



AAC Publications

Chaltén And Torres Del Paine: 2019–2020 Season Summary

Argentina-Chile, Southern Patagonia

This was the fourth consecutive season with fairly poor weather and conditions. After several anomalously dry seasons in a row, when climbing success in this area was quite straightforward, it has come as a bit of a shock to go back to the Patagonia weather of old. The only extended windows of good weather were in February, but the conditions were challenging, with much snow, ice, and rime on the walls. Not enough is known about the area's climate to know if the recent changes relate to inter-annual or decadal variability. Panos Athanasiadis, a European climber and climatologist, points out, "It is perfectly normal that multi-annual climate variations are very strong, and periods of one extreme are followed by years of the opposite extreme."

A recently published paper in the journal *Nature* shows that the poleward trend of the jet stream and the ring of low pressure that circle Antarctica—the two biggest influences upon Patagonian weather—paused around the year 2000 (Banerjee et al., 2020). This poleward trend had contributed to drier, more stable weather. The authors attribute this pause to the healing of the ozone hole, as a result of the Montreal protocol, the treaty designed to phase out the production of substances responsible for ozone depletion. Over the long term, climate models predict that increasing greenhouse gases will continue the poleward pull, but as this paper suggests, for some time the effect will be dampened by the ozone hole recovery. (See also "Sunny Patagonia?" in AAJ 2018.)

Despierta y Lucha on the west face of Cerro Peineta. [Rolando Garibotti](#)

Despite the difficult conditions, many climbs were completed (see also other reports in this section). In the Torres del Paine Massif, in late January, Sebastian Pelletti (Austria) and Cristobal Vielma Sepulveda (Chile) opened Despierta y Lucha (400m, 5.11 A1) on the west face of Cerro Peineta, to the left of Capicúa Pastor (Arancibia-Fica, 2005). The red granite was of superb quality, with long clean corners, finger to fist cracks, and a couple of difficult slab sections to connect cracks. They found a few short sections of aid—some thin, requiring pitons and micro-nuts. They rappelled Billy the Kid (Garber-Lloyd, 1993), leaving their line completely clean.

In February, Pelletti and Javier Reyes (Chile) climbed El Tambor (230m, 5.10+), a new route on the west face of the Colmillo Oeste. Late in the month, Christophe Ogier (France) and Gašper Pintar (Slovenia) did the fifth ascent of the "W" traverse of the three Paine Towers. Steve Schneider (USA) did the first ascent of this traverse in February 2002, completing it solo in 51 hours round trip from base camp.

In the Chaltén Massif, there were a few ascents in early December, but then the weather did not allow for much until early February. On Cerro Torre, a number of parties climbed the Ragni Route during two good weather windows. Ten days later, the first rime mushroom above the upper headwall collapsed, causing a massive avalanche that would have killed anyone on the route. The factors that influence rime mushrooms to break off are not known, but it seems plausible they behave in part like a snowpack, and that the combination of gravity, heat, and moisture can result in events like this. Avoiding periods when the freezing line is above the base of the route (2,300m) would be wise.

On Torre Egger, in January 2019, Brette Harrington (USA) and Quentin Roberts (U.K.) climbed a new variation on the lower east pillar, a line first scoped by the late Marc-André Leclerc. After the first four pitches of Titanic, their line headed left, climbing nine pitches (350m, 5.12b) to rejoin Titanic. Bad weather prevented these two from reaching the summit in 2019, and so they returned this season

along with Horacio Gratton (Argentina). Ice-filled cracks prevented free climbing the crux and forced them to make a three-pitch variation to their 2019 line. Eventually, they joined Titanic to reach the summit (950m altogether). They spent four days on the climb—two full climbing days, one waiting for conditions to improve at the half-height snowfield, and one descending.

Torre Egger and Aguja Standhardt from the southeast. (1) Titanic (Giarolli-Orlandi, 1987). (1a) MA's Vision (Harrington-Roberts, 2019, climbed free but not to summit). In 2020, MA's Vision was climbed again with a variation (blue line, Gratton-Harrington-Roberts), and the climbers summited via Titanic. (2) El Flechazo (Favresse-Villanueva, 2020) on the southeast pillar (see p.213). (3) Il Dado e' Tratto (Bernasconi-Bordella- Pasquetto, 2020), finishing on the north face (see p.226). Other routes not shown. Rolando Garibotti

In late February, Colin Haley and Alex Honnold (USA) traversed Cerro Pollone, Cerro Piergiorgio, and Cerro Domo Blanco. They first climbed Cara Sur (400m, 65° 5) on the south side of Pollone, a warmup of sorts, bivouacking at the col before Piergiorgio. They then climbed Esperando la Cumbre (400m, 70° M5) to the north top of Piergiorgio. The tricky traverse of the summit ridge was the crux (300m, WI4 M5 A0). From the main summit, they descended to the southeast (many rappels and some traversing), bivouacking before Cerro Domo Blanco. They then ascended the last portion of Filo Norte (250m, 60° 3) on Domo Blanco, making their final descent northwest to the Marconi Glacier. They named their linkup the Crystal Castles Traverse. A week later, Haley and Honnold did the first ascent of Cerro Electrico Oeste, the jagged peak to the north of Paso del Cuadrado.

On the east face of Cerro Piergiorgio, Alessandro Bau and Giovanni Zaccaria (Italy) climbed Scrumble de Manzana (WI5 M6), a stunning four-pitch, ice-filled corner that connects Cara Este to Esperando la Cumbre. Just to the west, Agustín Burgos (Argentina) and Tad McCrea (USA) climbed Muñecos de Barro (300m, 5.8 75° M3), a new route on the east face of Colmillo Este. They followed the couloir between Colmillo Este and Norte until 50m below the col, then moved left onto the north face until the summit.

In the Fitz Roy group, over February 20–21, Kiff Alcocer and Jordon Griffler (USA) climbed GBU-57A (6b+ C1), a 15-pitch new route on the south side of the west ridge of Aguja Rafael Juarez. After 12 pitches, their route briefly joins Filo Oeste, then heads left, climbing three more pitches to join the Anglo-American. The rock is of decent quality, although at times a bit gritty. They left no gear but found a few bolts at the belays of the first pitches from an earlier attempt (Raselli-Brun, 2013). Just to the south and on the west face of Aguja de l'S, Matías Korten and Agustín Mailing (Argentina) climbed Linea Roja (350m, 5.10), a new route on the upper headwall, following the obvious red streak to the right of Thaw's Not Houlding Wright.

Among the big news this season were many paraglider flights and BASE jumps. After climbing the Ragni Route, Fabian Buhl (Germany) became the first person to fly off the summit of Cerro Torre after climbing up it. He landed on the Torre Glacier after a 17-minute flight. The history of flying here started in 1988, when Matthias and Michael Pinn (Germany) climbed the Supercanaleta and flew off the summit of Cerro Fitz Roy. Four days later, together with Uwe Passler, they climbed the Compressor Route up Cerro Torre, carrying their paragliders, but poor weather prevented them from flying. A week later, they hitchhiked a ride back to the summit in a helicopter and all three flew off. In 1991, Roman Tschurtschenthaler (Italy) also hitchhiked a ride to the summit in a helicopter and flew off.

Also on Cerro Torre, Boris Egorov, Vladimir Murzaev, and Konstantin Yaermurd (Russia) BASE jumped from the "Valery Rozov" exit, in the vicinity of the Banana Crack on the seventh pitch of the Southeast Ridge. (Rozov jumped from here in 2008.) Across the valley, Alban Alozy, Arnaud Bayol, and Pierre Sancier (France) from the Groupe Militaire de Haute Montagne BASE jumped the west face of Mojón Rojo and the west face of Aguja de l'S, both times flying around 1,300m. Later in the season, Pablo Pontoriero (Argentina) paraglided from the summit of Cerro Fitz Roy after climbing the Supercanaleta, the third person ever to do so, after the Pinn brothers. In early December, Fabrizio Maffoni (Argentina) paraglided from the summit of Aguja Guillau- met; the feat was repeated in February by Claudia

Molestina and José Cobo (Ecuador).

It is important to note that although there is no specific regulation prohibiting BASE jumping or paragliding in the national park, any new activity in the park has to be specifically authorized before it is permitted. Since it poses no environmental impact, and since it's an activity practiced in the area since the late 1980s, it could eventually be legalized.

There were few accidents this season, but one was fatal. In mid-March, Johan Millacahuin Vivar, a promising, 18-year-old climber from Puerto Natales, Chile, died while descending from Torre Norte, in Torres del Paine. He may have rappelled off the end of his ropes. There is no organized rescue in the area, so a large group of friends spontaneously went to move his body to a place where he could be picked up by helicopter. Earlier in the season, Johan and two friends had done the second ascent of the British route on Cerro Cathedral.

– **Rolando Garibotti**

Images



Despierta y Lucha on the west face of Cerro Peineta.



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