

Iranian new route on Karambony tower (Ecole), Africa, Madagascar, April,2015. A2 8b
442m 7c .



The address of a short clip of the project on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uPljWFJwbU>

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Everything was like a dream and a wish. After big wall climbing in France, I suggested Africa and Madagascar to Hassan, but for a long time, the subject was just in our mind and there was nothing in real life, apparently nothing go ahead but we had not ignore the power of mind. On the other hand we both took a lot of time for publishing a book about climbing. By the way our new project was selected on Africa's tallest series granite which is known as the Yosemite of Africa. The massive of Tsaranoro in Madagascar was something which was growing in our dreams. The hardest and longest wall of Africa that was also located the most difficult route of southern hemisphere of the Earth, "Though Enough". This activity required to be planned and carried out numerous training. The structure of the wall generally in the form of smooth face with few cracks and that's why it was very difficult to open a route and required techniques such as the use of hooks and other equipments. The style of opening route was ground-up and most of the pitches opened had relatively high degree of difficulty. For us, the most difficult part of the project was planning to achieve the region. Several months before the project, I was busy searching the area and its conditions, download topographic of the routs, consult with best climbers of the world, planning for climbing and the days of presence in the region, terms of residence and many other issues we were thinking about for the first time. There was no experience on such a trip and we should plan without encounter problems or ability to deal with them. The cost of the project was staggering and also high cost of airline tickets per person (a sum of 2000 dollars) was one of the most obstacles of our program but it was not something to hinder us and with help from friends young but experienced big wall climber, Farshad joined us. All team members had experienced on big wall climbing and more need to coordinate and consensus the use of tactics for climbing, and it was achieved with training and regular practice before the main program. We did all our best to get ready for this project. A summary of the activities of the team members on big wall climbing are as follows:

1. Great Trango Tower, Slovenian route, grade 7b in Himalayas of Pakistan.
2. Rebuffate route aiguilles du midi in Alps, 6a.
3. Free climbed of Gran Capucin, the mixed route of Bonatti and direct in Alps, 8a.
4. Opening new route " Rajia" in Alpine style on Alam Kooch wall in Iran.

5. Winter climbing of the route "48" on Alam Kooh in Iran.

And also the team members opened many routes on mountains and walls of Iran and believe opening routes in the country can guarantee success in the climbing expeditions.



Karambony Massive, brilliant giant of the area



Beginning the work with change:

Our slogan in this project was "Change" , Change in many things, change the number of climbers from crowded teams to the fewer members but effective, a worth factor for opening route, as more pressure is applied to members and the whole work is done by a few people. Something we had experienced in Alps and we both could do perfect ascents. Another factor was considered in "Change" was opening route. But the opening was changed in his heart. It was agreed that the opening done on a cliff that is famous for being tough and rugged. The opening route definitely will be a high degree of difficulty and the team members should be able to climb the opening route to prove the suitability of it. Another change was documented the work, what was considered our weakness in the past. Lack of proper registration of moments on the opening route and the inability to show all aspects of the this sport was the reason as long ago focus our mind. In this project several days was attempted just for document the work. Yes, we were able to experience the change in our project.

Tsaranora Appellation:

The story behind the name of Tsaranoro originated at around 1820. During the fights of the Betsileo combat against the Merina tribes. The King Sahanambo was hiding with his closest followers in a cave. The cave entrance was closed, until food supplies ran short. The King's sisters Ratsara and Ranoro left for food and after finding food they returned earlier than expected but the cave entrance was carefully closed. Even by making loud noises, shouting and knocking, nobody opened and they finally died of thirst.

The time had been set, the King ordered the cave to be opened but he found his two sisters dead at the entrance. Since then in their honor he named the highest peak, *Tsaranoro* and it is prohibited to talk of the Merina people. It is believed, the person breaking the fady will walk in circles and eventually get lost and ultimately death.



In the map above the state of Madagascar in Africa and its position towards Iran was shown.



In the map above you can see the position of Tsaranoro to the capital of Madagascar (Antananarivo) .

Madagascar country:

Madagascar located in the Indian Ocean in the south east of Africa continent. The island is almost the same longitude with our country but is located in the South latitude of the Earth.

In contrast, the northern hemisphere countries. A green island which known as the eighth continent in recognition of animal and plant diversity. Some species of the country are unique and unparalleled in the world. The mostly desert form of the country near the ocean and the high mountains in center. Maromokotro is the highest mountain on Madagascar at 2876 meters. This island is the fourth largest island in the world. The population was estimated to be over 23 million, most of them with several children, marriage at early age and the family members work on farms and other jobs. The costs of services and labors are very cheap. The country became independent from France on June 26, 1960 and declared its independence as the Republic of Madagascar. Many tourists in this country are French. In addition to Malagasy, people also speak French and very rarely are able to speak English. A high percentage of the population with low incomes, most of the times are working hard. Ariary is the currency of Madagascar. Each Euro is roughly equivalent to 3150 Ariary, almost every Ariary is 1.2 Tomans (currency of Iran). Madagascar has several national parks which are famous and have their own specific features. Needle towers of Ankarana, watching birds in Marotaty National Park, see the biggest Lemur in Tada Andasy Be National Park, boiling springs of Ranomafana National Park, climbing the second highest peak of Madagascar in Andringitra National Park, the unique Baobabes trees and blind fish of Timanadetha National Park, beautiful canyons and waterfalls in Isalo and several other National Parks are attractions that make Madagascar attractive for tourists.

Flights of Madagascar:

One of the biggest problems for Iranians to go to Madagascar is provided plane tickets. Flights to this country have several stages, with long stops. Several types of flights are listed below:

Air France, because of so attractive of Madagascar for French and that the country's colonial in the past, it has direct flight. The important thing is that to use this flight you must have a transit visa of Europe and to get this visa needs costs and own condition and the process is so difficult. The cost of the ticket from France is about 1,200 dollars. More accessible way for Iranian is use of Turkish and Qatar flights. The flights with a stop in Kenya and using Kenya Airways will take you to Madagascar. The flight usually has three stages, and its price is roughly equal with Qatar and Turkish Airlines. To do so requires a flight from Tehran to Istanbul or Qatar and then transit from there to Kenya (Nairobi), from there with local flight you can go to Antananarivo and Madagascar. The flight usually takes more than 30 hours and you need to get a transit visa along the way in Kenya. The visa fee per entry to the country is \$ 20 per person including round trip will be \$ 40. In Nairobi using thermal sensors your body checks for healthy and having no fever, if you have any problem you will remain at the

airport until your problem is resolved. Our transit in Nairobi was too long. In both round-trip flights due to the long wait, we got into the town (It is possible with transit visa). Nairobi is an expensive city and the cost of taxis and hotels is such as European countries. Kenyan people are very kind and lovely, their English as a second language is very fluent. Kenya National Park and visit the city was what we managed to do that during transit. Our flight from Nairobi to Madagascar was the last stage of our Marathon flights.

When we got to the airport, the first things attracted our attention was the asking of police officers. A large number of bolts, drills and metal equipments made them curious, but they compensated this curiosity by telling "Give me Money". To enter Madagascar country should have vaccination card for meningitis, hepatitis, diphtheria, tetanus, yellow fever diseases as well as the prevention of malaria tablets .Vaccination card is checked at the airport. To solve this problem, you can go to the health centers in Tehran. We went to Tehran West Health Center, Ostad Moein Street, Shahid Dastghaib as well as for hepatitis we went to the doctor Mosaedyan.

Antananarivo:

It was 4 o'clock in the morning, lights of the large vehicles taking us to the Camp, was the only lighting in the street. Apparently, electric power supply was one of the important issues in this country. Car lights showed us strange thing. Perhaps the most surprising thing was what we saw in the country. Hundreds of people were running in the dark streets. Among them were 3 or 4 years old children to the elderly. Girls and boys without sport clothes and shoes, even with barefoot were running on the roadside. The numbers of people in the dark hours of the morning causing forgotten thirty hours sleep of flight.













Costs in Madagascar:

As mentioned Labor is cheap in this country, so preparation of food and craft prices of the country are appropriated. In the table below the prices of some items are written in Ariary. Each Ariary approximately equivalent to 1 Tomans Every Ariary is 1.2 Tomans.

