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### **Basque Traverse, Ojos del Salado to Volcán San Francisco**

South America, Argentina, Northern Andies

In February 2012, Jabi Txikon, Juan Noguerras, and Arkaitz Ibarra set out to for a 200km traverse of some the highest volcanoes on Earth. They acclimatized on Las Grutas (ca 4,000m) from February 1–5, and then they were taken by car to Puertas de Aguas Calientes on the way to Ojos del Salado (6,893m), where they would begin the traverse.

On February 8, they arrived in Agua de las Vicuñas to worsening storms, and on the 10th they reached El Arenal (Camp 1, ca 5,750m) on Ojos del Salado. They left for the summit early the next day, and at 9 a.m. they reached the summit plateau (ca 6,280m) and found much soft snow. Noguerras retreated, but Txikon and Ibarra continued, reaching the summit at 2 p.m. in bad conditions.

On February 12 they walked toward Volcán El Muerto (6,488m), and on the 13th they began to climb the south face. The climbing consisted of deep snow and ice runnels, so they ascended the face roped, and all three climbers reached the summit. Very tired, they descended the normal route and were forced to traverse around the volcano to reach their base camp.

The next day they walked toward El Fraile (6,062m), a volcano on the Chilean border. On February 15, Txikon and Ibarra reached the summit via a new route on a very steep, snowy face from 5,400m to 5,800m, calling it Maddi (AD+ 55°). They descended by scree.

On the 16th they approached the south face of Volcán Incahuasi (6,638m), which required a long descent to reach a camp at ca 5,500m on a very steep slope below the face. The next day they summited Incahuasi by the steep and snowy south ridge.

On the 18th, they approached Volcán San Francisco (6,016m) by the Valle del Fraile, and the next day they left camp at 2 a.m. and reached San Francisco's south face in three hours. The mountain had seen only one prior ascent, by Marcelo Scanu, 10 years prior. They climbed a steep ridge of rock and nevé, and reached the summit at 10 a.m., concluding their astonishing eight-day, 200km traverse.

## Images

## Article Details

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