# HA LING PEAK

The impressive north face of Ha Ling Peak is a prominent landmark in the Bow Valley near Canmore. It has inspired countless ascents of the mountain via its easy southern slopes, supposedly beginning with that of Ha Ling, a person of Chinese descent. The original name of Chinaman's Peak has been changed recently to more respectfully commemorate this ascent although it is still very widely used.

The face was one of the earliest major features in the Bow Valley to be climbed and the original 1961 route up the northeast face is now a popular rock-climbing route that goes directly to the summit. Other climbs have been added over the years on the true north face of the peak, but considerable scope exists for more. All the routes are long and serious undertakings particularly as bad weather tends to approach unseen from the southwest side of the mountain.

The climbs on Ha Ling Peak are reached from the earth dam at the north end of Whiteman Pond (no name change, as yet), a small lake on the Spray Lakes road, at the top of the hill overlooking Canmore. It is no longer possible to park at the dam itself and presently, cars must be left a few hundred metres farther south at a wide pullout next to the lake. The same parking area is used for Kanga Crag and EEOR.

## Approach



Ha Ling Peak from the Whiteman Pond dam. Viagra Point is the shaded cliff in the bottom right.

Walk across the earth dam and climb over a gated, chain-link fence. Continue to the end of the road and then turn right past the fence surrounding the water intake structure and follow a small trail up through trees. After about 50 m, turn right at a T-junction with a larger trail and continue along this for about 20 m to a small cairn on the left marking a side trail that climbs directly up the hillside. The trail passes through some large boulders and then turns right and contours over to an open slope. At this point the lower cliff bands (Viagra Point) are visible directly ahead and may be reached by staying low and contouring across the scree. To reach the main cliff, follow a good trail that diagonals across the slope and then zigzags up near the edge of the trees before moving up to the base of the cliff. It is strongly recommended helmets be worn at least for the last part of the trail below the Northeast Face route. The climb is still quite loose and parties on the climb cannot see the trail below.

#### Descent

A good hiking trail has recently been constructed on easy slopes on the southwest side of the mountain. From the summit follow the trail down left (south) initially and then across right for some distance to the treed shoulder overlooking the Spray Lakes road and the Goat Creek parking area. The trail zigzags down a steep, wooded hillside and leads to a bridge across the diversion canal at the foot of the mountain. The Spray Lakes road is a short distance ahead and a 1.3 km walk leads back to the Whiteman Pond dam.

To return to the base of the cliff, steep slopes on either side of the mountain may be descended although the route in neither direction is straightforward. Descent of the large, slabby bowl on the east side of the peak involves complex routefinding and sections of exposed down-climbing. It is recommended only for experienced parties although the lower section, below the large ledge on the Northeast Face, is less serious and can be used to retreat from that route in an emergency. Broken slabs and cliff bands on the west side of the peak offer a similarly tricky means of descent although with increased traffic a satisfactory route may become established. To descend in this direction, follow the hiking trail down to the shoulder overlooking the Spray Lakes road and then head north to the top of broken slabs above the lower cliff bands of Viagra Point. Scramble down through the slabs and then follow a long series of ledges that lead over to the right (east) and almost connect with the scree slope at the base of the cliff (see photograph of Ha Ling Peak from the Whiteman Pond dam). Either rappel or down-climb a small scoop to reach easy ground (a bolted station would be useful here).

Northeast Face\*\* 450 m, 5.6

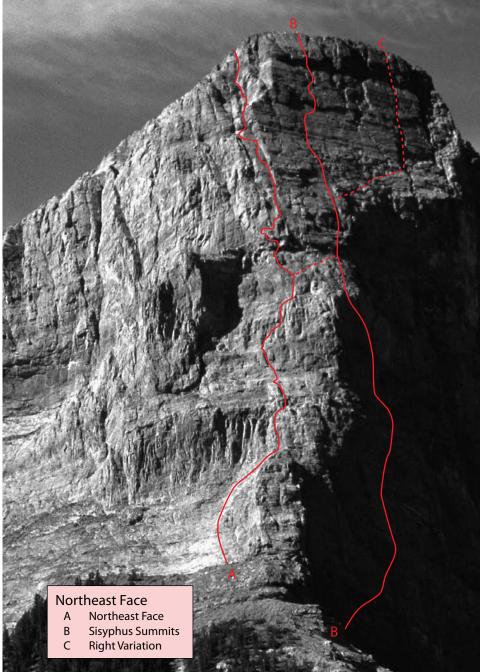
B. Greenwood, G. Prinz, D. Raubach & W. Twelker, July 1961

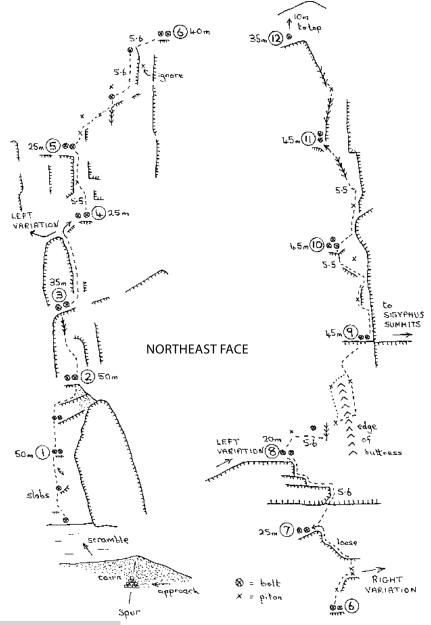
This classic route follows the buttress between the North and Northeast faces and provides interesting climbing in a fine situation. Two practically independent lines have been done, but

the best route is a combination of the two and this is described here as the principal means of ascent. Nowadays the route has a lot of fixed gear but it remains a serious undertaking with loose rock at stances, dubious pitons and a propensity for attracting afternoon thunderstorms. There have been numerous epics and even fatalities on this climb and it deserves respect from inexperienced parties. Pitons are not required but take a reasonable selection of gear, a few long slings and preferably two ropes in case of retreat.

Start Follow the trail beneath the face to a cairn on the spur beneath the buttress. Go around to the left for about 25 m and scramble up and slightly left on easy ground to the base of some slabs. A bolt marks the start of the climb that is about 15 m left of a long, left-facing corner.

- 1-2) 100 m Climb fourth class slabs left of the left-facing corner system and continue up right to scree ledges on the edge of the buttress. The route passes three bolted stations at 25 m intervals. Move up to a final bolted station at a break on the edge of the buttress.
- 3) 35 m, 5.4 Move right and climb the front of the buttress to a short groove that leads to a bolted station at a ledge.
- 4) 25 m, 5.4 Climb an easy corner on the right-hand side of a broad pinnacle and move up right at the top to a bolt belay.
- 5) 25 m, 5.5 Climb up to a shallow corner (piton) and continue up to a ledge and bolt belay.
- 6) 40 m, 5.6 Climb up diagonally right over shattered corners past a number of pitons and a bolt to a short, right-facing corner just before a longer left-facing corner system that comes up from below. Climb the steep wall left of the short corner to a bolt and then traverse right across the top of the corner system to a ledge and bolt belay on the edge of the buttress.
- 7) 25 m, 5.4 Continue up to a ledge 7 m higher (pitons) and then go up and diagonally left on a broken corner/ramp to a small bolted station on the left.
- 8) 20 m, 5.6 Move up and right slightly to an obvious break in the impressive band of overhangs immediately above and climb through this on good holds to a ledge system. Move left and go up to a large ledge 5 m higher (bolt belay). This ledge is also reached by the Left Variation.
- 9) 45 m, 5.6 Move up above the belay and then traverse right across a slab (bolt) to a short corner. Continue up and right onto the edge of the buttress (exposed) and then go up its right (or left) side to a ledge at the base of the long, upper corner system (bolt belay). The final pitches of the sport route Sisyphus Summits can be reached from here by an easy traverse right around the edge of the buttress. These lead directly to the summit, the hardest pitch being 5.10a.
- 10) 45 m, 5.5 Climb the corner for about 25 m until it is easier to move onto the left wall. Go up past a piton and rejoin the corner higher up. Move out left on a small ramp (piton and sling on the wall above) and climb an awkward little runnel to a bolt belay.
- 11) 45 m, 5.5 Move back right to a bulge in the corner and climb the easy left wall. Continue up a short, loose corner (piton), and then step across left and climb an easy groove to a bolt belay.





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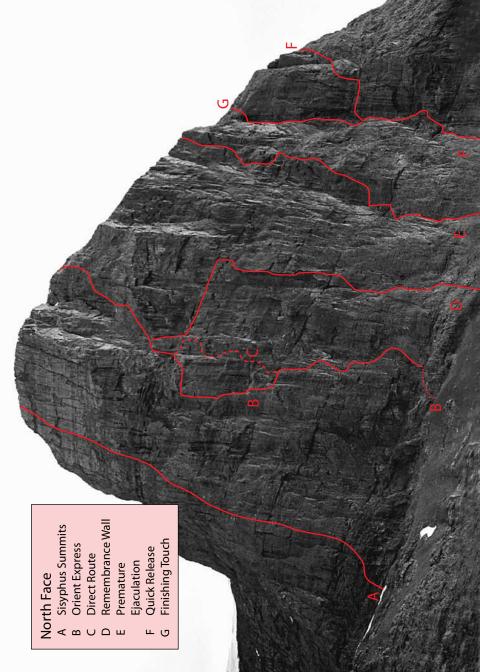
The overhang on pitch 8 of the Northeast Face. Climber Chris Perry.

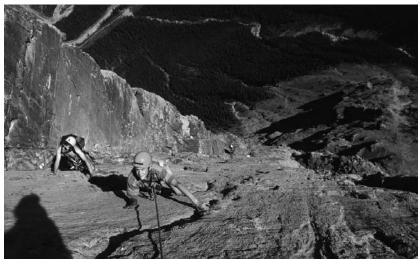
12) 35 m, 5.4 Continue up the groove above and move up left past a piton into the final corner. Belay at a single bolt a short distance below the top.

#### Left Variation:

This was the line followed on the first ascent and provides an alternative, but not recommended route for the middle section of the climb. It is rarely done and has little fixed gear.

5-7) 140 m, 5.6 From the belay at the top of pitch 4, move back down to the top of the broad pinnacle, and climb left and up over short slabs and cracks to a ledge about 60 m below a





The big dihedral near the top of the Northeast Face. Climber lan Perry.

large, conspicuous ledge on the left side of the buttress. Bypass an overhang on the right and continue up the wall, trending left (loose rock), to gain the large ledge near its left end. Walk right to the bolt belay at the top of pitch 8 of the normal route where the ledge joins the main wall.

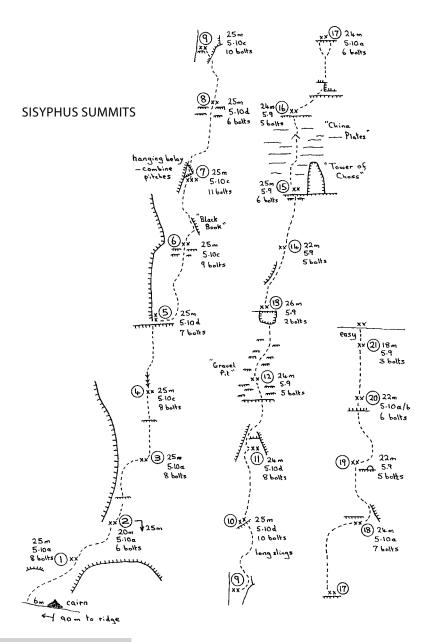
## Right Variation:

This alternative finish traverses right below the band of overhangs above pitch 7 of the normal route, breaks through them, and climbs the huge upper slab to the top of the mountain. Like the Left Variation, it is rarely done and currently pitons are required.

- 50 m, 5.5 To pass the overhangs above, make a long traverse right to a small belay below a short, steep corner immediately beyond a section of slabs.
- 8) 55 m, 5.7 Climb the rib on the right and continue up and then slightly left to a short layback crack (the pitch may be split here). From the top of the crack, go up slabs to a big horizontal ledge (piton). Sisyphus Summits crosses the route at this point.
- 9-10) 75 m, 5.3 Move right to a pillar, climb halfway up behind it, then traverse a long way right past a crack to the base of an obvious chimney in the upper slab.
- 11-12) 100 m, 5.6 Follow the chimney that narrows higher up and leads to the top.

Sisyphus Summits\* 500 m, 5.10d R. Chayer, H. Lenny & G. Hill, September 1994

Heralded as the longest sport climb north of Mexico, this 17 pitch bolt extravanza got mixed reviews at its inception, but now has an accepted place in Bow Valley climbing. The climb is en-



tirely protected by bolts, has 25 m pitches, and strives to find the best rock and most interesting climbing. It succeeds to a large extent although in places the line is contrived. The character of the route is quite different from the other North Face climbs but it represents a significant, and perhaps no longer controversial, achievement.

Start The climb begins at a narrow section of the trail about 90 m before the prominent cairn on the spur beneath the northeast buttress. The start is marked by a small cairn (6-7 m to the right), but the friendly line of bolts leading upward is hard to miss. Large sections of the route can be done as 50 m pitches and this greatly speeds up the ascent. Expect some rock fall and be prepared for rapidly changing weather.

## Orient Express\* 545 m, 5.9 or 5.11d

J. Firth, C. Perry & M. Sawyer, August 1976 Left Variation: D. Cheesmond & U. Kallen, July 1983 F.F.A.: Left Variation: D. Morgan & C. Perry, August 1983

F.F.A.: Direct (Original) Route: R. Debeyer & R. Slawinski, August 1999

Located at the top left of the north face is a prominent dihedral that slants to the right. The climb ascends the steep wall directly below this dihedral. It was originally called simply The North Face Route but the name has been changed to an early suggestion to avoid confusion with more recent climbs. The first ascent, which was completed between frequent rain showers, took three days and followed a direct line involving some sections of aid. These were avoided on the second ascent by climbing an essentially free line to the left in the middle section of the face. This Left Variation allows the route to be climbed free at 5.9 and this a worthwhile outing that can be completed in a day. The original line has recently been retrofitted and free-climbed at 5.11d and is described below as the Direct Route. On the crux sixth pitch, four bolts were hand-placed on lead to back up the four already there. Also, one bolt was added to each of belays 1, 2, 4 and 5 (belays 3, 6, 7 and 8 could also use an additional bolt). The old bolts appear to be in reasonable shape but have small carabiner holes. While the harder sections are well-protected on good rock, this remains a "traditional" climb. In particular, a small selection of pitons is recommended for protection and belays. The first two pitches are quite loose but the rock becomes much better higher up.

Start directly below the upper dihedral, scramble up and then right on ledges to below a right-facing corner 10 m up, with steep slabs on the right.

- 1) 45 m, 5.7 Go up a small, left-facing corner for a few metres, then step up into the right-facing corner mentioned above. Climb up and diagonally right across the slabs to a left-facing corner high up. Follow the corner to a ledge (bolt belay).
- 2) 50 m, 5.8 Follow loose ramps up and left past a piton to a short right-facing corner. Climb the corner for a few metres, move right and then back left on broken rock to a ledge (bolt and optional belay). Traverse along the ledge to its left end (bolt and piton belay).
- 3) 30 m, 5.9 Climb a steep crack in good rock for about 10 m to a small roof (piton). Traverse steeply right to a right-facing corner (piton), climb it for a few metres to below another

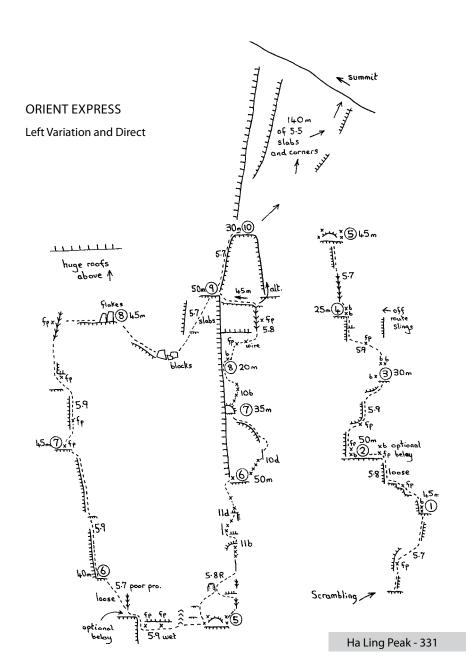
- small roof, and then move right again to a shallow groove (piton). Follow the groove to a small ledge with a bolt belay.
- 4) 25 m, 5.9 Climb a steep ramp up and left for 5 m, traverse 5 m left past a piton, step up onto a small slab and then move left to a groove (bolt). Climb the groove past a bulge to a ledge on the left (bolt belay).
- 45 m, 5.7 Follow the corner system above, moving right near the top, to a good ledge and bolt belay.

#### Left Variation:

- 6) 40 m, 5.9 Move across to the far left end of the ledge and make a difficult traverse left beneath an overhang (usually wet). Move up to a ledge and optional belay. Continue up and then left to the base of a corner system.
- 7) 45 m, 5.9 Climb to the top of the corner and small ledges on the left.
- 8) 45 m, 5.9 Move right and climb a steep wall to a shallow corner (piton). Follow the corner for a short distance, then climb left and up to a good ledge. Continue to a large ledge higher up.
- 9) 50 m, 5.7 Make a long traverse down and right, then climb slabs to a good ledge (junction with the original route).
- 10) 30 m, 5.7 Climb the steep corner above the ledge to the base of the upper dihedral.
- 11-13) 140 m, 5.5 Climb slabs and corners on the right side of the dihedral finishing well out on the right.

## Direct (Original) Route:

- 6) 50 m, 5.11d From the far right end of the ledge, climb a groove for 5 m to an overlap, then traverse left and up to a small pedestal (this point may also be reached by climbing broken rock farther left). Traverse up and right on excellent rock to a small niche directly above the belay (run-out 5.8). Climb up past three bolts to an awkward lip. Pull over this using a mono pocket (5.11b) and step over the overlap above to a rest stance. Move left to the first of the next four bolts. Climb the increasingly difficult groove above (5.11d) to reach the base of a large slab. Climb up past another bolt, trend left and then go back right to a ledge below a large corner (bolt belay).
- 7) 35 m, 5.10d From the right side of the ledge, climb up past three bolts to a thin crack. Make a few strenuous moves up the crack and then stretch right to a jug. Follow a groove that slants back left to the main corner. Belay in a small alcove.
- 8) 20 m, 5.10b Climb up past four bolts and continue more easily up the corner to a belay on the slabs above (single bolt).
- 9) 45 m, 5.8 Climb up and right past a piton and fixed wire. Traverse right for 5 m and climb a steep corner to a horizontal break. Either follow the break back left past the top of the main corner to the ledge at the top of pitch 9 of the Left Variation, or climb up and right and belay in the exit corner of Remembrance Wall.
- 10) 30 m, 5.7 or 5.8 Depending on which option was taken on pitch 9, either climb pitch 10 of



the Left Variation (5.7) or the remainder of pitch 9 of Remembrance Wall (5.8) to the base of the upper dihedral.

11-13) 140 m, 5.5 Climb slabs and corners on the right side of the dihedral finishing well out on the right.

Remembrance Wall\*\* 555 m, 5.11b

S. DeMaio & J. Marshall, July 1987

F.F.A.: R. Slawinski & E. Dumerac, July 1999

The climb follows a major line right of Orient Express but is forced left onto that route by large overhangs near the top. It is a very worthwhile route, offering some of the best and most sustained climbing on the north face of Ha Ling Peak. The first 2 pitches are somewhat loose but the rock above is generally excellent. Most belays are fixed but a small selection of pitons is recommended.

Original attempts on the route almost succeeded in breaking through the overhangs above pitch 7 (see topo and photograph) and DeMaio claims they were less than 20 m from easy ground. For those interested in adding a direct finish, keep in mind this comment was made during the height of Marshall and DeMaio's new route spree on the local walls and both have a legendary habit of remembering routes as being more straightforward than they really are. The climb is named in memory of D. Cheesmond, I. Bolt, D. Guthrie and D. Monroe, all of whom died in the mountains in 1987.

Start Scramble up for 10 m to a ledge below a shallow, right-facing corner.

- 1) 45 m, 5.6 Climb the corner to a large ledge. Traverse left to a bolt and piton belay.
- 2) 55 m, 5.10a Continue left along the ledge to a large right-facing corner. Climb the corner past an overhang to near its top. Break out onto the left edge of the corner on good holds and go up for 5 m to a small belay (thread).
- 3) 45 m, 5.8 Climb ramps and corners trending left, and then move back right over a short wall to a good ledge. Belay below a clean, right-facing corner (bolt and piton).
- 4) 45 m, 5.9 Climb the corner (piton) until a traverse right can be made across the wall to a ledge. Move right along the ledge to a groove and go up this to a short right-facing corner. Above the corner climb the right side of a detached pinnacle to a two-bolt belay at its top.
- 5) 50 m, 5.11b Climb the left-facing corner above the belay to a hanging block about 10 m below the top. Follow a traverse line of side-pulls and crimps left to better holds (crux). Climb up to a detached flake (good knife-blade crack below) and step gently over it. Pull over an overlap into the continuation of the corner above and follow it to a small single-bolt belay. The original route went up to the top of the corner and then used aid or tension to move out left.
- 6) 45 m, 5.11a Climb the sustained corner on excellent rock past an overhang and a bolt

- higher up to a good ledge on the right (bolt and piton belay).
- 7) 35 m, 5.10b Continue to the top of the corner and then go up to a bolt on a clean slab. Move up and right and climb a short right-facing corner (piton) to a traverse line leading left to a single-bolt belay.
- 8) 50 m, 5.9 Make a long traverse left on excellent rock past a bolt at the start, following the lower of two horizontal cracks. Belay on a loose ledge system.
- 9) 45 m, 5.8 Continue left and climb a right-facing corner and the chimney above to gain the upper dihedral of Orient Express.
- 10-12) 140 m, 5.5 Climb slabs and corners on the right side of the dihedral finishing well out on the right.

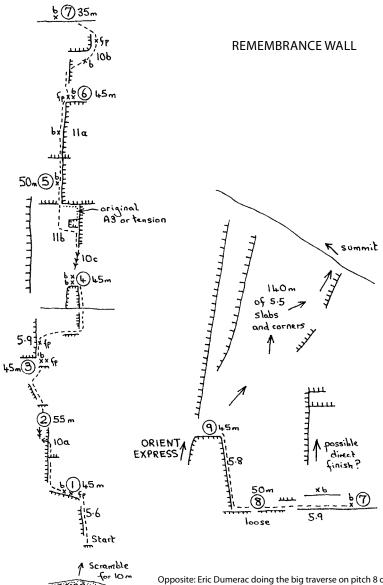
### Premature Ejaculation\*\* 400 m, 5.10b

D. Cheesmond & B. Gross, July 1985

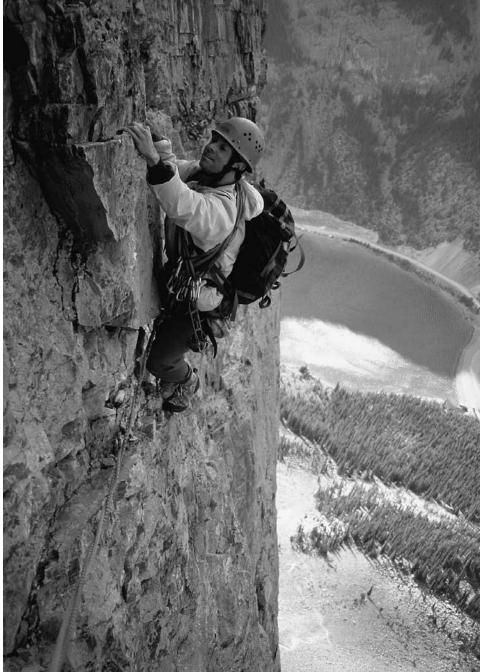
This excellent route climbs the left-hand of the two prominent dihedrals on the right side of the north face. The line was first tried by Steve DeMaio and John Kaandorp on an early visit to western Canada and the top of pitch 5 was reached by a more direct line up the main corner system. An epic retreat was made via a long traverse right onto Quick Release and this inspired



Sean Dougherty on an early attempt on Remembrance Wall. Photo Steve DeMaio.



Opposite: Eric Dumerac doing the big traverse on pitch 8 of Remembrance Wall. Photo Raphael Slawinski.



The climbing is sustained and the rock is mainly excellent. However, the route has a reputation for seriousness as the belay at the top of pitch 6 is poor and the next pitch is run-out. There is some debate over whether the route should be "fixed up" since seriousness is presently part of the route's character. Perhaps inevitably bolts will be added but currently go prepared for some tense climbing and take a few pitons.

Start Scramble up the corner for 30 m to a ledge and piton belay.

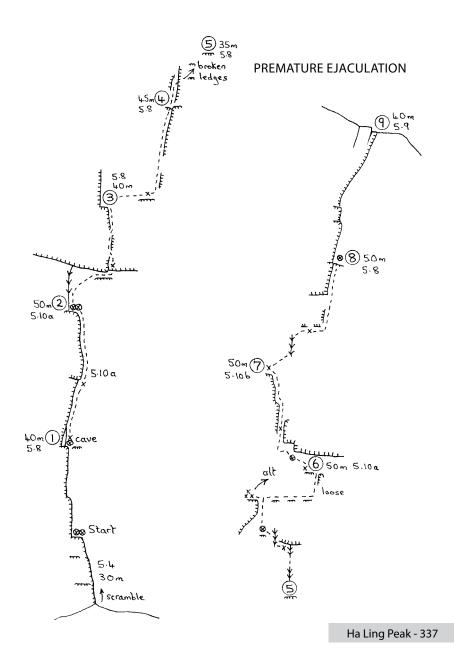
- 1) 40 m, 5.8 Climb the corner to a large ledge with a small cave and a piton belay.
- 2) 50 m, 5.10a Continue up the corner with increasing difficulty to a ledge and piton belay about 5 m below an overlap.
- 40 m, 5.8 Climb up to the overlap and move right to a piton. Continue straight up into a corner and belay at a ledge on the left, level with a faint break leading rightward across a slab (sling belay).
- 4) 45 m, 5.8 Traverse along the break past a piton to a corner system and climb this to a belay below a steep groove.
- 5) 35 m, 5.8 Climb a short way up the groove and then step right onto the face. Continue up broken ledges to the highest ledge on the right.
- 6) 50 m, 5.10a Climb the right hand of two shallow grooves to detached blocks below a roof (piton) and then traverse left past a short groove to a bolt at a ledge. Climb up and either move left to a ledge (pitons) and then go diagonally right up a loose wall to a ledge and single piton belay, or follow small ledges over to the right and climb straight up the wall past a small pillar and move left to the same ledge.
- 50 m, 5.10b Traverse left below the roof (bolt) and make a tricky step onto a slabby wall. Climb up to an obvious corner and go up this past a piton to a belay on the left (pitons).
- 8) 50 m, 5.8 Climb up and right on easy rock to a groove and go up this to a traverse right below broken roofs (piton). At the end of the roofs, move up to a right-facing corner on surprising holds and in an awesome position. Belay part way up the corner at a bolt or at a ledge 5 m higher.
- 9) 40 m, 5.9 Continue up the corner to the top.

Quick Release\* (and Finishing Touch)\*\* 375 m, 5.10a

J. Bauer & T. Jones, July 1976

Direct finish (Finishing Touch) and F.F.A.: B. Gross, B. Baxter and C. Quinn, July 1985

Quick Release follows the right hand of the two prominent dihedrals until a steep section is reached at about two-thirds height. A traverse right is then made to gain an easy right-slanting exit line. Finishing Touch is a direct finish that continues to the top of the dihedral. The rock is generally very good, and both climbs, particularly the direct finish, are sustained and well



worthwhile. Quick Release makes a good introduction to climbing on the north face but can stay wet late into the summer.

Start Climb easily up a groove on the right to a ledge. Continue to a ledge 15 m higher and a bolt belay.

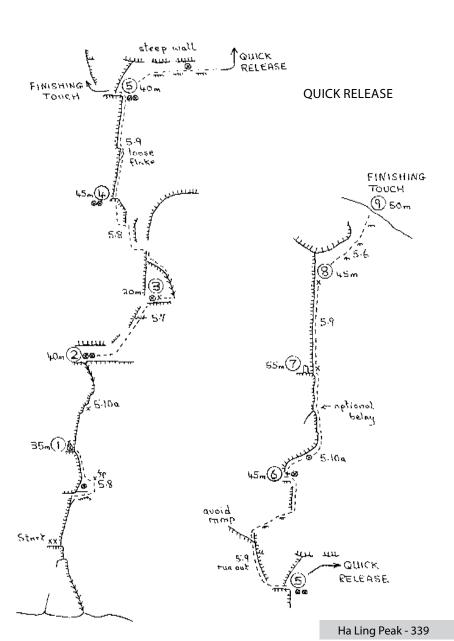
- 35 m, 5.8 Climb the corner to an overhang, traverse right on a ledge past a bolt and make a difficult step up onto the wall. Climb the wall (piton), then move back to the corner and follow it to a bolt and piton belay.
- 2) 40 m, 5.10a Climb the corner with increasing difficulty past an overhang and then up more easily to a ledge (bolt belay).
- 20 m, 5.7 Move out right past the roof and climb a broken slab up and right. Go up over an overhang formed by wedged blocks to a ledge and bolt belay.
- 4) 45 m, 5.8 Climb the short groove on the right and then follow a ramp-like break diagonally left back into the main corner. Go up for a short distance and then move across left to small ledges. Continue up for about 12 m to below a short right-facing corner. Traverse left 3-4 m on a small ledge, then climb up steeply to a bolt belay at the bottom of a long corner.
- 5) 40 m, 5.9 Climb the corner past a loose flake, which has somehow survived the test of time, to a blocky ledge on the left.

## Finishing Touch:

- 6) 45 m, 5.9 From the left side of the ledge, climb a groove for about 5 m and then step left on to the face. Move up and back right into the groove and continue up past a ramp on the left. Climb up and right to a small corner and go up this to a single-bolt belay at a ledge on the left below a big corner.
- 55 m, 5.10a Climb the wide corner/roof above past a bolt and up into a groove. Follow the
  groove to the main corner (the pitch may be split here) and go up this to a good ledge on
  the left.
- 8) 45 m, 5.9 Good climbing leads up the corner to a piton belay below the upper roof.
- 9) 50 m, 5.6 Move up and right on a slab below the roof and go up to the top.

## Original Finish:

- 6) 45 m, 5.7 Go up right to a terrace and walk right along this to the end. Move up over a bulge and belay in a small bay.
- 7-9) 130 m, 5.5 Continue up by a groove, then exit rightward to gain sight of the top. Continue up and right on easy rock to the ridge.



## **VIAGRA POINT**

This name has been given to a portion of the long band of lower cliffs that extends westward from below Ha Ling Peak and curves around to the south, overlooking Whiteman Pond. Viagra Point is a steep yellow cliff located at the highest point of the cliff bands, below a heavily wooded area at the top. It is visible straight ahead where the approach trail turns right across the open slope and heads directly toward the lower cliffs. Much of the cliff is very steep with rotten-looking yellow rock, but toward the right-hand side there are a number of discontinuous, light gray streaks indicating water seepage and better rock. Two climbs have been done, one of which goes up the centre of the gray streaks and finishes near a rotten overhang on the left side of a rib, and another that moves farther right and climbs an obvious black wall in the upper portion of the cliff to finish through a break in a large, curving band of overhangs. Both climbs start just to the right of a single tree growing close to the face and about 10 m left of the edge of the forest. They have had only a few ascents and the rock is reportedly a little dirty from water seepage. The right-hand route, Dirt Diggler, may still require some cleaning. The information given below and in the topo is incomplete but is the best that could be extracted from the first ascensionists. The best descent is probably to rappel the routes, although there is a break in the cliff band a long way to the right.

Cunning Linquist 100 m, 5.11a/b

E. Dumarac & P. Farrell, 1998

This is the left-hand route that climbs an attractive, gray-streaked groove in the central part of the face.

- 1) 30 m, 5.11a Beginning immediately right of the tree, follow the bolts up and left over an overlap and up to a good ledge and bolt belay.
- 35 m, 11a/b Move left and climb the shallow, gray-streaked groove moving left at the top to a bolt belay above a roof.
- 3) 35 m, 5.10d Climb up past a roof and into a corner on the left side of the upper rib. Exit right from this to a fixed station on the upper ledge system.

Dirk Diggler 105 m, 5.11b/c

P. Farrell & E. Dumarac, 1999

This route goes up the black wall to the right of Cunning Linguist and exits through a break in the upper roof line.

- 30 m, 5.10b Climb up toward a prominent dead tree on the right and then move left and go up a short, wide crack to a bolt belay on a good ledge just right of the Cunning Linguist belay.
- 2) 40 m, 5.11c or 5.11b The recommended route moves up and right from the belay and goes up past some short corners to a fixed station below a roof on the upper black wall (5.11c). Alternatively, a slabby wall below a right-slanting roof line left of the belay may be climbed to join the same pitch higher up (5.11b).
- 35 m, 5.10c Continue up the black wall to the break in the overhangs, climb through this, and go up a short groove to a fixed station on the upper ledge system.

