

IN THE NAME OF WILD

by

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Pipa @ Mountainside / Chaltén [2019 01]

01:07 PIPA: All here there are climbing routes. This is pretty high, it is 120 meters. We call that multi-pitch. Because you can make different stations. Now we're going away to a shorter one.

April: How long have you been climbing?

01:30 25 years probably.

02:45 Benji: Are there any mountains near Mar del Plata?

PIPA: Yes! Near Mar del Plata, where I am from, there are some mountains, and climbing: very good climbing.

03:12 Now we can see the Fitz Roy range and Torre behind, which is the little one here. The one with the mushroom on top, that's the hardest peak in the area, even if the Fitz Roy is higher, Torre is harder. It has an interesting climbing history.

April: Have you climbed it?

03:35 PIPA: Yes, I've climbed it. Two times a couple of years ago, 4 years ago.

April: Why did you climb it?

PIPA: [Laughter] I don't know. There is no answer for that. [pause] Why not? Yeah.

April: How long did it take you to climb?

04:05 PIPA: Well, it depends which side you climb. This is the east side but behind is the west side, which is actually a great adventure actually to get there because you need to look at the range to get to the ice field so that takes like two/three days to approach, then climbing, then coming back the same way. And then you need good weather window for that.

04:44 One time I climbed it I needed a traverse over all this range, like climbing and un-climbing a peak behind this one. Climb all the white peaks in the background and then Torre. So it was something different. All the range.

April: Have you climbed Fitz Roy as well?

05:08 Yeah. Fitz Roy is a bit easier, uh?

06:12 Just yesterday it was cold, the temperature lowered quite much. Now it raised a bit. It fluctuates a lot here. You can have snow in January, and be hot in the same month. Not humid at all, very dry.

07:42 Well stop around here.

April: And so how long have you lived in Chaltén?

08:11 PIPA: Now 13 years. About that.

April: And what made you come over here?

PIPA: Mountains!! [Laughter] Yeah! First time I got here I just came for a bike trip from North Patagonia down to Ushuaia. Just came into here and saw the peaks and said: I want to climb this one, one day.

08:38 And then I came back and I climbed it and then I stayed.

April: Has it changed a lot since you've lived here?

PIPA: Yeah!! Absolutely, yeah. It's more houses, more people living, more tourists coming, more climbers! It's pretty crowded right now. It began to become famous after some movies, you know, more information and a good guide book about climbing stuff. Yeah, and a lot of climbers. All overcoming here.

April: And I guess, do you get ... I made an observation, and there seems to be a lot of trekkers and climbers, and a lot of people here who are just to eat. Or just to enjoy the scenery. What do you think?

09:25 PIPA: No. More hikers I would say. There is not much to do for people that don't like to hike. I mean, sometimes they come but they stay a day and then they leave. But, yeah. I think that those people stay more in Calafate or even in some other places in Patagonia. So the ones that get here are more hikers or climbers, yeah.

April: How did you learn how to climb?

10:06 I took courses, like everything. First I started rock climbing. Because where I was born there are rocks, no ice at all. So I started rock climbing and then you climb a little bit you want to go higher. So I went up to somewhere in Patagonia to do a mountain, an easy one. Then I took an ice climbing course.

10:33 And then I started going higher, and then I started skiing.

Phil: What kind of mountains to you begin with?

PIPA: In Bariloche you have Lanín, which is the easy one.

Phil: That's the easy one? One side of Lanín.

PIPA: Yes, the normal route.

Benji: Because the other one is quite difficult, right?

10:54 PIPA: Sí! The South face is here in Argentina are the

hard ones to climb. All the North faces are easier. Then Tronador in Bariloche is another option. There are some big ones. Even here. If you want to start in mountaineering there are some options. Like this peak here, Eléctrico it's an easy one to start.

11:57 PIPA: Do you want to start? We can begin putting the gear on.

12:22 First we're going to put the harnesses on.

13:35 April: We have a friend who is an ice climber. We interviewed him for this project.

13:44 PIPA: Glaciar or waterfall ice?

April: Waterfall!!

15:06 Benji: How much is your feet size?

15:06 PIPA: 41... Depends on the type of climbing the shoe size you're going to use.

15:57 PIPA: Helmet on. It should match the size. It should be tight. You can adjust it. It shouldn't be extra tight because it can be uncomfortable.

16:56 April: Have you climbed other places in the world?

16:57 PIPA: I've been in Europe. All over the Alps: France, Austria, Italy, Germany. In the Dolomites. And then there is like a little town called Larco?, that is very famous for rock climbing.

April: Is it different climbing here than in those places?

17:21 PIPA: Like ... Technically speaking it's about the same. Here is there a lot less infrastructure so it is like the Alps a hundred years ago. So the approaches are very long. The forecast is not that reliable as in the Alps. So that makes for an interesting climbing here, more challenging. You also don't have either Fitz Roy, nor Torre in the Alps.

17:50 So these peaks are unique. Specially Torre. Like the West face is famous all over the world. Because it's all ice climbing, and like the strong winds that we have here make like mushroom-ice, tastes like lime-rice? It's very soft ice, so it is very hard to place anchors. The ice (croups)? came off so it's quite exposed to climb.

18:19 So you need to look for tunnels, that the wind makes into the ice actually. Somehow you are climbing inside a tunnel, which is crazy. Crazy landscape. And you go there, inside.

Phil: Two years ago for this project we were in the Dolomites. We were in Valgardena? I grew up in Italy and I

spent all my summers there.

18:57 So I probably have walked some of the trails you've been at. The rock there is very different than it is here. How do you feel about this rock, what is unique about this rock?

19:11 PIPA: There is a big difference between the rock that we have here that is volcanic and it's older, and the other one we have up there in Cerro Torre and Fitz Roy. That's granite. That's the rock that we are looking for climbing. This rock is kind of soft, so it's not the best rock we can find.

19:32 But for training or sport climbing it's good. And in Dolomites, the formations, the peaks, the needles are very nice but the rock is also soft. It breaks. It is quite exposed to climb there. But every rock is interesting. To climb different rocks is like climbing in different places. So the climbing itself is different. The places where you place your protection, I mean, how you feel about climbing there, how exposed you are is different. Every rock, every place is different.

20:14 Phil: When people normally go to mountains they use their eyes, sense of sight is everything for landscape. When you climb it's the sense of touch.

20:24 PIPA: Even in the States there's a place in Utah, called Fisher Towers, it is very soft rock. Even the anchors you place come off. It's super hard to climb that, but people like that, to get that feeling.

23:40 Well, generally speaking there are two different kinds of climb. We have here all that is set up, so this is called sport climbing, with anchors. It means that someone came before us, placed the bolts, and on top there are two that make a relay station. So it is quite safe in terms of safety.

24:05 But if we talk about climbing Fitz Roy the situation is completely different. We won't find any of these. So it is more like an adventure climbing and we need to place our own protection. So we use this kind of thing and we could track climbing. There are xxxx? and xxxx?, that you place in a crack and then they became stuck there and then if you push you can take them off and bring them back.

24:32 Of course this is not as solid as a bolt but it is what we use for climbing on Fitz Roy range. So alpine climbing with this stuff and sport climbing with this stuff here. ... There are two different types of climbing. When you start from the very bottom and you need to get to the top is called leading, it's what I am going to do right now.

25:00 So I need to go up, place some protection with these bolts, then get to the end and come back down. Once a rope is on the top, we are going to be climbing what we call top roping. So it means that there is no potential fall, because

the rope is already on top. So you will be climbing on one side and I will be belaying you on the other side. So top roping and leading. When you lead you can fall and if you fall you are going to fall a couple of meters but of course, all the material we use is prepared for that.

25:32 Like the ropes are dynamic so they are going to absorb the energy of a potential fall. So, once I set the rope above I need someone that breaks. That's what we call the belayer. So I need you to belay me.

26:11 So as belay device we are going to use this one. They're are different types. This is called ATC. So the idea is just to pass the rope through and by making friction you're gonna stop me eventually if I fall. So we use the ATC, a karabiner, and we are going to connect this to your harness.

26:35 So basically, you are going to use one hand on the breaking side, and one hand on the climbers side. And there are two situations: when you need to give slack and when you need to take slack. So let's practice that.

28:48 Now I am going to get to the top and I need the rope to be tight and you lower me down, little by little.

30:23 If the angle between you and the wall is bigger, if I fall, *[pack]* I can bring you against the wall.

30:50 You have to let the rope loose when I go up so I can move freely. More rope.

33:49 Take! [...] So I can come down.

36:46 *[Shoe trying]*

37:12 The hardest part is trusting in all the material, because it's all about that. When you need to hang over and I need to bring you down, that can be a little frightening.

April: We did some indoor climbing wall once.

37:40 PIPA: But with rope or just wall.

April: So maybe you remember a little bit.

PIPA: Right now try to focus more on your feet. Where you put your feet.

38:28 We also use this, which is chalk. We put this back behind in case your hands are sweaty.

40:17 Follow the rope and un-clip once you get to each point.

41:00 You will always be secured to the rope so if you fall it will not be a big fall for you.

41:29 Kudos *[Autumn]*!

42:47 Untie!

45:19 Right hand! Yes!

48:18 Be careful with those plants. They are spiky.

April: So when you're climbing, do you put your hand to the spot where you want to move your legs next?

49:14 Pipa: Depending on the wall and how steep the wall is, is the technique you're going to use. These kind of walls are vertical or even like it's a positive slope. You want to move your feet first. So feet, two or three steps and then hands. If it's overhanging it is difficult, it's different. You need to reach with your arms, and you need arm push. But,

49:43 This kind of wall is all on your feet.

50:03 Let's see Benji now.

50:55 No socks on. Be careful with the insect, it's a tábano. The shoe should be very tight, toes cramped.

53:01 When you reach the end, to the express, you un-clip the rope.

55:45 Make a deep breath and relax.

57:56 Another breath and check for options, you can reach with your feet.

59:34 Hardest part all done!!

1:00:29 Now you can release the rope from the clip. And come down.

1:01:17 Now you can come down, I'll do that slowly. No hands! Only feet.

1:02:03 Just hang from the harness. Trust!! And lift your feet flat against the wall, walking.

1:03:20 Hurray!!

Autumn up!

1:04:18 The shoes are only for when you're going upwards. Otherwise they're so tight you just remove them. [Moving on to other angle of the rock].

1:06:26 It's important to breathe. Most routes have ideal places to rest, and then go on.

1:10:05 Handholds there! [To Autumn] Match your hands. Good!! Just relax!

1:13:27 Well done!! You can come down now. A: Drop? P:

Yes! Walking

1:16:23 Claps!!!

1:17:23 (Pipa cleans the 1st path to build the 2nd one)

1:21:18 (Coming back down)

1:24:22 Benji 2nd time up (preparation).

1:25:57 PIPA: Use the flat part of shoe to smear against the wall.

1:26:58 Short steps and hips away from the wall, that way you create friction.

1:28:07 All these wall have rating. The first one was 4+, and this one is 5+.

April: How high does the rating go?

PIPA: We use the French scale: 9C. It changes all the time.

1:28:30 Two years ago it used to be 9B. So now it's a bit harder.

April: What makes them higher? What changes, type of rock...?

PIPA: Type of handholds you have. How negative the wall is. How long the wall is.

Phil: So if it's a French scale, it depends how much fun you have on top. [Laughter]

1:29:02 (Benji ready to go up 2nd time).

1:29:27 April: Benja has Pearl Jam on his back now!! (where the chalk is)

1:33:15 PIPA: Few places for hands. Lift your legs quite a bit. And place them wide open.

1:36:11 Adherence step there. 1:38:07 Esa!! 1:38:35 Breath! And finish.

1:39:02 Just another try!! Then it gets easy.

1:40:55 Buena!! Just a short distance. Phil: You're getting paid! Benji: Enjoying it!! [Laughs]

1:41:39 Listo!! Joya!! Just hang.

1:45:11 Benji celebrates getting back down and tired.

1:43:19 Where are you running the project? Besides here in Patagonia.

April: Belize, Tazmania, New Zealand, Dolomites, Galapagos,

Japan, Okasara Islanda, all the sites in Canada, one more to go. And then after here to Island, and most likely Vietnam, and two sites in Africa. Maybe Tanzania. And Madagascar. Depending on the political climate. Five year project, three and a half years into it now.

1:45:30 (Autumn up again 2nd time!) 1:49:12 PIPA: Nice!!

1:50:01 I studied under a Bachelor in Environment Management, and I liked sociology and anthropology. In Tandil, at UNICEN.

1:52:26 Yes!! Excellent!!!

1:55:17 [Today I am going to a needle (aguja) called Aguja Guillaumet, in the range of Fitz Roy.]

[Pipa goes up to get the rope out of the clips] [Talks of substitution techniques] [It's 11:30]

12:45 Benji: What does ``the wild`` mean to you?

13:11 PIPA: I think that the wild (savage/salvaje), considering mountain activities, is what describes Patagonia. In some way Patagonia still is wild (savage/salvaje) in the sense that there is still very little information about what one would like do, and climbing in Patagonia is rebuilding what climbing involved from a long time ago: a lot of research on the target,

13:38 the climate conditions, which are very variable, information on the routes, information on the access that have a lot of variation. In that sense Patagonia involves the wild (savage/salvaje) of climbing, with a certain degree of accessibility, because they are still some places that are more wild (savage/salvaje) in Antarctica, but Patagonia has a nearby town, it's easy to get over,

14:02 but the climbing up there is still wild (savage/salvaje).

Benji: Regarding Patagonia, you've given some attributes, and yet Patagonia seems to be somewhat unknown inside Argentina, and people from abroad have impressions. How would you present Patagonia to a local and foreign public?

14:28 PIPA: I believe that foreigners have more knowledge about what Patagonia is than Argentines. For Argentineans, Patagonia has been represented by the area of Bariloche, that is, North Patagonia. Little by little Argentines are getting to know this part of Patagonia. And regardless of the most well known spots like Chalt  n, Calafate, Ushuaia, there is a lot of parts that are totally wild (savage/salvaje).

15:02 There is all to be discovered. All to be done. Actually over here, in terms of climbing, there are still mountains that don't have names because they haven't been climbed, simply two days of walking distance away. If you would try to find such a situation in other parts of the world it would imply a much larger effort.

15:26 April: Could he introduce himself, who he is, what he does?

Benji: Name, job, could you also explain your influences to come over here, whatever that may imply, from your childhood up to how it developed, and how it changed for you to end up living here.

16:05 PIPA: My name is Juan Manuel Raselli, they call me Pipa. I wasn't born in Patagonia. I was born in Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires Province. I think my first contact with nature was there, with my parents, not actually climbing but in the fact of going out to the mountain, or to the beach and do camping in places that had some wild into it.

16:34 And I believe that it then where the sense of adventure was born. And climbing always represented that: adventure. So I began rock climbing, then I started to going higher into the mountains, to travel to that. To do some ice climbing, to undertake courses, and try to get a solid preparation in that, and then I tried to link that, the sports-side, up to a way of life and being able to create some income with that.

17:01 and being able to be in permanent contact with nature. And I started working in the mountain, then I began to prepare as a guide and I believe that's the way I ended up in Patagonia. Because I began to come as a sports person, wanting to climb these mountains, and then to work on them. And now I believe that my sport aims are complete but I have other aims as a guide: to take other people to learn about places over here.

17:33 And they're not very easily accessible. And trying to go over there in a safe way. So, that's why I got prepared as a guide, and I got the complete level guide [GM International], which also gave me the chance to travel to other places in the world.

Phil: Do you normally teach children to climb? How often?

17:58 PIPA: It is not very common to have children. It is more common to have families who introduce their children to climbing, and that I did have. Locally, in Chaltén, theres a climbing school for children, and from kindergarten they go out to the mountain. The teachers take them over to walk, they recognize the climbing places, they know the climbing places' names and the routes' names.

18:33 And I believe that this will change in the next generation. It didn't happen to my generation, but I believe that in the next one there's going to be a very good basis of children with a relationship with the mountain.

Phil: Is it good for children today to learn how to be outdoors and how to climb?

18:53 PIPA: [Laughter] Yes, I absolutely believe that. It's another way to live, relating to the mountain since you're a child. And all of these challenges that the mountain puts onto you at any level, from being able to go through a route up to planning a trip, or an ascension. There's the trick.

19:21 Phil: If there is one lesson that mountains of the world have taught you, what is it?

19:32 PIPA: I believe that it would be to live simple. I believe that in the mountains everything reduces to that. All is so simple that at the same time it can become complicated, because we're so used to complicating things that when we have the simple answer we refuse to accept it. But I think that when you're in the mountain, even more so in hard situations, in which I've been, of life or death: survival and simplicity.

20:01 April: Earlier, before climbing you explained a difference between sport climbing and alpine climbing. Would you like to elaborate more?

20:10 PIPA: I like everything. I learned to live with all mountain' specialties, from skiing, to climbing. I believe that all is so specific that they're children that would only do sport climbing and they find it hard to go to the mountain for a walk, because they have the sport climbing very very easy, by car. But the essence of the mountaineer is in everything, in being able to combine all the activities.

20:45 April: What is your most memorable climb through Patagonia? More challenging, or a story about it?

20:58 PIPA: I believe that the climbing that brings the most memories is the one from Cerro Torre, which I did a couple of times, but when I went through the West Side making a crossing that has not yet been repeated, and climbing a mountain that had not been approached before, it was several days, and I could share the moment with my brother and a friend, that was my biggest challenge and the one that gave me the highest satisfaction. 21:25 Sometimes, in climbing the satisfaction doesn't come from the difficulty level but rather in something that actually represents something important to yourself. And I believe that that climb combined the both things.

21:35 Benji: Do you feel, emotionally, anything different about going with someone as close as a brother? More risky ...? More positive in some sense ...

21:44 PIPA: No. I believe that the important point is to choose your climbing partner and being able to know him completely, not only in a technical aspect. But rather all the emotional side, and how to react right there when your up there. But you can also get that with a friend, a fellow climber, with whom you share a lot of time climbing together.

22:10 It doesn't have to be your brother. Obviously, I think it's easier and perhaps more gratifying, but I have had very good feelings with friends, while climbing.

Chalten / Pipa

Calafate / Pedro Svarka

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