



AAC Publications

Quimsa Cruz, Ski Ascents and Descents

Bolivia, Cordillera Quimsa Cruz

On April 23, Mikiko Fischel, our camp cook Lucrecia Chambi, and I camped by the shores of Laguna Huallatani in the central part of the southern Quimsa Cruz. The following day, Mikiko and I skied the glacier northeast of the lake to reach Coricampana (5,550m, 16.98662°S, 67.33743°W) at the northernmost point of the glacier. We skied to a point around 100 vertical meters below the summit, then put on crampons for the short headwall and knife-edge summit ridge. In descent, we skied the headwall (35°–40°) from the ridge on good snow.

Getting onto this glacier was fairly easy and required about one hour of walking from the end of the mining road on the northwest shore of the lake. Several other peaks, such as Huayna Cuno Collo (5,640m), are accessible from the glacier, but skiing to and from the summits would be difficult due to the rocky and narrow summit ridges. [See AAJ 2020 for a brief history of the peaks above Laguna Huallatani.]

We then moved base camp northwest to the roadside Laguna Octa Khota (Octacota), with its disused Malla Chuma mine, and skied an unnamed peak at the top of the glacier north-northeast of the lake. [This snow peak is around 5,590m and is situated at 16.92111°S, 67.38904°W, immediately east of Cerro Nikko (5,630m), first climbed in 1968. It appears to be unnamed, and while it could be referred to as Cerro Nikko East, it is an independent summit and deserving of an independent name; the names given by the Japanese in 1968 were “unsuitable” for peaks in Bolivia, according to Andean chronicler Evelio Echevarría. The mountain lies northwest of Cerro San Enrique in what is sometimes referred to as the Choquetanga Group, between Atorama and Gigante Grande.] **The glacier here has receded significantly, and one must navigate a newly formed lake and several sections of glacier-polished rock interspersed with glacial debris. However, it is a relatively big glacier by Quimsa Cruz standards, and the skiing was good aside from some ice in the lower part.**

We skied to within 30 vertical meters of the summit, using ice axes at the top, although in hindsight we could have skied all the way. Many other peaks of equal or lesser elevation appear to be skiable from the same glacier.

The scale of ski mountaineering in the Quimsa Cruz is smaller than in the more heavily traveled Cordillera Real, but mining roads allow relatively easy access to the glaciers, and there’s a very good chance that you’ll have the place entirely to yourself.

—Josh Fischel, Bolivia

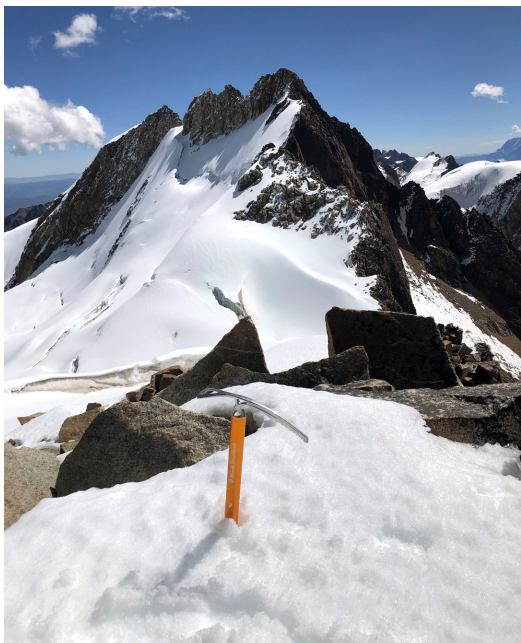
Images



Mikiko Fischel on the Huallatini Glacier with the lake of the same name below.



An idyllic base camp by Laguna Huallatini. (A) Jacha Cuna Collo, at 5,800m the highest peak of the Quimsa Cruz. (B) Huayna Cuno Collo (5,640m). (C) Huallatani (ca 5,600m). (D) Coricampana (5,550m). (E) Anco Collo (5,460m).



Looking west at the main summit of Cerro Nikko from the east summit.

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