

We packed our bags and tried to go home, but could not get a flight, so we returned to Paine with all our kit on our backs for a one-week blast. We staggered into the Bader Valley and camped at the Welsh Camp. The next day we camped at the base of La Mascara, a splendid pointy peak that had not seen a British ascent.

The following morning, we fixed our ropes for 150 meters and returned to camp, only to find a Spanish and French team who were planning to climb the same mountain. The following day, we tried to climb, but it stormed and snowed for another two days. After the storm, we had only three days before we had to leave, so with nothing to lose we climbed up for a further 150 meters and bivied on a snow ledge. We were pushed off the ledges in the night by falling snow, but by the morning it had stopped snowing.

The next day of climbing was very cold and extremely windy. The climbing was now slow, due to harder aid climbing. After another 100 meters, we reached a fine but small bivy ledge. Communicating on this day was very difficult due to the wind roaring through the col 100 meters to our left. By now we had only one day left to climb before we had to walk out. At first light, 5 a.m., we could not believe our luck: the day was perfect. The only day of 24 hours of clear weather in seven weeks and it was our last full day in the park! On January 19, we climbed from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m., when we stood on the summit. The whole of the Paine Massif was crystal clear. We climbed the pink granite on the left side of the face with some of the best free climbing we had ever done.

After four hours of abseiling we reached our bivy gear, totaled. The following morning, we abseiled back to the glacier and walked out to the bus. The next day we flew home. It was certainly one of our best walls and we felt particularly pushed by the weather. Our climb was 800 meters and 23 pitches of mostly free climbing, with all but one pitch of the aid going clean on nuts and cams. Hooks were used on one pitch. We found brilliant rock throughout. We called our route *For a Few Dollars More!* (VI E3 6a A3).

MIKE "TWID" TURNER and LOUISE THOMAS, Wales

La Mascara, Ilusiones, New Route. Eva Martos, Diego Pelaez, and I got to Torres del Paine National Park on January 8. We arrived later than expected, so we lost some time trying to get the permits. We had to leave our climbing gear at the entrance of the park (so that the CONAF was sure that we were not going to climb without the permits) and start carrying the food, clothes, etc., to establish base camp. On the other hand, the very expensive horses (U.S.\$70 per horse) climbed almost up to Welsh Camp in the Bader Valley, which was a nice surprise. Welsh Camp was three and a half hours from the base of La Mascara, so we also installed an advanced base camp next to the wall. We fixed 200 meters of rope and left the ground in capsule style with food and water for about 14 days. The next day we were stuck in the first camp for two days in bad weather. We had one double portaledge and one single, but the first night the one who was sleeping alone was blown up by the wind, so we all slept in the double portaledge, which we tied on the bottom (but we were still moved by the wind!). We could climb almost every day, even if just for a few hours. But just before moving the camp, a big stone fell into the portaledge, making a large hole in the tent and the portaledge itself. Fortunately, it didn't hit anybody. We almost decided to go down, repair the damage and come back in a few days, but finally we decided to keep on climbing, as the weather was improving.

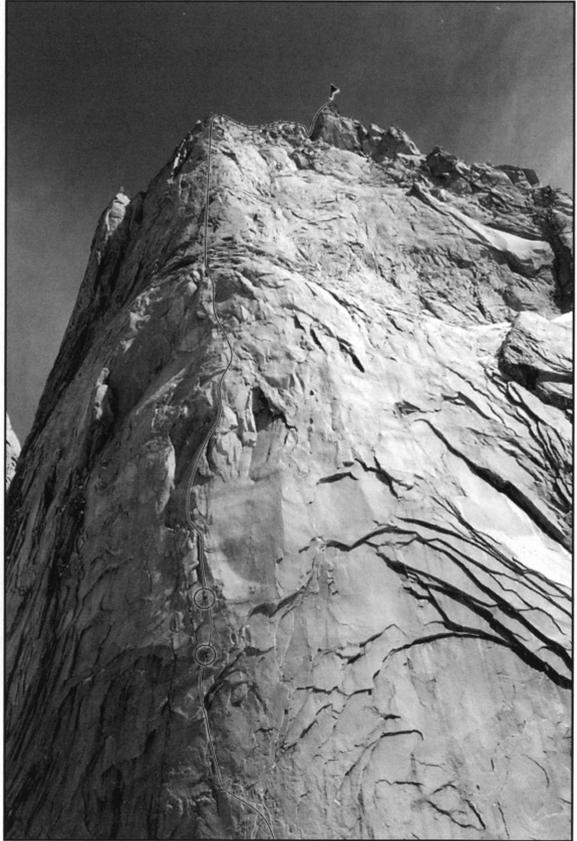
The next camp (II) was much better protected from wind. We summited on January 30 on a very calm day (no wind at all on the ridge!), after four final pitches of fairly easy ridge. We named the 17-pitch, 700-meter route *Ilusiones*. It is mainly aid climbing with difficulties up to

A3+ and some 6b moves. We freed just two or three pitches, but in good conditions, more pitches could be freed. The route is steep and has excellent rock in its first part and the final headwall, and has two pitches in its middle with some loose rock. We put two bolts at every belay except the first, which has no gear in it (we started hauling from the second belay). We didn't need to place any bolts between belays.

The route climbs the first 30 meters of *Magic Carpet Ride*, branching left before reaching its first belay. We descended January 31 in bad weather. We met a French, Welsh, and Italian party and they all opened new routes on this wall. Bader Valley is not as unknown as it used to be, but we think that there are still possibilities for opening new routes on La Hoja and La Espada.

EDUARDO ALONSO, *Spain*

Editor's note: it was later reported that the Italian party was attempting the "finger" formation right of La Mascara in February and March, reaching a high point 150 meters below the finger's summit. Further details are lacking.



Eva Martos and Diego Pelaez on pitch 3 during the first ascent of Ilusiones (VI A3+ 6b, 700m, Alonso-Martos-Pelaez, 2001) on La Mascara. EDUARDO ALONSO

La Mascara, Fragile Faces, New Route. Gabor Babcsan (Hungary), Stéphane Bauzac (France), and Leslie Fucsko (French/Hungarian) opened the route *Fragile Faces* (A4+ 6C, 800m) on the east face of La Mascara, located at the end of the Bader Valley (formerly called the Pingo Valley) beside the east face of the Espada, Hoja, and Cuernos Norte. We began to open the first pitch on January 17. Up to January 25, we opened one or two pitches per day, put up 300 meters of fixed ropes and went down every night to advanced base camp to sleep in our small tent. On January 26, we pulled up our 150 kilograms of materials to the end of the fixed lines and set up our camp with two portaledge. From this point, we opened the last 500 meters at a rate of one or two pitches per day except the summit day, January 30, when we opened four pitches in about 20 hours of non-stop climbing. It was our last chance to reach the summit because of the bad weather and our lack of food and time. We reached the summit at midnight, despite the very bad shape of my shoulder (rock fall destroyed it on the