



AAC Publications

Cerro Pajarito, Northwest Face, El Abrazo de la Serpiente

Colombia, Guainía Department, Cerros de Mavecure

On February 1, 2018, Dave Allfrey (USA), Kieran Brownie (Canada), and Paul McSorley (Canada) completed a route up the previously unclimbed northwest face of Cerro Pajarito, one of the Cerros de Mavecure (also spelled Mavicure) monoliths in Guainía. This region in the far east of Colombia is home to the Puinave people, who have lived along the banks of the Rio Inírida for millennia. Local legend tells the story of Princess Inírida, who soloed the four major formations of this area (Mavecure, Mono, Diablo, and Pajarito) during a rampage fueled by a magical love potion. She is said to reside in the south wall of Cerro Pajarito and can be recognized by a large white streak in the otherwise monolithic black slabs.

This climb was two seasons in the making: Brownie and McSorley climbed six pitches in February 2017, but then ran out of hardware. Returning a year later with Allfrey, they climbed to the previous high point and continued to the summit after fixing three ropes the previous day. Characterized by large huecos and run-out slabs on textured granite (the Guiana Shield has some of the oldest rock on Earth), the route is 660m long and rated V 5.11c. Though it is entirely bolt protected, there are serious runouts, and several pitches have an R or X rating. All pitches were established ground up and on-sight.

Aside from the remoteness of this area, the intense heat proved to be a crux. Climbing in the midday sun was nearly impossible on the black granite, which was intensified by daytime highs averaging 47°C (117°F) during the climb and reaching up to 53°C during their visit. The Canadian-American team began their days around 2 a.m. and benefited from the “super blue blood moon” at the end of January for added light. Their route is called El Abrazo de la Serpiente (“Embrace of the Serpent”), inspired by Colombian director *Ciro Guerra’s* film of that name, whose powerful imagery of the region prompted Brownie and McSorley to explore the area’s climbing potential.

Two parties are believed to have climbed this formation before. An unknown German team climbed the smaller east or northeast face in 1992, linking run-out slabs between trees. Damian Benegas (Argentina) and some locals ascended a similar line in 2015, reporting eight long pitches up to 5.10b, with no protection other than trees.

– Paul McSorley, Canada, with additional information from Alpinist.com

Images



The line of Abrazo de la Serpiente on Cerro Pajarito. At right is Cerro Mono.



Kieran Brownie (belaying) and Dave Allfrey on the new route up Cerro Pajarito.



Cerro Pajarito

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