

CENTRAL ANDES, ARGENTINA

Aconcagua, 2005-2006 season overview. From November 15, 2005, to March 15, 2006, the Parque Provincial Aconcagua had 7,285 visitors who trekked or climbed. This is 12.5% more than the preceding year. There are now 40 rangers (34 in the early season). Even after the season finished, rangers and climbers still were active in the park. There were 4,271 individuals who attempted the summit, 65 more than during the 2004-2005 season. An estimated 35% reached the 6,959m summit. Eighty-five percent of the visitors were non-Argentines, who can now get permits by Internet or with help from their consulates. Three people died (two Spanish and a Swiss).

There is now a GPS and weather station on Aconcagua's summit, and the information is sent by automatic radio command. The park has improved waste and garbage disposal. Even the 780 mules in the park suffered fewer injuries, thanks to a special project to assist them. There is now an ambulance in the lower park, and the Mendoza police rescue team is active, even using a helicopter. The Horcones hut, which burned last year, has been improved and now has bathrooms.

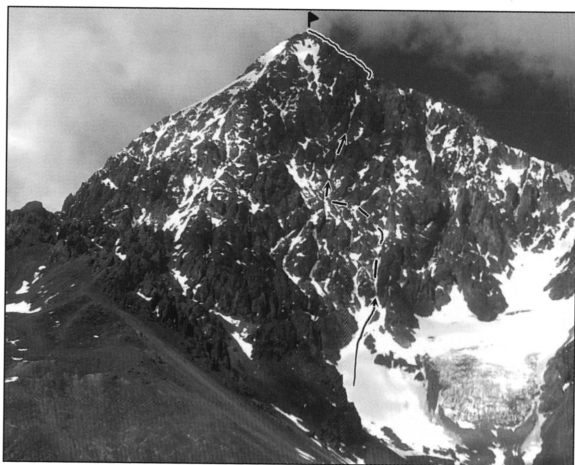
The Club Andinista Mendoza made its third consecutive winter ascent, reaching the summit on July 24. The team consisted of Popi Spagnoli, Gonzalo Dell Agnola, and Horacio Cunietti. Spagnoli is the first female to ascend Aconcagua in winter.

Sometimes Aconcagua is a circus. A Peruvian named Holmes Pantoja Bayona made a record by ascending Aconcagua from Horcones in 13 hours (4,112m of altitude gain). He summited on February 3, 2006, in sneakers, and returned to his starting point after 20:35. Another Peruvian, Jaime Ramirez Quiroz, made a new record on February 24. He went from Horcones to the summit in 9:30, 14:59 round-trip. The first sea level-to-summit ascent was made by a 17-member Argentina Navy team. Each member ran a sector of the 1,600km between Mar del Plata (on the Atlantic Coast) and the summit, which the anchor man reached on January 17, 2006.

Italian Angelo D'Arrigo set a world record by flying a non-motorized delta wing to 9,100m while flying over Aconcagua's summit.

MARCELO SCANU, *Buenos Aires,
Argentina*

Pico Polaco, An Offer You Can't Refuse. On January 12, 2006, Scott Vanderplaats and I completed a new route on Pico Polaco (6,001m), in the central Argentine Andes. The route follows an obvious couloir up the northwest face, then summits via the north ridge. This face was previously unclimbed. The route begins at the lower snowfield and traverses up and left over loose



An Offer You Can't Refuse on the north face of Pico Polaco.
Jarrett Tishmack

mixed rock, followed by an excellent traverse into the main couloir. The couloir contains headwalls of excellent moderate ice and mixed pitches. We accessed the ridge by a chimney system in the upper headwall, passing through gigantic towers with beautiful icefalls on all sides. The ridge offers scary and exposed rock, with excellent views of the Argentine foothills to the east and the Chilean highlands and the Pacific Ocean to the west. We reached the north summit by a steep face of alpine ice for the last 50m, while the main summit was a 15-minute traverse to the south. We descended the normal south face route. We had believed our route would link up with the Austrian north ridge route of 2002. However, we found that there are two distinct ridges, separated by a large snowfield, on the north side of the mountain. Our route climbs the ridge visible from base camp, and thus climbs new terrain all the way to the summit. We named the route *An Offer You Can't Refuse*, due to its aesthetic quality on a beautiful mountain. It took 43 hours to traverse the mountain (including an open bivy), bergschrund-to-bergschrund, with 1,000m of technical climbing (5.7 R/X M4- 70°).



Scott Vanderplaats taking caution not to send down any watermelon-sized rocks on the first pitch of technical climbing, Pico Polaco. Jarrett Tishmack

JARRETT TISHMACK, *Ft. Collins, Colorado, AAC*

NORTHERN PATAGONIA, CHILE

COCHAMÓ

Valle Cochamó, overview and various ascents. At pitch 13 on the white granite of the 1,000m Trinidad wall, Argentine Esequiel Manoni and I were interrupted by a condor's 2m wing span slicing the air, as the curious bird swept by our position. Below was the Cochamó River valley, a.k.a. the Yosemite of South America. The sun shone on the thick rainforests, waterfalls, and 1,000m walls dominating our views. The typically dry, stable February [2006] weather was here. Our predetermined line began on the west face of the north Trinidad Tower but worked its way over to the north face halfway up. The route began on flaring 5.10 butt cracks, later taking us to classic 5.10 face and dihedral-crack pitches. After we exchanged prolonged stares with the condor, we continued up. The following seven pitches ascended a mixture of cracks, including an easily protected 5.9 offwidth, an excellent 50m 5.10a fingertip splitter, and finishing with a perfect 5.9 hand crack. After a 14-hour push from the base, we inaugurated the longest fully free line in the valley: *Bienvenidos a Mi Insomnio*, 5.10d, 920m, 20 pitches, nine being 5.10. We walked the last 300m to the peak and took in the incredible views before the sun set. Volcan Tronador's immensity, capped by glaciers, stood out among other snow-capped summits: Volcan Orsono, Calbuco,