	Average hotel accommodation	1 fast food meal	1 meal in a restaurant	The cost of daily rent a car with a driver without fuel	Nice wooden mask (Craft)	1 kilo of banana	The cost of a taxi for the short distance (average)
Antananarivo	35000	8000	8000	110000	20000	1000	3000
Environs	25000	9000	12000	110000	20000	800	3000

The best time in the region:

Almost in most months of the year, apart from late September to the end of the March, activity in the region is possible. In April the weather was very hot, but the view is very nice. All fields are green with beautiful view. Access to routes due the growth of many plants is difficult. From early July to mid-September weather is cooler and the condition of climbing is more appropriate. In this season the region turns from green to yellow color and access to the base of the route due to the drying of trees and plants is easier. Due to conditions our team started working in the region since the beginning of April. The following table can make decisions easier about time spent in the region.

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
											

From November to the end of March, known as low season and the rest of the months are considered High Season. Accommodation and transfer fees also vary according to the season of Low or High.

Access to the Tsaranoro towers:

We moved from Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, to the South and East. There are about 30 national roads in Madagascar. We must start from No. 7 National Road toward Fianarantsoa. We have passed different cities on our way. Ambositra was one of the most popular cities in the middle of the road. The city is very popular for crafts and carving wood. You can buy nice crafts with reasonable prices. The farms around the road are generally includes Rice, wheat and corn. Most of the people are working during the hours of the day. Road No. 7 is generally passes through forests and pastures.



The

road and its scenery was very unique and exquisite. Along the way looking at deforestation was very annoying. Unfortunately, the population on the rise, targeted forest for living and survival and

the main fuel is provided by trees. Unfortunately, the continuation of this trend, nothing will be left of Madagascar beautiful nature. Most families often have many children. Children are busy cattle grazing on pasture or working on farms. Some of them are also engaged selling things along the roads. After about nine hours drove from Antananarivo we reached to Fyaranato. Relatively large town we needed to purchase all the requirements right here or you

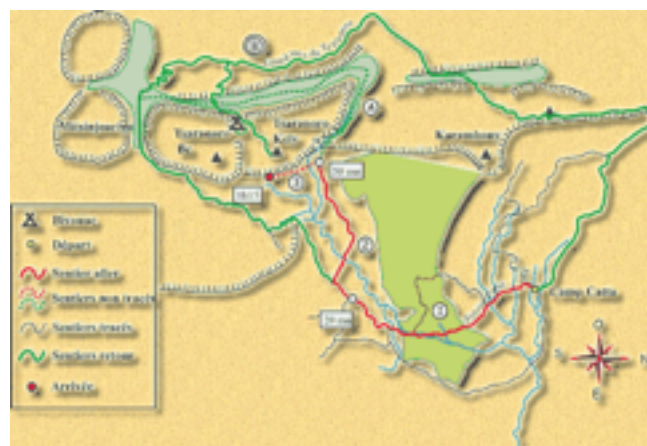
have to get it in camp a higher price. List of the items are completed. Mineral water, toilet paper, rice, frying oil, and other items were provided and then move to Ambalavao. It is the last point of the metropolitan area and from this point on, there are villages. This is the last part of the urbanization north of the Madagascar. After 37 km from Ambalavao and crossing two stone mountains that represents the gateway to the south of Madagascar, before the Antanambao village you can see a big square house in the right side of the road. From the left side of the road, you enter a dirt way. From here Tsaranoro and Camp board can be seen here. From this point onwards, you definitely need a 4WD car to get the dirt road crossing. Following the dirt road after about 1 hour you will see signs of the Camp. If you start early in the morning from Antananarivo, in the evening you can reach the Camp. Otherwise, it would be two days visit due to the dangerous of the road at night.

Transfer costs from Antananarivo airport to the Camp

Transfer costs from Antananarivo airport to the camp for 4 people	The time required
650000 Ariary	About 13 to 14 hours

Reaching to the Wall and Camp:

Tsaranoro massive has given a beautiful view to the area. In the lower floor, there is a vast plain with beautiful farms, gradually get height to the west and turn to the dense forest. Eventually end by reaching 800 meters long dam of Tsaranoro. The collections lead to the beautiful mountains of Cameleon from the south, as well the magic ridge of Andringitra from the east. Since 1999 Andringitra as one of the national parks of Madagascar are hosted thousands of tourists .Tsaranoro towers respectively, from the north to the south are: Lemur, Karambony, Nord, Kely, Be, and Atsimo. Tsaranoto is the highest wall with 800 meters, the rest of the walls have pretty appearance and inscription faces. The big cornices were staring our eyes. The large couloir between Tsaranoro Be and Tsaranoro Atsimo is so beautiful and stunning. The yellow integrated pillar of Karambony is very spectacular. Actually we had never seen before such integrated and beautiful pillar.



The guide of Camp Catta and other peaks in the region:

More to the south there is separate wall, *Vatovoarindrina*, which have unique collections for climbing. The stone appears fully integrated and non-climbing.

When you look at the walls from Camp Catta the first wall on the right (north) is the black Lemur. The wall consists of routes about 5 pitches (300 m) from easy to difficult paths. Black colors and spots of water on the wall attracted a lot. The next wall is the famous Karambony. An integrated beautiful though and yellow pillar which is very popular and have very attractive routes. *Tough Enough* was opened in the central part of the tower. The most difficult route of Madagascar and southern hemisphere of Earth opened by Adam Ondra in free style. Karambony 450 meters is the unique solid rock in the world. Next wall to the right of Karambony is Nord. This wall with its big cornice in the middle is captured any climber's attention. Lynn Hill, along with several other women had opened a hard route on the wall. The next wall is Kely. The wall with the route "Out of Africa" is among the busiest routes in the region. After Kely with 600 meters, there are Tsaranoro Be with 800 meters height and Gondwalaland with grade 8 of French, stand with proud. Atsimo tower is located on the left side of this mountain the home of famous and tough route "Mora Mora".

The history of climbing and opening route on Tsaranoto:

These series of walls have been a popular adventure climbing destination since the late 1990's. Most of the plumb lines have been climbed already. Much of the remaining rock looks very hard indeed. The first route, Rain Boto (7b+) was climbed by big wall veterans Kurt Albert and Bernd Arnold in 1995. The other beautiful routes were opened such as "Out of Africa", 6a+ by legendary climber Michel Piola. This route is almost the easiest and busiest routes of the wall. Other routes are generally relatively high grade of difficulties. *Tough Enough* (F8b+) is one of the hardest multi pitch challenges of southern hemisphere on the Earth has been free climbed in a day by Adam Ondra. Christine, the owner of Camp Catta is a talented man who used to rock climbing when he was young. He held the complete topography of the routes with profile of openers in his camp which available through the website of the Camp. Before our route, the last route was opened by a French party in 2014 but didn't climb after opening.

Camp Catta and settle in it:

Camp Catta is the last available place perfect for a comfortable night in the region. The Camp is decorated beautiful and carefully with various symbols and its restaurant is a place to exchange information for different tourists and climbers. Facilities for accommodation in night includes: Rental place for tents, tent rental, comfortable tent and rooms rental. The prices are variable from 6000 to 130000 Ariary. The best option for us was comfortable tents. The tents had high ceiling and two beds inside that made rest and sleep very comfortable. In Camp area Lavatory and public bathrooms were also available. It was a bit of a problem with no Internet available but was not bad in terms of being away from the virtual world. Of course, using the SIM Card Thelma could ability to communicate through the phone line. The cost of our comfortable tents was 30,000 Ariary per tent. The Cost of restaurant was expensive for us because equivalent of European food prices. We almost had taken a lot of canned stew from Iran and with rice bought from Madagascar we ate Persian foods. In Madagascar we could not find gas canisters for our Primus and of course, with previous coordination with the camp, we were rented a large tank of gas. Of course several times we tested local foods. In the area of the camp and its environs, special kind of monkey showed

off. Lemur with beautiful long black tail was completely free in camp and even at the base of the walls. Kamlyon was another very popular animal with unique appearance and very lovely and quiet. Red spider, scorpion and all kinds of insects are abundant in the region. There are trails from Camp to the walls. Scheduled to different walls is as follows:

Name of the wall	Lemur	Karambony	Tsaranoro	Kamlyon
Reaching to the wall	45 minutes	45 minutes	2 hours	2 hours
Get to the top of mountain from walking path	5 hours	5 hours	8 hours	6 hours

Direct study of the area and the selection line of the climb:

Just one day after arrival to the region we decided to check the wall and choose our route. A long walk started from the base of lemur and after 2 hours reached the end of Tsaranoro and Atsimo. By Telescopic camera and studied paths we selected three lines.

Line 1: A big chimney on Tsaranoro and Atsimo, with beautiful and relatively simple movements, traverse to the left, lead to the summit. The advantages of this line were great length and high speed of opening route because of the simplicity movements required. And the disadvantages, not straight-line path as well as the degree of opening probably was not what we were raised in our minds.

