

Expedition name ` Hidden British Cochamo expedition 2024 `

MEF Reference 24-31

Expedition start and end date Dates 29th Nov to 23rd Dec

Expedition Leader with contact details

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Expedition members and nationalities

Mike Turner British

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Location -Cochamo, Llanquihue Province, Los Lagos Region, Chile.

Addition MEF Grant awarded (circle all that apply):

Fred Iseman Alison Chadwick Nick Estcourt Roger Chorley

Cochamo 24

Kevin Kilroy and Mike turner travelled to the stunning Cochamo Valley. Chile. The initial objective of climbing a new Big Wall Climb on El Monstrou had to be given up initially due to the severe weather in November making the approach to the climb too dangerous. The November constant cold and snowy weather had left the area with an unseasonably lot of new snow. The team switched their objective to finding a new line on other walls in the area. They searched various walls and eventually tried an unclimbed line on Trinidad Central. After a number of days the line disappeared into a seem not a crack and unable to climb on the team retreated to the base of the wall.

With the remaining time the team repeated various other existing free routes in the area.

- Alandalaca on Trinidad South
- EZ does it on Trinidad North
- Las Manos del Dia on Trinidad Central
- Plus a bunch of short routes in the valley.

Climbing detail by Kevin

3:30am...the synthetic rustle of sleeping bags, the squeak of eagerly inflated Therma rests mixed with a chorus of zips slice the pre-dawn silence amongst the trees in La Junta campsite, Cochamo. Jet Boils try hard to roar through the nippy night air and deliver some not really needed hot brews. The team is psyched. It's time to go. Rucksacks are encouraged onto backs, packed with climbing and bivy gear for the one night weather window. Ahead is a 3 hour hike through ancient forest with 1000m vertical height gain to the base of Trinidad, one of several snow capped 1000m granite walls visible from camp.

The first leg of the journey involves a river crossing...a steel cable Tyrolean complete with a suspended wooden basket and nylon pull cord makes life very easy (and exciting), as we help each other safely across. Hiking poles clink along the stoney river bank, against the ethereal flow of ice-cold melt water as the path leads us up-valley before a sharp turn off into the trees. Before long we are greeted by some of the oldest living creatures on earth...Alerce trees (Patagonian Cypress) estimated to be in the region of 3,000 years old, stand around 50m in height with a distinctive red bark covering their 3m diameter trunk. The team stops for a moment to appreciate their natural beauty and simply stand in their presence as the morning light grows throughout the forest.

After a couple of hours the forest begins to thin...the sky beyond the trees looks grey with cloud, perhaps the forecast was wrong? A few more meters along the forest trail and the sky, it seems, is not the sky at all and the grey clouds reveal themselves as a gigantic granite buttress littered with cracks, corners and seams. Trinidad Norte. The left most of the three gigantic buttresses which makeup Cerro Trinidad. Directly above us now is the route Sundance E5 A2+, first climbed in March 1996 by British climbers Grant Farquhar and Simon Nadin and recently free climbed by Belgian climber Siebe Vanhee and Chilean climber Diego Diaz Aguilera in January 2020. We can see the first compelling 12 pitches (of 21), with more than half the route out of view further above. Deciphering options for unclimbed lines on this wall proves to be far from straightforward and so the team decide to move on to Trinidad Sur to look for other new route options and perhaps try a few warm-up pitches on an established route called Alandalaca.

We stash our camping gear and food below the Bivy Boulder and warm up our arms on the in situ pull up bar below its overhanging face. By 9am we are racking up at the bottom of the first pitch of Alandalaca E5 400m on Trinidad Sur. A featured granite slab without much protection, "French 6a" the topo suggests. If experience has shown anything, it's that the first "easy" pitch of a multi pitch is never that, especially on granite, especially in the mountains. .

Mourne-like-rounded granite flutings lead worryingly above ledges to a drilled peg, which Tim had clipped above his head. Tim's quite tall (as was the first ascensionist we later learn). Moving quickly in the mountains is a thing of joy, occasionally a necessity but something that when

leading on bold granite slabs with quirky insecure climbing often proves to be challenging. Moments like this feel a bit like a showdown at dusk...staring down the approaching runner (no matter how poor a placement it may be), you can't rush but if you don't make a move soon, it's going to be too late. Luckily I'm wearing my head torch. Stand up, lock off in balance, breathe, peg clipped, step back down and a world of possibility suddenly opens up.

By the top of the third pitch, the team reunite on a small ledge and take in the view. The Alerce trees like matchsticks glitter in the sunlight far below, La Junta campsite looks a long

way off nestled below the snowy cumbres and it's only approaching midday. We decide to abseil down and look for more new route options. After walking around in a circle, somewhat accidentally, for a couple of hours we spied a line, immediately left of Alandalaca, which looks too good to be true. A corner system near the edge of Trinidad Sur's buttress that leads to splitter cracks, maybe 450 m in height. Topos are checked and rechecked...this line looks unclimbed from what we can gather, swiping through 82 topos for routes on Trinidad on our phones (a guidebook for Cochamo is coming soon). That night below the bivy boulder, the team is excited at the prospect of attempting this new line. We rise early before the rain the next morning, return to the base of Alandalaca for the third time and stash our kit for the return.

The following day, back at La Junta campsite, the rain pours, as predicted. While we cook and pack for the incoming 10 day weather window, our new route plans change abruptly as we learn that this line *has* been climbed and is called 'Vida De Ogro' 6a A2+ by Brazilian climbers Rian Mueller and Daniel Fernandes in 2005 and is currently on the wish list of local climbers and campsite staff to try and free. So, wanting to respect the local climber's wishes, we change our plans and seek out one of the crack options on Trinidad Norte, close to the British route Sundance. Twid has his eyes set on an aesthetic crack, left of the crux pitches of Sundance. It looks difficult to get established in but once there, may deliver anything from perfect hands to an aid seem. It's too hard to tell from below, even with the binos, so up we go.

To give the team a head start on the potential new route, We fires up the first 5 pitches of Sundance, which has become a popular short route for visiting climbers to do in its own right (named Gendarme E3 250m), summiting on a pinnacle where Sundance continues to the right. The wild off width and crux layback, using the fix and follow technique for the first time which feels cool. Twid follows, jumaring behind us on static lines until all t are on top of the pinnacle. At this point, the original plan was for Twid and Kirsten to take over the lead but due to unforeseen rope shenanigans, Twid hands me the lead. The next pitch is a 12a...the original crux free pitch of Sundance. E5. And it's wet, a bit dirty and mega scrittley! If this was in the Mournes, it might feel like trying a harder, longer, bolder, wet and way more scrittley version of Eddie Cooper's Last Rites at Hen, complete with runout above a rusty lonely peg. I tried a few times to commit above the peg, moving the side runners higher each time but in the end it just seemed too committing to me and so plan B (or was this plan G?) was deployed.

Trinidad Norte



Valle Trinidad 539 © Cochamo.com

Red Line shows the attempt at the line line. •

Dotted Red line of intended new route.

1 EZ DOES IT.

If this was plan G, then G was for Gardening! A series of mossy cracks rise up and left of Sundance's now infamous E5 pitch. Extremely slow and tedious cleaning and aid climbing in

Miura's, interspersed with sporadic vertical tree wrestling resulted in a very long belay for Twid (about 7 hours!) and very sore feet for me. But we got a pitch higher and the aesthetic new route crack was getting nearer. The following day, Twid and I returned to camp to collect more static rope and aid gear Twid and I then spent two days on the wall pushing the rope up and left into the aesthetic crack. The final section involved 5 hours of bat hooking by Twid to pendulum across into the crack. Alas, when he got there and looked in, he was not greeted with the gift from Mother Nature that we had wished for...the aesthetic crack was well disguised and turned out to be a blank seam. Without hope for aid climbing up the feature, it was obvious our new route plans had not worked out. So we abseiled off, stripping down the static ropes as we went.

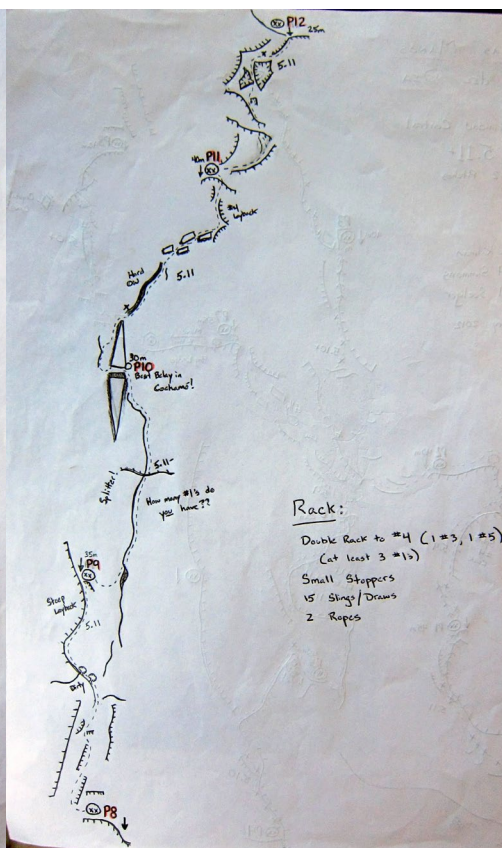
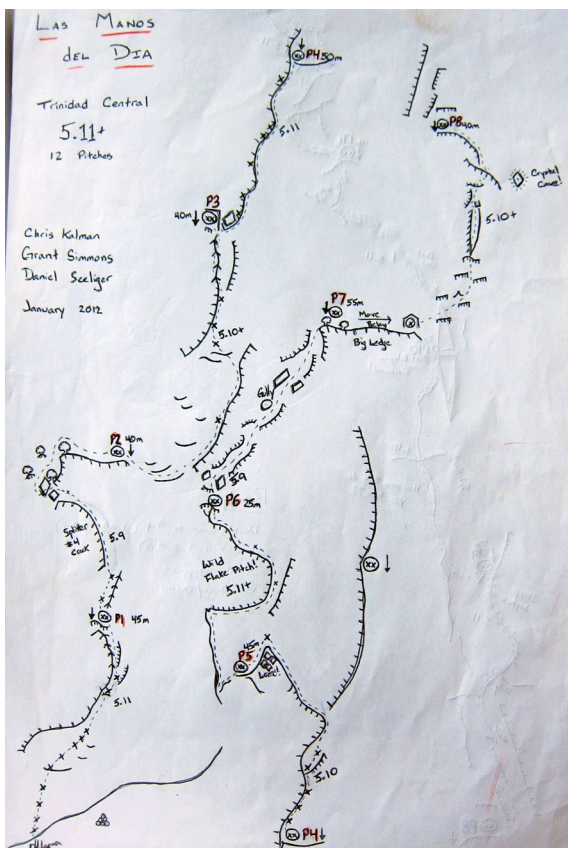
With just under a week remaining, we decided that trying yet another new route plan on a 1000m wall wasn't realistic and so we climbed on a few excellent established routes including EZ Does It (E1, 10 pitches to the summit of Trinidad), Manos del Dia (E3, 11 of 12 pitches), Camp Farm (6c+ variant, 7 pitches) and Apnoea (HVS, 2 pitches). We would like to say a huge thank you to Mountaineering Ireland and the Mount Everest Foundation for partially grant funding our expedition. To our friends Kirsten Kramer and Tim Stephens for their support, knowledge and companionship and to their friends Brandon and Stephie for their very kind hospitality at the start and end of the trip. To our Arrieros, Cristian and his family for transporting all our stuff on their horses, and to the lovely people at La Junta camping for a very welcoming stay in Cochamo. And finally to Mike Twid Turner for the invitation to climb and learn from his depth of experience and passion for big wall climbing and mountaineering.



