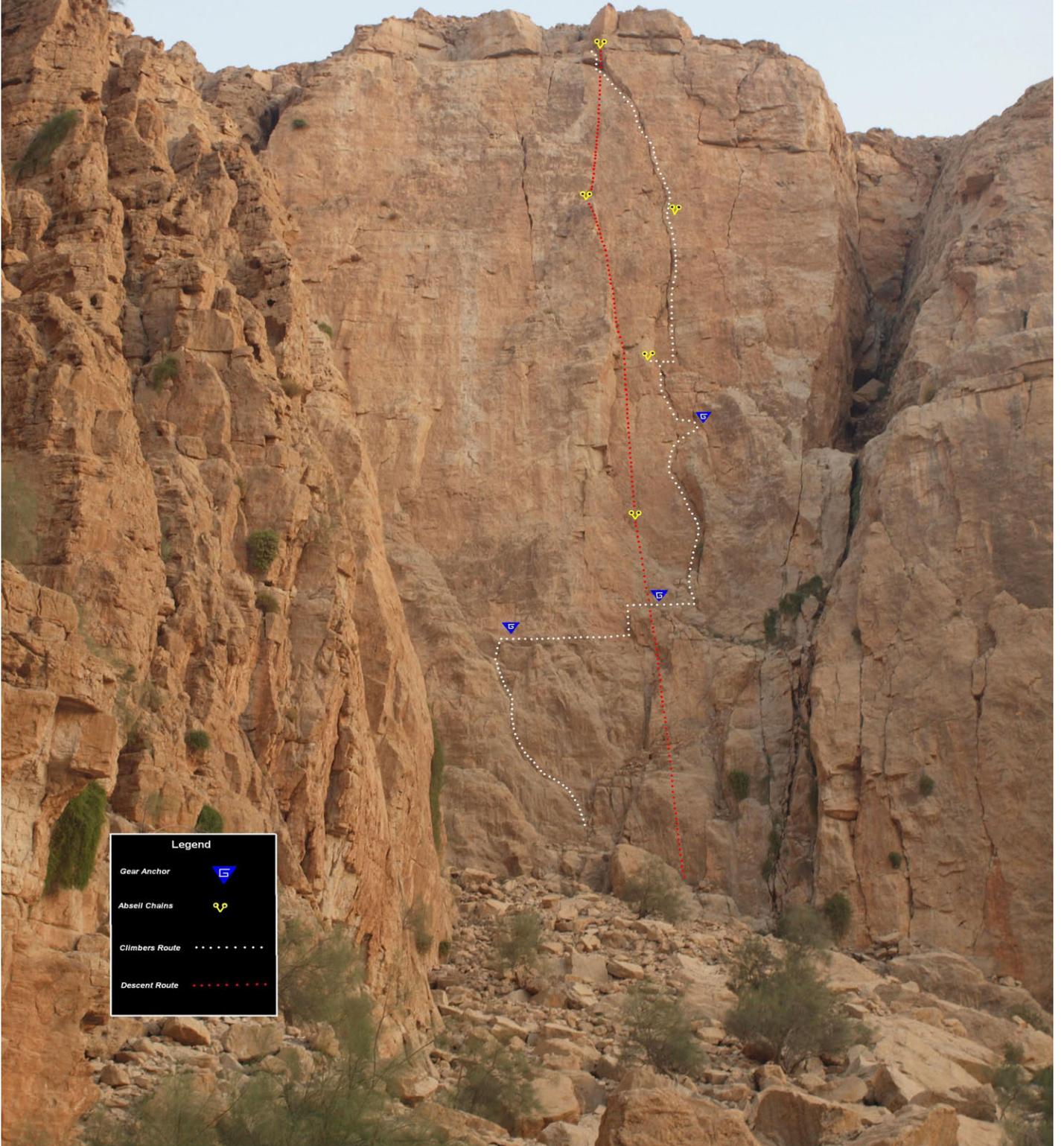


# Red Wall - Wadi Naqab

Vertical Vice E3/4 6a 187m (tentative grade)

F.A. Andrew LaBonte & Peter Thompson December 18, 2009



**Legend**

- Gear Anchor 
- Abseil Chains 
- Climbers Route 
- Descent Route 

## **Climbing in Wadi Naqab**

Red Wall seems to be the result of a sudden event of mass erosion when a large piece of the mountain fell off, leaving behind an almost completely vertical face with a large boulder field below. It is likely that because of a geological event such as this, Red Wall looks distinctly different from other mountain sides in the UAE that have been slowly weathered, leaving behind many terraced ledges.

John Gregory and Dee McEnery were the first people to attempt a route in Wadi Naqab some time in the late Nineties but were unable to complete the route because they lacked the gear needed to protect the wide cracks. Peter Thompson rediscovered the wall in early 2009 when he was hiking in the area. There is potential for several more long challenging lines on Red Wall and the wall beside it. There is even more potential for quality 1-2 pitch crack routes within close proximity to Red Wall.



### **Some info on the route**

We attempted to climb the route twice in a ground up style but a combination of loose rock and steep terrain on the 5<sup>th</sup> pitch forced a change of tactics. After this set back, we spent several days over the next few weekends climbing to the top by a different route, and abseiling down the cliff face to clean the certain sections and equip the route with abseil chains in some places.

Even though the route was cleaned on abseil prior to the ascent, the remote nature of the cliff made it impossible to clean it completely. Our cleaning efforts were concentrated on removing the odd 'death block' stuck to the wall with mud

and clearing the cracks of flaky rock inside that might cause gear placements to fail. You can trust the gear placements but like every where else in the UAE, test the face holds before you pull on them. The more you use the crack, the more secure you will feel.

Allow two hours for the approach and two hours to walk out. The route took us eight hours to climb and one hour for the abseil descent. So bring headlamps and plenty of water.

## **Getting There**

- Approach as for Wadi Bih.
- At the Lantern Roundabout turn right towards the airport.
- Turn left (i.e. U-turn and turn right) at Time Motors after 5 km.
- Turn right at the Archirodon Construction sign after 4.1 km.
- Turn left at the Archirodon sign after 2.5 km.
- Turn right on the dirt track by the tree just before the quarry entrance after 5.3 km.
- Turn right on a gravel track up the wadi bed (300m before a beige steel structure) after 2.7 km.
- Park at the flat area near the end of the track at [correct gps coords not available] after a few km or at the small stone house a little further on.



## **Approach**

- Walk along the dirt track for a little while until you get to where it has been washed out
- When you are facing two large wadis, take the one on the left then keep walking along the river bed
- After about an hour of walking from the car you should reach a large boulder field with a big cliff in the background. (approx 5 meanders in the channel are now between you and the car)
- Go a short distance (10-20m) into the boulder field on the left side, then cut back left to a scree gully marked by a cairn.
- Climb the scree gully to a terrace marked by a cairn.

- Follow this rightwards on a goat path until it meets the river bed again above the boulder field.
- From here walk across the river bed and up to the cliff face keeping left.

## **Gear**

- 2x 60 m Ropes
- 1 complete set of nuts
- 1 full set of cams from 12mm (green alien) to 0.75 inch (green camalot) plus:
- Doubles of size 1 and 2 (red and gold BD)
- Four 3 inch cams (blue BD)
- Three 4 inch cams
- Lots of slings

On cams: You will need a lot of big cams. The crack goes for a long way without changing size in the last two pitches. Taking a single set of cams and hoping to slide the same piece up for a distance or beefing up the rack with lots of hexes is not advised. Don't bring a knife to a gunfight.

## **Route description**

**Vertical Vice** E3/4 6A 187m (Tentative grade awaiting consensus)

**Pitch 1:** Climb past 2 bolts to gain the right facing corner. Follow this until you reach a long ledge that extends to your right. Belay from here. (5a 35m)

**Pitch 2:** Walk across the ledge and climb the chimney to a big ledge (easy 25m)

**Pitch 3:** Jam your way up the hand crack in the flake/corner feature. Once above the flake keep going right until the flake is wide enough to sit on and you can make a belay with small wires in a vertical crack. (5a 40 m)

**Pitch 4:** Delicately traverse back left at the same level as the belay. Then go up the slightly overhanging crack to reach a bolt anchor on the last ledge you will encounter before the top. (5c 15m)

**Pitch 5:** Starting about 2 m right of the anchor, climb between the two finger cracks that widen higher up. When you are close enough to the corner, make bridging moves for as long as you can before committing to the steep crux. Swing through the right slanting crack on good jams until you can recover in the chimney before the final push to the chains. Top tip: Save 2 quick draws and an 8 foot knotted sling (or daisy) so that you can hang the cached "bosun's chair" a comfortable distance below the chains for the hanging belay. (6a 35 m)

**Pitch 6:** Follow the crack past two over laps then up through the sustained vertical wall with wild exposure all the way to the corner. Float up the corner then out and over the final roof to reach a ledge and the rappel chains. Gear Note: Three and four inch cams are the only protection you will get between the over laps and part way up the final corner, use them sparingly. (5c 37m)

## **Descent**

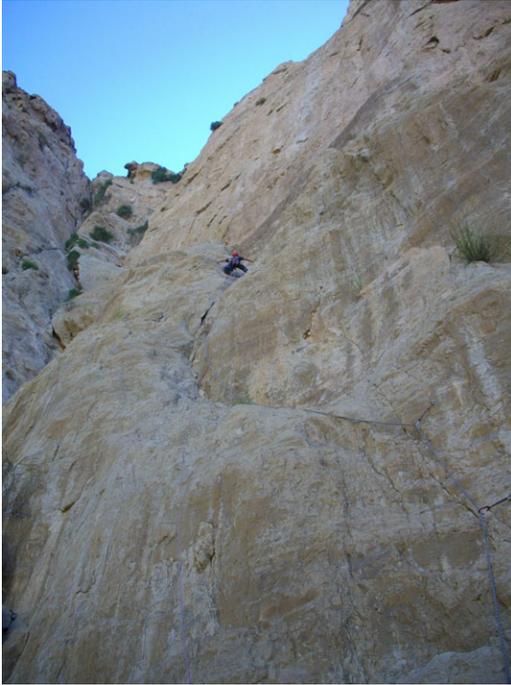
From the last belay station abseil straight down to a flat ledge the size of a picnic table about 35 below. From here make two more 60 m abseils to get back to the ground. Put knots in the ends of your rope.

**Warning!** When pulling your ropes after the last abseil it is easy for it to catch around some loose rock that is balanced on one of the ledges that are not on route. So before you pull your ropes down (with some rock) at the end of the descent, stand far back and off to the side. There are plenty of big over hanging boulders to hide behind when doing this. Keep your helmet on.

## **Bailing**

If you need to retreat from anywhere in the first three pitches you will have to leave some kit behind. If retreating from the top of the fourth pitch it is possible to reach the lowest abseil station if you go straight down until you are level with it then pendulum over to the left. Bailing from the top of the fifth pitch is also possible but requires that you start pushing off from the wall (army style) once you are below the bulge so that you can swing in once you are level with the ledge. If you don't do this you will just be hanging in space with the wall out of reach.

**Some photos from the first ascent**



*Top left:* Pete Thompson leading the dihedral on the first pitch

*Top right:* Andrew LaBonte on the fourth pitch

*Bottom:* Andrew LaBonte belaying from a 'bosun's chair' after leading the fifth pitch



*Top:* Pete Thompson leading the third pitch. The cracks making up the next two pitches can be seen above.

*Bottom:* The exposed sixth pitch, as viewed from an adjacent ridge. (This photo was taken on a day spent cleaning and equipping the route.)

