



AAC Publications

Punta Satya, Estoy Verde

Chile, Cordillera Sarmiento

In March, Jon Griffin, Tad McCrea, and I traveled to the remote western side of the Cordillera de Sarmiento and spent two weeks exploring the area. Previously, the majority of the few climbing expeditions to this range have accessed the peaks from the narrow Fiordo de las Montañas on the east side of the cordillera.

We departed Puerto Natales in a fishing boat on March 3, first crossing Golfo Almirante Montt, then heading west and eventually north up the Estrecho Collingwood, east through the Paso Cubillos, and south down the Seno Taraba. The 12-hour boat ride deposited us in an unnamed bay in the central part of the Seno Taraba. (This bay is directly west of Cerro Cinco Amigos and north of the smaller bay Seno Aguja, which was used to access Cerro Caprichoso, a.k.a. Fickle Finger of Fate, on the 1992 expedition led by Jack Miller; see AAJ 1993.) The ocean was merciful and our voyage smooth. As far as we know, no one had ever set foot in this area of the range, leaving us to discover waterfalls plunging into aqua blue lakes, pristine forest, unnamed glaciers, and virgin peaks.

By the time we anchored, night was falling, so we slept peacefully on the boat and waited until morning to search for a place to establish base camp. Finding dry ground proved to be a challenge, but we eventually found a suitable site near shore and got to work clearing brush, digging out moss, and felling small trees to use for our shelter, using plastic and other supplies we'd purchased in Puerto Natales. After two days, we had built ourselves a nice little house, furnished with tables we fashioned from old crates and seats from recycled wooden pallets that we brought with us.

Once camp was established, we hacked a trail through the dense jungle, finding a passage into the high mountains above. On our first day of good weather, we left camp at noon after the rain stopped and made our way up the jungle trail, eventually gaining a steep ridge that led us to a glacier. We navigated our way up the glacier and climbed a nearby peak with a striking mixed line gutting the center of the southwest face.

We began climbing around 8 p.m. and encountered mixed terrain up to M6 for 200m. The summit ridge above was perfect névé. The moon cast shadows of towering giants nearby, only increasing our wonder. Our rappels began around 2 a.m., and we were caught in a storm on the descent. Howling wind and sideways rain pelted our faces, making it challenging to find our passage off the glacier. Eventually, we made it safely back to solid ground and wandered down in search of a protected place to set up the tent and dry off. At 7 a.m. we crawled into our shelter, soaking wet, and listened to the roaring wind.

The storm only worsened, so we spent a few hours drying and warming our cold bodies before making our way back down to base camp, over 24 hours after we'd started. We named our new route Estoy Verde (200m, M6) after the green rock we encountered while climbing the peak, for which we adopted the name Punta Satya, given by the party that climbed the same peak later in the season from the east (see report here). According to our GPS, the summit is 51°52.39.20 S, 73°23.23.90 W. This corresponds well with the map produced by Camilo Rada, on which Punta Esmeralda appears to be the northern or main summit of the unnamed 1,444m peak just west of Punta Barlovento. (See the online map and Rada's AAJ 2014 feature story "Recon: Towers of Wind and Ice.")

After spending a few rainy days in our shelter, the weather cleared and we ventured out to attempt the unclimbed Alas de Angel Sur. We retraced our steps through the jungle and onto the glacier near Punta Esmeralda. However, this time we climbed up and over a col to reach the east side of the range. We spent almost six hours navigating the glacier, searching for a way to access the peak but dark clouds began to swirl and the wind began to blow. Our time was up, and we began the journey back to camp.

Two days later, our boat arrived on schedule, bringing with them bottles of wine and wide smiles. We celebrated with our friends, toasting to adventure and relishing in those last moments deep in the Patagonian wilderness.

– Whitney Clark, USA

Images



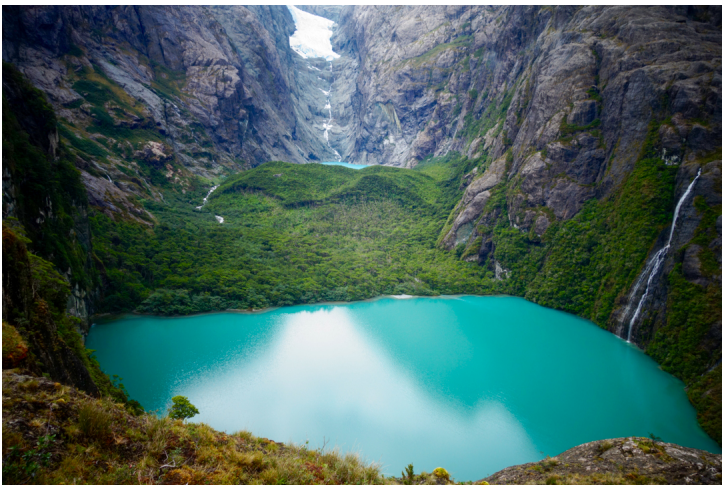
Climbing into the night on Estoy Verde.



Looking up at the west side of unnamed 1,444m peak just west of Punta Barlovento in the Cordillera de Sarmiento. Punta Esmeralda is the spire on the left, and the route Estoy Verde (200m, M6) ascends the obvious corner system.



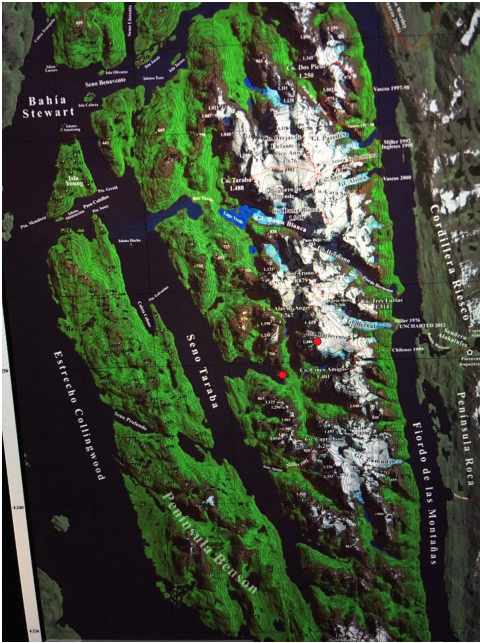
The 2017 team cutting a trail through the lush forest above Seno Taraba on the west side of the Cordillera de Sarmiento.



On the approach to Punta Esmeralada, looking down to a glacial lake discovered by the team, which they called Lago Arco Iris.



Exploring a glacier on the east side of the Cordillera Sarmiento, possibly part of the Glaciar Bernal. Alas de Angel Sur in the background.



An overview map of the Cordillera de Sarmiento showing the areas mentioned in this report. The team's basecamp and the 1,444m peak just west of Punta Barlovento are both marked by a red dot.

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