

moon! Particularly when you gain altitude, you have the feeling you are in another world: the valley with its yellow sand contrasts with the small red massifs. The colored, very sculpted rock requires a perfect concentration and technique. You are obliged to learn to use your whole body so as not to break a hold. It's more than climbing on your feet. When it's 5.12c, that's not easy.

This is not the hardest route in the world but, due to the quality of rock, the incredible shapes of the holds and the perfect verticality of the wall, it is one of the most singular. The route is well equipped with bolts and rings (special ones made by Petzl), but sometimes it's runout enough to maintain the game of "Oops, here it's really better I don't fall." Compulsory moves are not harder than 6c, and so attempting the route is possible for many climbers.

ARNAUD PETIT, *France*

OMAN

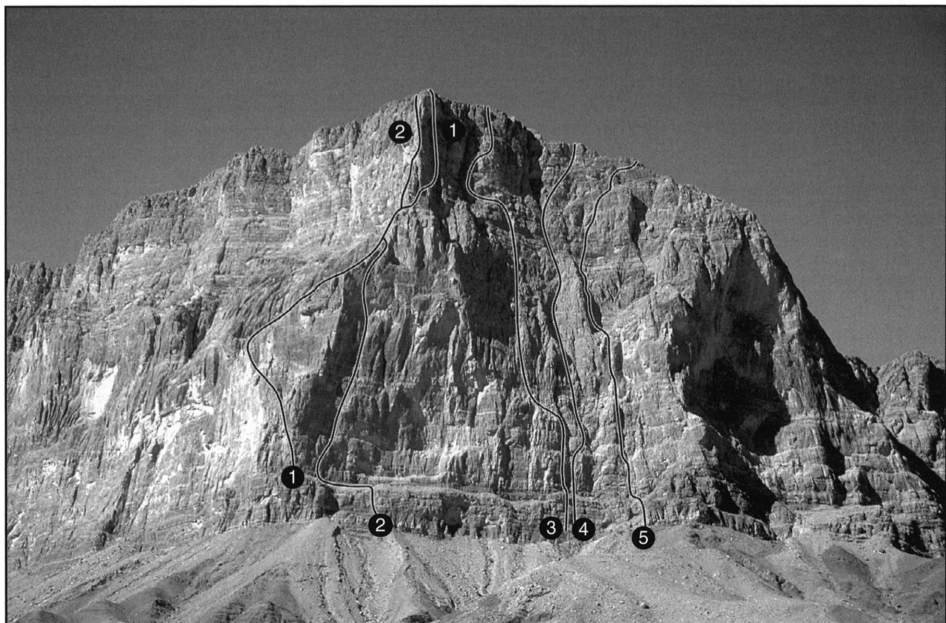
WESTERN HAJAR MOUNTAINS

Western Hajar Mountains, Overview and Various Ascents. The Western Hajar are a range of limestone mountains of varying rock quality. The main walls rise up to 1000 meters and, with respect to technical rock climbing, have been subject to very little exploration. On the southwest edge of the range, overlooking the desert of the Empty Quarter, lie three mountains made up of exotic limestone. This stone provides wonderful opportunities for free climbing in the middle grades, with natural protection on the best limestone.

Jebel Misht has Arabia's biggest wall, as well as having probably the largest continuous expanse of rock. One thousand meters high and seven kilometers wide, it was brought to the world's attention in 1979 by a French team, led by Raymond Renaud, who sieged the curving prow that separates the south and southeast faces. The climb weighed in at 5.10 with 1500 meters of climbing. Rumor has it that the ascensionists received helicopter support during their ascent. This climb was repeated in 1993 by an English team led by Jerry Hadwin, and in the winter of 2001 it received its first one-day ascent, care of Swiss climbers Antoine Fabre and Claude Redard. Fabre lived in Dubai for many years and was responsible for the drive and development of long routes in the Wadi Bih and Wadi Ghalilah areas of the Emirates.

The wall to the right of the French Pillar has become the focus point for harder new routes over the last two years. First off, Tom Nonis (U.S.) and Paul Ramsden added *Eastern Promise*, a 1000-meter 5.10 up the central groove line on the face. Ramsden returned a year later with fellow Brits Aqil Chaudhry and Paul Eastwood to add *The Empty Quarter*, again 1000 meters long at runout 5.10. Two of the remaining lines on the wall fell during the winter of 2001. Geoff Hornby and David Wallis climbed the groove line and wall right of *Eastern Promise*, naming it *Intifada*, at a similar grade, while Pat Littlejohn and Steve Sustad produced *Icarus* by climbing the hanging groove line immediately right of the lower French Pillar and finishing directly up the upper arête. Four stunning routes, all free and without recourse to hammers, pins, or bolts.

