



## AAC Publications

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### **Cordón Aysén Exploration and First Ascent of Cerro Enroque**

Argentina-Chile, Northern Patagonia

**On a 23-day expedition during the austral winter of 2017, Natalia Martínez and I accessed and explored the remote Cordón Aysén in Chilean Patagonia.** The Cordón Aysén is a 30 km mountain range on the western edge of the Northern Patagonian Ice Field, 16 km northwest of Cerro Arenales. It is dotted with beautiful and challenging summits, all of them believed to be unclimbed prior to our expedition, with the exception of a minor peak in its northern end, Cerro Margarita (2,236m), which was ascended by Sir Crispin Agnew as part of the British Joint Services Expedition of 1972 (See Alpine Journal 1974).

Other than Cerro Margarita, named after the British princess, the only other named feature until recently was Cerro De Geer (2,520m), likely the highest summit of the range. It was named by Otto Nordenskjöld and his expedition's geographer, Hugo Pallin, in 1921 (See Alpine Journal 1933). To date, Cerro De Geer remains unclimbed, along with many extraordinary peaks to the south of it.

Natalia and I started by boat on July 24 from Puerto Bertrand in Chile's Aysén region, heading toward the outlet of the Soler River. From there we walked 21 km to El Palomar, a rudimentary wooden shelter that is the property of Patagonia Adventure Expeditions and part of the impressive Aysén Glacier Trail. Our loads arrived at El Palomar on pack horses; from there, following Romero Creek, we carried three sets of loads to the Nef Glacier.

On July 30 we started crossing the Nef Glacier using sleds. A very broken-up area of the glacier forced us to camp and explore the crevasse field for a feasible route. The following day a route was found, and we started to carry loads through the maze. During this time we experienced an extreme rain event, where many crevasses turned into lakes and our camp was spared from flooding only by some channels we carved in the ice at the last minute to redirect the water.

On August 4 we accessed the Northern Patagonian Ice Field by a 1,690m pass between Cerro Cachet and Cerro Largo (In 2007, Nicolas Von Graevenitz and Camilo Rada made the first ascent of Cerro Largo; see AAJ 2008). We were most likely the first team to use this pass after the New Zealand expedition of 1971 (see AAJ 1973). After traveling west, we established our advanced base camp on August 6 at 1,509m, at the foot of the Cordón Aysén, completing our 12-day approach.

At noon on August 7, taking advantage of a sudden break in the bad weather, we initiated the ascent of an unnamed peak that we later named Cerro Enroque (2,466m, 47°04'03"S 73°34'25"W). From camp, we approached on skis for 5.7 km, gaining about 760m up a glacial ramp on the north side of the peak. This approach brought us to the upper pinnacle of the mountain, where we crossed a bergschrund and cramponed up snow slopes for approximately 120m. Once the terrain steepened, we first attempted a direct route up the east side of the summit tower. Eventually, we wrapped from west to east around the tower, climbing two pitches (about 80m) of ice up to 70°. We reached the summit at 6 p.m., and, after two rappels, we enjoyed an extraordinary ski descent, benefited by a full moon. The ascent was D-

On the morning of August 9, we launched an attempt on Cerro De Geer, but we were thwarted by thick fog and high avalanche risk.

We initiated our return on August 10 and arrived back in Puerto Bertrand on August 15.

– **Camilo Rada**, Chile

In AAJ 2018, Camilo Rada also published a look at the climbing potential on the Northern Patagonian Icefield. It can be found [here](#).

## Images



The northern Cordón Aysén as seen from the summit of Cerro Enroque during the first ascent of the peak by Camilo Rada and Natalia Martínez. The two climbers began referring to the sharp peak on the left as Cerro Alfil (meaning Bishop); behind, barely poking through the clouds, is the summit of Cerro De Geer. Camilo Rada said, “Enroque is the name in Spanish for the castling move in chess, in which you swap the rook (“torre” in Spanish) and the king’s positions (in this case Cerro De Geer is the king). So, for its shape, its position between the king and the torre, and in keeping with the chess theme, we started referring to the pointy peak as Alfil, Spanish for the bishop piece in chess.” Camilo Rada



The southern Cordón Aysén as seen from the summit of Cerro Enroque. The sharp peak on the left is Cerro Aguila. Camilo Rada said, “It was named by Martin Sessions, a glaciologist who was part of the British Joint Services Expedition of 1972 and who revisited Benito Glacier several times. Both from the east and the west, the tri-summited peak looks like a bird, which is why he called it Aguila (meaning “eagle”).”



