



AAC Publications

The Gunsight, Time

Utah, Canaan Mountain Wilderness

James Wieman starting the 5.10 R sixth pitch of Time. Wieman and various partners made eight trips to the wall to complete the line. Photo by Arturo Calvo

It was in 2015, upon moving to Rockville, near Zion National Park, that I first envisioned establishing a line on a beautiful, unclimbed, north-facing cliff line on the horizon, southwest of Eagle Crags and across the main valley from Mt. Kinesava. My wife, Samantha Cooke, suggested we call the cliff the Gunsight, for an obvious notch in the ridgeline. In October 2018, I began to develop a route on the Gunsight. It would take eight separate trips with my wife and various friends, spread over six years, to push it to the rim.

The approach is likely what kept climbers away for so long—it took me three attempts to find the best way. Ultimately, it required a 2.5 mile off-trail hike, with 1,600 feet of elevation gain, through a pristine desert wilderness called Valley of the Moon. Traveling through an area called Valley of the Moon, the approach traverses pristine desert wilderness filled with cryptobiotic soil, cacti, and wildlife. Compared with the crowds and people in Zion, it offers true wilderness solitude.

In the fall of 2018, with my wife and friends, I established the first two pitches, both 5.10+, which set the tone for the route: adventurous climbing through delicate sandstone with thoughtful movement.

We pushed the route four pitches higher in spring 2020. Pitch four, a beautiful dihedral awash in desert varnish, was initially opened at 5.10 C1 and eventually freed by Arturo Calvo that season at 5.11+. On the same attempt, we onsighted pitch six at 5.10+ R, requiring face climbing on fragile holds connecting crack systems.

Jeffrey “Sunny” Hartnett and I added two more pitches in 2021, reaching a massive ledge below the summit. In 2022, we established a 5.11 offwidth variation to pitch five, allowing the route to go free, as well as an enjoyable chimney for pitch nine. During this attempt, we climbed to 15 meters below the rim, only to retreat due to gale-force winds.

I finally pushed the route to the rim with Arturo over two days, April 15–16, 2024. After fixing ropes to pitch four on the first day, we camped at the base and summited the second day. In a nod to the geological history of the area as well as the many memories created during the years working on the line, I named the route Time (1,180', 10 pitches, V 5.11+). Other friends who participated in opening the route included Trevor Boley, Nelson Klein, Hector Estrada Nieves, and Dylan Stuart.

I hand-drilled protection bolts (30 total), on both lead and rappel, and trundled significant rock to make the route safe to repeat. Every pitch has a two-bolt anchor, and the route can be rapped with two 70m ropes.

A continuous one-day free ascent was still on the docket. On October 21, 2025, Arturo, Sunny, and I made a free-as-can-be ascent of Time during a nontraditional triathlon I named the Ziathlon: a 55-mile, human-powered loop, with 6,500 feet of elevation gain and descent, consisting of rock climbing, canyoneering, and mountain biking—all starting and finishing from my home in Rockville. The ascent was “free as can be” because I led every pitch but grabbed a cam while linking pitches one and two, and I pulled through the final 5.11 crux move on pitch ten. Arturo, however, freed all the pitches while

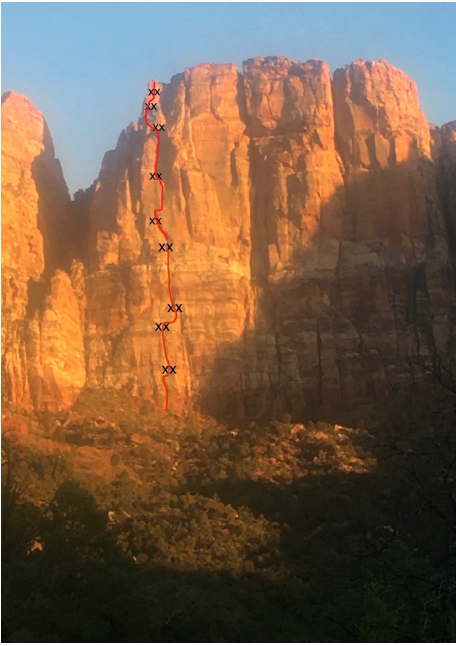
following.

Starting at 4 a.m. from my home, I biked and hiked six miles to the Gunsight, where I met up with Sunny and Arturo at the base. We climbed Time in seven pitches, topping out in 5 hours 56 minutes 29 seconds. Arturo and Sunny rapped the route and took all the gear. Samantha met me on the summit and we hiked six miles across Canaan Mountain. Next, along with Nick Rea, Samantha and I descended nine rappels through Water Canyon (3B III). Then I rode a mountain bike 25 miles from Hilldale to the Point on Gooseberry Mesa. Heather Larson, Eric Wallentine, and Jimmy Wilson joined me for the Gooseberry Loop. Finally, Jimmy and I biked the 17 miles back to my home, finishing down the exposed Grafton descent. I completed the entire 55-mile loop of the Ziathlon in 17 hours 54 minutes 10 seconds.

In the years I spent back there, I only saw evidence of one other climber in the area—someone had bailed 30 meters into a two-pitch line that Derrick Fassbender, Jan Gloeckner, and I established in 2019. There is vast potential on unclimbed cracks at the Gunsight for those seeking an adventure.

—James Wieman

Images



Time (1,180', 10 pitches, V 5.11+) on the Gunsight, a previously unclimbed wall in the Canaan Mountain Wilderness.



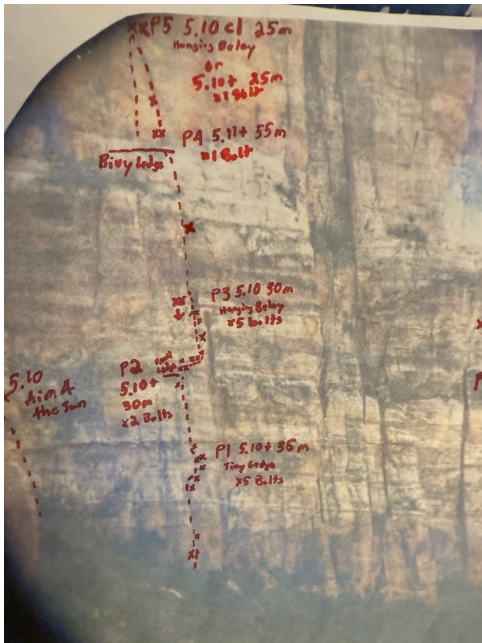
James Wieman leading the 5.11+ fourth pitch of Time (1,180', 10 pitches, V 5.11+).



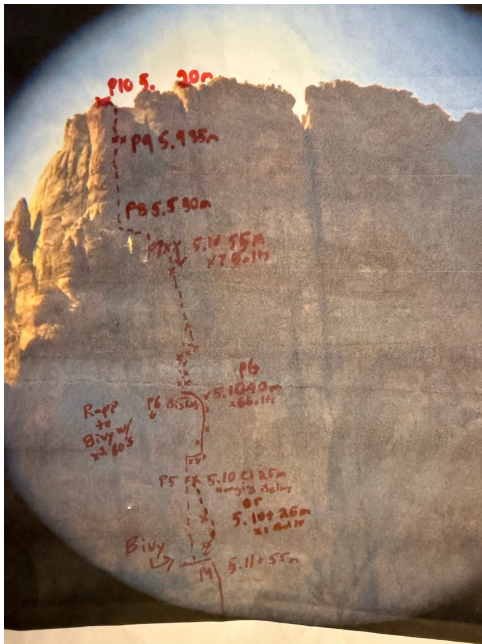
James Wieman starting the 5.10 R sixth pitch of Time. Wieman and various partners made eight trips to the wall to complete the line.



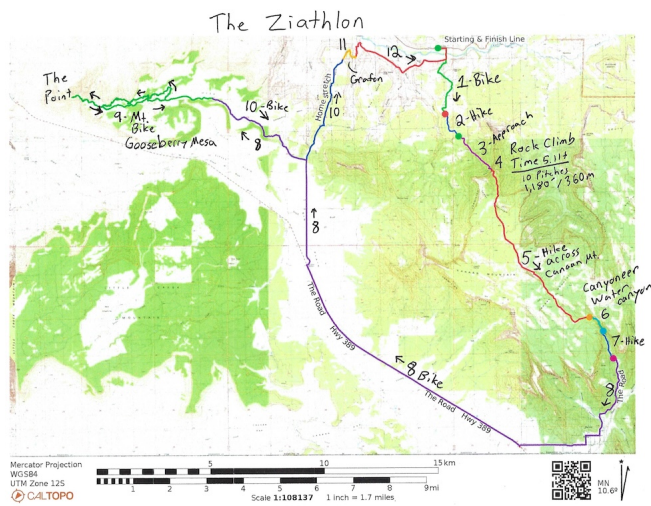
(Left to right) James Wieman, Arturo Calvo, Jeffery "Sunny" Hartnett, and Samantha Cooke on the summit of the Gunsight, after climbing Time and midway through the Ziathlon, a human-powered triathlon Wieman came up with to celebrate his completion of the cliff's first full route.



Top of the lower half of Time (10 pitches, V 5.11+).



Top of the upper half of Time (10 pitches, V 5.11+).



Map of the "Ziathlon," a bike, hike, climb, and canyoneering adventure conceived to mark the completion of the route Time in Canaan Mountain Wilderness.

Article Details

Author	James Wieman
Publication	AAJ
Volume	67
Issue	100
Page	165
Copyright Date	2026
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions