



Aerial views, April 2011 of above: twin summits of Mt Abbe from the west; the walls on the left overlook the Clark Glacier, the face at the far right is on Peak 7260ft. and below: Peak 8410ft from the north-west. The wall on the far left is on Peak 7260ft. On the right are Peak 8440ft and Peak 8290ft. (Paul Knott)



Summary

An account of the first ascent of three peaks south of Mt Abbe, overlooking the Johns Hopkins glacier in south-east Alaska's Fairweather range. The team of Paul Knott and Kieran Parsons climbed from 21 April to 8 May 2014 on what was Paul's ninth trip to the area. A highlight was finding perfect mountain granite.

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Cordillera Chaupijanca, Peru



The Huaraz – Pachapaqui – Huallanca road, with the ridge of the Tancán peaks in the background. (All photos: Evelio Echevarría)

Its former name was Cordillera Huallanca and thus it appeared in the reports of the first expeditions between 1969 and 1972. That name disappeared in 1974 when the Instituto Geográfico Militar of Peru launched its definitive Carta Nacional and the range began to display its original and true native name, Cordillera Chaupijanca; Chaupi in Quichua means 'middle' and janca, 'heights'. An accurate name, since the Chaupijanca is compressed between the two giant ranges of northern Peru, the Cordillera Blanca and the Cordillera Huayhuash. Indeed the Incas knew best how to name their mountains.

The Chaupijanca may well be the smallest of the 26 cordilleras known to exist in Peru, but what matters is what it has to offer visiting mountaineers. It runs north-north-west to south-south-east for some 35 to 40 kilometres. It averages some seven kilometres wide, except at the tract near the village of Aquia, where its width must be about 14 kilometres. This is due to the fact that its highest point, Nevado Pampash (5338m) sits somewhat apart and to the west. The entire range is bound in the north by the Pativilca river



The winding Pachapaqui – Yanashalla pass, with the NW side of the Burro massif in background.

valley, which separates it from the Cordillera Blanca and in the south, by the Yanacocha moors, separating it from the Cordillera Huayhuash.

The Chaupijanca is mining country in its northern third, with agriculture and cattle raising (sheep and llamas) in the other two thirds. There is little population and few settlements. The village of Pachapaqui (3963m; about 900 people) is the best place to access the northern half of the range. The town of Aquia (3300m) could yield access to the western and southern half, while the mining town of Huallanca could perhaps do so into the unknown eastern slopes.

Nature is disappointing. Animals, even birds, are rarely seen. In the lower valleys grow small clusters of blue lupins and yellow senecios. In the higher meadows, scattered groves of queñua (*Polylepis sp.*), a red bark tree that may reach to around 4500m are found. The one attraction in this respect is the puya (*Puya raimondii*), a striking broad plant with a flowering spike that can reach 2m high. It has been declared under the protection of the government of Peru but in the highlands, shepherds, mostly young boys, for warmth, burn their leaves and flanks. In the valley of Rodeo I counted about 160 such plants, with some 70 already burnt.

The mountaineering season runs in the tropical winter between May and September, and the weather is usually dry and pleasant. There is clear water in lagoons as well as in fountains and trickles draining down from the hills.

The whole northern and western Chaupijanca district is serviced by a



The valley and road leading to the Gara mine, access to the Burro massif.

vehicular road that starts at the city of Huaraz in the north, heads south to Aquia, then east and through the Yanashalla pass (4680m), to the towns of Huallanca and La Unión. A Huaraz bus company offers a daily service for this route.

There remains the purpose of this brief presentation: what kind of mountaineering could this small range offer? Since most of the Cordillera Chaupijanca is still in the epoch of exploratory mountaineering, what matters most is first ascents. The one pertinent sheet of the National Chart (1:100,000) shows 17 mountain peaks between 4900m and 5000m and 34 between 5000m and, plus the 5338m of Nevado Pampash, the highest. Of these 51 peaks, 16 are known to have registered ascents. The majority of them, at least on maps, are still unnamed. Many have been fixed with accurate heights.

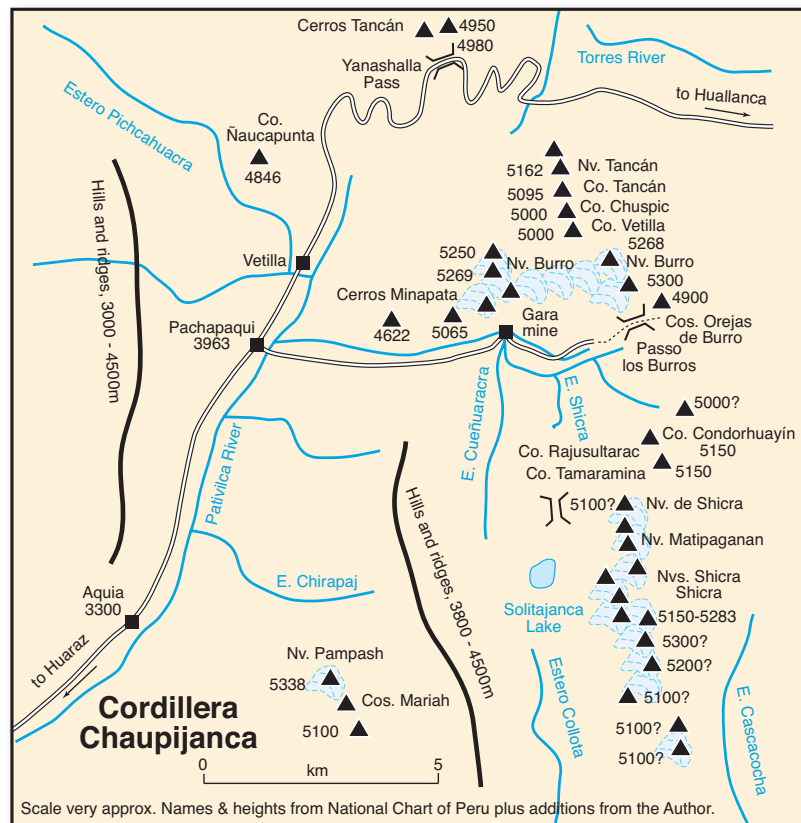
Points of access and their main groups of peaks are:

1. For the northern extreme of the range, that is, north and south of the Yanashalla pass (4680m), one can use, I dare say comfortably, the daily rural bus and get off wherever one may wish, then hike, camp and climb. There are about 10 bold peaks, mostly rock, between 4950m to 5200m.

2. For the heavily glaciated district of the Burro massif, arrive in Pachapaqui by bus, then march along the vehicular road to the Gara mine or enlist a ride with a lorry taking miners to the same place. Mountain peaks are the nevados Huallanca or western Burro (5269m), Cumbre de los Burros (5268m) and a few others accessible from the Gara mine. The easternmost



Unclimbed Condorhuayín ridge (5000m?).



Shicra valley with unclimbed rock peaks Rajusultarac and Tamaramina (5100m?). Puya plants in foreground. (Evelio Echevarría)



peak of the Burro massif, mapped at 5300m, is in my opinion no higher than 5150m, but still an imposing objective.

Incidentally, why are those impressive heights prosaically called the Burro peaks? Simply by extension, since they dominate the Paso de los Burros (Pass of the Donkeys). When I visited the area I heard that the lower rock peaks by the pass were labelled Orejas de Burro (Donkey's Ears).

3. For the central group, reach Pachapaqui and hire some *arriero* (herdsman) with a horse or donkey to carry loads up the Quebrada (valley) de Shicra and camp

wherever water is at hand. After a gap in the area is crossed, then descend south into the valleys of the southern ridge of ice peaks. This central section is collectively called Shicra Shicra and it rises from 5100 to 5283m. According to a Spanish guidebook by JJ Tomé this group could also be approached from the town of Huallanca, on the eastern slopes.

4. The little known southern half of the Chaupijanca has to my knowledge not entered climbing reports. I assume it can be accessed from the village of Aquia. The National Chart shows several contour-lined nevados at 5200-5300m. Finally the southernmost Azul Cuncush 5000ers bring the range to an end.

The climbing history of Cordillera Chaupijanca is short but shows that rather large expeditions were attracted by this small mountain range. In 1969 a Brazilian expedition of eight, under D Giobbi, ascended the two Burro peaks (5269 and 5268m) as well as Minapata (5065m) and an unlocated Tunacancha.

In 1971 a team of four led by Hugh Clark, all Anglo-Saxon surnames, climbed three of the Shicra Shicra nevados (5150, 5190 and 5283m) and two of the Tancán peaks in the north side (5095 and 5165m). A month



The rather artistic indigenous landmark of the Paso de los Burros (Pass of the Donkeys), 4700m.



Part of the Gara glacier with the south-west face of the south-east peak of the Burro massif (5150m?).



Part of the Shicra Shicra ridge (5150 - 5283m) from the north-north-west.

later, an Italian party of 10, under Sergio Macció, probably reclinbed Clark's Nevado (5190m).

In 1972 another Italian party, six members under G Mainini, climbed Nevado de Shicra (5150m?), Condoraju (5115m) and Matipaganán (5170m). And in 1984 one Peruvian and two Americans reascended Nevado Pampash or Huamánhuequi (5338m), which had been won by three Peruvians in 1967.

Finally our own experiences: in June 2003 the well known Spanish Cordillera Blanca experts Antonio Gómez and wife Consuelo, plus myself, camped in the upper Quebrada de Shicra. My two companions opened a new route on the icy west face of Nevado de Shicra (5150m?). In June 2005 I reconnoitred alone the valleys of Vetilla, Queñuaracra and Gara, reaching to the Paso de los Burros (4700m). And in 2008, in a short side trip from Huaraz, the Spaniards Antonio Gómez and Txomin Uriarte made the first ascent of the sharp rock peaks of Ñaucapunta (4846m), north-west of the Vetilla valley.

In conclusion, besides the opening of new routes—something nearly unknown in the Cordillera Chaupijanca—the mountains located in the northern and southern ends of this range will represent the main attractions for future pioneer work.

Nowadays, when even humble 5000ers in the giant ranges of Asia are sought by climbers, other equally small, more accessible and less costly mountain ranges like the Chaupijanca could well offer better choices.

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Maps

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