



## **PataGonia 2005**

Slovenian expedition to Patagonia - 15.1. 2005 – 10.2.2005

Andrej Grmovsek and Silvo Karo

On 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2005 our small team from Slovenia, Silvo Karo, me, Andrej Grmovsek, my wife Tanja Grmovsek and Monika Kambic Mali settled down in Campo de Agostini.

This was just my and Tanja's first visit of famous Patagonia, but Silvo's tenth and Monika's fourth. So we were interesting mix of newcomers with big eyes and Patagonian veterans, but all of us already very experienced climbers. Silvo and myself actually didn't have some special climbing goals and our plan was to climb fast and light and to adjust our plans weather permitted.

In Agostini we met many climbers already waiting for a window of good weather, which was forecasted for 19<sup>th</sup> of January. The weather forecasts that Thomas Huber was getting from Innsbruck (big thanks to him and Innsbruck's meteorologist again) were really a big help for us. So we started at Agostini on 19<sup>th</sup> of January at night and went directly to the base W face of **Ag. Saint Exupery** (2558m). Silvo and I warmed up in very nice route **Claro de Luna** (6c, 800m) which we climbed to the top in 6 hours (+3 hours of rappelling). At 3 o'clock in the morning we returned to Agostini, 23 hours on foot. After a few bad days another day of good weather was forecasted. We moved to Polacos and expected good weather. But it wasn't really good, so on 26<sup>th</sup> of January in the morning we changed our big plans to more realistic ones, given the weather conditions. Silvo and I climbed **Anglo-American route** (6b, 600m) in W face of **Ag. Rafael Juarez** (2482m) in strong wind, some snow showers and mostly in boots.

At the end of January for Patagonia unusually long and warm spell of weather started. We moved our high camp from Polacos to Norwegos and on 31st of January Silvo and I started with our planed line on **Cerro Torre** (3102m). We decided to ad "sitting start" to one of the longest and most famous rock faces of the world. We planned to climb **Slovenian start for Cerro Torre**. With only the necessary rock and ice climbing equipment, some Powerbars and bottle of water we started climbing at first daylight. We climbed route **Rubio y azul** (6c, 350m) to the summit of **Torre de la Media Luna**. Then we continued on a virgin terrain climbing few pitches up to 6c+ and passing **Three sisters towers**, as we named first three towers above Torre de la Media Luna. Than we made a 40m rappel, climbed another pitch back to ridge and continued on easier ridge (III – 5) for more than 500 meters, passing an obvious 30 meter high spire which we named **Torrisimo**. After another rappel we were at base of **Torre Pereyra**, which was climbed last year for the first time (but from west side). We climbed 300 meters to 6c+, in fine cracks and corners, to its summit and were only second party on it. Than we traversed for another 100 meters down the ridge and after a short rappel we were on Col of Hope meeting climbers who already climbed Cerro Torre. We were climbing for about 11 hours already. We drank a bit, left some cams there and immediately (at 5pm) started with **Compressor route** (6b, A1+, 65°, 900m). We were fast on the first wet pitch, but then conditions worsened there was more and more verglas, snow and ice in route, forcing us to climb in boots and crampons. We enjoyed the last sunlight on the monumental bolt traverse. We continued through the night and climbed some tricky, mixed ice pitches. After passing the Ice Towers, freezing stormy winds slowed our tempo. We enjoyed first sunlight at the base of headwall. At 10.30 am we stood on summit of Cerro Torre on a sunny, almost cloudless day, with a wonderful view. We climbed our line in 28 hours of nonstop climbing, making about 1700 altitude meters and climbing much more than 3 kilometers of rock and ice. Silvo summited Torre after 19 years, for the second time. We rappelled the route, which was now in very wet conditions and finished our roundtrip at 7pm in Norwegos. We waited for the girls, climbing also on Torre, and together we went straight to Chalten to celebrate our success.



But the weather got nice again and we had to move back to the mountains. On 6<sup>th</sup> of February Silvo and I moved with all necessary climbing equipment from Agostini to bivouac above Lago Sucia, with goal to make second ascent of **Italian route** (6c, A3, 1300m) in SE face of **Ag. Poincenot** (3002m) fast and light alpine style and as much as possible free. The route was climbed by numerous Italian expedition 19 years ago, in two years of attempts, with fixed lines from bottom to top of the ramp. Checking the topo of the route, with many pitches A1, or 6a A1, we thought those would probably go free and fast, so we were planning for one day of marathon or maximum day and half of climbing. On the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> of February we crossed a very dangerous glacier to the base of Poincenot's S wall. We started by climbing the first few easy pitches, not earlier than 9am. When we came to ledge below the first aid pitch we only stare in smooth, vertical and overhanging wall with only few features, which loomed more than 400 meters above us. We were lucky Italians left bunch of pitons, some aiders and also bolting kits and lots of fixed rope on the ledge. We took some rusty aiders (we didn't have ours because we thought we wouldn't aid a lot) and some pitons. Half of the next 10 pitches, which we climbed into the night, were thin cracks, flakes and slabs, which required technically not hard, but time consuming nailing and aid climbing. The other half of the pitches were awesome free climbing (to 6c) on huge flakes and in some corners. We reached a quite good ledge for a bivouac just before dark. Next day we climbed the last aid pitch and continued on easier terrain, free climbing to 6c for about 450m to join the classic Irish route and continued on it for another 350 m to the summit of Ag. Poincenot. We reached it at 3pm. We had done 2nd ascent of this elegant but quite hard route and first integral ascent (the Italians didn't climb to the summit). I think many of the aid pitches can not be free climbed. We rappelled the route and through the night happily crossed the glacier to the Sucia bivouac.

With this, my forth summit in the bag, I finished my three amazingly intensive and successful weeks of climbing in Patagonia. My annual holidays were over and I had to fly back home and go to my job. But I will always remember my first trip to sunny Patagonia!

Written by Andrej Grmovsek, Slovenia