honeycomb on the second pitch of Treehouse Jam (40m, 5.11-) on the north face of Lookout Tower, near Sedona.

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