



## AAC Publications

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### **Nevado Santa Cruz, South Face, Illegal**

Peru, Cordillera Blanca

**Nathan Heald and I had the good fortune** to climb the mythical Nevado Santa Cruz (6,259m, sometimes called Pukaraju), made legendary by Nicolas Jaeger's 1978 solo ascent of the south face. From Cashapampa, we approached via the Paccharuri Valley with the only mule driver who accepted the challenge, Aquiles. He remembered the route, which hadn't been used for ten years. It took us two days and a machete to reach base camp.

After bivouacking in the moraine for one night, Nate and I began our climb at 9:30 p.m. on July 2. The first two pitches featured 90° mixed climbing that was difficult to protect. We then entered the sustained face of 65° snow that took pickets well. The wind never stopped blowing, and we only got one hour of sun.

On the upper pitches we climbed hard ice (AI4) and traversed through loose snow to the final gully. We reached the summit ridge at 4 p.m., exhausted, and crossed several crevasses and false summits before reaching the true summit at 6:30 p.m. on July 3. We descended by the same route, making 15 rappels, and returned to base camp at 4 a.m., about 30 hours after leaving. Our line is called **Illegal (1,000m, TD+ AI4 M5)**. [The 2025 route likely shares ground near the start with the 1984 route by Ecuadorian climbers Ramiro Navarrete and Marco Suarez, who angled left on the face to eventually join the southwest ridge. The 2025 route is to the left and completely independent of the direct line climbed by a German team in 1977, then soloed with variations by Nicolas Jaeger (France) in 1978.]

**—Josue Sanchez, Peru**

## Images



Nevado Santa Cruz (6,259m), with the approximate line of Illegal (2025) on the south face. The southwest ridge of Nevado Santa Cruz, first climbed in 1980, faces the camera. Santa Cruz Chico is to the left.

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