



AAC Publications

Illimani, Pico Norte, South Spur Attempt

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

In June, Italians Marco Erbetta, Enrico Rosso, and Father Antonio Zavattarelli, the latter a missionary in Penas, made an unsuccessful attempt on the south spur of the west ridge on Pico Norte (6,403m). Other members of the team were Paola Anzola and photographer and videomaker Amedeo Rosso, Enrico's son.

From a camp below the mountain the team spent a day trying to access the south spur directly, but were turned back by large seracs. They then climbed to the Nido de Condores, at 5,450m on the normal route (west ridge) leading to Pico Sur, Illimani's main summit. On June 8, Erbetta, Rosso, and Zavattarelli continued up the ridge to a point where they were able to descend a couple of hundred meters left onto the glacier basin below the central and north summits. They camped below the south spur, and the following morning climbed two-thirds of this elegant, sharp snow arête to an altitude of 5,900m, where they were forced to retreat. Conditions proved too dangerous, with unconsolidated snow on one flank and wind slab on the other. After a difficult descent the three continued to Nido de Condores, which they reached just before nightfall. If they'd succeeded on the south spur, their plan had been to continue along the ridge from Pico Norte, over the central and main summits, then down the normal route.

Hans Ertl and Gert Schroder followed roughly the same route to this glacier basin to make the first ascent of Pico Norte in 1950. They climbed to the lowest point on the ridge connecting Norte and Central (6,362m), then followed the sharp south ridge of Pico Norte to its highest point. A direct route up the southwest face from the basin, the Via del Indio (D-), was first climbed in 1973 by an Austrian expedition led by Rudolf Wurzer.

From the summit of Norte a long ridge descends west, then northwest, over Pico del Indio (6,109m). Before reaching the Indio, the ridge throws a long spur to the southwest, climbed by the classic 1972 Mesili-Sanchez route Khoya Khola. The shorter spur attempted by the Italians lies between Khoya Khola and the summit. Despite being an obvious and attractive objective, there appears to be no record or local knowledge of it having been climbed.

– Lindsay Griffin, from information provided by Enrico Rosso

Editor's Note: Several years after this report was published, it was learned that a 1989 Italian expedition led by Franco Maestrini climbed the south spur of the west ridge of Pico Norte, making the first known ascent.

Images



(PN) Pico Norte from the west ridge (normal route) of the main summit of Illimani, looking across the glacier basin used to approach south-side routes. (1) Upper west ridge of Pico Norte. (2) South spur attempted by Italians in 2014. (3) Via del Indio climbs the southwest face directly; it was a straightforward ice slope during the 1973 first ascent. (4) South ridge of Pico Norte. (5) North ridge of Pico Central (summit just off picture to right).



The elegant south spur of the west ridge on Pico Norte.



On the crest of the south spur of Pico Norte.



The south spur of the west ridge of Pico Norte (summit dome visible to right). The three climbers can be seen on the crest of the spur at one-third height.

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