



AAC Publications

Pico Pirineos: El Lobo del Desierto

Mexico, Nuevo León, Parque la Huasteca

Rolando Larcher, one of my regular traveling companions, suggested the idea of climbing in Mexico. After some research on the Internet, Rolando was drawn to a stunningly beautiful wall in Huasteca Canyon and, without knowing anything about it whatsoever, explained to his sponsors that this would be the main goal of our expedition in January and February. Luca Giupponi joined us as the third member of our team.

Paolo Marazzi, who had climbed in Mexico a few months earlier, put us in touch with Alex Catlin, an American who lives in Monterrey with his wife, Connie, and their two children; they devote much of their time to establishing climbs. We rendezvoused at a Starbucks in Monterrey. Despite heavy symptoms of espresso and croissant withdrawal, alleviated as much as possible with muffins, we immediately set to work examining the nearby rock faces. After two days we concluded that the wall Rolando had seen on the Internet, the east face of Pico Pirineos, was the most beautiful and interesting. But what had been climbed there? No problem: Alex called a local expert, and from what we gathered, picking up bits of their conversation in Spanish, it seemed the line we'd chosen was still virgin. [Editor's note: The new route begins to the left of Primer Año on the lower east face of Pico Pirineos, then moves to the north face in its upper half.]

We began our usual expedition routine: alarm clock in the middle of the night, a disgusting breakfast at a 7-Eleven, followed by climbing from first light to well past sunset. Then, exhausted, we'd dine in a restaurant in Monterrey to take in some protein. There was no time for alcohol or nightlife, not even for sightseeing or sport climbing. Completing the route was the main goal—we'd rest later. Is this perhaps why we've never returned from a trip empty-handed?

We climbed strictly ground-up, dividing the pitches evenly between us. We hung from hooks only to place a bolt, after free climbing the section below, meaning that we had to deal with some obligatory runouts! Many pitches used a few cams in addition to bolts.

After three days of hard work, we'd put up five long pitches to climb the spectacular lower east face of Pico Pirineos. Sometimes we were accompanied by a pleasant breeze, while other times it was hellishly hot. Cleaning the route cost a lot of time and energy, but we wanted to create a beautiful and safe line. So, while one of us established a pitch, belayed by another for up to three or four hours, the third jumared up and down to clean the previous pitch.

To climb the upper mountain, we didn't want to follow the easy arête directly above our start (already breached by an older route), so we abseiled 60m onto the north face, a nearly vertical 300m sheet of limestone. We decided to tackle this triangular face straight up through a brown section that resembled a howling wolf. A drastic drop in temperatures resulted in two days of freezing on this shaded face—it seemed as if we were in Patagonia! Luca grit his teeth and summoned his energy to finish the last hard pitch.

After two days of rest we redpointed the route on February 3, each climber leading the pitches he'd established. For my two friends, 7c climbing was probably a mere formality, but for me, having spent

half the year recovering from a broken leg, redpointing my crux pitch was a significant undertaking, as was the first pitch of the route, which I also established: a 50m 7a+ with holds covered in dust from all the cleaning on the pitches above. We were pretty spent when we summited, and we abseiled by the beams of our headlamps, as usual. Mission accomplished, in less than 15 days.

– Maurizio Oviglia, Italy

Images



Rolando Larcher leading pitch four (5.12c) of El Lobo del Desierto.



Luca Gioponni opening the eighth pitch (5.12b) of El Lobo del Desierto on the upper north face of Pico Pirineos.

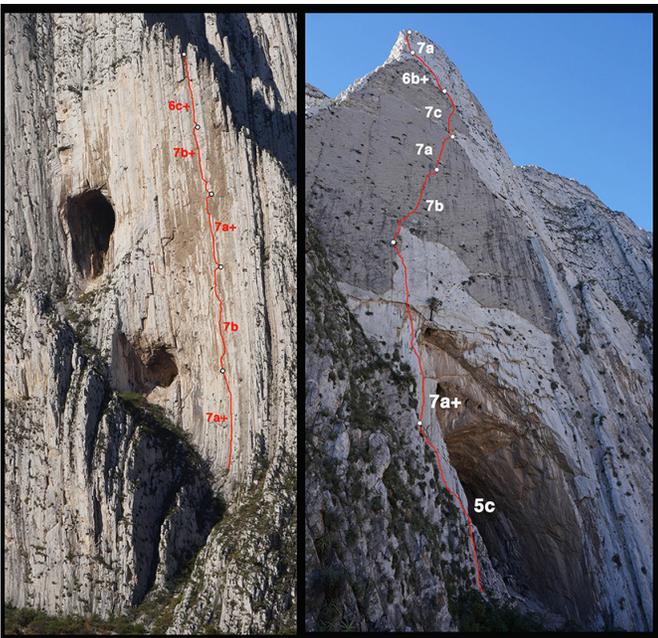


Photo-topo of El Lobo del Desierto, Pico Pirineos.

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