



AAC Publications

Nevado Sajama: Complete Ski Descent

Bolivia, Cordillera Occidental

On April 17, Erik Olerud and I skied virtually the entire northwest ridge of Sajama (6,542m), Bolivia's tallest peak, in excellent snow conditions. We descended approximately 1,000m on skis from the summit to about 5,450m (250m below the high camp). We removed our skis for a short traverse across a narrow ridge at about 6,000m but managed to ski a steep couloir (at least 50°) in the headwall below this section. Aside from some hard snow and variable conditions just below the summit, we enjoyed soft corn snow conditions for the entire route.

The previous day, we started from the usual parking location in the Queñua forest (-18.10167, -68.95548) at 4,350 meters and hiked to the high camp (5,700m) with two porters. At 5 a.m. we left camp and climbed the northwest ridge primarily using crampons, relying on ice axes and a rope to navigate the steep headwall. We put on our skis for only the last few hundred feet after crossing a massive crevasse near the summit. We arrived on top around 12 p.m., allowing the sun to soften the snow on most of the route.

After conferring with Bolivian IFMGA guides, we believe our ski descent of the northwest ridge is the most complete to date. Previous descents have covered the 450m directly off the summit.

—Josh Fischel, USA

Images



The northwest ridge of Nevado Sajama is the ridge on the left side of the image. The high camp is located in the lower of the two notches. The headwall couloir is visible between the last two rocky sections before the snow dome.



High camp at 5,700 meters on Nevado Sajama. The northwest ridge route goes up between the two obvious rock features and then ascends a steep headwall that is partially visible behind the rock tower on the left. The remainder of the route climbs the snow dome to the summit.



On the way to high camp on Nevado Sajama with two porters.



Excellent corn snow conditions above the high camp on Nevado Sajama's northwest ridge. The headwall is visible to the right of the rock feature in the upper left of the image.

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