



## AAC Publications

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### **La Huasteca, Cañón de la Sandía and Cañón de Guitarritas, New Routes**

Mexico, Nuevo León

**At an elevation of 1,362m, Cañón de la Sandía is situated at the southeastern end of the larger Huasteca climbing area. This canyon can be seen from the road 2.1 km past Rompepicos Dam, with an obvious overhanging orange wall. In April, I was fortunate to complete Vuelo de Fortuna (300m, 5.13b) with Rolando Larcher (Italy).**

I had my eye on this gem of a line for years—it was a bit of an obsession. The overhanging tufas, the solid rock, the northern exposure, and the easy access really make it unique. The route starts on gray rock, and the enormous cat-claw tufas at the top of the first pitch are a good landmark. I started the route solo in January and completed four pitches ground up and mostly free, with a few removable bolts.

Rolando quickly appreciated the beauty of the line from photos and signed up to finish it with me. The spectacular and solid rock allowed us to free climb the remaining pitches ground up, drilling off hooks. Although we had to wander back and forth, we felt incredibly fortunate to find an “easy” line up this very intimidating wall. The climbing was sustained, with most of the pitches in the mid to upper 5.12 range (12a, 12b, 12d, 12d, 12b, 12d, 13b, 12d, 11d, 10c). We were even blessed with unusually cool temps for the redpoint—quite a “flight of fortune!”

The north-facing wall of Cañón de la Sandía, showing (left) Karma Bonfire (11 pitches, 5.12c) and (right) Vuelo de Fortuna (9 pitches, 5.13b). Photo by Jason Nelson

I returned to Cañón de la Sandía in November and completed Karma Bonfire (330m, 5.12c) with Jay Foley from New Mexico. The route starts 20m left of Vuelo de Fortuna, and the first two and a half pitches follow a vertical seam. Connie Rochelle and I started this line in 2016, ground up off stances, but my shoulder injury stopped us dead. Jay offered to step in and finish it with me.

Jay and I continued ground up, using stances and hooks to place the bolts. We then freed the 11-pitch route in a two-day push, swapping leads. The route follows the left edge of the overhanging and north-facing wall, making it a great year-round option for climbing. There is an aid bolt that allows one to skip the 5.12c crux, allowing the route to go at 5.12a A0. This route has magnificent views, mostly comfy belays, and fun, varied climbing. There is also a nice bivy ledge after pitch seven.

Also in January, Connie Rochelle and I established Don Julio (130m, 5.10 R) in Cañón de Guitarritas. The route starts where the rock ridge on the east side of the canyon touches the east side of the road. Connie had been eying this ridgeline for a while, and our chance finally came on a family visit for Christmas and New Year's. The route pretty much follows the ridge but sometimes cuts left onto the south face. This is an adventure route that has some plants and loose rock. The bolts are sparse, but the cruxes are well protected. We rappelled the north side of the ridge via four independent rap stations. There is a bailout rappel off the south face after pitch two.

– Alex Catlin, México

## Images



The north-facing wall of Cañón de la Sandía, showing (left) Karma Bonfire (11 pitches, 5.12c) and (right) Vuelo de Fortuna (9 pitches, 5.13b).



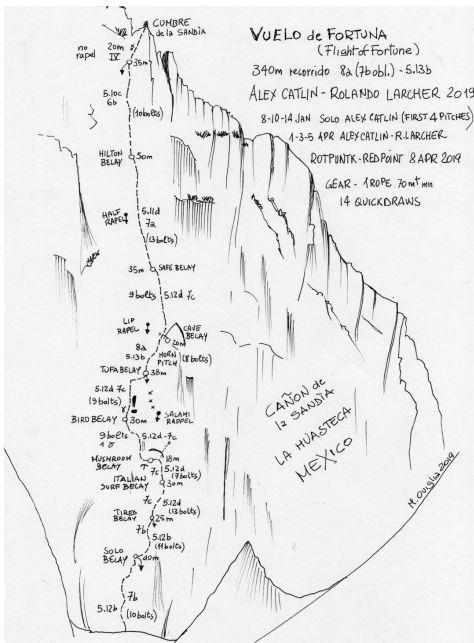
The north-facing wall of Cañón de la Sandía, showing (1) Karma Bonfire (11 pitches, 5.12c) and (2) Vuelo de Fortuna (9 pitches, 5.13b).



Alex Catlin climbing pitch four (5.12a) of Karma Bonfire (330m, 5.12c.).



Alex Catlin on pitch eight (5.11d) of Karma Bonfire (330m, 5.12c.).



Topo for Vuelo de Fortuna in Cañón de la Sandía.



Rolando Larcher (left) and Alex Catlin on the summit after climbing Vuelo de la Fortuna in Cañón de la Sandía, La Huasteca.



Rolando Larcher on Vuelo de Fortuna at La Huasteca.

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