

several difficult crevasses. Once at the summit at 12:30 p.m. we began the difficult part of the day: descending the "regular" *Figure 5* route. After six rappels anchored by imaginative counter-balances, rime bollards, and a threaded boulder, we arrived at the lower glacier. Dehydrated from the grueling equatorial heat, we stumbled back to camp at 9 p.m. The Connelly-Stock route is Grade 4, 65 degrees.

JOE STOCK, *unaffiliated*

VENEZUELA

Mt. Roraima, German Route, and Bungle in the Jungle. In December, our team of Zac Barr, Corey Nielsen, Peter Mortimer, and photographer Ben Watkins traveled to Mt. Roraima to attempt to free climb the unrepeatable aid line *The Prow*. The route follows a 600-meter overhanging buttress on the most remote part of Mt. Roraima. Roraima, at 2800 meters, is the highest of over 100 tepuys, large mesas that dot the 500,000-square-kilometer Gran Sabana in southeastern Venezuela. As a result of the difficult access, the vast majority of the tepuys have not been explored, let alone climbed. The ascent of *The Prow*, made in 1973 by a British team that included Joe Brown and Don Whillans, accessed the buttress through the Guyana jungle from the east. The climb and its epic approach were immortalized by fellow team member Hamish MacInnes' book, *Climb to the Lost World*, and by a BBC film. We would attempt to follow the trekker's trail from the western Venezuelan side, and then navigate the 15 kilometers around Roraima through the jungle. Failing this, we would hike to the top up the trekker's trail on west side, traversing the flat-topped summit in search of a means of descent.

When we first arrived in Santa Elena, Venezuela, the launching point for trips into the Gran Sabana, we were told that rock climbing was no longer permitted. The Venezuelan government had recently ceded control of the Gran Sabana region to the indigenous Pemón Indians, and access to Roraima was restricted to hikers accompanied by Pemón guides. We also heard that arriving at the base of *The Prow* through the jungle was virtually impossible.

Posing as adventurous biologists, we persuaded the local helicopter pilot to secretly ferry a loaded haul bag to the summit. This would allow us to innocently pass the Pemón entrance station with only standard backpacking gear. Facing a 36-hour window in which to reach the proposed meeting point on time, we hurriedly packed up. We were detained at the park entrance over a quarrel between the ranger and our Venezuelan companion, Yupi, who had had an affair with a Pemón woman from the village. After losing an entire day, we were punished further by receiving only six days' permission to stay in the park. Our rendezvous with the illegal gear was in jeopardy, plus we needed at least 12 days to accomplish our goal. Fearing the worst (our equipment confiscated, us facing an Indian tribunal), we sent Ben, who had gotten sick, back to the pilot to call off the crime.

Back down after a few days of reconnaissance, we realized we would need permission if we were to achieve our goal. Our spirits picked up when we heard of a hidden ramp that descended the cliff near *The Prow*. A week of groveling in Indian villages and National Park offices rewarded us with a letter of permission from the highest authority within the Pemón community. On January 3, with this document in hand, we arrived a second time at the trailhead, expecting the royal treatment. However, the only royal treatment we received was reserved for our wallets. The village chief demanded that his four brothers accompany us as guides, and in contrast to the many strong guides available, our newly appointed crew was fresh from a long spell of Christmas cheer and looked like shriveled raisins.



Roraima as seen from the west. ZAC BARR

Carrying all the gear to the “triple point” (the border of Venezuela, Brazil, and Guyana), we spent six futile days searching for the ramp down the backside that would lead us to the base of *The Prow*. Conceding defeat, we abandoned our dream of climbing *The Prow* and instead did the more accessible German Route (IV 5.12), which begins near the hiker’s trail. Climbing the steep featured sandstone, gazing out over the jungle, our minds wandered back to *The Prow*. Hanging at the belays, we chatted about returning someday and actually arriving at the bottom of the route, and maybe even climbing it as well.

ZAC BARR and PETER MORTIMER*, *unaffiliated*

*Recipients of a Helly Hansen Mountain Adventure Award

PERU

CORDILLERA HUAROCHIRÍ

Cordillera Huarochirí, Various First Ascents. This range, known locally as the Cordillera Pariacacca, is located south of the mining town of La Oroya. Names for the range, such as Cordillera Central and Nevados de Cochabamba, that have been applied by expeditions are unknown to local inhabitants. The range contains some 100 rock and ice peaks from 5000 to 5751 meters. About half of them have seen ascents. The most common route of access is La Oroya-Pachacayo, but in the last few years, Peruvian mountaineers have also opened a new Lima-San Mateo-Yuracmayo approach, which yields access to the western side of the range.