



## AAC Publications

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### Cody, The Palisades, Africa Son

Wyoming, Absaroka Range

Africa Son. Photo: Zach Lentsch

**The Palisades are a row of tall limestone fins on the southwest flank of Rattlesnake Mountain, visible from the Buffalo Bill Reservoir on Highway 14, heading west out of Cody.** Many years ago (probably in the late 1990s), Todd Cozzens and the late Bobby Model started a number of lines on the Palisades ground-up, but after hitting multiple dead ends, they abandoned that approach. Todd explored the potential for a rap-bolted line from the top of a Palisade formation he called the Pit Viper and found high-quality rock, but ultimately abandoned the project, having only bolted the anchors.

In 2021, I spent three days bolting a seven-pitch line, top-down, on the Palisade immediately north of Pit Viper, and I enjoyed many solitary days Mini Traxioning or rope-soloing the middle and upper pitches. The climbing was reminiscent of Kalymnos slabs, on hard, blue limestone. By the summer of 2023, I had freed the seven long pitches of the route individually.

Early in the summer of 2024, my good friend and storied South African climber James Mader swung through Cody at the tail end of a U.S. trip. Together, we climbed Africa Son (900', 7 pitches, 5.12-) in under five hours, completing the line and closing the chapter that Todd and Bobby began to write decades prior. It is the first complete summit route in the Palisades.

The name Africa Son was a gesture of gratitude toward James and also an homage to Bobby Model, who moved to Kenya in 2004, was critically injured in a nonclimbing accident in Cape Town in 2007, and died two years later.

—David M. Gauvin

#### Route Details

Access is by driving the Monument Hill Road off Highway 120 heading north out of Cody. Monument Hill road is closed after December 31 every year and reopens sometime in late June or early July. The coordinates for parking to approach Africa Son are 44.6043241, -109.3441772. Access the route by descending the large scree gully on the south flank on the Africa Son palisade, or rappel the route by scrambling to a top anchor 30' below the summit on a large ledge.

Gear: 22 quickdraws/slings.

P1 (40m): 5.10c

P2 (40m): 5.11

P3 (30m): 5.12-

P4 (35m): 5.12a

P5 (40m): 5.11d

P6 (40m): 5.11a

P7 (50m): 5.8

## Images



(A) marks the formation climbed by Africa Son (900', 7 pitches, 5.12-), the first full-length route in the Palisades.



David Gauvin on pitch five of Africa Son (900', 7 pitches, 5.12-).



David Gauvin on pitch four of Africa Son (900', 7 pitches, 5.12-).



David Gauvin on the third pitch of Africa Son.



Africa Son (900', 7 pitches, 5.12-), the first route that reaches a summit in the Palisades formation, Rattlesnake Mountain, Wyoming.

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