



AAC Publications

Spring Canyon, Italian Cowboy

Utah, Zion National Park

In February 2020, Jacob Dickhausen, Andrew Park, Pasquale Verrastro, and I headed up Spring Canyon, a seldom-visited portion of Zion National Park, east of the Altar of Sacrifice and behind the old Zion History Museum. After hours of bushwhacking through rough terrain and examining multiple options for new free routes, a beautiful southwest-facing wall with an obvious line screamed, “Climb me!”

After a few feet of vegetated rock at the base, the dihedral crack cleared and was clean for hundreds of feet. Higher up, we repeatedly deployed four- and five-inch cams as the crack headed into a monster chimney ending with a short roof. After this incredible and exposed exit, a comfy belay awaited before the crux of the route. Forty-five meters of tips to hands took us through the short lieback crux and onto an exposed face and arête sequence to the final belay stance.

The last pitch begins in an overhanging dihedral protected by two bolts and sporty moves. The exposure kicked back in as the pitch transitioned onto a clean, dead-vertical panel with a one-inch crack. Atop the crack, a stem box led to the final anchor on a sunset-worthy ledge. Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+) is a clean and striking line that stops just short of the top of the wall, due to deteriorating rock quality and lack of cracks. The route has five protection bolts in seven pitches.

After several days spent establishing the line, and on the last day before the park was shut down due to COVID restrictions, I freed every pitch while Pasquale supported the ascent.

— Rob Pizem

Images



Above the bushy and sandy start typical of Zion routes, Rob Pizem is rewarded with hundreds of feet of perfectly clean and varied dihedral climbing during the first ascent of Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+).



Rob Pizem does battle with one of the lower corner's wide sections during the first ascent of Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+). Though the lower climbing never was harder than 5.10, it proved draining before the upper crux pitches.



Rob Pizem jams and stems through dreamy, well-protected moderate climbing midway up Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+).



At the end of pitch four, the real work begins as Rob Pizem prepares to enter the wideness on the first ascent of Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+).



Rob Pizem in the 45-meter chimney that ends with a 5.12- exit move, partway up Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+) in Zion National Park.



Rob Pizem at the end of pitch five on Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+): a wild stemming exit from the chimney with a technical dihedral that leads to a well-earned ledge belay.



The final pitch of Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+), which climbs a sporty overhanging dihedral past two bolts and questionable blocks near the end.



The southwest-facing wall in center right is home to Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+), which climbs the shaded dihedral in the middle of the wall. Behind is the towering Altar of Sacrifice.



The southwest-facing wall that's home to Italian Cowboy (1,000', 7 pitches, 5.12+) in Zion National

Park. The route climbs the clean dihedral in the middle of the wall into a steep chimney system, and finishes on wild overhanging corners.

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