



AAC Publications

Nevado Excelsior (5,773m), West Face

South America, Argentina/Chile, Central Andes

On November 5, 2011, Mijel Lotfi and I reached the summit of the mythic Nevado Excelsior (5,773m), the highest peak of the Macizo de la Jaula. This almost unexplored area is located west of the famous Cordón del Plata. Most of the peaks in the Macizo de la Jaula range are unnamed, probably because access to this narrow ravine is remote and physically difficult. As the adventurer goes into the deep, narrow valley, any possibility of communication with the rest of the world is lost; a mistake or accident could be fatal. We went light and fast, taking only six days round-trip.

Our adventure started near the village of Punta de Vacas. We chose a new approach through the Quebrada Fea, a deep, 30km gully starting on Tupungato River's east side. It took us three days of walking from the gully entrance (ca. 2,400m) to reach our base camp (ca. 4,600m) at the foot of the unclimbed west face. This first part of the expedition was long and difficult due to steep moraines and fast-flowing streams that had to be crossed carrying 25kg on our backs.

On our summit day, we started climbing at 7 a.m. up a snow corridor (50° UIAA III/IV). Then, we continued up the west ridge (40° snow). We reached the summit after seven hours, enjoyed the magnificent view. At the top, we found the summit register from 1964: The first ascent in 1964 took 18 days; the second ascent in January 1978 took 12 days; the third, in September 1985, lasted 14 days—making ours the fastest yet.

We descended carefully but quickly. After reaching base camp we continued downward, crossed melting glaciers and falling several times into hidden glacial streams, before making camp at ca. 4,000m to rest. It took us two more days of walking to reach the village.

Editor's Note: This report has not appeared in a print edition of the AAJ.

Images



Mijel Lotfi climbing Nevado Excelsior's snow corridor.



Nevado Excelsior west face.



Nevado Excelsior west face.



ablo González climbing Nevado Excelsior's snow corridor.

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