
MARCELO SCANU

Argentina & Peru



On the lower slopes of Cerro Overo on the epic traverse of the Famatina Range.

Once again, Argentina experienced a high devaluation of its currency, in the order of a hundred per cent, so it's become much cheaper for foreigners. There are also new low-cost flights and better access to the mountains, most of them awaiting a first ascent or a new route. Unusually, many of these flights do not require travellers to go through the capital Buenos Aires. These direct routes between Argentine cities are consequently less expensive and quicker. The weather has been good and on Aconcagua, Argentina's most visited mountain, there was a very good season with no deaths: this was the first season with no fatalities for 29 years. All ascents are from the 2018 season except where stated.

Chañi Massif, Jujuy

An Argentine-French team hiked to the old military refuge at 4,700m at the base of Chañi Chico during the first half of November with help from locals with donkeys, trekking through ancient abandoned villages on sections of the Inca trail. They climbed a number of walls. The Argentines Martin Molina and Martin López Abad and Maud Vanpouille of France climbed a distinct needle south-east of Mount Von Rosen, which they thought virgin



On the Cuesta del Tocino on the first part of the Famatina traverse.

but afterwards appeared to have been climbed already by Martín Altamirano and Martín Castillo. The group made a variation on the upper section. The route was 500m, 6c on the last section and named *Bebé Cóndor Vuela* for the condors that live there.

Maud reported that, 'Our next objective was the south pillar of the Chañi Chico (5571m) itself, which we had come for and appears to be the most sustained wall in the area in terms of steepness and length. The cracks and sections unfold perfectly to let us gain height and headache, pitch after pitch. The rock is splendid and we did not even need a piton, all of it mostly very solid, apart from the top section. The summit lets us see an infinite view of the desert to the north and the way down could not be easier with a walk off and one abseil.'

The route turned out to be 600m, 7a and was named *Coca, Hypoxia y Carnavalito* (coca leaves, hypoxia and northern carnival) for the culture of the north of Argentina. The next day another party of our group comprising Argentines Carlos Torino, Ignacio Karlen and Pepe de la Cuesta also opened a route, slightly to the left of their line up to 6c. Before the bad weather, Maud teamed with Martín López Abad and opened two short lines of approx 130 meters next to the refuge grading both up to 6b. The place appears to have a lot of potential for route opening of medium length, on good granite, mostly on traditional gear, and also for more technical lines with mixed equipment.

Chaschuil-Pillahuasi, Catamarca

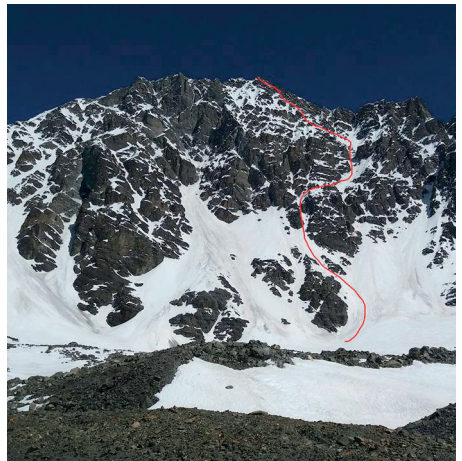
During 2019 Marcelo Scanu explored the ranges of the Río Pillahuasi near Chaschuil. There are many summits and entire ranges without ascents.



Chicho Francia nearing the top of the first pitch on the east face of Vallecitos.
(*Matías Hidalgo Nicosia*)



Chicho leading the start of the steep second pitch. (*Chicho Fracchia*)



The line of Divina Providencia on Vallecitos (5435m).

On 24 February, Scanu made the first ascent of Bayo (4274m) after a long walk in with Andrés Zapata via the east face. They saw a lot of wildlife, especially guanacos, vicuñas and condors and during his climb Scanu was attacked by a bad tempered hawk. On 19 April Maxi Ortigoza and Scanu teamed up to climb Bayo's range south summit called Cumbre Carrizo (4160m) by its east face, a peak that was also unclimbed. It's worth noting that it wasn't long ago that locals were still living in caves on the Río Pilla-huasi. Today nobody lives here all year round. This region has the highest volcanoes, active and extinct, in the world, with Ojos del Salado to the north.

Famatina Range, La Rioja

Argentines Griselda Moreno (leader), Ramiro García, Paula Miranda and Lelo Saldaña made the first traverse of all the summits of Nevado de Famatina. This traverse was attempted five times in the 1990s without success. The traverse was more interesting because it was done in the southern hemisphere winter. The ascents were finished on 28 August after nine days and seven summits. Summits ascended: Cerro Negro Overo (5778m), Cerro 'Pradhbupada' (5842m), Cerro Nevado de Famatina (5821m), Cerro Overo (5930m), Cerro La Mejicana (6094m), Cerro El Gran Riojano (6090m) and Cerro General Belgrano (6122m). They departed from Puesto de las Tres Piedras and finished in the ancient gold and silver mine of La Mejicana. Their camps were: 20 August, Puesto de las Tres Piedras (3200m), 21 August, Cuesta del Tocino (3650m), 22 August, Ridge (4540m), 23 August, Ridge (4820m), 24 August, Leños Ridge (5215m), 25 August Archaeological Ridge (5600m), 26 August, Pradhbupada plateau 5840m, 27 August Highest Summits plateau (6070) and 28 August, La Mejicana mine. High winds destroyed a tent and they passed ancient Inca logs near Negro Overo and Inca ruins at Negro Overo's summit, a sacred mountain where deer-horn offerings were found several decades ago.

Cerro Vallecitos, Cordón del Plata

The area of Vallecitos in Mendoza is a training area with peaks ascended by many climbers each year. It's a good place to climb before going to Aconcagua. Cerro Vallecitos (5435m) is one of the highest and most climbed in the Cordón del Plata. Its first ascent dates back to 8 January 1946. The first team consisted in well known Francisco Ibañez, Ricardo López and Luis Vila.

During September 2016, Matías Hidalgo Nicosia, Agustín Piccolo and Diego Cofone opened a line on the east face of Vallecitos. They named it *Divina Providencia* (1200m, 70°, WI2, D+). They made fast progress up their long route from their base at 4,200m.

Matías Hidalgo Nicosia teamed up with Chicho Fracchia and Matías Sindoni during October 2017 and opened a route on the south face of Vallecitos calling it *Cascadas del Viento* (600m, WI5, MD). This line starts with the crux: two ice pitches some 100m. The second pitch has a 15m section of 90° and another of 95°. After this steep part the difficulties are lower;



Matías Sindoni and Chicho Fracchia just below before the summit ridge on the south face of Vallecitos. (*Matías Hidalgo*)



Climbing the east face on the first ascent of Copla Blanca (4630m) in the Río Tupungato. Although straightforward at PD, the mountains are remote.

they ascended snow gullies up to the summit ridge. They started from a base camp at El Salto (4200m) with two aborted attempts because of high winds. They finally ran out of food because of this with only oatmeal left to eat. Both routes were climbed in the day, with an estimated eight to nine hours to the summit.

Río Tupungato, Mendoza

From 13 to 21 October Ramiro Casas and Glauco Muratti crossed the Tupungato river and hiked up an unnamed creek immediately south-east of Punta de Vacas. First they climbed a peak they named Cerro El Escampe (4570m), at 32°55'36"S 69°38'54"W. The mountain is west of two big cols that link the unnamed creek with Quebrada Colorada. They climbed in snowy conditions, during the second day the weather was bad with easy rotten rock and 50° snow. The two started on the south-west face and then followed the south-south-east ridge before finishing on the upper east face.

The Copla Blanca (4630m), 32°55'11"S 69°42'37"W, is the highest summit in the ridge that separates the unnamed creek and the Quebrada Negra. The route was established on its north-east face up 55° snow slopes and some grade II rotten rock. Because of conditions, they couldn't use crampons or belays. Both these peaks were climbed for the first time.

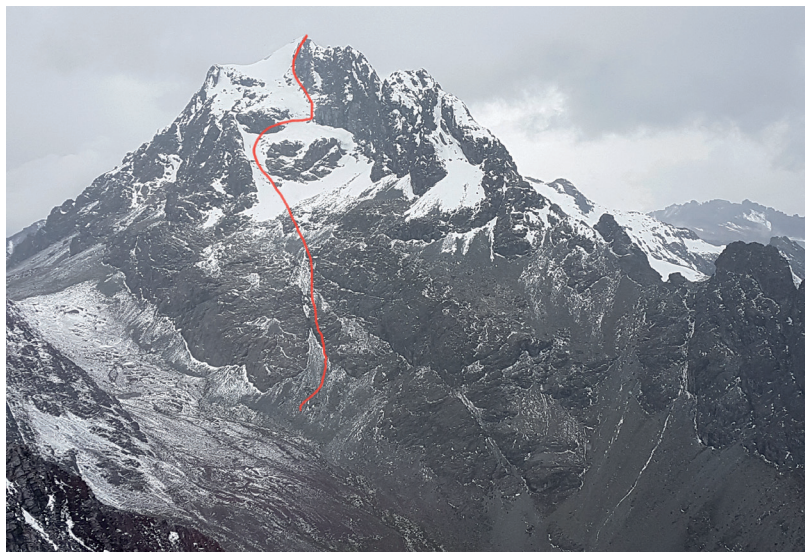
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Rajuntay

The Cordillera de la Viuda is a very interesting place for exploration and climbing. Next to Lima, it has many 5,000m peaks with moderate ground. The highest summit is Rajuntay (5477m), a beautiful technical mountain.

On 1 May, the French-Peruvian Steve Meder and his Peruvian porters Antonio and Jorge Chinchay climbed a quebrada in the slopes of Nevado Uco, where the Rimac river emerges to camp at 4,930m below the north-east face of Rajuntay. This face was still unclimbed; an attempt the previous year was aborted in bad weather. The next day, with doubtful weather Meder started early, climbing an easy five-metre vertical rock and ice step using crampons and leaving a peg for the descent. He continued up steep terrain with rocks towards the beginning of the snow, the crux. Climbing a 45° snow gully, he made a traverse to a similar gully with a 50° step to a short ridge and from there reached the summit in bad weather. This route was much easier than his previous climb on the more technical west ridge.

On 3 May he attempted an unclimbed summit on the north ridge, a fore-summit of Rajuntay called Pequeño Rajuntay (Little Rajuntay). He climbed a gully of hard ice up to 60°, having seen the route from a previous ascent of Nevado Uco. He protected himself with a 60m rope and reached the north ridge at 5,350m. He continued 20m more (M3). He thought he was standing on the summit but afterwards, studying photos, he realised that the neighbouring top was his objective. He plans to attempt it again up a line of 70° ice and steep loose rock.



The new route on the north-east face of Rajuntay (5477m). (Steve Meder)

The north summit of Pico Norte or Rajuntay Norte (c5400m) was one of the last unclimbed peaks of the range. Steve Meder was joined once more by Antonio and Jorge Chinchay. They trekked the Quebrada Uco in a snowstorm, putting base camp at 4,835m on the north-east face of the mountain. Next day he scouted the route and snow conditions of the north-east gully and reached the north ridge. On 6 June he started up alone at 5am, roped-solo, reaching the summit four and a half hours later. The route was 350m, 70°, M3.

Nevado Huayllaco, Cordillera Blanca

Huayllaco (5460m) was first climbed in 1963 by the Brazilian of Italian origin Domingo Giobbi and the Peruvian brothers Eugenio and Macario Angeles. Giobbi was very active in those years in the Cordillera Blanca and surrounding mountains. Huayllaco, located on the south section of the Cordillera Blanca, was very little visited. The first ascent via the south-east ridge route was likely the only route opened for decades.

Argentine Julieta Ferreri and Brazilian Marcelo Motta Delvaux opened a new route during winter 2018, reaching the summit on 25 July. They approached the mountain by the Quebrada Huayllaco camping on Laguna Verdecocha (Green Lake) at 4,650m. From there they took the south-west glacier that leads to the col between Huayllaco and Nevado Raria (5576m). Just before the col, they switched right heading to the south-south-east face of Huayllaco, a beautiful face that finishes at the south-east ridge. The route goes directly up the face, at D 60°-70°. Near the summit they reached a rocky section to the left and stopped there, 10m short of the ridge, because of powder snow and dangerous ice cornices with no belays. On June the



View from the north peak towards the summit of Rajuntay. (Steve Meder)

same climbers had ascended Raria by the *Giobbi* route but they started from Verdecocha camp and not as *Giobbi* from an advanced camp at 5,150m.

Nevado Tacusiri, Cordillera Vilcanota

On 6 June 2018 a group including Argentine Nehuén Conterno and Peruvians Jorge Sirva and Rodrigo Mendoza departed Pitumarca (3600m), 80km south of Cusco, drove 30km to Alkatauri and then trekked for an hour and a half to the base of Tacusiri (5400m). They took the left couloir on Tacusiri's south face, climbing eight pitches with a lot of powder snow, some ice and poor rock. They reached the summit ridge rating their route D+ with mixed terrain up to M5. They didn't continue to the summit because of the late hour Unable to rappel the south face, they descended the west face by two 60m abalakov rappels, thence to the north glacier and to the end of the difficulties. They did the round-trip in a nonstop 18 hours and named their route *Expreso de Medianoche* (Midnight Express). They will attempt to finish the route with better weather.