



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Aspiring, South Face, Thales**

New Zealand, Southern Alps

**Known for its iconic pyramid shape, Mt. Aspiring is often called the “Matterhorn of the South,” as it is the only peak above 3,000m outside of the Aoraki/Mt. Cook region and it towers above its surroundings, mesmerizing all who see it.** In the days leading up to my attempt, I was warmly welcomed by the local climbing community, who were generous with their advice. Allan Uren, a local climber, showed me what he thought could be an aesthetic and direct new line up Aspiring’s south face. When a weather window emerged between September 9 and 11, I met up with Lukas Kirchner, an experienced German alpinist and Kiwi transplant, to make an attempt.

We tramped (New Zealandese for “hiking”) for a few hours to reach the Matukituki River, near which we spent the night, and then tramped up the French Ridge the next day to reach the base of Aspiring’s southwest ridge, where we bivied in a snow cave on Bonar Glacier. We awoke to a calm morning sky, with Uren’s proposed line up the 500m south face beckoning. After surmounting a bergschrund at the base, we simulclimbed moderate alpine ice that was, for the most part, in great condition. We began to swap leads in blocks, encountering occasional thinner, mixed sections, which added engaging variety to the long stretches of alpine ice.

After being in the shade all day on the south face, topping out onto the Coxcomb Ridge into the warm afternoon sun felt instantly rejuvenating. We safely reached the summit by late afternoon and carefully descended the northwest ridge. We named the route Thales, in honor of the ancient Greek philosopher’s thoughts on fluidity and mindfulness. (750m climbing distance, which includes the 500m south face and part of the Coxcomb Ridge, NZ 5). [Editor’s note: The new line starts near Perspiring (2005) and Shooting Star (2014) and continues directly up toward the Coxcomb Ridge where those routes bear left.]

– Janette Heung, USA

## Images



Ice bouldering on the Bonar Glacier.



Lukas Kirchner cleaning snow blocks above the bergschrund on the south face of Mt. Aspiring.



Lukas Kirchner on excellent alpine ice during the first ascent of Thales on the south face of Mt.

Aspiring.



Janette Heung on the Coxcomb Ridge of Mt. Aspiring, having topped out on the south face by the new route Thales.



The south face of Mt. Aspiring, showing known routes. (T) marks the new route Thales (2016).

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