

climbed and summited all five fingers via their shortest routes in about 11 hours, completing my vision of a desert push. On the final tower of the link-up hundreds of bats began to pour out of the crack we were climbing, and one of the 5.11 cruxes involved manteling a pile of bat dung with a bat carcass embedded in it. At one point a frantic bat slammed into my chest, nearly knocking me off my stance. While the climbing was amazing, by far the most enjoyable and memorable part of the journey was encountering all of the friendly, colorful people from a culture so vastly different from the Western with whom I live.

Statistics: This was the first time the five fingers of the Hand of Fatima have been climbed in one day. The link up involved about 30 pitches, or approximately 3,500 feet of technical climbing, plus much hateful hiking in the sticker-infested, chest-high, “Black Mamba Grass Fields.” The technical crux came on the final tower of the link-up Suri Tondo, which went at 5.11d and involved hand jamming and finger locking in a crack soaked with bird and bat urine, but the bat-dung mantle—complete with half decomposed bat carcass—was DEFINITELY the most memorable 5.11 moment. The first route of the link up was a new route first ascended two days earlier by Jimmy Chin and Evan Howe. This was the most logical and least dung-infested way up the beautiful and slender Kaga Pamari, and yielded three 60m pitches up to 5.10dR, i.e., big runouts on solid 5.10 face.

CEDAR WRIGHT, AAC

Hand of Fatima, further notes to Wright's report. The Hand of Fatima towers close to the town of Hombori within a region mainly occupied by the Fulani tribe. Hombori's unique position shares tribal borders, so the regional market trades between many clans: Dogon, Hogon, Senufo and the still feared Tuareg from the barren Sahara only 70km north. Feared because in recent history they attempted a regional coup and occupied Hombori and the surrounding area, their insurgency finally suppressed by Mali's military.

Cedar Wright secured the Fulani Chief's permission to dwell and climb on their land. Kaga Tondo—the largest “finger”—was our first objective. In native Bambara it translates very simply as “Big Rock.” Kaga Tondo's North Pillar is dubbed the world's longest sandstone route. The rock was of good quality, sometimes brittle and blocky, but never dangerously loose. Most importantly it proved a very, very fun outing. We neared the summit as residents enjoyed their feeding hour: cracks spilled all sizes of birds into the sky, including swifts, hawks, eagles, vultures, and a pair of massive storks with the proportions of a small Cessna. They created a wonderful and unique summit experience.

KEVIN THAW

NAMIBIA

Spitzkoppe, summary. This stunning granite outcrop in central Namibia has some of Southern Africa's finest climbing, with bouldering to 14-pitch trad and sport routes, and delicate face climbing to crazy cracks and chimneys. Spitzkoppe is located in the middle of the Namib Desert, one of the driest places on earth, and due to the hot temperatures it is recommended to climb only between April and September.

The summit of Spitzkoppe was first reached in 1946, and since then the number of routes