



AAC Publications

Upernavik and Other Areas, Six Historical Ascents

Greenland, West Greenland

Scoping potential lines on Kangeq Island from the yacht Civetta. Photo by Martin Krasňanský

The idea to climb in the Upernavik area originated with Dodo's Delight, a 2016 film featuring climbs above the Arctic Circle, accessed by sailboat. Dirty crags full of seagull shit weren't very attractive to me. Still, a seed of interest—or questions—had been planted: Why there? And what will I find there? What does it give to me? Sometimes questions are more powerful than answers.

A few months after seeing the film, I found a story about climbing around Upernavik by the Polish alpinist Marcin Tomaszewski (see AAJ 2018). He also posted photos of a virgin wall on Kungut Peak, on Kangeq Island, complete with GPS coordinates. This was like finding the key to the door behind which lay the answers to my questions.

I emailed Vladimir Porvaznik, a Slovak ex-climber and rich professional sailor with his own small yacht, Civetta, and enough experience and time to sail to West Greenland. We gave him a good story about our climbing expedition, and he was in.

First, Vladimir sailed to Greenland from Canada, where he'd been with Michal Sabovčík and Michal's girlfriend, Silvia Krištofovičová. The rest of us—Gabriel (Gabo) Čmárik, Juraj Koreň, and I—arrived in Nuuk by plane in June. After a week of waiting for good wind, we set sail toward the Upernavik archipelago without any special plan. It was more about discovery than hurrying to reach Kungut.

When we finally got there, we were disappointed at first. The unclimbed wall looked to be no more than 300 meters high. However, we'd never gauged the size of a wall against nothing but water and heaven. What we'd guessed from the boat would be the first pitch was really three pitches. Tomaszewski had been right: The wall was around 800 meters high. We managed to climb a new line we called Vel'ryba ("Whale"). Except for seven meters of wet, dirty rock, the whole route went free.

This wall offers a few other great lines that will go mostly free, I believe. There is another big cliff maybe a mile to the right of Kungut that, to my knowledge, remains unclimbed—this formation was the best we saw in the area.

During the remainder of our trip, we climbed several smaller cliffs in this area and also established two new lines near Maniitsoq, on the way back to Nuuk.

In West Greenland, I had found my answers: The sea is never boring, the stone is good enough to justify a visit, and the whales are big and mythical. If you don't like climbing with time pressure, this is the place for you: It's never dark in summer, so you just climb, climb, climb, fueled by instant coffee. The farther north we went from Nuuk, the more sunny days we got. But I will say that when you like good, cheap beer, Greenland is the worst country in the world.

—Martin Krasňanský, Slovakia

List of New Routes

July 1, 2019: Sardinka (280m, VI+ R2*), 72°42'04.0"N, 55°02'04.0"W, Gabriel (Gabo) Čmárik, Martin

Krasňanský, and Juraj Koreň, Saningassoq Island

July 6–7, 2019: Veľryba ("Whale," 800m, 15 pitches, VII C1 R4*), 72.505952,-55.363094, Gabriel Čmárik, Martin Krasňanský, Michal Sabovčík, 17 hours nonstop; Kungut Peak, Kangeq

July 11, 2019: Tulene (350m, VII+ R2*), Sylvia Krištofovičová, Michal Sabovčík; Nutaarmiut Island

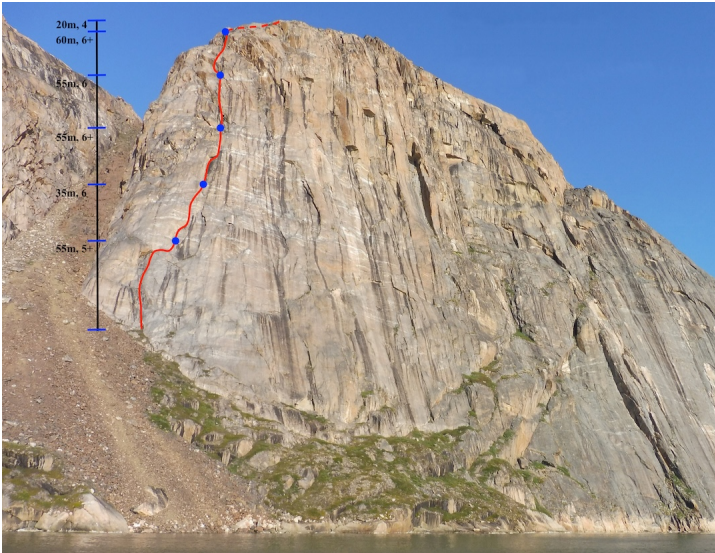
July 12–13, 2019: Insomnia (455m, VII- R2*; Camalots 5 and 6), 72.600925,-55.765929, Gabriel Čmárik, Martin Krasňanský, Michal Sabovčík; Qavdlunad Island

July 24, 2019: First Men (400m, 6b), 65.676585,-52.875225, Gabriel Čmárik, Martin Krasňanský; Inguip Tunule peak, Sermersuut Island, Maniitsoq area

July 24, 2019: Vegettall (425m, VII+/VIII-), Juraj Koreň and Michal Sabovčík, Sermersuut Island (same face as above, to the right of First Men)

* The R grades (R1–R6) are a grade for seriousness used in the Tatras, in which R1 is perfect protection and R6 is basically the illusion of protection.

