



## AAC Publications

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### **Sumidero Canyon, Xibalbá Uprising**

México, Chiapas

Martin Siller on pitch 11 of Xibalbá Uprising (850m, 5.12a/b) in Cañon del Sumidero. Photo: Jan Hoebeeck

**For millions of years, the Grijalva River carved the Cañon del Sumidero, and it is now one of the most important tourist attractions in the southern state of Chiapas. For a few years we have been living in San Cristóbal de las Casas, which is only about one hour from the canyon. Our dream was to develop a new and completely free route through the central and highest part of this natural wonder.**

Previously, there was only one route climbing to the top of Cañon del Sumidero: Hombres del Pañuelo Rojo (500m, 17 pitches, V 5.11 A1+), established with aid through a very steep section of wall by a group of climbers from Chiapas in 2006 (see AAJ 2007). Our planned route was on the highest walls deeper into the canyon—from the Grijalva River to the top is approximately 850m. The wall in this area is split into two parts: a steep ascent through jungle, with a few moderate rock pitches, and the main upper headwall.

We began working on this line from the ground up in June 2018, but after about 550m of climbing, we decided to retreat because we encountered a lot of really big, loose rocks, and to continue would have been life-threatening. We came back exactly one year later, and because of the experiences from the previous year, we decided to equip the route from above. To reach the top, we had to get permission from the local commune, Triunfo Agrarista. In one of their monthly meetings, we convinced them to let us cross their land and started working on the route.

The work took a couple of weeks because the two of us could only carry water and supplies for a maximum of four days. On each trip, we managed to equip three to four pitches with the necessary bolts and to clean the route while rappelling. Our aim was to establish a secure route but not overbolt the line. We used 90 bolts to protect the entire climb, using traditional gear when we found cracks. We waited for the rainy months to pass, and then, in December, we were able to finally start free climbing.

As agreed, our boat man stood at the pier in Cahuare at 6 a.m. After about half an hour, we reached the small rocky beach that marks the start of the approach. With the first step out of the boat, you enter the jungle and immediately have to focus on possible dangers, such as crocodiles, scorpions, spiders and poisonous plants. The path leads steeply up and over a crest, gaining about 400m; this section includes several 25m rock steps (5.9). The last section leads through a fragile funnel of rock, which brought us directly to the base of the wall.

The first rope length on the headwall leads through distinctive cracks and corners, which protect with traditional gear. This is followed by a long rightward traverse and a short overhanging crack. The first 6m of the third rope length consist of brittle rock, which can be climbed free but require a little sensitivity. It took four attempts to free the third pitch, and then we had achieved our daily goal. As the wall faces southeast, we only had two hours in the morning and four hours in the afternoon to climb in the shade. During the midday hours we had to protect ourselves from the heat under the portaledge.

On the second day we started at 4 a.m. and climbed a shallow ramp that leads to the crux of the route. This is an 8m section on very small crimps over a slightly overhanging plate, followed by a simple and spectacularly exposed crack. It took five attempts to solve this pitch's complex boulder problem.

On day three we were most concerned about pitch seven, because it is the longest of the route and there are several demanding passages. To our delight, it went on the first attempt. We flew through pitch eight, one of the most beautiful corners we have ever climbed, and pitch nine, which required a lot of endurance after surmounting a small roof. The most difficult climbing was now behind us, and we had only four rope lengths through the upper wall ahead. We couldn't sleep because of the anticipation.

The nicest part of the route awaited us: slightly overhanging stalactites over perforated plates and wavy bands of fine limestone. On the evening of the fourth day we reached the top, and we spent one more night there, at the edge of the canyon, to enjoy a campfire and the amazing surroundings. We named the route Xibalbá Uprising (850m, 5.12a/b).

– Martin Siller, Austria, and Carsten Thess, Germany

## Images



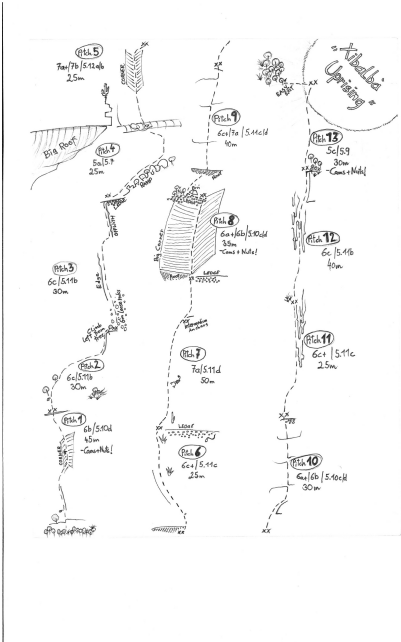
Carsten Thess climbing pitch 12 (5.11b) of Xibalbá Uprising (850m, 5.12a/b) in Cañon del Sumidero.



Martin Siller on pitch 11 of Xibalbá Uprising (850m, 5.12a/b) in Cañon del Sumidero.

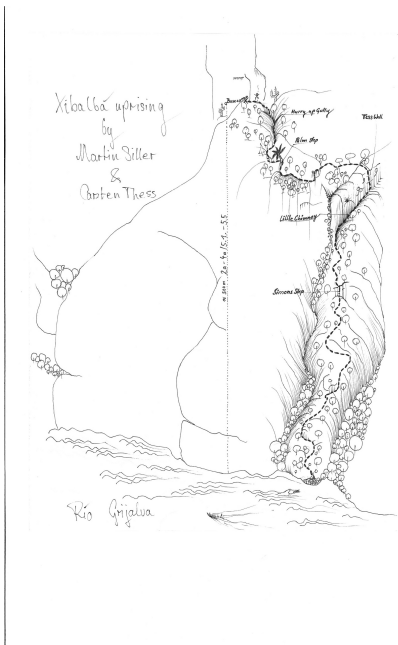


Carsten Thess climbing pitch 12 of Xibalbá Uprising (850m, 5.12a/b) in in Cañon del Sumidero.



Topo for the route Xibalbá Uprising in Cañon del Sumidero, Chiapas.





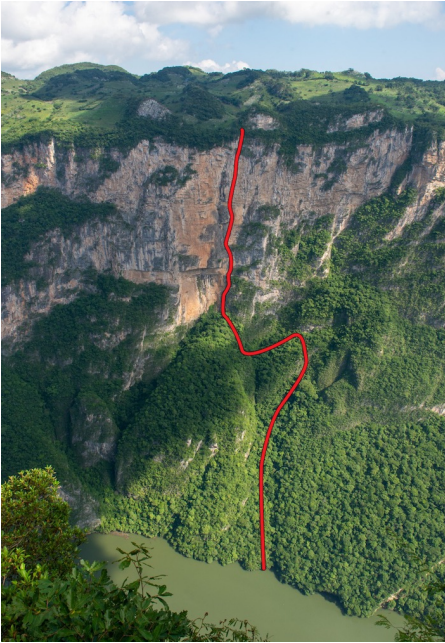
Topo for the approach pitches of Xibalbá Uprising in Cañon del Sumidero, Chiapas.



Detail of the upper pitches of Xibalbá Uprising in Cañon del Sumidero.



Detail of the lower pitches of Xibalbá Uprising in Cañon del Sumidero.



The route Xibalbá Uprising (850m, 5.12a/b) in Cañon del Sumidero. The first half comprised steep jungle hiking interspersed with technical pitches. The 13-pitch headwall has a mix of traditional and bolt-protected climbing and is mostly 5.10 and 5.11.

Article Details

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