



AAC Publications

Mystery Towers, New Routes

Utah, Southeast Utah

Not all of us have the good fortune of living close to paradise, and not all of us have the luck to be able to travel when we would like to. And so that leaves some of us no alternative but to adapt ourselves to the situation and travel when work permits it, which often happens to be during the blistering months of July and August. But I'm going to confess to a secret. Thanks to this, I have discovered my paradise in an oven of 40°C (104°F), where the sensations experienced feel much like a mystical encounter.

When you find this special place where you feel more comfortable than even at home, it is difficult to ignore your feelings, so all that is left is to find the perfect partner (Joan Gibert) and get to work. And so was born our project: Three from Hell—three first ascents in the Mystery Towers, a brilliant and magical place. This endeavor took place in July and August of 2019, during a total of 20 uninterrupted days of hauling and climbing.

Our first tower was Gothic Nightmare. Here on the south face we climbed Stone Monkeys (5.7 A4+), the longest and most intense route, featuring very hard sections that kept us absorbed and focused. Resting in our portaledge, we enjoyed an absolute calm in the desert, only disturbed by the occasional summer storm.

From there we headed to the Doric Column, a gem of nature. On this tower we were lucky because our chosen route was north-facing, thus allowing us to climb much more at ease, away from the intense heat. The first pitch was perhaps the most difficult and followed a thin crack. From the anchors it stayed stiff and intense. We trended left to follow a very beautiful but dirty crack that we had to clean a lot. We continued up the last pitch between gigantic mud cauliflowers with an incredible location. We reached the top at sunset and reveled in the magnificent display it gave us, moments that will live in our memories—Empebrats from Hell (5.9 A5).

The final prize was found on the southwest face of the Fortress: Muerte Destruccion (5.11a A4), an incredible crack that ran from the bottom to the top of the wall, waiting for us with open arms. I had spotted it years ago, but I couldn't believe that it had never been climbed. We got down to work and the result was one of the most beautiful lines we had ever climbed. We did the entire climb with no fixed anchors. Here we were not so lucky with the sun, which punished us mercilessly, almost to the point of sunstroke. But the magnificent tower gifted us with a small virgin summit. It's funny how time goes by when you are at ease in a place. Thanks to my partner Joan for sharing it with me, and thanks to the towers for providing the good vibrations.

– David “Pelut” Palmada, Spain, Translated by Pam Ranger Roberts

Three Mystery Towers Routes: Jim Beyer (USA) reported solo ascents of three new routes in the Mystery Towers in 2019: Iron Age Master (A4) on the south face of Gothic Nightmare and Enter Sandman on the southeast face of the Citadel in April, and Two Fall Wall (A4+ R) on the north face of Gothic Nightmare in May. Brief descriptions are available at Mountain Project.

Images

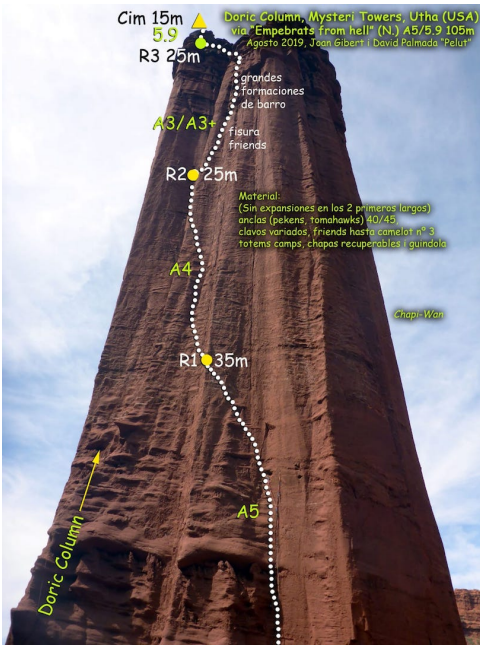


Photo-topo for Empebrats from Hell (5.9 A5) on the Doric Column in Utah's Mystery Towers.

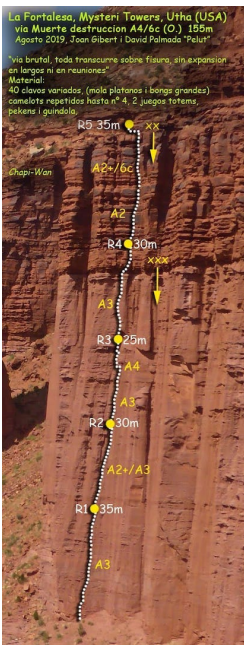


Photo-topo for Muerte Destrucion (5.11a A4) on the Fortress in Utah's Mystery Towers.

