



AAC Publications

Nevado Mururaju, South Face, Con Mucha Lechuga

Peru, Cordillera Blanca

The south face of Nevado Mururaju with the two 2025 lines. Expedition Photo

After more than a month in the Cordillera Blanca, we were a little tired but still had time for another climb. We wanted something away from the beaten path, and after lots of research we decided on the south face of Nevado Mururaju (a.k.a. Pongos Sur, 5,688m). We only discovered two routes on this side of the mountain: the south face direct (1999) and a Slovenian route on the far right side of the face (2010), both poorly documented.

Early on July 23, our group of five—Necj Cerkovnik, Matic Jezeršek, Hana Zelič, Matevž Zevnik, and Jure Zidar—left our camp at 4,900 meters, approached the wall in about two hours, and started climbing at sunrise. We climbed the first two pitches up a couloir, which rose into a snow barrier where passage was made possible by a steep chimney with rock on the sides. We continued for two pitches on excellent snow and ice and found ourselves 100 meters below a large ice serac.

Here, our two parties separated. Jure and Necj decided to climb our planned route, which began with a long leftward traverse followed by a climb up to the west ridge. There, they were disappointed to see that giant cornices made passage to the summit too risky. They descended by the west ridge and then a gully back to the glacier, making several rappels.

Meanwhile, at the point where the first team traversed left, Matevž, Hana, and Matic continued straight up, climbing two pitches in good condition before reaching the upper serac. They attempted to find an exit to the right, but after one pitch this proved impossible due to unstable sugar snow. They retreated with a 30-meter rappel and looked to the left. After two hours of demanding climbing in poor snow, they reached an ice tunnel that led farther left and provided an easier route to exit the face. The second team topped out about three hours after the first and were pleased to find tracks and rappel stations on the descent route.

Both groups exited the south face onto the west ridge at 5,608 meters. We called these lines Con Mucha Lechuga (550m, TD IV+ 70°–90°). For us it was an amazing adventure and a personal success—we leave the “new route has to finish on mountaintop” debate to others. [Editor’s Note: The first half of these ascents very likely followed the direct route up the south face climbed on July 31, 1999, by Y. Gal (Israel) and A. Saibene (Argentina), who called their route Ice Fingers (500m, MD 80°). After a couple of hundred meters, the 1999 team continued directly toward the summit where the 2025 teams angled left to the west ridge. The 2010 Slovenian route ascended the broken glacier to the right of the main south face, then up the east ridge to the top.]

**—Necj Cerkovnik and Matic Jezeršek, Slovenia,
with additional info from Sevi Bohorquez, Spain**

Images



Nejc Cerkovnik leading first steeper pitch on Con Mucha Lechuga in good snow conditions. Matic Jezeršek



Hana Zelič in a narrow chimney that allowed the climbers to reach easier slopes in the middle of the south face of Nevado Mururaju.



The last pitch of the left variant on Con Mucha Lechuga.



Dead-end attempt to climb out on the right side of the serac blocking the right variant on Con Mucha Lechuga.



Entering the tunnel that allowed the right-hand variant climbers to move beneath the serac and exit the south face.



Descending the west ridge of Nevado Mururaju.



The south face of Nevado Mururaju with the two 2025 lines. After reaching the west ridge, the climbers descended from there. The first half of these ascents likely followed a line climbed in 1999 by Y. Gal and A. Saibene, who continued up and right to the summit.

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