

Exploration of Cordón Riso Patrón and first ascent on Cerro Buracchio

The mountain range Cordón Riso Patrón is located on the western edge of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field and is one of the remotest areas of Chile. In austral winter 2014 our team reached the area traversing the ice field from east to west via ski and explored successfully the Cordón. In addition to several first ascents of slightly lower peaks we climbed the highest and virgin summit of Cerro Buracchio (2767 m) by a new alpine style route, “Ruido Blanco” (70-80° / TD-, 650 m):

The mountain range Riso Patrón is dominated by two mystic and rarely seen mountains. The first one, Cerro Riso Patrón has seen only one ascent in 1988 when a strong Italian team approached the summit from Fiordo Falcón and Casimiro Ferrari reached the summit by the south/southeast face in plain southern winter season. On the second impressive mountain, Cerro Buracchio, three ambitious attempts led by Camilo Rada failed due to bad weather conditions. During their best attempt in 2002 Rada and Maria Paz approached the summit up to a few meters when a fall of Rada and an incoming storm forced them to descend. Originally listed in several Chilean maps as Cerro 3018 the mountain was christened Peak Vanguard (Zen’ei-hou) by a Japanese expedition of Rokko Gakuin Alpine Club led by Hidetaro Sakagami in 1969. Because the Japanese name never became properly public Rada and his team suggested the name Cerro Buracchio in 2002, in honor of the Chilean alpinist Cristián Buracchio who died in a plane crash in 2001.

Starting in mid-August from El Chaltén our team had both mentioned mountains in its focus. After several days of strenuous gear shuttles we reached the Southern Ice Field via Paso del Viento. From there, we traversed the glacier skiing round Nunatak Viedma heading west to Paso Rokko. At that certain point, there were two options for reaching Cerro Riso Patrón. The southern route leads southwestward descending an unknown and awful looking icefall. The northern alternative crosses Paso Rokko heading westward to the eastern summit of Cerro Burrachio. In the South of it a lower pass (in the following called Paso Buracchio) steeply sloping to the west leads to the huge plateau below the south face of Cerro Buracchio. An unknown corniced ridge descends westwards likely accessing the north face of Cerro Riso Patrón. Due to the outstanding weather forecast, the provided GPS track of Camilo Rada and the unexpectedly long approach to our current location we took the northern route, set up a food depot for the return and reached the base of Cerro Buracchio on 24th of August. The next day we explored the plateau and nearby hills with breathtaking views to Cerro Riso Patrón (see fig. 2 route B).

After having installed a fixed rope over the difficult bergschrund the day before, on 26th three of us (Paul Sass, Uwe Seifert and Robert Koschitzki) ascended the slopes from the base camp to the bergschrund by ski again. Leaving the skis at the bottom of the wall, we started climbing the steep south side (70-80°) of Cerro Buracchio at 8:30 am. The excellent weather changed before noon and it was snowing the rest of the day. After 12 pitches we reached the wind exposed southwest corner in whiteout conditions without any view of the onward route. Traversing to the downwind south face, we fortunately found a system of ice gullies leading through the headwall. Two pitches later, at 6:30 pm we got to the top of Cerro Buracchio (2767 m, S49°31.614' W73°36.999') after 650 m of ice climbing. Descending our route we reached the bergschrund around 2:30 am. Due to the heavy snow fall during the day and the steepness of the wall the ski deposit was completely covered with snow and a snow slab was released on the lower slopes. Exhausted from the tiring climb and due to orientation problems by night we quit the search for our skis after an hour. At 3:30 am, we arrived at the base camp where Franz welcomed us with a hot meal. The next day was dedicated to the ski rescue which we found buried under 2.5 m of fresh snow. Without ski it would have been an interesting walk back home.

After recovering our strengths the food had shrunken to three days for reaching the food depot on the other side of Paso Buracchio. Due to the missing time and the worsen weather forecast we had to

gave up our plan to attempt Cerro Riso Patrón. Instead, we decided to explore the unknown summits in the range southerly of Cerro Buracchio. On 28th of August, three of us (Paul, Franz, Robert) climbed a small tooth-like peak belaying two pitches in mushroom ice (see fig. 2 route C), on whose top I lost parts of my incisors due to a confrontation with a dead man. Next day Paul and I traversed the adjacent peaks in the east (route D). Once climbed the gentle slopes to the first peak we could follow the ridge line without mentionable differences in height. Only a two pitches climb of a fragile ice gully in the valley side of an inconspicuous elevation required climbing skills. Due to the bad weather at the late afternoon we were forced to descend to the east and returned to the base camp by night.

On August 30th, we left the base camp, climbed Paso Buracchio on a fixed rope, and hauled up the sledges. Taking advantage of the good weather we explored the eastern part of Cordón Riso Patrón. Apart from a couple of minor summits southeast of Paso Buracchio we (Franz, Robert and Uwe) could climb a peak likely to be the highest one in the southern range (see fig. 2 route E and F). Due to the scarce time we were not able to follow the long and weakly ascending and descending ridge completely, but ascended its most prominent peak (2746 m, S49°32.417' W73°34.374'). On our way back to civilization we made a side trip to Cordón Mariano Moreno ascending a snowy peak of the Gemelos Blancos by ski. Returning to the ski deposit approx. 150 m below the summit we could ski down the west face finding powder conditions. Regarding to our way back to Chaltén via Paso Marconi we propose the name Cerro Regreso (2695 m, S49°27.127' W73°27.304') to the unnamed and unclimbed peak which offers an incredible view to Cordón Riso Patrón to the west and to Cerro Torre and Fitz Roy to the east.

Back home we had time for research in terms of the mentioned peaks south of Cerro Buracchio. As far as we know, the only expedition exploring that mountain range was the Japanese team of 1969 crossing the Southern Ice Field from Fiordo Exmouth in the North to Estancia Cristina in the South. They numbered the summits of Cordón Riso Pastrón in ascending order starting from east to west (P1-6). Based on the mail contact to Shuji Iwata who joined that expedition we figured out that our team did the second ascent of P6 (first ascent by K. Matsunaga and H. Maekawa, 16.02.1969) and first ascended the peaks P4 and P5.



Figure 1: Cerro Buracchio (south face) with route "Ruido Blanco" (source: Robert Koschitzki)

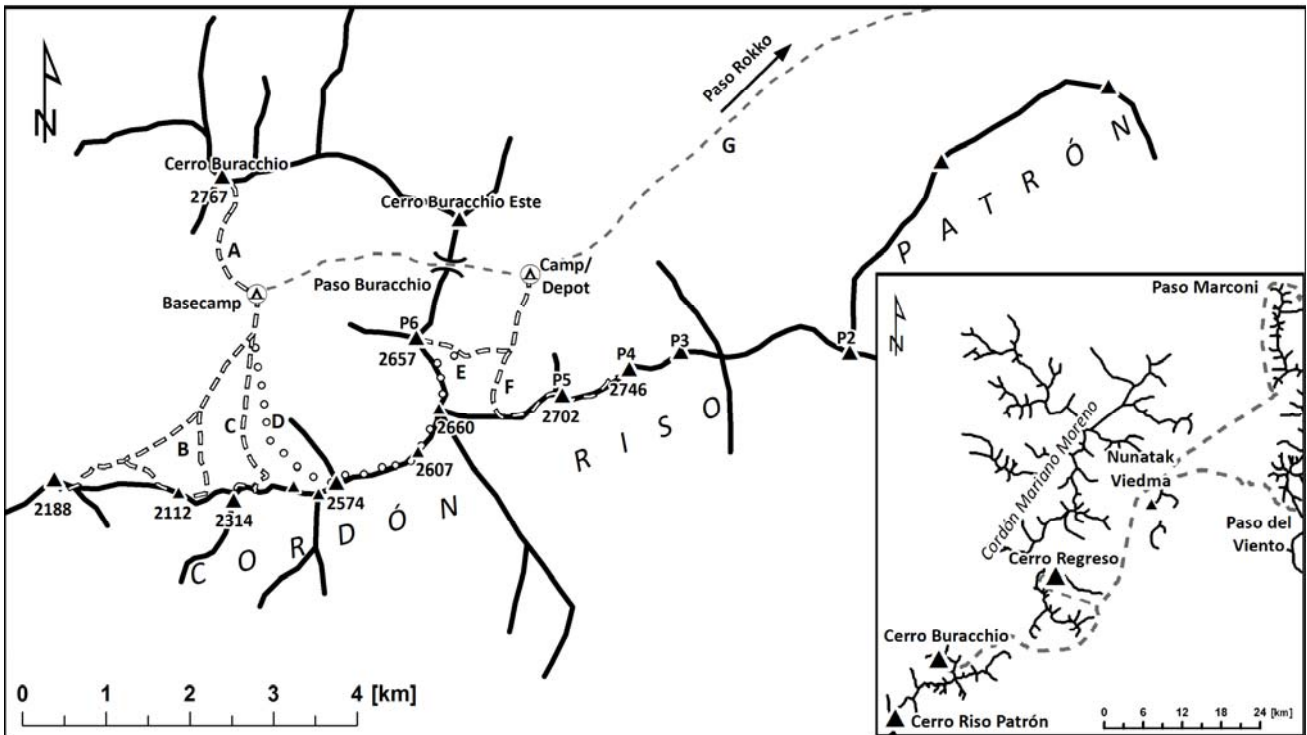


Figure 2: Ridge line map of northern Cordón Riso Patrón (source: Franz Goerlich based on SRTM data)