A clear winter night at camp in the Cordón Aysén, with the east face of Cerro De Geer in the background, left.



Natalia Martínez with the east side of Cerro Enroque in the background. The summit is the tower on the far right-hand (north) side of the massif. The climbers ascended a ramp (mostly hidden) on the north side of the peak before tackling the final pinnacle; only the upper 10m of their route can be seen from this angle.



The view from the crevasse field of the Nef Glacier, en route to the Cordon Aysen, looking toward Punta Pantagruel (left), Cerro Gargantua (center), and Cerro Largo (right). In 1971–'72, New Zealanders climbed Gargantua by a snow ramp on its north side (See the attached link where it is called P 2,700 I: <http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/12197347602/South-America-Chilean-and-Argentine-Patagonia-Northern-Patagonian-Icecap>); they also attempted the peak in the shade between Gargantua and Cerro Largo. In 2007, Nicolas Von Graevenitz and Camilo Rada climbed Cerro Largo (See: <http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/12200824700/South-America-Chile-Central-Patagonia-Cerro-Largo-First-Ascent-Northeast-Ridge-Cerros-Hyades-Turret-and-Escuela-First-Winter-Ascents>). In November 2017, a team climbed the small point between Pantagruel and Gargantua, calling it Punta Anna (See: <http://publications.americanalpineclub.org/articles/13201214518/Northern-Patagonian-Ice-Field-Exploration>).



Cerro Aguila from the west.

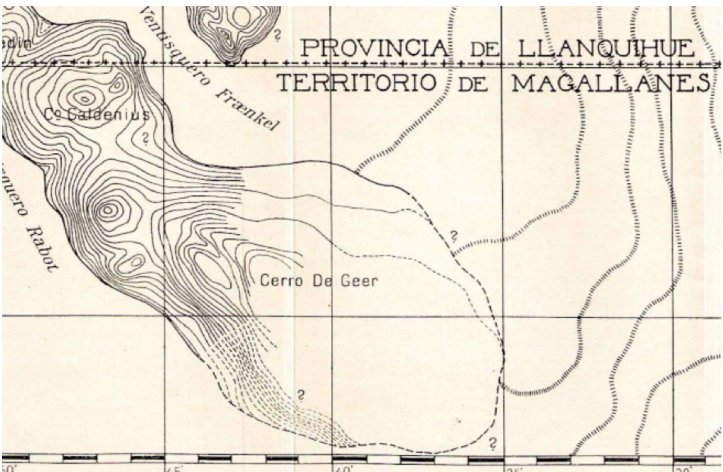




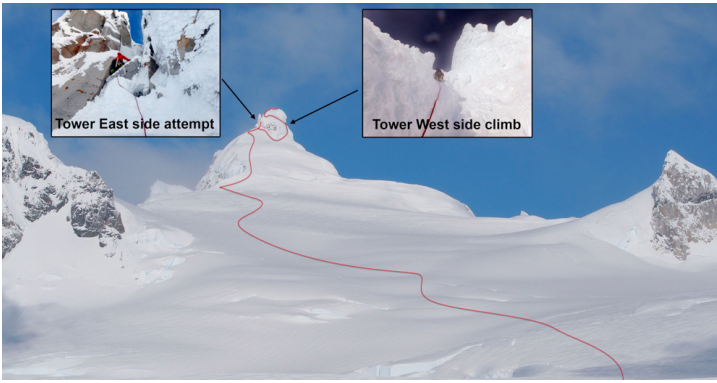
A close-up photo of the approximately 300m-east face of Cerro Gargantua.



Camilo Rada



Cerro De Geer as drawn by 1921 expedition geographer Hugo Pallin.



The upper pinnacle of Cerro Enroque from the north, showing the team's route up the summit tower.



The Northern Patagonian Icefield, showing approach from Puerto Bertrand to the Cordón Aysén used by Natalia Martínez and Camilo Rada in July/August 2017. (Yellow line: boat travel; blue: foot travel aided by horses; red: foot travel and climbing.) Martínez and Rada made the first ascent of Cerro Enroque. Other peaks climbed in early 2018: (1) Cerro Fantasma. (2) Punta Pantagruel. This is a simplified version of a map under development by the Uncharted project. Peak names and locations differ from other sources, including official maps, but the mapmakers have strong historical evidence to support the naming. Maps and more information can be requested from [natalia@unchart.org](mailto:natalia@unchart.org).

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