



AAC Publications

Nevado Ausangate, northwest face, variation (no summit)

Peru, Cordillera Vilcanota

On July 6-8, Edwin Espinoza Sotelo, Luis Crispín, and I climbed the northwest face of Nevado Ausangate by a variation to the Dueber-Nave-Zebrowski [AAJ 1984]. We took two days to approach—first camping at Laguna Azulcocha in the valley formed by the neighboring Cerro Percocaya, then at the base of the northwest face. We climbed and descended the peak in a day on July 8.

On July 6, Edwin Espinoza Sotelo and I left Cuzco for the herding community of Pacchanta (ca 4,300m) to meet Luis Crispín and attempt the north face of Nevado Ausangate. The next day we hiked to Laguna Azulcocha, which lies at the foot of Ausangate, to make our base camp. That night we burned an offering to the Apu for safe passage on our climb.

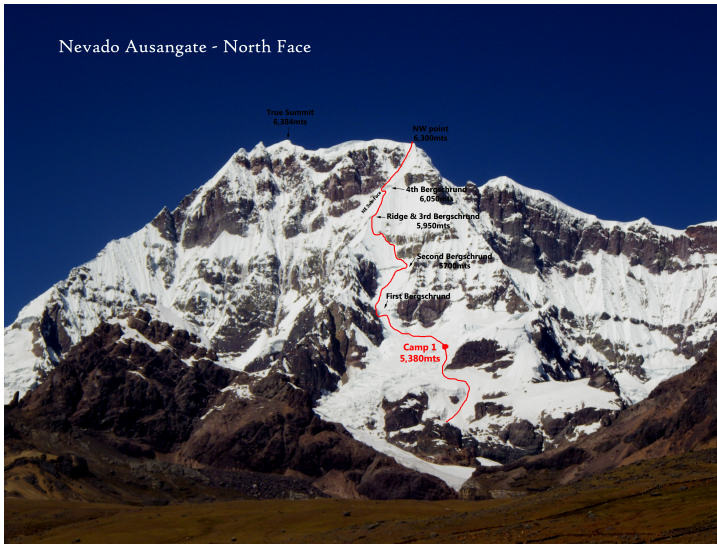
On July 7 we established a high camp at ca 5,380m on the northwest face of the mountain. The climb to this point was relatively straightforward. From Laguna Azulcocha we followed the moraine directly toward the mountain and the valley formed by the neighboring Cerro Percocaya. Once on the glacier, easy snow climbing brought us to a large platform on the glacier, on the right side of the broad north face. The afternoon was spent studying the face and hypothesizing how to pass an immense bergschrund on the line first climbed by Dueber, Nave, and Zebrowski.

We left the tent at 1 a.m. on July 8 carrying the bare minimum. Easily navigating crevasses for the first part, we ran into a problem at the first bergschrund: a crevasse about three meters wide running the length of the glacier. I found a bypass on the extreme left side of the broad snow gully, where glacier met the rock. A 15m chute of steep mixed climbing brought me above the obstacle. We then made our way up easy snow to the next bergschrund. This 'schrund was also too wide to pass, but luckily I found a way through on the far right side. Once above this the technical climbing started. We skirted some rock walls on the left side of the gully, then reached hanging icicles below a large shelf a little more than halfway up.

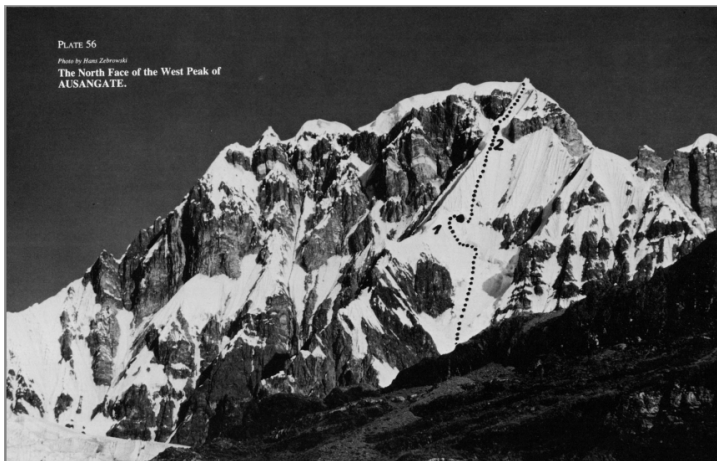
Leaving our hideout, I traversed left into one of several steep ice runnels. Eventually I reached another tricky bergschrund, where an exposed 4m section of vertical ice granted passage. We then climbed up 65° snow, reaching a fourth bergschrund about three-quarters of the way up the face. We passed this one on the left-hand side, close to the rock, and then began the final rope lengths up the face (70°). After simul-climbing for another hour we topped out on a crest above the face at 12:30 p.m. Visibility was at a minimum, with no view of the west summit, so we descended from here by downclimbing and rappels.

[Editor's note: The route taken by Crispín, Heal, and Sotelo mostly follows the line of **Deuber-Nave-Zebrowski (AAJ 1984)**, a route which was **possibly climbed by an Italian team in 1982, but not to the summit (AAJ 1985)**. Heald and team made significant variations at the many bergschrunds to negotiate significantly altered terrain, which often involved steep ice and mixed climbing. Although they only reached the upper ridgeline, their ascent was much faster than the previous ones, which required bivouacs en route.]

Images



A detailed topo of the route climbed by Heald and partners.



The route reported by Dueber, Nave, Zebrowski.

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