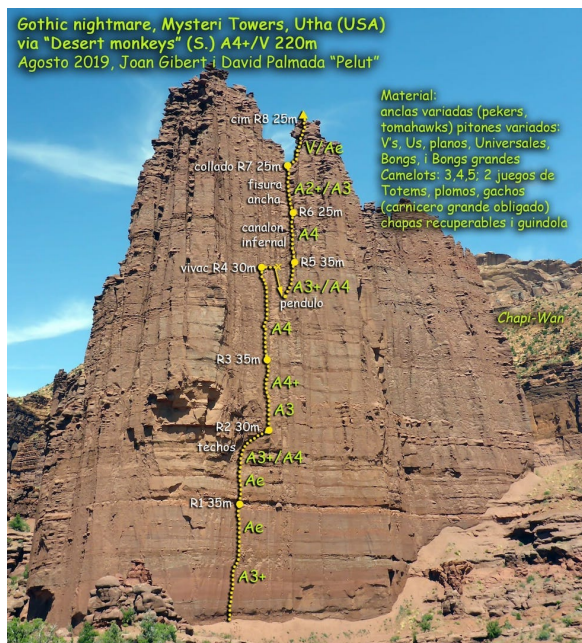
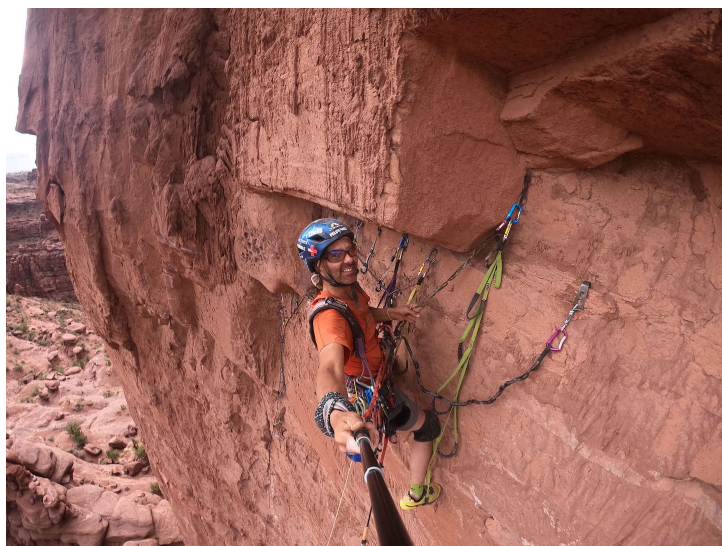


Photo-topo for Stone Monkeys (5.7 A4+) on the Gothic Nightmare, in Utah's Mystery Towers.



David "Pelut" Palmada at the end of the second pitch during the first ascent of Desert Monkeys (5.7 A4+) on the Gothic Nightmare, in Utah's Mystery Towers.



David "Pelut" Palmada happy to find a bit of shade from the brutal summer sun, during the first ascent of Muerte Destrucion (5.11a A4) on the Fortress in Utah's Mystery Towers.



David "Pelut" Palmada and Joan Gibert lounging at the bivy during the first ascent of Desert Monkeys (5.7 A4+) on the Gothic Nightmare, in Utah's Mystery Towers.



David “Pelut” Palmada and Joan Gibert below the Mystery Towers in southeast Utah. The Doric Column, the Fortress, and the Gothic Nightmare are visible behind them from left to right.



David “Pelut” Palmada breaks out the “butcher hook” during the first ascent of Muerte Destruccion (5.11a A4) on the Fortress in Utah’s Mystery Towers.



David "Pelut" Palmada on the second pitch of Empebrats from Hell (5.9 A5) on the Doric Column in Utah's Mystery Towers.



David "Pelut" Palmada and Joan Gibert riding the summit of the Gothic Nightmare after making the first ascent of Desert Monkeys (5.7 A4+).



Questionable pro on the second pitch of Desert Monkeys (5.7 A4+) on the Gothic Nightmare, in Utah's Mystery Towers.



David "Pelut" Palmada atop the Gutter of Death, a deep chimney on the upper portion of Desert Monkeys (5.7 A4+) on the Gothic Nightmare, in Utah's Mystery Towers.

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