

Press Release For Immediate Use
4th August 2016
Faroe Islands

Troll Finger Expedition Successful

A team of rock climbers from New Zealand has established a new route on the iconic Trøllkonufingur - a pillar of rock towering above the North Atlantic Sea on the coast of Vágur, in the Faroe Islands. The previously unclimbed face is extremely steep, with the summit standing over 300m directly above the ocean, with little or no horizontal relief.

“You could drop a stone from the summit and it would land in the water,” said local climber and expedition liaison Absalon Eysturoy.

The trio of Jack Grinsted, Dave McKinney, and Jase Blair climbed the 313m seaward face. They spent 5 days on the wall, completely self-sufficient with food, water and equipment. This followed a previous attempt during which they established the first two pitches (rope lengths), but retreated due to deteriorating weather.

The climb was extremely demanding. It involved 12 pitches of: sustained, challenging route finding; aid and free climbing; and difficult rock and weather conditions. The team reached the summit at 12.12am on the 31st of July, 2016. Darkness forced the team to wait just below the summit for 3 hours, before descending to pack up their camp, removing all equipment and waste.

“This expedition has been two years in the planning, and it feels incredible to have achieved our goal,” said team leader, Jack Grinsted. “It was more difficult than any of us expected, and took every ounce of strength and willpower we could muster.”

The climbing was a combination of: free climbing - using equipment only for security in the event of a fall; and aid climbing - using equipment to advance progress up the rock. A mixture of traditional (removable) protection and permanent bolts were employed. Bolts were used sparingly, mainly for anchors between pitches, and placed on lead. The challenging nature of the climbing meant the climbers were on the wall for longer than anticipated, and the team ran out of food after day three. On day four, the 30th of July, the climbers made a final push for the summit, starting at 6am, and returning to camp 26 hours later at 8am on the 31st.

“Climbing the Trøllkonufingur has been a truly wild experience. Sharing tiny rock ledges with hundreds of puffins and other seabirds was an incredible privilege,” said Dave McKinney. “It’s been an unforgettable trip.”

“I came to take photos, but found myself leading one of the most difficult pitches of rock I have ever faced,” said team photographer Jase Blair. “This expedition tested us all to our limits, and I couldn’t ask for better teammates with which to tackle that challenge.”

One of the particular challenges the climbers faced was getting from the boat onto the vertical rock face, along with 100 kilograms of equipment, food, and water. This required very calm sea conditions to get both on and off the route. Weather was significant factor overall, with local conditions being very changeable and difficult to predict.

The climb was made possible by an Sport New Zealand Hillary Expedition grant. The Hillary Expeditions provide support for New Zealanders to take on exciting, world-first adventures in the great outdoors.

The Troll Finger Team would like to acknowledge the support they have received from a range of individuals and organisations, both on the Faroe Islands and in New Zealand. In particular, Absalon Eysturoy and his family have been instrumental in making this ascent possible. Eysturoy is a Faroese climber living in Copenhagen, who was the instigator of the project and initially a climbing member of the team. He climbed with the team on the first attempt, but was unable to join them a second time. The expedition would not have happened, much less been successful without Eysturoy, and his family's support. The support crew also included Lis Ridley, another New Zealander, who provided essential logistical and communications support to the team during the ascent.

"This has truly been a team effort," said Grinsted. "We all gave everything we had to the climb, and could not have done it without the help and support of the everyone who has got behind us."

"The people of the Faroe Islands have been famously hospitable," said McKinney. "We have been embraced with a warmth and enthusiasm that is humbling and special."

Grinsted, McKinney and Blair would like to thank their major sponsor, Sport New Zealand. Additional thanks to the New Zealand Alpine Club, Atlantic Airways, Earth Sea Sky, Aspiring Enterprises, Health Discovery Co., Hilti NZ, Canon NZ, Just Jerky, Samsung NZ, the West Coast Alpine Club, Greymouth Camera Club, Moana Road, Blue Shadow, and Jógvan Weihe.

For further info, images, or video content please contact Jase Blair on +298 59 66 40 before 11am NZ time, or jase@katabatic.co.nz

Team members are available for interviews.

Absalon Eysturoy is originally from Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, and currently resides in Copenhagen, Denmark

Jack Grinsted is originally from Nelson, and currently resides in Christchurch, NZ

Jase Blair is originally from Tauranga, NZ, and currently resides in Greymouth, NZ

Dave McKinney is originally from Wellington, NZ, and currently resides in Aviemore, Scotland