



AAC Publications

Cerro Capicua, West Face, Picaflor

Chile, Northern Patagonia, Cochamó

In February 2016, Martin Håskjold Larsen, Clare Mains, Barry Smith, Fernando Viro, and I opened a new route on the west face of Cerro Capicua, which we called Picaflor (meaning “Hummingbird”). The face has been estimated to be 1,200m; our route was fairly direct and covered ca 1050m of climbing.

Clare and I started the route together, starting with A Tirar a la Rarita (AAJ 2014) / Tigres del Norte (AAJ 2009) for nine pitches, then hauling our supplies to Plaza Cataluña (the large, tree-covered ledge around 400m up the wall). From there we began new-routing to the left of A Tirar a la Rarita. Clare and I were forced off the wall and back to camp after a few days due to an injury, a couple of gear shortages, and weather; we retreated in dangerously wet conditions. The river crossing in particular was right on the edge of losing control.

When I went back up, it was with Martin and Barry. I was on lead for most of the new pitches; Martin led pitches 14, 19, and 24; Barry led pitches 16 and 20. We also had some valuable logistical help from Fernando Viro, and a lot of friendly support and bits of old rope from Cooper Varney, Daniel and Silvina Seeliger, and various other climbers and campers at La Junta. The project took all of February, with around two weeks at a time being spent on the wall. We spent many other days waiting out rain or at Plaza Cataluña. On the final push to the summit, we spent five nights sleeping on the wall using a portaledge and a hammock.

All of the 16 new pitches (except the final, 25th pitch) required some amount of aid. This was sometimes due to very hard climbing, but mostly due to near-impossible protection. Many of the cracks turned out to be closed-up seams, and a lot of them needed beaks, RURPs, or very shallow Lost Arrow placements.

Photo by Vincent Lawrence / Acadia Images Photography Workshops

We were keen from the start to make this a free line, and I talked a lot with the Cochamó regulars to get a feel for the local ethics. The accepted approach is that bolts should not be overused, but that it was better to place a bolt or two and provide a safe free climb than have it remain aid. Without bolts, very few of these pitches would have offered a reasonable level of traditional protection for free climbing. For this reason, I chose to place bolts anywhere where only pitons would fit. I feel certain that every pitch can now be freed.

All this made the climb very hard to grade. I know the first ascent involved a few A2+/A3 pitches, but now that there are bolts on those sections, the grade is reduced to A1. My plan is to return and give Picaflor an all-free grade. I estimate at least three pitches will be around 7b. [See the attached PDF for a detailed topo and route description or download the photo topo.]

—Tom Ireson, U.K.

[Click here](#) for a super-high-resolution Gigapan image of Cerro Capicua by photographer Vincent Lawrence.

Images



: Looking down Capicua's west face during the final five-day push on Picaflor.



The team below Cerro Capicua.



The arc of the Milky Way above Valle de Cochamó. The lights visible on the wall are those of the Picaflor team.



Looking down on Valle de Cochamó.



Wall life on Picaflor.



Tom Ireson begins another pitch on Picaflor.

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