Trinidad Norte



Topo de E.Z. Does It. © Juan Catón
Valle Trinidad 514 © Cochamocom



Travel to Cochamo

Flights to Chile where routed via Madrid Airport flying with Latam. We both flew from

home (Belfast or Geneva) and met up in Madrid. The long flight with LATAM took us to Santiago, where our bags were turned up quickly. We then transferred through to the Domestic terminal. Worth noting there is a luggage belt for ongoing flights in the International hall which saves rechecking in your baggage at the Domestic counter. We both had to pay extra for second bags in both directions. Impossible to get all our equipment into one 23kg each. In fact we were seriously loaded up.

Puerto Mont Puerto Varas

The town is a pleasant port with many shops and supermarkets. It has lots of great outdoor shops now in a new shopping mall. Easy to buy clothes and camping kit. Funnily enough it wasn't easy to get camping gas that fitted our stoves. Luckily we found some in Puerto Varas the next day. Puerto Varas is a similar distance from the airport as is Puerto Montt. It's a much nicer place on the side of Lago Llanquihue and very touristy. It has plenty of supermarkets and outdoor shops. Probably a better place to shop and buy provisions for the trip. There are plenty of good sized supermarkets also to buy food. Gas was more readily available in the shops also.

Puerto Varas to Cochamo

We got a ride in a friend's van to Cochamo then onto the Road head and visitor centre. Cochamo village is on the Estero Reloncavi. It's a pretty small place with a number of small well stocked shops plus lots of restaurants. There are hotels and bunkhouses plus campsites. It was all pretty quiet while we were there but obviously gets busy in the high season. It's about 2 hrs drive from Puerto Varas to Cochamo and a further 30 minutes drive to the road head. It's possible to get a bus to Cochamo from Puerto Varas and the airport and then a taxi to the road head. At the road head it's possible to park your car at an Estancia near the start of the walk in. They allowed us to camp also at the parking and use their outside toilets.

Visitor Centre

Before you walk into the Cochamo area you have to sign in with the authorities. They have a path side booth at the start of the path. They need your rough itinerary and dates of return. It's more to check that walkers and climbers return safe to the road head. They take your passport details. They need your camping details.

We registered on the reservation website www.reservasvallecochamo.org for the park area. This will give us permission to climb. It's just a reservation site no requirements needed.

Getting to base camp-horses

We had pre booked online with La Junta Camp site and a gaucho to help carry our bags. The horses arrived on time and we hung out while they loaded the horses. 50kg per horse of weight was the limit. We packed our bags the previous night to weigh the right amount. A scale was handy. Also packing bags of similar size so that the horses had a balanced load. The path to La Junta is quite tight in places so packing tight helped the horses pass through. The Gauchos placed all the bags in waterproof sacks. But it's a rough journey and if it rains your kit will get wet. Water proof bags are best.

We walked ahead of the horses for 4 hours up to the campsite with little rest. It's a hard muddy walk so best travel lightweight. We carried some spare food and water. Best count this as a full days activities. It's a long way! The park closes in the afternoon for walkers leaving the road head. So best start early. Boots are best as it's muddy. We both had lightweight walking boots.

Camping

There are actually 3 campsites in the Cochamo valley which the climbers use.

