
MARCELO SCANU
South America
2022-23



Alvaro Rojas Rivera with his group climbing Cerro del Gallo (5615m) in the Atacama.
(Alvaro Rojas Rivera)

Chile

In the Atacama region, Alvaro Rojas Rivera and his group ascended various interesting virgin volcanoes in a remote zone 57km north of Ojos del Salado and near the Paso de San Francisco and the Argentine border. Starting in 2019, three important volcanoes were explored including Volcán del Toro, surely the previously highest untrodden summit in Chile. They were looking out for Inca remains but nothing was found on the summits.

On 24-27 October 2019, Chileans Juan Avalos, Cristóbal Diaz, Danilo Layana and Alvaro Rojas Rivera climbed **Cerro Negro Grande** (5570m). They had seen the mountain from Juncalito (5675m), first climbed 25 years earlier. Thinking Negro Grande was also rarely visited, they erected a base camp at 4,425m and reached what was in fact an unclimbed summit from the north-west after some false tops.

Volcán del Toro (5935m) was marked as Cerro del Mortero on the old 1898 map. After investigating the peak, the group concluded it could be the highest summit in all Chile. From 7-11 December 2021, Claudia Arratia, Inés Carrasco, Ariel González, Antonio Neira, Jaime Paineo, Fernando Toro, Oscar Torres, Mauricio Urrea and Alvaro Rojas Rivera reached the top after leaving their base camp at 4,750m and climbing the west face.



A view from the descent illustrating the vast and desolate landscape in this region. (*Alvaro Rojas Rivera*)



On the slopes of Cerro Negro Grande (5570m) and the spectacular geology of the Atacama. (*Alvaro Rojas Rivera*)

The last volcano, **Cerro del Gallo** (5615m), with its nice pointed summit, was spotted by the group descending Toro. The summit is a small but perfectly formed stone tower. From 1-5 February 2023, a group established base camp at 4,550m. From there Carlos Etchegaray, Fabián Fadic, Ariel González, Danilo Layana, Jaime Paineo, Juan Soto, Oscar Torres and Alvaro Rojas Rivera reached the summit via the north face.

Argentina

In northern Argentina's Catamarca province, on the border with Chile in the northern Andes, Lisandro Arielovich and Glauco Muratti climbed **Cerro El Segundo** (5350m) from the east. They camped in an ancient place called Tres Quebradas (4300m) that has been used since pre-Columbian times to the present, including by the well-known Polish expedition of the 1930s. On top they found an ancient topographic marking and a curious one-metre asymmetric cairn that could be pre-Columbian. It appears it pointed towards an important place for their ancient cosmography. The expedition took place in April.

Located in the Cordón de La Ramada of San Juan province, **Alma Negra** (6120m) is a beautiful 6120 mountain that lies nearby mighty Mercedario. Both mountains were first climbed during the 1933-4 Polish scientific expedition led by cosmic-ray physicist Konstanty Jodko-Narkiewicz. Austrian Christian Stangl reached the summit on 4 December approaching from Paso del Espinacito (4476m), a historic pass used by San Martín to liberate Chile from the Spanish. Stangl made base camp there because his horses couldn't continue due to snow. He made another camp at 4,400m below the south-east ridge. He climbed to a bottleneck between vertical cliffs and camped at a flat zone at 5,200m. On summit day he took the south-east ridge, reaching what he claims as the south summit with little more information. He had to turn a glassy rock band 100m below the south summit by descending a little and traversing towards the east and then went to the highest summit and descended by the same route.

During November, Martín Suso, Lisandro Arielovich, Federico Barberis and Glauco Muratti made the first ascent of **Cuchilla Negra** (5130m), a remote mountain in the Cordón del Potrero Escondido in Mendoza province. Two previous attempts were made in 2016 but both aborted 200m short of the summit, one because of avalanche risk and the other because of tricky penitentes. The group departed from Punta de Vacas and trekked for two days through the valleys of Río Blanco and Potrero Escondido before reaching the first crux, a 300m cliff. As on previous expeditions they climbed this via a narrow and steep ravine on this occasion with waterfalls. This had section of V with the risk of rock fall. Above the cliff they made two camps. The way to the summit had many penitentes and they had to use crampons because of the frost. Some 100m from the summit they deviated from the direct line because of threatening cornices, taking instead unstable rock of no more than II or III but with no possibility of belays. They found better rock higher up and the last 50m was II and III. The double summit was previously unclimbed.



The line of the first ascent of Cuchilla Negra in the Cordón del Potrero Escondido. The deviation at the top was to avoid cornices. (*Glauco Muratti*)



Frederico Barberis leading up the penitentes in the main gully of Cuchilla Negra. The cornices that later collapsed are above his head. (*Glauco Muratti*)



Loose ground at the top of Cuchilla Negra. (*Frederico Barberis*)



The line of the first ascent on the Argentinian side of Cerro Tres Hermanos. (*Glauco Muratti*)

To descend they made two rappels and during the second the team heard an explosion as part of the cornices fell on the route. They hurried to extract themselves from that risky section. They rated the route AD but said that it only describes the technical difficulties and not the distance, or the ascent and descent of technical terrain with heavy packs, the isolation and no possibility of rescue, the lack of information and the terrible penitentes. Muratti says, with truth, there must be an Andean grade system scale to describe this kind of ascent.

With this climb the Grupo Rosarino de Actividades de Montaña and in particular Glauco Muratti finished the exploration of the entire Cordón del Potrero Escondido with eight remote summits at a range of 4,600m to 5,300m. This task took 19 years.

Located in Central Andes of Mendoza province, **Cerro Piloto** (5056m), known also as Cerro Amarillo, lies in the headwaters of Quebrada Benjamín Matienzo near the border with Chile. On 16 December Argentine Gabriel Fava and Frenchman Henry Bizot opened the first line on the south face. They placed three camps, the last one at 4,490m on the moraine just below the face that was in dry condition. They climbed right of a poor snow and ice couloir with penitentes and a 20m rock step. The route was named *Patrick and Elisabeth* (500m, D).

Also in Mendoza, **Cerro Tres Hermanos** (4764m), the ‘three brothers’ is an interesting and attractive mountain that lies on the Argentine-Chilean border. It’s most usually been climbed from Chile since the 1960s. The highest summit,



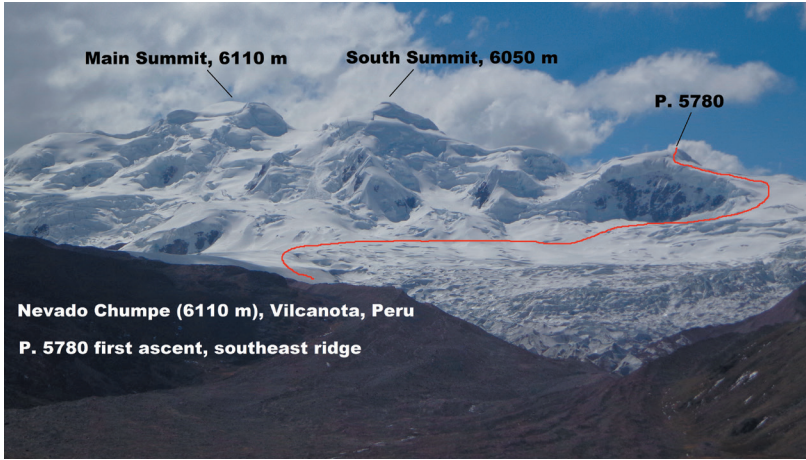
On the northern summit of Cerro Tres Hermanos in Mendoza province.

the north one, hadn't been climbed from Argentina before 2022. Fernando Martínez and Luciano Barale reached 100m short of the summit by some steep snow gullies on the south-east face. And there was also previous activity in the steep Quebrada Sin Nombre that ends at the Portezuelo de Lomas Colorados (4458m) border pass that was also used by Argentines Glauco Muratti and Federico Barberis. These two made the first ascent of the higher north summit in a four-day expedition that departed Las Cuevas on 11 August in the winter season. The first three days the weather was good, the last one they had snow and whiteout conditions. Facing calf-deep snow, they wished they'd brought skies or snowshoes. Muratti and Barberis climbed the north face, rating it as PD/PD+. Before their last camp at 3,900m they traversed loose and tricky 40° snow, ice and rock. The last 350m were mixed 40°-60° slopes and a II-III rock chimney. The pair climbed unroped and then down-climbed the route.

Peru

In the Laguna Paron region of the Cordillera Blanca, a difficult route was opened in August on the south-west Face of **Caraz II** (6020m) by the Spaniard Ibai Rico and Peruvian Aritza Monasterio. *Fango, Mushrooms and Cornice* (400m, MD+, 70°-80°) finished 20m short of the summit because of an unstable ridge. The east face of this peak is better known with several lines including the serious *Australian* route (720m, ED1, W3, V+, A2), established by Matt Scholes and Ant Morgan in July 2004 and still unrepeated.

During July, Peruvian Juan Benavides and Chilean Ignacio Vázquez Palominos climbed *Juanito and La Luna* (350m, MD+, M4, 6a) on the north face of **Shaqsha** (5703m). The pair rounded the peak's rocky foot and climbed the glacier directly to reach the face where they found a line of rock and ice on its centre-left. The summit was reached on 9 July. On 24 July Chileans Ignacio Vázquez Palominos and Martín Contreras Ried summited

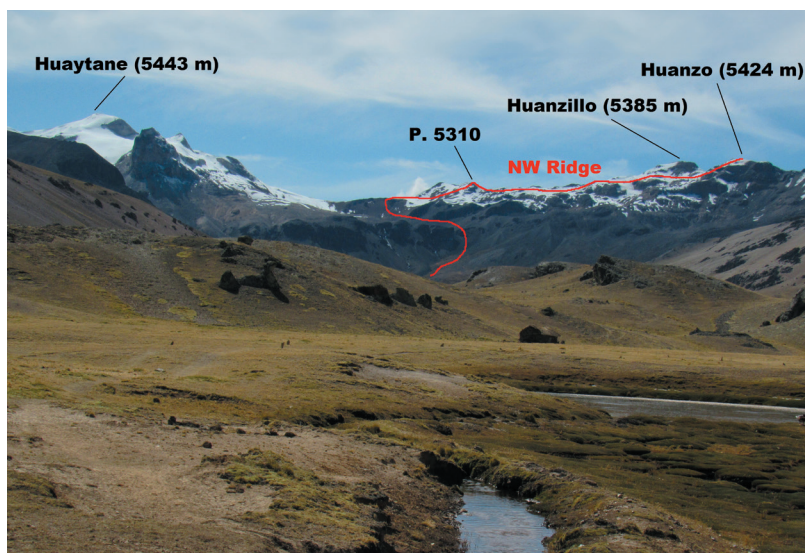


The line taken by Marcelo Delvaux on his first ascent in the remote Chumpe group in the Cordillera de Vilcanota and a more distant view identifying the group's peaks.
(Marcel Delvaux)



Nevado Huascarán Sur (6768m) via what is certainly a new route: *Agua en Marte*, (MD+, WI4, 80°). On 22 July they bivouacked at 4,980m and next day climbed the bulk of the route, with a hard section (WI4, M4) gaining the 80° ice and snow face and the south-east sub-summit, then the upper south-east ridge with a bivouac at 6,500m On the final day they summited and descended the north side. Huascarán is known in Quechua as Mataraju. Also in July, Slovenians Anja Petek and Andrej Jez with Spaniard Aritzia Monasterio climbed the first line on the east face of **Hualcán** (6122m) calling it *Fango Fiesta* (1150m, ED, M5, 60°-85°).

The well-known guide Nathan Heald and Peruvian Leo Rasalio climbed **Lasunayoc** (5936m) in the Vilcabamba range. Their new route, climbed in November, was via the south and then the east faces and was rated 1,000m, TD, WI4. On 9 May, in the Vilcanota range, Heald and Bill Thibeault made the first ascent of **Huilayoc** (5974m), also called Huila Aje, via the west face at AD.

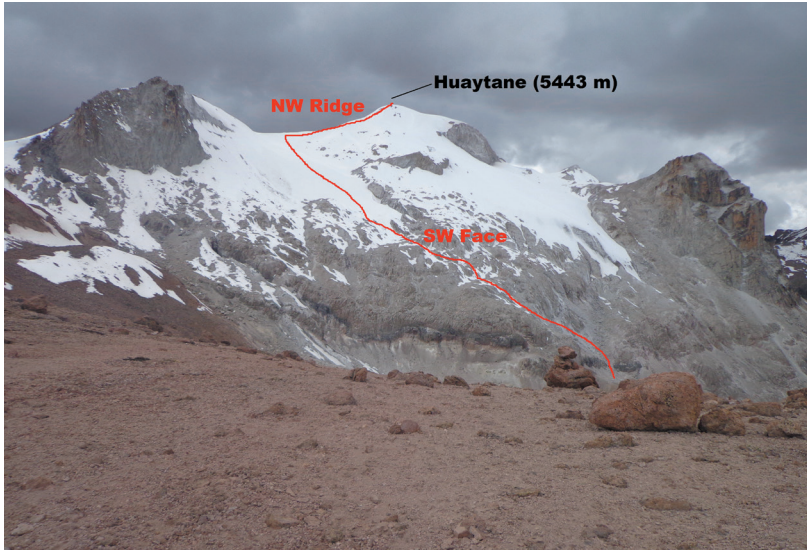


The Cerro Huaytane group in the isolated and rarely visited Cordillera Huanzo.
(Marcel Delvaux)

Still in the Cordillera de Vilcanota, Brazilian Marcelo Delvaux made a nine-day unsupported traverse in May between the villages of Pacchanta and Mallma. His traverse including an unclimbed summit of 5,780m. His itinerary went from Pacchanta to **Abra Jampa** (5068m), Laguna Ticllacocho, Quebrada Jampamayo, Suyrucochapampa, **Abra Huayruro Punco** (5360m), Murmurani, Laguna Sibinacocho, Quebrada Puja Orco, **Abra Chumpe** (5400m), Laguna Chuyanecocho, Laguna Huarurumicocho, Laguna Mullucocho, Laguna Pucacocho, Laguna Singrenacocho and finally Mallma.

Peak 5780m lies on the south-east ridge of Nevado Chumpe (Jatunriti), an enormous massif in one of Vilcanota's most remote zones. He arrived at a base camp on the sixth day to climb the south glacier of Nevado Chumpe, approaching from a glacier tongue just before Abra Chumpe. Once on the glacier he followed the labyrinth of crevasses towards the north-east arriving to the base of Peak 5780m at a zone with falling seracs. He then went to a col between the peak and a secondary summit, finally climbing the south-east ridge to the summit. In the last part he found the crux of 55° ice.

The Cordillera Huanzo is one of the forgotten ridges in the Andes. Because of its isolation, only two expeditions have been recorded, one in 1970 and the other in 2015. In 1970 Sue Tatum and John Ricker made a long traverse between Santo Tomás and Antabamba ascending **Nevado Jatun Huaychahui** (5452m) and the ridge's highest summit **Chanchoaña** (5494m): see *AAJ* 1971. Many years later, in 2015, well-known Scottish climber John Biggar and party made the second ascent of Chanchoaña by the same 1970 route of north ridge and face. They then achieved the first ascents of **Condorillo** (5213m), called Toro Rumi by Biggar, and **Huaytane** (5443m).



The line of the new route on Cerro Huaytane. (Marcel Delvaux)

During the first days of May, Argentine Julieta Ferreri and Brazilian Marcelo Delvaux headed towards Huanzo and its north-east sector where the bigger glaciers lie. After a complex approach of five days from Arequipa they arrived at Laguna de Huanzo. They then had eight days of activity trekking 50km and climbing three mountains and crossing two passes over 5,200m. They went first to Quebrada Huanzo, then a 5,221m pass between **Cerro Huaytane** and **Cerro Calasaya**, which they called Paso Huaytane, to Quebrada Huacullo and a 5,197m pass north of **Cerro Chancoaña** that they christened Paso Chacoaña, Quebrada Tirane and finishing in the villages of Quiriquiri and Paterio. The first summit climbed was **Cerro Huaytane** climbed by Biggar in 2015 by its north ridge. The pair opened a new route via the south-west face and north-west ridge. Biggar reported the summit as 5,430m, while Ferreri and Delvaux recorded 5,443m.

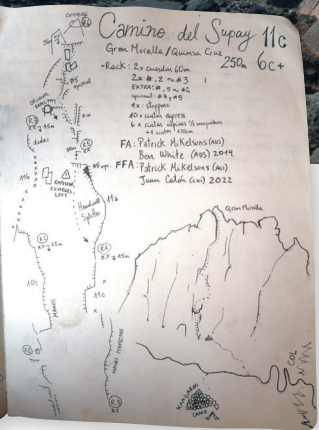
Next day Ferreri rested and Delvaux went to a mountain that the Instituto Geográfico Nacional del Perú calls **Cerro Huanzillo** and the locals Nevado de Huanzo. He took the Quebrada de Huanzo up to a 5,214m col between Huaytane and Huanzillo. From there he continued to the north-west ridge with rock and snow terrain and some secondary peaks on route. He didn't find any trace of activity along the route or at the summit, which his GPS measured at 5,424m. He decided to call it Huanzo as the locals do, giving the name of Huanzillo (little Huanzo) to a secondary 5,385m summit to the north-west.

After three days of trekking and crossing Huaytane and Chancoaña passes, the pair reached an unknown mountain south of Cerro Huaña calling it **Huaña Sur**. It has two summits with GPS readings of 5,372m and 5,387m. They found cairns on them but don't know who were their precursors. They left the district by lorry towards the city of Santo Tomás.



The first pitch of *Camino del Supay* on the Gran Muralla.

In 2019 Patrick Mikelsons and Ben White, both Australian, made the first ascent of a route in the middle of the north-west face of the mighty **Gran Muralla** (c5100m), the 'great wall' in Cordillera de Quimsa Cruz, La Paz. This wall is good granite and the pair climbed ground up, with aid on three-quarters of the route, which took four days of climbing and a fifth day cleaning and drilling rap stations. The crags were dirty with vegetation so progress was slow. The Australians didn't have time to free it but in August,



Line and topo of *Camino del Supay*.

Mikelsons and Chilean Juan José Catón freed every pitch, finding difficulties up to 5.11c. After the descent and a clean-up it may be more like 5.11-. The route was named *Camino del Supay* (250m, 5.11c). Supay is the Andean subterranean god and nowadays the devil is also known as supay.



The splitter pitch high on *Camino del Supay*.



Patrick Mikelsons and Juan José Catón on the summit.