

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.

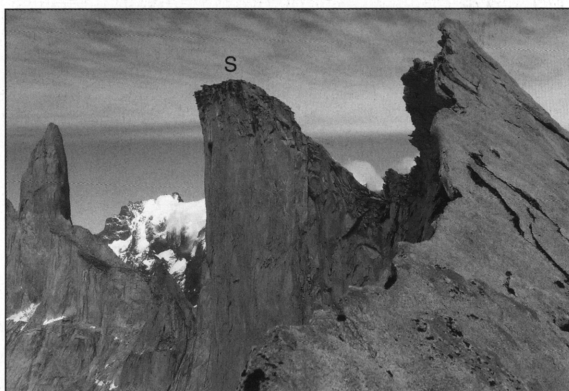
I then climbed two smaller, previously unclimbed summits. I scrambled easy south slabs and a small snowfield to the top of a small sub-peak of the South Tower, naming it La Mesita. A few days later Pete Webb and I climbed a sub-peak of El Spartano, El Brujo, via a fun four-pitch 5.8 on the southwest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

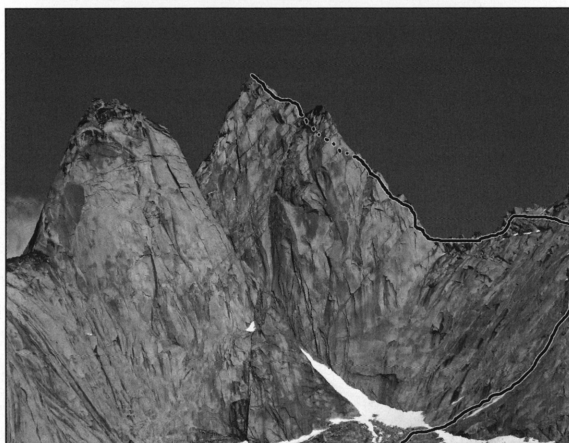
Big thanks to the Mugs Stump Award for their generous help on this expedition.

DAVE TURNER, AAC

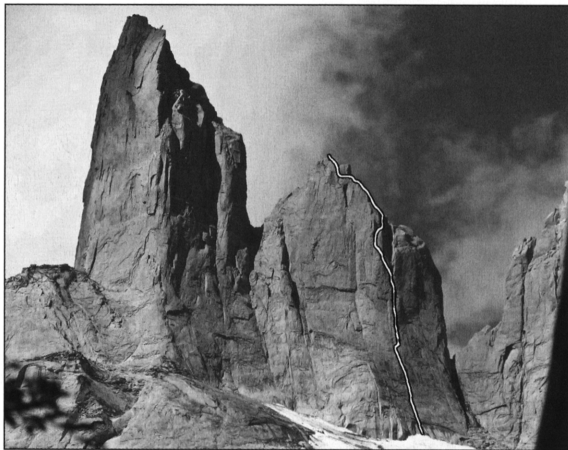
El Cuchillo, Anarquía Vertical. In the French Valley of Torres del Paine National Park, Sebastian Muñoz (Colombian) and I established Anarquía Vertical on a previously



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



Audios Ayer, on the higher Gemelos. Dave Turner



Anarquía Vertical, on El Cuchillo. El Espada is to the left. Dave Turner

virgin formation, El Cuchillo (the Knife; ca 2,000m), located on the southern flank of La Espada (the Sword). On January 23 we left base camp, a granite cave below the west-facing slabs below the face, at 4 a.m. and reached the route at 10 a.m. Though it would be possible to approach by snow in different conditions, we followed a dry couloir that led us through some fourth-class and eventually 5.6–5.8 slab climbing. We climbed a direct line on the west face, in alpine style with one rope, swapping leads, predominately free-climbing. The

crack system is beautiful, with great protection, and has passages of easy face climbing. When the crack got thin, we were forced out onto the faces. We passed through one short section of aid, in a roof at the beginning of the route; with less ice it should go free. We followed this system from ledge to ledge through immaculate chimneys, splitter hand cracks, technical face climbing and ramps, to the top of pitch five. Then we traversed right on a beautiful granite handrail, and again right up and over a few blocks, and into a dihedral with lots of positive edges, finishing in a narrowing hand crack. At 2 p.m. we were nearly on top of the formation, looking up at the summit block. It looked impenetrable, with a thin seam that would surely be hard aid climbing. I wondered if our efforts had fallen short. We traversed left across the summit ledge and I found a perfect hand crack in a funky chimney, then stepped out left into a finger crack. As Sebastian followed, he yelled, “Walker, you found the stairway to heaven, *hermano*.” We reached the summit of the 300m west face at 2:50 p.m., after 10 pitches, and rated the route 5.10b A1. The rappels followed the south ridge to the line of ascent, ca 30m each. With smiles on our faces, we scrambled down the remainder of the dry couloir and reached our granite cave at 8 p.m.

WALKER MACKEY, *Colorado*, AAC (AAC Mountain Fellowship Grant recipient)

Cuerno Norte, The Devil Rides Out. On the east face of Cuerno Norte (2,400m) Mike “Twid” Turner, Geoff Hibbert, Peter Jones, and I established The Devil Rides Out (700m, 20 pitches, ED 5.10 A4). We climbed on 11 of our 13 days in the Bader Valley, usually in bad weather, but the sheltered east aspect allowed us to knuckle down and still climb. We used two and a half sets of cams, four sets of wires, a full set of pegs, hooks, beaks (very useful), and 700m of rope (200m of which we bought in Puerto Natales at great cost after the airlines lost one of our gear bags).

In early March we established our Advanced Base Camp under the face, and then Geoff and I scouted, climbed, and fixed the first four pitches (160m) of the approach slabs. The next day we started working our way up the wall, climbing in conditions that started mild and progressed to wind and rain, then deteriorated to snow and gale-force winds—not uncommon. After each day’s climbing, we fixed ropes and returned to the ground. Some of the climbing, such as on the igneous dike bisecting the slabs and the upper steep walls, and smaller dikes