



AAC Publications

Paddle and Climb: Many Ascents

Greenland, West Greenland, Upernavik Region

The cliff above the 2022 expedition's Camp 6 on Nutarmiuk island, showing Black is the New Orange (left) and Super Slab. Photo by Olly Sanders

Catrin Thomas and I planned a four-week trip, flying to Upernavik then traveling around various islands by kayak. Our direction of travel was dictated by the winds, ice, and sea state.

This plan resulted in kayaking around the entire island of Nutarmiut, taking our time as the climbing opportunities were plentiful and far better than expected. Campsites were varied, with some on tiny islands with no access to fresh water. Others, on larger islands, offered plentiful water supply and lakes for a swim. Icebergs in the area didn't prevent access to any of our destinations, but at times they were densely packed, and it's easy to see how you could get into a spot of bother if the wind changed and you happened to be in the wrong spot. The northern tip of Nutarmiut was quite full of bergs, but this was the only place where ice conditions came close to forcing a change of plan. Our fuel usage was light, as we were able to do most of our cooking on open fires. Even some of the smaller islands had plentiful stashes of wood.

We had fabulous weather for the first 12 days, with seemingly endless sunshine and light northerly winds—T shirt weather on sunny rock that was sheltered from the wind. It then became more unsettled. Temperatures remained mild and the precipitation—mainly drizzle—only became activity-limiting on a couple of days. We hired kayaks from Nikolai Sorensen (Kayak-North) in Upernavik, where there is also a good supermarket that is generally well-stocked, dependent on when the last supply ship was there.

There is a wealth of opportunity in this area to climb new routes of all grades. Rock quality is generally good, with loose stuff easily avoided. Access was straightforward, as most of the routes were clearly visible from our campsites. We climbed on 100–200m cliffs, which had the advantage that they afforded a walk-off rather than rappel descent. However, there is an abundance of cliffs more than 500m high.

On July 9, from our Camp 1 at 72°45.916'N, 55°53.651'W on Qaersorssuaq island, we climbed Dogger (120m, HVS 5a), and later in the trip Sinister Start (120m, VS 4c). These were the only climbs where we had to negotiate poor quality rock.

On the 14th, from our Camp 5 at 72°38.539'N, 55°16.723'W, we climbed a short VS and an easy climb up the ridge on the headland (200m of height gain, 2km in length, D/VD, although harder options are available).

Above Camp 6 at 72°39.336'N, 55°19.268'W lay two buttresses. On the 15th, the smaller one on the right gave The Line of Least Resistance (175m, Mild VS). Next day, on the left buttress, we climbed Super Slab (215m, HVS/E1 5a), and on the 17th, Black is the New Orange (240m, HVS/E1, 5a).

On the 19th, from Camp 8 at 72°35.452'N, 55°28.125'W, we put up Birthday Buttress (75m, E2 5c). Camp 11 at 72°42.014'N, 55°43.191'W offered the opportunity to climb Rain Nearly Stopped Play (125m, HVS 5a) on the 23rd and One Step Beyond (125m, E1 5b) the following day.

We climbed other short new routes and did much paddling before eventually returning to Upernavik on August 4. After frustratingly canceled flights, we managed to fly out on the 12th. Route lengths quoted are climbing distance unless otherwise noted.

— **Olly Sanders, U.K.**

Images



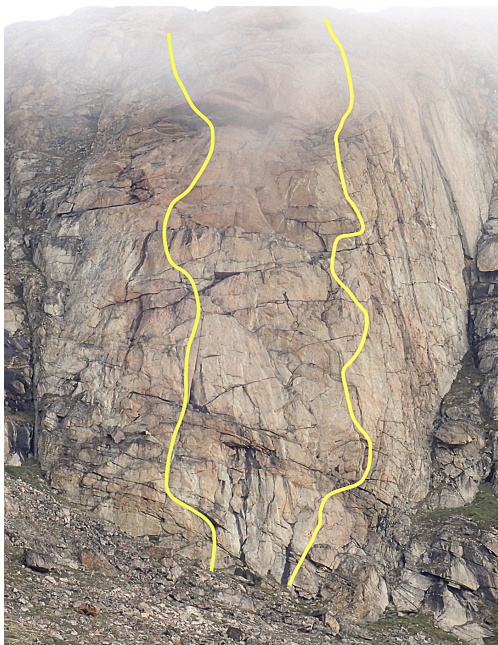
Catrin Thomas on the first ascent of Black is the New Orange on Nutarmiuk island.



The cliff above the 2022 expedition's Camp 6 on Nutarmiuk island, showing Black is the New Orange (left) and Super Slab.



This crag was above the kayak-and-climb team's Camp 11 on Qaersorssuaq island. Rain Nearly Stopped Play and One Step Beyond climb the 125-meter orange buttress on the left.



The two long routes climbed from Camp 11 on Qaersorssuaq island: Rain Nearly Stopped Play (left) and One Step Beyond.



A typical campsite on the islands of Upernavik region.



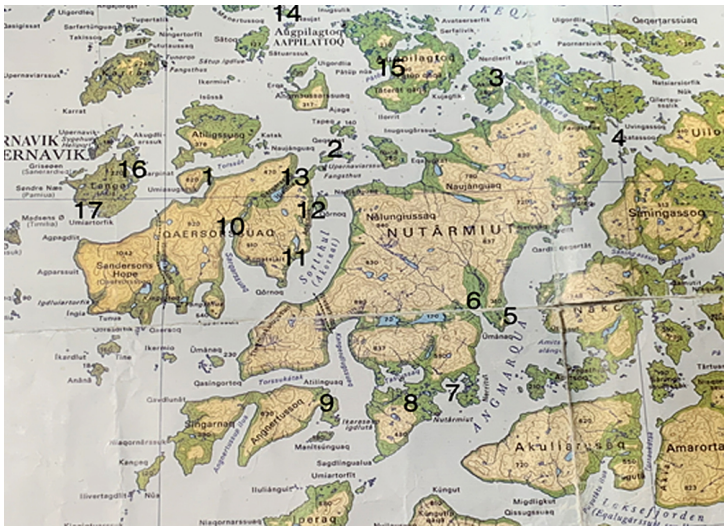
Catrin Thomas on the first pitch of Rain Nearly Stopped Play above the 2022 kayak-and-climb expedition's Camp 11 on Qaersorssuaq island.



Catrin Thomas on the first ascent of Super Slab close to Camp 6 on Nutarmiuk island.



Olly Sanders on the first ascent of Super Slab, close to Camp 6 on Nutarmiuk island.



Map showing campsites used by Olly Sanders and Catrin Thomas during their kayaking-climbing trip in the Upernavik region of West Greenland during July 2022.

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