



AAC Publications

Cerro Esmeralda, South Face, Cortinarius

Chile, Southern Patagonia, Prat Range

On May 28, Aldo Coral (Ecuador), Nicolas Secul (Chile), and I ventured into the valley between Cerro Azucena and Cerro Esmeralda in the Prat Range, which is about 50km south of Torres Del Paine and 35km northwest of Puerto Natales. After battling through the dense Patagonian lenga forest, we established our base camp at the foot of the south face of Cerro Esmeralda (1,460m, 51°28'19"S, 72°48'34"W).

[Editor's Note: According to Andeshandbook.org, Esmeralda was first climbed in 1937 by Germans Gustav Fester and Ricardo Jakob, presumably by the east ridge that rises directly above the road.]

The next morning, we simul-climbed up and left on steep snow until reaching a mixed section that avoids the hanging seracs on the upper west side of this face. After climbing up and right via two mixed pitches, we continued navigating up steep snow ramps. In the middle of the face, we reached a rock band and belayed the two crux mixed pitches. The rock provided scarce protection, and the ice conditions were too poor for ice screws. After overcoming this vertical band of rock, we simul-climbed for another 100m to, finally, reach good water ice. Two pitches up the ice saw us to the summit ridge, from where we headed west to the true summit. We descended the east ridge back to our vehicle.

We named the route Cortinarius (700m, WI4 M4) after the genus of purple mushrooms we found littering the forest on our way into the valley.

– Seb Pelletti, Australia

Images



Aldo Coral seconding the first pitch of mixed climbing on the south face of Cerro Esmeralda.



Nicolas Secul leading in the crux second rock band on the south face of Cerro Esmeralda.



Seb Pelletti leading in the crux second rock band on the south face of Cerro Esmeralda.



Nicolas Secul on the final ice pitches on the south face of Cerro Esmeralda.



The route Cortinarius (700m, WI4 M4) on the south face of Cerro Esmeralda, climbed in May 2020.

Article Details

Author	Seb Pelletti
Publication	AAJ
Volume	63
Issue	95
Page	
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions