



AAC Publications

Pico Italia, East Face, Al Fondo Hay Sitio; New Pico Italia–Huayna Potosi Link-Up

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

On June 8, Rodrigo Lobo and I made the first ascent of Al Fondo Hay Sitio on the east face of Pico Italia (ca 5,750m). We trained specifically for this route: Among other things, we climbed 25 sport pitches in the Aranjuez Valley in one day. This meant we were able to climb most of the 700m route on Pico Italia simultaneously, in only 2.5 hours. We roped for the last 150m but climbed this section in one long pitch. I insisted on belaying here as the route crossed an icefall and climbing between rock and ice with rock shoes required care. Maximum difficulties were 6a+.

We approached in three hours via the Glacier Viejo, exited on the summit ridge a little left of the main top, and in a further three hours downclimbed part of the south ridge before descending a loose gully on the east face to return to the base of the route.

We took only one ice axe and one pair of crampons for both climbers and suffered with cold feet during the descent in rock boots. It took a further three hours to walk back to Elvira's Hut on Zongo Pass, for a round trip of 11.5 hours.

East face of Pico Italia. (1) East face buttress (Beisly-Monasterio, 2012). (2) Descent followed by Robert Rauch and Rodrigo Lobo in June 2016. (3) Al Fondo Hay Sitio (Lobo-Rauch, 2016). (4) Arthritis (Beisly-Monasterio, 2013). Photo by Robert Rauch

In my opinion Rodrigo is the strongest of the current young activists in Bolivia, and through our training we have built a mutual trust. We are also trying to bring a modern style into the mountains, one that is fitting for the harder Andean routes.

Later in the month, I returned to Pico Italia and made the first link-up of Arthritis (600m, TD+ 6a, Beisly-Monasterio, 2013) on the east face and the south ridge of Huayna Potosi. I climbed alone, making the first solo and possibly the second overall ascent of Arthritis.

I left the Elvira Hut at 5 a.m. and, after descending from Huayna Potosi, arrived back at the hut at 9 p.m. the same day. (The first ascensionists of Arthritis took 17 hours to complete the route.) The total ascent and descent amounted to around 3,500m. Although all the ground had been climbed previously, I feel this particular expedition deserves a name of its own: The Real Deal. I'd hoped to try this project with Rodrigo, but since he had work engagements I went alone.

On my first attempt I climbed halfway up Arthritis before the weather changed and I opted to retreat, reaching the base in a snowstorm. Two days later I was back. A heavy storm during the night forced me to delay departure for a day, and when I left it took four hours to reach the base of the route via the Glaciar Viejo—arriving any earlier would have made it too cold for rock climbing. I started up the face at 9:30 a.m. and two hours later was at the top (feeling the crux was 6a+). I then changed from rock shoes to mountain boots and set off down the north ridge, with its many ups and downs, reaching the Pico Italia–Huayna Potosi Col in three hours (ca 400m of descent). I started up the beautiful south ridge of Huayna Potosi immediately and reached the main summit at 6 p.m., then descended the normal route in a further three hours. I'd trained hard for this project, going running at every possible opportunity, and on the ascent I pared my equipment to the minimum so I could travel

fast.

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Images



Looking down the slabs of Arthritis during the first solo ascent.



The south ridge of Huayna Potosi seen during the solo Pico Italia–Huayna Potosi link-up.



The summit ridge of Huayna Potosi, seen in the late afternoon during Robert Rauch's Pico Italia–Huayna Potosi link-up.



Looking up the slabs of Arthritis during the first solo ascent. The route follows the line of cracks directly above, left of the corner system.



Rodrigo Lobo in the lower corner system of Al Fondo Hay Sitio.



Climbing the icefall on the first ascent of Al Fondo Hay Sitio.



Rodrigo Lobo in the loose descent gully on the east face of Pico Italia.



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Descending icy terrain in rock shoes at the end of the climb of Al Fondo Hay Sitio.

Article Details

Author	Robert Rauch
Publication	AAJ
Volume	59
Issue	91
Page	0
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions