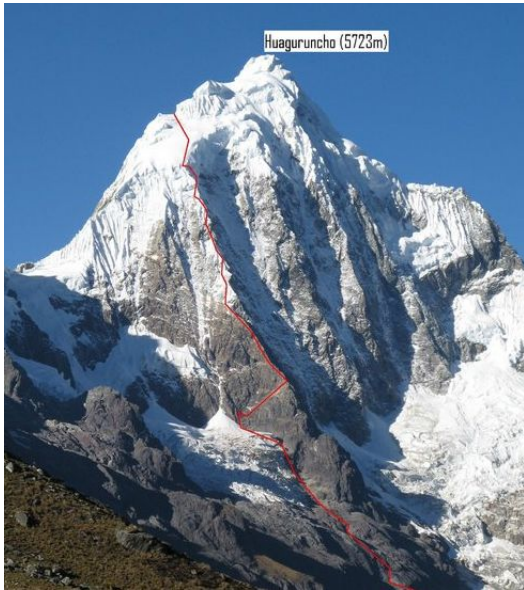


The Nick Escort award: South west face of huaguruncho report 2017

Huaguruncho 5723m

Objective: the unclimbed central spur on the SW face.



Summery

After a successful acclimatization ascent of the original route on Esfinge 5320m in the cordillera blanca myself (James Monypenny) and Harry Mcghie bought supplies in Huaraz and headed for our main objective; Huaguruncho. Sadly upon arrival I became very sick with a chest infection and the weather remained unsettled, with nearly constant precipitation. After one week of fever and rain we decided to descend to sea level and get medical attention. The forecast for the month ahead looked extremely bleak, with not a single weather window on the horizon, we made the tough decision to head south towards Cusco and Bolivia in the hope of finding drier weather, with the plan to return to huaguruncho should the forecast improve. The forecast never did, and has remained unsettled for several months. I might return early in the season (April / May 2018). Our plan to head south eventually paid off. After an unsuccessful attempt on the South face of Humantay (near Cusco), we eventually managed a new route on PK24 & a route on PK Maria (East side of Illampu, Cordillera Real, Bolivia). After this I Soloed the French route AD+ huayna potosi 6200m and flew off by Paraglider & Soloed a new route on the South Face of Illimani 6400m, Cordillera Real, Bolivia, and also made my decent by Paraglider. I also made the first ascent of the South west ridge of Piruhata 5700m.

Further information on our other climbs can be found by following this link:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H3rGVVLepSDNfilJIE84r02IFGwTQ5viUT4QkcLiSKA/edit?usp=drivesdk>

Logistics

Transport:

Lima to Cerro de Pasco, 60 soles, 9hrs, bus departs from 'Calle de hauscaran con mister with Empresa (company) "santa Anna" +51989585453. booking check out "red bus.pe"

Cerro de Pasco to Huanuco, colectivo, 20 Soles per person, 4-5hrs, departs from a small parking area (get a taxi there from the bus terminal).

Accommodation:

There are a few hostles / hotels in Huachon (presumably mostly for workers in the mines). We stayed at the one in the main square (not recommended; 60 soles, twin room, no hot water or WiFi) and another one 5mins from the main square (much better), 35 soles for private single room, hot water, no WiFi.

Food

We did our shopping in Cerro Pasco market which was next to the bus terminal. Equally you could do your supermarket shop in Lima.

There are a few small eateries in Huachon.

Horses

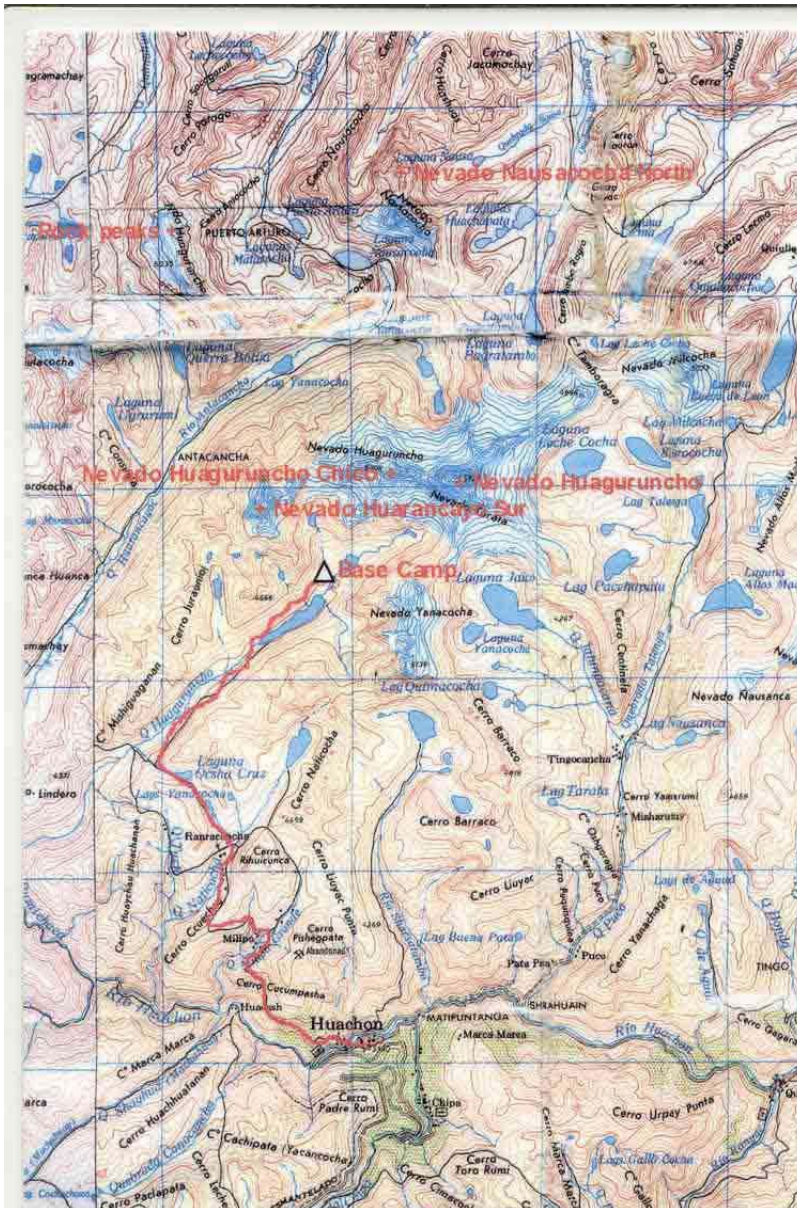
We easily arranged horses for the walk-in (80 soles) in Huachon and with the local farmers for the walk-out (150 soles).

Basecamp

There are two families living in the valley under the SW face of huaguruncho. The family of Ernesto Quinto was very friendly and we often shared / swapped food. (Well harry did, I was mostly in a fever in the fetal position). When you climb I'd pay the family to look after your stuff.

Walk-in

6hrs.



Climbing history

Huaguruncho, first climbed by a British team in 1956, is a very impressive peak and towers over its neighbours. It lies in quite a remote part of the Andes, near the town of Huachón. As the name of the range (Cordillera Oriental) suggests, the mountains are further towards the Amazon basin than most major mountain groups in this part of Peru, thus making for higher precipitation than in the classic cordilleras Huayhuash and Blanca. It is perhaps for this reason, along with its relative remoteness, that Huaguruncho has only been climbed four times, despite being a very impressive peak. These ascents were as follows:

- 1956 (British, N side and W ridge, D, 1200m); The team was composed of W. R. Kempe y Michael Westmacott, George Band, Jack Tucker and John Streetly, plus geologist Donald S. Matthews, who sadly died during the expedition;

- 1970 (American/Norwegian, SW ridge, TD+, 1000m); team composed of Lief-Norman Patterson (USA), James Jones (USA), Trond Aas (Norway), Odd Eliassen (Norway) and Jon Teigland (Norway);
- 1976 (Japanese, NNE Ridge, TD, 1500m – route climbed with much fixing of ropes over a whole month); team composed of Hideaki Naoi, Akira Yamada, Hiroshi Kuriyama, Kazuhiro Oka, Masao Hashimoto, Tomomi Akiyama and Yoshiki Mitsumoto;
- 2003 (Spanish, NW Face “Directa Tancash”, TD, 700m); team composed of Oriol Bard, Xavier Fabré, Jordi Marmolejo and Albert Barguès. This was the first alpine ascent of the mountain, in a single 16-hour push.

Tony Barton & Andy Houseman 2006 had as its goal the first ascent of the SW face of Huaguruncho. The pair carried out an acclimatisation climb (first ascent of Huarancaya Sur), however on returning from an attempt on the south spur of Huaguruncho Chico their base camp was discovered to have been ransacked and they had to abandon their attempt. Barton returned to Huaguruncho in 2008 with Tom Chamberlain and Olly Metherell. They got onto the SW face of Huaguruncho for the first time and decided to attempt the left-hand of three spurs on the face. Gaining the spur from the right entailed some easy mixed ground, followed by three pitches of up to VI, 7. After a bivouac on the spur’s crest, they were forced to turn around due to poor weather.

Tony Barton and Tom Chamberlain 2010 climbed "LLAMA KARMA" 1000m ED/ 90-/V, 24 pitches on the left hand spur on the SW face. They completed the spur however did not make the summit (see they're BMC report).

Huaguruncho blog post



“Failure and frustration”

The sky was blue, and our bodies tired with that satisfying ache of a successful ascent of esfinge. But all that was about to change. We got back to Huaraz (the capital of the cordillera

blanca). The next day, at breakfast, we checked the weather. Being September we were at the fringe of the climbing season, and it seemed like the weather was about to crack. The forecast however was better for the cordillera Oriental. The highest peak being huaguruncho 5723m which was our main objective. Specifically the beautiful middle arete of the South West face. Which is a massive and probably very hard and very beautiful line, that I had been wanting to try now for several years. Ideally I'd have liked to climbing something else in the cordillera blanca first with Harry. As we had never really climbed together before this trip, and would have benefited from the extra acclimatisation. But the weather god's seemed to be saying "go", and so we went. In Fact we rushed to pack and jumped straight on a bus back to Lima (Peru's capital city), arriving in the evening just in time to catch a night bus onwards. Several buses & colectivos later we arrived in Huachon. In contrast to Huaraz, this small village doesn't see gringos (white westerners) much (let alone one's with white hair), so curiosity and stares were par-course. For once arranging a horse to carry into base camp was easy, and the next day we met with our goucho (horse handler), loaded up, and began the walk-in. The walk-in takes about 6hrs. At the start I felt fit, but felt like I had a cold maybe coming. But the final km I was really struggling, with the onset of a fever. Turns out the overnight bus travel had impacted my immune system. Turning the final corner, and seeing huaguruncho, poking through the dark swirling clouds was exciting. I didn't have the energy to socialise much with the local farmers who we had made our camp next to. Instead I collapsed into my sleeping bag, incorrectly optimistic that I might feel better tomorrow. A week later, and the situation was starting to look pretty bad. My illness had developed into what was probably a chest infection, and I was still weak with fever. Also the weather remained pretty bad, with precipitation every day. Harry looked after me by cooking, I barely left the tent, I usually crawled out once a day to go to the toilet, which took all of my energy. Eventually we were low on food, and we both had to agree that it made sense to leave. Despite not having much choice, this was pretty gutting. This was the mountain I really wanted to try most. And to not even be allowed an attempt was frustrating and saddening. But this is how it goes and sometimes the mountain gods are kind, sometimes not. We rented horses from the local farmers (I felt too weak to walk out alone) and headed back to Huachon. Seeing as the weather forecast for the foreseeable future looked pretty bleak for huaguruncho we decided to head to Lima, so I could recover at sea level, get some medical attention and we could return if the forecast looked promising. And so we went and enjoyed the comforts of the city. I slowly recovered. I quite like Lima. You can fly (paraglide) from the sea cliffs (this meant, once I felt well enough, I could test my single surface light weight wing and harness), there's surfing, the people are nice, the food is good, living is cheap. Almost a week had passed, and I felt recovered, but sadly the forecast for huaguruncho was looking terrible. Supposably the further south you go, the more stable the weather, and so we decided to head towards Bolivia.

Contact details

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Thankyou's

I am very grateful to the Nick Escort award for kindly supporting our trip to attempt Huaguruncho SW face and am sorry that we were very unsuccessful.

Using this report

This report can be used for research purposes, and maybe reproduced and used by the Nick escort award. If anybody else should wish to use or publish all/parts of this report for any purpose, please get in contact.

General travel advice: south America

When to go

June to mid September is best for climbing in Peru and Bolivia. It is possible to climb later (November / October, however the weather is less stable and afternoon storms are regular). Huaguruncho is right on the edge of the Andes and seems to get above average precipitation, therefore I would highly recommend going during the prime season, which we originally intended, however work commitments got in the way.

Flights:

We flew London to Lima (Peru), this is the cheapest route. British airways & KLM are among the cheapest options, with British airways being direct. It is possible to find return flights at around £500, however we required flexibility with dates, due to the nature of our work and therefore both paid in the region of £700.

Maps

It's usually possible to find maps in towns and cities. Tour agencies often will sell them. Check individual objectives for more info.

Many maps sold here:

Instituto Geografico Nacional – Avenida A. Aramburu 1190-1198, Lima 34

Gas cartridges / multi fuel

Gas cartridges can be bought from camping shops & some tour agencies in Lima, Huaraz, La Paz, Cochabamba.

Fuel for multi-fuel stoves is best bought in the form of “bencina blanca” available in some hardware stores (ferreterias).

Equipment

Almost all equipment is imported to south America and therefore it's cheaper to bring everything. Huaraz and La Paz have most items, but overpriced and difficult to find. We bought snow stakes in Huaraz.

Money

ATMs and banks are in most towns and cities, I recommend getting a credit card with free withdrawals (for example Halifax clarity credit card), dollars can be changed in all but the smallest towns. Be aware of fake notes when exchanging cash.

Security

A money belt worn under the cloths is recommended. Always keep an eye on your belongings, especially in busy places such as bus stations, markets etc. Taking only official / radio taxis at night is a good idea. Leaving a Basecamp unguarded, low in the mountains is risky. I personally have had 2 unsuccessful muggings / pickpocket attempts whilst in south America. Violent crime towards westerners (gringos) is rare, but it does happen, I befriended a Canadian guy who violently had his whole trousers taken off him in the streets of Mendoza (Argentina)!

Visas

Always double check the current situation online. I believe British citizens can get a visa on arrival for all countries in south America, mostly between 30 & 90 days. And most countries it's possible to pay to extend your visa (often possible in regional immigration offices).

Health & hygiene

Eating local can be a great experience of local culture (the lunch time menu-del-dias are excellent) however street food can lead to diarrhea. Aim for the popular spots, with freshly prepared hot food.

Good hand washing, and drinking purified water can also prevent illness.

Transport

Bus travel in south America is comfortable, affordable (with the exception of Argentina which is much more expensive) and punctual. Modern coaches, with "cama" (bed) seats, will often transport you overnight. Sometimes food and movies are included. Always check the details and don't always believe what they tell you!

There are some low(ish) cost **airlines** such as aerolineas (Argentina) but I have no first hand experience; the baggage allowance is low 15-23kgs so factor in for excess charges, and be aware that some advertised cheap prices are subsidised for only Argentinian locals and foreigners will be charged around double the price (a shock if you didn't realize until arrival at the airport).

Taxi's: the taxi app Uber works well in Lima and Cusco (sometimes La Paz) and means you can't get ripped off. Talk to locals about other apps, as Uber is banned in certain places. "Radio" taxis i.e. official taxis, in Peru and Bolivia are more legitimate, and less likely to cause a problem. Best to agree a price before entering the taxi. Although when in small towns, where there are no gringo's they don't seem to realise they can rip you off.

Collectivo's: these small micro buses connect small towns & cities and go almost everywhere, you'll have to chat to locals to find out where and when they depart. But this is a really cheap way to get around. Normally they will depart when full, and pick-up or drop off anywhere enroute.

Hitchhiking: lots of people hitch in Argentina as the buses are expensive (I have only ever gone relatively short distances, with mixed levels of success).

Buying a vehicle: theres a tax free zone in Iquique (northern Chile) where you can buy reduced new imported cars. On Sunday in El Alto, La Paz there's a used car market. Oilx is

an app / website where used vehicles are sold. Also check out Facebook groups for the area you're in. You'll need to register the vehicle in your name and have all the paperwork if you intend to cross borders.

Food

Latin America has some great food. Menu-del-dias (menu of the day) is a great lunch time option, and is often cheap and fast. The app "TripAdvisor" has restaurant recommendations for bigger towns / cities.

Freeze dried meals are hard to find, therefore if you want these in the mountains then bring from home. Otherwise most items can be purchased from local markets and supermarkets.

Language

Apart from those living in tiny remote villages, almost everyone speaks Spanish. Learning some basic Spanish will get you a long way. Having some conversational Spanish will make life a lot easier. Download Spanish on Google translate for when you get stuck!

Accommodation

Guidebooks, such as Lonely Planet, Air B&B, Hotels.com, booking.com, couchsurfing are all good resources.

Alternatively turn up and look around; if you have the energy!

Communication

Buy a local SIM card (unlock your phone) and using the internet and making bookings becomes easy.

Entel is best for Bolivia (if you can find someone to register it for you). Supposedly "personal" has the best coverage for Argentina.

Don't expect signal in the mountains, so consider a satellite phone, SPOT device, inReach or similar.

Media

Blog: <https://transandesclimb.wordpress.com>