

Continuing southeast we detoured for a ski ascent of a 942m-high icecap peak 13km east-northeast of MSM. Our final ascent was of Point 1,078m, 17km southeast of MSM. This involved a pleasant ski across its east glacier. At approximately 832m we discovered what might be a human-built bivy rock wall, potentially prehistoric. Our plan had been to ski down the Mala River, but views of the lower Mala made us nervous. There might not have been enough snow left, so we traveled east, north of the Mala, through a series of side valleys and passes.

On our last night camping, May 29, it rained. Locals said spring arrived several weeks early. The next day we were picked up by snowmobile north of the mouth of the Mala River and returned to Pond Inlet. We thank The North Face Canada and Mountain Equipment Co-op, who generously supported this expedition.

GREG HORNE, *Alpine Club of Canada*

*Exploration and various descents.* The original premise of Brad Barlage's and my trip, from mid-April to mid-May, was to traverse from Pond Inlet, near the northern tip of Baffin Island, to Clyde River, 200 miles to the south. The idea was to use skis and traction kites to cover the large, open expanses of sea ice and link a series of fjords and passes through the heart of Baffin's Big Wall country. After an exploratory trip in 2002, we found the kiting and skiing to be so good that we were looking for bigger and better areas to experiment with.

Unfortunately, we got too much of what we were looking for. After a slow start, the kiting "improved" to the point that we were rocketing along at 30mph with loaded sleds. Much of Baffin's sea ice is smooth, but not all of it, including the patch of pressure ice that flipped one of our sleds into the air, scattered gear all over, and effectively put an end to our traversing dreams.



Brad Barlage searching for couloirs on Baffin Island after the kite skiing proved too much. *Andrew McLean*

Lacking a Plan B and still having three weeks, we began to improvise. The couloir skiing around Sam Ford Fjord and the Walker Spur had been stupendous, so we gambled a few weeks' salary on a Ski-Doo ride out to the Coutts Inlet and Nova Zembla Island area to seek out steep, splitter couloirs. This decision was based on looking at topo maps and trying to guess where good ones might be, a marginally successful strategy.

While they look similar on topo maps, the walls in the northern region aren't quite as high, as steep, or as plentiful as their southern cousins. There are quite a few bulging shields of beautiful granite, but they tend to be split by smaller couloirs that either dead-end or are lower-angle and rocky. Most of the walls are in the 2,500' range, and the skiable lines are few and far between.

After a day attempting to climb the rounded massif of Qiajivik, the highest point in northern Baffin, we climbed and skied a nice south-facing line near the Qiajivik glacier terminus and dubbed it "Nanookie" in reference to polar bear tracks near its base. A day later we packed up and moved east, skiing the premier couloir of the trip along the way, a steep 3,500' north-facing line that we christened "Caribootie."

We spent the next week exploring the convergence area of Coutts Inlet, where we found four skiable lines. All four faced due east and had a sphincter-winking glaze of ice that didn't add comfort to the 45+° angle. The most gripping was the 50°, perfectly straight, narrow chute we named "Pagophile" (ice lover), followed by "Gnarwhal," "Arctic Turn," and "Terror Incognito."

In an attempt at something different, we later skinned over to the shores of Nova Zembla Island, where we weathered a bizarre arctic rain storm for days before finally climbing and skiing Nova Zembla's high point (which may not have an official name) via GPS in a virtual whiteout. The skiing was as bad as it gets: shallow, rotten snow, zero vis, warm, tons of rocks, and generally unpleasant.



Choice couloirs skied by Brad Barlage and Andrew McLean in 2004. *Andrew McLean*

ANDREW MCLEAN

*Mt. Odin, south couloir ski descent.* On April 17 Jim Surette, Ken Sauls, and I left our camp at the Windy Lake shelter, with our sights set on skiing a giant couloir which splits the south face of Mt. Odin. It was first climbed in 1974 by a French team and repeated in 2003 by Canadians, who recommended it as a spectacular descent. At 2,143m Odin is the tallest peak on Baffin Island. It took five hours to climb the couloir to a col at 1,640m. The snow at the bottom was rotten, but in the gully proper it turned solid and even had light powder in some sections. From the col it is another 500m of elevation gain to the summit, via the southwest ridge, with several sections of 5.7. The top part of the couloir is the steepest, at about 35°. The bottom part of the gully is choked with boulders, but we found a line which led all the way to the valley floor, for