



AAC Publications

Nevado Huayruro Punco, West Face; Nevado Parcocaya, South Face

Peru, Cordillera Vilcanota

On July 16, I traveled into the Vilcanota Range with my client John Lewis (USA) and assistant guide Luis Crispin (Peru) to climb Ausangate's normal route. However, we abandoned this plan due to deep snow and instead turned our attention to smaller peaks in the area.

Our first objective was Nevado Huayruro Punco (5,550m), a mountain that crowns the divide between the Pitumarca and Sibinacocha watersheds. Luis said the Quechuan name translates to "red gate;" it is also sometimes called Pacco, which apparently means "shaman." I had been eyeing the west face for some time and could not find a record of previous ascent (most ascents occur via the north aspect). The 350m west face is the steepest, most heavily glaciated aspect of the mountain, with ice reaching from the summit down to ca 5,200m.

We began our climb at 3 a.m. on July 18, leaving our base camp near the village of Jampa and hiking up Quebrada Chilcamayo. Luis accompanied John and myself on the 5–6km approach, leaving the two of us at the base of the glacier (ca 5,200m) just after sunrise.

John and I began crossing the glacier at 8 a.m., simul-climbing a pitch of 55° ice. We climbed two rope-lengths of steep, knee-deep snow directly to the base of the main headwall, where the obvious crux presented itself: 30m of 70° blue ice with two bulges, all of it capped by a 5m serac. I spent over an hour leading the pitch due to a full meter of fresh snow. Negotiating the final serac was particularly strenuous.

The shaded aspect of the face made for cold belays, and it was a relief to emerge into sunlit slopes above. Above the headwall, we marched up penitente slopes to the summit, where Luis awaited us. While John and I were busy climbing the west face, Luis had climbed the standard north ridge route with a random stray puppy as his partner. When all four of us reunited on the summit, we decided to name the dog Pacco after the mountain. He would become a valuable member of our expedition over the coming days. All four of us descended the standard north ridge together, returning to base camp by 4 p.m. Our new route on the west face of Nevado Huayruro Punco is 350m, AD+ WI3.

On July 22, the final day of my trip into the Vilcanota Range with John and Luis, we decided to explore the vast moraine at the base of Ausangate's north face. We eventually reached a beautiful olive-green tarn at ca 4,840m, at the base of Nevado Parcocaya (5,290m). (I would suggest the name Laguna Parcocaya for this unnamed lake, which is a fantastic hiking objective in its own right.) Luis and John stayed to rest at the lake below while I made a solo ascent of the south face.

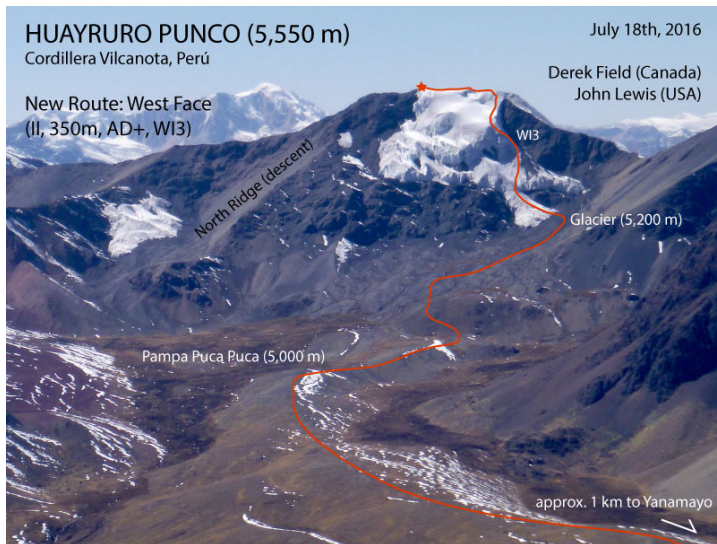
After weaving through dozens of crevasses, I arrived at the base of the major headwall. [The author reports that Nathan Heald attempted this face alone two years ago but could not find a safe way through the vertical headwall of ice at ca 5,150m.] I chose a rock buttress on the far right side, which held a number of partially visible snow gullies. I ventured up the friendliest-looking gully (40–50° snow in a 3m-wide slot) and encountered a vertical rock step about 25m up. Awkward 5.7 chimney moves and a desperate belly flop landed me safely on the snow above. I continued up the gully to its junction with a 20m wall of blue ice (70°). Nearing the top, I exited diagonally to the right on mixed terrain, eventually manteling over a short ice step to gain the summit crest.

I strode along the snowy ridgeline to the base of the summit block, a 30m tower of sheer rock. On the west side of the pinnacle, I found a way across the final bergschrund and continued up a steep dihedral (5.6) on quality metamorphic rock. On the summit I found a weathered old sling evidently used by a previous team to rappel the normal route on the north side.

