



## Cerro Silvia, Northeast Face

Chile, Aysén Region, Northern Patagonian Icefield

**In late October, Rebeca Caceres, Isidora Llarena, and I met in Puerto Guadal with the goal of climbing of Cerro Silvia (2,770m; 47°10'4"S, 73°29'33"W) on the Northern Patagonian Icefield.** We departed for Valle Colonia on the 26th with three 75-pound backpacks, brimming with packrafting, mountaineering, skiing, and camping gear and 14 days of food. Although Isidora and I knew this multi-day approach well from our expedition to Cerro Nora (AAJ 2021), Patagonia quickly reminded us to leave expectations behind. We parked the car four miles earlier than expected due to a chest-deep, swollen river. Two hours in, wind gusts caught our skis and paddles during a river crossing, leading to two swims and four lost trekking poles. Day two, we arrived at Lago Colonia to oceanic waves and persistent winds, forcing us to delay our paddle.

On October 28, we paddled four miles across Lago Colonia through a building headwind and reached the far shore with renewed momentum. We spent the next two and a half days making our way toward the icefield: crossing Cachet Dos lake by packraft, hiking along and on Glaciar Colonia, and bushwacking through lenga forest. At last, on October 30, we reached the dazzling expanse of the icefield and put on our skis for the first time. We crossed the Glaciar Colonia and established our base camp on a nunatak (1,750m). The following day brought bluebird weather, and Isidora and I skied to the 2,750m plateau between Cerro Garcia and Cerro Arenales to scout the area.

On November 1, we used a short weather window to attempt the northeast face of Cerro Silvia. The peak is located between Cerro Buscaini and Cerro Garcia. Leaving early, we skied two miles to the base of a snow ramp leading to the col between Silvia and Buscaini. There, we left our skis and bootpacked to the col in steep but inviting snow. We crossed a sizable bergschrund and then climbed 60–70° ice and snow to the summit ridge (200m, AI2). From there, we traversed to the summit. The ascent had views to the Pacific Ocean, but clouds quickly moved in at the top. After the obligatory selfie, we began the descent in whiteout conditions. On our ski back to camp, Rebeca fell and injured her knee.

The weather continued to worsen; we spent the following three days hunkered in our tent as Patagonian winds howled outside. We slowly passed the time by reading aloud from Pema Chodren's *When Things Fall Apart*, building a massive wind wall, and sponging up the increasingly flooded tent. On November 5, the storm cleared. Isidora and I began an attempt on Cerro Arenales but turned back early due to wind and snow conditions. As a team, we decided to descend and begin the four-day journey back to Puerto Guadal. Crossing Lago Colonia on a perfectly calm morning and descending the Class II+ Rio Colonia in packrafts offered a final hurrah.

— Nadine Lehner, USA

## Images



Rebeca Caceres, Isidora Llarena, and Nadine Lehner (left to right), with Cerro Arenales behind.



Photo from a January 2021 expedition to Cerro Nora, looking southwest from the Glaciar Colonia to Cerro Garcia (left), Cerro Silvia (center-left, behind the cloud), and Cerro Buscaini (center-right). The November 2021 ascent of Cerro Silvia followed the snow ramp leading to the col between Cerro Silvia and Cerro Buscaini; from there, the team ascended the northeast face (hidden from view).



Typical Patagonian bushwhacking, but with a tremendous backdrop: Cerro Arenales behind.



Ascending the glacial ramp to Cerro Silvia with a view to the northwest of peaks in the Cordón Aysén.



On a scouting trip to the 2,750m plateau between Cerro Garcia and Cerro Arenales. The rock wall (left) comprises Cerro Garcia's lower northeast buttress.



Map of the approach to Cerro Silvia, via the Colonia river, lake, and glacier.

## Article Details

Author	Nadine Lehner
Publication	AAJ
Volume	64
Issue	96
Page	
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions