

Seeking Balance Finding Adventure  
Ski Mountaineering Expedition to the  
Southern Patagonian Ice Field via Kayak  
September 30<sup>th</sup> – October 19<sup>th</sup> 2019

Team Members:

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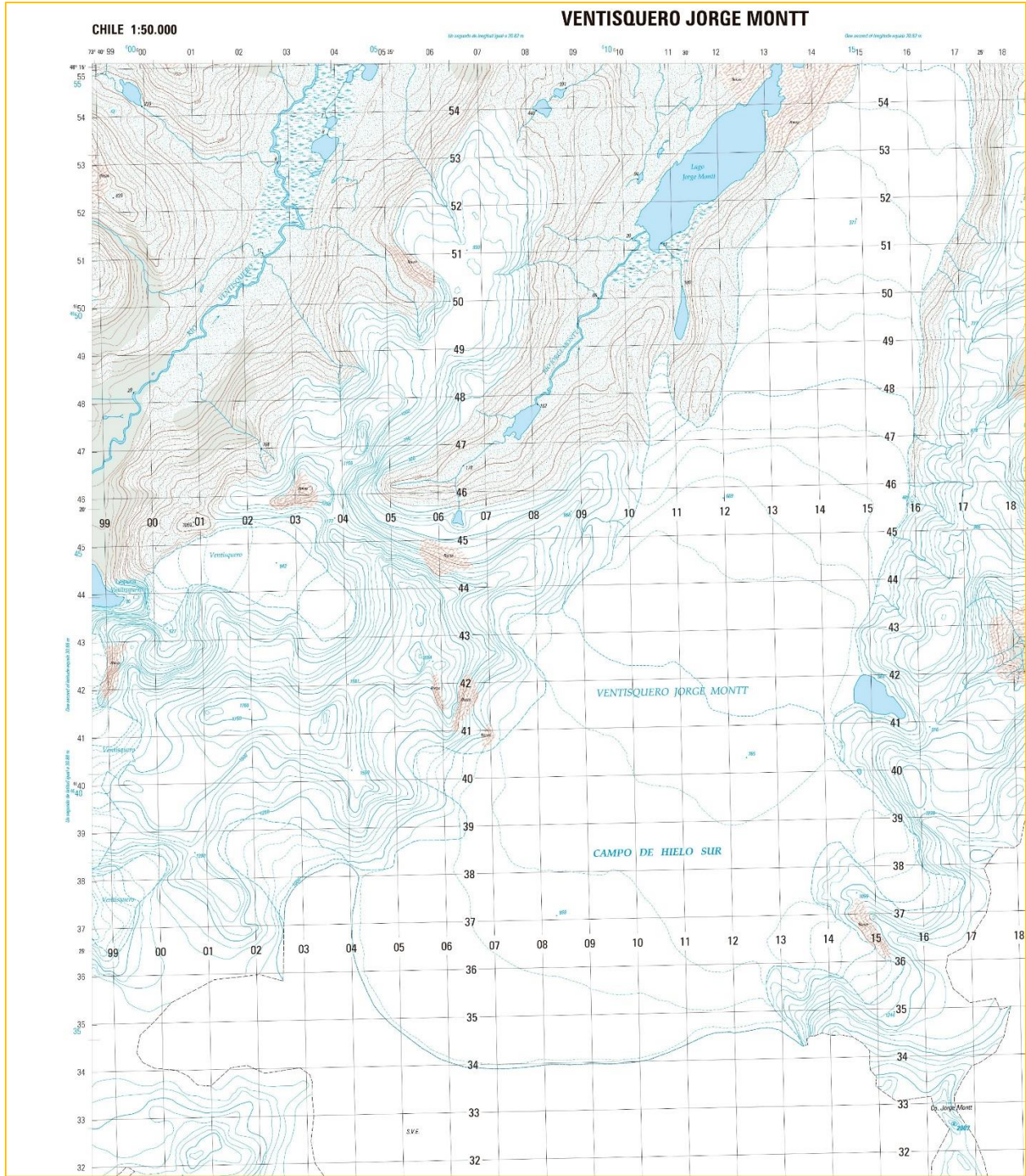
MEF reference: 13-10-Patagonia

**Where:** Northern portion of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field, Parque Nacional Bernardo O'Higgins, Aysen Region, Chile.



