



AAC Publications

Nevado Huayna Ausangate, New Route

Peru, Cordillera Vilcanota

Huayna Ausangate is the name used for two different peaks on the western side of the Cordillera Vilcanota. One of them is a subpeak of Nevado Ausangate that is located two miles west of the main summit, along its west ridge, and has a height of 5,700m. I believe this subpeak was first reached in 1953 during the main peak's first ascent (AAJ 1954). Carlos Buhler climbed a direct route up the west face in 1977. There have been a few other ascents, the most recent in June 2015 by local guide Daniel Chillihuani and two Swiss clients.

The other Huayna Ausangate is a pointy, prominent summit at the western end of the Colque Cruz massif, with a height of about 5,600m. Although not as high as its neighbors, it is steeper on all sides, and mixed climbing is required to reach the top. There are only a few references to this peak in past expedition accounts, and I believe it had been climbed three times previously. The first was by Fritz Mörz, Heinz Steinmetz, Jürgen Wellenkamp, and Heinrich Harrer in 1953, during the trip on which they made the first ascents of Ausangate, Cayangate, Colque Cruz, Jampa I and II, and Surimani. Huayna Ausangate was covered with more ice then, quite noticeable when you compare their photo with one I took at almost the same spot on the west ridge. The second ascent came in 1971 when the French Alpine Club was active in the area; Léon Carron and Annik Wates climbed it from a camp on the northwest side (AAJ 1972). In 1985 the Italian Alpine Club made a handful of ascents from the north side of the Colque Cruz chain. Their report notes that Italo Bazzani and Livio Lanari climbed "extremely steep ice via the north face" of Huayna Ausangate to establish a new route (AAJ 1987).

During my attempts to climb the south face of Colque Cruz in 2014, the sight of Huayna Ausangate raised interest every time. The south face looked quite dangerous low down due to a rock wall topped by a large serac that would have to be passed to reach the upper glacier. I figured an easier approach would be from the north.

On September 27, Alexis Trudel (Canada) and I left Cusco and took the bus to Tinki, where we met Luis Crispin (Peru) and bought the last supplies for the trip. A taxi took us up toward Perhuayani Pass on the interoceanic highway, and we got out at the community of Yanacancha. Luis' father, Alejandro, and brother Macario were waiting for us with their horses near a restaurant on the roadside. After three hours we arrived at a base camp on the northwest side of Huayna Ausangate at ca 4,900m, in a flat moraine next to a clear lagoon the size of a football field. Here, we found the circular stone camps of one of the previous expeditions.

On the 28th, Alexis, Luis, and I took our climbing gear up a moraine ridge to the icefall coming down from the northwest side of the peak, which seemed to be the easiest access. We explored a way through the crevasses, so we could make quick work of it the next day, and left our equipment cached. We departed camp at 1 a.m. on September 29, and after weaving around and jumping a few crevasses we reached the north side of the west ridge, where we climbed 300m of easy mixed. We gained the west ridge at about the exact spot where the Austrians had taken their photo in 1953. It was light outside by now, but we were in the shadow of the mountain and there was still 300m of climbing on the summit pyramid to overcome.

Alexis decided to stay on the ridge and wait for us due to an altitude headache. With many cornices on the ridge, we made a short rappel onto its south side. Luis led first, heading up 60m of poor snow to reach a rock wall. From there we alternated 30m pitches of mixed climbing. The angle was about

70°, with good rock but bad ice and six inches of loose snow. It took us five pitches to top out. The clouds had come up from the Amazon, but there was still very good visibility, and Laguna Singrenacocha looked surreal below. We stayed for half an hour. Around 10 a.m. I made a V-thread in the summit ice and we began rappelling down the southwest face, not wanting to go down the ascent route because of falling rock. Near a bergschrund, Luis and I struggled back up the ridge to meet Alexis. As we downclimbed to the icefall it started snowing hard, and we lost our way a few times. After jumping a few icy crevasses we made it out to the moraine and down to the tent by 4 p.m. Our route up the north face, west ridge, and south face is 600m, D AI3 M4.

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Images



The Colque Cruz chain from the west, with Huayana Ausangate on the left.



Crossing a bergschrund up the upper south side of Huayana Ausangate. The peak in the far distance is Kimsachata; the two closer peaks on the right are Inchaichuni and Payachata.



Heading up toward the mixed climbing on the summit pyramid.



Mixed ground on the summit pyramid.



Luis Crispin topping out a pitch on the summit pyramid with Nevados Kiru and Colque Cruz in the background.



The final pitch to the summit of Huayana Ausangate.



The route from the west ridge (pictured here) to the upper south side is shown.



The view of the start of the route up the north side of Huayana Ausangate from the team's base camp.

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