



## Huayna Potosí, Double Traverse, Ski Descents

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

**Seeking new ways to explore familiar Huayna Potosí, on which I often guide, I planned an extended ski tour over the 6,088-meter mountain in April.** After spending the night in the Anselme Baud Hut at 5,270m, the highest hut on the south side, I started up the normal route at 4 a.m. At the summit I met Sergio Condori, who wanted to ski the Pala Grande, the 45–50° east-facing slope leading to the summit. We waited an hour, and at 9.30 a.m. deemed the snow soft enough to start our descent. Once down this 170m slope, we parted ways and I headed down alone on the northern slopes. I'd looked at this descent many times while guiding the mountain; with a little bit of imagination it is totally obvious. The first third was quite steep, then it eased and I let the skis take me. I headed down toward the small village of Botijlaca, and eventually, when the skiing ran out, reached a beautiful glacier lake.

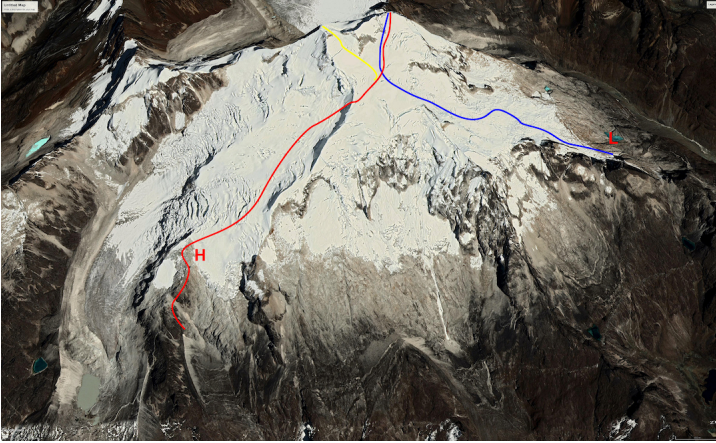
Unfortunately, there was not one square meter of flatness to pitch my lightweight tent. I had no option but to start right back up again. Although the forecast had been favorable, the weather turned bad. The slopes here are vast, and with no visibility I realized I was going round in circles, so stopped and chopped a tent platform out of the steep snow. The night was miserable, but by morning the sky was clear. I quickly found my ski tracks from the day before and continued upwards, climbing with axes and crampons.

I reached the summit of Huayna Potosí at 12.30 p.m., then skied the normal route in perfect snow back to the Anselme Baud Hut. The next day I ascended the normal route once more but broke off left to reach the South Summit (approximately 5,960m), from the top of which I skied back to the Anselme Baud and returned to La Paz the same day.

My three-day "Haute Route" covered 3,600m of ascent and demanding descent, mostly on skis. It is a route of two strongly contrasting halves: the absolute loneliness and silence on the huge northern slopes, and the tourist hotspot of the normal route.

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## Images



Looking more or less west at Huayna Potosí (6,088m). On day one of Robert Rauch's extended ski tour, starting from the Anselme Baud Hut (H), he climbed to the summit via the normal route (red line). He then skied back down the summit slopes (the Pala Grande) and descended to the north (blue line) until reaching a small lake (L). After a bivouac partway back up the mountain, he summited again, descended the normal route to the hut, and then went back up again on day three to climb the south summit of Huayna Potosí (yellow line) and ski back down to the hut.

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