



Cerro Aguda (West Summit), West Ridge

Chile, Aysén Region

In February, Itai Cohen, Elaine Kennedy, and I made an ascent of the west ridge of Cerro Aguda (2,641m; 46°48'51.74"S, 73°09'36.18"W; also called Cerro Agudo or Aguja Aguda) on the eastern margin of the North Patagonian Icefield. The peak had been climbed previously from the south (AAJ 1971). This was an all-encompassing adventure in which the journey to reach the mountain was easily the crux.

Cerro Aguda dominates the southern side of Lago Leones, amid dozens of inspiring peaks, with the west ridge plainly visible along the skyline from the lake. The peaks Tronco, Cristal, and Mocho also make their presence known, with large icefalls flowing from the mountains and cascading into the water.

After first hitchhiking to the area, we located Phillipe, who owns the Terra Luna Resort, near Puerto Guadal. He provided us with a splendid jetboat approach to the southwest corner of Lago Leones, where our bush bash began. At first, we hugged the west side of the outflowing Rio San Tadeo. After a quarter-mile, we passed the end of a tiny, rhubarb-infested stream before turning right and entering the bush, where we thrashed to the upper tarn.

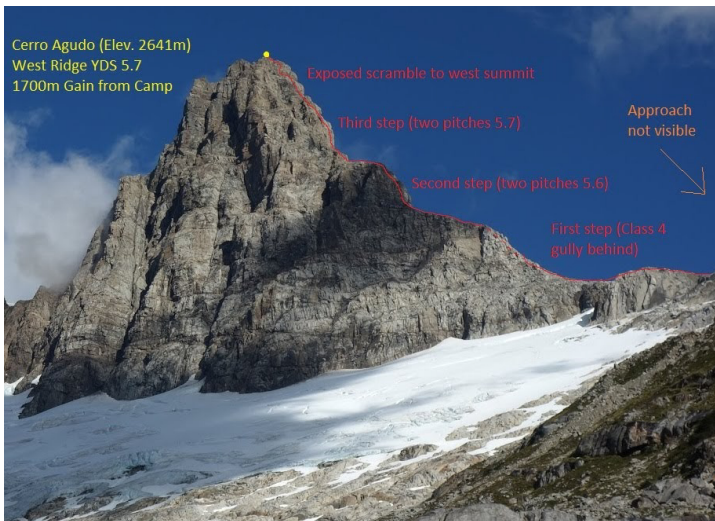
Dreaming of sunshine for what felt like an eternity finally paid off on our sixth day out, when San Valentín showed her beautiful face and allowed us to proceed. We ascended in a south-southeast direction up glacier-polished slabs, which gave us easy access to the broad, flat bench below Cerro Aguda's west ridge. From here, Cerro Hyades (3,078m) at the edge of the icefield became visible for the first time to the west, as did the giant overhanging mushroom on Cono Helado, which blew our minds.

Fresh snow remained from the previous days' rain, which spiced up the climb. The west ridge offered three steeper steps of climbing separated by wide, flat benches, and there was a lot of soloing and scrambling. The crux came up high where I excavated melting snow from a near-vertical 5.7 chimney and hand crack. The day began to fade as we reached the west summit, 1,700m above camp.

The true summit is guarded by a 30m-deep notch and gendarme—this will have to wait until my next lifetime or for another crazy seeker of moderate and obscure routes who also doesn't want to wait in El Chaltén for weeks on end. We were content to finish on the west top. We retraced our route, and it was fully dark by our final rappel. We didn't eat dinner until 1 a.m.

– Matt Lemke, USA

Images



A photo-topo of the new route up Cerro Aguda's west ridge.



Approaching Cerro Aguda past giant Chilean Rhubarb.



Cerro Aguda's west ridge (right) viewed from the north.



Sunrise on San Valentín and its neighbors from the Cerro Aguda team's high camp.



Looking west as the sun sets behind Cerro Hyades (3,078m, left) and Cono Helado.

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