



Chaltén and Torres del Paine: 2020–2021 Season Summary

Argentina-Chile, Southern Patagonia

Due to the pandemic, Argentina remained closed to most foreign tourists, allowing only those from neighboring countries to enter and with Los Glaciares National Park not opening until early January.

Chile opened its borders to tourism in late November, however, the Torres del Paine National Park remained closed to climbing. With the health care systems of both countries stretched to their limit, travel for tourism's sake seemed best left to calmer times.

It was an unusually warm and dry summer season, with the freezing-line above 3,500m (well above the major summits) for a nearly three-week period. Trees lost their leaves three months early. In Paine, this resulted in two massive rockfall events, which affected the routes Riders on the Storm and Magico Este on the east face of Torre Central and Kawesqars on the east face of Torre Norte. In Chaltén, Cerro Torre saw no ascents. The first good weather window arrived in early February. By then it was too warm for a route like the Ragni, which should only be considered when the freezing line is below 2,000m.

In the Torre Group, there was a lot of activity on the north face of El Mocho, where Seán Villanueva O'Driscoll and partners made three notable ascents over numerous trips. First, in January 2021, he and Lucas Rubiolo freed Grey Yellow Arrow (450m, originally 7a A0) at a grade of 7a+. The crux pitch is a proper offwidth that requires walking a #6 Camalot and finding other protection every so many meters. Next, in January 2021, he and Gabriel Rocamora started on the first pitch of Little Big Wall and then continued straight up for nine new pitches to complete the first ascent of Chalten Sin Clecas (450m, 7b; meaning "Chaltén Without Tick Marks"). In O'Driscoll's words, the route offers "Excellent climbing with a little of everything: mossy wet cracks, blind moves behind aretes, and a hand jam roof crack with feet cutting loose, followed by a feet-first move—the whole shebang!"

Lastly, in March 2021, he and Matías Korten ascended the same first two pitches of Chalten Sin Clecas, then completed seven new pitches just to the right, which they christened Chalten Sin Chapas (450m, 7a+). O'Driscoll had made several attempts on this line with Rocamora and Rubiolo, hitting a dead-end around pitch 5 that would require bolts (he later bypassed this by climbing into a corner to the right). The name of the route, "Chaltén Without Bolts," refers to the unquestioned and widespread use of bolts in the cliffs surrounding Chaltén as the first and only protection option. On all the climbs, O'Driscoll and partners descended via Approach Team Line, which is expedient and highly recommended. At the end of the previous 2020 summer season (during the lockdown) Korten and O'Driscoll climbed a new route on the north face of Aguja Media Luna to the right of Harvest Moon; Cuarentena Clandestina (250m, 7a+) ascends five burly pitches with several wide sections.

In the Fitz Roy Group, in mid-August, 2020, Jon Griffin and Lia Peralta climbed a new line on the south face of Cerro Ñire (to the east of Techado Negro). They started via an inviting frozen waterfall (3 pitches, WI5) on the lower buttress (originally climbed by Juan Aguada and Tomas Aguilo in July 2019), bivying below the upper face. Next day, they simul-climbed steep snow and two mixed steps (M5 and M6), to reach a shoulder below the east summit. They climbed one more mixed pitch (M6) to within 30–50m of the summit, where 100km/h winds forced them to retreat. They descended the northeast gully, making two rappels, to then "crawl" towards Laguna Sucia, getting pinned down by a total whiteout and making a second bivy. They called their unfinished line Rafagas Inolvidables (450m, WI5 M6; meaning "Unforgettable Wind"), which is dedicated to Matteo Pasquetto, a young Italian climber who had spent the 2020 summer season in Patagonia, climbing new routes on Mocho

and Standhardt, and died shortly after in the Alps.

In early February 2021, Seán Villanueva O'Driscoll made a solo ascent of the Moonwalk Traverse, the "reverse" version of the Fitz Traverse, which is a feature article in this AAJ. On March 3, O'Driscoll returned to Cerro Chaltén (Fitz Roy) with Jon Griffin to climb La Chaltenense (500m, 7a) on the south face. The new route follows an often-talked-about monster offwidth. To start, they climbed the first two pitches of The Colorado Route, then continued straight up for nine pitches via a 350m-vertical crack, which is 5–6 inches wide with a few short chimney sections. This is likely one of the longest and most sustained offwidths in the world, with difficulties consistently in the upper 5.11 range. It was also a cold day, with the freezing line at 2,500m and a total of one hour of sunlight on this orientation. Both climbers suffered mild frostbite.

There were "Some desperate moments!" O'Driscoll recounted, "I would slip down a few centimeters, get completely out of breath, try to find some way of jamming some part of my body—either a foot, a knee, a leg, an arm, chest—get really bad lactic acid build up in some muscle I had never felt before, try and catch my breath back, stop my mind from wanting to give up, recover and then get back at it!" Since they only had two #6 Camalots, O'Driscoll would shuffle them, at times leaving no protection between one belay and the next. They reached the summit at 3:40 a.m., sleeping for a few hours before tackling the descent. They carried a single sleeping bag but no stove or tent. The name of the route honors their long stay in Chaltén and is offered as thanks to its local community.

In the FKT (fastest known time) department, Miguel Andrade did the loop around Cerro Huemul in 8:13:40 hours in December 2020, besting the previous record by almost four hours. This is the most popular trekking circuit in the area, covering 65km and 3,000m of gain, and typically completed in three to four days. In early March 2021, Tomas Aguilo completed the north ridge of Cerro Domo Blanco (600m, 50° 3) in 13:02 hours round trip from the Río Eléctrico bridge, covering 60.8km and 2,500m of vertical gain. Lastly, in mid-March 2021, Santiago Scavolini did the first solo ascent of the Motocross Traverse (750m, 6b+), linking Aguja Guillaumet and Aguja Mermoz in 5:05 hours.

In an unfortunate development, CONAF, the Chilean park service, placed a big fabric dome at the entrance to Circo de los Altares. This is a disputed border zone, and this action violates the current prohibition on government intervention in the area. High winds broke the dome, it filled with ice, and is now trash. CONAF's policy of installing infrastructure on the icecap is most unfortunate. In recent years they have installed three controversial Quonset huts to the north, in Paso Marconi and along the margin of Glaciar Chico.

In the Torres del Paine massif, unreported from early 2020, Andrea Zanetti and Antonio Zanetti attempted a new line on the west face of La Mascara, in the French Valley. They climbed 19 pitches, with difficulties to 5.10 and A1, stopping upon reaching the north arete, around four pitches from the top. They placed two bolts at almost every belay and a total of about 20 pitons, 20 bolts, and a couple dozen 6mm rivets for protection. They had tried the same line during the 2017–2018 season with Giorgio Espen, Marica Favé, and Rossana Tomasi, retreating after fourteen pitches.

The Torres del Paine National Park Legacy Fund, a local NGO, donated and installed two more waterless toilets. They had installed one such toilet in 2018 at Campo Italiano, at the entrance of the French Valley. This season they installed a second in Campo Japonés, the basecamp used by climbers to access the west side of the Torres, and a third in the southwest area of the park.

On a sad note, from Chile, Diego Señoret, a key member of the very strong current contingent of Chilean climbers, passed away in late December in an automobile accident. He had climbed extensively with Cristóbal and Juan Señoret, who, despite being almost the same age, were his nephews. Diego had climbed all three Paine Towers, Cerro Torre, Cerro Fitz Roy, a new route on Cerro Paine Grande, new routes in Cochamó, and even Eternal Flame on Trango (Nameless) Tower. In August, perhaps sensing what was to come, he wrote, "Here is to many more days in nature appreciating the simple and the essential. To many more days with family and loved ones, warriors of

this life. I am grateful for all the experiences and all the beings I have crossed in this path. It has been a magical opportunity to live through it.”

— Rolando Garibotti

Club Andino Bariloche Journal Database: Toward the end of 2019, I approached Club Andino Bariloche (CAB) with a proposal to digitize their publications and create an online archive with free access. The CAB was founded in 1932 and, until recently, published an almost yearly journal, documenting much of the mountaineering history of the Patagonian Andes. To create the digital archive, I enlisted the help of Claudia Posch, Gerhard Rampl, and Milena Peralta from the Institute of Linguistics of the University of Innsbruck, Austria. (They had created similar online archives for the Austrian and New Zealand alpine clubs.) After I scanned the more than 7,000 pages of CAB publications, Milena ran text recognition on the scans and coordinated with close to 30 volunteers to correct errors; this resulted in clean text that optimizes searches. The Digitisation and Digital Preservation Group of the University of Innsbruck provided proofing software and created the website and search engine. The archive is hosted by the university’s HRSM-Project Digitization and Information Processing for the Digital Humanities. Launched in early 2021, it can be accessed at transkribus.eu/r/clubandino/#/. — Rolando Garibotti

Images



The north face of El Mocho, showing: (1) Grey Yellow Arrow (450m, originally 7a A0) which Seán Villanueva O'Driscoll and Lucas Rubiolo free climbed at a grade of 7a+. (2) Little Big Wall. (3) Chaltén Sin Clecas (450m, 7b), climbed by O'Driscoll and Gabriel Rocamora. (4) Chaltén Sin Chapas (450m, 7a+), climbed by O'Driscoll and Matías Korten.



Jon Griffin following up the cold, monster offwidth of La Chaltenense (500m, 7a) on the south face of Fitz Roy.



Jon Griffin low on the monster wide crack of La Chaltenense (500m, 7a) on the south face of Fitz Roy.

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