Sketch of approximate Kayaking route to Jorge Montt Glacier:

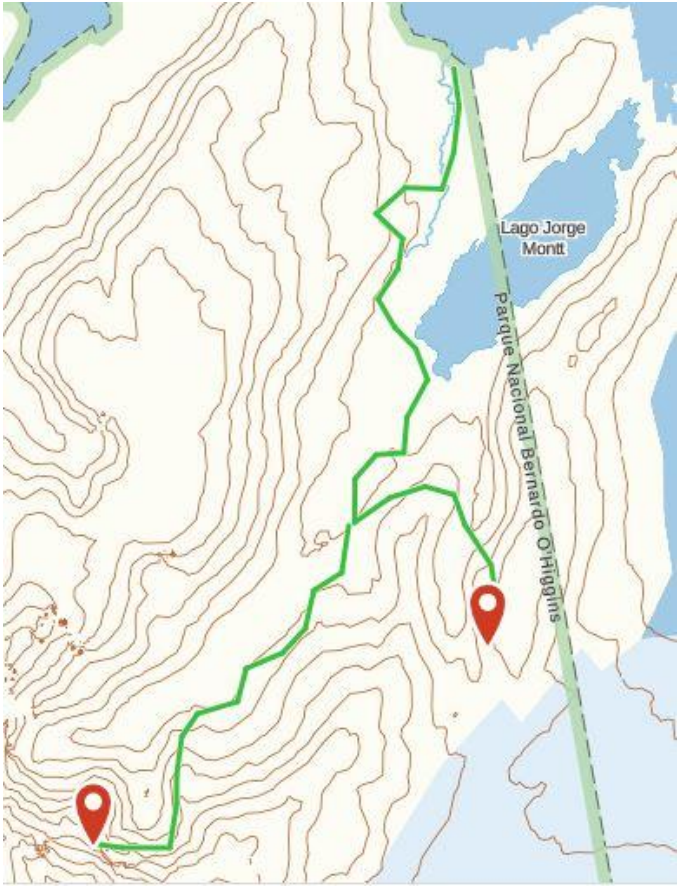




Sketch Map of the Glaciar Jorge Montt



Most recent satellite imagery of the Glaciar Jorge Montt we could find. Yellow line shows where the tongue of the glacier now sits.



Approximate route one towards Glaciar Jorge Montt

Photographs of route one:



