



AAC Publications

South Sinai, New Routes

Egypt, Sinai Peninsula

WITH THE HELP and encouragement of Dave Lucas, a British guide, Kyle Duba, Kyle Elmquist, Micah Rush, and I—all Wyoming boys—pulled off a one-month climbing expedition in South Sinai in November. Near the village of St. Catherine (site of a nearly 1,500-year-old, still-operating Christian monastery), Rush and I put up a new line on the west face of Jebel Safsafa, naming it the Muezzin Calling (8 pitches, 5.11). On Jebel Batta, also near St. Catherine, we freed two three-pitch aid routes, Dire Straights and Tachtonie HaShahar. Dire Straights, which had been described as an “unprotected 5.12 offwidth,” went clean at Wyoming 5.10 with good gear. Rush freed HaShahar with a crux of 5.12+ flared fingers.

With support from two Bedouin guides, Salim and Ragab, and camels, we then walked for a day through stunningly beautiful desert, northwest of St. Catherine, to reach the west face of Jebel Naja. Here, three nine- to 11-pitch routes had been completed, starting in 2007, two of them by Lucas. He also started the central line on the face, but was stymied by a 100-foot blank section. He encouraged us to give it a try. While Micah and Kyle worked on hand-drilling three bolts in this blank section, Duba and I put up a seven-pitch 5.11 route to the left, naming it Jamel Bahr (“camel shit”) for the frighteningly crumbly rock up high. On November 23 our party of four climbed the central line, naming it the Sheik (10 pitches, 5.11 C1 or 5.13b).

After this we continued to travel by camel to several gorgeous crags, including Jebel Umma H Shaur, east of St. Catherine, where we repeated a number of routes put up by Lucas. I can't say enough about the hospitality of the Bedouin people. Without their kindness and guidance, this expedition would not have been possible.

– Mark Jenkins, AAC

Editor's note: In January 2018, Russian climbers Mikhail Khomenyuk and Vladimir Moroz added Egyptian Executions (350m, 9 pitches, 5B) to the southwest face of Safsafa. See photo below.

Images



The new Russian route Egyptian Executions on the southwest face of Safsafa.



Mark Jenkins leading a new route called Walk of Life on Jebel Batta near St. Catherine in South Sinai.



Micah Rush leading the second pitch of the Sheikh on the west face of Jebel Naja, South Sinai.



Micah Rush frees HaShahar (5.12+) on Jebel Batta.



Kyle Elmquist working the 5.13 third pitch of the Sheikh on Jebel Naja.



The village of St. Catherine in South Sinai.



The west face of Jebel Naja, showing (1) The Hills Have Eyes (2007), (2) Gruffalumps (2013), (3) Bahr Jamel (2017), (4) Beauty and the Beast (2014), and (5) The Sheikh (2017). A climb called Rayman (2013) is located farther to the right.

Article Details

Author	Mark Jenkins
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	248
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions