



## AAC Publications

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### **La Popa, El Cacomixtle de la Noche**

Mexico, Nuevo León

**I needed a change of scenery. For once, I wanted no glaciers, no heavy backpacks, no wind and cold.** I wanted to climb in shorts. Where there was plenty of limestone and, above all, where you could still explore. So, I and three friends, Gio Ongaro, Simone Pedefferri, and Max Piazza, went to Mexico in February.

When we first traveled to Mexico, in 2015, we felt that energy that only climbing in a place in its infancy can give you. Simone, Marco Maggioni, and I went to El Salto, where we opened a multi-pitch route on the El Chamán face (AAJ 2017). There were only a few climbers, and almost all of us were there to bolt routes.

Now the community of El Salto lives on climbing tourism, there are cafes for climbers, and during the day you meet a lot of people at the crags. It is beautiful, but there is also something missing: that energy in the air given by new places, where you experience more than just the climbing. That's why our main objective in Mexico was again off the beaten path: a new route climbed ground-up on La Popa, where the closest village has only a few inhabitants and no cafes or shops. The east face of La Popa is up to 300m high, almost 3km long, and largely overhanging.

I could tell you about the romance and the ethics of trying to open a route from below. But, unfortunately, it all went wrong. The wall's steepness made it difficult to find a good line, I got injured low on the face, and Simone and Max ended up in a large area of rotten rock. Our attempt stopped after about 50m.

We were back to square one, but still with food and water for ten days. We had to compromise, and we decided to bolt a sport route from above. We wanted to find the most logical and aesthetic line, to give something to the climbing community.

We didn't do anything crazy or extraordinary in the end. We just climbed a route on magnificent limestone, first on technical walls, then on gray overhangs with perfect pockets. A route that, from our point of view, could become a great classic. The route begins about 350m to the right of El Gavilán (Gallagher-Jackson, 1997). We named it El Cacomixtle de la Noche (11 pitches, 5.13b) after an encounter I had one night when I woke suddenly and saw a beautiful and rare cacomixtle (a mammal in the same family as raccoons and coatis) next to our food bag.

—Paolo Marazzi, Italy

[illegible]

Paolo Marazzi during the ground-up attempt on a new route on La Popa, aborted after about 50 meters of climbing.



Max Piazza during the first ascent of Cacomixtle de la Noche (11 pitches, 5.13b) on La Popa.



Paolo Marazzi climbing one of the last pitches on Cacomixtle de la Noche (11 pitches, 5.13b) on La Popa.

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