

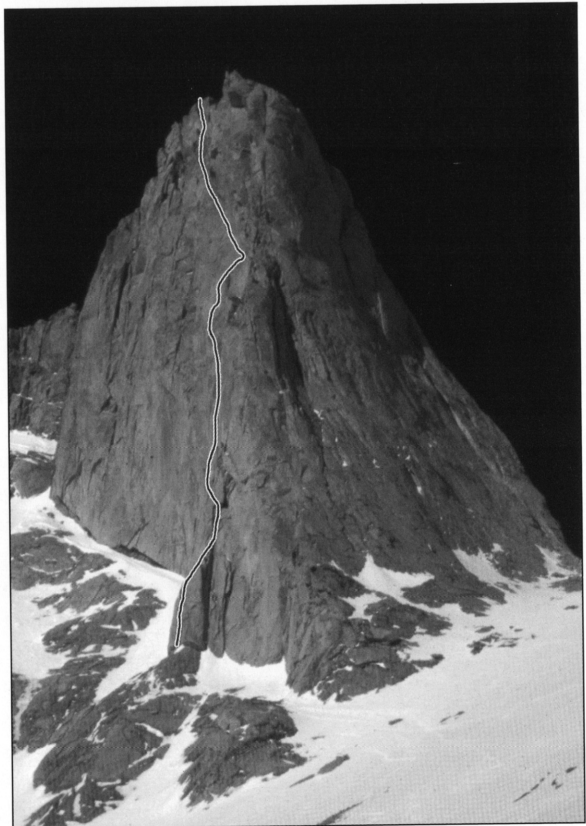
Our new route, which we christened *Lauchon Este*, climbs a line on the east face. We found some traces of passage in the lower part. The first 120m involve easy slabs (5.8), but after the third pitch difficulties increase, with three pitches following perfect cracks (5.10+). We reached the upper basalt formation at the base of an obvious dihedral, which we climbed in one pitch and which is the only feature on the east and north faces that gives access to the upper ridge. We followed the ridge for 120m (easy), climbed a 30m step, then more easy ground, to reach the final summit tower, which required a 45m pitch. At the summit we did not find any traces of passage, and this, combined with Buscaini and Metzeltin's conclusion from their research that all routes stop at the base of the upper basalt formation, lead us to believe that ours is likely the first ascent to the summit. We climbed 500m in nine pitches, with difficulties to 5.10+. The basalt section involves difficulties to 5.9, with little protection. We left belays equipped with threads, pins, or bolts. Because *Cuerno Este* is lower than some of the neighboring formations, and because our route faces east and is therefore protected from the wind, it is a good objective for a bad weather day. The climb took us 12 hours.

RAMIRO CALVO, *Club Andino Bariloche, Argentina*

Peineta, Capicúa Pastor. In October, Dario Arancibia and I summited *Peineta*, the fourth Paine Tower, by a new route (*Capicúa Pastor*, 12 pitches, 500m, 5.9 A1+), making what seems to be the seventh climb of the spire. Our route ascends the west face, facing the Valle del Silencio (opposite the east faces of the *Fortress* and *Shield*).

We were a three-climber team, Francisco Rojas being the other member, with the idea of opening, in winter, a new route on the *Shield*, but we had problems with it from the very beginning. We entered the Paine Towers on August 1, in winter conditions, with loads totaling 1,000kg. After 15 days we were established in the Japanese Camp; then we took two weeks to put a cache in Valle del Silencio and, finally, five days to sculpt a snow cave in the glacier between the east faces of the *Fortress* and *Shield*.

The weather, although harsh, was more than acceptable.



Peineta tower, showing *Capicúa Pastor*. Other routes exist to the right of this line. *Rodrigo Fica*

But after we had climbed the first 50m of the Di Donna Couloir, the avalanches began. After additional incidents in the following days, we retreated and changed our focus to Peineta.

On September 11 a severe storm arrived and stayed for 17 days, and Francisco Rojas had to leave because of his job. In the first week of October, Arancibia and I fixed nine pitches, and, after another week of bad weather, on October 14 we summited. Two weeks later, on November 1, we left for civilization after retrieving our ropes and garbage.

According to information we received (though we don't know if it is 100% correct), the first climb of Peineta was made in 1986 by Christophe Delachat and Pierre-Jean Pradalier (MD+ 6b A2). The second was made in 1990, from the east side, by Yvan Boullen, Pierre Faivre, Lionel Pernollet, David Ravel, and Jerome Ruby (28 pitches, ED 6c A3). Thereafter, several new routes and repeats have been made.

Our expedition was the only mountaineering activity in Paine Towers this winter. Ours was the third winter expedition ever, after Mario Manica and Luca Leonardi in 1987, and Rodrigo Traub, André Labarca and Claudio Retamal's attempt on Paine Grande in the late 90s.

Peineta should be considered the fourth Paine Tower. If it isn't, it's because most people see the towers from east, where Peineta seems to be more a granite wall than a spire-like mountain. A lot of space for new routes remains on Peineta.

RODRIGO FICA, *Chile*

WEST OF PAINE

Meseta de los Franceses, various first ascents. In July, Pablo Besser, Ismael Mena, Nicolás von Graevenitz, and I made the first winter ascent of Cerro Balmaceda, at southern end of Continental Icecap [see below]. From the summit the Tyndall Glacier and surrounding mountains attracted our attention. Nicolás and I started planning an expedition to the seldom-visited Meseta de los Franceses, the glacier just west of Tyndall. The only recorded ascent in the area (by Gino Buscaini) was of Cerro Manzano, a 1,500m peak west of Tyndall. After difficulties fulfilling CONAF's permit requirements, we camped near Cerro Manzano on our fifth day. Three days later, having given up the idea of visiting the northern part of the Meseta, due to a highly crevassed glacier, we camped at the base of the east ridge of an imposing peak, which like most peaks in the area is unnamed. The next day we made a reconnaissance of a tributary glacier that runs east-west, to the north of our camp. We were pleased to find that several beautiful peaks surrounded it. Finally we had something to climb! The weather kept us in the tent for two days, but on the third day we decided to climb, despite bad conditions, and ascended three small peaks: Piojo (1,601m, S51°07'696" W73°31'692", PD, 600m) and Ciego (1,595m, S51°07'640" W73°32'453", PD, 500m) and Cerro Dormido (1,717m, S51°07'766" W73°32'781", AD, 700m). The next day we climbed Cerro Desconsuelo (2,011m, S51°11'594" W73°29'057", PD+, 1,000m), which is at the southern end of the Meseta. The weather finally improved, and we attempted the prettiest peak in the entire area, the one whose ridge protected us from the wind. We started up at 8 a.m., climbing a long ice couloir leading to the icy north face. The first pitch was 50°, followed by another with steps to 85°, and a third that involved a traverse (70°) to avoid vertical ground above. The fourth was 80° and deposited us on the east ridge. The weather was perfect, no clouds or wind. To reach the corniced summit we climbed two more easy pitches. We named the peak Cerro Travesía (1,913m, S51°09'470" W73°31'342", MD, 700m