



AAC Publications

The Citadel, East Buttress, Babies' First Big Wall

Alaska, Alaska Range, Kichatna Mountains

After months of heavy snowfall in the Cathedral Spires, the storms exhausted themselves and it was our turn. On June 10, Paul Roderick delivered Vincent Lapointe and me to the Shadows Glacier with high stoke and higher atmospheric pressure.

The east buttress of the Citadel with the line of Babies' First Big Wall. Photo: Cameron Jardell
We set our sights on the east buttress of the Citadel (8,520', 62.43391, -152.71451) and spotted a line of weakness on the far left side of the leftmost east-facing wall of the buttress, accessed via a wide snow ledge connecting to the base of the Supa Dupa Couloir (McAleese-Sanders-Turner, 2003; see AAJ 2004). The following day we began our attempt, only to find the feature consisted of exfoliating choss.

We returned the next day (June 12) to start a different line on the same face, right of our first attempt. After a night on the wall, we fixed ropes and retrieved more food and water from base camp before pushing up a 5.10 crack system. The crux was on the third day of the climb, where Vinny climbed an A2 pitch with a pendulum under a barrier roof. This allowed us to exit the vertical face onto easier slab terrain.

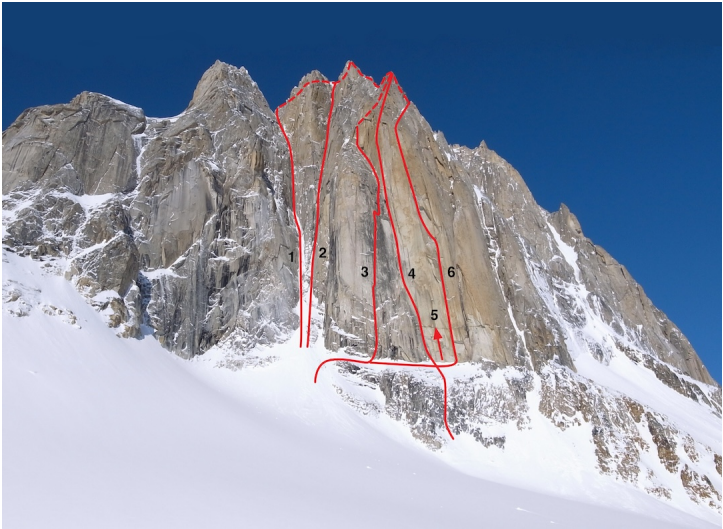
We camped again before launching with light loads to the top of the buttress, mostly on slab pitches that we simul-climbed. We topped out the wall, connecting our route with the East Buttress route (Black-Embick-Graber- Long, 1976; see AAJ 1977), then began rappelling back to our high camp without summiting. On our fifth day on the wall, we finished the rappel descent, watching as an avalanche from the Supa Dupa Couloir narrowly missed our stashed skis. We named our route Babies' First Big Wall (600m, 5.10 A2). We placed one hand-drilled bolt for our portaledge.

With sunshine and warm temps still hovering over the range, we set out on June 19 to repeat the south buttress (Bauman-Lewis, 1984; see AAJ 1985) of Avalanche Peak (6,900', 62.446111, -152.715278), which we summited in a single push from base camp. We found high-quality rock—for the Kichatnas—not exceeding 5.10 A0.

After days of rain and wind, we attempted the west face of a satellite peak north of Vertex Peak, but abandoned the climb in the face of persistent rain.

—Cameron Jardell

Images



The east side of the Citadel, above the Shadows Glacier, showing approximate lines of (1) Hypa Zypa Couloir (2013), (2) Supa Dupa Couloir (2003), (3) Babies' First Big Wall (2025), (4) Last Cry of the Butterfly (2003), (5) the start of Off the Wall Madness (2002), which joined East Buttress partway up, and (6) East Buttress (1976). Routes 3 and 5 stopped on the foresummit; the others continued to the highest point.



The east buttress of the Citadel with the line of Babies' First Big Wall (600m, 5.10 A2). Vincent Lapointe and Cameron Jardell climbed the new route from June 12–16, 2025, to the junction with the east buttress route (Black-Embick-Graber-Long, 1976).



The south buttress (Bauman-Lewis, 1984; see AAJ 1985) of Avalanche Peak is the obvious rock wall.



Vincent LaPointe assessing options on the south buttress of Avalanche Peak (Bauman-Lewis, 1984), which he and Cameron Jardell repeated after establishing a new big-wall route on the Citadel.



Looking north along the Shadows Glacier from high up on the Citadel.



Vincent Lapointe on the upper slabs of Babies' First Big Wall, a new big-wall route on the east buttress of the Citadel in the Kichatna Mountains.



Vincent Lapointe rappelling Babies' First Big Wall on the east buttress of the Citadel.

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