# 18 Days in Torres del Paine


The Team

Sponsors

Objective

The Bader Valley

The Route

Route Diary

Travel

Agent

Permit

Accommodation

Food

Insurance

Equipment

Technical Equipment

Stoves

Photography

Weather in the Bader Valley

Remaining climbing objectives in the Bader Valley

Environmental Impact

Accounts

Contacts

# 18 Days in Torres del Paine

The Team
Mike Turner – 40 mountain guide with a vast wealth of big walls and mountain experience throughout the world.
Robert Brewer -42 associate director engineering, Himalayan, alpine and big wall experience.
Geoff Hibbert – 42 Architectural Team Leader, Himalayan alpine and big wall experience.
Peter Jones – 36 company CEO , Himalayan and Yosemite big walls experience.

Sponsors
Our thanks go to all the sponsors, without their support this expedition could not have been undertaken.

| | |
|---|---|
| Welsh Sports Council | £2000.00 |
| Apex Drilling | £1200.00 |
| Soil Mechanics | £600.00 |

DMM many thanks for the hard wear and ropes provided to the team.
Mammut many thanks for providing Kit for Twid.

Objective
1. Central tower – the route chosen was climbed less than a month prior to our arrival by an Italian team.
2. South tower via Bader valley – a culmination of time available cf. to distances to ABC, loss of a 3rd of the equipment and rope in transit made this target problematic. It was agreed to change the target to a wall accessible from the Bader valley on route to the south tower ABC.
3. Cuerno Norte 2400m comprising a shear 800m granite wall.

Map of the Central Torres del Paine

The Bader Valley
The Bader Valley lies to the south of the classic Central Torres del Paine massif, it is situated between the Ascencio Valley to the east and the French Valley to the west. It is accessed via the Hosteria las Torres via a path alongside Lago Nordenskjold, part of the classic 'W' route around the central massif.

The valley is narrow and deep lying between the 900 and 1300m contours, it is approximately 5 km long taking between 3 and 6 hrs to access the various faces from Advanced Base Camp (ABC). Its mouth is guarded by the Cuerno Principal and Cuerno Este 2600m (devils horns) while at its head lies the south face of the South Tower 2850m. It is bordered to the west by an uncompromising ridge of orange granite peaks of the Cuerno Norte 2400m (northern devils horn), Cerro Mascara 2300m,

Cerro Hoja 2200m (the blade), Cerro Espada 2500m (the shield), to the east lies the west face of the Monte Almirante Nieto 2668m.

The centre of the valley comprises a weathered golden granite dome dipping southwards toward the mouth of the Bader valley. Capping this formation and the hill tops themselves are black metamorphosed Jurassic sediments, contorted into steep folds, iron impregnated and baked to hornfels.

To the north east, on the upper approach to the south tower above the 1300m contour, the valley is glacial, the ice being rock hard and steep. To the south the valley is rock strewn with glacial moraine and boulder fields. At its entrance circa 900m sits the Stantia Bader, which most expeditions call base camp, an idyllic spot centred in a twisted forest of beach trees which shelter inhabitants from the relentless north westerly winds.

A minor hanging glacier below the mascara is still present, however the glacier below the Cuerno Norte has receded over recent years exposing ice cracked and sculpted granite slabs with an occasional covering of rock fall debris. ' Rock Hard' ice now only occupies the deep narrow weathered clefts and gullies in the sweeping granite slabs.

Between moraine and the base of the slabs is a small glacial pond which empties and fills daily, this is to be the site of ABC over the succeeding weeks.

Lower Bader Valley Cerro Mascara, Hoja, Este

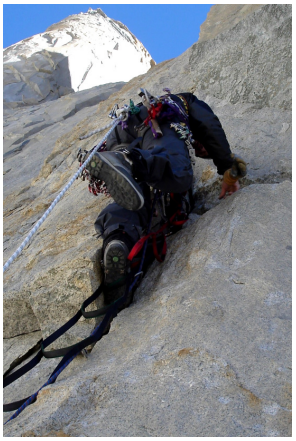
Upper Bader Valley and South Tower

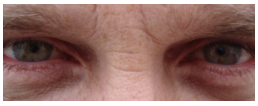
The Route

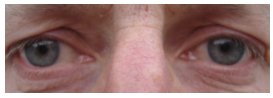
The sheltered East face aspect of Cuerno No rte

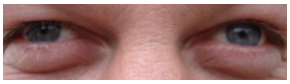
# The Devil Rides Out - ED 5.10 A4 700m 20 pitches

First ascent M Turner, R Brewer, G Hibbert, P Jones March 2008









Route Diary

Day 1 - 3rd March 2008. 10am depart cheerless Bristol airport for Madrid to meet the team and relax. A late night assessment of photo records, available in an internet café via Twid's website, allow us to reconnoitre the South Tower and its possible lines, a necessity following the success of a team on our preferred line only weeks earlier.