Line 2: A straight line on Tsaranoro Be that half of it was pillar face and the other half was very beautiful and hard chimneys lead to the top. The advantages were its beauty and length of this path (about 800 m). But disadvantages were that, one half of the pillar likely to open in free style required a lot of bolt and of course, we had not enough bolts. As well as access to the foot of the wall and transfer process was very cumbersome.

Line 3: A pillar face on the Tsaranoro, it was likely again encounter a shortage of bolts.

Line 4: Yellow pillar face on Karambony massive and Ecole peak with a beautiful view of the cornices and pillars went to the Ecole peak. The route length estimated about 500 meters and access to it was taken about 45 minutes from Camp Catta. We estimated the pitches of the wall will be very hard but eventually decided to open a new route. The number of bolts and our equipments were appropriated for this route, and selected as our final option.

The opening of the route:

Totally six days spent for opening the route, at the beginning of each day, two of us were working on the wall and the third person transferred the equipment to the wall, as well as responsible for photography and filming the team's work on the wall. The path to Ecole was clear and unambiguous. Just behind the Camp's restaurant was written on a stone "Karambony", following the path end to the wall .This path was full of twisted trees and weeds in the early days. Preparing the way of tracking without harming the trees was also our decision. A large amount of equipments loaded to the foot of the wall by three members of the team. Lists of equipments used to open are as follows:

Item	Equipment	Specifications/Numbers
1	Climbing Rope	Petzl Arial, 9.5 mm
2	Static rope, 200 meters	Beal, Asilinioum, Unicore 8.5 mm
3	Petzl Bolts	70
4	Karakal Bolts	130
5	Portaledge	Two-persons
6	Friend (normal and micro size)	A full set combination of Camalot and Totem
7	Ball Nut	A full set of small size
8	Chock(normal and micro size)	A full set
9	Hooks (Talon, Bath, Captain-Hook, etc.)	10
10	Cooper heads	One set
11	Pegs	15 Different sizes
12	Rurp, Micro peg, Birdbeak	8
13	Quickstep	Two pairs
14	Haul bags	3
15	Tag line	1
16	Quickdraws	25
17	Single Carabiner	20
18	Screw Carabiner	10
19	Drill with spare batteries	1
20	Water and food	

Style of opening route:

The opening was conducted mainly using hooks and drill bits. Pitches of 1, 10 and 11 opened in lead and free style, rest of them aid climbing. Of course, at the end, all free pitches were climbed in free style.

Specifications of opening pitches are:

pitch1: By reaching the base of the wall through the dense trees, our work begins. This pitch with a 20-meters climbing reach to a short ledge. There was distance between the ledge and wall. With another 20 meters climbing on the face and line of the rolls, getting another small ledge and finally after passing between two trees and climb the last 5 meters we approached

the last ledge of this part where it was the place of anchor. Numbers of bolts in this part were 12 and the degree of difficulty was 6C+.

Pitch 2: With a little traverse to the right, two parallel cracks were upward trend. Passing the first crack and 6 meters, redirected the line and reached the second crack after 25 meters climbing. This pitch had 13 bolts, and its degree of difficulty, 7C, A0.



Pitch 2 with difficulty of 5.12c/d



Pitch 3: From this point onwards we were completed in the pillar section, passing 25 meters in aid climbing and difficulty of A2. Two Talon were required to pass this pitch.

Pitch 4: This pitch was the hardest one, 50 m through pillar difficulty of 8B and A2 with nail and small holds reached to a small ledge, from there we situated on the edge of ridge and approached the end of this part. Numbers of bolts were 13.



Pitch 4 with difficulty of 5.13d

Pitch 5: This pitch with 16 bolts and by moving in the opposite corner of the pillar or sometimes the edge of the ridge and with beautiful view was reached the large triangular ledge in the middle of the wall. It was 49 meters and the degree of difficulty 7A+.



