

Climbing in South Greenland 2015, July 1-30

Bringing the spirit of freeclimbing to the 1200m sheer west face of the remote Ulamertorsuaq in Greenland was the goal of this two-person-climbing. Silvan Schüpbach and Bernadette Zak, both from swiss city Thun tried hard to free a never repeated and barely protected aid bigwall route. After 10 days on the wall during two attempts, the couple managed to climb to the summit, struggling with high difficulties and dangerous runouts.

Delayed Start

After their arrival in Nanortalik on July 2, the climbers have been informed that the ship freighted gear will not arrive before July 6. This basically meant a delay of one week to the already tight-scheduled expedition. The day after the basecamp was reached, July 7, they already started to climb. The first 500m of the route Piteraqa are barely protected and included many mandatory and dangerous runouts on spaced bolts and gear. July 9, the climbers reached the so called heart where the wall steepens up. Hard and steep climbing on an exposed pillar led the swiss climbers reach a portaledge bivy 6 pitches from the top, having freeclimbed every pitch until there. But the next morning, July 10, it snowed, the wall got wet and the climbers had no more food and water left to wait for better weather. So they had to retreat.

Second Go

As the last part of the route Piteraqa is in common with the known route War&Poetry, the climbers decided to climb War&Poetry to the top and climb the remaining pitches of Piteraqa by reaching from the top. From July 15. to 18., they climbed War&Poetry to the top with Schüpbach onsighting all hard pitches (up to 7c). On July 19. the climbers started to freeclimb the remaining pitches of Piteraqa. On one of the hardest pitches, the original line went up a blank wall with bathooks. Despite a natural and freeclimbed feature was found, there was still a blank traverse of 3m making it impossible to freeclimb this pitch within the remaining time and strength of the well tired climbers. So the entire free ascent remains a future challenge.

Other perspectives

The remaining days in Greenland, the couple spent their time exploring many of the other Fjords in the area by a small zodiac boat. It seemed to them that there is still a big potential for new routes on good rock.

Piteraqa free attempt: 7c, R, X, 1200m, with a 3m pendulum at Pitch 22

