

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.

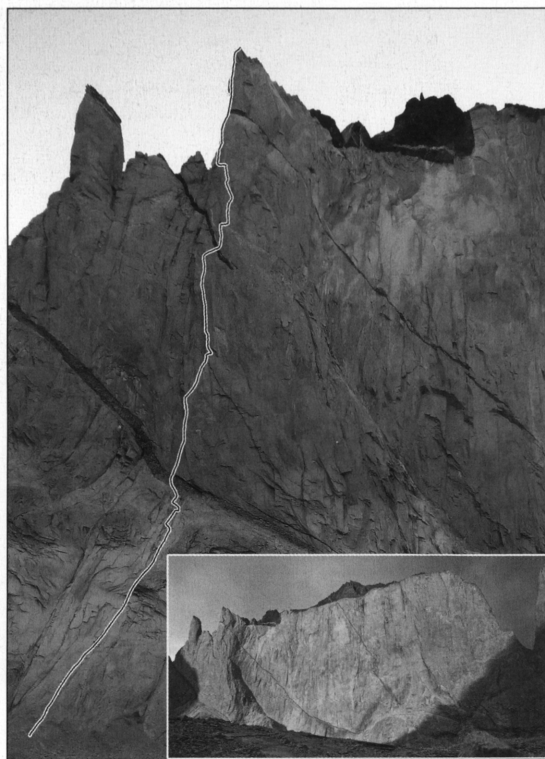
WALKER MACKEY, *Colorado*, AAC (AAC Mountain Fellowship Grant recipient)

*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

above, proved loose, broken, and gnarly, and sometimes overhanging. Fortunately the rock quality improved somewhat as we climbed higher, though we still encountered broken, loose flakes. On the final tower we ascended the left arête of the right-hand pillar of the twin pillars, through a scooped overhang and up the summit slabs. We summited late on March 15 and descended into the early morning hours, celebrating in camp with rum and as much chocolate as we could manage. The next day we returned to the wall and removed our bags of equipment and all of our ropes, and began moving out. By the following afternoon we were in sunny and warm Laguna Amarga, where we quickly discovered a bar and a reggae band and commenced the celebration.

BOB BREWER, U.K.



The Devil Rides Out, on Cuerno Norte. Inset shows the broad the east face. Bob Brewer

*Torre Norte, El Husar de la Muerte.*

On January 30–31, 2009 Nicolás Gutierrez and I (both Chilean)

opened a direct new line on the west side of the North Tower of Paine, north summit. It's probably the first Chilean route on the three towers of Paine. We first climbed Peineta, by Durazno para Don Quijote, and attempted the South Tower. Then, after several days of bad weather, we left base camp at 4 a.m. and, after a six-hour approach, arrived at the base of the wall. We didn't know what we wanted to do, but after studying the wall we decided on a clean dihedral between Caballo del Diablo and Adrenalina Vertical. The weather turned bad, very cold and windy. When we started climbing around 11 a.m., everything was covered with snow and ice. We had to clean verglas and ice from the cracks with our ice axe, and the climbing was slow. Our water froze. We climbed nine mixed pitches. At 1 a.m. we reached the north summit. Our fingers and feet were frozen. We descend by the same line of ascent.

We wanted to free-climb as much as possible, but the weather forced us to aid some sections. The route is on perfect granite and will easily go free in good conditions. El Husar de la Muerte (500m, 5.10+ A1) is named in memory of a one of the founders of Chilean independence.

FRANCISCO ROJAS MIX, DAV Chile

*Torre Central, South African Route, first free ascent.* On February 2, 2009, Ben Ditto, Sean Villanueva, and I summited the Central Tower of Paine via the South African Route, making the first free ascent of the 1,200m east face. The route was first climbed in 1973–4, repeated once (that we know of), in 2004, and takes a striking line that follows a huge dihedral splitting the