



AAC Publications

East Maiden, The Shiv, and The Camel, New Routes

Alaska, Brooks Range, Arrigetch Peaks

The Arrigetch Peaks at sunset, taken from the top of the Aquarius Wall. From left to right: the Citadel, East Maiden, West Maiden, the Camel, and Parabola. Photo by Cameron Jardell

In July, Mathias Gruber, Maya Humeau, Luke Shacter, and I ventured into the Arrigetch Peaks to fulfill our dream of a proper expedition-style adventure and explore the granite of the Alaskan Arctic. We spent 18 days in the area, most of them rainy. Based in the Aquarius Valley, our team made three failed attempts, three repeats, and four first ascents in what amounted to a spectacular trip.

On July 22, Brooks Range Aviation dropped us at Circle Lake near the Alatna River. We pushed through the sunlit night with 80-pound packs, bushwhacking the first few miles before finding the Arrigetch Creek Trail. After stopping for a rest, we made camp beneath the Maidens the next evening.

The next day we all set our sights on the north face of the East Maiden. [Editor's Note: An NPS report written in 2003 titled, "History and Route Descriptions of Rock Climbs in the Arrigetch Peaks," lists the north face as having been climbed by an unknown German party in 1998. Their exact line is also unknown, though the author and his party found numerous bolts scattered on the face.] Luke and I climbed two and a half pitches before bailing due to rain. Maya and Mat waited out the storm before beginning up the face, then lost steam several pitches up and traversed to a gully on looker's left of the face to descend. The next day, Luke and I soloed slabs to a col to attempt the south face of the East Maiden, only to be caught in fog and rain partway up the face, where we retreated.

Maya Humeau topping out on the Shiv during the first ascent of Supernatural Apparition (300m, 5.10). The northwest face of Badile is in the background. Photo by Matias Gruber

Seven days of rain later, we were ready to send. The four of us walked up the Aquarius Valley to the east face of the Shiv, a fin-shaped peak between Wichmann Tower and Badile. Luke and Mat climbed on the left of Maya and me, and we simultaneously established two new routes on the 80° wall. Luke and Mat's Hunting People (300m, 5.11 R) climbs an open face with scattered flakes to a wide roof crack. Maya and I followed a left-facing corner system with intermittent slabs that we named Supernatural Apparition (300m, 5.10); our route joins the last two pitches of Hunting People before topping out. We descended the north ridge, making just one rappel.

After 12 hours of sleep, Maya and Mat set off for another attempt on the north face of the East Maiden, while Luke and I went for a link-up of the north ridge of Parabola peak (5.7, Coburn-MacKinnon-Morley-Pardue-Pflueger, 2002) and the Aquarius Wall (5.7, Barash-Robins, 2003). We soloed Parabola in two hours and then descended a heinous gully before climbing six pitches on the Aquarius Wall.

After 15 pitches on East Maiden, Mat and Maya completed a likely variation (based on the old bolts they encountered) to the unknown 1998 route on the north face. They found bolts on the upper route despite a consistent and protectable crack system. They dubbed the variation Gut Ripper (650m, 5.10).

There looked to be decent weather on the day before our scheduled pickup at Circle Lake. Mat and I left early to attempt the unclimbed northwest face of the Camel. A choss ramp took us to the bottom of a low-angle, slabby face, which the two of us simul-climbed to the east ridge in three long pitches

before gaining the summit. We named the route Vasudeva (600m, 5.8). We rappelled the south face and then rappelled and downclimbed a gully west of the summit. During that time, Luke and Maya simul-climbed the Aquarius Wall in two pitches.

The team on the summit of the Shiv, with Wichmann Tower behind. Photo by Cameron Jardell
We packed camp and rendezvoused at the confluence of Aquarius and Arrigetch creeks before descending to Circle Lake to rejoin civilization. This trip was made possible in part by the AAC Live Your Dream Grant, as well as the wild mushrooms we foraged daily to supplement our meager rations.

— **Cameron Jardell**

Images



The team approaching the Shiv in the upper Aquarius Valley in Arctic twilight.



Luke Shacter following a pitch on Hunting People (300m, 5.11R), a new line on the east face of the Shiv.



Maya Humeau topping out on the Shiv during the first ascent of Supernatural Apparition (300m, 5.10). The northwest face of Badile is in the background.



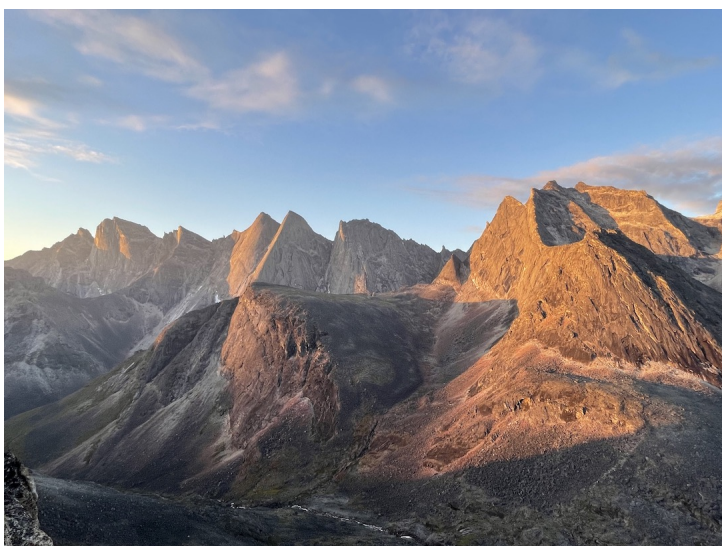
Panorama of the central Arrigetch Peaks, taken from the summit of the Shiv.



Cameron Jardell on the final pitch to the summit of the Camel during the first ascent of Vasudeva (600m, 5.8). The Maidens are visible in the background.



The team's base camp, positioned on the north side of the Maidens, with the Camel visible on the right.



The Arrigetch Peaks at sunset, taken from the top of the Aquarius Wall. From left to right: the Citadel, East Maiden, West Maiden, the Camel, and Parabola.



The team on the summit of the Shiv, with Wichmann Tower behind.



The east face of the Shiv showing the two new routes climbed in August 2021: Hunting People (300m, 5.11 R) on the left, and Supernatural Apparition (300m, 5.10) on the right.



The north face of East Maiden, showing the line of the Gut Ripper variation (650m, 5.10). The route shares terrain with a 1998 route by unknown German climbers.

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