



AAC Publications

Chameleon Wall, Mercury Miners

Madagascar, Tsaranoro Massif

Dakota Walz cruises the fifth pitch of Mercury Miners (220m, 6a+) a new line on the Chameleon Wall, with a great view of Tsaranoro Be and its neighbors across the valley. Photo by Bosco Bonilla

After a month of big-walling in Mozambique, Bosco Bonilla (Spain), Owen McGinness (USA), and I visited Madagascar to add an element of “vacation” to our expedition. After landing in the capital, Antananarivo, we took a taxi brousse, or “bush taxi,” 14 hours south to Tsaranoro, a rough, cold, crowded ride. Once in Tsaranoro, we repeated a few classic routes and, using bolts we had left over from Mozambique, we opened a new route on the Chameleon Wall.

While likely the least aesthetic and grassiest wall in the valley, Chameleon has very enjoyable climbing, is only a 20-minute hike from Tsarasoa camp, and has the best views of the other formations. The rock was so solid and featured that it took us only two half-days of climbing to establish and free our 220-meter route. Afterward, I Micro-Traxed every pitch to add necessary bolts.

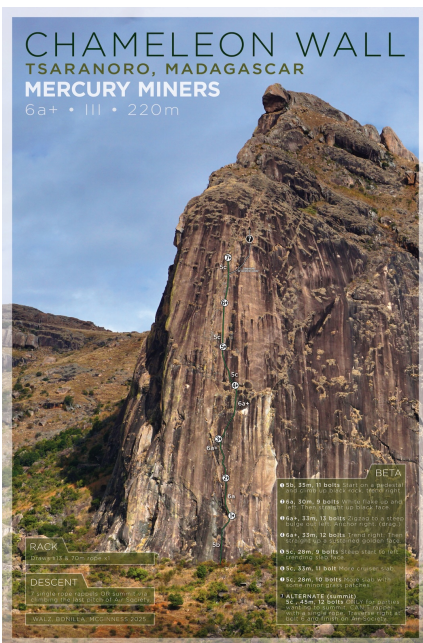
Our route, Mercury Miners (7 pitches, 6a+), ends when the good climbing does—about 100 meters below the summit, where the Chameleon Wall kicks back and becomes a bushy scramble. From that point, parties can rappel to the ground using a single 70m rope. We made the climb very safe compared with the run-out standard in the valley, in hopes that it would be useful to the local Malagasy climbing guides. When we told them the route did not reach the summit, they were disappointed, so we added an option at the last pitch to traverse right and finish on Chameleon Air Society (240m, 6 pitches, 6b; see AAJ 2013).

—Dakota Walz, USA

Images



The Chameleon Wall, named for the rocks at the top resembling a chameleon (head left, tail right) lounging in the sun.



Mercury Miners (220m, 6a+), a new route on the Chameleon Wall in Madagascar's Tsaranoro Massif. The route can be rappelled from the top of the last pitch or climbers can move right and finish on Chameleon Air Society (Botzon-Byrne, 2013) to reach the summit.



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Article Details

Author	Dakota Walz
Publication	AAJ
Volume	67
Issue	100
Page	235
Copyright Date	2026
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions