



AAC Publications

Puño Este, Half-Cocked

Argentina-Chile, Northern Patagonia, Aysén Region

In January 2016, Jim Donini and I climbed a new route on Puño Este (ca 2,050m), a peak just east of the Hielo Continental Norte in Chilean Patagonia.

We base-camped at Jim's lake house by the shores of Lago General Carrera while waiting for good weather. When the weather cleared, Jim's wife, Angela, drove us up a long and winding road in the Rio de la Colonia glacial drainage. During the drive we caught a glimpse of a glowing granite spire with a sizable east wall. At this point we aborted plans for our initial objective and diverted our attention on sight.

For the approach, we managed to forge a path up rocky dikes and through dense bamboo and lenga forest to a beautiful hanging alpine lake. This "infinity pool," with its stunning view of Monte San Lorenzo to the east, served as high camp.

The next morning, we approached the impressive east face of Puño Este up a broad shoulder above the lake. With limited time, we chose to ascend the scenic southeast ridge. The climbing involved eight pitches up to 5.9+ and several hundred feet of 4th- to low 5th-class scrambling. We carried up and over the summit and descended the rear of the peak down easy, low-angle slopes to a rocky arm. Here, we made one short rappel to the glacier and traversed back to camp. Our route is called Half-Cocked (600m, 5.9+). The next day, we mostly retraced our steps down through the foliage, rappelling bushy cliff bands that stood in our path. Upon reaching the Rio de la Colonia, we retrieved packrafts and floated to the confluence of Rio Baker, where, after a few more hours, we set up camp on a sandbar just off the bank. In the morning, we continued down the river with one portage, accidentally passing our planned take-out. We were fortunate to hitch a ride back to Angela and the waiting HiLux.

Unbeknown to us at the time of ascent, Puño Este was apparently climbed in December 2014 by a Chilean party who ascended a route (6 pitches, 50–60°) that encompasses a portion of our descent. We encountered a small cairn on our way down and later unearthed an online write-up. The climbers refer to the peak they climbed as Cerro Puño, when in fact Cerro Puño (2,108m) is located just to the west of Puño Este, across a broad glacier separating the rocky spires of the massif.

– Tad McCrea, USA

Images



Puño Este as seen from below.



Jim Donini paddling the glacial outlet of “Lago Colonia” by packraft with gear on board. The team descended the Rio de la Colonia and onto the Rio Baker.



Puño Este is marked by the red star.



Puño Este on the right and Cerro Puño on the left, viewed in winter conditions. The rocky east face of Puño Este is prominent, with the southeast ridge (600m, 5.9+) on the left.

Article Details

Author	Tad McCrea
Publication	AAJ
Volume	62
Issue	90
Page	0
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions