



AAC Publications

Pico Triangular, South Face, Wormhole

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

On June 19, Gregg Beisly, Robert Rauch, and I climbed what we believe to be a new route in the Zongo Pass area. Although I'm not sure the feature we climbed has a real name, we have started calling it Pico Triangular, due to its obvious shape as viewed from the wholly irrelevant and mildly annoying police checkpoint at Milluni. It is a 5,600m subsidiary peak of Huayna Potosi, just to the south of Pico Italia.

I was feeling a bit knackered, but agreed to come along as far as I could manage. After two hours or so of pleasant uphill hiking, we crossed several hectares of giant ice cubes. Putting a skip in the stride to avoid wayward serac fall, we arrived at the base of a deep cleft, toward the right side of the south face, after a total of three hours.

I was expecting a dry chimney, but Robert found a slender drip of ice, 5–7cm wide and likewise deep, through steep loose terrain. I figured they could lower me from the next belay if I just sampled this first bit, so I pressed on.

Each pitch above offered interesting climbing. A passage of ice underneath a large chockstone, where everyone except me had to trail their packs to squeeze through, gave the route its name: the Wormhole. I had cleverly given my haler companions most of the gear. I think we did about 12 pitches, with the upper ones giving some particularly fun ice in a corner. We graded the 500m route TD/TD+ WI4 M4, and the consensus was that this was one of the best routes any of us had climbed in Bolivia.

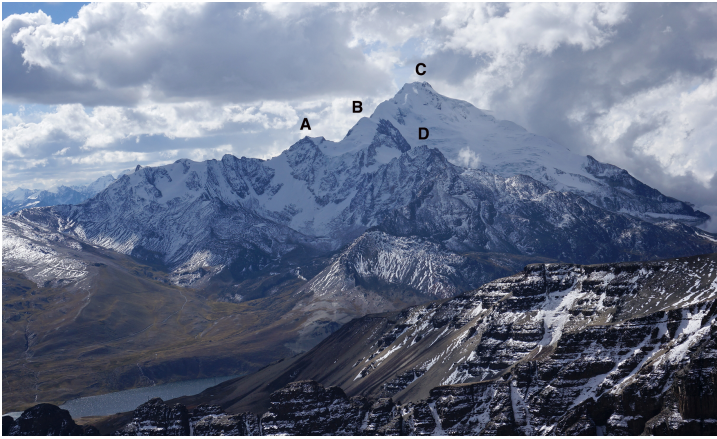
We would have enjoyed lingering in the sunlight on the summit of our small peak, but we needed to move quickly down the southwest ridge, as there was less than an hour before dark. I think Gregg secretly indulges my desire to leave later in the morning because he likes to climb into the dark. With more time to spare, this ridge would be awesome. I asked for a rope and Gregg obliged. Robert followed on his own. We rapped a few times, but mostly weaved our way through loose granite blocks.

I was relieved to spot the col, from which we had only ca 300m of 50° snow to descend, plus several kilometers of hiking to the car. However, I then pulled on a desk-sized block that rotated under minimal pressure. The block hit me in the chest as it went into the void, and I fell roughly six meters. Nothing like this had ever happened to me previously, so I didn't know exactly what to do. There was only one choice, since there are no helicopters or other rescue services in Bolivia: continue on.

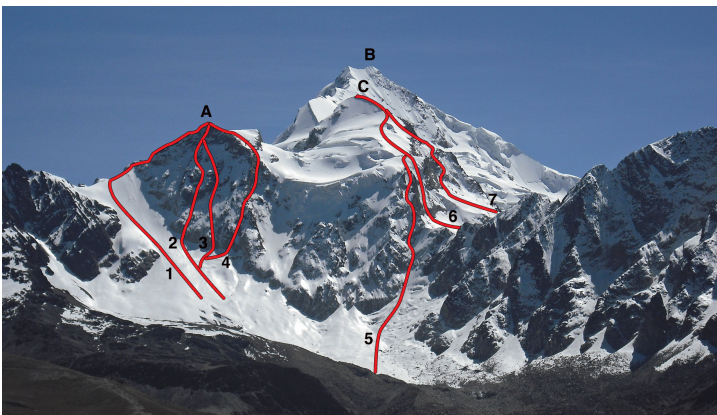
Darkness fell. We did not want to cross beneath the seracs again, so we aimed directly toward the car, and fortunately found it without problems. On arrival I gave a spectacular demonstration of dry-heaving from exhaustion, but 15 minutes later we were discussing future plans.

Chris Clarke, Bolivia

Images



Looking northwest over Zongo Pass at (A) Pico Triangular, (B) Pico Italia, (C) Huayna Potosi, and (D) Pico Milluni. The left skyline is the southwest ridge, likely climbed in 1963 during the first ascent of the full ridge to Huayna Potosi. The normal route to the summit of Huayna Potosi, first ascended in 1919, is on the right, climbing behind the right skyline in the upper section.



Looking north toward Huayna Potosi. (A) Pico Triangular: (1) Southwest ridge (D-, likely first climbed in 1963). (2) Baked (D+, Baker-Beisly, 2011). (3) Happy Meal (TD, Cusik-Stock, 1999). (4) Wormhole (TD/TD+, 2014). (B) Huayna Potosi. (C) Pico Italia: (5) Monasterio Route (D, Monasterio-Monasterio, 1998). (6) Normal Route (AD). (7) Southeast face (AD+).



Chris Clarke descending the southwest ridge of Pico Triangular.



Gregg Beisly on a steep ice pitch during the first ascent of the Wormhole.



Robert Rauch disappears into the Wormhole.

Article Details

Author	Chris Clarke
Publication	AAJ
Volume	57
Issue	89
Page	0
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions