



AAC Publications

Cerro Fitz Roy, South Face, Colorado Route

Argentina/Chile, Southern Patagonia, Chaltén Massif

Ogling photos at home in Colorado, on the plane ride down to Patagonia, and even from a vantage point at Niponino camp, Max Barlerin was doing his best to convince Mike Lukens and me there was a new line to try on Fitz Roy. Just one day back from climbing Aguja de l'S we jokingly started a cost-benefit analysis to aid our decision-making for the next adventure. A few glasses of wine later, Max's vision for a line on the south side of Fitz Roy found itself at the top of our list.

Warm spells this past season in southern Patagonia made crack climbing on south faces more feasible, as they were likely to be free of ice. Our approach across the Piedras Blancas Superior Glacier, on the other hand, was made more complicated by the warm weather. We delicately walked two thong-like snow bridges over gaping crevasses, finally weaving our way to a bivy below the east face of Fitz Roy. The intimidating 4,000' gray monolith towered over our heads.

The following morning we simul-soloed the 60° snow slope left of La Brecha. At our bivy, we rested, refueled our bodies, and worked on our alpine sunburn, all while watching the light change on the south face in hopes of revealing a line. It looked plausible, but portions were hidden. Alarm set for 2:30 a.m., we brewed and finished packing our kit.

Leaving camp required ascending a small buttress to gain a snowfield that hugs Fitz Roy's base. We paused for a bit, allowing the sky to lighten. We now had a visual on our possible entry point (between the Washington Route and Asado) as we shod up in the snow at 6 a.m. The route began up a beautiful finger crack and a short offwidth, the first of many, many splitter cracks to come. Roughly 12 hours later, we had finished the ten steep pitches of the headwall. Three more pitches of simul-climbing up blocky terrain had us on the summit of Fitz Roy. We brewed a quick dinner and retreated to our three-man bivy sack, spooning under the summit block. Morning blanketed us in blue sky. We rappelled the Franco-Argentine and finally hit the isothermic snow of La Silla in early afternoon. After a brew and packing up our gear at the base, we made the rappels down La Brecha and began a slushy walk out the Piedras Blancas.

We bivied one last time on the shore of the electric-blue Laguna de los Tres, below the glacier. We couldn't believe that a line so beautiful and clean had been untouched: a golden granite headwall with nary a loose rock and splitter cracks for over 1,000 feet. The climbing varied from ring locks to fists (tons of fists), with an occasional wider section, for 13 pitches. I am still trying to convince Max to go climb it again—the Colorado Route (500m, 5.11c).

Quinn Brett, USA

Images



A splitter finger crack on pitch two of the Colorado Route, south face of Fitz Roy.

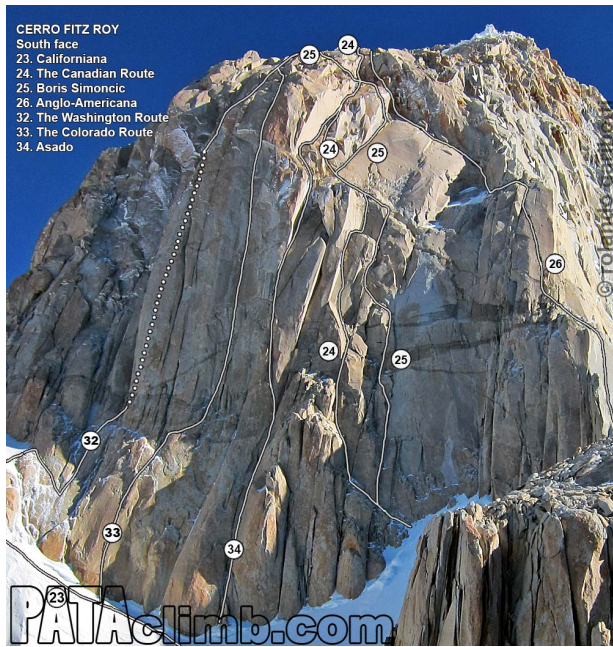


Pitch five of the Colorado Route, one of “many, many, splitter cracks.”



On pitch nine of the Colorado Route, where the route’s straight-in cracks transition into a nice corner

system.



The south face of Fitz Roy. Number 33 is the Colorado Route.

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