- 1 La Junta
- 2 Camping Trawen
- 3 Camping Hermosa

Camping La Junta is centered in the Cochamó Valley, surrounded by hiking trails, granite walls for climbing, waterfalls and old-growth forest. This is where we stayed the whole time. The staff were all climbers, very helpful and always available. I would stay there again

Benefits

- A few minutes to the Toboganes waterfalls.
- Trails – such as Trinidad, Paloma, Matelandia and Anfiteatero – begin in La Junta where Camping La Junta is located. Camping La Junta advocates responsible and sustainable tourism over time. Its efforts to minimize its impact on the environment include:
 - Several hectares of green open space with trees that provide shade, and next to the river, ideal for establishing your camp.
 - Ecological composting toilets (x6).
 - 2 roofed shelters with firepits, with large tables and sinks to wash dishes.
 - Information board, with a message board, forecast and information to help care for your surroundings.
 - 3 sinks for washing dishes & 2 showers (cold water) that use biofilter gray water drainage,
- Policy of taking down all your garbage, separating waste to recycle what is possible.

Camping Trawen

similar to la Junta plus had a café, small shop selling some basic food and bread and pizzas. They also had some internet off a Starlight system which was expensive.

Camping Hermosa

More of a walkers campsite and less climbing friendly. Across the Cochamo river from La Junta.

Waste removal

The camp sites had environmentally friendly toilets. Drop loos with wooden chips to help with break down the human waste,. All the rubbish was taken out on the horses and disposed of back at the road head appropriately. On the hill toilets had been previously dug for climbers to use containing any pollution in many camping areas.

Equipment

We had climbing equipment to cope with walking into Big Walls, walking and basic snow climbing and a large free and aid. Rack for the climbing. We used it all! Going in December was great with the weather but there was a lot of old snow about and approaches to routes where difficult in places. Having crampons and ice axe was essential. The nature of the granite meant it took cams and wires well. Cams especially important. It was useful having stiffer rock shoes for the climbing and a spare pair in case they wore out. I almost wore out a new pair over the trip. There are limited supplies in Puerto Montt in a Decathlon. Don't expect much so best bring everything with you to Chile.

Rough outline on climbing rack

- 4 sets of wires 1-11
- 4 Full sets of cams to BD 4, 2 each to size 6.
- 30 quick draws various
- 8 slings 1.2m 6x 0.6m
- 3 sets of micro cams
- Sky hooks various

Peckers x 10
Pitons x 12
A few mashies
Wall hauler
Set of jumars each
Helmets essential
Chalk bag plus plenty of chalk
Prussik loops; micro traction, Grigri
Crampons
Axe
Walking poles
50+ Litre rucksack
2 Big Haul bags
Portaledge and tent
2 half ropes
1 70m single
300m static rope

For camping and biving

While at base camp at La Junta we had a small tent each. We also had a bivi tent but didn't need it. While biving in the high camps we just slept on our blow up mats. A small tarp would of been handy but we didn't take one. Suggest the Decathlon one which some German climbers had. A bivi bag was sensible as you cannot rely on the weather in Cochamo. We took a jet boil and a pocket rocket to cook on which worked well. Some extra pans etc. Camping up below the walls is frowned on and everybody we spoke to just bivied out. There are some well placed dry bivi boulders which will keep you dry when the weathers bad. We took synthetic sleeping bags in case of getting wet. But a down bag would of been warm enough and lighter

Communication

Once you entre the Cochamo valley there is no mobile reception. We had Garmin inreach to keep in contact with home and to check basic weather forecasts. My Garmin was playing up on the trip but I would say they are a good thing to have for rescue and communication. It was nice being less reliant on phones in a wild place. It was possible on one of the camp sites to pay for some internet and be able to chat to people.

