



AAC Publications

Khala Cruz Group, Condores y Picaflores

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

On May 17, Pacifico Machaca and I climbed a 200m, six-pitch route on the south face of the most prominent granite buttress of the Khala Cruz group (west of the 5,200m highest summit). We believe this is the same buttress mentioned in AAJ 1982, as we found a piton a few meters up the first pitch. Above, we found no other traces of previous passage. (See editor's note below.) The line we followed provided a good adventure, so we feel it is worth supplying additional information.

The route starts at ca 5,000m, after less than one hour of approach from the road leading to Zongo Pass. The first 15m is vertical to overhanging, and we overcame it using aid. Above, we climbed a 55m pitch (5a) to reach a vertical gully, which we climbed in two pitches (6a and 6a+). We made two belay stations protected by roofs. Both pitches contained some big boulders stuck in the gully and had short overhanging sections. Above the exit, we reached a large, snow-covered ledge. We moved up this, then slanted slightly left for 55m (5c). As the terrain eased off, we belayed one more pitch (5a) before simul-climbing to the top. We were then able to descend easily by walking/scrambling down the west ridge of Khala Cruz.

We suggest the name Condores y Picaflores, as we were visited by an adult and adolescent condor that came close enough we could hear them gliding through the air, and we were relieved to be "protected" in the gully. On two other occasions a hummingbird came so close to my face that its visit was even more frightening than that from the condors.

Editor's note: In November 1980, longtime La Paz resident Stanley Shepard soloed a route on this face that he named La Muesca (the Slot). By his own admission, it was an audacious solo. He appears to have climbed a similar line to Machaca and von Ungern to the snow-covered ledge at roughly half-height. Conditions would have been much snowier then. Where the 2015 party moved left, Shepard continued up the giant chimney system (the slot), which was ice-choked and had sections of vertical, somewhat unstable granite.

Alexander von Ungern, *Andean Ascents*, Bolivia

Images



The south face of one of the western summits of Khala Cruz. (1) Condores y Picaflores. (2) The presumed line of La Muesca.



Pacifico Machara exiting the steepest part of Condores y Picaflores at the end of pitch four.



Pacifico Machara exiting the lower gully of Condores y Picaflores at the top of pitch three.

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