

## CENTRAL ANDES, ARGENTINA

*Aconcagua, 2005-2006 season overview.* From November 15, 2005, to March 15, 2006, the Parque Provincial Aconcagua had 7,285 visitors who trekked or climbed. This is 12.5% more than the preceding year. There are now 40 rangers (34 in the early season). Even after the season finished, rangers and climbers still were active in the park. There were 4,271 individuals who attempted the summit, 65 more than during the 2004-2005 season. An estimated 35% reached the 6,959m summit. Eighty-five percent of the visitors were non-Argentines, who can now get permits by Internet or with help from their consulates. Three people died (two Spanish and a Swiss).

There is now a GPS and weather station on Aconcagua's summit, and the information is sent by automatic radio command. The park has improved waste and garbage disposal. Even the 780 mules in the park suffered fewer injuries, thanks to a special project to assist them. There is now an ambulance in the lower park, and the Mendoza police rescue team is active, even using a helicopter. The Horcones hut, which burned last year, has been improved and now has bathrooms.

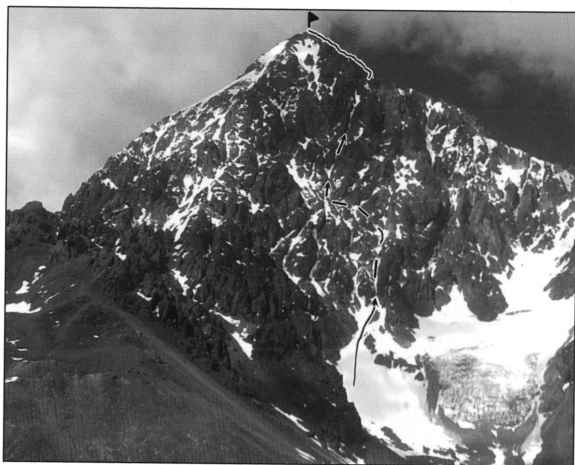
The Club Andinista Mendoza made its third consecutive winter ascent, reaching the summit on July 24. The team consisted of Popi Spagnoli, Gonzalo Dell Agnola, and Horacio Cunietti. Spagnoli is the first female to ascend Aconcagua in winter.

Sometimes Aconcagua is a circus. A Peruvian named Holmes Pantoja Bayona made a record by ascending Aconcagua from Horcones in 13 hours (4,112m of altitude gain). He summited on February 3, 2006, in sneakers, and returned to his starting point after 20:35. Another Peruvian, Jaime Ramirez Quiroz, made a new record on February 24. He went from Horcones to the summit in 9:30, 14:59 round-trip. The first sea level-to-summit ascent was made by a 17-member Argentina Navy team. Each member ran a sector of the 1,600km between Mar del Plata (on the Atlantic Coast) and the summit, which the anchor man reached on January 17, 2006.

Italian Angelo D'Arrigo set a world record by flying a non-motorized delta wing to 9,100m while flying over Aconcagua's summit.

MARCELO SCANU, *Buenos Aires,  
Argentina*

*Pico Polaco, An Offer You Can't Refuse.* On January 12, 2006, Scott Vanderplaats and I completed a new route on Pico Polaco (6,001m), in the central Argentine Andes. The route follows an obvious couloir up the northwest face, then summits via the north ridge. This face was previously unclimbed. The route begins at the lower snowfield and traverses up and left over loose



*An Offer You Can't Refuse on the north face of Pico Polaco.*  
Jarrett Tishmack