



AAC Publications

Season Summary

Chile-Argentina, Chaltén Massif

The 2014–2015 season was marred by the death of Pablo Argiz, the pilot of a helicopter that crashed while attempting to rescue an injured climber. Argiz crashed because he misjudged the capabilities of his own helicopter; however, he was attempting to help a climber who fell into a crevasse while traveling unroped on a glacier and the climber's partner was unable to carry out a simple crevasse-rescue maneuver. Earlier in the season, another rescue involved two very inexperienced climbers who, for their very first alpine climb, ventured drastically beyond their experience and abilities onto the west face of Cerro Torre.

The climbing in the Chaltén Massif is of serious wilderness character. Rescues are carried out on a volunteer, Good Samaritan basis, and individuals risk their own lives in the process. Wall rescues are not currently possible here (other than self-rescue, not a single wall rescue has ever been successful in the area). All this requires that climbers choose objectives that correspond comfortably with their skill level. Adequate risk management is essential, and it's imperative to behave in a self-sufficient manner.

Although the local rescue team is volunteer, in the last five years it started billing for many of the rescues. The proceeds have been used to purchase equipment and pay for training courses. Starting next season, it appears likely they will start billing for all rescues and that rescue insurance will become mandatory, in the park and surrounding area. The cost of rescues varies greatly depending on their complexity, but the minimum coverage currently being discussed is US\$12,000. Should this come to pass, it will be possible to buy the coverage on-site, through an Argentine insurance company, for an estimated US\$125 for three months. On top of training and equipment, the local rescue team will use the proceeds to buy insurance coverage for volunteer rescuers, including "worker's comp" (currently they have none) and have a fund available to pay for helicopter time without delay from insurers (crucial hours, often days).

As for climbing, though this season had a number of fairly lengthy, good weather periods, it was an "alpine" season, with a decent amount of snow and difficult conditions. Colin Haley (USA) had an incredibly successful season, but that is a testament to his skills and knowledge of the area and not to particularly favorable conditions. In addition to the climbs described in his report on [page XXX](#), in mid-February he and Alex Honnold (USA) nearly completed a one-day ascent of the Torre Traverse (Cerro Standhardt to Cerro Torre, crossing over Punta Herron and Torre Egger), retreating just two pitches below Cerro Torre's summit, after 20 hours of climbing.

On his second trip to Patagonia, young climber Marc-André Leclerc brought down the house with a solo of the Corkscrew linkup on Cerro Torre. The Corkscrew climbs the lower half of the southeast ridge to the Via dei Ragni on the west face, covering over 3,000' with difficulties to 5.10, A1, and WI6. He completed the ascent in 18 hours round-trip from the Col of Patience, an incredibly fast time. This is by far the hardest route ever soloed on Cerro Torre. Leclerc found difficult conditions, with fresh snow covering some of the rock and plentiful verglas. At one point he was forced to stop and wait 40 minutes until the sun warmed the face and melted some of the ice and snow. He only belayed by back-looping, doing so twice. He descended the southeast ridge.

Earlier in the season Markus Pucher (Austria) free-soloed the Via dei Ragni for a second time (he had already done so in 2013). His latest ascent was carried out in whiteout conditions. Later in the

season Caroline North and Christina Huber (both Germany) did the first female team ascent of the same route. Theirs was the second female team ascent of Cerro Torre and the first completely unsupported (the previous ascent relied on a rope fixed by another party on the crux pitch).

Approaching Col Trento from the east, Slovenes Luka Lindic, Luka Krajnc, and Tadej Kriselj traversed the three summits of Cerro Adela (Sur, Central, and Norte), descended to the Col de la Esperanza, and then climbed the Via dei Ragni on Cerro Torre. Earlier in the season, Krajnc and Kriselj climbed a new line on the west face of Mojón Rojo: Blockbuster (500m, 5.11).

Austrians Peter Ortner and Toni Ponholzer linked Tobogán and Spigolo dei Bimbi on Punta Herron with the Huber-Schnarf on Torre Egger to complete the first integral ascent of Tobogán (950m, 6b AI4 M6).

On Cerro Domo Blanco's southwest face, Nicola Binelli and Tomas Franchini climbed a steep rock pillar on the left side, completing 12 pitches and retreating without continuing to the summit. They christened the pillar Pilastro Rampagaroi and their line Amico Vento, Amica Luna (400m, M6+ 6b+ A1).

The lower portion of the Pilar Este route on the east face of Cerro Fitz Roy has been littered with cable ladders and fixed ropes dating back to the first ascent in 1976. Matteo Della Bordella, Luca Schiera (both Italian), and Sylvan Schüpbach (Switzerland) made a commendable effort by cleaning off most of this trash, which was later brought to town by Iñaki Coussirat and Cristobal Señoret.

On Aguja Guillaumet, Ben Erdmann and Jonathan Schaffer (both USA) climbed Von Bürgermeister (400m, 5.11+), a new line on the right side of the west face. With Crystal Davis-Robbins, Schaffer went on to climb a partial new line on the north face of Aguja Poincenot, which they called John Henry (550m total with 300m new terrain, 5.11+) and also a new variation to the west ridge of Aguja Rafael Juárez (300m, 5.10+). In late February, Schaffer and Haley made the first ascent of Torrisimo by its northwest side, (five pitches to 5.9 C1). This short but slender spire is located on the ridge between Torre de la Medialuna and Punta Pereyra.

Czech climbers Michal Brunner and Jindrich Hudecek climbed Invisible Line (400m, 5.11+ A1), a new route on the northeast face of Aguja Poincenot. It follows the massive crack and chimney system that runs parallel to and left of the Potter-Davis route.

Brette Harrington completed the first free-solo ascent of the mega-classic Chiaro di Luna (780m, 5.11-) on the west face of Aguja Saint-Exupery. Her ascent is the first female solo of any of the towers and displayed inspiring levels of boldness and motivation. Less than a week later, Marc-André Leclerc also free-soloed the route.

Rolando Garibotti

Images



Punta Herron and Torre Egger, showing the integral Tobogán (950m, 6b AI4 M6), which links the Tobogan and Spigolo de Bimbi routes with the Huber-Schnarf. Many other routes ascending these towers are not shown. See www.pataclimb.com for the all the routes.



The northeast face of Aguja Poincenot with Invisible Line (400m, 5.11+ A1). Many other routes ascending these towers are not shown. See www.pataclimb.com for the all the routes.

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