



## AAC Publications

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### **Peak 5,600m, southwest ridge; Chearoco, southwest face and southwest ridge**

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

During July I teamed up with New Zealand expat Gregg Beisly for our annual exploration of the cordilleras Real and Occidental. Gregg lives with his family in Bolivia and works with a youth leadership program in the shantytown of El Alto, above La Paz.

Conditions during the month were the harshest I have met in over 20 years of climbing in the Bolivian Andes; the weather was unusually unstable and stormy, with deep snow, consistently high winds, and extreme cold. Our initial plans to climb long, technical new routes therefore had to be replaced by faster, more traditional alpine assaults.

After a climb of the southwest ridge and south face of Pomerape, Gregg and I drove to Estancia Kelluani, ca 100km northwest of La Paz, and the same day walked up the Kelluani Valley for 10km to place a low camp (4,600m) below the Chearoco Massif. The next day, July 25, we made the first known ascent of Peak 5,600m, which we reached via a side valley northwest of camp. Crossing the glacier, we climbed the steep, rocky southwest buttress for 200m to an upper glacier. We continued up the southwest ridge for 500m to the highest of three tops. Descending our route, we regained camp in a nine-hour round trip. [In 1978 a team of Italians report climbing "five summits on the ridge running west from Chearoco and separating the Chearoco and Kelluani valleys." It has been impossible to ascertain the exact location of any of the peaks they climbed.]

On July 27, from a high camp at 5,100m, we climbed Chearoco (6,104m). We first traversed north-northwest to reach the southwest face. This gave excellent, steady climbing for 400m (50°) to emerge onto the bitterly cold and windswept southwest ridge, below a small but distinct summit. From here we slowly traversed the entire upper shoulder of the mountain, wading in waist-deep snow, cutting under seracs, and avoiding a series of crevasses, to reach the southeast ridge. We were greeted by a howling wind, which was seemingly intent on numbing all senses and putting a stop to our climb. After a small break on the lee side, we gathered sufficient energy to climb the steep 20m névé step to the razor-sharp summit pyramid. The route was AD+. [Chearoco is a broad massif with the south summit 20-30m higher than the north top. The route reported here—or a similar line—is believed to have seen previous ascents. The southwest face of Chearoco was reportedly climbed in 1969, but there are no details. In 1982 a pair of Argentinians climbed the 50-55° southwest face to the south summit, but their description was vague.]

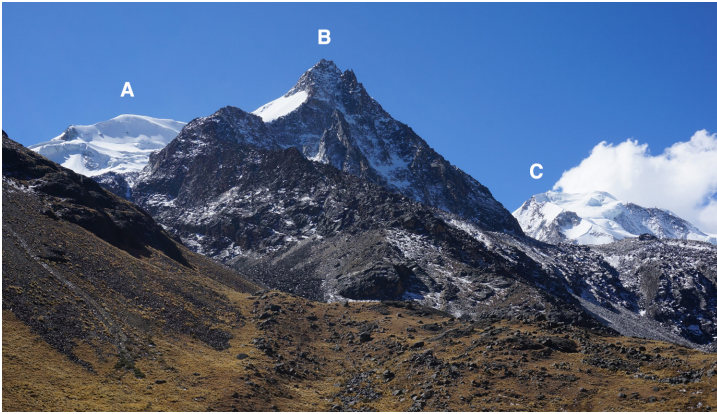
As Chearoco is one of the Cordillera Real's highest mountains and sits close to the middle of the range, its summit serves up unparalleled views of the entire chain, Lake Titicaca, and the verdant eastern valleys. The original route up the peak (Austrian, 1928) lies to the right of our line and is now much harder due to snow loss. Right again, the southwest spur (Italian, 1978) passes under active ice cliffs, making the south face (first ascent unknown but climbed in 1978 by Italians) the most climbed route today.

Until two years ago the Chearoco area had attracted few mountaineers. The Omasuyo locals, who live on the western flanks of the mountain, have a fierce reputation and have consistently harassed, stoned, and robbed visitors, including Bolivians from other regions. In the mid-1990s I was harassed and fired upon. However, a recently arrived Catholic priest and climber, Father Antonio Zavatarelli, who is contributing to the development of sport climbing in the Penas area, has seemingly convinced

the Omasuyos to become more congenial hosts. The situation has significantly improved, opening up this important area to trekking and mountaineering. During our brief stay we found the locals welcoming and helpful, without any shots fired.

Erik Monasterio, New Zealand

## Images



Looking northeast from the Kelluani Valley at (A) Peak 5,600m. The 2014 ascent followed the left skyline. (B) Unnamed peak, ca 5,500m. (C) Chearoco, with the standard route up glaciated slopes facing the camera.



Erik Monasterio approaching the summit of Chearoco. In the background, southwest along the Cordillera Real, is the flat-topped Chachacomani (6,074m). Kelluani (5,912m) is the indistinct summit in front. In the distance, right, is Huayna Potosi.



Chearoco from the southwest. (1) Southwest face (possibly first climbed by Argentinians Burrieza and Crispo in 1993; climbed in 2014 at AD+). (2) Original route (AD+ Horeschowsky-Hortinagel, 1928). (3) Southwest spur (AD+, Ferrari-Gemli-Gugiatti-Lanfranconi-Marmori-Vitale-Zappelli, 1978). (4) South face—regular route (AD, first ascent uncertain but climbed by Italians in 1978). (5) Southeast ridge (AD+, Floodpage-Hunter-Quicke, 1962), west access. (The route originally was climbed from the east.) The normal finish to routes 1-4, once in the snow basin below the summit, is the middle line shown. This can be cut by a large bergschrund, particularly later in the season. In that case it's possible to

climb the left (southwest) ridge or head right to join the top of the southeast ridge.



Erik Monasterio climbing the initial rock buttress on the southwest ridge of Peak 5,600m.

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