



AAC Publications

Cerro Tronco, South Face

Chile, Central Andes

The line of Odissea on the south face of Cerro Tronco. Photo: Gonzalo Robert.

In October, Chileans Cristóbal Cament, Nicolás Gutiérrez, and Alexis Rojas climbed the huge, steep south face of Cerro Tronco (5,567m, -33.1796, -70.0652). The peak was first climbed in 1960 (see AAJ 1961) by Wilfred Siegel and Walter Stehr—both of Chile—who followed the long glacial slopes between Cerro Tronco and Cerro Risopatrón to the north. They promptly made the second ascent the following morning to retrieve a forgotten camera.

The 2024 ascensionists had begun eyeing Cerro Tronco's south face a couple of years earlier. When a weather window opened in late October, they arranged a ride in a helicopter to a base camp at 4,000m, high above the Olivares River valley. Using a drone, the team studied the face and laid plans to attempt the main ice line breaching the lower face, which is topped by an imposing serac.

On October 29, Cament, Gutiérrez, and Rojas left their camp at 2 a.m., approached the face, and tackled three pitches of poor rock before reaching the icefall. Three more pitches of very steep and physical ice climbing led the group to their first bivouac, at 4,800m, where they were able to set up their tent in an ice cave.

On the second day, the group zigzagged up four more pitches of vertical and bulging ice. After a total of 500m of steep climbing, they finished the lower wall and started angling to the right on a 55° névé slope, soon reaching the level of the large serac, which days before had released ice over their route. At around 5,100m, they established their second camp.

The tired climbers started late on their third day, October 31, and ascended several mixed pitches up to 65° and M4 before following a névé ridge to the summit. Hugs and tears were shared on top before the team began rappelling along the ridgeline bordering the right side of the face. They set up their third camp at 5,200m.

On the fourth day, using rock and ice anchors, they continued rappelling down the prominent gully on the right side of the main face and finally returned to base camp, where photographer Gonzalo Robert greeted them with Odissea beers, inspiring their route name: Odissea (WI6 M6 A3+). The ascent had gained 1,575m from their base camp and about 1,250m from the foot of the face. The helicopter returned to pick them up on November 2.

—Marcelo Scanu, Argentina

Images



Glacial waterfall as seen on the observation day.



Artificial and mixed secretion.



Helicopter view of Cerro Tronco's imposing south face.



The massive icefall on the south face of Cerro Tronco as seen from base camp.



Nicolás Gutiérrez, Alexis Rojas, and Cristóbal Cament approaching the south face of Cerro Tronco from base camp.



Nicolás Gutiérrez leading the second rock pitch on the south face of Cerro Tronco. Three mixed pitches were climbed to reach the main ice flow.



Cristóbal Cament on the third ice pitch on the south face of Cerro Tronco.



Alexis Rojas on the fifth ice pitch of the south face of Cerro Tronco.



Alexis Rojas leading the fifth ice pitch of the south face of Cerro Tronco. Nicolás Gutiérrez and Cristóbal Cament can be seen at the belay.



Nicolás Gutiérrez leading the sixth ice pitch on the south face of Cerro Tronco.



Nicolás Gutiérrez exiting the frozen waterfall on the south face of Cerro Tronco.



Nicolás Gutiérrez, Alexis Rojas, and Cristóbal Cament approaching camp two on the south face of Cerro Tronco, above the steep lower wall.



View of the steep ice and serac on the south face of Cerro Tronco.



Steep mixed ground low on the south face of Cerro Tronco.



The line of Odissea on the south face of Cerro Tronco. The route gained about 1,250 meters from the foot of the face.

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