



AAC Publications

Pico Tunari, South Face, Pippo

Bolivia, Cordillera de Cocapata

From June 21-22, during the austral winter, Rodrigo Lobo and I made the first ascent of the south face of Tunari (5,035m, 17°17'8"S, 66°23'30"W), a long escarpment situated well over 200km southeast of La Paz and clearly visible from Cochabamba, Bolivia's third-largest city. Rodrigo's parents live in Cochabamba, and we spent the night at their house before driving to the north side of Tunari and hiking up to a small lake below the main summit, where we camped.

Since a direct approach to the south face looked too complicated, next morning we walked up the north slopes to the summit and then descended through steep, snow-covered terrain to the south. When the snow was deep we took to the rock and downclimbed several exposed sections—it was quicker than trying to find rappel anchors. At the base we traversed along the long, steep south face. It had an intimidating aura, which almost made you want to quit before starting.

We headed for a dihedral, invisible from a distance, which rises to the main summit. We first climbed 100m of hard snow/ice, which, as we were wearing running shoes, proved a dangerous undertaking: I used two stones as ice axe substitutes. We then simulclimbed to the dihedral, which we climbed via a steep pitch in loose metamorphic rock at 6a+. The face above was consistently hard, 6b+ to 6c+, on far from sound rock. Snow on the face and a temperature of -5°C didn't make the climb any easier. Close to the summit, we were stopped by a difficult pitch that we spent hours unsuccessfully trying to surmount. We had to spend the night on a poor ledge with rudimentary bivouac gear.

We shivered the night away and then, at 8 a.m. the following morning, began again. Rodrigo managed to climb above our high point and found a cam placement. We both took a deep breath. He continued and then, almost in despair, found a fixed anchor placed by two climbers who had rappelled the face some time ago. He belayed there. From his cam, 15m of unprotected traverse on tiny holds separated me from Rodrigo. I switched mentally to solo mode and made it—the crux pitch.

We traversed left beneath huge loose overhangs and discovered a vertical, loose chimney. This led to easy ground, our first rays of sun for 26 hours, and the summit. What a route! We named our line Pippo (500m climbing distance, 7a+) after a friend of Rodrigo's who had while died trying to traverse all the main summits in the range.

– Robert Rauch, Bolivian Tours, rauchrobert@hotmail.com

Images



Robert Rauch emerges from overhanging ground. From here to the belay, snow-covered rock had to be climbed in rock shoes.



Robert Rauch on the summit of Tunari after the first ascent of the south face and 26 hours in shadow.



The Cordillera de Cocapata (a.k.a. Cordillera de Cochabamba) and high camp on the north side of Tunari. From here, Rodrigo Lobo and Robert Rauch crossed the mountain and descended the far side before making the first ascent of the south face.



The south face of Tunari. The first ascent followed a route a little right of the fall line from the summit, then moved left near the top, eventually reaching the summit from the left.

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