Emergency and rescue

The Junta Campsite staff are the contact for emergency. They have radio contact with down the valley and SAT links to rescue serves which basically the Police and Military. There was an accident with a young Chilean guy who slipped off on a steep path 2-3 hrs above the campsite. The young guy was badly injured and hurt his ribs and back. At first he was carried on a stretcher down through the forest which was very difficult. A bit like rescuing somebody through a vertical jungle! Both of us had just returned after spending a number of days in the high camp climbing when somebody asked if we could help carry the stretcher. Obviously we volunteered and repacked for a long night helping. The rescue in the valley is made up of the locals and anybody happy to help. I was amazed by the numbers of young fit climbers on the site who refused to help! In the end the young guy walked down to camp with the help of folk. He was clearly not in a good state and a visiting German Doctor was extremely worried for the guy. Who was passing blood. Without insurance or cash the helicopter would not come. It took a lot of convincing for a military. Chopper to come in the next day and pick up the guy. It was unlikely he would of made the long 5+ hours walk out and the thought of a horse ride didn't seem that appealing! But that's the options available. So best be insured and have access to cash.

We had a major first aid kit at base camp with various drugs plus a smaller first aid on the mountain.

Carabineros de Cochamó (local police)

+56 65 2765136

+56 65 765280

+56 65 218268

Firefighters of Cochamó

+56 65 2216216

Weather and when to go to Cochamo

Weather in Patagonia can vary dramatically. Cochamo is near the top end of Patagonia just below the `Lake District` area where there are lots of volcanoes. The Cochamo region is lush forest in the vallies, almost like jungle its dense and not easy to get through. Like all of Patagonia Cochamo it can rain a lot and gets severe winds. But there is less wind and rain than the more famous areas in the south of FitzRoy and Paine. It's a long way further north and climatic differences are vast.

Expect weather to be varied temperatures, rain and snow. . We had hot weather in the valleys and snow on the tops. Generally the weather was very good for our Expedition. We had great stable weather for most of the time. A few days of rain in a month for December. That's not bad going. Generally climbers go for December through to end of March. Busiest times January and February. December was ideal for us and Id go again during this period. The only problem with December waste that the weather had been terrible all November and there was still a huge, unseasonally, amount of snow left over from the winter. The cold bad November weather had kept the snow about. This made our original plan to climb on the Gigantica impossible. The approach slope was an avalanching near vertical , exposed to the sun each day.

Many lines were running with water earlier on also and drainage from snow fields an issue on higher peaks. Most climbs involved crossing snow patches to get to the starts. If wanting to free climb later could be better but statistically December has been a good month over the last few years.

Sources for weather forecast

Garmin in reach

Notice board updated each day on the camp site

Climbing Potential in the area

Information about climbing in the area is very haphazard. Even though we contacted climbers who had been there, sived through the AC and AAC journals and general internet information. We had a books worth of topos from previous climbs. It was hard to piece all the information together. Clearly lots of climbs have gone unrecorded by teams from many countries. The local knowledge is also patchy but the best bet! The www.cochamo.com website is starting to collate all the info which will help in the future. But as an area which is frustrating to find new lines. The rock doesn't lend itself to lots of cracks but rounded fissures which don't have much trad free climbing potential. We didn't want to use a drill to bolt lines and this limited the climbing. Gear is just hard to find! Cracks and corners are generally very dirty so onsite climbing is hard going. For Big Wall climbing using free climbing without bolting I would suggest go elsewhere if looking for new lines.

Reporting our Climbing

Kevin is writing a report for the Irish Mountaineering Log and Twid running a series of lectures in early November 25. Our climbing Expedition will feature in our lectures.

Expenses of the Expedition

Awarding Grants

Mount Everest Foundation £2000

The Irish Mountaineering Council £500.

Expenses

Flights £1556 +1360= £2916

Camping £248.58

Horses £96.39

Gas £120

food £623.01

Equipment £33.54+161+200+61.75

Hotel Puerto Varas £95.14

Taxi to airport /fuel share £20.42 +£54.48

Insurance £500+ BMC and Twids Swiss medical

Total Expenses spent £4630.31

Off setting our Carbon use

Carbon offset Certificate number 3004250457034614

By Michael Turner 5.24MT of CO2

With Sustainable Travel International EIN 37-1461679

We give our permission to the Mount Everest Foundation to circulate the report to help future Expeditions to the area.



