



AAC Publications

Pico Italia, East Face, Día Libre

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

The east face of Pico Italia with the 2019 Ecuadorian-Australian route Día Libre. Photo by Seb Pelletti

While completing part of our IFMGA aspirant guide course, Aldo Coral (Ecuador) and I spotted an unclimbed line on the east face of Pico Italia (ca 5,750m), right of the existing routes. At the time, the face was quite snowy and we anticipated a good mixed line. When we returned four days later, on September 23, 2019, the face had shed almost all its snow and ice, leaving just rock, some of it verglased, which we would now have to climb in our bulky mountain boots.

We had left La Paz at 8 p.m. the previous day. We reached the base camp for Huayna Potosí, rested and refueled for a few hours, and then started up the Glaciar Viejo. Passing all existing routes on the east face, we reached the base of our proposed line on Italia.

Getting onto the route was tricky; we had to dodge ice-covered sections on the first two slabby rock pitches. Once we reached the left-slanting groove line that runs up this section of the wall, and around which our line was based, we climbed two hard pitches: Aldo led a bouldery 6b section, and I led an overhanging 6c pitch to get us onto the crest of the ridge on the right. Two airy pitches took us to the summit ridge, which we followed to the top of the mountain. Protection was scarce on the first few pitches but was good in the upper section. I'd recommend a single rack up to Camalot 3.

Three rappels in a snow chute below the summit led us down to the Glaciar Viejo in between existing routes. We named our route Día Libre (360m, 6c), as it was our only "day off" during the month of our guides' course

— Seb Pelletti, Australia

Images



The east face of Pico Italia with the 2019 Ecuadorian-Australian route Día Libre.



Aldo Coral on the third pitch (5.9) of Día Libre, east face of Pico Italia.



Seb Pelletti on pitch two (5.10) of Día Libre on Pico Italia, looking for a way to dodge the verglased rock in the main groove.



Aldo Coral on the last pitch (5.10) of Día Libre on Pico Italia, climbing an airy arête to the summit ridge.



Aldo Coral on one of the crux pitches of Día Libre, Pico Italia.



The east face of Pico Italia. (1) East face buttress (TD+ 6c, Beisly-Monasterio, 2012). (2) Al Fondo Hay Sitio (6a+, Lobo-Rauch, 2016). (3) Arthritis (TD+ 6a, Beisly-Monasterio, 2013). (4) Día Libre (6c, Coral-Pelletti, 2019).

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