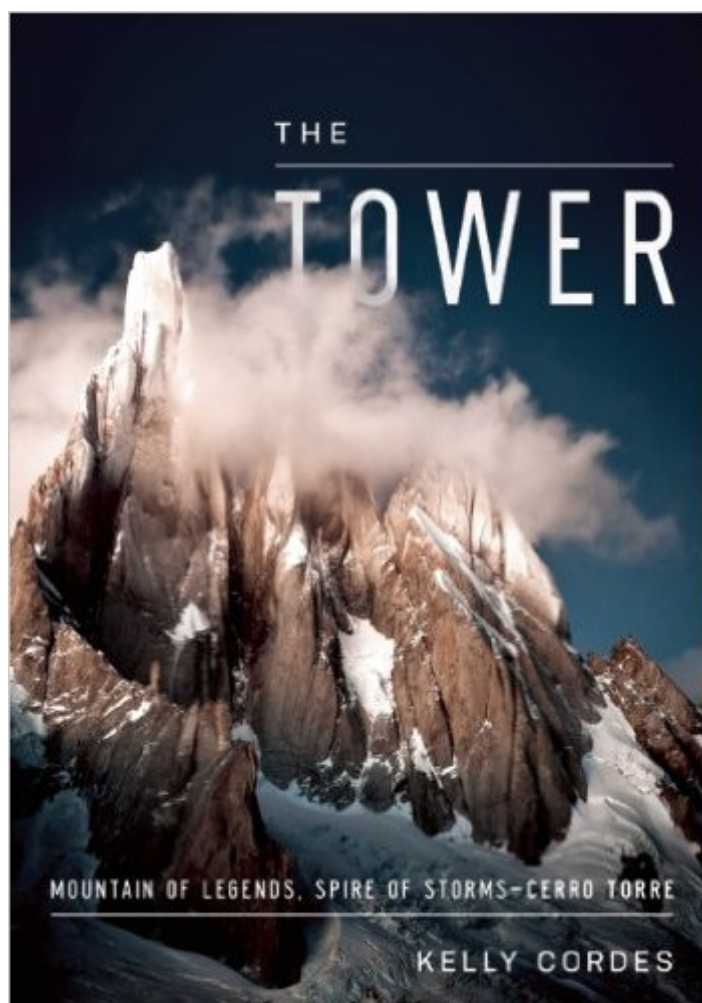


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The Tower: A Chronicle Of Climbing And Controversy On Cerro Torre



Synopsis

Patagonia's Cerro Torre, considered by many the most beautiful peak in the world, draws the finest and most devoted technical alpinists to its climbing challenges. But controversy has swirled around this ice-capped peak since Cesare Maestri claimed first ascent in 1959. Since then a debate has raged, with world-class climbers attempting to retrace his route but finding only contradictions. This chronicle of hubris, heroism, controversies and epic journeys offers a glimpse into the human condition, and why some pursue extreme endeavors that at face value have no worth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At its surface, this book chronicles the climbing history of Cerro Torre, in Patagonia. This is an elite-level mountain, known both for its big wall rock and its ferocious and unpredictable weather. Cordes has the climbing skills to tell this story, having climbed Cerro Torre and many other world-class peaks. In addition to a serviceable collection of maps and a glossary of climbing terms, the book has an abundance of photographs. The color plates are glorious, while black-and-white photos in the text provide documentary support to the text. Much of the book concerns two controversies, both connected with Cesare Maestri. Maestri has the first claimed ascent of Cerro Torre, in 1959, in a climb that claimed the life of his partner, Toni Egger. Some doubted Maestri's claims at the time, and subsequent evidence has made them increasingly dubious. Maestri returned to Cerro Torre in 1970, when he used a gas-powered air compressor to drill 400 bolts in the Southeast Ridge. This Compressor Route is out of step with modern climbing aesthetics; Hayden Kennedy and Jason Kruk removed 120 of Maestri's bolts after making the first fair

means ascent of the Southeast Ridge. In addition to climbing narratives, the book tells of Cordes's research into the history of Cerro Torre. Some chapters tell stories of his interviews in Italy and Argentina, mostly interesting, but one simply documents that Cordes has met Reinhold Messner. The book gets off to a somewhat disorganized start, but then settles mostly into a straightforward chronology in its 36 short chapters. It could have used a stronger editorial hand, perhaps combining the scattered accounts of his research into a single Part, for example.

Just finished Cordes' book "The Tower" which explores the controversial historical tale of the first ascent on what is unarguably one of the most awe-inspiring and captivating mountain peaks in the world, Cerro Torre (one of those sharp, steep peaks that you see in the Patagonia clothing logo). If you love non-fictional, historical, adventure writing, you will really enjoy diving into this quick reading page turner. This book should be on your bookshelf alongside *Into Thin Air*, *Eiger Dreams*, *Touching the Void*, and *Annapurna*, if you enjoy reading tales of adventure and intrigue in the mountains. The former senior editor of the *American Alpine Journal*, Cordes explores the claims, personalities, fact based evidence, and the controversy of the first ascent of what was once thought to be unclimbable mountain, a peak that Messner calls "A shriek turned to stone." This book is a damning academic take-down conducted by a scholar of mountaineering history that unequivocally and systematically, recounts the history of the mountain and debunks the audacious assertions of a man, his partner, and an entire community of people who choose to believe in blind faith. Cordes visits the places, the people, and pitons by retelling the stories of the climbers who were there. Cordes weaves his experiences as a mountaineer, personal interviews with climbing legends (Messner, Garibotti, Donni, Haley Wharton, etc) and extensive research to craft a masterful exploration of the history of Cesare Maestri's unbelievable assertions and actions (both in '59 & '70). Alternating between the author's internal rhetorical monologues and recounting of various ascents of the mountain, he poses challenging and provoking thought exercises.

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