



AAC Publications

Illiniza Sur, Southwest Face, Razuyaku

Ecuador, Andes

On September 19–20, Nicolas Davalos and I climbed what may be a new route on the rarely visited southwest face of Illiniza Sur (5,263m) in Ecuador's western Andes. This face, according to our local sources, was first climbed by Jorge Anhalzer and companions in 1977 and repeated in 1998. A second route was climbed by Thomas Hunt, Jorge Montopoli, and Delia Montopoli in 1983 (AAJ 1984). These routes likely ascend the rock features, ramps, and couloirs to the right of our line; it's possible our routes share terrain at the start and near the finish.

I first tried to access the southwest face from the refugio on the north side some years ago; however, it is difficult to do so and requires a lot of descending. This time, we approached from the plains above the town of Planchaloma and hiked for a full day to a high camp at the base of the southwest face. (The description of the approach in AAJ 1984 is similar to ours.)

The next day, we ascended a short couloir above camp and then traversed left to reach a series of steep snow ramps and steps of ice and mixed terrain. The climb took about seven hours to the summit. However, it is totally condition-dependent. We were lucky to find exceptionally good water ice conditions from a prior melt-freeze cycle. We call the route Razuyaku (400m, TD WI5 M5), which means "ice water" in Quechua.

On our descent down the opposite side of the mountain, we encountered a major problem: The Ecuadorian Ministry of Environment accused us of trespassing. As of this writing, political changes in Ecuador have formally permitted commercially guided climbing or recreational climbing on established routes only, though enforcement of this rule varies. We do not agree with these measures, but we recommend future travelers stay informed of current regulations.

— Felipe Proaño, Ecuador

Editor's Note: The normal route up Illiniza Sur ascends snow and ice ramps on north-northwest face just left of an area of seracs. A more difficult route, La Rampa, ascends the north face; however, glacial recession has made ascents of this once popular route exceedingly rare. To the right of the normal route is La Araña, which ascends the west flank of the mountain (AAJ 1997).

Wrapping to the right, the routes on the southwest face include the 2020 route Razuyaku, the 1977 route, and the 1983 route. Further right, the south ridge and southeast flank form a shorter but steep and rocky wall. The south ridge was first ascended in 1973 by Joseph Berge and Marco Cruz (AAJ 1974). There are at least four routes on the 200m southeast wall climbed by Nicolas Corti, Andres Herrera, and various partners, with difficulties to TD+ 6b+. The route known as Celso Zuquillo (PD+) climbs the east ridge. In addition, Santiago Quintero climbed a solo new route on the east face (date unknown).

— Erik Rieger

Images



The general line of Razuyaku (400m, TD WI5 M5) as viewed from the west.



The southwest face of Illiniza Sur (5,263m), showing the 2020 route Razuyaku (400m, TD WI5 M5), which means “ice water” in Quechua. The 1977 route and 1983 route likely share a similar start but then climb straight up or via the couloir feature to the right, whereas the 2020 route climbs well to the left.



Felipe Proaño on the last steep sections of Razuyaku (400m, TD WI5 M5) on the southwest face of Illiniza Sur (5,263m).



Felipe Proaño at high camp on the slopes below the southwest face of Illiniza Sur.



The south ridge and southeast flank of Illiniza Sur (5,263m) form a shorter but steep and rocky wall. The south ridge was first ascended in 1973 by Joseph Berge and Marco Cruz (AAJ 1974). There are at least four routes on the 200m southeast wall climbed by Nicolas Corti, Andres Herrera, and various partners, with difficulties to TD+ 6b+. The route known as Celso Zuquillo (PD+) climbs the east ridge.

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