



AAC Publications

Cerro Picacho, South Face

Chile, Central Patagonia, Aysén Region

Cerro Picacho (1,883m, 44°54' 32.5"S, 72° 13' 11.8", labeled incorrectly as **Cerro Puntiagudo on the IGM map**) rises above dense forests along the **Carretera Austral highway between Mañihuales and Villa Amengual**. On January 31, 2019, Armando Montero (Chile) and I left Coyhaique hoping to take advantage of a weather window and attempt a new route on the south face. After leaving the car along the road, we followed a steep stream to the west and passed around the northern aspect of the mountain until we reached a col below the west face, where we bivied.

The stunning granite spire of Cerro Picacho with the 2019 route up the south face shown (600m, 5.10+ A0). Armando Montero

The next morning we traversed below the entire west face and passed over the southwest ridge. After crossing a small snowfield, we started up the south face. We swung leads up sustained vertical to slightly less than vertical rock, mostly in the 5.9-5.10b range, with two harder 5.10 + crux pitches. There was only one 80m of class 4, which we climbed unroped. The rock is beautiful alpine granite but is loose and dirty sections, and at time we resorted to aid to clean sections and avoid knocking off large blocks. We reached the summit at 6pm. Amazingly, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, and we had incredible views of Cerro Elefantes the Queulat Glacier, and Volcan Melimoyu to the north and the Mañihuales Valley to the south. We rappelled toward the col between the southern (true summit) and northern summits, and then continued rappelling the west face back to our bivy. We believe our route (600m, 5.10+ A0) was the first ascent of the south side of the mountain.

The history of Cerro Picacho is very interesting, as its first ascent was done in a style that has yet to be repeated. In March 1987, Claudio Hopperdietzel, a local mountaineer from Puyuhuapi, climbed to the summit alone in a single push, car-to-car, in a day (around 1,700m of vertical gain). He climbed and downclimbed the technical southwest ridge, using a 20m rope to make a few rappels off natural features for a few steeper sections during the descent, though he didn't bring any type of harness or protection.

Claudio has said in conversations that he never became accustomed to climbing with a rope and that his route was just 4th class. However, subsequent parties who have climbed this ridge assure the route includes multiple sections of technical climbing, with a crux in the 5.8–5.9 range! Since Claudio's ascent, Picacho has been ascended many times, by various routes from the northwest and west, but never free solo or in a single day from the car. With Jim Reynolds' recent remarkable ascents in El Chaltén, it is incredible to think of a largely unknown pioneer, making first ascents in Patagonia in a similar style over 30 years prior.

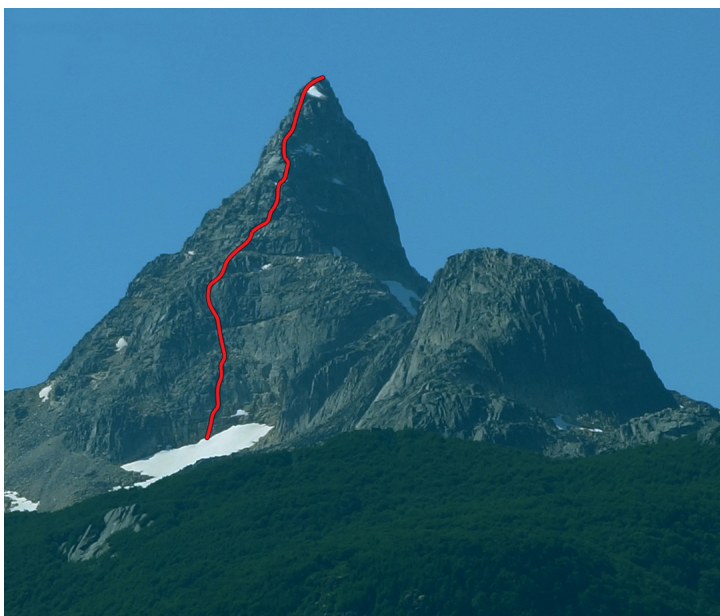
– Duncan McDaniel, USA

Earlier Routes on Cerro Picacho: Cerro Picacho was first climbed in 1987 by Claudio Hopperdietzel, solo, up the southwest ridge. In the 1990s, Peter Hartmann (Chile) and John Hauf (US) climbed the northwest face to the north summit then traversed to the south summit. In February 2011, Franco Cayupi, Joos Ilsbroux, and Armando Montero climbed another new route on the northwest face, further west of the Hartmann-Hauf route, which they called Lost in Melimoyu (800m 5.10a). The northeast wall is believed to be unclimbed. — From information on www.andeshandbook.org.

Claudio Hopperdietzel's summit photo from the first ascent of Cerro Picacho in 1987. Claudio

Hopperdietzel

Images



The stunning granite spire of Cerro Picacho with the 2019 route up the south face shown (600m, 5.10+ A0). The photo was shot from Rio Picaflor Road (an exit 28 km north of Villa Mañihuales).



Claudio Hopperdietzel's summit photo from the first ascent of Cerro Picacho in 1987.



The view from the main summit of Cerro Picacho looking over the north summit of Picacho toward

Cerro Elefantes and Lago Las Torres.



Looking due south, with the southwest ridge of Cerro Picacho wrapping downward to the Mañihuales Valley. The Mañihuales River runs south until Villa Mañihuales and then turns to the southwest.



Duncan McDaniel (left) and Armando Monterro (right) on the summit of Cerro Picacho.



Duncan McDaniel leading excellent granite on the south face of Cerro Picacho.



Armando Monterro leading excellent granite on the south face Cerro Picacho.

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