Day 2 - 4th 00.10 depart Madrid for Santiago we experience both fine refreshment and weather throughout the flight. A manic hour at Santiago airport allows us time to pick up the baggage and meet Pete J who has flown in from Chicago, he reports the airline have lost a bag of equipment. Not normally critical, this bag contained 250m of rope, some sky hooks, 1 set of friends, his sleeping bag and a tent, this loss is of significance. We continue to Punta Arenas arriving at 16.00 and are quick to find a bus ride to Natales, negotiating an additional ticket for Pete along the way and arriving at 18.00. We taxi to El Mundial lodging, drop equipment and undertake a frenetic shopping trip over the last 2 hrs of opening time. This enables us to stock provisions and allows Twid time to make contact with a local fixer, Cristian, they miraculously manages to purchase 200m of 10mm static line along with 60m of 10mm dynamic to help replace the missing equipment. We later meet Cristian and our two porters at a bar adjoining El Mundial, to familiarise them with the workload and our drinking habits.

El Mundial 'blue bar'

West from Espancia to Cuerno Principal

North towards the French Valley (left), Cuerno Principal centre and Bader Valley right.

Day 3 - 5th 06.00 we head by bus for Laguna Armaga, the weather is fine and sunny, far better than some members of the party, winds are fast above 2000m. Pete remains awaiting delivery of lost baggage without which we are compromised. To make things worse during a bus change on route a 20kg bag of food is transported to an adjacent bus and hence delivered to another port. Twid and Bob proceed via 4x4 to the Hosteria Las Torres and Geoff leaves to pay the peak fee and recover the missing bag. At the Hosteria we load a total of 6 horses, each carrying 60kg payloads to Base Camp. Twid and a porter head towards Base Camp (a fast 4hr walk). Bob awaits the return of Geoff, the porter and the lost bag which finally arrives in the late afternoon. There is no hope of hiring a gaucho and horses thus the remaining equipment is shared out and carried to BC arriving late in the evening. Tents are pitched in a the stantia, providing protection from the wind, at the mouth of the Bader Valley.

Torres del Paine from Laguna Amarga

Stantia Bader

Italian base camp site Stantia Bader

Day 4 - 6th 06.30 mild and sunny with strong gusts above 1000m. We commence the carry of loads from BC to ABC, reviewing and discussing objectives as we approach ABC. Loss of the equipment and distance to the base of the South Tower Route force a decision to find an alternative, we search for an Advanced Base Camp under the east face of the Cuerno Norte. A firm objective is agreed upon, shelving initial plans for the line on the north end in favour of an attempt on one of the unclimbed pinnacles rising out of the southern end of the ridge. Twid returned to BC for a further carry and to await Pete's arrival, Bob and Geoff scout and climb the first 4 pitches (160m) of the approach slabs, realigning the rope during the descent to a safer line. A long day is completed at ABC as the drizzle turns to heavy rain. By 22.30 following saturation, Twid's tent commences leaking leaving the team dejected.

Cuerno Norte, Cerro Mascara, Hoja and Espada

Leaky ABC tents

Day 5 - 7th a windy, mild and sunny day starts well, we climb the fixed ropes to the high point and continue for 70m to the first broken and weathered rock barrier an igneous dyke bisecting the slabs and the upper steep walls. We search for a pitch through unstable ground and move left to find a route through the dyke, placing the first hand drilled bolt on route by means of star drill ( a sleek 15min operation). At 17.00, Pete and Twid arrive at the top of the ropes with most of the remaining equipment (the lost equipment bag has been recovered). The team split belaying duties, separate members belaying and controlling separate ropes, minimising the risk to the leader should potential rock fall cut one of the ropes. The dyke proves to be loose, broken and gnarly. A nasty pitch, The Dogs Cahonnas Left Hand, is established through the overhang allowing access to the corners and

face above. The weather deteriorates further and by 18.00 the rain becomes persistent. The team descend arriving late at ABC in heavy rain which rapidly deteriorates to snow and later gale force winds. Storm conditions continue throughout the night.

Climbing the lower Dyke (The Dogs Cahonnas)

Deteriorating weather at the top of the slabs

Day 6 - 8th windy particularly high up, rain persists throughout the day, the temperature remains below freezing and all appears bleak until a brief couple of hours of sun in the late afternoon rekindle the spirits. There is no time for climbing, rather the damp equipment is quickly aired and dried in the brief sunshine. We remain at ABC for a tutorial and practical session in structural and igneous petrology. As the sun dips on the skyline the temperature rapidly plummets to well below freezing, a cold evening and night with windy gusts follows.

Cold night at ABC

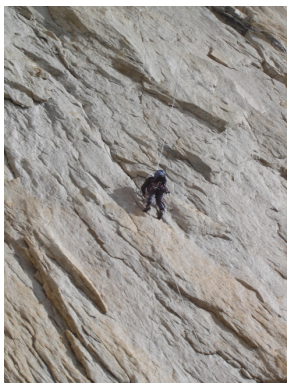
Drying out at ABC

Day 7 - 9th a cold icy start, very windy easing later, the temperature remains at or below freezing throughout the day, the cold wind grips the body. The cold sees the first real use of hand and foot warmers which prove throughout the trip to be a valuable resource and commodity. Twid and PJ effect a difficult access up verglassed slabs to the previous days high point establishing a further 3 pitches (130m) of mixed aid and occasional free climbing up loose blocky ground. The grooves and ribs being loose on a grand scale of tens of meters. They reach a second thin black dyke, marking the end of the grove which has now become a detached tower free standing against the wall, behind which you can peer to the abyss beyond. A day off allows BB and GH opportunity to return to base camp and transit the remaining food and equipment to fully stock ABC.

Cerro Mascara

Ascending Broken corners to hollow flakes

Day 8 - 10th offers a cold 07.30 start, low down limited ice has formed the day remains windy throughout. It takes 3 hrs to reach the high point. GH reclimbs the last pitch of the previous day and clears the gear, all available ropes and equipment are established at the high point. A single short pitch is established, The Grand Traverso, ending below a protective overhang away from the rock fall funnel created by the groove line above. All bolt hangers used are recovered and the descent ropes are realigned (400m of rope has now been fixed). New belays are created on the descent line, ensuring a safer access onto the wall. PJ departs for Chicago.


Bolting the descent

Grand Traverso

Day 9 - 11th a cold windy day with persistent rain and snow, ensures the team remain at ABC in the warmth of sleeping bags for most of the day. A break and sun shine at 16.00 allow a crystal hunting session, and second tutorial - igneous petrology, metamorphism and diagenesis.

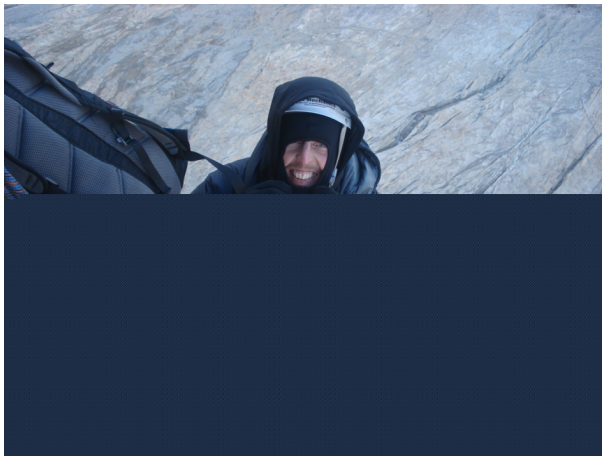
2nd lost day due to weather at ABC

Day 10 - 12th a windy very cold day, Twid climbs through the left side of overhand and via a number of cracks moves slowly left into the bottomless grove (58m). Reassuringly the rock improves in quality, it is from here that the slow relentless battle up the wall commences, if cracks and seams disappear on our chosen line a time consuming re-route could be required substantially reducing our chances of completing a route in our timescales.

Aiding on Pitch 11

Pitch 11 breaking out of the overhang

Day 11 - 13th a warmer blustery day with strong winds limited to higher altitude where they funnel clouds over the tops. Clear skies ensure positive progress. A pedestrian start at 0800 as all 3 of the party ascend the ropes and shift all equipment and rope to the high point. The grove is climbed for 55m to its natural end and a difficult escape made right onto the shield to establish a double bolt belay below a broken blocky grey dyke where the seam disappears. We break right across and into the dyke to a good crack to establish a belay on the first ledge encountered on the wall (50m). A traverse out right and into a series of open groves (50m) established all equipment at the high point, the ropes are straightened out during the descent.



Hanging around

The first ledge pitch 14

Pitch 12 grove

Pitch 13 across the dyke

Day 12 - 14th the day dawns clear, warm and sunny, the stable conditions and drop in wind allow thoughts of success. We commence with a new vigour at 0700 for a long 15hr day. We all ascend the ropes and a slow (4hr) hard aid pitch is climbed via open groves and 3 seams, gaining access left into a notch on the skyline (50m). A final 15m pitch on lose very broken flakes ends on a suspect flake belay. All equipment is established at the high point. As the day ends the temperature plummets and the rain degenerates to snow which sets in for the night. At most there are potentially 2 climbing days remaining, but only if we cut time to the bone and run out to BC and the Hosteria in the same day. Although we have reached the free standing tower we are uncertain of success.