



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Kalamos, Southeast Face, The Ritual of Hardship**

Greece, Cyclades Islands, Anafi

The Ritual of Hardship (500m of climbing, 7b/6c+ obl.), the first route up the southeast face of Anafi's Mt. Kalamos. Two earlier routes end near the monastery circled in the photo. Drone photo by Kyriakos Rossidis.

**Ten years ago, during a flight over the Aegean Sea, I spotted a remarkable rocky mountain rising from the water.** The flight attendant could name the neighboring isle of Santorini, but it was only after returning to an internet connection that I discovered this mysterious island's name: Anafi.

The fascination with Anafi resurfaced during conversations with two friends, Nikos Hadjis and the late Yiannis Torelli, who mentioned their route Halcyon on the island's Mt. Kalamos, which rises nearly 500m from the sea at the eastern tip of the island and is the second-biggest monolith in the Mediterranean, behind Gibraltar. They also mentioned the massif's potential for new routes. In May 2023, Constantinos Andreou, Andreas Rossidis, and I (all from Cyprus), along with Daniela Banc (Romania) and Jenny Schauroth (Germany), embarked on a journey to unlock Anafi's climbing potential.

Before our visit, the island only had two documented routes: Argonaftiki Ekstratia and Halcyon. In 1999, Thomas Michaelides and Aris Theodoropoulos established the former at 5b, climbing a distinctive pillar on Mt. Kalamos's south-southwest face using trad protection. In 2008, Nikos Hadjis, Yiannis Torelli, and Theodoropoulos established the aesthetic and fully bolted, 435m Halcyon (7a+/7b, 6b+ obl.) on the south face, right underneath the currently unoccupied Kalamiotissa Monastery; the route was freed in 2012 by Nicolas Morell, Iliana Peikova, and Sylvain Perrin.

Navigating logistics on this remote island, as well as figuring out how to put up a route right above the sea, created a set of challenges. Daniela and I began by hiking up Mt. Kalamos to look at its virgin southeast face, which we'd picked as our objective for its steep, aesthetic headwall. The hike transformed into a wild and remote ascent, offering the first taste of the exposure that would define our expedition. The wall itself was breathtaking, the high quality of its orange and tan limestone and amazing marble features visible from a distance, its vast scale hard to fathom against the Aegean. Choosing the exact line would not be easy. We'd need to break it into smaller sections and bolt ground-up to choose the most logical path.

As the rest of the team arrived, we formulated our strategy: We'd secure a boat to access the base of the route. As for the headwall, we'd employ a top-down/ground-up approach in which we'd abseil to the start of each pitch and then bolt it "ground up" to get back to the bottom of our fixed lines. This also let us install the route in suboptimal weather, when the boat couldn't access the base.

Using this strategy, we equipped ten pitches on the headwall in four days. Meanwhile, on a rest day, a boat ride let us see the wall for the first time from the water and locate our access point, a perfect belay ledge right above the waves. On our fifth and final working day, we divided the labor among all members of the team, stripping our fixed lines and then rappelling down the easier lower section, installing anchors as we went.

On May 28, late in the afternoon, we embarked on a bumpy boat ride to the wall. Over the next two and a half days, we cleaned and free climbed the route. The initial climbing was a combination of slabs, steep pitches, and ledges with loose debris. On the first day we reached Mouse Ledge at

around 200m above the water. The second day we tackled the challenging headwall, working hard as a team to clean holds, free pitches, and navigate the technical terrain. We split into two separate rope parties—one of three people and another of two—and the leader of each party freed every pitch first go except for the crux 15th pitch (7b). For this one, we had to abseil back down from the Party Ledge, where we spent our second night on the wall, and then free the pitch first thing on our final climbing day.

Our route, The Ritual of Hardship (19 pitches, 7b/6c+ obl.), was bolted where necessary; a full rack of cams up to number 3 and wired nuts also are necessary. The climb was a testament to the spirit of adventure and the satisfaction that comes from overcoming challenges as a team. Anafi, a relatively unknown gem in the Aegean, had captured our hearts, offering us the adventure that we were looking for. We'll certainly be back for more.

### — Kyriakos Rossidis, Cyprus

#### **The Ritual of Hardship (500m of climbing, 19 pitches, 7b/6c+ obl.)**

1. 4, 15m. Starting on a ledge 5m above the water, follow the obvious crack.
2. 3, 20m. Follow the diagonal ramp to the left. 1 bolt.
3. 5b, 20m. 4 bolts
4. 5a, 22m. 4 bolts
5. 5a, 42m. Navigate between the steep dirt ledges, following the rocky parts.
6. 5b, 20m. 3 bolts
7. 5c, 20m. Follow the steep ramp to the right, with some short overhanging sections. 5 bolts
8. 3, 10m. Traverse right to Mouse Ledge. 3 bolts
9. 5a, 37m. Start to the right of the belay and then traverse back left.
10. 6a+, 38m. Follow slabby terrain to the start of the orange rock and climb that to a belay in a crystal "oven hole." 10 bolts
11. 7a, 28m. Traverse left from the belay and then straight up the steep, crimpy face. Then traverse left to gain the steep crystal "oven crack" and follow it to a belay up and right. 11 bolts
12. 7a, 28m. Follow the cracks straight above the belay that lead to technical climbing. Belay on the left. 8 bolts
13. 6b, 32m. Steep, juggy terrain straight above the belay and then left, following the corner to the belay on a good ledge. 6 bolts
14. 6b+, 27m. To the right of the belay up steep ledges and overhangs. 6 bolts
15. 7b, 32m. Follow the corner system to a steep, pocketed wall and then traverse left to another corner system. Belay on the Party Ledge. 11 bolts

16. 6a+, 16m. From the belay on the right side of the ledge, follow the vertical ramp up and right to another ledge belay. 6 bolts
17. 7a, 36m. Traverse to right of the ledge and follow the narrowing corner up and right; climb a vertical wall with a few overhanging passages. 6 bolts
18. 6c, 36m. Follow the steep crack right above the belay and then on easier terrain. 7 bolts
19. 6a, 24m. Gray slab with pockets. 5 bolts

## Images



Andreas Rossidis and Jenny Schaubroth climbing the first pitch of The Ritual of Hardship on Anafi's Mt. Kalamos, starting from a belay ledge right above the Aegean Sea.



Jenny Schaubroth leading pitch 16 (6a+), right above Party Ledge, where the team spent their second night on the southeast face of Mt. Kalamos.



Daniela Banc and Kyriakos Rossidis enjoying the view from Party Ledge on Mt. Kalamos.



Kyriakos Rossidis on pitch 15 (7b) of The Ritual of Hardship on Anafi's Mt. Kalamos.



Kyriakos Rossidis on pitch 15 (7b) of The Ritual of Hardship, the first route up the southeast face of Anafi's Mt. Kalamos



The topo for The Ritual of Hardship (500m of climbing, 19 pitches, 7b/6c+ obl.), the first route up the southeast face of Anafi's Mt. Kalamos. The photo was shot with a drone during sunrise on day two on the free ascent. Two earlier routes end near the chapel circled in the photo.

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