



"This book is for those of you who are interested in learning the who, what, when, where and how of Baffin's past, and I hope it will help to maximize your adventure.... Realistically, I doubt whether more than a few routes in this book will be repeated in my lifetime. Most climbers going all the way to Baffin Island will naturally want to leave their mark with a new route. So my hope is that this book will serve as a treasure map, with the treasure being Baffin's still virgin territory. There is plenty to go around, so have at it."

—from the Introduction

\$29.95

Complete with maps and an invaluable trip planning section detailing the information needed to make your trip an unforgettable success, *Baffin Island* is the first comprehensive adventure guide to the fifth largest island in the world, which is quickly becoming known as a premiere destination for climbers, skiers, trekkers and adventure travellers alike.

The author, Mark Synnott is a world-class alpinist who has climbed extensively throughout the world, including five trips to Baffin Island. Throughout his career as a professional guide and accomplished climber, Mark's adventures have allowed him to work closely with The North Face, The National Geographic Society and *Climbing* magazine.

MARK SYNNOTT

CLIMBING
TREKKING
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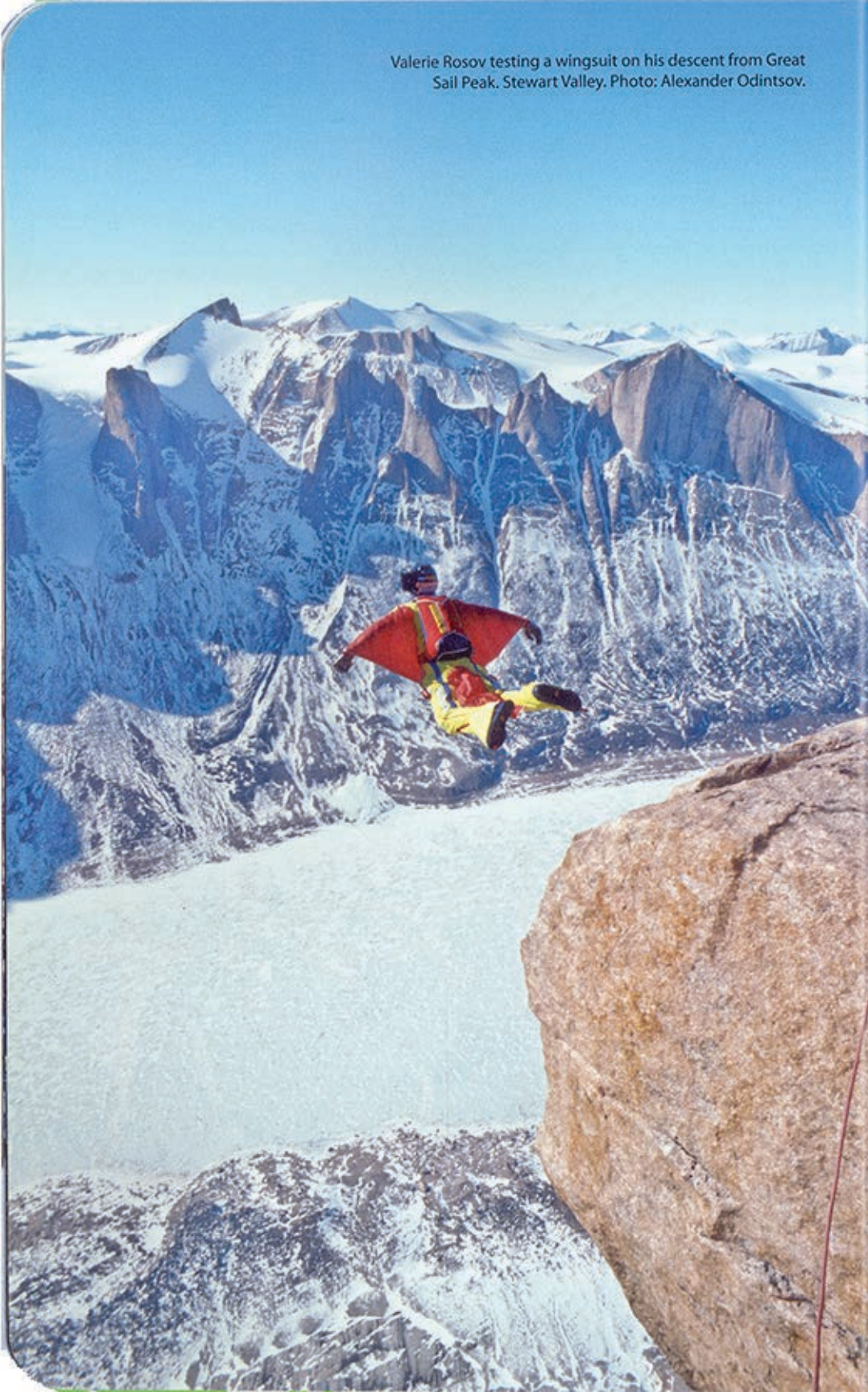
Contents

Auyuittuq National Park	27
The East Coast	112
Trekking Akshayuk Pass	185
Skiing Baffin Island	197
Selected Ski Descents on the East Coast	220

Acknowledgements	7
Introduction	11
Baffin Island	13
Climbing History	14
Climbing in Baffin Island	22
Baffin Island History	230
Trip Planning Information	235
Maps	240

Photo: Eugene Fisher.

Valerie Rosov testing a wingsuit on his descent from Great Sail Peak. Stewart Valley. Photo: Alexander Odintsov.



Introduction

Like some of the walls that I've climbed on Baffin Island, this guidebook project seemed to go on forever, and I often wondered if I would ever top out. But I told myself, just like I've sometimes had to on the wall, 'It's too late to back down now.' Well, the commitment has finally paid off, and I can present to you this guidebook to climbing, skiing and trekking in Baffin Island. The biggest thing I learned from doing this book was actually no big revelation at all: there is no other place like Baffin Island in this world. Some faraway climbing destinations you visit once and it's enough. Then there are places, like Baffin, which draw you back over and over again. I can safely say I've developed a bit of an obsession with Baffin Island myself, and I'll never be done exploring in this Arctic wonderland. Whether it's a big-wall climb, a sea kayaking or sailing voyage, or a kite ski down a frozen coastline, there will always be another Baffin adventure to dream about.

The book you're holding in your hands has been born out of my love for this place and its people. Getting to know Baffin Island has been extremely rewarding, but it has also made me realize that this book is bound to contain inaccuracies, mistakes, omissions, etc. I still have many unanswered questions, so hopefully time will help to bring information more to light. If you have route updates, omissions, additions, etc., I'd appreciate it if you'd e-mail them to me at mark@marksynnot.com.

Another thing you'll notice about this book is that in many cases we have published the original topos. Using the originals seemed to make sense compared to redrawing every single one and then trying to come up with a standardized key for topos from a dozen different countries. So take the topos at face value. I've studied every one, and I know that a lot of them are confusing, to say the least. This is not Yosemite, and, of course, I have not done all of the routes in this book. At the very least, what I hope I'm offering here is an overview of what climbs and ski tours/descents have been done. Wherever possible I've tried to identify routes that are considered classic and worth repeating. A close study of this book, however, will surely raise more questions than answers, and I can assure you that the best place to figure it all out is up there. So do your research and plan carefully, but then just go for it and get yourself up to Baffin.

This book is for those of you who are interested in learning the who, what, when, where and how of Baffin's past, and I hope it will help to maximize your adventure – not take away from it. Realistically, I doubt whether more than a few routes in this book will be repeated in my lifetime. Most climbers going all the way to Baffin Island will naturally want to leave their mark with a new route. So my hope is that this book will serve as a treasure map, with the treasure being Baffin's still virgin territory. There is plenty to go around, so have at it.

Baffin Island

Baffin Island is located in northern Canada, north of Hudson Bay and west of Greenland. It is the world's fifth-largest island, covering 507,451 km². Much of Baffin lies above the Arctic Circle. The topography of Baffin is incredibly diverse, including glaciers, ice-clad mountains, U-shaped valleys, towering granitic walls, peninsulas, fiords, swamps and lake-studded plains. The northwest end of Baffin Island is made up of two barren peninsulas – the Brodeur and the Borden. From Bylot Island off the north coast (just above the village of Pond Inlet) to the Cumberland Peninsula, you'll find a deeply incised fiordland characterized by massive sea cliffs and pointy, glaciated peaks. In central Baffin on the Cumberland Peninsula lies the 19,089 km² Auyuittuq National Park Reserve. Here you'll find the greatest concentration of mountains and glaciers in all of Baffin. The park centres on the Akshayuk Pass, a deep glacial valley that runs north/south from North Pangnirtung Fiord (outside of Qikiqtarjuq) to South Pangnirtung Fiord. To the north lies the Penny Ice Cap, a massive glacier that is believed to be a remnant of the last ice age. Glacial tongues spill through various side valleys down into Akshayuk Pass, dropping from as high as 2700 metres down to 500 metres. The highpoint of the pass is at Summit Lake, where two major river valleys – the Owl and the Weasel – flow north and south respectively to the ocean. From the park, the land slopes down to the south and east, dropping out of the mountains and onto a vast marshy plain that eventually drains into the Foxe Basin.

Geologically, Baffin Island is part of one of the earth's largest continental shields. The Precambrian Shield (aka the Canadian Shield) is centred under Hudson Bay and covers more than eight million km², running from arctic Greenland and Baffin Island all the way down the east coast of North America. The shield is composed of granites, gneisses and schists. These rocks were formed two billion years ago, when they were spewed from the earth's crust through volcanic activity. The shield was later buried under sediments in a shallow sea. Over millions of years, the Precambrian Shield was lifted up through volcanic activity. Wind and rain eroded away the softer sedimentary rocks, exposing the ancient granites, gneisses and schists. These rocks were then further carved and eroded by the Great Ice Age, which took place during the Pleistocene Epoch, from about two million to 10,000 years ago.

Starting at this time, the climate in North America began to cool, resulting in the massive Laurentide Ice Sheet, which at its height was larger than all of Canada. Most scientists believe that this ice sheet actually advanced and retreated several times, and at its height stretched all across Canada and down into the United States. The Great Lakes are believed to have formed from the meltwater from the retreating ice sheet. The action of these great ice sheets grinding against the half-billion-year-old rocks of the Precambrian Shield eventually carved out the monolithic rock precipices of Baffin Island that now draw rock climbers from around the world.

Baffin Island