



AAC Publications

Khala Cruz Group: Patagonian Sunset, 4 Estaciones, and El Techito de la Granja

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

On June 3, Marcelo Gomez (Bolivia) and I climbed a 150m, three-pitch, traditionally protected route on the south face of a granite buttresses of the Khala Cruz group, to the east of the 5,200m highest summit.

We started our climb at 2 p.m, at ca 5,000m, after one hour of approach from the road leading to Zongo Pass. After some easy scrambling across a slab, we climbed the first 40m pitch at 5b. Thanks to our 70m ropes, we were then able to climb the following section in one pitch. It turned out to be the crux of the route, with several sustained vertical sections and a move I believe to be 6b. The third and last pitch (50m, 4) got us to the summit ridge, which we followed, simul-climbing and scrambling, until we reached the highest summit of the group, just as night set in.

We called our route Patagonian Sunset, as we climbed in cold south-face conditions and reached the summit ridge at sunset in very windy conditions.

On October 23, Marcelo and I were back to climb a 200m, five-pitch, trad-protected route on the southeast face of the most prominent granite buttress of the Khala Cruz group, west of the 5,200m highest summit.

From the same parking spot, one kilometer before reaching Zongo Pass, at the base of Huayna Potosi, we walked for only half an hour. We then put on our rock shoes and climbed unroped through easy terrain to avoid loose scree, reaching steeper walls at the base of the buttress. We started our first pitch at 4,900m, climbing a few steps of 5c with little protection. The second pitch was more scrambling than real climbing. As we started the third pitch the climbing became more serious, with a delicate traverse toward a chimney (6a+). As it started to snow, we got to the crux of the route, an excellent finger crack allowing good protection. We believe this crack, which crossed a slightly overhanging compact wall, might be 6b. We then made a fifth and last pitch through easy terrain before climbing together to the top of the buttress at 5,050m. The sun was now shining again and we were able to enjoy the view.

We named the route 4 Estaciones after the four seasons of weather we experienced on the climb. Estaciones is also the Spanish word for belay station (we built four).

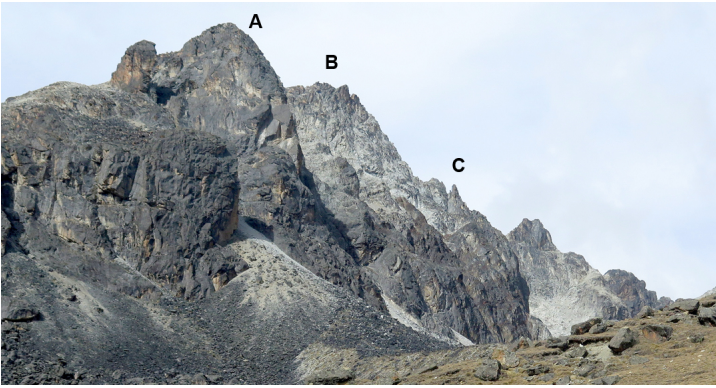
Over a month later, I came back to the same buttress with Damien Freemantle (Swiss), a friend from childhood. He considers himself a non-climber, but was happily able to onsight 6a sport routes at the La Paz crag of Aranjuez. Looking forward to an adventure, we started this time in the middle of the southeast face and climbed the first two pitches without great difficulty. From here, the line we had first spotted was not accessible, so we changed plans and followed the edge of a slab, where some challenging moves awaited us. Among these was a delicate and exposed traverse to reach a belay under a big roof. Once more we reached the time of the day when, during this season, it begins to snow. I was able to free climb into the roof, but the second half proved way too difficult for me. Using aid, I reached a point half a meter from the exit, but did not have enough big gear to finish it. After a lot more snow fell, I finally found a solution by hanging off a precarious nut, which I knew would pull

out if not loaded vertically, and retrieving a number three cam from below. I graded the roof A2, but with more big pieces of pro it would have been much easier. By now the rock was covered in snow and we were lucky to be able to finish via easier ground. From the top of the buttress it is possible to walk/scramble down the west face.

I've named this route El Techito de la Granja (6a A2), after the difficult roof and the fact that Damien lives on a surreal farm with other outdoor enthusiasts in the middle of an urban area.

Alexander von Ungern, Andean Ascents, Bolivia

Images



The Khala Cruz massif, as seen from the road one kilometer before it reaches the Zongo Pass. (A) Western buttress, climbed by the routes Condores y Picoflores, Muesca, 4 Estaciones, and El Techito de la Granja. (B) Main summit. (C) Eastern buttress. Patagonia Sunset climbs to this point then follows the skyline ridge back left to the main summit.



Patagonian Sunset on the south face of one of the eastern summits of Khala Cruz.



Marcelo Gomez reaching the belay at the end of pitch one of Patagonian Sunset.



Marcelo Gomez finishing the crux pitch of 4 Estaciones in falling snow. The main difficulties of the pitch are not visible on this image.



Damien Freemantle expressing his joy at finishing the crux of El Techito de la Granja, a roof that overhangs five meters.



Damien Freemantle following the third pitch of El Techito de la Granja. Alex von Ungern had led this section 15m above his last piece of protection, which led him to describe it as "delicate".



The southeast face of the first (and most prominent) buttress on the ridge leading eastward to the main summit of Khala Cruz. (1/red) Approximate line of La Muesca. (2/red) Approximate line of Condores y Picaflones. (The lower half of both 1 and 2 is drawn correctly, but the upper sections are approximate. See AAJ 2016). (3/blue) El Techito de la Granja. (4/green) 4 Estaciones.

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