



AAC Publications

Tucupit Point, North Face, Star Planet

Utah, Zion National Park, Kolob Canyon

Back in early 2018, the Kolob Canyon Scenic Drive was about to close for an indefinite period to undergo substantial road repairs, and I was nervous. For years I had enjoyed unfettered access and good fortune, resulting in the opening of multiple new routes and the development of a deep love for the area. Since this road provides the only reasonable access to all the finger canyons, my only option was to run out there before the shutdown, take a bunch of photos, plan, dream, and wait.

Fast-forward two years to another closure, this time due to COVID-19, and I still hadn't made it back to Kolob since I took those photos. Near the end of August, Zion finally reopened Kolob and lifted the pandemic-related climbing ban. The rock was dry, my work schedule was flexible, and I was healthy—this was my opportunity.

I headed straight to a potential line in the center of the north face of Tucupit Point, deep in the North Fork of Taylor Creek. I knew there were beautiful splitters high up on the wall from my old photos, but I wasn't sure if the bottom would allow passage without extensive drilling. On closer inspection, I found a hairline seam that ran to the ground, so I started up the first of a series of seams that cut through a clean, gently overhanging wall.

The first pitch, incredibly steep and smooth, was 200' and took me six days to complete! I almost wrote it off as too thin and considered bailing at several points. In the beginning, only number 1 Pecker tips would work. I'd get up a few placements, then the beaks would rip and I'd tumble down the hill. This went on for an hour or so until I had some luck and managed to string together a series of beak tips that held. I a bolt in around the 18' mark.

Climbing higher on day two, I ripped all the beaks down to the first bolt and jammed my thumb. I gave it one more try before bailing—bolt two went in around 30'. Motivated by self-preservation, I would drill a catastrophe bolt every time I approached ground-fall terrain. Aside from these fail-safe bolts, the occasional hook move, and a few small cams at around 140', the entire first pitch was beaks.

The remaining wall offered vertical to overhanging aid climbing, including seven pendulums (three on pitch two alone), for over 1,000', before it kicked back to just under vertical for the last two pitches.

I recruited Cedar City local Christian Cattell to help finish up the route on day 13. Up to this point, I had done everything solo-aid style, leaving fixed ropes at my high point and returning to the ground each night. The final 400' was less steep and the cracks widened to chimney size, so I thought it would be faster to belay this section out. The strategy paid off and we were on the summit by sunset.

We rappelled the wall, first from a tree and then down the route using fixed anchors. In all, I placed 24 lead bolts and 14 belay bolts.

The wall is approximately 1,300' high, but due to its wandering nature and all the pendulums, it ended up involving over 1,600' of climbing—what a ride! Star Planet (VI 5.11 A3+).

— Karl Kvashay

Images



The northern aspect of Tucupit Point in the north fork of Taylor Creek in Zion's Kolob Canyon region. The line of Star Planet (1,600' climbing distance, VI 5.11 A3+), a new aid line climbed by Karl Kvashay in 2020, is shown.

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