

# A rock-solid guidebook

**Book Review** by R.L. & Karen Stolz

**S**TANDING beneath a strikingly steep, six-hundred-foot dolomite tower in the Italian Alps, studying a recently published guidebook, we looked up at the rock, perplexed.

The route couldn't go that way! It just *couldn't*! And it didn't. This was our third, and final, time being misled by this beautifully produced, full-color collection of misinformation purporting to be a rock-climbing guidebook to the most beautiful routes in Val Gardena. We unceremoniously stuffed the handsome book into the bottom of a pack and proceeded to climb what appeared to be the most appealing line to the tiny summit. It was, in spite of the guidebook, a pretty good route.

Over the course of our thirty-five-year careers as mountain guides we have collected hundreds of guidebooks, chronicling climbing areas throughout the world. Some of these volumes include precisely detailed information about every characteristic of each climbing route they describe. Others offer mere suggestions as to where one might find adventure on a cliff. Either approach can be effective, but regardless of how much detail a guidebook offers, clarity of descriptions and accuracy of the information provided are qualities that separate the good from the bad. And we are reminded by our misguided adventure in the Dolomites not to judge a book by its cover alone.

The second edition of *Adirondack Rock*, by Jim Lawyer and Jeremy Haas, contains an almost unbelievable quantity of detailed information about more than 3,100 rock-climbing routes on 320 cliffs throughout the Adirondack Park. And, even more than the first edition, it is frighteningly accurate. We have guided some of the routes in this book hundreds of times, and we are inclined to trust the information in *Adirondack Rock* every bit as much as our own recollections. This book will not lead you astray!

On top of that, this full-color, two-volume, slipcased set is one of the most attractive guidebooks we have ever seen. Charts summarizing crag quality, aspect, and approach information, along with the number and difficulty of routes at each cliff, are useful when deciding where to climb. GPS coordinates, full-color maps, and beautifully drawn route topos make it easy to find the crags and then to follow the routes. Multiple appendices, covering a wide variety of categories (e.g., cliffs that require a canoe for the approach or where to climb if it's raining), help make the immense amount of information in the book more manageable. Jim and Jeremy are extremely fastidious, and the vast time and effort they've devoted to researching and documenting *Adirondack Rock* is truly mindboggling, to the extent that even the most finicky climbers will have difficulty finding fault with this book. When it comes to rock-climbing guidebooks, this one is simply as good as it gets anywhere in the world.

Let's we seem completely awestruck, we must at least attempt to do a little nitpicking. First, although *Adirondack Rock* is absolutely gorgeous, it is rather large and heavy to be hauling to a cliff. It also contains a huge quantity of information and, although the appendices and printable topos from [adirondackrock.com](http://adirondackrock.com) are very helpful, a smartphone app or other searchable electronic technology would be a valuable addition (not a replacement) to the printed book.

Second, there is the matter of using little blue dots to indicate if a pitch is entirely protected by bolts (to which a rope can be easily clipped). This is an attempt to address the number-one question visiting climbers ask of the locals: "Where are the bolt-protected sport climbs?" Because of the wilderness nature of this place and the prevailing climbing style, Adirondack "sport" climbs are



Photo by David Le Pagnre

**Brian Kim climbs Esthesia on the Spider's Web in Chapel Pond Pass.**

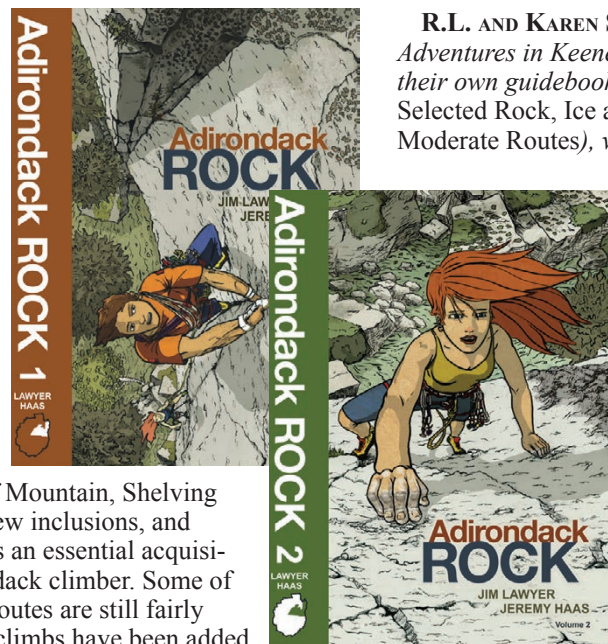
not numerous and sometimes perilous. While the authors are careful to point this out, not every climber will pay attention to those caveats, and because so many climbers nowadays expect bolted routes to be fully equipped for catching a fall, it is especially important to emphasize that a blue dot does not mean you can fall with impunity. In fact, it might mean exactly the opposite.

Even though we have lived in and climbed throughout the Adirondack Park for more than thirty years, the new *Adirondack Rock*, by including numerous previously undocumented areas, reminds us of how much climbing there is to be had within the Park's six million acres. In the Park's northern reaches, the recently opened Silver Lake area is larger, by itself, than many major rock-climbing destinations. Add to that Sugarloaf Mountain, Shelving Rock, and a host of other new inclusions, and this second edition becomes an essential acquisition for any serious Adirondack climber. Some of the newly listed crags and routes are still fairly scruffy, but plenty of great climbs have been added

in the six years since the first edition was released. By the way, bouldering information has been removed from *Adirondack Rock* and will be covered in an independent bouldering guidebook.

The new *Adirondack Rock* is a guidebook that should be in every climber's library and is more than worth the \$40 price, even if you own the first edition. ■

**R.L. AND KAREN STOLZ** are the owners of *Alpine Adventures in Keene*. They are currently completing their own guidebook: *Classic Adirondack Climbs: Selected Rock, Ice and Slide Climbs (Easy to Moderate Routes)*, which will be available in 2015.



**Adirondack Rock**  
By Jim Lawyer and  
Jeremy Haas  
Adirondack Rock Press, 2014  
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Softcover, 1,104 pages, \$40