



AAC Publications

Cirque of the Moon, Two Routes

Wyoming, Wind River Range

Mitchell Steinman following the 5.11+ first pitch of the 1978 route Pipeline. Photo: Stefanos Apostle
In early September, Mitchell Steinman and I spent about a week in the Cirque of the Moon. After the 12-mile approach and its four river crossings, we made base camp in a meadow nestled within the cirque's vast moonscape.

The following day, aiming to investigate the walk-off descent for many of the routes in the cirque, we connected various features up the right side of the north buttress of Sumac Point, to the right of Bo Mambo (500', 5.9, soloed by Dakota Walz in 2020). This resulted in a short, enjoyable route, despite lichen-covered rock: Martian Moonbase (500', 5.8 PG-13).

The next day, we hiked to the third buttress of Tycho Wall, home to the classic Pipeline (1,000', 9 pitches, 5.11+), established by David Baltz, Mark Dalen, and Mark Leonard as an aid line in 1978, and then freed the following year by Bruce Bundy, Mike Head, and Tom Wells. We climbed the first few pitches before being stormed off.

After waiting out a storm, we attempted the unclimbed northeast face of the Sunset Wall. We hoped to connect two prominent features in the middle of the wall: a leftward-sweeping flake and a vertical splitter above it.

After three pitches up to 5.10-, we reached the flake, which narrowed from offwidth to thin hands over the course of 50' and finished with 20' of easier climbing. Clocking in at 5.11-, this pitch would be a four-star classic anywhere if close to the ground. This was followed by a dirty, flaring finger crack that we aided at C1; if cleaned, it would most likely go free around 5.11+/5.12-.

After three more pitches, we found ourselves under a chossy roof with no clear route up. We found dead-ends or dangerous obstacles straight up (loose block), right (blank section), and left (loose blocks and blank section), and without aid gear for the blank sections, we rappelled to the ground. Heading right instead of left on our final (eighth) pitch might have been a way to bypass these obstacles, with perhaps three more pitches to reach easy ground. We called our incomplete route Moonrise Kingdom (800', 8 pitches, 5.11- C1).

—Stefanos Apostle

Images



Martian Moonbase (500', 4 pitches, 5.8 PG-13) on the north buttress of Sumac Point, Cirque of the Moon, Wind River Range, Wyoming. Stefanos Apostle



Moonrise Kingdom (800', 8 pitches, 5.11- C1) on the Sunset Wall, Cirque of the Moon, Wind River Range, Wyoming. The ascent ended below the summit, and the climbers estimated perhaps three more pitches would be required to reach the top.



Mitchell Steinman following the 5.11+ first pitch of the 1978 route Pipeline.

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