



AAC Publications

Nevado Sahuasiray, southwest face

Peru, Cordillera Urubamba

The large massif of Nevado Sahuasiray (5,818m) is an impressive sight while traveling by car from Cusco. Sahuasiray and its neighbor Nevado Chicon tower almost 3,000m above the cities of Urubamba and Calca. The first ascent of Sahuasiray was by an Italian expedition, which climbed the southeast face/east ridge and stood on both summits, the northern one being approximately 50m higher (AAJ 1964). Since then, the only known attempt was by a party hoping to climb the southwest ridge (AAJ 1972). I previously thought Sahuasiray was the highest in Cordillera Urubamba however, my recent GPS reading on Nevado Veronica (5,911m GPS) suggests that peak is higher.

The first time I visited the valley on the west side of Sahuasiray was in October 2013, when I made it as far as the herding community of Cancha Cancha. From the village, the views of the three peaks Chicon, Sirijuani, and Sahuasiray intrigued me for their beauty and accessibility. I returned a month later with Erich Nordt Orihuela to explore a route on the west face. However, the climbing on this face looked difficult and it was affected by constant rockfall.

After the rainy season, Erich, Eduardo Baca, and I left Cusco on April 8 for an attempt on the southwest face. We took a taxi to Hauran to meet an arriero who would help us with our gear. The trek up to Cancha Cancha went quickly, but there the community leader forced the arriero to unload our gear from his horse in the village. They seemed afraid of any responsibility should something happen to us. It took us about two hours from the village to reach a base camp under two large rocks that form a roof. On April 9 we carried our gear to the top of a rock buttress at ca 5,300m. The climbing was not as difficult as expected, and atop the buttress was a snowfield where we found a flat spot for our high camp. From here, we had to go down to go up, and we found easy access from camp down a snow chute onto the glacier.

Erich and I left camp at midnight after Eduardo opted out of the climb. I fixed our extra rope down the 40m snow chute so we could use it to come back up on our return. On the glacier we made quick progress over hard snow. After reaching the southwest aspect of the peak, the snow became knee-deep and the crevasses more complicated as we ascended. A couple of hundred meters below the summit, we reached a large, wide crevasse. At this point it was about 5:45 a.m. and Erich did not have the energy to keep going; he decided to wait while I went to the summit. I followed the length of crevasse left toward a ridge where a convenient snow bridge allowed me to cross the crevasse with ease. This was followed by 60m of climbing up hard snow (60-70°). The snow became unconsolidated as I neared the corniced ridge. Once on the ridge, I found good hard snow on the north side as I climbed 150m to the summit (AD/D). It was 7:24 a.m.

After a bit of rest I collected my wits and prepared for the downclimb. I found Erich waiting for me in the sun after I crossed the crevasse, and after retracing our route down the glacier we hauled ourselves back up to our high camp. From there, we loaded our packs and descended the rock buttress. It took us a couple of hours to reach our base camp under the rocks, and a five-hour slog brought us back to the road in Huaran.

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Images



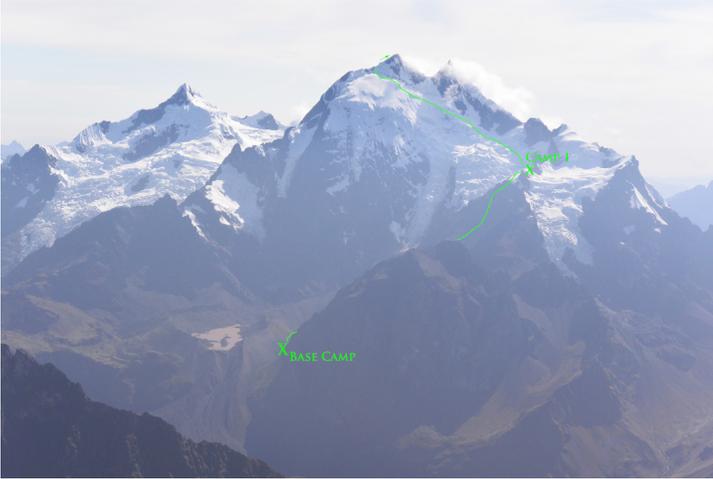
Sunrise from Nevado Sahuasiray's southwest face, with the peaks Salcantay (back left, in the Cordillera Vilcabamba), Veronica (back right), Chicon (front left), and Sirijuani (front right).



The final corniced ridge up to the summit of Nevado Sahuasiray.



The narrow and exposed summit of Nevado Sahuasiray (5,818m).



An overview of the route up the southwest face of Nevado Sahuasiray (5,818m) with camps marked. Nevado Chainopuerto is pictured left.



The glacier leading up the southwest face of Nevado Sahuasiray (5,818m) with arrows marking the route.

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