



## AAC Publications

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### **Chaltén Massif and Torres del Paine: 2017–2018 Season Summary**

Southern Patagonia

**THE PATAGONIAN SEASON was marked by very unstable weather. This prevented any groundbreaking ascents, but a good time was had by most and for the first time in years there were no serious accidents.** If bad weather is what it takes to accomplish that, let's hope the bad weather continues. We can all agree there has been far too much death in our community of late.

In the Chaltén Massif, the big news was the change of ownership of around 8,000 acres on the south side of the Río Eléctrico Valley, which gives access to the northern flank of the massif, via Piedra Negra, one of the most popular advanced camps. The land was purchased with funds provided by the Wyss Foundation, from Swiss-American philanthropist Hansjörg Wyss, with hopes of donating it to Los Glaciares National Park. The NGO Banco de Bosques is in charge of the land for now and unfortunately has decided to keep charging the access fee that the previous owners had in place. However, during the second half of the season, the concessionaire, a third party, decided to stop charging climbers.

To become part of the national park, the land first has to be transferred from provincial to federal control. The proposal that was presented to the provincial legislature includes several other national park expansions, totaling over one million acres. Such a vast land transfer has resulted in strong opposition from farming (livestock) and mining groups. The proposed law was brought up twice for a vote, and both times it was blocked and sent back to committee. An agreement seems improbable.

Another concern with the land purchased by the Wyss Foundation is that Banco de Bosques, with funding from American Richard Butler has taken a rather unexpected turn in Perito Moreno National Park, near Cerro San Lorenzo. They have installed five new huts in what was an otherwise pristine area, which until now received only 800 to 1,200 visitors per year. The fear is that Banco de Bosques might intend to install similar levels of infrastructure along the Río Eléctrico. In Argentina there has been an 80-year debate regarding the management of wilderness areas, between the non-interventionist model copied from North America and the much heavier-handed European vision of the outdoors. The installation of huts under the guise of "conservation" sets a particularly bad precedent. There is also a proposal to place a hut below Cerro Colorado (Apidame), a pristine climbing destination outside of Chile Chico in the Aysén Region.

There are now two private helicopters stationed in El Calafate, and these should be very useful in case of accidents. Although unable to perform technically difficult rescues (such as long-line rescues), they would be able to retrieve injured climbers from most valley bottoms or glaciers, saving precious time and effort. Insurance coverage for rescue costs in excess of US\$10,000 is essential. (The standard AAC membership benefit is not sufficient.) Either pay for added coverage from Global Rescue or consider joining the British section of the Austrian Alpine Club ([aacuk.org.uk](http://aacuk.org.uk)), which offers comprehensive coverage for quite a low fee. Rescue insurance is mandatory in Torres del Paine National Park. GoFundMe campaigns are not the way to pay for rescues.

In the Chaltén Massif, the following new routes were climbed, listed in geographical order, from south to north along the west side, and back south along the east side.

Two lines got climbed in the southwest and west faces of Cerro Solo: French Connection (600m, WI4 M6 A0) by James Monypenny (U.K.) and Austin Siadak (USA), and Los Gringos No Comen Lljua

(600m, 5.8 90°) by Monypenny and Rodrigo Lobo Villarroel (Bolivia).

On Cerro Adela Sur, Vlad Capusan and Török Zsolt (RO) climbed a variation in the middle section of the East Ridge route (Aikes-Monaco-Pellegrini, 1967), up a steep wall via six pitches with difficulties to M5+ and WI4. On the north face of Punta Filip, Jonathan Griffin and Tad McCrea (both USA) climbed Espera que te Pegue (10 pitches, 5.10+ C1) to join Amigos Perdidos, retreating without continuing to the summit. On the northwest face of Cerro Pollone, Matteo della Bordella and Luca Schiera (Italy) climbed Maracaibo (250m, 5.11+ C1), descending east without continuing to the summit.

Earlier in the year, in early September, Markus Pucher (Austria) did the first solo winter ascent of Aguja Guillaumet via the Amy-Vidailhet couloir. A five-pitch pillar immediately left of that route was climbed by Aurélien Bessot (France) and Marcelo Machado (Brazil): Pilar del Quinto Sol (190m, 5.10 C2). The Comesaña-Fonrouge on Aguja Guillaumet got climbed in 11 hours car to car, and Christopher Alcocer (USA) and Sam Lambert (Canada) climbed a five-pitch variation to the south summit: Plata o Plomo (5.11+). Unreported last season, Seán Villanueva and Siebe Vanhee (Belgium) did the first free ascent of Disfrute la Vida (Pitelka-VonBirckhahn, 2009) on the west face of Aguja Guillaumet, now 5.11.

On the east face of Aguja Mermoz, Johanna Marcoz, Jeremy Stagnetto, and Jerome Sullivan (France) climbed a direct start to Jardines Japoneses (Haley-Holsten-Schaefer, 2010), up a striking ice-filled corner (150m, AI5). On the east face of Aguja Val Biois, Lutz Zybell, Felix Getzlaff, and Tom Ehrig (German) climbed La Torcida (350m, 5.11+ M4) to the junction with the first-ascent route, from where they retreated.

On Cerro Chaltén, Colin Haley (USA) and Austin Siadak repeated the classic French Northwest Ridge route (a.k.a. Afanassieff) in 10 hours 37 minutes, taking 23:57 round-trip from Piedra Negra, descending via the Francesa.

On Aguja Poincenot, Villanueva and Vanhee free climbed all the crux sections of the unrepeated Whiskey Time (Eggler-Pitelka, 1994), originally A4, now 5.11+. The second crux was climbed via a variation, traversing left into an offwidth crack right from the belay. Unfortunately, around pitch ten and with only three easier pitches left, high winds forced them to retreat.

On Aguja Rafael Juárez, Matías Korten and Agustín Mailing (Argentina) climbed five new pitches to join the west ridge (Los Millenials, 5.10).

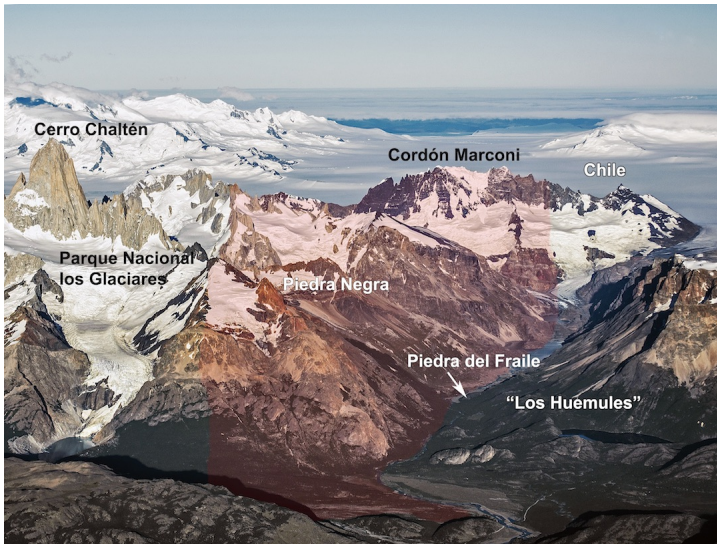
Very little got done in the Torres del Paine massif. Aleta de Tiburón was the most visited feature, with more than 30 parties attempting it this season, out of a total of 45 climbing permits issued for the entire massif. The French 1981 southwest face route offers 10 pitches to 5.8 on good rock and in one of the most stunning settings one can possibly fathom.

Climbing out of the Bader Valley on the east face of Aguja Desconocida (the north summit of La Máscara, a feature originally called the Thumb), Villanueva and Vanhee climbed El Matédor (500m, 5.11c), a new line just to the left of Chi Dorme non Piglia Pesci (Amore-Angelini-Polacci-Vietina, 2002), with which it shares a couple of pitches in the upper section.

A Catalan team made a valiant attempt to repeat the South African Route (1,200m, 5.12d) on the east face of Torre Central, but were forced to retreat one or two pitches shy of the summit ridge. Later in the season, Villanueva and Vanhee attempted a one-push ascent of the same route, but encountered very bad conditions and retreated a couple of pitches above the Boeing Ledge (pitch 17).

– Rolando Garibotti

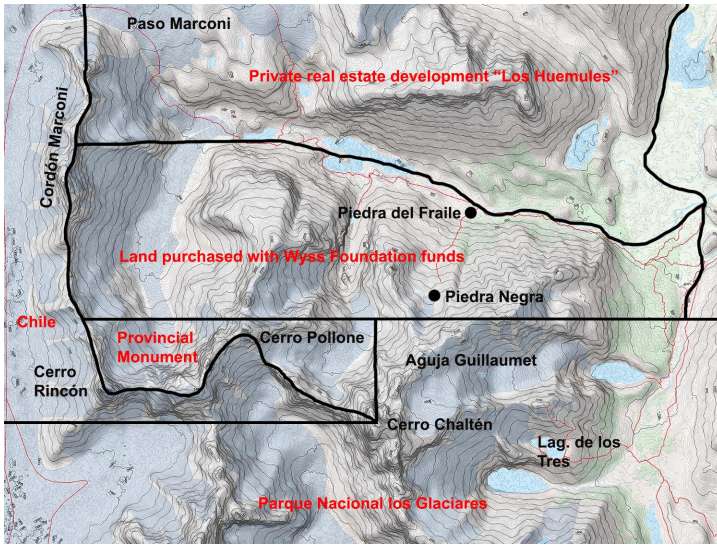
## Images



The northern part of the Chaltén Massif, seen from the east. The land purchased with Wyss Foundation funds, slated to be donated to the national park, is highlighted in red. (Borders are approximate.) El Chaltén is to the south, 10km left of the edge of the photo.



Cerro Solo from the southwest. (1) Los Gringos No Comen Llajua. (2) French Connection. (3) Chosspotamia (AAJ 2017).



Map of the area affected by land ownership changes above the Río Eléctrico valley.

## Article Details

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