



AAC Publications

Cirque of the Moon, New Routes

Wyoming, Wind River Range

Between July 15 and 20, Chris Natalie and I explored the seldom-visited walls of the Cirque of the Moon, south of the North Fork of the Popo Agie River, between Long Lake and Papoose Lake. As expected, the gravity exceeded that found on its celestial namesake. Unfortunately, the rock quality did not.

We began by questing up the unclimbed north face of Flattop Spire. Five pitches up a short blank section necessitated a bolt and two pendulums rightward. Three more moderate pitches took us to the summit plateau. It may be possible to eliminate the swings on Moss on the Moon (800', III 5.9 A1) by clipping the bolt, downclimbing, and traversing on lower holds (5.11?). Bring beaks to make it reasonable.

After a rest day, we attempted another unclimbed feature: the Wombat. Like previous parties in this cirque, however, we found the southeast-facing rock to be extremely loose. We explored two different possibilities but bailed after just 300'. Future parties might try to find a path that avoids the lightest gray rock on this wall.

Finally, we set our sights on a system of wide cracks on the Green Cheese Buttress. Our ascent began on Telstar then veered left into a prominent right-facing chimney where I was forced to tiptoe past several sections of unstable blocks. Above a tight tunnel-through, I sliced two fingers while trundling a particularly precarious bastard. Chris eagerly took over and forged a surprising enjoyable line to the top on Space Aged Cheddar (700', III 5.8).

Overall, we were delighted to discover this wild place remains pristine. Disappointment, however, creeps in due to the loose and vegetated nature of the rock. After a five-day visit, we're saddened to agree with Mark Dalen, one of the first to explore the cirque's climbing, in 1978, that "all the plum lines are surely plucked in the Cirque of the Moon." [Editors Note: AAJ 2017 has two reports on the Cirque of the Moon: a historical report on 1978 and 1979 ascents, along with a story about new routes in 2016.]

– Jack Cramer

Images



Chris Natalie and Jack Cramer were surprised to find Moss on the Moon (800', 5.9 A1), their new route on Flattop Spire in the Cirque of the Moon. According to Cramer, "Anyone foolish enough to try for the first free ascent can expect to find the crux where the route traverses right near two-thirds height."



Chris Natalie on the opening corner of Moss on the Moon (5.9 A1), in the Cirque of the Moon in Wyoming's Wind River Range. Natalie and Jack Cramer climbed this new route in mid-July 2019.



The Wombat in the Cirque of the Moon, showing the line attempted by Jack Cramer and Chris Natalie in mid-July 2019. Their attempt was stopped 300' up by overhanging seams and loose, kitty-litter rock; they tried two possibilities before bailing.



The Green Cheese Buttress in Wyoming's Cirque of the Moon, showing the line of Space Aged Cheddar (700', III 5.8). This route, climbed by Jack Cramer and Chris Natalie in July 2019, takes solid rock down low to a right-facing chimney near half height. The final two pitches finish on fun splitter cracks.



Above the chimney during the first ascent of Space Aged Cheddar (700', III 5.8), the rock quality greatly improved and splitter cracks were found.

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