

native stones

routes up there in the early '90s, and route development slowly but surely picked up steam over the next two and a half decades, with the total number of routes probably doubling in the last 10 years alone. I personally followed a similar routine.

When I had climbed most of the Stanley Headwall, I turned my attention to Storm. My first trip to Storm was in 2004, when I climbed the first pitch of what would later become the Peach, then made to about the halfway point of what would later become the Plum. This wild little bit of climbing was a game-changer for me, as I learned what was possible in the realm of scratching up vertical verglas on natural gear.

In 2006 I returned to climb Buddha Nature, one of the most obvious and regular forming mixed routes. I became hooked on

hazards – all crucial skills for Storm – seeking adventurous multi-pitch trad routes.

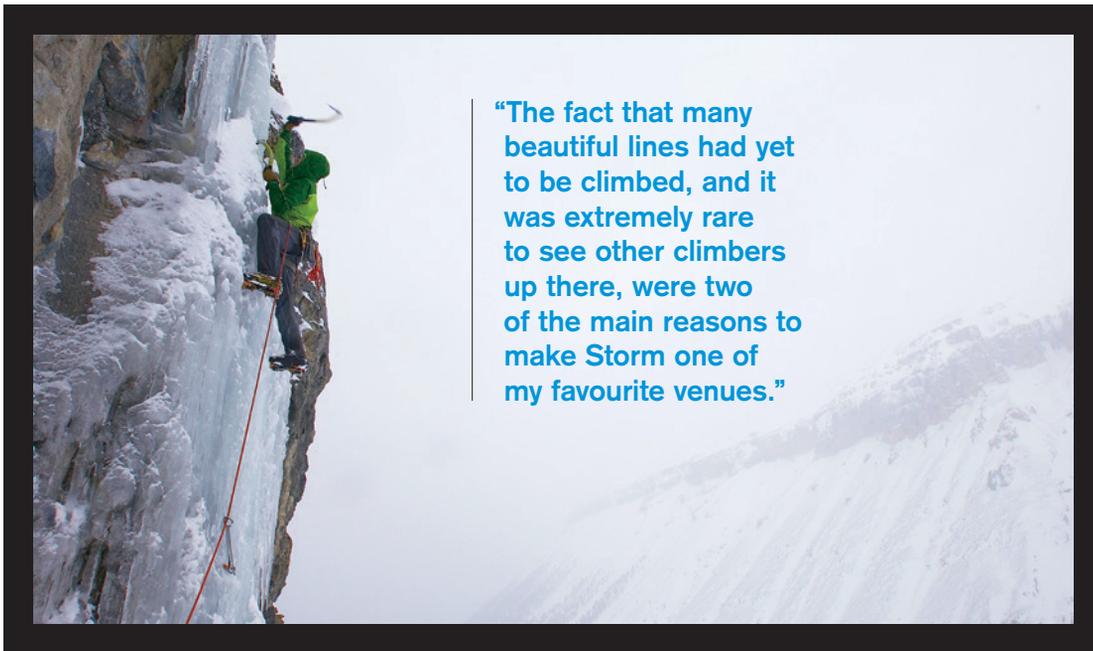
The best time to go is either early season while it's still possible to hike, or mid-to-late winter when the snowpack is deep and approach on skis is good. Skiing out is a well earned luxury compared to hiking, as it's mostly a downhill glide. There is usually a period of around six weeks where there is too much snow to hike and not enough to ski, although this can vary from year to year. There is a lot of avalanche terrain to deal with at Storm, so be mindful of the snowpack, and especially the overhead hazards.

It's best to avoid this venue in times of elevated avalanche hazards. Due to its high elevation and north facing aspect, the Storm Creek Headwall is one of the earliest ice climbing areas to come into

Opposite top: **Jon Walsh** on pitch-two of The Plum

Opposite bottom: **Walsh** on Rectal Squirrels

Below: **Marc-André Leclerc** on pitch-three of The Plum



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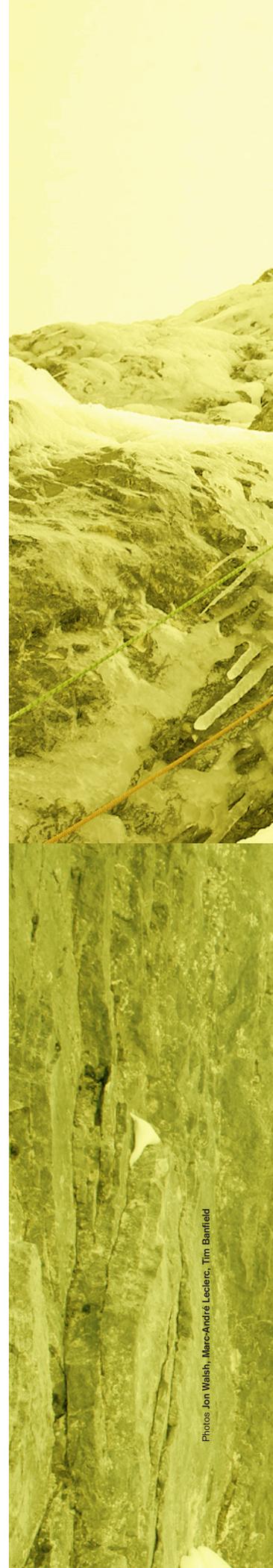
the “trad mixed” style, and impressed with quality of the rock at the headwall, something not always easy to find in the Canadian Rockies. The fact that many beautiful lines had yet to be climbed, and it was extremely rare to see other climbers up there, were two of the main reasons to make Storm one of my favourite venues. But by the end of 2018, it was interesting to see sometimes four or more parties a day up there.

It doesn't sound like much by today's standards, especially as such a venue that spans a couple of kilometres, but I suppose it's a sign of what's to come. It's nice to see so many well-rounded mountain athletes that can ski, climb, suffer, and manage the

condition and is often good to go by the end of October, and can last into April. It usually takes about two hours to get to the first wall and the routes between Buddha Nature and Rectal Squirrels, and three hours to get to the routes at the back.

Like the Stanley Headwall, pretty much all the routes are worth doing, but some of them are superb and have deservedly become classics. Check Will Gadd's app “Ice Climbing in Western Canada,” for more pitch-by-pitch details, gear and approach beta, and history.

Jon Walsh is one of Canada's leading all-round climbers.



Photos: Jon Walsh, Marc-André Leclerc, Tim Banfield