*Kayaking towards Glaciar Jorge Montt*



*Leaving ocean for the mountains*



*Navigating the dense bush*



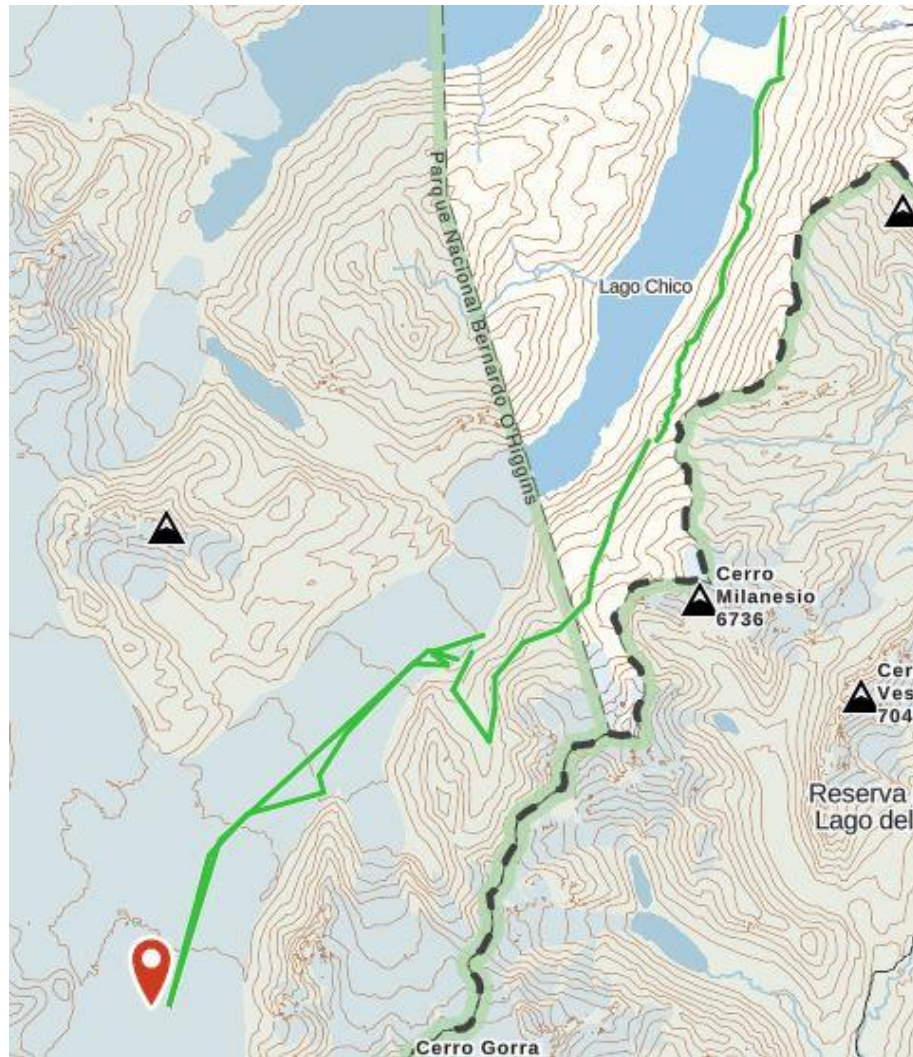
*If not bush then swamp navigation*



*Scrambling over slippery rocks near treeline, the southern icefield still not in sight*



**Route two:**



Departing from the edge of Lago Villa O'Higgins walking along the ridge near lago Chico and accessing the southern ice field via Glaciar Chico.

Photographs of Route two:



*Walking along Lago Chico, Glaciar chico in distance*



*Access point of Glaciar Chico*



*Beginning to skin up Glaciar Chico*



*The team on the southern icefield, Monte Fitz Roy in the background*

**Original Objective:**

Our primary ski mountaineering objective was to be an exploration of the northern portion southern Patagonian icefield. Starting near the Glaciar Jorge Montt, traversing towards Volcan Lautaro. This was subject to weather, snow stability and other safety issues.

Our maps and satellite imagery, as well as any beta from other climbers in the area were approximately two – five years old. Over the past years the Glaciar Jorge Montt has receded significantly, and the vegetation in the periglacial area has increased. Our experience accessing the glacier was quite different that others had experienced. After three days of swamps, prickly bushes and slippery rocks we still couldn't see the glacier or icefield and decided to try a different approach. This meant giving up on our 100% human powered goal and involved taking a bus from Tortel to Villa O'higgins and then a boat from Villa O'higgins to Lago Chico.

**Second Objective:**

To access and explore on ski the southern icefield by way of Glaciar Chico. To find and ski routes and peaks along the way.

**Why?**

The idea of a "fair means", human powered expedition was appealing to us for many reasons. We were able to combine our passions for ski mountaineering and ski kayaking into one unique adventure. We were also able to reduce our overall footprint and draw attention to the impacts of climate change in the region we explored.

Our team works in the outdoor industry and is constantly exploring our home mountains. We are seeing the direct impacts of climate change on our mountains and mountain communities and it is important to us that these impacts are shared to drive more global action on climate change. The outdoor community is large and powerful when our voices are combined. If we become more aware of the impacts of climate change on communities like ours, we can hopefully inspire more action.

Overall dates of expedition:

September 30<sup>th</sup> 2019 – October 19<sup>th</sup> 2019

September 30<sup>th</sup> – Launch Kayaks from Tortel village, Kayak approximately 15km to first camp on Isla Teresa. Stormy weather with some snow, hail and strong winds.

October 1<sup>st</sup> – Kayak approximately 25km from Isla Teresa to southern end of Isla Alberto Vargas. Sunny skies and light winds meant this only took about five hours. Spent extra time doing a beach clean.

October 2<sup>nd</sup> – Kayak approximately 42km from Isla Alberto Vargas to our final camp near the outlet of Jorge Montt. Strong tail winds helped us cover a larger than expected distance. Set up camp on the large beach amongst the icebergs.

October 3<sup>rd</sup> – Exploring the fjord up to the tongue of the Glaciar Jorge Montt, kayaked approx. 20km through calm waters and icebergs, still were many more kilometres's away from the glacier.

October 4<sup>th</sup> – Began to shuttle gear towards Lago Jorge Montt. The unexpected discovery of a rough trail helped us here. Approximately 50kg of gear/person and skis on packs made walking and manoeuvring through swamps and trees difficult.

October 5<sup>th</sup> – From a new base camp beginning to look for routes onto the icefield. Two main options discussed. One attempted, very little altitude gain made but horizontal distance towards second set of lakes better.

October 6<sup>th</sup> – Second route option attempted. More vertical gain but thick bushes followed by slippery rock walls limit ascent.

September 30<sup>th</sup> – October 5<sup>th</sup> – Sea Kayaking towards Glaciar Jorge Montt. Final camp location GPS coordinates N 48 14.617 , E1 73.500

October 7<sup>th</sup> – Reach two points, still many kilometres and vertical metres from the icefield. Swampy and bushy conditions limiting progress. (N 48 18.500, E 7 73.5333) and (N 48 18.700, E 2 73.500). Decide to attempt via a different approach

October 9<sup>th</sup> – Return to Tortel and relocate to Villa O’Higgins via a five-hour bus ride

October 10<sup>th</sup> – Meet with CONAF ranger in Villa O’higgins and other locals to determine options for accessing the southern icefield via Glaciar Chico.

October 11<sup>th</sup> – Arrange transport on next safe day to cross Lago O’higgins.

October 12<sup>th</sup> – Begin approach from Lago Chico. Following a rough trail and GPX routes along the southern edge. Starting from N 48 54.350, E 7 72.950. Camp in a small grassy meadow, approximately 20 kilometres in.

October 13<sup>th</sup> – Continue walking along the southern ridge, descending through a steep boulder field and stream to be close to the glacier. Camp approximately 500m from the glacier on scree. Recon access points.

October 14<sup>th</sup> – Reach Glaciar Chico, accessing the glacier at N 49 02.667, E 7 73.067, navigating the dry glacier and crevasse network for several hours before beginning an ascent via skins on light snow. Camp on the glacier.

October 15<sup>th</sup> – Continue to skin the upper portion of Glaciar Chico. Reach furthest distance on the southern icefield. Hear weather updates indicating a large storm approaching. With a deadline of October 19<sup>th</sup> we decide to turn around. Enjoying a perfect bluebird day on the southern icefield with Cerro Fitzroy behind us.

October 17<sup>th</sup> – Return to Villa O’Higgins.

### **Other Relevant Comments**

We first applied for Difrol permits from <https://difrol.gob.cl/en/procedures/expeditions/> . These permits were straight forward and took a few weeks to process. We received an email from the head offices letting us know that for the permits to be valid we needed permission from the local CONAF office and Armada. These were not possible to get ahead of time, and neither office responded to our emails. We personally had to meet with CONAF officers in Coyhaique, Tortel and Villa O’higgins who signed relevant paperwork for us. The main purpose of this was to ensure we were aware of their limited resources and should be prepared to self-rescue.

We stayed in touch via Inreaches with contacts to provide updates on weather through out the trip. This technology meant that we were able to modify our trip when we received word of a large storm approaching and we would highly recommend all climbers to purchase similar two-way communication devices.

