



The east face of Jabal Misht (2,090m), one of Oman's finest high mountain rock climbing venues. The face has a strong British history and a selection of routes are marked. British grades are used throughout. (1) English Arête (1,200m, E4 6a, Davison-Oberhauser, 2002). (2) Icarus (1,100m, E4 5c, Littlejohn-Sustad, 2001). (3) The Empty Quarter (1,000m, E2 5a, Chaudhry-Eastwood-Ramsden, 2000). (4) Eastern Promise (1,000m, E2 5c, Nonis-Ramsden, 1999). (5) Intifada (1,000m, E1/E2 5b, Hornby-Wallis, 2001). (6) Southeast Pillar (800m, HVS 5a/5b, Howard-McDonald, 1988). (7) Jerusalem (800m, VS 4c, Hornby-Knott, 2005). (8) Palestine (800m, VS 4c, Hornby-Knott, 2007). *Paul Knott*

It was a pleasure to climb these long mountain routes without having to deal with mountain weather and access (boulder chokes, long talus slopes, and possible flash floods aside). As always the people in the mountains were hospitable, and we found the country safe. In the city the passions we witnessed were due to Oman reaching the semi-final of the Gulf Cup soccer. We met no other climbers during the trip, though during the season, parties from Russia, France, and the U.K. made ascents on Jabal Misht. Oman-based climbers are also developing the potential for shorter, often bolted routes in various wadis. In the mountains almost all climbing to date has adhered to traditional ethics, using natural gear.

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Jordan

WADI RUM

April 2006-April 2007, summary. In April 2006 regulars Walter Haupolter and Albert Precht visited the west side of Jebel Rum and with friends put up three routes: Silver Fox (6a), Pensionier's Tango (6a+), and Jordan Express (6b). These routes were 250-300m high, were climbed in traditional style, and finish on the shoulder of Frustration Dome, north of Sheikh



From left to right, the 500m east and southeast faces of South and North Nassrani, in Wadi Rum. Muezzin is visible as the large crack line toward the right side of the southeast face of North Nassrani. The new American-Canadian route, Dar al Salaam (5.13a) crosses Muezzin to finish up the smooth wall right of Muezzin's final crack. La Guerre Sainte climbs the left side of the same face, finishing up the prominent black water stripe. *Tony Howard*

Hamdan's Siq. During the same month O. Didou, P. Jammeson, and P. Voignier put up Misery and the Banana Skin (5+, 200m) on El K'Seir and two new lines in Barrah Canyon: a single 6b+ pitch left of the classic Merlin's Wand and a 6b pitch right of Siege of Jericho. Also, they suggest that the classic pitch of Little Gem in Rakabat Canyon is nearer 7a.

More new routes appeared in Wadi Rum during October. On challenging terrain in the Barrah Canyon, Thomas Senf and Rolf Weber put up Ehe Auf Zeit on



The two 600m west faces of North (left) and South Nassrani, with the smaller Draif al Murragh to the right. The big new French route (18 pitches, 6c A1, Guillaume-Ravier, 2006) climbs the west face of North Nassrani. *Tony Howard*

Jebel Abu Judaidah. They climbed the 16-pitch route using traditional protection throughout. Pitches 7-15 follow an obvious line up mostly perfect rock at a grade of 5b+ to 6c. The same team added Sex (w)as Well on Abu Judaidah's north gendarme, also in the Canyon. This six-pitch route, with a crux of 6b, mostly follows cracks in good rock but has serious moves on the difficult pitches. Two days later they climbed Ritter der Kokosnuss (6b, seven pitches) on



Tony Howard on the upper slab of The Haj, Suweibit Gharbia, Wadi Rum, during the first ascent. In November 2006 Italians added another route to the left on the same face, a nine-pitch traditionally protected climb at UIAA VII A1. *Di Taylor/Tony Howard collection*

Abu Aina Towers, finishing on the final two pitches of the Edwards' classic, Lion-heart. They report it to be "a classic line on good rock." The following day, still hungry for rock, they almost completed Coitus Interruptus on Vulcanics Tower. The pair climbed three pitches of 6b and 6b+, commenting that they were "too fat for the last pitch." This didn't stop them from making a six-pitch route two days later on Draif al Muragh's east face; Model TV is 6b+ A0 and "a nice line on good rock."

In November an American-Swiss team added a couple of single pitch climbs (both 6a) on the 30m-high granite rock just above Rum village. Two more were put up on sandstone near the Kharazeh rock bridge, northeast of Rum towards the highway. Both were 6a, and for some reason bolts were added afterwards. This team also added two more single-pitch routes "near Obeid's Bedouin Camp at Disi village," again northeast of Rum.

Italians Gianluca Bellin and Andrea Cozzini were in the area during November and added the nine-pitch

L'Alba di Fabio to the south face of Suweibit Gharbia, left of the classic line of The Haj. They used traditional protection throughout, grading two hard pitches UIAA VII A1 and VI A0. The two report the climb to be "a beautiful and varied route on good rock."

In early December two French Pyreneans Arnaud Guillaume and Christian Ravier, moved onto Haupolter-and-Precht territory, climbing the 600m West Face of North Nass-rani over three days. Their 18-pitch route was sustained at 6a and 6a+, with crux pitches just below the summit at 6c and 6b A1. They left nine pitons and 13 bolts in place. The pair then added another route to the Dark Tower on Jebel Rum's east face, between existing classics Mira Khoury and Black Magic. The new five-pitch line had a crux of 6c+.

Over the winter Britains Hugh Cotton and Robert Durran added Southern Star to the south face of Jebel Suweibit, east of The Haj. They reported this seven-pitch route to be excellent and on good rock, with good protection. The pair gave it a U.K. grade of E2 5b, equating the crux to 6a+. They repeated a number of classics over the Christmas period but found "the weather unusually cold, the worst for 12 years." They were caught out on the Traverse of Jebel Rum, a great Bedouin classic, spending two days snowed in under an overhang. At the same time two Italians suffered from "rain, hail and cold," which provided "scary climbing" on the 300m slabs of Orange Sunshine (British VS or French 5) on Jebel Burdah.

The next big route appeared in March 2007, when the American-Canadian team of Aaron Black, Ben Firth, Jean Gamalovsky, Chris Kalous, and Heidi Wirtz put up Dar al Salaam on the southeast face of North Nassrani. This is on the same wall as the Arnaud Petit bolted route, La Guerre Sainte (7b, 12 pitches), which the team repeated. Their new eight-pitch line crosses Muezzin from left to right and gives “sustained climbing on excellent rock with an unbelievable final pitch.” The last four pitches go at 5.10a, 5.10b, 5.12a, and 5.13a (or 5.12/A0). Approximately 60 bolts were placed on this 320m route, though none interfere with the neighboring Muezzin. Kalous redpointed the top pitch on his last day, but the climb is yet to have a continuous free ascent.

Finally, a little note on action elsewhere in Jordan. Climbers have found numerous crags along the length of the Jordan Rift Valley, of granite, basalt, sandstone, conglomerate, and limestone. Some routes are even below sea level (the Dead Sea is 400m below sea level). Though Di Taylor and I have discovered some of the cliffs, the main protagonists are the French, in particular the guide Wilf Colonna and friends. (Wilf spends around six months of each year in Jordan.) Most routes are about 20m high, but a few are between two and nine pitches. Some have been equipped, and it is inevitable that there will be more development.

There are also superb treks and canyons throughout Jordan, though there are dangers: three people were killed in a flash flood during April, in one of the canyons leading to the Dead Sea. Information will be found in *Jordan—Walks, Treks, Caves, Climbs and Canyons* (by Di Taylor and Tony Howard) and *Canyons in the Jordan Rift Valley* (Itai Haviv). Also see *Treks and Climbs in Wadi Rum* (Tony Howard) for routes in Rum. This guide had been out of print for over a year, but a fourth edition was published in May 2007. This recent edition contains most of the Rum classics, and although no new climbs have been added, there is new information on access, and a copy of the Rum Protected Area Guidelines for Safety and Environmental Awareness for Climbers and Trekkers.

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