



AAC Publications

Cape Farewell, Tininnertuup IV and Punta Alboran; Fox Jaw Cirque, Various Routes

Greenland

Sasha Doyle engaged in the corner offwidth on the northeast face of Tininnertuup IV. On the left, across the broken depression, are the slabby walls of Tininnertuup III. Photo by Ed Luke
The Irish coastline at Ballycastle drifted away to stern as the wind built to a consistent Force 5–8. It remained that way for the next 17 days. Tim Luke (skipper), Sasha Doyle, and I edged our way across the North Atlantic in our solid 10m sailing boat, Medusa, lost in an existence of tinned soup and paperback novels.

The final approach to southern Greenland was incredible, with the mountains of Cape Farewell visible above a thick belt of ice fog. Once engulfed in this mist, we dodged icebergs and growlers through the night to arrive in Nanortalik at sunrise.

Having walked beneath the towering column of Ulamertorsuaq in previous years on the way to base jumping exits, I knew the well-known route War and Poetry looked awesome. Our warmup would be the first half—the Poetry section—of this beautiful face. Sasha and I climbed 15 pitches to the Black Heart Ledge, bivouacked, and then descended; the route above this point is a bit above our grade.

Our next destination was the Tininnertuup peaks near the head of the Tasermit Fjord. Two load carries in unsettled weather saw us peering up at impressive walls of an indiscernible scale. Many of our original objectives appeared to have poor rock, but better-looking rock appeared on the north-northeast face of Tininnertuup IV (1,720m). On July 11, carrying warm jackets, a lightweight storm shelter, and a stove, we gained the north-northeast face using a line of weakness on the lower slope of Tininnertuup III. Some wet and classically loose pitches led us to the base of a nice, wide crack system. An offwidth corner had me questioning some life decisions, as our only number 5 cam disappeared way down beneath my feet. Above these difficulties, we attempted to cross friable, unprotected slabs to access another crack system out to the left, leading toward the summit. However, we ended up thinking better of it and instead ran for the skyline—the northwest ridge—up loose lines of weakness, reaching the ridge at around 1,500m. Our climb had pitches of E3 5c.

It was now 8 p.m., the sun dipped low, and an icy breeze drifted in. It was time to head down. Countless rappels into multiple gullies, lots of snags, and creative anchor constructions took us to the snow line.

Punta Alboran on Sermersoq Island. (1) Fisuras en La Niebla. (2) Worse Things Happen at Sea. Photo by Ed Luke

Our next destination was Sermersoq Island just north of Nanortalik. An early start on July 27 had us rowing ashore in a bay on the north coast. We then gained height to the right of an indented waterfall and made a long walk around a glacial lake to reach the east face of Punta Alboran (1,060m; formerly Half Dome but renamed in 2013 by Spanish climbers who completed the only recorded route on the peak). We were excited to find the rock quality looked good in the center of the face and chose a line up the blunt arête immediately right of the existing route, Fisuras en La Niebla (300m, 7a, see AAJ 2014). We discovered a mixture of quality pitches and tenuous, flared, lichen-filled granite cracks. Eight pitches later, we topped out to enjoy spectacular views inland across countless mountains toward the ice cap and a glistening sea to the west. We scrambled down rock slabs to reach the snow line on the south side of the peak, then traversed east to cross a small col and descend to our bags.

We were back at the boat by nightfall, naming our route Worse Things Happen at Sea (300m, E3 5c).

The Trillergerne peaks, with the towers of the Fox Jaw Cirque below catching the sun, seen from the Tasillaq Fjord. Photo by Ed Luke

The east coast of Greenland drifted by as we hopped our way via remote anchorages to Tasiilaq and then the drop-off for the Fox Jaw Cirque. A long, heavy, and brilliantly flat walk into a boulder field below the Cirque had us in position to climb in this relatively remote and fly-free paradise. On August 13, we repeated a route on Baby Molar (a.k.a. Milk Tooth Spire, about 1,100m) put up by the 2014 British expedition: the eight-pitch Days of Miracle and Wonder (E2 5c). We then rappelled the bolted descent to the left of Tooth Fairy [along the line of the 2000 Swiss route], and in the afternoon climbed another eight-pitch route, which we named Polar Bear Tea Party (E1 5b) on the eastern edge of the spire [this appears to take similar ground to the Southeast Buttress (III 5.9), climbed by an American-Canadian team in 2007].

We next climbed a line left of Days of Miracle and Wonder, which we named Sila, a seven-pitch HVS 5a following a nice series of cracks. We repeated Beers in Paradise on the Incisor, then on our final day made an early start to gain height on the glacier below the Cirque, heading for a tower in the back corner, probably to the right of any existing routes. On close inspection the rock quality was terrible but not wanting to waste the early start, we made slow and precarious progress upwards, making sure not to drop big bits of rock on each other. At half-height and with massive blocks delaminating from the mountain, we decided to call it a day.

We were away from the U.K. from mid-June to September 1. On land we generally experienced stable weather with light winds. We also saw more than 50 different whales, most on the wilder sections of the east coast, which is a migration route and feeding ground for many of their species.

— Ed Luke, U.K.

Images



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Punta Alboran on Sermersq Island. (1) Fisuras en La Niebla. (2) Worse Things Happen at Sea.



Sasha Doyle on pitch seven of Worse Things Happen at Sea.



Sasha Doyle on the upper corner system of Beers in Paradise, Incisor, Fox Jaw Cirque.



Towers of the Fox Jaw Cirque. Part of Baby Molar/Milk Tooth Spire is visible far left (it's right skyline ridge approximately the line of Southeast Buttress). The attempted route at the back of the cirque is on the far right.



The Trillergerne peaks, with the towers of the Fox Jaw Cirque below catching the sun, seen from the Tasillaq Fjord.

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