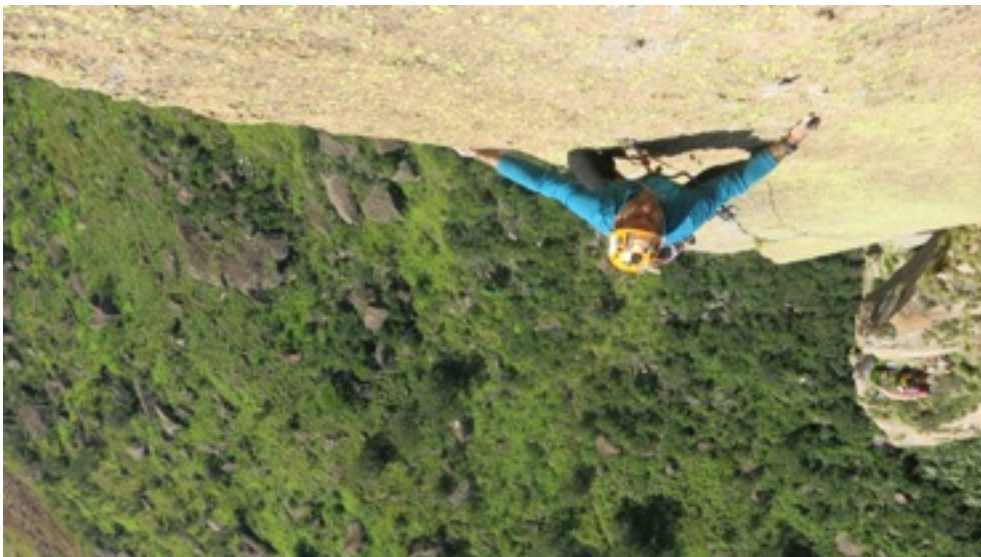
Pitch 5 with difficulty of 5.12a

Pitch 6: It was also the second aid pitch, 6 bolts take you up to 20 meters above the ledge It was also A2.

Pitch 7: By following the line of beautiful face and nail holds getting under the eyebrow cornice. This is the place for night bivouac and installed portaledge which connecting bottom and top of the wall with 7 bolts and difficulty of 7C.



Pitch 7 with difficulty of 7c



Pitch 8: By following the route from the edge of ridge and then a diversion to the pillar on the wall continued moving upward to achieve beautiful funnel. This pitch of 48 meters with 13 bolts and difficulty of 6C+.



Bivy on Portaledge



Pitch 8 with difficulty of 5.11b

Pitch 9: Continued on the right side of the ridge of this funnel and climb 50 meters lead to the end of this pitch with 11 bolts and difficulty of 7B.

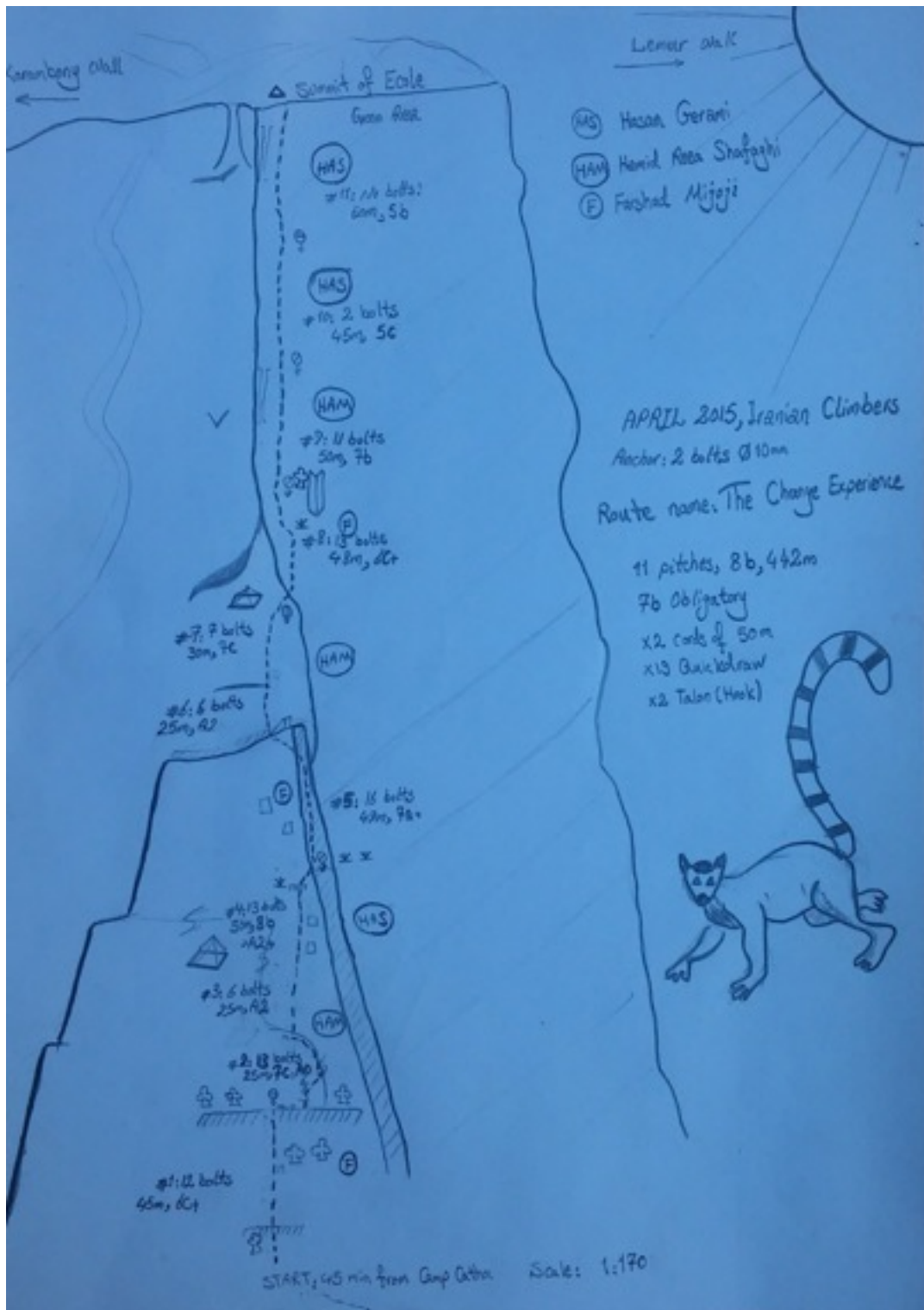


Pitch 9 with difficulty of 5.12b

Pitch 10: It was 45 meters, also had two bolts and difficulty of 5C.

Pitch 11: A simple route to the summit of Ecol, 5B, with 50 meters without Bolt.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Area/Meters	45	25	25	50	49	25	30	48	50	45	50
Difficulty	6C+	7C, A0	A2	8b	7a+	A2	7c	6c+	7b	5c	5b
Difficulty	5.11b	5.12d	A2	5.13d	5.12a	A2	5.12d	5.11b	5.12b	5.8	5.7
Number of Bolts	13	13	6	13	16	6	7	13	11	2	0



After the route was opened, we have a full day rest at Camp Catta. That day, was a good one for our tired bodies to recover. Then 3 days worked on the wall, climbed all pitches and filming. Each pitch was climbed at least by one person and the final corrections were made on the route. A few bolts were replaced then after photography and filming, the equipment transferred to the bottom.

A few tips:

1. Mosquitoes are the biggest problem of the region in this season. They are generally attack at the sunset and early evening. Anti-mosquito spray is necessary.
2. There is a kind of scorpion in the region and big ledge of the wall, which also known as the same local name. Sting of this Scorpion that looked like a big Millipede is rapidly cause death.
3. The rock of the region made of compact granite with good strength. There is no loss in the wall (With the exception of a few isolated stones) .
4. Water is flowed in the region in April. The water is going down from different valley at the foot of the wall and we used straw water purifier for drinking. This water is likely not found from July to August.
5. Access to foot of some routes because of the rainforest in April, very hard.

We thank all those who have been with us to make this project come true, dear Abbas Sabetian, he was informed since the beginning of the project and helped us so much. Dear Reza Zarei, supported us with his kindness, Dr. Shokravi that has always been consistent and support the technical programs. Dear Tahmores Saraei with unwavering support had solved many problems. Dear Mr. Zolfaghari that was really consistent and helpful. Dear Mr. Nasirzadeh always do not hesitate to help. Lovely Alireza Amzejerdian, he was always with us. Rasol Keshvary, we don't forget his smiles and support before the project. Dear Abbas Tehrani with his kindness and support accompanied us. As well as other friends, including Mahmmud Mirnori, Hossein Rezaei, Mohammad Reza Ahmadian, Miss Hosseinzadeh and her colleagues of Gol Kooh blog, compassionate Friends of Kooh Nameh and very grateful all friends who supported and remember us.

