



Cordón La Llave, Multiple New Routes

Chile, Northern Patagonia, Aysén Region

As often happens in the Patagonian Andes, the Cordón La Llave (45°1'4"S, 72°3'54"W) is one of those forgotten, compact cordilleras whose low height (1,650m) and prominence have left it practically anonymous—unfairly—until very recently. The range is about 100km north of Coyhaique, north of the town of Villa Mañihuales and very close to Laguna Pedro Aguirre Cerda. Easy access to this small range is one of its great attributes: From the Carretera Austral (Route 7), a 10km logging road can be driven up to 900m (in normal conditions). From there, in just one hour of walking, it is possible to surpass the vegetation line.

When viewed from the south, La Llave forms a horseshoe-like silhouette 3.5km in length with three principal summits; the highest is the west summit. Although the range has limited relief on all sides, the steep southern slopes provide numerous technical alpine challenges—both climbing and skiing routes, ranging from 300m–500m—during the height of austral winter and spring.

I climbed the first route to the west summit in 2019; another party added a second route shortly after. After more visits, I learned the secrets of the north and east summits as well, and by 2022 I had climbed three additional new routes. These are grouped by the corresponding summit below.

On the west summit, Javier Galilea and I established El Camino del Guerrero (400m, D- 65°) in August 2019. Our route followed a beautiful ice gully on the center-right side, very sustained and direct, with strong alpine ambience. In the same month, José Neira and Raimundo Olivos climbed Pepito Paga Doble (300m, AD+ M4 60°), which begins in a steep gully on the left side of the face. Germán Villagrán and I made the first repeat of this route in winter 2022. After an initial section of 60°, the crux comes in the first third of the gully (M4), followed by more straightforward climbing.

On the north summit, Pablo Cid and I climbed a short but intense line on the west face in September 2019: Libre y Salvaje Pero Tóxico (250m, AD 70°). It has two pitches of steep climbing on cauliflower-like ice to reach the airy and narrow summit. In October 2022, Duncan McDaniel and I climbed the longest route to date: El Que Busca Encuentra (500m, AD+ 60°). The route is a highly entertaining and exposed tour of the south face. (Future parties should be wary of avalanche danger.) We descended Libre y Salvaje Pero Tóxico via two rappels.

On the east summit, Germán Villagrán and I climbed Barraco Arisco (400m, AD+ WI2+ 60°) in August 2021. It is a beautiful and diverse climb up the southeast spur, and it contains the most water ice of any route in the range so far. Future climbers could choose more difficult variations to increase the ice climbing difficulty. We descended the same way.

Visitors should make sure to fill out an entry permit, respect the use of the gates, and be mindful of the wildlife. Pouring out a little maté or cerveza as an offering to this place is never a bad idea.

— Marco Poblete, Chile

Editor's Note: A PDF with more information on these climbs can be downloaded [here](#).

Images



Nearing the top of Libre y Salvaje Pero Tóxico (250m, AD 70°) on the west face of the north summit of the Cordón La Llave.



Looking north to the Cordón La Llave in March conditions. The various routes climbed between 2019 and 2022 are indicated by the yellow lines.



El Camino del Guerrero (400m, D- 65°) on the right side of the south face of the west summit of the

Cordón La Llave. This August 2019 route was the first known climb in the range.



Climbing the beautiful ice gully on El Camino del Guerrero (400m, D- 65°) on the right side of the south face of the west summit of the Cordón La Llave.



En route on El Camino del Guerrero (400m, D- 65°) on the right side of the south face of the west summit of the Cordón La Llave. The west face of the north summit is visible behind.



Pepito Paga Doble (300m, AD+ 60° M4) on the left side of the south face of the west summit of the Cordón La Llave.



Libre y Salvaje Pero Tóxico (250m, AD 70°) on the west face of the north summit of the Cordón La Llave, a short but intense line to an airy summit.



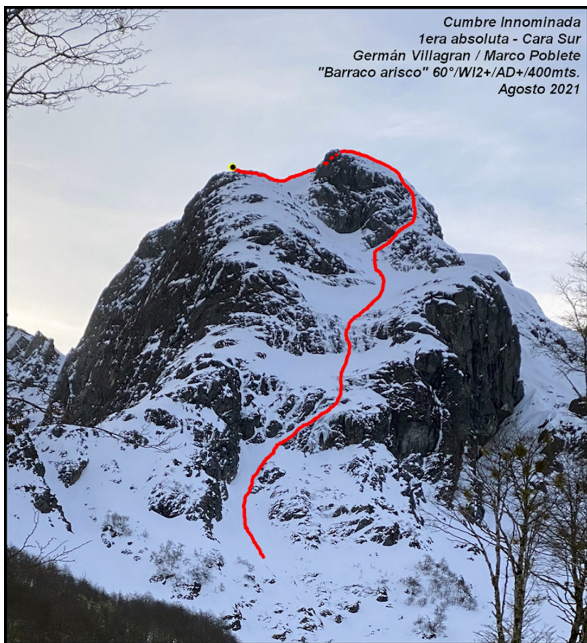
Steep cauliflower-like ice on Libre y Salvaje Pero Tóxico (250m, AD 70°) on the west face of the north summit of the Cordón La Llave.



The longest route in the Cordón La Llave to date: El Que Busca Encuentra (500m, AD+ 60°) on the south face of the north summit.



Climbing steep snow on El Que Busca Encuentra (500m, AD+ 60°) on the south face of the north summit of the Cordón La Llave.



Barraco Arisco (400m, AD+ 60° WI2+) on the southeast spur of the east summit of the Cordón La Llave.



Climbing moderate water ice on Barraco Arisco (400m, AD+ 60° WI2+) on the southeast spur of the east summit of the Cordón La Llave.

Article Details

Author	Marco Poblete
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	233
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions