



## AAC Publications

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### **El Cohete, Apollo 13**

Argentina, Northern Patagonia, Turbio IV Valley

**Wanting to go on an expedition with friends and colleagues, I organized a team of five women including Julia Cassou, Fay Manners, Belén Prados, Rocio Rodriguez Guiñazu, and myself to explore the Turbio IV Valley.** We are all driven by a deep love for climbing and exploration, and after hearing the stories of first ascensionists like Leo Viamonte, Sebastian de la Cruz, and other locals, we were excited to explore this part of Argentina.

Our expedition began in late January with two days of hiking and horseback riding bringing us to the nexus of the Turbio II, III, and IV valleys, a place called La Horqueta (The Fork). We entered the Turbio IV Valley at the Don Ropo hut, then ferried loads on small trails through dense forest and over two zip lines to the Don Chule hut. After exploring various walls and climbing some pitches to get a feel for the granite, we established a camp near Lago Mariposa and decided to open a route up the southeast face of El Cohete (The Rocket, 42°21'39"S, 72°7'3"W), an unclimbed formation.

On January 29, we started work on the climb and fixed a couple of pitches, but days with heavy rain forced us back to the hut. Fortunately, the periods of rain during our visit never lasted more than two days, and we usually had a couple of good days at a time to make progress. In all, we spent 15 days on the wall cleaning, placing protection, climbing, and removing all our gear at the end.

Our objective was to open a route that would be nice for people to repeat. This involved a lot of cleaning, because the cracks were full of plants with deep roots and the slabs were covered by lichen. While two of us pushed the line, the other three cleaned and protected the lower pitches.

Opening the route involved some aid, but the cleaned pitches offered amazing, varied, and sustained free climbing up to 7b+ on solid granite. We only placed bolts when necessary (approximately 40 10mm protection bolts in all); each belay station is equipped to rappel. We climbed 600m over 13 pitches to reach the top of the rock pillar, then continued up to a ridge and eventually the first snow peak above the wall. We called our route Apollo 13 (7b+).

After carrying everything back down to the valley, we concluded our monthlong adventure by packrafting the Río Turbio to Lago Puelo and a boat ride back to civilization.

**—Caro North, Switzerland**

**Images**

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