

our free-climbing possibilities. We used hardware ranging from 23 beaks to a #4 Bigbro. After 19 pitches (up to 65m) we reached easy terrain and climbed about 300m (5.0-5.3) up and down to the main summit. We rappelled the wall, mostly down our route. We named the route with our dead Bavarian friend and climber in mind: *Adios Michi Olzowy* (VI 5.11b/c A4b/c).

THOMAS TIVADAR, *Munich, Germany*

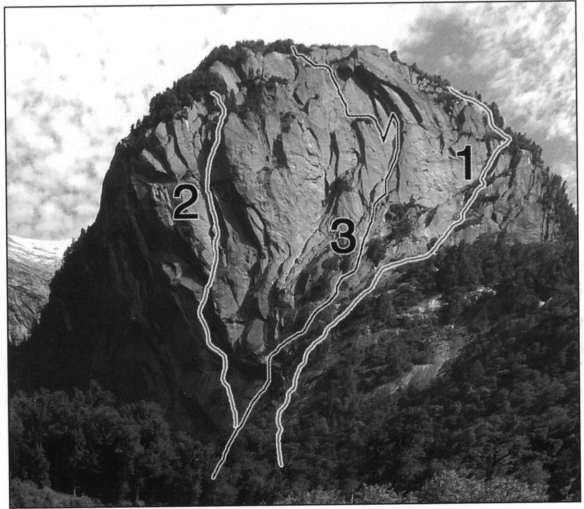
*Cerro La Junta, Viaje a la Luna Creciente.* In the grassy meadows of a high plateau, after six hours of horse packing along a muddy trail with several delicate river crossings, Jens Richter and I were surrounded by snowcapped mountains that towered over a valley that holds stunning granite walls of more than 1,000m. Yosemite Valley must lose in any comparison. The Valle Cochamó offers both more and higher walls, and you do not share the breathtaking views with anybody else.

Up the valley lies the Refugio Cochamó, a tiny old wooden cabin with nearby camping (and a loo with lots of view). Some days, the neighbor who lives 3km up the river comes riding by, stops for a cup of maté and a quick chat about what's new in the valley. It's never much, just a couple of cows and horses and the everlasting sound of waterfalls. Condors circle majestically around the granite walls.

Some climbers have left their traces on a few of these walls, but free-climbing remains in its infancy. A dominant and beautiful line on Cerro La Junta captured our attention. Shaped like a delicate crescent moon, a system of crack lines and dihedrals shoots up the 1,000m-high wall.

During our four weeks in the Refugio Cochamó, the unpredictable Patagonian weather and other bad circumstances gave us only seven days of climbing. We used the first days to clear the very old trail that leads through the dense, wet rainforest to the base of the wall. But after we fixed ropes and stored food and water high on the wall, an accident stopped our ambitions and reminded us of our vulnerability. Tired after a long, happy day of climbing, Jens slipped as we stumbled along the muddy path, and a bamboo stick ripped his cornea. Not a nice thing, when the clinic is a six-hour hike and one-and-a-half-day bus ride away.

Days of sunshine came and went while Jens sat in the cabin, blind and inpatient. Ten days later he seemed well enough to try again, but the weather changed, a north wind bringing five days of ridiculously strong, incessant rain. Eventually, the first day of sunshine found us back on the wall. It seems, though, that the Patagonian St. Peter is not a climber: the sky broke



Cerro La Junta: (1) *Alter Gartenweg* (Schanderl-Tivadar, 2003). (2) *1000 Dollar Gedächtnisweg* (Schanderl-Tivadar, 2004). (3) *Viaje a la Luna Creciente* (Richter-Tittel, 2004). Not shown: *Camp Farm* (Hoyt-Seeliger, 2004; ascends only the lower part of the wall, starting as (3) for 3.5 pitches, then same as (2) for pitches 5 and 6, before an independent finish). *Jens Richter*

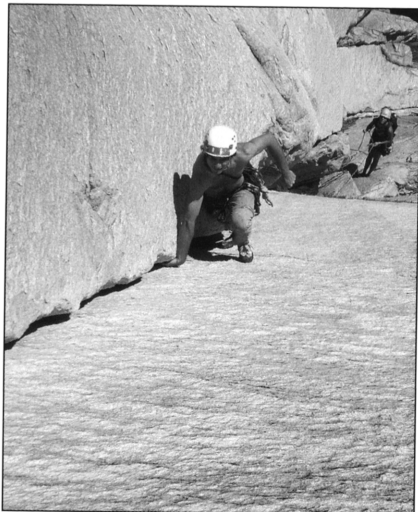
open and untamed rains poured down again. The wall became a massive waterfall. We were on pitch 10, diving desperately for cracks in which to place bad gear to abseil from, as the water rose to our hips.

After another drenching week in the cabin, we got two days of reasonably good weather. This allowed us, after 39 hours of climbing, to finish our free route [except for one rappel point], climbing beautiful and beautifully exposed granite slabs, hard vertical faces, and steep, perfect cracks and dihedrals all the way to the summit. There we stood with the day fading, soaking up the breathtaking view and drinking home-brewed German schnapps.

We can recommend Valle Cochamó to anyone who wants to experience the unique nature of Patagonia (rain included), who wants to hike on old gaucho trails through a mossy rainforest, who wants to find himself in a remote and overwhelming-in-paradise. It is a peaceful, precious place.

Viaje a la Luna Creciente (1,070m, 24 pitches, 7c (7a obl.) A0, Jens Richter-Sabine Tittel, December 2004). Belay stations are established, and important bolts and pitons remain in place. Climbers need 60m twin ropes and two complete sets of cams and nuts.

SABINE TITTEL, *Germany*



Andy Hoyt on pitch four of Viaje a la Luna Creciente, Cerro La Junta. *Jens Richter*

*El Monstruo, La Gran Raja.* Jerzy Stefanski and I (both Polish) created a new line on the previously unclimbed east wall of El Monstruo. After transporting our equipment to Barranca Pass (sort of our advanced base camp), we descended the next morning to the Barranca Valley, through a vertical forest. At 2 p.m. on February 18, 2006, we started our climb, leading a few pitches up to 7a. After a cold, uncomfortable bivouac with no sleeping bags or other bivouac equipment, we climbed the rest of the wall the next day, up to a snowy headwall ridge, encountering difficulties up to 6c. We reached the top exactly when the sun set, then followed the ridge down north to our bivouac on the pass.

The east wall of El Monstruo (the name given by climbers in Cochamó) is 1,000m high and has one weak point: a series of dihedrals that, after about 10 pitches, becomes a crack and then a chimney. That is why we called our line La Gran Raja (*Big Crack* in English, *Wielkie Pęknięcia* in Polish). The route has 22 pitches, difficulties up to 7a (we climbed it onsight), climbing distance of 1,100m plus 200m of snowy ridge to the top.

Before El Monstruo, we tried to repeat the Alandalaca on Trinidad Sur but didn't succeed (bad weather and lack of energy).

We also tried a new line on Piedra de Gorila. After two days of cleaning dirty and grassy cracks, an uncomfortable bivouac, and a few falls, we gave up.

Cochamó Valley is located in northern Patagonia, close to Puerto Montt. Summer weather makes this area similar to Yosemite Valley. There are five 1,000m big walls and a few smaller