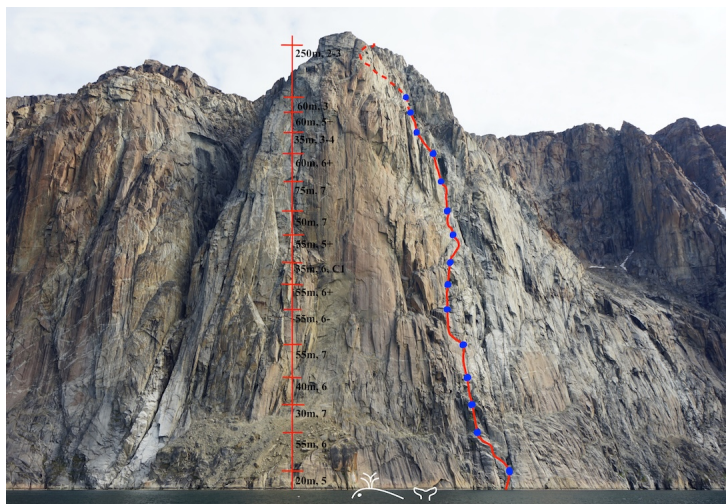
Images



The line of Sardinka (280m, VI+) on Saningassoq Island.



Scoping potential lines on Kangeq Island from the yacht Civetta.



The line of Vel'ryba ("Whale," 800m, 15 pitches, VII C1) on Kangeq Island.



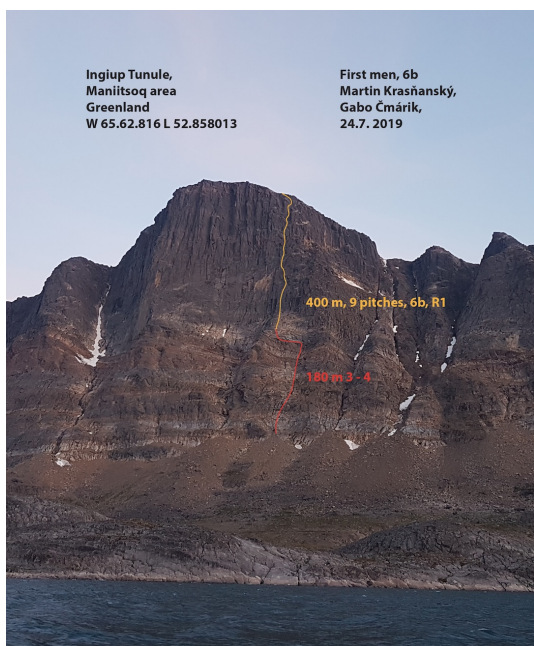
The line of Tulene (350m, VII+) on Nutaarmiut Island.



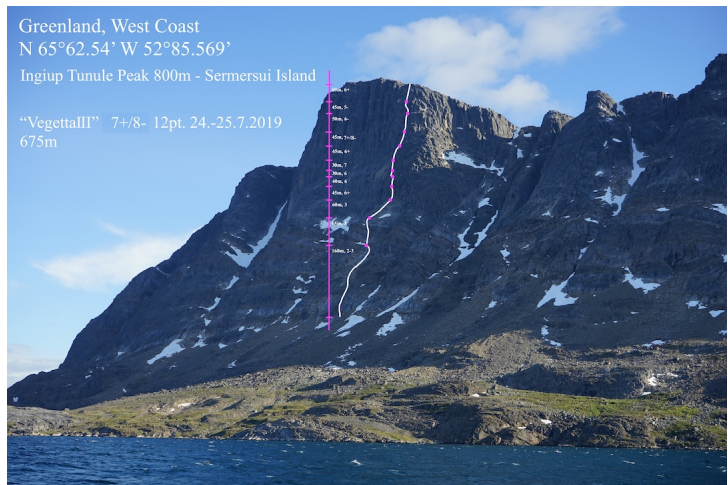
Michal Sabovčík (left) and Gabo Čmárik scope the 450-meter face on Qavdlunât (Qallunaat) on which they climbed the route Insomnia (UIAA VII-) in July 2019.



The line of Insomnia (455m, VII-) on Qavdlunad Island.



The line of First Men (400m, 6b) on Sermersuut Island, Maniitsoq area.



The line of Vegettalll (425m, VII+/VIII-) on Sermersuut Island.

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