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Coropuna Central II (6,161m), first ascent; Corupuna, history

Peru, Cordillera Volcanica

In June, a group of Spanish mountaineers, Jorge Perez, Eduardo Ruiz, and Jose Martinez, climbed a new route up one of the central summits of the Coropuna massif from the south. This great snow-capped mountain, approximately 150km northwest of Arequipa, has six summits higher than 6,000m and colossal dimensions—the massif covers 83 square kilometers.

Coropuna was sacred to the Incas, but its modern history began much later, in 1910, when archaeologist Adolph Bandelier announced that Coropuna was higher than Aconcagua. In 1911, Annie S. Peck and archaeologist Hiram Bingham traveled to Coropuna to see if this curious affirmation was true. Peck reached the two eastern summits, ca 6,305m and ca 6,234m, while Hiram Bingham climbed to the highest summit, at 6,425m. The north summit, Coropuna Casulla (6,377m), was reached by Piero Ghiglione, Manuel Montañez, Victor Motta, and Mathias Rebitch in 1952; the west summit, Nevado Pallacocha (6,171m), was climbed in 1974, by Hans Raum and Heinz Thater. Until now, the central summits, ca 6,150m and ca 6,161m, were believed unclimbed.

We started our approach from Viraco, a village on the southeast side of the volcano (ca 3,200m). On the first day we reached Aguas Calientes (ca 4,700m), establishing our base camp near thermal baths. We installed a higher camp at ca 5,025m by climbing up the center of Quebrada Buena Vista and then via rocky steps on the northwest side onto the glacier. To avoid crevasses, we climbed a long ridge to a wide col (ca 5,900m) between the eastern summits and our objective, Coropuna Central II (6,161m). From here, Perez continued alone, crossing a vast plateau before ascending the peak's east ridge to the summit.

After the climb, we verified that the central summits may have been reached in 2003 by a team of glaciologists (Thompson, et al) doing a study of the massif before erecting a meteorological station on the main summit. In September 2003, Carlos Zarate and partner climbed Coropuna Central I (6,150m). In August 2004, an additional glaciological study was done on the massif, coordinated by Walter Silverio; their team climbed five of the six main summits. However, it's believed that the route up Coropuna Central II from the south is new.

Images

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