



## AAC Publications

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### **Cerro Puño, North Face**

Chile, Central Patagonia, Aysén Region

**Cerro Puño (2,108m) is an attractive summit at the top of the Colonia Valley, on the eastern flank of the Northern Patagonian Icefield (Campo de Hielo Norte).** Puño Este (ca 2,050m), the eastern summit of the Puño massif, has been climbed by previous parties, including Jim Donini and Tad McCrea's 2016 ascent of the imposing eastern face (AAJ 2018). The taller western summit of the massif remained unclimbed.

On January 10, 2019, Ben Barron, David Carel, and I (all USA) began our drive up the Colonia Valley, first crossing the Baker River on a beautiful, antiquated balsa (car ferry). Dirt roads turned to muddy two-track, and, as the path faded, we stashed our truck in the bushes and proceeded on foot.

I had attempted Puño two years prior, in 2017, with a different team, and the faint machete path we'd left on that expedition appeared intermittently over the course of our approach. Even with a vaguely defined route through the thick Patagonian brush, the bushwhack was formidable and involved occasional fifth-class maneuvers up trees or mud walls. After six hours of painfully slow progress, we threw our sleeping bags on a granite slab near a small lake and watched the evening colors settle over the landscape. The San Lorenzo massif loomed proudly in the distance on the Argentinean border.

The next day we quickly moved through the remaining forest and brush to emerge onto a series of high granite slabs leading to the Puño Glacier. At the base of the glacier we built a high camp and then roped up to scout the terrain; we found it considerably more crevassed than two years prior.

At dawn the following day we crossed the glacier and made a few tricky steps over the bergschrund, then followed steep snow around the eastern side of a small nunatak in the middle of the massif. This brought us onto a plateau where we could see for the first time the north face of Cerro Puño. We crossed a narrow snow bridge over an otherwise impassable moat, and steep snowfields led to the base of the rock. Ben led five pitches of moderate rock to the summit, including three pitches of surprisingly aesthetic, high-quality granite. We lingered on the summit for 30 minutes, taking in sweeping views of Cerro Arenales, the Colonia Glacier, and the Cordón Aysén.

A 70m rappel off the eastern face of the summit block placed us at the top of a steep snow gully. One more 70m rappel deposited us back at the base of the rock. With the weather window closing around us, we retraced our route to high camp and then descended to the Colonia Valley in howling winds and sleet over the course of two days.

– Ben Wilcox, USA

## Images



High camp below Cerro Puño (2,108m) with the Colonia River below.



Approaching Cerro Puño (2,108m) through the thick Patagonian brush. The south face of Cerro Puño is in view. The team ascended the glacier around the right hand (east) side of the nunatak visible on the right side of the photo and then climbed the rock pitches on the opposite north face.





Beginning the third pitch on the north face of Cerro Puño (2,108m), with the Colonia Glacier in the background.



The north face of Cerro Puño (2,108m). The route followed good granite for three pitches, and then traversed and climbed dirty choss to reach the true summit.



Approaching Cerro Puño

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