



AAC Publications

Ranrapalca, Northwest Face, Ya Pe' Cholo

Peru, Cordillera Blanca

In 2022, we made an attempt on the unclimbed northwest face of Ranrapalca (6,162m), but we'd barely reached its base before we retreated, exhausted. We had been active in the Cordillera Blanca for two months and found the ascent too difficult in our current state.

We decided to return at the end of the 2023 season with Micher Quito, a friend and guide in Peru. The uncertainty of what we were going to encounter on Ranrapalca was enormous. Above all, we were worried about the quality of the rock and how many days the climb would take us.

We arrived in the Cordillera Blanca just a week before attempting Ranrapalca and acclimatized quickly on two beautiful, snowcapped mountains: Yanapaccha (5,460m) and Cashan (5,716m). As a local guide, Micher was very acclimatized. It was late August, very late in the season. Ranrapalca was quite bare of snow, and the weather forecasts were not very encouraging, but we still wanted to give it a try.

The northwest face is comprised of a big rock wall to the right of the snow and ice routes on the north and northeast faces. On August 29, Eneko led the initial nine pitches while we (Iker and Micher) hauled the packs. The climb began with some slabs that were difficult to protect and not easy with the weight we were carrying. Little by little, we gained height. After 13 hours of climbing, we reached a bivy site at 5,700m. It was small and uncomfortable, and we couldn't sleep a wink due to the continual rockfall. The next morning, we decided to change our planned route and move left onto a spur that seemed more protected.

We began very early on the second day. By midmorning, we were up on the spur, and we saw the top getting closer, but the climb seemed endless. Iker led all the pitches until the finishing slabs, where Micher took over.

Once atop the wall, we encountered several large crevasses on the summit slopes. Micher was essential to help us avoid falling into them, as he is well accustomed to this type of terrain. We reached the summit around 4 p.m., with a storm on our heels.

On the way down the normal route, our biggest problems began. It started to snow, with poor visibility. Thank goodness Micher knew the descent well.

Halfway down, Eneko was hit by a stone that could have killed him, but luckily only grazed his helmet. He was unconscious for several seconds, and he finished the descent with severe dizziness and pain in his neck and head.

At 2 a.m., after countless rappels, we arrived safely at the Longoni refuge (5,000m), where our friend Alex was waiting for us with very hot soup.

We named the route Ya Pe' Cholo, which is a Peruvian slang term for an affirmative, roughly translating as "Yes, Amigo" (900m vertical, 1,200m of climbing, 6b 80°).

— Eneko and Iker Pou, Spain

Images



Ya Pe' Cholo (900m, 6b 80°) and the bivouac site on the northwest face of Ranrapalca. The descent was by the normal route, the northeast face, off-picture to the left.

Article Details

Author	Eneko and Iker Pou
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	98
Page	191
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions