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Larkya Peak (Larkya Main), Southeast Face, Directa Ecuatoriana

Nepal, Manaslu Himal

While reaching the summit of Manaslu, Esteban Mena caught a glimpse of Larkya Peak (6,416m) and later had no trouble convincing Roberto Morales and Nico Navarrete to join him for an attempt on the big rock wall of the southeast face. A few months later, they were eating their first chapatis in Kathmandu when they learned of the Georgian first ascent of the peak, just days earlier. However, they still wanted to establish their own route on this impressive wall.

Base camp was made in Dharamsala (4,500m) on the Manaslu Circuit trek, and the first step was a reconnaissance of the best approach. They first headed southwest up the never-ending Syacha Glacier, leading toward Manaslu North, then turned north and followed the upper glacier to the foot of the southeast face of Larkya Peak. They continued north, crossing a pass to the northeast of the peak that they named Ecuadorians' Col (ca 5,920m on the HMG-Finn map, between Larkya and Peak 6,039m), and descended the glacier on the far side. This led back to the Larkya Glacier and the Manaslu Circuit, but it turned out to be an extremely complicated and dangerous glacier. It was obvious there was only one way to Larkya Peak: the long way via the Syacha Glacier.

On October 14 they left Dharamsala and, in two days, with heavy loads, reached a camp at 5,600m below the southeast face. An unexpected snowstorm forced a welcome day's rest. On the 17th the three climbed the first three pitches of their proposed route (right of the Georgian line), fixed two ropes, and descended, inspired by the quality of the climb.

Next day they set off at 4 a.m. and enjoyed quality climbing until the 10th pitch, where unstable rock and technical difficulties began to slow them down. They soon realized that their anticipated one-day ascent was not going to happen, and at 6,200m prepared a bivouac.

After a night on a small snow patch, a cup of coffee and hydrated scrambled eggs put them in gear at 5 a.m. That day they lived through intense moments, with the final wall consisting of a series of vertical or even overhanging sections of rock that seemed to defy gravity. It was as if they were climbing the giant scales of a dragon, hoping not to wake it. Slowly they rose above the beast, and they were rewarded with a magnificent view from the top, having created the aesthetic Directa Ecuatoriana (700m, VI 5.11 R C2).

– Esteban Mena, Roberto Morales, and Nico Navarrete, Ecuador

Images



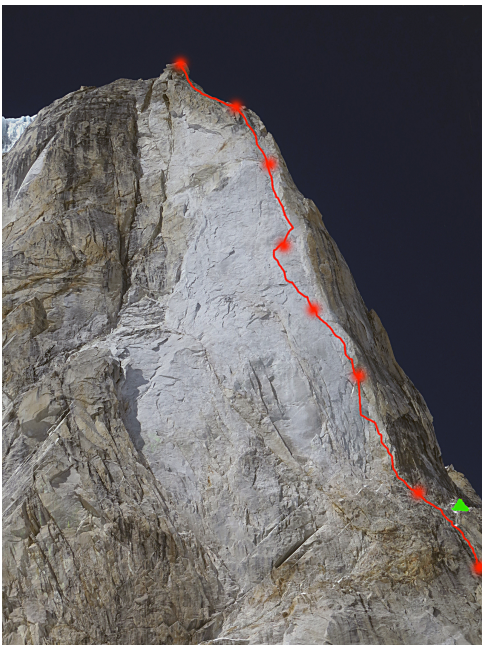
Jumaring pitch seven of Directa Ecuatoriana on the southeast face of Larkya Peak, with Manaslu behind.



Setting out on pitch 10 of Directa Ecuatoriana on the southeast face of Larkya Peak, with Manaslu behind.



The southeast face of Larkya Peak (6,416m) with the approximate line of the Georgian Route (left) and Directa Ecuatoriana, both climbed in the autumn of 2017.



The top section of the southeast face of Larkya Peak, showing the Directa Ecuatoriana on the upper pillar. The top section of the Georgian Route (climbed early in 2017 for the first ascent of the peak) more or less follows the corners on the left of the rock scar.

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