



AAC Publications

Trapezoid Peak, Four New Routes

United States, California, Eastern Sierra

The east-northeast face of Trapezoid Peak, showing (1) Puff the Magic Dragon (5.12b), (2) Shield of Dreams (5.13b), (3) Harvest Time (5.12c), (4) Rasta Root (5.12b), (5) Man on the Flying Trapezoid (5.12-), (6) Don't Be a Square (5.10-), and (7) It's a Trap!...ezoid (5.10). Photo by Matt Carpenter

Perfect stone is gold to miners of first ascents. In California's High Sierra, steep walls with perfect rock are rare. Except, perhaps, right above Bishop.

In the summer of 2021, my wife, Lisa Coleman, and I were topping out Mt. Goode (13,086'), a popular peak with some classic rock routes that lies just off the buzzing Bishop Pass Trail. From the summit, I gazed down on the next mountain to the north, Trapezoid Peak (12,960'). A gorgeous, perfectly cleaved green wall shimmered in the glancing afternoon light like an immaculate jewel—porcelain smooth and nearly featureless except for a few thin, vertical lines.

The main panel on Trapezoid is mostly green-colored epidotic granite, also called unakite. When tumble-polished, unakite is considered a semiprecious stone. I didn't know this when I first spotted this glistening face, but I did know it was sheer and beautiful, and that I had to return for a closer look.

After a bit of research, I discovered the right side of the formation had just received its first routes in 2020. Matt Carpenter and buddies had put up a couple of shorter 5.10 routes and a stellar-looking 5.12a right of center called Man on the Flying Trapezoid (see [AAJ 2022](#)).

I finally inspected the wall up close in the spring of 2022. My partner was Chase Leary, a local granite master whose wizardry on the rock has earned him the nickname "Swami." Chase's family goes back three generations in the Eastern Sierra, and his father, Kevin Leary, was one of the first climbers to establish the 5.12 grade in Tuolumne and the Eastside.

Seizing the pleasant weather of April, we returned in full snow conditions—that is not to say it was actively snowing, just that the land was covered in snow. Despite the Sierran hills being referred to as "alpine," we are not alpinists; instead, we refer to ourselves as "Calpinists," or Californian alpinists—a term for us hedonistic, good-weather-loving softies coined by the late, great John Bolte, a young Santa Cruz climber who tragically died in Patagonia in 2022.

Chase and I trudged to the top of Trapezoid towing a sled stacked with static ropes, looking to stake a claim. After fixing down the wall, we surveyed the multitude of glorious thin-crack lines. The rock was so good that even the smallest cams and brass nuts were bomber protection for free climbing. We decided to start on the left side and pick our way to the right. Our goal was to create routes that were clean, safe, and classic. Stoked to be in a fairly remote cirque in the early season, with no one else around, we took pride in trundling as much loose and hazardous rock as possible. We scrubbed like fiends, buffing holds and blowing off the dust to bring out the shine in our treasure. As the pitches revealed themselves, it became clear these would be some of the best hard pitches we had ever climbed.

By late June, we had cleaned and sent the first gem of a route: Puff the Magic Dragon (700', 6 pitches, III 5.12b). To our delight, this route ended up receiving at least five more ascents throughout that

summer. These parties confirmed our biased opinion that, indeed, it was a classic.

The second route to go down is the king line of the formation: Shield of Dreams (5 pitches, III 5.13b), with an immaculate, improbable seam that runs through the center of the massive green shield. Every pitch is high quality, and with two back-to-back entirely gear-protected 5.13 pitches at almost 13,000', it is one of the hardest routes in the High Sierra.

As August rolled around, we moved right to the next obvious line. This time my wife, Lisa "Little Ninja" Coleman, joined our team, adding some great conversation and extreme perkiness. Harvest Time (6 pitches, III 5.12c) has two of the high country's cleanest 5.12 tips cracks, where micro cams and perfect nuts test the leader's gear-placement skills, as well as their ability to climb hard above small pro.