The left end of Misht's south face has been overhauled with the addition of half a dozen new routes. A playground of 5.9 territory, this wall provided Hornby, Ramsden, Eastwood, Chaudhry, Wallis, Nonis, and David Barlow with excellent one-day outings, of which *Threading the Needle*



The south and southeast faces of Jebel Misht, showing 1. The French Pillar (5.10, 1500m, Renaud et al, 1979). 2. Icarus (5.11, 1100m, Littlejohn-Sustad, 2001). 3. The Empty Quarter (5.10 R, 1000m, Chaudhry-Eastwood-Ramsden, 2000). 4. Eastern Promise (5.10, 1000m, Nonis-Ramsden, 2000). 5. Intifada (5.10-, 1000m, Hornby-Wallis, 2001). GEOFF HORNBY

and *Snakes and Ladders* are probably the best. Both weigh in at 5.9 and 750 meters in length.

Jebel Misht is now closed to further climbing. Omani wildlife experts obtained closure to encourage the rare Tahir mammal to live and breed in peace. They fear that climbers may drive the animals away and into areas where they may be hunted. This is a ban worth taking seriously (jokes about prison food, etc.).

The second limestone exotic is the vast mountain of Jebel Kawr. This is more of a massif than a mountain, and it extends for 20 kilometers with walls on every side. Access and descents are very involved and require good water planning and management. After two previous attempts, Bill Wheeler, in 1984, succeeded in adding the first route to these walls with his *National Day Climb* on the wall left of the Kawr Tower. Seven hundred and fifty meters of slab and face climbing at maximum 5.7 was the least of the difficulties; the long waterless descent was as close to a disaster as you would want to get. The walls then remained quiet until 1999, when Hornby and Ramsden climbed the prow of the Kawr Tower to give *The Queen of Sheeba* (5.9, 750m), and Nonis and Barlow added *Wadi Girls* (5.9, 500m) up the pillar to the right.

Hornby and Ramsden returned a year later with Eastwood and Chaudhry to attempt the biggest feature on the mountain, dubbed the Kawr Pillar. The pillar was climbed with a bivouac below it on both the way up and down and went at 5.10 and 900 meters of height gain.

Jebel Misfa is the third of the limestone exotics and presents shorter route potential. First blood went to Fabre and Redard with a 12-pitch, 350-meter offering at 5.10 up the pillar right of the summit (when viewed from Wadi Ghul).

Elsewhere, the range has started to produce new routes on many of the accessible walls and pillars in the Nizwa area and in Wadi Tiwy. With the closure of Misht, it looks as if future exploration will be centered on these other areas. Needless to say, the ethic of climbing free and without man-made holes is the only acceptable way as far as the local people are concerned.

GEOFF HORNBY, *The Alpine Club*

MOROCCO

Peak 4040m, New Route. On April 18, Tomas Gomez Gomez and Massimiliano Montemagno (Spain) established the new route, *Eva se Desespera* (V+ 75°, 645m), on Peak 4040m, near Afellah N'Ouanoukrim in the Western Atlas. Further details are lacking. (Servei General d'Informació de Muntanya)

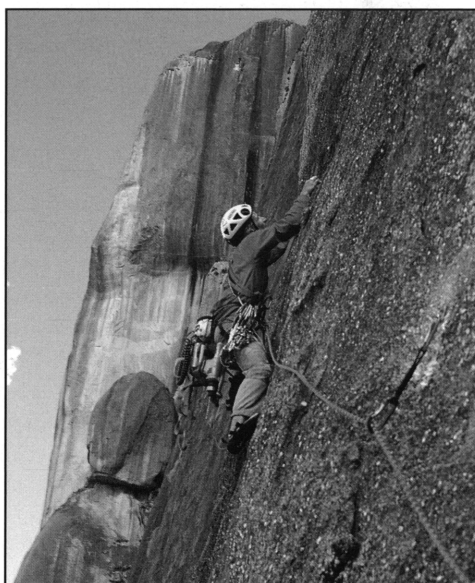
MALI

Matakoyaré, Northwest Face. On January 26, Toni Galvan, Joan Sole, and Jenny Lafarga (Spain) established the new route *Buen Rollete Dogoncete* (6a, 300m) on the northwest face of Matakoyaré. The peak lies along the route from Banako to Gao. Further details are lacking. (Servei General d'Informació de Muntanya)

MADAGASCAR

Andringitra National Park

Tsaranoro Kely and Pic Dondy, New Routes, and Other Ascents. A Polish expedition visited Madagascar from mid-August until the end of September. Bogusław Fic, Tomasz Samitowski, Krzysztof Zielinski, Waldemar Niemiec, and Michał Zielinski, with Marcin Jamkowski as a climbing cameraman and photographer and Marzena Hmielewicz as a photographer and journalist, climbed various established routes and put up two new ones. Fic and Samitowski climbed the route *Ebola* (6b+) on the Lemur Wall onsite at the beginning of their trip. They found the rock to be superb. Fic and K. Zielinski repeated *Pectorine* (6b A0), another brilliant route on the same face. On the east face of Tsaranoro Kely, Bogusław Fic, Tomasz Samitowski, and Krzysztof



Bogusław Fic establishing pitch 8 of Cucumber Flying Circus. KRZYSIEK ZIELINSKI