

TORRES DEL PAINE

French Valley, first ascents. My original plan was to solo a new big wall route on the South Tower of Paine, but after a tendon injury I had to eliminate wall climbing and try a few different peaks instead. There were only four independent virgin summits left in the Park, as far as I knew, and I was lucky enough to climb three of them. I also climbed two smaller virgin sub-peaks.

First, Mark Matthews and I made the first ascent of the higher of the two Gemelos. The lower summit had been climbed once or even twice, but our 350m route on the higher tower, full of beautiful cracks and faces, had never been even attempted. We climbed the northeast ridge free, at 5.10, and named it Audios Ayer. It received a second ascent, and was highly enjoyed. We rappelled the south face/ridge.

I then soloed the two highest virgin peaks in the valley, over three days in late January 2009. On the 21st, my birthday, I made the first ascent of El Dorado, the first peak southwest of the South Tower of Paine. I gained the summit via a 250m set of cracks up the north side of the peak, and rappelled more or less the same way. The route had two short sections of 5.10, but the rest was easier. Just to the southwest was another virgin summit that I climbed two days later, El Spartano. This great 400m 5.9, the north face to the northeast ridge, followed the coolest ridge I have ever climbed; for 200m you hand traverse this wave of exposed golden granite, overhanging on the other side.

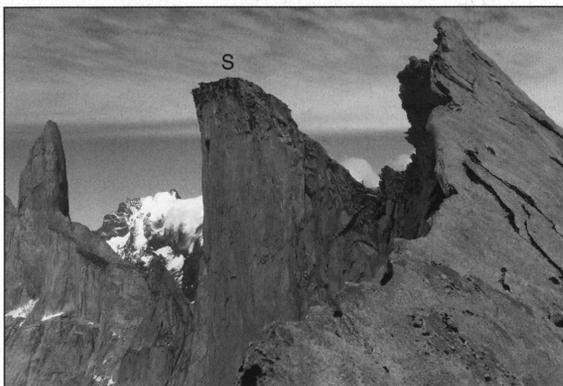
I then climbed two smaller, previously unclimbed summits. I scrambled easy south slabs and a small snowfield to the top of a small sub-peak of the South Tower, naming it La Mesita. A few days later Pete Webb and I climbed a sub-peak of El Spartano, El Brujo, via a fun four-pitch 5.8 on the southwest face.

I also made four solo attempts on a new route on the South Tower of Paine's west face. On my final attempt I climbed 60% of the way up, only to be turned back by storm.

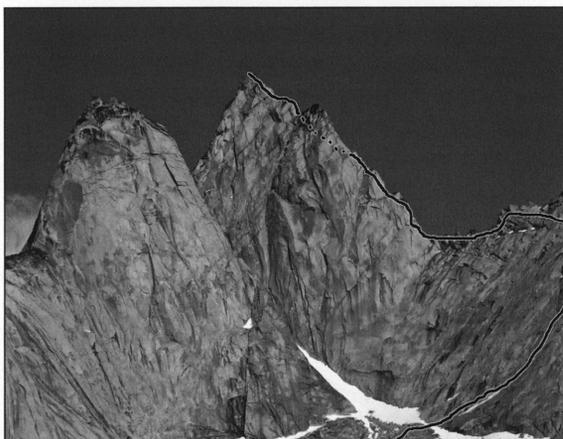
Big thanks to the Mugs Stump Award for their generous help on this expedition.

DAVE TURNER, AAC

El Cuchillo, Anarquía Vertical. In the French Valley of Torres del Paine National Park, Sebastian Muñoz (Colombian) and I established Anarquía Vertical on a previously



El Spartano, with its wave-like summit ridge. Dave Turner



Audios Ayer, on the higher Gemelos. Dave Turner