By summer's end, we were starting to feel a bit burned out. However, one feature had been staring at us all season, and we couldn't resist having a go at the massive overhang in the dead center of Trapezoid's face. I twisted Lisa's arm to join us again, not realizing a brief cold snap would have us absolutely freezing all day. Despite turning purple, we managed another Trapezoid summit via another new route. Rasta Root (5 pitches, III 5.12b) starts 50' left of Man on the Flying Trapezoid, and the third pitch surmounts the Rasta Roof, likely the steepest pitch of free climbing in the Sierra high country. Finger cracks, double roofs, and multiple cruxes make this pitch a wild journey. [Bolted anchors of unknown origin were found on the initial crack line by the 2020 team.]

All of our routes top out the wall. We added bolts wherever the gear was not totally bomber, and all the belays are bolted. Nearly every pitch is set up for rappelling with a single 70m rope. This part of the wall faces almost due east, so morning sun and afternoon shade give options for different climbing conditions. A rejuvenating cold-water swim in crystal-clear Margaret Lake during the hike out is the cherry on top.

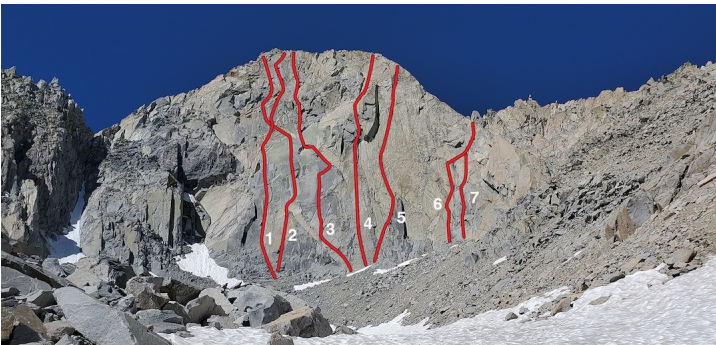
The High Sierra shines among mountain ranges, and generations of stoked Calpinists have mined the Range of Light. For modern miners like us, the Golden Age is now.

— Andy Puhvel

Images



Chase Leary milking the offset crack on pitch two (5.12c) of Harvest Time (700', 6 pitches, III 5.12c), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



The east-northeast face of Trapezoid Peak, showing (1) Puff the Magic Dragon (5.12b), (2) Shield of Dreams (5.13b), (3) Harvest Time (5.12c), (4) Rasta Root (5.12b), (5) Man on the Flying Trapezoid (5.12-), (6) Don't Be a Square (5.10-), and (7) It's a Trap!...ezoid (5.10).



Lisa Coleman lost in a sea of epidotic granite on pitch four (5.12a) of Harvest Time (700', 6 pitches, III 5.12c), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



Lisa Coleman enjoying the exposure on pitch four (5.12a) of Harvest Time (700', 6 pitches, III 5.12c), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



Andy Puhvel feeling the exposure on pitch three, the "Rasta Roof" (5.12b), Rasta Root (700', 5 pitches, III 5.12b), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



Andy Puhvel feeling the exposure on pitch three, the "Rasta Roof" (5.12b), Rasta Root (700', 5 pitches, III 5.12b), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



Andy Puhvel enjoying the laser-cut splitter on pitch two (5.12a) of Shield of Dreams (700', 5 pitches, III 5.13b), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



Chase Leary cruxing out on pitch three (5.13a) of Shield of Dreams (700', 5 pitches, III 5.13b), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



On pitch three (5.13a) of Shield of Dreams (700', 5 pitches, III 5.13b), Chase Leary grabs the bucket, a gray TCU below his feet.



Chase Leary adrift on pitch three (5.13a) of Shield of Dreams (700', 5 pitches, III 5.13b), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.



Andy Puhvel on pitch two (5.12a), Shield of Dreams (700', 5 pitches, III 5.13b), Trapezoid Peak, Eastern Sierra, California.

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