



## AAC Publications

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### **Piruhata, Southeast Face and South-Southwest Ridge**

Bolivia, Cordillera de Cocapata

**After making the first ascent of the south face of Pico Tunari in June, Rodrigo Lobo and I decided that we simply had to climb all three of the most significant rock walls in the extensive Cordillera de Cocapata:** Tunari's south face, the southeast face of Piruhata, and Hatuncasa's west face. Due to sustaining a little painful frostbite on our ascent of Tunari, we decided to wait for the warmer spring temperatures of November.

We joined the fearless Carlos Regalsky from Cochabamba (after whose brother, Pippo, we named our Tunari route) and James Monypenny from the U.K., who was on a 10-month climbing trip through South America. From Cochabamba a friend drove us two and a half hours to a spot below the southeast face of Piruhata (ca 5,060m, 17° 12' 50" S, 66° 24' 0" W), which lies about 8km north of Pico Tunari. (Piruhata is a Quechua word, and none of us knows what it means; Bolivia has 30 different ethnic groups and 30 different languages within its borders.) We established base camp and then traversed below the entire southeast face of Piruhata. We were dismayed to find it extremely intimidating, with large overhangs that looked impossible to breach. Rodrigo and I found a weak point in the center of the face, while James spotted a line of cracks on the far left, leading to the long but reasonable south-southwest ridge. We left at 7:30 a.m. next morning, Rodrigo and I for the center of the southeast face, Carlos and James for the ridge, which lay well out of our sight.

Our start was loose 6b+ with only sporadic protection. Unusually, we were buzzed closely by a pair of condors. We then simulclimbed 150m to a dihedral in the upper half of the face. It led to large overhangs, the next question mark. The rock was not sound, but the temperature was warm and we climbed in T-shirts. We found a wild crack the we followed through the overhangs. Shortly after 11 a.m. cloud rolled in and we began to feel the first snowflakes. The next pitch was easier, but then we were hit by a violent thunderstorm with hail. I managed to hide beneath an overhang and change my clothes, but Rodrigo, below, was considerably more exposed. Two hours later, in lessening snowfall, a very cold Rodrigo joined me. We saw, far below, Carlos and James descending after completing their route, trying to find a rappel line. They asked if we needed help and we told them no.

The storm eventually eased and Rodrigo pulled out a fine lead, with cold fingers, on the pitch above. To our enormous relief, the next pitch took us out of the steep section of the wall. We simulclimbed difficult ground for 150m, and then at 4:30 p.m. hugged each other like grizzlies on the summit.

We decided to take the safest option and descend the easy north flank, then walk around the mountain to a road. We moved fast, and by dusk had reached the road. A truck driver stopped to give us a lift, then looked at Rodrigo's long hair and drove off. I remarked he must have been afraid, to which Rodrigo replied, "How many bad guys do you know with long hair?" I could only answer that all those I could think of, both famous and less well-known, had short hair. We laughed a lot and continued walking along the road, eventually reaching the point where we could hike back up to our base camp. Here we met Carlos and James, who had seen our lights and come to help with our packs.

We named our route Las Tortugas Tambien Vuelan (Even Turtles can Fly, 6c+). Carlos and James completed the first ascent of the south-southwest ridge (which James called Bolivia's chossiest cliff). There were two hard pitches of around 6b, and the rest rather easier. They were also pinned down by

the scary thunderstorm on the final ridge, and Monypenny's fingers sparked with electricity. It had been an intense day for both teams.

– **Robert Rauch**, Bolivian Tours, [rauchrobert@hotmail.com](mailto:rauchrobert@hotmail.com)

## Images



Carlos Regalsky above the start of the Monypenny-Regalsky route on the south-southwest ridge of Piruhata.



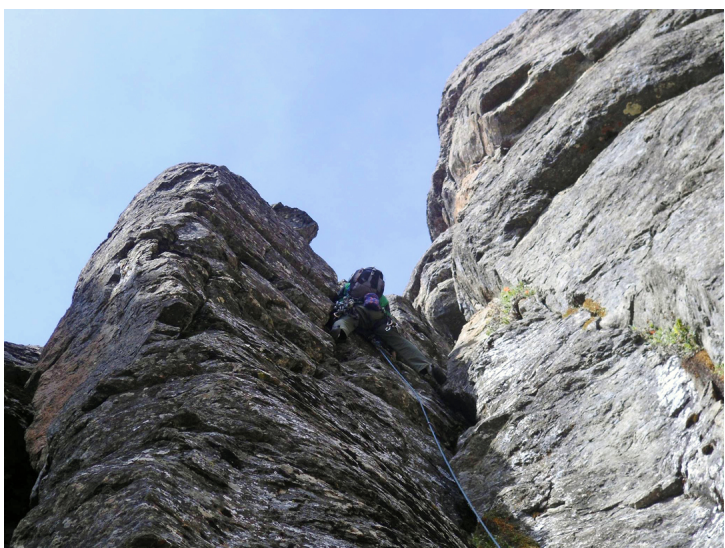
Rodrigo Lobo heads toward the large overhangs on the southeast face of Piruhata. It is still T-shirt weather, but not for long.



Traversing below the southeast face of Piruhata while prospecting for climbable lines.



Rodrigo Lobo waiting out the last part of the thunderstorm on the southeast face of Piruhata. After the weather cleared, Lobo, with very cold fingers, made a fine lead of the steep pitch above.



Rodrigo Lobo starting the first ascent of the southeast face of Piruhata.



Looking across the extensive southeast face of Piruhata from the new route Las Tortugas Tambien Vuelan.



The extensive southeast face of Piruhata, with the two routes climbed to date, both in 2017: Monypenny-Regalsky (left) and Las Tortugas Tambien Vuelan (Lobo-Rauch).

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