



AAC Publications

Hua Shan South Peak, South Face, High Tide Or Low Tide

China, Shaanxi Province, Qin Mountains

Hua Shan is a collection of steep granite summits in southern Shaanxi Province. It is one of the holy Taoist mountains from the time of the Tang Dynasty; Taoist monks built temples on top of high places to be closer to heaven. Eventually a path was built to the top of West Peak via the northern valley, and for hundreds of years this was the only route up Hua Shan.

Modern climbing began in 2009. In that year Leo Houlding (U.K.), Carlos Suarez (Spain), and Wang Zhiming (China) made the first ascent of the Lotus Flower Summit on West Peak via a route named Northern Celestial Masters (600m, E6 6b). In July 2014, Chinese climbers He Chuan and Zhu Xiaofei made the first ascent of the Landing Goose Summit of South Peak via Never Give Up (600m, 20 pitches, VI 5.10+ R C2+, AAJ 2015). In July 2015 He Chuan returned to solo a new route on the Pines and Junipers Summit of South Peak (Climb Like You Are Dying, 20 pitches, 5.10+ R A3).

In October, Gu Chizhi, Wei Guangguang, Wang Zhiming, and I established a 690m new route on the south face of Landing Goose Summit, left of Never Give Up. Weather data from previous years convinced us to select October, and we expected clear, dry days. In fact, we encountered several unexpected early winter storms, with rain and snow, during our 13-day capsule-style ascent.

On October 24, after fixing rope on the first two pitches, the first rainstorm arrived and we hid in a cave 20m above the ground until the 27th, when the weather finally cleared. That day we climbed 160m, ending at midnight. Next day it was drizzling. This, and our accumulated fatigue from hauling, forced us to take a rest day. Progress over the following two days was slow due to wide cracks and heavy vegetation. Just after we established our second portaledge camp on the 30th, after a total of 280m climbing on the route, it began to snow. This lasted 24 hours and we had a cold and wet Halloween.

On November 1 it cleared, and after waiting until noon for the rock to dry, we set off, only progressing 60m that day. On the 2nd we reached a headwall, where the crack system we had been following stopped. We began aid climbing and had to make a few pendulums to connect crack systems. That night the wind howled and punched our portaledges, preventing anyone from getting any sleep. On top of this, the forecast was for heavy precipitation for the next two days. Fortunately, once the sun rose the wind died down, and beautiful granite cracks made us forget our fatigue. Later that night we reached the top of pitch 13 and set up our third camp, 510m of climbing above the ground.

We weren't quite sure how much distance remained to the summit, and incoming bad weather meant we had to climb faster. On the 4th, after some slow chimney climbing, the angle of the face diminished, indicating we had entered the red zone and were getting close to "touchdown." After fighting heavy vegetation for another four pitches, we reached the top in the dark and rain. We all felt a bit weightless back on solid ground. Rain quickly turned to snow, and it was not until three days later that we could retrieve all our gear. We named the route High Tide or Low Tide (690m, 18 pitches, VI 5.11 C2) due to the rain, snow, and wind we endured on the wall.

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Images



Gu Chizhi hauling loads at the top of pitch eight during the first ascent of High Tide or Low Tide on Landing Goose Summit.



Wei Guangguang on Pitch four (5.10+ offwidth) during the first ascent of High Tide or Low Tide.



Wang Zhiming on the blank section of pitch 10 during the first ascent of High Tide or Low Tide on Landing Goose Summit.



The south face of Hua Shan South Peak. (1) High Tide or Low Tide (2015). (2) Never Give Up (2014). (3) Climb Like You Are Dying (2015).

Article Details

Author	Griff
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	367
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions