

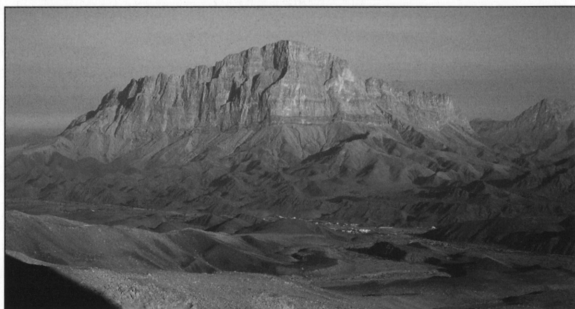
Oman

Western Hajar, various first ascents.

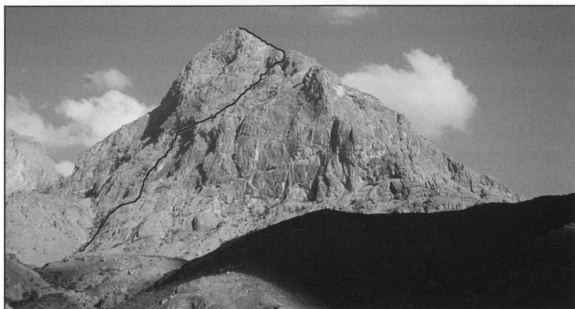
In December 2004 and January 2005, Geoff Hornby (U.K.) and I climbed on the mountain limestone of the Western Hajar. We based ourselves around Wadi Al Ain west of Al Hamra, three hours drive from the capital, Muscat. Thanks to Geoff's extensive knowledge of the area, we were able to climb seven new routes.

Attracted by the huge southern aspect of Jabel Misht (2,090m), we climbed Palestine (800m, TD-), taking the full length of the southeast pillar, via a black band at the bottom and a groove and amphitheater on the upper face. We also climbed Mishts of Time (540m, D) to the right of existing routes on the southwest face. Opposite, on the north face of the isolated Jabel M'Saw, a pyramidal summit between Asala and Misfah, we climbed the first route on the formation, White Magic (570m, TD-), which follows a clean white slab to a surprising traverse through the overhangs. On the east face of Jabel Asait we climbed Buzzy Bee on the loose lower tier and the more satisfying Arch Wall (385m, TD-), which leads to a rock arch on the narrow summit ridge. We finished by climbing the first route on the north face of Jabel M'Seeb opposite the southern pillars of Jabel Kawr. This was the enjoyable Juggernaut (435m, D-), a steep groove festooned with holds.

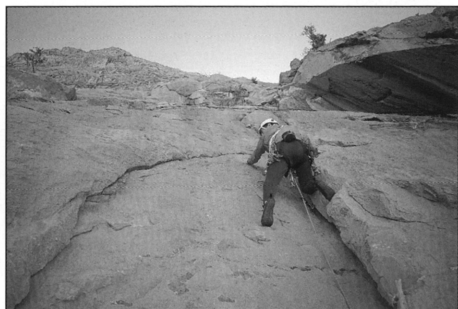
We climbed from the road each day, carrying just a light wind top, a pair of trainers for the descent, a few liters of water, and energy bars. The rock was hard and smooth in water-worn grooves, but elsewhere it was sharply pitted. We descended by long boulder and



The majestic Jabel Misht (2,090m), perhaps Oman's finest "high mountain" rock climbing venue, seen from Hibshe. Facing the camera, the ca. 900m south (a.k.a. French) pillar divides the extensive south face to the left from the steeper southeast face to the right. *Paul Knott*



Jabel M'Saw from the northwest. Marked is the January 2005 British route on the north face: White Magic (570m, TD- F5+). This is the first rock climb on the formation. *Paul Knott*



Paul Knott leading pitch 5 (F4) during the first ascent of White Magic, Jabel M'Saw, Western Hajar. *Paul Knott*



The southwest face—Coxcomb—of Jabel Misht. Routes marked here in the central section of the face are typically in the 5.7 - 5.9 category and around 500m maximum. (1) Tindetinix (Cicogna-Manica, 2003), (2) Watergate (Brachmayer-Precht, 2001), (3) Misht as a Newt (Barlow-Nonis, 1999), (4) Sorely Misht (Hornby-Sammut-Turnbull, 2003), (5) Gorillas in the Misht (Hornby-Ramsden, 1999), (6) Red Misht (Chaudry-Hornby, 2000), (7) Mishts of Time (Hornby-Knott, 2004). *Paul Knott*

scree slopes, which added to the challenge. During our visit heavy rain flooded the roads, and afterwards the temperature was surprisingly cold for several days. Traveling through the country was a pleasure, and we received great hospitality from the people living in the mountains.

PAUL KNOTT, *New Zealand*

Jordan

WADI RUM

Autumn 2005-Spring 2006, summary. In 2005 climbing slowly began to pick up again in Wadi Rum, and just before Easter 2006 many climbers and trekkers were active. Visitors are advised to have travel and sports activity insurance, even if climbing with Bedouin guides, who are unable to obtain rescue insurance. Long-time activist Wilf Colonna, a French guide who runs a Jordanian travel agency, notes that local guides have formed the Wadi Rum Volunteer Rescue Society. They are looking for contributions, so they can purchase much-needed rescue equipment. Donations should be made to Sabbah Eid al Zalabieh, who is looking after the Rum Rescue Fund in the Arab Bank. Guides have identified accident “hot spots” and are training aspirants about hot spots on popular routes, before issuing a guiding permit that will be recognized by the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA). The Guides also hope that the French Mountaineering Federation (FFME) will assist, by providing a technical guiding