



AAC Publications

Lady Mountain, Pachamama

Utah, Zion National Park

The northeast face of Lady Mountain (6,945') soars over Zion's Emerald Pools Trail and dominates the view from the Zion Lodge. This monstrous face had held my attention for years, both because it is one of the tallest in the park and because it had only one established route, which doesn't go to the summit. Ghost Dance (15 pitches, VI 5.9 A3+, Haden-Rasmussen, 1995) ascends the far right side of the face and ends where the cracks die and the face tilts back into slabs.

Despite scoping the face dozens of times from Emerald Pools, I could not spot a crack system up the middle of the steep, blank face. By carrying a spotting scope to the top of the nearby classic Iron Messiah, however, I got a whole new perspective and realized there was potential for a summit route far to the left of Ghost Dance, although this too would circumvent the steepest part of the face.

On April 21, Ky Hart and I carried gear to the bottom of what we would come to call the Skirt, a feature that could be considered a subpeak of Lady Mountain, as it is separated from the main face by a deep saddle. We planned a ground-up attempt, with hopes of freeing as much as possible and placing a minimum of bolts. The beautiful fourth pitch proved to be the free climbing crux of our route (5.11b), and Ky led it in exceptional style: onsight and clean. The fifth pitch was just as exceptional, but I aided through an awkward flared chimney. Ky was able to follow the pitch without aid and thought it could be led free at 5.11c.

We bivvied after the sixth pitch, near the top of the Skirt, and the next day crawled and tunneled through very steep, dense scrub oak to the top of the formation. From here, a 200' rappel into the saddle put us under the main face, where we were immediately pinned down by a 24-hour torrential downpour. We bivvied under a tarp that we had inexplicably decided to bring along and watched the rain come down, praying that the thousands of feet of Navajo Sandstone above us would hold together. The ephemeral waterfall above Emerald Pools flash-flooded before our eyes. What should have been a paradise bivy among desert ponderosas felt more like a rainforest as fog set in.

After two wet nights in the saddle, we watched the sun come out and we started up the main wall. (The rock was steep enough that it had stayed reasonably dry.) The first pitch from the bivy wound up being the aid crux of the route at A2: a clean, steep corner with a small crack. Pitch after pitch of good climbing, mostly free, brought us to the east are te, where we bivvied at the top of pitch 12. The next morning, we quickly made our way up five pitches of lower-angle climbing, up to 5.10, following the path of least resistance, to reach the top.

A typically heinous Zion descent followed as we retraced our route to the pitch-12 bivy, then descended gullies to the southeast. It has been alleged that Fred Beckey once said something to the effect of, *If it's got green foliage, it'll hold a man's weight.* We tested this theory again and again as we rappelled off whatever was available. Eventually, we intersected the Lady Mountain Trail and were soon at the Bit & Spur saloon telling lies to old friends.

Although we carried a massive pin rack, we only placed three number 3 Tomahawks, all on pitch eight; all other aid was clean. Regaining the 200' we lost by rappelling into the saddle made for a total of 2,400' of elevation gain on the route. This makes Pachamama (17 pitches, V 5.11b A2) one of the longest routes in Zion, equal to Mike Dunn and Ky's Cowboy Killer (VI 5.10 A4 X), climbed in 2021 on the Altar of Sacrifice. We bolted anchors on pitches five, eight, and nine and did not place any lead

bolts.

– **Matt Ward**

Images



Partial view of Lady Mountain from the northeast. The 17-pitch route Pachamama begins with the Skirt—the butte in center left—then descends 200 feet into a hidden saddle and continues up the headwall and ridge above. Ghost Dance, the only other line on the face, is mostly obscured but ends on the right shoulder of Lady Mountain.



The line of Pachamama (17 pitches, V 5.11b A2) on the northeast face of Lady Mountain.

Article Details

Author	Matt Ward
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	169
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions