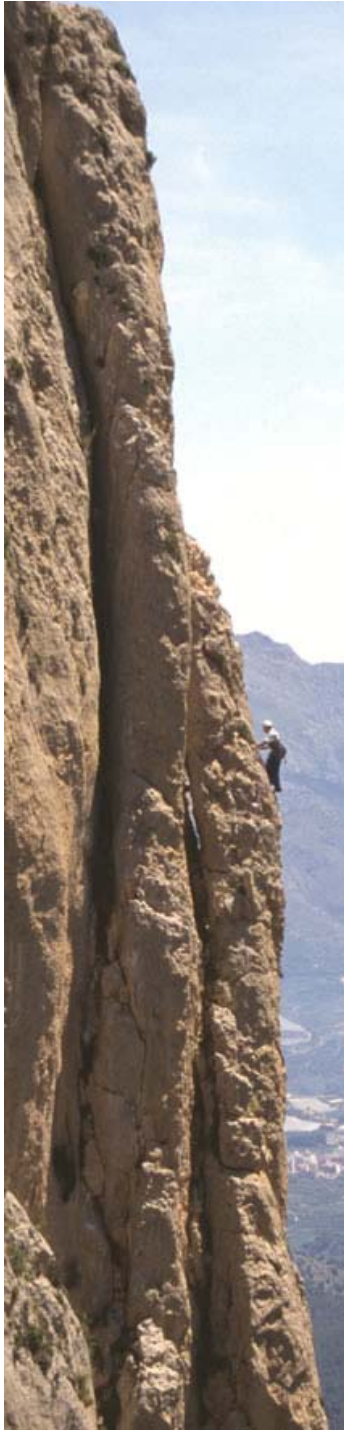


Cynical Pinnacle

Aguja De Pilar - Penya Roc



I knew it was there, for years I had walked below it when walking up to La Capella and the Echo Placa. It had always been at the back of my mind after completing the first ascent of La Cathedral. It had always looked small but interesting until one day my curiosity got the better of me. What had caught my attention for so long had been an obviously detached pillar of rock resting against the main face. It seems, from below, to be completely detached and obviously loose. The day finally came when I actually made the effort to have a closer look. Living here in the Costa Blanca there is so much unclimbed rock that one tends to push to one side so many fantastic areas to visit. You eventually get round to visiting them and then find that you had dismissed a truly magnificent area, and Aguja de Pilar really fits this description. A mirror image of The Haunted Walls, steep, spectacular, filled with natural lines with a feeling of remoteness, but with climbing that is easier and a walk off even simpler, what more could one ask? The approach for this wall is the same as for Haunted Walls but one continues on a further 0.5 Km to the next col. From this col the face suddenly 'hits you between the eyes' as you realise the true dimensions of the detached pillar, it really is impressive.

The actual climb, which I did with a private client as a guide, came out even far better than I could ever have wished. The most outstanding feature of this wall is the large needle (aguja) of rock, half way up, leaning against the face. It looks grotesquely detached and loose. It's certainly detached but is so large that climbing on its outside face, as Cynical Pinnacle does, you forget completely that you are climbing on a pinnacle,

The approach from the col is also unique for a mountain route in that you have to abseil down the gully to reach the base of the wall. You can approach from below but the work and pain involved, from the spiky vegetation, makes the abseil approach a much better alternative. The first pitch, 30m. E1.5b. had in fact been climbed before. Three bolts and a number of poor pegs (removed for safety reasons) was evidence that someone had been here previously. This happens in many of these remote areas. Spanish climbers are far more adventurous than most visiting climbers give them credit for. Traditional classic adventure climbing is alive and kicking in Spain. The bolts and pegs were very old, demonstrated by the use of poor pegs in places where good natural gear could be used. This first pitch is pure classic E1 5b, which leads to a good ledge with bolt belays. The next pitch takes a faint groove just to the right of the belay, the original older route goes further round to the right and cut back up again using a number of poor pegs (I suspect as aid) to reach the same belay. In keeping with the first pitch this groove has some good climbing. The next pitch, taking the front of the pillar, is the longest and most spectacular. You follow the original route right for a while, up to the base of the big groove formed by the right hand side of the pillar, this groove is taken direct by the original route. C/P now makes a dramatic swing left onto the front of the pillar itself, looking much more like a wall than a detached piece of rock. A crack now leads directly up the centre of the pillar. Keeping in this line, and resisting the urge to traverse into the chimney on the left, you end up at a surprisingly good and spectacular ledge and belays. You now start to get the feeling that you are indeed on top of a slender and detached piece of rock, the views from here are superb.

The next pitch 4b A1, is pure Dolomite or alpine climbing. You climb to the very top of the Aguja, steadying your nerves, you reach up to an in situ bolt high up on the steep wall. Using this, and the one above for aid, you make a long move left onto the arête which allows you to climb higher more easily to another spectacular belay and a chance to take in all the magnificent views. Another enjoyable 25m, 4a pitch leads to a ledge just below the top of the crag from which a further short scramble reaches the top. It's now just a simple walk back to your sack. You can be sure that few climbers will resist the chance of taking a picture of route they have just climbed. An easy walk back below the Pleasure Domes,

(more about these in the future) leads back to the car.

The whole of this wall coupled with The Haunted walls this area has something for every one who enjoys wilderness climbing and must represent some of the best climbing of its type to be found in Spain.

What other climbs are there on Aguja Del Pilar?

Describing the routes from the base of the wall, and the lowest point in the gully are:

(5). La Espada. 163m. 6a. & A1. E2. (5b+. & A1. E2. UK.) Perhaps not as dramatic as C/P but with climbing which is just that little bit harder. This climb also has an aid section at the top.

(4). Carretera Del Angels. 171m. 6a. E1. (5b.E1.UK). Using the same start as Cynical Pinnacle and The un-named Original Route. This route has a superb third pitch with face climbing up an improbable looking wall.

(3). The Original route. Name unknown. 6a. E1. (5b. E1 Uk). A real classic.

(2).Cynical Pinnacle. 175m 6a. & A1. E1. (5b.& A1 E1 UK.) A superb climb which will soon become a classic.

(1). Rise of the Phoenix. 152m V. Adv V-. (5a. Hard very severe. UK)

Starting about half way down the gully this is the easiest of the routes on this wall. A climb with really contrasting styles of climbing. The superb chimney on pitch 4 will please those who enjoy chimneys in a dramatic position. It's a wide chimney so there's little need to struggle if you use good technique.

(P). Project. 3 pitches completed. V/5c/V. E2 UK. The final route on this wall has only had three pitches climbed, the major pitch being the steep overhanging groove on the left of **Rise of the Phoenix**. My intention this year are to continue this line up the walls on the left, but at the moment no real weaknesses have been discovered to take natural gear. Once a line has been found that will take natural protection this route should make an equally enjoyable climb on this wall.

Rise of the Phoenix./ Cynical Pinnacle variation.

For those who cannot climb at the standard required to lead the first pitches of Cynical Pinnacle, one can use the first and second pitches of **Rise of the Phoenix** until moves across the wide crack/gully can be made to reach a ledge on the far right (belay Bolt). A short traverse right leads to the second belay of C/P. From here you can then climb the pinnacle pitch of Cynical Pinnacle and the corresponding finishing pitches to the top. This Variation makes a very evenly graded rock climb of 5a.Hard Very Severe standard.

Rowland and Mark Edwards organise Rock and Mountain courses through Compass West International Rock-climbing in Finestrat Costa Blanca. Course are run for beginners to advanced standards. The routes described here are just a few of the many new routes and areas they have opened in the Costa Blanca, e.g. Toix TV and Sea cliffs, Bernia, La Capella, Cathedral, Echo Placa . Echos One and Two, Castello. Most of the routes on Aguja Encantada on the west face of Puig Campana and routes on the South face.

Many of the long sustained routes on Divino and Haunted walls. Their latest projects are in a new area they call The Pleasure Domes which form the head walls of the Sella Valley and the South side (north facing) of Echo Valley.

Aguja De Pilar Gallery (click on images)



The pinnacle close up.



La Espada. Rowland on La Espalada.163m. 6a or 5b. & A1. E2.



Morning mist at Ajuga Del Pilar



Rowland on Cynical Pinnacle



Rowland on the third pitch of Cynical Pinnacle



Early morning mist at Ajuga del Pilar



[Student on pitch 3 Rise of the Phoenix](#)



[Stepping off Cynicle Pinnacle](#)