



## AAC Publications

---

### Getu Valley, Great Arch, Valhalla

China, Guizhou Province

Edu Marin dangles from the Great Arch, high above the Getu River. Half of Valhalla's 14 pitches cross the roof, totaling 300 meters of climbing. Photo: Karel Downsborough

**"I need to bolt a line there!" That was Edu Marin's reaction after Dani Andrada, who put up Corazon de Ensueño (240m, 8c), showed him photos of Getu's Great Arch back in 2011.** Getu is a quiet village in China's southern Guizhou Province that became known to climbers after the 2011 Petzl RocTrip video hit the Internet. One of the most impressive natural rock arches in the world, sitting high up above the Getu River, at its narrowest point the arch spans 70m and the minimum distance from the floor to the roof is around 120m. Locals have been free soloing up the lower arch for centuries to collect bird's nests, but it wasn't until June 2008 that Olivier Balma and his students of the CMDI (China Mountain Development Institute) bolted the first sport climbing routes in Getu.

Since ending his competition career several years ago, Edu has focused on ticking very difficult and long rock climbs, often with the support of his 68-year-old father, Francisco "Novato" Marin. These included repeats of Panaroma (500m, 8c), Orbayu (600m, 8c), Voie Petit (450m, 8b), Sansara (150m, 8b+), Wogü (250m, 8c), and several others. However, these lines are generally vertical and Edu wanted to do something different. At Getu's Great Arch, he imagined establishing the longest and hardest multi-pitch roof climb in the world.

In March 2018, Edu and his brother Alex left Barcelona with 300 bolts, hundreds of quickdraws, and a lot of rope. After two flights and a three-hour car journey, they arrived in rural Getu. When Edu saw the arches for the first time, he knew this would be an once-in-a-lifetime project. The two explored both arches, and after an attempt to bolt a route on the lower arch, Edu decided to focus on the higher Great Arch instead.

Edu and Alex spent hours examining the roof through binoculars to find a climbable line. They decided to start on the right side of the cave, where four pitches (7b+, 7a, 8a+, and 7c+) gave access to the roof. Then the real work started. They attached fixed lines down from the roof so they could jumar up to access each section more efficiently. Over the course of the next month, they bolted seven pitches through the roof to the exit of the arch, from which three more pitches led to the top. The horizontal section of the line spans about 300m.

With a little bit of time left before their return to Spain, Edu was able to try the pitches and quickly realized this might be a tougher project than he had imagined. The first roof pitch (fifth overall) is called Odin's Crack, and at 9a+ is the single hardest pitch on Valhalla. However, from the crux pitch to the final anchor, there are nine more pitches of 8a or harder (including two 8c+ pitches). After spending two months in Getu, Edu returned to Spain to train. His goal was to free all 14 pitches in succession and in a single day.

Edu returned to Getu in the fall of 2018, along with his brother and father, and spent a few months working the route. Alex returned to Spain after about a month, but Novato stayed on to support his son. The two took a week off to rest in Cambodia in January. In February, conditions were perfect and Edu was certain he could do the climb before it became too hot. Edu managed to send all the pitches separately, and Odin's Crack was finally ticked on February 19. It was time to attempt a free ascent from the ground up.

On his third attempt at freeing all the pitches in one consecutive go he had made it through the entire roof without a mistake. There was one hard pitch left, Thor's Hammer (8c+), before the relatively easy last two 8a pitches. "I named it Thor's Hammer, because after getting there with the whole roof behind you, it feels like you're being knocked down on every move because you're so tired" was Edu's explanation for the name. He was about to enter the three last hard moves when a crimp hold snapped and he fell. He couldn't believe what had happened. After getting back to the anchor, he decided to try again, but he was empty.

After a week of recuperation, starting at 7 a.m. on March 20, 2019, he was back on the route. The first four pitches went smoothly, and the momentum carried on as he climbed through Odin's Crack without a problem. He cruised through the rest of the roof and got to the last hard pitch. "Ahora sí!" ("Now, yes!") Novato yelled as Edu climbed through Thor's Hammer and then, finally, to the top of Valhalla. Edu hung in silence as Novato made his way on the fixed lines to join him at the top. He had freed Valhalla (450m, 9a+). After almost six months in Getu, it was over in nine hours of climbing.

– Karel Downsborough, Belgium, with information from Edu Marin, Spain

**Editor's note:** The route consists of 14 pitches rated, in order, 7b+ (5.12a), 7a (5.11d), 8a+ (5.13c), 7c+ (5.13a), 9a+, 8b+ (5.14a), 8a (5.13b), 8c+ (5.14c), 8a+ (5.13c), 8b (5.13d), 8a+(5.13c), 8c+ (5.14c), 8a+ (5.13c), and 8a+ (5.13c).

## Images



Edu Marin dangles from the Great Arch, high above the Getu River. Half of Valhalla's 14 pitches cross the roof, totaling 300 meters of climbing.



Father and son at the top of Valhalla



Edu Marin's "rest" after the crux of Odin's Crack.



Edu Marin working on his goal of sending Valhalla in the Great Arch

## Article Details

Author	Karel Downsborough
Publication	AAJ
Volume	62
Issue	94
Page	
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions