

Capitan Tajin, in Timrazine Canyon. *Francesco Fazzi*



Daniele Geremia equipping pitch four (7a+) of Capitan Tajin. Nasty loose block to his left was later cleaned. *Francesco Fazzi*

6b obl, 355m). Our new line lies 30 minutes walk from the village, on the true right wall (facing downstream) of the canyon. It is just beyond L'enfant du Sable (7a, 6c obl, 390m, Simone Sarti-Maurizio Oviglia, 2004, on-sight without using bolts) and the giant boulder that blocks the gorge. We climbed and equipped the 320m-high wall in eight pitches from the ground up, using 8mm bolts. The rock is really good, just a bit sandy in places, but the spacing between bolts is often long. While it is possible to rappel the route, it is better to descend on foot. We called it Capitan Tajin (7c+, 7a obl). The fifth pitch is the crux, though pitch six is 7b, and four and seven are 7a+ and 7a respectively. No pitch is easier than 6a+. Everybody who visits Taghia and stays in the *gites* (village guest houses) will understand the route name. The food is great, but not the variety: couscous or tajin, tajin or couscous. Nonetheless, we appreciate it—thanks Hamed!

FRANCESCO FAZZI, *Italy.*

MALI

Mata, northeast face, Akuna Mata-ta. Claudio Mandrini, Paolo Stoppini, Alberto Zanada, and I left Italy on November 28 for Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). From here we traveled almost entirely on dirt routes 380km to Daari, where we stayed at the campground run by Salvador Campillo and his wife, situated next to the Hand of Fatima. We climbed several established lines on the

Hand, which provides a variety of routes. Then, after a couple of days scouting for a new rock wall, we discovered the northeast face of Mata, which was 40km from camp. It took us

three days, December 4-6, to complete our route, which we named Akuna Mata-ta (320m, 7b). The route is bolted, but a good selection of cams and micro-Friends is essential. We were pleased with the rock throughout, and the quality of climbing. It's an elegant line with a high degree of exposure; we couldn't have asked for anything more.

ALBERTO ZUCCHETTI, *Italy*

NAMIBIA

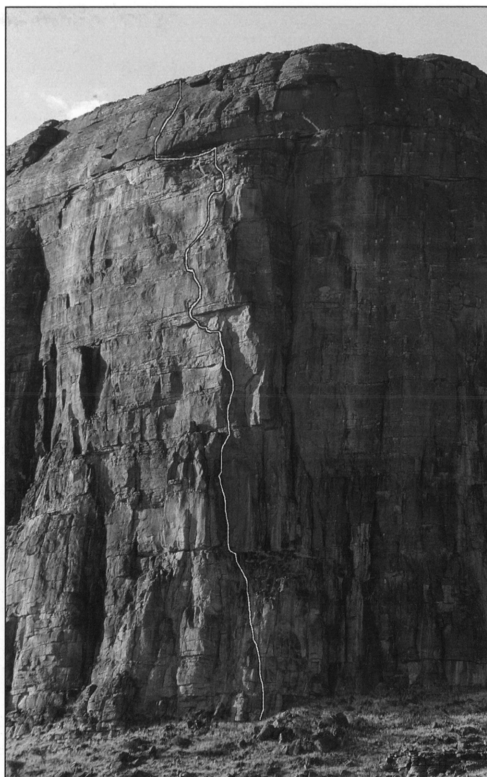
Brandberg, Southern Crossing. Bushes, bird excrement, snake paranoia, exfoliating faces, incipient seams—all to get to one perfect crack climb. Throughout May, Peter Doucette, Kate Rutherford, and I explored Namibia. Chris Alstrin and Gabe Rogel joined us to document the trip. At the end, on our last possible climbing day, we completed a first ascent of Southern Crossing, a V 5.11+ (South Africa grade 26) on the Orabeskopf Face of Brandberg, Namibia's highest mountain. It took seven days of work to find the line, clean it, and do a one-day ascent.

Namibia is not known for its climbing, which is why I wanted to visit. Better known as Africa's newest independent country, Namibia is the continent's largest source of uranium and diamonds and the locale of the Namib Desert, the Skeleton Coast, and tribal peoples. In the middle of the country lies Spitzkoppe, with over 80 established climbs. When I heard about it, I wondered where else in Namibia it might be possible to climb.

War, apartheid, and remoteness have combined to discourage exploration of many of Namibia's vertical landscapes. When I saw an out-of-focus photo of a 2,000' granite prow, with a mud Himba hut in the foreground, I knew I'd found my objective. The Himba are southern Africa's largest pastoral tribal group and have maintained their distinct cultural identity despite being on the borderline of battle, resources, and landscape. I wanted both things I saw in that photo: the culture and the climbing.

First we visited Spitzkoppe, an 1,800' granite dome with slab climbs reminiscent of Joshua Tree. We climbed there, then moved north, driving five long days on dirt roads to reach the Marienfluss Valley and the granite prow. It took only 15 minutes to realize that our 2,000' objective would be unwise. We were now 18 days into our expedition. We turned to the Himba instead and learned that a 200' 5.7 was just as valid as a 2,000' 5.12 when it comes to cultural connection.

We drove south. Plan C was a trip to the Brandberg and a granite face called the Orabeskopf: 1,500' of pure rock to a 7,200' summit. It is steep, riddled with cracks, and in the shade



Akuna Mata-ta on northeast face of Mata. *Alberto Zucchetti*