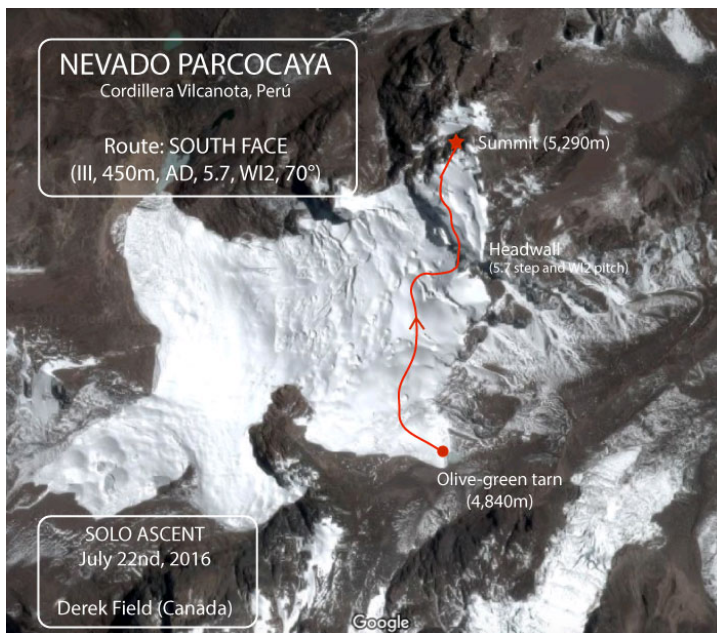
Cursing my foolishness for neglecting to bring a rope, I carefully downclimbed my route in its entirety. I was able to aid down most of the 5.7 rock step using the sling I'd found on top. Round-trip time from Laguna Parococaya: 1 hour, 8 minutes. My route on the south face of Nevado Parococaya is 450m, AD 5.7 AI3.

– Derek Field, Canada

Images



Huayruru-Punco-NW-face.jpg: An overview of the route up the west face of Nevado Huayruru Punco (5,550m).



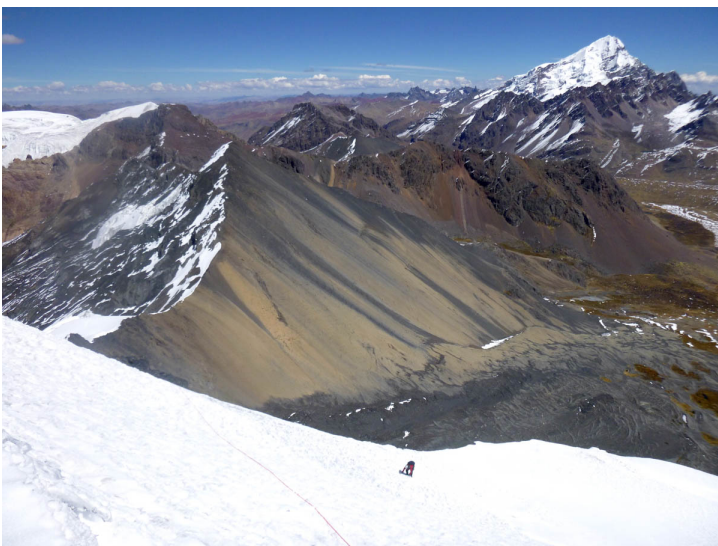
An overview map of the route up the south side of Parocaya.



John Lewis nearing the top of the third pitch on the west face of Huayruro Punco.



Looking down toward John Lewis on the fourth pitch on the west face of Huayruro Punco.



Looking northwest from Huayruro Punco, with John Lewis coming up the final penitente slopes.



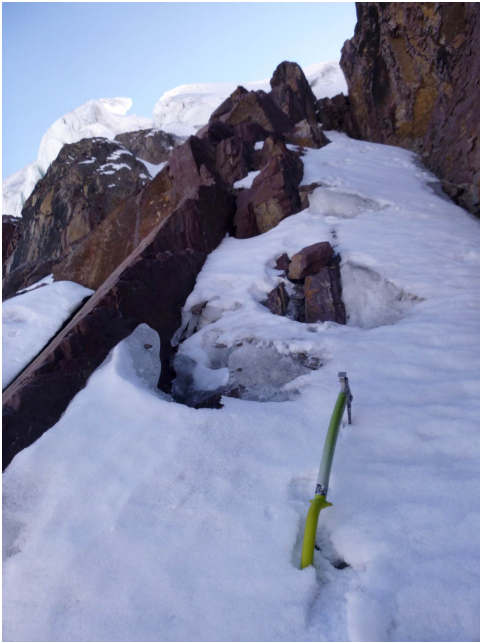
Looking north from the summit of Huayruro Punco, with Luis Crispin, John Lewis, and Derek Field (holding the stray puppy, Pacco) on the summit.



Looking up at Parcocaya from the olive-green tarn at ca 4,840m.



Pacco the puppy resting on the glacier at ca 5,100m, below the north face of Ausangate.



Looking up the initial snow gully on Parcocaya at ca 5,150m.



Self-timed photo looking north along the main crest toward the summit block of Parcocaya.



Looking east from the summit of Parcocaya, with the Callangate massif behind.



The crux ice wall on Parcocaya.



An overview of the route up the south face of Nevado Parcocaya (5,290m).

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