

Czechoslovakian-American Exchange. In September 1982 Mark Wilford, Rick Powell and Matt Kerns visited Czechoslovakia and concentrated on sandstone areas which had been a cradle of free-climbing. In return the American Alpine Club invited us to America. We heartily thank the A.A.C. and all who helped us during September and October of 1983. In 33 days we drove 10,000 miles across the United States from New York to San Francisco and back again. We visited 20 national parks and monuments. We climbed more than 20 routes in rock-climbing areas, which included the Needles in the Black Hills, Devils Tower, Boulder and Eldorado Canyons, Estes Park, the boulders at Horsetooth Reservoir, the Yosemite, Joshua Tree and the Shawangunks. We were enchanted and surprised by American rock climbing. We were enthusiastic about our American friends, disappointed by American beer, amazed, and sometimes even a little sad, about the condition of America's nature as well as towns and cities. Our impressions of our brief and confusing visit are powerful. Country music and hundreds of miles through prairies led us to the Black Hills Needles. Here we followed our eyes and not the guide book to find our routes. The popular Czech climbing "slippers," described by Mark Wilford, were lying peacefully in our bags and our ropes were regular climbing ropes, not ones for "agricultural purposes" which he said were used by some Czechs. The Devils Tower was a stone's throw from the Needles. Because fingers were incorrectly inserted in a crevice, Carol's Crack spat Petr Čermák out. "Coming," he reported. He was moving in a cloud of chalk, though in quite the opposite direction from what he had hoped. He exchanged his boots for "slippers" and his climbing problems were over and done with. Then came Boulder. Our experiences in Boulder and Eldorado Canyons, Estes Park and meeting Mark Wilford and Mark's friends Nick Donally and Jeff Lowe impressed us deeply. (Most of the climbs done here and elsewhere were of 5.9 to 5.11 difficulty.—*Editor.*) We moved to the Yosemite. On El Capitan we chose the West Buttress because the topo in the new Yosemite guide promised free climbing, but we found this far from being true. Petr Brzák climbed the crux on a borrowed rurlp. Pendulums, flake lassoing, bag hauling, falls from pitons, stoppers or Friends—that is the music all climbers know from El Cap. Some of the tunes were new to our ears. Most surprising to us was the lack of fixed protection between the belays. This is not the case in the Alps or in the other areas we had visited before. But we became familiar with the breath of the Wall of Walls. By noon of the fourth day we were giving our thanks on the Thanksgiving Ledge. Coming down, we met Vilda Vilím, who was waiting for us with bottles of Pilsner beer from Rick Powell. At last our photographer Standa Vaněk cheered up a little after El Cap, where he had not been able to photograph anything but his fellows' faces and backsides. Arid Joshua Tree sent a storm on the climbers' heads, just as the Shawangunks did some time later. The weather put an end to climbing. We drove from Tucson to Washington, D.C. in 36 hours. The trip was rather hard work. We slept three to five hours a day, traveled mostly at night, ate a lot of noodles and macaroni, drank a little beer and exposed about 150 rolls of film.

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