



## **Graham-Hawthorn Patagonia Expedition 2017**

### **Team members:**

Peter Graham - 30 – British - Leader

Uisdean Hawthorn 24 - British

Duration: 1/1/17-28/2/17

### **Location and brief summary:**

We travelled to the Fitz Roy Massif in Argentinian Patagonia to attempt new routes and repeats in the range. Our main objectives were:

- New route on the unclimbed Pollone Pillar Oeste Chico
- New route on the west face of Aguja Bifida
- New Route on Fitz Roy West Face.
- Ascent of the unrepeat Venas Azules on Torre Egger

We based ourselves in El Chalten for two months. Unfortunately due to the particularly bad weather this season in Patagonia we were not able to attempt any of our main objectives.

### **Attempts and endeavours:**

- Aguja Guillaumet Brenner-Moschioni
- Cerro Piergiogio – East face (attempt)
- Aguja Saint-Exupéry - Chiaro di Luna
- Aguja Rafael Juárez - Anglo-American (attempt)
- Fitz Roy – Supercanelette (attempt)
- Cerro Torre – Ragni (attempt)

### **Detailed Account of Expedition by Uisdean**

The classic view of Fitzroy on the drive into town was of course blocked by a mass of dark clouds.

After only a day in town the weather looked to be good for 24 hours so we packed our bags and set our alarms for 3 am. We managed to climb Aguja Guillaumet via the Brenner-Moschioni that climbs the North Ridge. The climbing is mostly straightforward with one really nice 6b+ crack pitch. It took us 18 hours from road to road. It was nice to skip the bivi and do it in a long day, meaning we got back to town at 11pm and managed to get a burger and chips before heading to bed.

Our next trip into the mountains was a lot less successful it culminated in us wandering around on a clagged-in Torre Glacier and after hours of weaving around crevasses we discovered we couldn't go any further due to rock fall and some active seracs blocking out way to our intended route. To make things worse it was Christmas day and after a very disappointing Christmas dinner of tuna, pasta and mayonnaise we spent the night in the tent and headed back to town the next day.

We only got one day in El Chalten to rest and eat as there was another 24 hour lull in the winds so the next day we made the 6 hour walk back to our gear stash at Nipinino on the Torre Glacier.

The alarm sounded at 3 am and after some cake for breakfast we headed off and climbed Chiara de Luna, a fantastic 750m rock route on Saint Exupery. A cold first few pitches were worth the pain as it soon warmed up and perfect pitches of granite cracks came one after the other. We topped out at 6 pm to a calm summit and some awesome views of the Torres. We started heading down and after a few abseils the winds picked up and it started snowing.

Many abseils later we reached the snow at the base of the wall, just as it was getting dark. It was now lashing with rain. We got back to the bags and started walking back down through the cliff bands and big ramp system to get back to the glacier. However, after 20 minutes we were cliffed out. The rain was restricting the beams on our head torches and eventually although being fairly sure we were in the right place, the only way was down into a very dark void and both of us had no recollection of climbing up anything so steep on the way up. An hour of wandering around in the rain and dark had passed so we decided it was time to give up and sit under a boulder for 3 hours until it got light again. Sitting under the boulder we were both reasonable warm except for our legs and feet. I couldn't help but think this was a really rubbish way to end such a good day in the mountains.

In the day-light we discovered that we had been in the right place and there was just a small section of down climbing previously on the approach in the dry and day-light both of hadn't even registered it as climbing. After much cursing we trudged back to our tent. It was still lashing with rain. We decided that rather than trying to get dry and sleep in the tent for a few hours it would be better to pack everything up straight away. After a fair few sense of humour failures packing up Pete and I ate some pasta, stashed the gear and made the long 6 hour walk back to town.

The second half of our time in Patagonia involved throwing ourselves at a few different routes but the main event was attempting Cerro Torre via the Ragni route. We walked in to the Torre valley, spent a day waiting out a storm. Tried to get over the Col Standhardt but failed due to some extreme Clagg on the glacier, preventing us and a few other teams from going anywhere. The next day we were about to walk out when we met our friends Kim, Dan and Garry walking in, telling us there was an okayish forecast and they were going to try the Ragni. Pete turned to me and said "well if there going we have to go in case they do it". We turned around and spent another night in the Torre valley before heading over the col the next morning. The next day the weather started bad and was due to get worse but we tried anyway. The inevitable happened at the base of the mixed pitches and

the abseiling with howling wind, horizontal ropes, and frozen hair began. The walk out round the Icecap was extremely long, at times an amazing experience and at others really shit. Something that will always remind me that failure or success is sometimes quite irrelevant and its more important to notice the other small things around you which are totally unique to the exact place you are. But mostly to enjoy suffering because at the end of the day, it is inevitable.

## Budget

<b>Expedition Costs:</b>	<b>Expedition Income:</b>
<b>Grants: MEF - £ 1650</b>	<b>Travel - £3000</b>
<b>BMC - £ 1050</b>	<b>Food and Accommodation -£1300</b>
<b>AAC(UK)- £ 300</b>	<b>Insurance - £ 700</b>
	<b>Gear - £ 100</b>
<b>Personal contributions – 2 x £1050</b>	
<b>TOTAL: £5100</b>	<b>TOTAL: £5100</b>

## General Beta for Climbing in Patagonia

Most information about climbing in the region can be found in Rollando Garibotti's excellent guide book Patagonia Vertical or on his website [www.pataclimb.com](http://www.pataclimb.com).

On top of what's written there here's a few things that I would definitely recommend bringing when visiting El Chalten:

- Bring decent approach shoes and light weight crampons. Most of the rock routes do not require full weight mountain boots to approach. Preferably high top style ones as these take crampons better.
- Bring stiff comfortable pair of rock shoes. All the Patagonian regulars where la sportiva TC pros. These provide a lot of protection and are stiff enough that you can climb hard in a larger size.
- If possible bring two sets of gear. Having gear stashed at two base camps will greatly maximise your options. In different lengths and types of weather windows you may want to choose routes on different areas of the massif.
- ATM charges are extortionate in Argentina bring a lot of Pesos or US dollars.

## Support and Thanks

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