

of the gully were two pitches with ice sections of 70° to 85°. The line reaches the bottom of the headwall and turns left onto a snow ramp (55°, with some dry). Then the line ascends a steep, narrow gully (90°). The first crux, "Cross on your Feet," is a 90° M5 pitch with small icicles. The next pitch and second crux, "The Belly," is a 90° wall which leads toward a breach in a snow gully. However, just before reaching this breach, follow a snow ledge (50/55°) to the right for almost two pitches. A 70° M4 pitch to the right gives access to the central gully, which cuts into a second breach (60° to 75°). Escape right just before it. You are at the bottom of the rocky foresummit. A horizontal ledge takes you right for two easy pitches to the summit snow ridge and the normal route. Follow it to the top via snow and a rocky step. Descend by downclimbing the northeast ridge, always on the right side of the ridge.

Illampu is located in the Cordillera Real, close to the village of Sorata. It's a remote summit, with a three-day approach to base camp (17,400'). La Conjuración des Imbeciles (The Confederacy of Dunces, 870m/2,860', VI M4 WI5) is a great, aesthetic line that we established on June 9. It follows the impressive central gully of the north face. One-push style being the fastest and the safest way to climb this route, we reduced our gear to four ice screws, four pitons, four Friends, some nuts, one 200' 7.7mm rope, a little water, and two goose gilets. Such a way of climbing allows you to be fast, but only if everything is going okay. The start is the same as that of the 1978 Mesili Route, which heads to the left side of the face and surmounts three seracs to reach the foresummit (6,344m/20,810'). This face is now far drier than in 1978. The first part of the couloir we climbed is now a six-pitch gully with 85° ice steps and M4 dry-tooling sections. The gully reaches the bottom of a 50m-high serac. This, the crux, was a 70m pitch (WI5, with some M4 to start). Above a 150m, 55° snow slope, head right to a second serac. Climb it on the left (70°). Then climb snow below the last serac for one 70° pitch. Climb to the left, on snow with mixed sections, to avoid a rocky headwall. Follow a secondary ridge to the foresummit, which we reached in 7hrs, 30min from the start. From the foresummit we reached the main summit in two hours via a corniced ridge with no protection. We had 30 minutes of daylight left when we summited, and began down climbing the normal, Southwest Ridge route (III 65°). It wasn't easy finding our way through the icefall, avoiding ghostly crevasses, with a lamp that only gave 15 minutes of light, but without bivy gear we couldn't afford a night out. The only solution was to find the tent, which we did around 10 p.m.

We had an exceptional journey, an adventure that brought us to wild places without a soul around. We pushed our dream to the end, to be sure that life was worth being lived. The spirit of your climb is still more important than the climb itself. As long as there are climbers willing to escape from trails, adventure will exist.

SEBASTIEN CONSTANT, *France*

## CORDILLERA QUIMSA CRUZ

*The Big Wall, The AA Crack.* After all the usual hassles of overweight and oversized baggage, and of making connections on the long trip from Yosemite, Donny Alexander and I arrived in the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz in June, just as the wet season was ending and winter was beginning.

When we got everything to our Laguna Blanca base camp, I spent the next couple of days eating ciproflaxen-like candy, trying to counteract the effects of something I ate in La Paz. After living no longer seemed such a bad idea, we humped a load into Mocoya Valley, which is at

about 15,700 feet. There is no water where we bivied, so we only brought up enough supplies for about a week. However, that was enough time to do what we are pretty sure is a first ascent (The AA Crack, IV 5.8 C2) on The Big Wall. When we got to the base of the most-obvious line, we saw slings 150 feet up. But it was such a beautiful line, we decided to climb it anyway. After following low angle slabs, I got to an old anchor consisting of a pin and a tied-off horn. Donny led the next pitch, about 30 feet up coming to three old tied-off Austrian pins, apparently a bail point. (Above, we saw no further evidence of the route having been climbed). A 20-foot section of rock on that pitch is poor quality, and both Donny and I took 30-foot whippers. The third pitch follows a gorgeous left-facing, left-leaning orange/gold corner system for 160 feet. The fourth pitch starts in the same corner, which turns into a three-foot-deep, shoulder-width-wide water groove. Fortunately, the crack we had been following continues up the back of the groove. The fourth pitch ends on a ledge after 170 feet. The top is then another 185 feet of broken climbing, with occasional 5.8ish moves. Because the crack we followed was somewhat dirty, and rotten in a few places, the going was slow. Climbing at 16,000 feet was also probably a factor. Each lead took about five hours, most of which involved cleaning placements, then trying to cry the dirt out of our eyes and sneeze it out of our noses. Because of the slow going we debated going back to Laguna Blanca for the portaledge, but decided not to because the wall is only 800 feet high. So every night we rapped down and in the morning jugged back up to our high point.

