



## Climbs in Wadi Naqab and Wadi Ghalilah

United Arab Emirates

**One part of the limestone Hajar mountains lies within the United Arab Emirates.** In 2009 I was living in the UAE, and while walking in Wadi Naqab I came across an impressive crag. Red Wall, as it became known, appeared to have been formed by a massive rockfall that left behind a 150m sweep of steep rock.

I returned with Andrew LaBonte to try and climb the first route on Red Wall. Our first two attempts were ground up, but a combination of loose rock and steep terrain forced a change of tactics. We climbed to the top by an easier route and spent several days abseiling down to clean sections of rock and to equip the wall with some anchors.

In December 2009 we climbed the route, which we called Vertical Vice (187m climbing distance, E3/4 6a), with Andrew leading the hardest of the six pitches. The route is trad apart from two bolts that protect the start.

The longest routes in the UAE are in Wadi Ghalilah, notably Barun Wall (600m, TD VI), climbed by Antoine Fabre and Claude Redard in 2001. Hikers visit Wadi Ghalilah to ascend a precipitous path known as Stairway to Heaven, which goes from the wadi floor up to an Omani village on the plateau above. In 2010 I became interested in putting up the first route on the walls next to Stairway to Heaven.

In November 2010, Luke Hefferman and I climbed the lower buttress (305m climbing distance) at HVS 5a. We continued up 300m of scrambling to the start of the upper buttress. It was too late to finish the route, and luckily we were able to walk along a long ledge system to reach Stairway to Heaven and descend that way.

I was encouraged by the good rock and climbing on the lower buttress, and in December I returned with Mat Etheridge. We approached via Stairway to Heaven and climbed the upper buttress, with 360m of climbing (HVS 5a). The saga continued as I returned with Lawrie Brand to try to complete the route in one push. We were starting the upper buttress when a sudden rainstorm stopped us. (This was unlucky as it hardly ever rains in the UAE.) It was exciting to run back along the ledge to Stairway through waterfalls.

Finally, I returned with Pete Meyers in February 2011. We bivied at the start of the route and set off at first light. Thanks to my knowledge of the route, we climbed the whole 16-pitch line in eight and a half hours. We called the route Black Dog (965m climbing distance, including the scrambling; E1 5a or TD VI). This is the longest route in the UAE.

– Peter Thompson, Alpine Club, U.K.

## Images



Peter Thompson on pitch three of Vertical Vice, Red Wall, Wadi Naqab.



Luke Hefferman checks out the big limestone wall in Wadi Ghalilah. The line of Black Dog (965m climbing distance, including scrambling; E1 5a or TD VI) is shown.



The Red Wall in Wadi Naqab, showing the line of Vertical Vice (187m climbing distance, E3/4 6a) and the rappel route.

## Article Details

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