



AAC Publications

Livingston Island, Edinburgh Hill

Antarctica, South Shetland Islands

Edinburgh Hill, rising nearly 600 feet above the Drake Passage, off the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. The climbers ascended the orange basalt near the prow, followed by dangerous scrambling to the summit.

Photo by Todd Swain

In early February 2026, our team set sail from Ushuaia, Argentina, aboard the Tánana, a French sailboat captained by Patrick Jeandidier. In addition to Patrick, the group included Americans John Evans, Michael Veazey, and us, along with two crew members from Rapa Nui and Argentina.

We crossed the Drake Passage to Livingston Island in the South Shetland Islands, off the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. Due to a large ocean swell, we were unable to land anywhere near our climbing objective, Edinburgh Hill (180m, 62°32'30.3"S, 60°01'08.1"W), a striking basalt tower on the north side of Moon Bay, at the eastern end of the island. We were eventually able to get ashore about 45 minutes' hike to the north of the tower.

On February 24, we succeeded in climbing the northeast aspect of the formation. The initial basalt cliff had columns about 18 inches in diameter, with excellent rock, which we climbed in a 100-foot pitch (5.8). A 50-foot 4th-class pitch past big, teetering blocks was followed by 300 feet of scrambling on loose talus. At the top was 50 feet of 4th class on massive Jenga-like blocks. We descended the same line we climbed. This was likely the first ascent of the formation.

—Todd and Donette Swain, USA

Images



Climbing the first pitch during the first ascent of Edinburgh Hill.



Basalt columns on the first pitch on Edinburgh Hill.



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