



## The North Tower of Paine

Climbing in Patagonia is legendary. It is a place of epic proportions with stories of great difficulty and hard technical climbing amidst some of the worst weather in the world. Anyone's climbing resume will jump impressively with an ascent of any of these routes. But not every climb here has to be teetering on the knife edge between success and disaster. We have climbed here enough to get to know the weather patterns and how to play the timing and when to push and when not too. Experience does count in this, the "Home of the Wind."

The North Tower is a double summited peak with the south summit being the higher. It was the first of the three towers to be climbed in 1958 by the Italian expedition led by Guido Monzino.

The weather can be bad and the winds can often top over one hundred miles an hour. But when the weather allows climbing all of that is suddenly forgotten and the experience of climbing amidst the worlds finest mountains will never forgotten by the climber who is a true alpinist at heart. There is absolutely nothing that can compare with feeling the rough granite under one's fingers and the rare blue sky days of Patagonia while ascending one of the world's great alpine rock climbs.

### **Itinerary**

This trip outline is our ideal plan. But Patagonia has a habit of sweeping all of our best laid plans away in the wind so be adaptable and be prepared to take whatever comes. This is all part of the alpine experience. There are no guarantees here but we will be doing our utmost to succeed.

Day 0 Arrive in Punta Arenas, a small town at the southern tip of Chile and the capital of the Magallanes Province.

Punta Arenas lies on the Straits of Magellan and has most of the amenities we need to equip ourselves for the mountains.

Day 1 Travel to Torres del Paine National Park. This is a three to four hour trip via private transportation. We will have time to sightsee and to visit the fishing town of Puerto Natales. We hope to arrive in time to meet our horses and to travel to the hut in the lower Ascensio Valley.

Day 2 We will carry a load of equipment up to our basecamp at the "Japanese camp" at the last trees in the valley.

Day 3 Move everything up to the basecamp and set up home for the next ten days.

Day 4 Start to move essential equipment up to the base of the towers. It was up here that the original British expedition to the Central Tower in 1963 established their camp and where Don Whillans developed his prototype "Whillans Box" to deal with the extreme winds.

Day 5 Move to Camp 3, only if not windy.

Day 6 Climb to the Col Bich between the North and the Central Towers. This is one of the most impressive places you will ever be with vast granite walls all around and views out onto the Southern Patagonian Icecap. We will fix ropes to enable multiple summit attempts and for a quick return.

Days 7-12 We hope for a good day to climb to the summit and back down. The climbing will be a mix of aid climbing and up to 5.9/10 free climbing.

Day 13 Return to the hut in the Ascensio Valley

Day 14 We meet our arrieros and their horses and return to the roadhead and meet our driver later in the day to return to Punta Arenas and celebrate (or drown our sorrows) with fine Chilean food and wine.

### **Prerequisites**

It will be ideal if you have done an SMC trip previously. This will involve climbing at up to 5.10 in rock shoes with a light pack. You need to be comfortable ascending fixed ropes. Speed is all important and if possible we would like to arrange a climb here in the USA prior to leaving to make sure that you have all of your systems down before putting them to use on this major undertaking.

**Dates and Prices:** Check the brochure and web site. Should minimum participant numbers not be reached you will be given the option of paying our private rate, rescheduling, or cancelling. Price includes guiding, permits, horses and mules for transportation of equipment, camping fees, park entry fees, hotels in Punta Arenas, local transportation, all necessary group climbing gear, tents, kitchen gear and food in the mountains. It does not include in town restaurant meals or transportation to Punta Arenas, personal equipment and gratuities.

If these dates do not fit into your plans please call us to arrange a private trip at dates of your convenience.

**Ratios:** This is a major technical ascent and we need to keep ratios low. A maximum of two climbers to one guide.

# Equipment List for the North Tower of Paine

This list provides you with suggestions for lightweight, compact equipment. If you have any questions don't hesitate to call and ask our advice.

Weather in Patagonia can be bad, but not extremely cold. It is not as far south as you might think, at latitude 50, the same as the US/Canada border. So take what you might for a Cascades trip or a Sierra trip in cold, wet windy weather!!!

## **Essentials**

- Internal frame backpack of about 3-4000 cubic inches
- Duffle bag for putting things into for mule transportation
- Sleeping bag. This should be rated to about 25°F. If it bulky put it in a compression stuff sac
- Sleeping pad system. A Ridgerest pad and a Thermarest works best. Bring a Thermarest repair kit.

## **Hiking Essentials**

- Poles, telescoping probe type are best.
- Hiking boots. A lightweight pair with good ankle support is needed. Do not use too light a pair since there will be rough off trail hiking.
- Hiking clothing, shorts and long sleeve shirts.
- Small daypack for day hiking.

## **Climbing Essentials**

- Mountaineering boots. Temperatures are not extreme but the boots must be warm enough. A lightweight pair of plastics or good leather boots is appropriate.
- Ice axe. A general purpose 70cm axe or so.
- Ice hammer. Not essential, but if you have one bring it since it might open up some other climbing opportunities.
- Crampons. An all round mountaineering type rather than a rigid technical crampons that "balls up" is preferable.
- Harness. Harness\*. An adjustable leg loop type such as the Black Diamond Bod or Wild Things Expresso will accommodate layering changes.
- Climbing helmet.
- Belay/rappell device
- Four locking carabiners
- Four regular carabiners
- Rock Shoes. These must be comfortable and we recommend the specialized insulated rock shoes made by Boreal and La Sportiva.

## **Clothing**

- 4 pair synthetic liner socks
- 4 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Gaiters for both climbing and hiking
- Long underwear top and bottom. 2 pairs. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable
- Warm pants. Tights or expedition weight Capilene
- Warm shirt. Expedition Capilene or light Synchilla
- Another fuzzy sweater top such as synchilla
- Pile jacket
- Pile pants or bibs. 200-300 weight.
- Light down jacket; synthetic fill is second choice.
- Best quality Gore-tex rain/wind pants and rain jacket.
- Warm hat

- Balaclava; silk and/or pile
- Visor hat (for sun)
- Bandanna for something for facial and neck sun protection
- Liner gloves 2 pair for one set gets wet
- Shell gloves

## **Etc.**

- Sunglasses, high quality with keeper leash. The type with side shields are recommended. If you wear corrective glasses you might want a second pair.
- Headlamp. With a spare set of batteries.
- Goggles for bad conditions
- Ear plugs for noisy tents
- Personal kit; tooth brush...
- Sunscreen and lip screen. SPF 30+. Make sure the lip stuff
- Waterbottles. At least 2 one quart bottles with wide mouths.
- Eating equipment; bowl, cup, spoon, fork.
- Pocket knife. Swiss army style.
- Personal Medical Kit. The guide will carry a large kit so yours will predominately consist of foot repair items, mild pain killer such as Advil, and bandaids.
- Reading material, cards, games etc.
- Camera. Bring film and a spare battery to record those summit moments.
- Personal toiletries. It is not necessary to smell like a rose each day so do not over do it.
- Passport
- A secure passport/money pouch. Waist one are the best.
- "Around town" clothing that can be left at the hotel. Does not have to be formal wear, but something other than jeans and t-shirts since we will eat out at some good restaurants.
- Pee Bottle. Beats getting out of the tent late at night!!

## **Food**

- We will buy the main food items there, but will bring some items from the USA. We will provide breakfast, dinner and lunch but bring some snack items like cliff bars, power bars, gorp concoctions. A days worth for most people would be 2 bars, 3 ounces of gorp, and perhaps a candy bar. Don't over do it.

## **Shared Equipment Provided by SMC**

- Shelter. We will provide lightweight, storm worthy tents. If you have your favorite, by all means bring it, but we do want to pair people up where possible to reduce weight.
- Cooking equipment and kitchen
- Ropes
- Climbing hardware
- Water purification.
- Group first aid kit.