
MIKE TURNER

Thunderstruck

First Ascents in the Kichatna Spires



The east face of Kichatna Spire. (Mark Thomas)

I can't exactly remember how many trips I've made to the Kichatna Spires, that knot of stunningly beautiful granite peaks 110km south-west of Denali in the Alaska Range. It has to be around a dozen or so. I've been most years since the turn of the millennium. There are so many big faces there and loads to do. It's way more impressive than most of Patagonia and I've done a lot in Patagonia. For me, part of the appeal is the remoteness. True, you fly in to the glacier but once you're there you're committed. Rescue is difficult. Denali is a different world in that respect; that's more like being in the Alps.

I've only been in the Kichatna once when there's been another team climbing there: a Polish trio in 2003. That spring Krysztof Belczynski, Marcin Tomaszewski and Dawid Kaszlikowski climbed a new route on the east face of The Citadel, above the Shadows glacier: *Last Cry of the Butterfly* (1,000m, VI 5.10+, A4, 80°). Their line took the prow of the east face, just left of a new route I'd climbed the year before with Stuart McAleese called *Off the Wall Bonkers* (850m, VI, 5.11a, A2), the direct start to the face's original 1976 route. As it happened we were back on The Citadel at the