After finishing the route we walked back down to Laguna Blanca. After a couple of rest days, we hiked back to Mocoaya Valley for another week, hoping for more climbing there, then on Cuernos de Diablo in the next valley east. But my climbing trip soon ended when a hold broke and I fell, injuring my ankle, on Penis Pinnacle. A few days later I played belay slave for Donny on short crack climbs above our bivy. Then we hiked (I gimped) back to Laguna Blanca.

Mocoaya Valley has lots of potential, though I recommend going in Bolivian spring rather than winter. We did not get to check out the next valley north, which supposedly has had no



The northeast tower of Nordostl Turm, showing the original German route of 1987 (the ridge on the cliff's upper right), and the Bach-Burns route in 2002 (rising from the lower left). Cameron Burns

development. Directly north of The Big Wall are several formations up to 500 feet high, with beautiful splitter cracks. The problem, beside my ankle, was that it would be 80° in the sun, 25 in the shade. Since it was winter, the north side of the valley only saw the sun for about an hour every morning. Therefore, snow from the wet season was not melting, and cracks and ledges had snow and ice. Winters are dry, though, so I imagine that when those formations get spring sun, they become very climbable.

I give many thanks to the American Alpine Club, not only for the grant they were so kind to give, but also for their support through my pretrip changes. Although our trip did not work out exactly as planned, we had a great time and say thank you very much for helping make it happen!

LYNNEA ANDERSON, AAC

*Araca Group, various ascents.* Mike Walker, Cameron Burns (Basalt Bigfoot Coalition), and I spent June 29–July 10 in the Mocoaya and Teacota valleys of the northern Araca Group of the Quimsa Cruz. While there, we spent most of our time bivouacked under a large boulder, avoiding high winds, cold, and driving snow. We did manage three ascents, two of which were firsts.

In La Paz we hired a 4x4 Jeep to drive us eight hours to the depressed mining village of Viloco, on the western slopes of the Quimsa Cruz. Once in Viloco we solicited the locals for directions north to the Mocoaya Valley, where we established the first in a series of unseasonably wet camps. From the Mocoaya Valley we employed a passing miner, Juan Maydana Choque, his sons, and their two mules to assist us over two passes to the Teacota Valley and the eastern slopes of this jaw-dropping range.

On July 7, the weather began clearing, and so did our minds. Cam and I climbed a direct route (2,800', IV 5.9) up Point 5,304m, referred to as the Northeast Tower (Nordostl Turm) by the 1987 German Bolivia expedition. The descent was straight back down via sand-filled gullies and rappels. On July 9, with clear skies and warmer temperatures, Cam and I climbed Hamburguesa Daydreams (1,200', III 5.7) on a huge slab of rock just west of the Northeast Tower and part of the same complex of rock. The descent was a walk off to the west. During our stay we also climbed a nice, small, Bugaboos-like tower (that may have been previously climbed)—mostly scrambling, one pitch of moderate rock—just north of the Pico Penis, in a blizzard, via the east (Amazon) side.

On July 10 the snow returned and so did Juan, his sons, and the mules for our trip back to Viloco. We returned to La Paz on July 11th via the local bus system, which is a story in itself.

BENNY BACH, *Team Rio de Caca*

*Various ascents and descents.* Wade McKoy, Porter Fox, Hal Thomson, Ptor Spriceneiks, and I found ourselves in the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz last June. A bit of ski mountaineering the main goal. A few peaks bagged. No signs of any other climbers or skiers. Bissell and Ptor on the south-east face of Korichuma (18,200'), rated at 60° but more like between 50° and 55°. Perfectly beautiful, exposed face. An enjoyable solo climb. A bit of ice. Semibreakable crust on the face, but good enough for a ski descent. No falls allowed. Super fun. Chamonix-like spires, emerald-green high alpine lakes, first descents, receding glaciers (like my hairline), and five great friends. Summits with swirling clouds. Laughing uncontrollably with Porter. A four-foot tall, friendly farmer selling us a lamb and potatoes, and us devouring it in an afternoon. Stomach ache. Llama poo fires at night, with Wade shooting star trails. Beautiful. Pretty easy. A paradise indeed.

Also climbed and skied Bitch's Brew (17,600'), Porter Fox and Bissell Hazen on a mellow, rolling glacier route. Ptor Spriceneiks on Cerro Yaypuri. An exposed, perfect first ski descent. Wade McKoy, Hal Thomson, and Ptor on a nameless peak on the far right of the valley.

BISSELL HAZEN



The sunny southeast face of Korichuma (18,200'), with its amazing ski slopes. Wade McKoy