

wind-carved rock formations, before descending left of the climbing line, making full use of our 100m ropes. This expedition was supported by The British Mountaineering Council, UK Sport, Mount Everest Foundation, The North Face, Petzl, and Beal.

ANNE ARRAN, U.K.

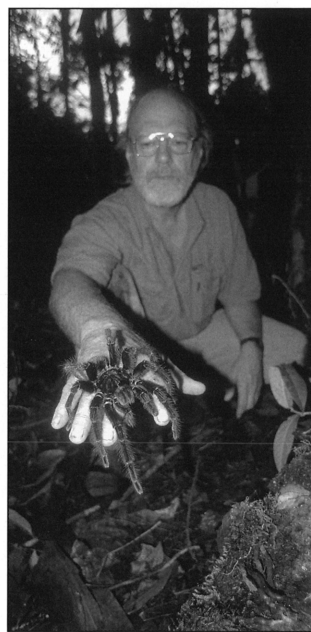
Acopán Tepui, Unate Arête (a.k.a. Racquel Welsh Arête). Louise Thomas, Dave Turnball, Steve Mayers, and I traveled from St. Elena after meeting up with Alfredo Rangel, a local climber who had climbed at Acopán with John and Anne Arran. After flying in we took one days' march through the savanna and jungle to reach the base of the wall. The line was a huge 500m arête which had previously been tried by Italian climbers (70m climbed and bolted). Over 65 days we worked on the line and bivvied on top for a day. We fixed ropes and enjoyed base camp and party life. We aimed to have a holiday, not an epic. One could take portaledge, but with a big team we kept life simple. We did not place any pegs or bolts. It was a very pleasant rock climb, all pitches E2 to E5, all pitches free except the first, which had a few rest points because of a bees' nest. Solid, excellent sandstone, perfect for free climbing, took nuts and cams well. We climbed about 500m in about 20 pitches, including easy scrambling at the top. It's big and bulging and leads to the land that time forgot, hence the route's a.k.a. This is a class venue without a doubt. Acopán is 80 miles in circumference, with only three routes. We also repeated a route on the south tower—Jardineros de Grandes Paredes, 350m, about E3, first climbed by Italians with Venezuelan Ivan Calderon—a fantastic climb. The weather is hot but with a constant cool strong breeze.

MIKE "TWID" TURNER, U.K.

Guyana

Roraima, The Scorpion Wall. My dream of climbing a tepui began more than 10 years ago. An article in National Geographic captured my imagination, with its photos of huge virgin rock walls soaring above a remote, mysterious jungle. Tepuis, I learned, are the remnants of a sandstone plateau that once covered an area of roughly 200,000 square miles in the heart of the Amazon. Over millions of years erosion wore down this plateau and left about 100 table-topped rock formations sticking out of the jungle. The cliffs ringing them range from 1,000' to 3,000' high and extend in some places for miles. Tepuis represent some of the biggest, yet least explored, rock walls on the planet.

In 2001 I received a grant from the National Geographic Expeditions Council to lead a botanist and a biologist up a tepui wall to search for new species. While many people had studied the tops of tepuis, no one had investigated the walls themselves. We originally planned to do the trip in Venezuela, but found it impossible to get a permit from the government. We decided instead to climb and study a tepui



Bruce Means with a giant tarantula he found in camp. Mark Synnott