



AAC Publications

Bubbs Creek Wall, East Face, Ikigai

California, Kings Canyon National Park

The 2,000' Bubbs Creek Wall has seen a fair amount of development during the last several years on its main southern face, but the east face had yet to see an ascent. During the socially distant summer of 2020, that's where I set my sights: a massive unclimbed face to explore and try to piece together a line. Between the size of the formation and its distance from civilization, I needed help.

Throughout the summer, Dave Meyer, Cassie Reed, Marec Serlin, and I made frequent weekend trips to the wall, carrying in loads often nearing 70 pounds. Starting in the big chimney that marks the east end of the wall, we climbed ground-up with a mixture of free climbing and aid tactics, fixing ropes as we went. Slowly but surely, we fixed 1,200' of rope to the top of the headwall. On August 22, we pushed into the unknown, without any idea of what was awaiting us. We were ecstatic to find highly featured, beautiful golden granite and low-angle terrain reminiscent of the nearby Charlotte Dome. We topped out to complete the first ascent, then rapped the route.

Our goal was to create a completely free route, so we still had our work cut out for us. Using modern toprope-solo techniques and our remaining fixed lines, we figured out the best free route that connected all the dots. The climbing was fun and the rock required little cleaning. The cruxes tended to be short, mostly no harder than 5.11, with one section clocking in at around 5.12a, which could easily be pulled through on bolts for a super-fun 5.11 A0.

Winter was starting to move in, so our trip on October 24 would likely be our last chance to free the route. With the beta still fresh in our minds, we managed to complete an all-free ascent with daylight still remaining. To follow the samurai theme of the wall and because we felt we had purpose during these unprecedented times, we named the route Ikigai (1,800', 18 pitches, 5.12a), which means "a reason for being" in Japanese.

— Shaun Reed

Panda Express, Free Ascent: In summer of 2020, also on Bubbs Creek Wall, Christian Black and Vitaliy Musiyenko made the first free ascent of Panda Express (2,000', 5.11b), a route Musiyenko and Daniel Jeffcoach first climbed in 2018; see AAJ 2019. They found a variation to the route's one aid pitch featuring overhanging face and varied crack climbing above the bivy ledge. This is now the easiest free route on the main wall.

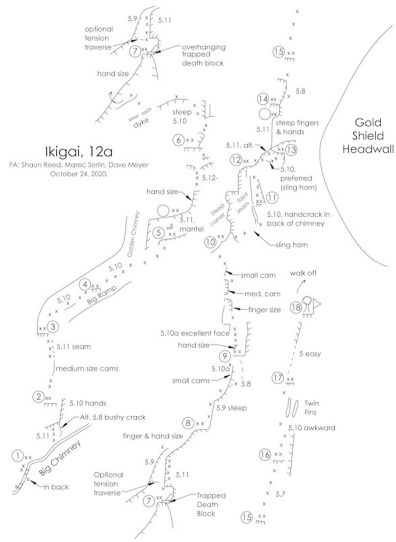
Images



Dave Meyer on pitch 10 of Ikigai (1,800', 18 pitches, 5.12a) on the east face of the Bubbs Creek Wall. Ikigai is the first route to tackle the east face of the formation, and the first free route to be completed in a single season.



Marec Serlin on pitch six of Ikigai (1,800', 18 pitches, 5.12a) on the east face of the Bubbs Creek Wall in Kings Canyon National Park.



Topo for Ikigai (1,800', 18 pitches, 5.12a) on the east face of the Bubbs Creek Wall in Kings Canyon National Park.

Article Details

Author	Shaun Reed
Publication	AAJ
Volume	63
Issue	95
Page	
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions