



## AAC Publications

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### **Cerro Torre, north face, Directa de la Mentira**

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On the afternoon of January 31, after completing La Travesía del Oso Buda and making an attempt on Cerro Torre's southeast ridge, Marc-André Leclerc and I hiked up to Niponino with our sights set on another longstanding project of mine. During my two descents of Cerro Torre's north face, I had been amazed by the quantity and quality of crack systems that rise straight out of the Col de la Mentira (the col between Cerro Torre and Torre Egger, a.k.a. Col of Conquest). The only established route on this side of Cerro Torre, El Arca de los Vientos (Beltrami-Garibotti-Salvaterra, AAJ 2006), traverses onto the northwest face from the col and then cuts back onto the north face about halfway up.

On February 2 we climbed the lower eastface to the Col de la Mentira in three blocks. Conditions were tricky, with some verglas. As the sun began to hit the east face, recent rime accumulations began to peel off and soon we were climbing in a nonstop barrage of grape- to-golf-ball-size rime chunks. It was a bit painful, but more importantly we wondered if something big and dangerous might fall down.

We climbed one pitch above the Col de la Mentira and found the same tent platform we'd chopped during our "reverse traverse" of the Torres. We didn't sleep much that night, and in the morning were unsure if it was wise to continue, but we rationalized it'd be easy to try a few pitches and rap back down. Marc, with his fresh perspective on the range, had in the days beforehand come up with a great idea: Since we knew the location of every anchor, we could rappel back down the north face after our ascent, rather than the southeast ridge, and therefore leave all our bivy gear at the col. Thus we began the new route with pleasantly light day packs.

Marc started the first block just before 6 a.m., climbing in gloves, aiding most of the moves, and chipping ice and rime out of the cracks. By the third pitch the sun hit us and climbing barehanded became possible. At the end of our fourth pitch we stood below a prominent 100m finger-to-hand crack. Marc took the first pitch of this glorious splitter, and my lead block began with the second pitch. Above the crack, El Arca traverses in from the right and we followed this to the top. It felt special to lead the upper half of the north face, having juggled these pitches seven years earlier on the Torre Traverse.

Since Marc hadn't gotten his opportunity to lead the upper Ragni Route during the reverse traverse, he was psyched to do it this time. The experience he'd gained during the traverse clearly made a big difference, and he took us up our last four pitches fast. We arrived on the summit at 9:30 p.m., just a bit before dark. Despite knowing where all the anchors were, the rappels down the north face took on a vastly different character in strong wind. On the last rappel to our bivy it took both of us pulling on ascenders for 20 minutes to pull the ropes. Starting down the east face was a huge relief, as we were now on the lee side of the mountain. We finally reached the glacier at 6:30 a.m., having made the first complete ascent of Cerro Torre's north face. Our "variation" Directa de la Mentira (1,200m 6b+ C1) climbs about 250m of new terrain.

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## Images



Colin on the sixth pitch of Directa de la Mentira, the second of the incredible splitter crack pitches.

## Article Details

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